

## I Believe...

Barry O'Dell

**A** charge that is sometimes levied against the churches of Christ is that they are known more for what they are *against* rather than what they are *for*. It does appear at times that there are some who, when they write or teach, their sole purpose is to write or teach about what someone else is doing. Allow me immediately to say this - there certainly is a time and a place to speak out against false teachers and false practices. There is no doubt that there are those, who, in the name of Christ, are teaching and practicing things that are contrary to Scripture. For example, FCGN has just completed a lengthy series of articles that exposed the false doctrine of preterism. Things like that must be done (Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11). However, while exposing error is a necessity, it is not the sum of gospel preaching/writing.

There are many things that are taught and practiced in the name of God that are not "of God." That is, God is not the source.

Jesus said, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matt. 7:21-23). Heaven is only for those who do God's will. Intent does not matter. The sincerity of an individual does not matter. God's revealed will is the final authority for man's faith and practice (Deut. 29:29; 2 Thes. 2:15). An easy-to-understand principle that is revealed throughout the entirety of Scripture is that man has no right to add to or take away from the word of God. The Law (Deut. 4:2), Wisdom Literature (Pro. 30:6), and the New Covenant (Gal. 1:6-9) all warn us about this! Paul warned the Corinthians (and us) not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). There are 66 books in the Bible containing 1,189 chapters and 31,102 verses - surely a teacher of the Bible can find something to write or preach about other than what some other person is doing or saying!

As any student of God's word should know, when one opens the Bible, he has direct access to the mind of God! Listen to Paul: "*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into*

*the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (1 Cor. 2:9-13). In the Bible we have things that were "freely given to us" by God Himself! What a blessing! Here's an example of what I'm talking about...

In Acts 8 we read of a man from Ethiopia who was reading the Isaiah scroll. He was approached by Philip who asked, "*Understandest thou what thou readest?*" (Acts 8:30). After admitting that he needed some guidance "*Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto*

*him Jesus*" (Acts 8:35). In order to obtain salvation, the Ethiopian eunuch needed to be taught the truth - what to believe - about Jesus. Mankind has that same need today! Paul wrote about this too when writing to Timothy. "*And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 3:15). The truth here is very plain! One must know the "holy Scriptures" in order to be saved. He must know what to believe. Jesus tells us that we can know the truth and that it will set us free (Jn. 8:31-32).

There are multiple instances recorded in the Bible of people believing a lie. Jacob believed the lie that his son, Joseph, was dead (Gen. 37:33-35). Hananiah, a false prophet of Jeremiah's day, was telling Judah that her captivity would only last for two years when God said it would be seventy years (Jer. 28:1-4). False witnesses lied about Jesus in order to get Him convicted and murdered (Matt. 26:59-61). Even today, there are those who believe a lie - even though it is presented to them in the name of God. We must - and *CAN* - know the truth. Paul wrote, "*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17). Enjoy the upcoming articles and editions of FCGN on **I Believe...**

**"66 books...1,189 chapters...31,102 verses"**

**G**enesis is the introduction to the Bible. If the book of Genesis does not provide a firm, trustworthy foundation, including its Creation accounts, the remainder of the Old Testament and the entire New Testament crumble. Genesis is a battlefield. The battle for Genesis is a major campaign in the war of faith. If liberal critics win this battle, the war is lost. We must, therefore, be dutiful in our defense by understanding the defense starts with Genesis. Of no small significance in this defense of Genesis and the Creation Week is that Jesus referenced the Creation account, seemingly taking it for granted that it represents an actual event (Matt. 19:4-5). This speaks volumes in our present considerations!

If there is one philosophy among all others that is behind the rejection of the Bible in general and Genesis Chapters One and Two in particular, it is surely the General Theory of Evolution (man came from matter alone by time and chance alone). If, however, Genesis is true, then evolutionary explanations, even “theistic” varieties, cannot be correct. If, therefore, Genesis is accurate in its account of the Creation, the whole of the Scriptures find themselves worthy of all acceptance. Therein is found the rub! If Genesis is true, “modern man” finds himself on the spot. The kind of life he would selfishly choose is one that the Bible condemns. It therefore comes as no surprise that naturalistic explanations for origins will dominate when materialism prevails as the basis of a society’s structure. Hedonism and Christianity do not mix.

However, there are some who want to hold to the Bible while at the same time embracing most, if not all, of the structures of General Evolution. To do this, Genesis must be interpreted so as to allow for vast ages of time within the record of Chapter One. The “*Gap Theory*” and the “*Day Age Theory*” have developed as attempts to reconcile the suppositions of geologic time with the days of the Genesis creation account. The reconciliation proposed by the Gap Theory rests on three basic points taken from an interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2. From these points a theory is developed that allows billions of years to pass between the first two verses of chapter one. Vast amounts of time are needed to support the Theory of General Evolution. Time doesn’t solve the problems, but it allows for the “appearance” of having something of substance. The first point of the Gap theory is based on an incorrect distinction that is made between the Hebrew words *bara* and *asah*. *Bara* is said to mean “create” while *asah* is given the meaning of “recreate.” This distinction, however, is easily removed by noting that Genesis 1:26 refers to God “making,” *asah*, man, while Genesis 1:27 says that God “created,” *bara*, man. While the two words are not identical in meaning, they obviously can be used with a degree of interchangeability. The Gap Theory also depends on defining the Hebrew

word *hayetah* as meaning “became” instead of the usual “was” in the first clause of verse two. The word demonstrates the condition of the world after God created it, however, not that it was created one way and became another. The third point of this theory presents the thought that *tohu vabohu*, “waste and void,” must refer to something that happened as the result of a long period of decline from order to disorder. However, *tohu* simply means “unformed” and *bohu* is defined as “empty.” The thought is that God created the world in a state where its geographical features were not yet developed and upon which there dwelled no inhabitants. “Undeveloped and unfilled” is the thought. The remainder of Creation refines this to make the earth a suitable dwelling place for humans (one of the major stylistic features of Creation Week).

A sister theory that attempts to find billions of years in the Genesis account is the “Day Age Theory.” All who hold to this particular view are not evolutionists, however, the theory gives credibility to the geologic time column which is itself one of the primary doctrines of evolutionary speculation. The most striking argument against a “day,” *yom* in Genesis chapter one, being a long age of time is the wording of Exodus 20:8-11. Here in Exodus, the word *yom* clearly is used to refer to a twenty-four-hour day. Additionally, the creation days are also mentioned here, rather straightforwardly as being the same as the days of an ordinary week. Whatever the word might mean elsewhere i.e., Genesis 2:4 where a figurative use is found (not at all what is needed to make *yom* work for the Day Age Theory); in Exodus 20:8-11 *yom* is used in the sense of a typical twenty-four-hour period of time, an ordinary day and associated with the creation week as if it too were comprised of ordinary days. Genesis makes the same point about a twenty-four-hour day, as does Exodus by associating both evening and morning with each day. Each of the creation days had two periods of twilight, evening and morning. Genesis One, it should also be noted, is generally considered to have been written in prose rather than poetry thereby associating the force of the language with being a literal. Even if some allowance be made for possible time measurement relatively minor differences, no time periods of vast eons in length can be gotten from a simple look at the text.

Both the Gap Theory and the Day Age Theory find no comfortable, obvious support in the Genesis account of creation. Were it not for the suppositions of the General Evolution Theory, I doubt the attempts to find eons of time in Genesis Chapter One would receive so much attention. The real issue is very clear-cut. Does the Bible teach a literal six-day creation, or does it teach the Theory of General Evolution? Let me clearly state, that being the case, I believe the Theory of General Evolution to be one of the greatest deceptions ever perpetrated in Western culture.

**I**t is often said “as goes the home, so goes society.” The home is the basic unit of society. Breakdowns in society ultimately lead back to breakdowns in the home. It is sad, but not surprising, to see the society freefall morally and therefore spiritually. The problem behind this freefall is the change in attitudes over the years towards the home or the family. The idea that the home is simply a social construct is quite prevalent. Words such as “nuclear” or “traditional” are thrown out to describe the home. The implication is that the home is a societal institution that originated and was designed by mankind. This belief has led to the false idea that marriage itself is simply a “piece of paper” or a “license” given by the government and that government is the entity that determines what a marriage and the home is to be. No wonder the home has fallen in disarray over the last several years as the governmental legalization of homosexual “marriages” has been front and center.

What should the home look like? The answer is found in Jesus’ words to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:4 when he stated *“Have ye not read, that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?”* It is important to note that Jesus Himself, God the Eternal Word, appeals back to creation to define the home. Jesus does not appeal to civil law, but the natural order of things established at creation as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Those chapters establish the fundamental truths pertaining to the home: that the home has God as its origin, the home has a God given pattern, and the home has a God given function. By looking back to God’s word - especially the fundamental teachings of Genesis 1 and 2 - one can see how the home is to function.

**The home has God as its origin.** Genesis 1:26 states that God made man and woman in His image, assigning genders and blessing, instructing them to, “be fruitful and multiply...” (2:18). God is the divine designer, architect, and creator of the home. Happy, Scriptural homes, that will benefit society, must look to God alone and be built according to His will (Ps. 122:1).

**The home has a God given pattern.** God made male and female (Gen. 1:26-27), making male first, then female. In creating the male, God knew it was not good for the man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). God knew man needed companionship, a “help meet” (“ezer kinegdo”) or a “helper fit for him.” Man needed someone like him, of like nature to himself, but not him, a difference: a woman. There is a natural order to creation, but in no way does this make the female inferior to the male. She was taken from Adam’s side (Gen. 2:21-22). If she were taken from his head, she would have been superior. On the other hand, if she had been made from his feet, she

would have been inferior. Being fashioned from his side suggests her equality with man, though the man is the head of the wife by natural order of creation (1 Cor. 11:1ff; Eph. 5:23ff) and certainly Adam himself demonstrated this principle in naming his wife. Woman then is the perfect “help meet” or complement to man because she is of like nature of man. The phrase “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh” signifies the unmistakable compatibility between the man and woman. It is in the marital relationship that the companionship of man and woman is fully realized (2:23-24). In marriage, man leaves father and mother to cleave to his wife. The idea of “leave” suggests the permanence God had in mind for the marital relationship in that it demonstrates why a man will leave father and mother. The idea of “cleave” denotes the concept of sticking, gluing, or joining closely in a permanent union, implying and necessitating affection and loyalty. It is God who created the institution of marriage, and it is God who joins man and woman together in marriage: not man. Therefore, man does not have the right to put asunder what God has joined together (Matt. 19:6).

**The home has a God given function.** The command of Genesis 1:28 is to both the male and female to

“be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion...over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

Along with the responsibility of dominion over the earth, both male and female have a role in being fruitful and replenishing the earth. The question is “What relationship does this occur in? Is it unlimited as some suggest?” There is the issue of fornication, which is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19ff). So, the logical deduction is that this responsibility is fulfilled within the confines of the marital relationship (Heb. 13:4). Can a man and a man fulfill this command? Can a woman and woman? Obviously not! Can a male and female do so outside the marital relationship? Not without sinning against God. In being fruitful, the husband and wife are to bring their offspring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Part of doing such is teaching their children God’s plan and pattern for the home and marriage.

In conclusion, though the book of Genesis is found in the Old Testament and Christians are not bound by the Old Testament law today, the principles and patterns considered are just as pertinent and binding today as they were then because God’s plan and pattern for the home is established on natural law put into place at creation. Therefore, the home should not look like what the world says. It should be what God established back in Genesis 1 and 2. May all strive to build homes God’s way - the Genesis 1 and 2 way.

**“God is the divine designer, architect, and creator of the home.”**

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### The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

#### Salvation

- Saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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