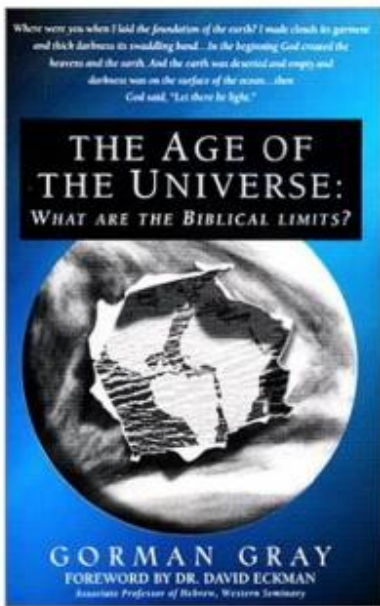


Young Biosphere Creation (YBC) instead of Old Earth or Young Earth Creation

John Michael Fischer, 2021, www.newgeology.us

Young Biosphere Creation (YBC) is a biblical creationist theory that says the biosphere (all living things) were created recently (thousands of years ago) by God, but that the universe of stars, gas, etc. was created by God first, an unknown number of years earlier; perhaps millions or billions of years ago. It was conceived by Gorman Gray, and the account here is made from his book.



YBC emphasizes the accurate translation of verses in Genesis chapter 1. It argues that the mistranslation of key words has led to a misunderstanding of the origin of the universe by Young Earth Creationists (YEC), and that acceptance of evolution theory for the origin of the biosphere is a mistake by Old Earth Creationists (OEC). The "Gap theory" of OEC injects conventional geologic column history between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, whereas YBC does not inject conventional geologic column history between Genesis 1:2 and 1:3.(Gray, p.19)

THE YOUNG **BIOSPHERE**
CREATIONIST VIEW OF
GENESIS
(YBC)

Young Biosphere Creation is based on 3 key points for interpreting the text of the first chapter of Genesis:

- 1) It highlights a distinction between two Ancient Hebrew words, bara and asah, that are usually given the same meaning in English, “to make”, and applies one of the lesser-used meanings to nathan, usually translated as “to place”.
- 2) The first verse is understood to be the creation of the entire universe, including Earth as a planet devoid of life as described in verse 2. An unknown amount of time passes before the rest of the chapter unfolds, but billions of years are possible to allow distant starlight to reach Earth and for long half-life radioisotopes inside the Earth to decay.
- 3) The actions described from Genesis 1:3 through Genesis 1:18 are as seen from the surface of the Earth rather than as one looking down on Earth from a distance

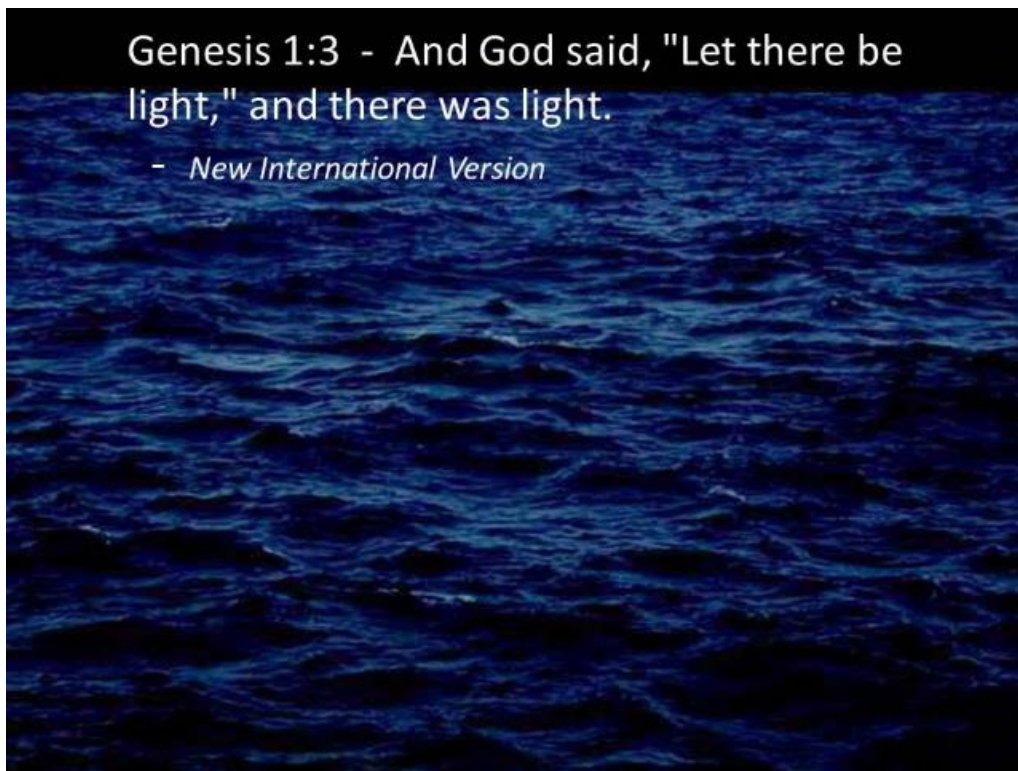
Let’s go through the creation verses. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” “Shamayim” means “heaven”, either the universe or the sky, depending on context. Here it is used the way David did in Psalm 8:3, when he writes “your heavens... the Moon and stars”. The Hebrew word “bara” is used, which means only one thing: create. So the first thing that God did was create the universe of stars, nebulae, planets (including Earth), and moons. It is not a summary of what follows, which describes His working on the Earth to create the biosphere.

The only place in the creation story in which the planet Earth is created is verse 1, so it exists fully formed but is a dead planet, like all the others astronomers have found. The Spirit of God prepared to work on the Earth, which was barren and empty (tohu wabohu) with a global ocean wrapped in dark clouds. “Formless” is a mistranslation of “tohu” in verse 2. “Tohu wabahu” means an “empty wasteland” in this context. And darkness was on the surface of the deep ocean. Job 38:9 says God had covered the Earth with clouds, wrapping it in thick darkness. If that does not refer to verse 2, when was it?(Gray, pp.58,59) These were water clouds, unlike the thick clouds of other gases that still enclose Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. So Earth was a solid planet with a deep ocean covered with thick, wet, dark clouds. How long it was like that the Bible does not say; it could be any amount of time, but at least long enough for starlight from the farthest galaxies to reach Earth and radioisotope ratios to develop inside it. Of course, God exists outside of time.



Verse 2 then says “the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.” From here on, everything is described from a viewpoint on the surface of the Earth. This is not an unusual idea. R. K. Harrison wrote in his Introduction to the Old Testament in 1969 that it was “as though the writer were actually on the earth at the time in a position to record the developing phases of created life as he experienced them.”

As long as darkness on the ocean surface continued, a “first day” was impossible. So when verse 3 says “let there be light”, the clouds were thinned enough to allow a little sunlight to the surface, enough to be able to discern the evening and morning in verse 5. Many have assumed there was suddenly all-over cosmic light without a point source like the Sun. Gorman Gray notes that this would not allow an evening anywhere, and yet there was evening and morning the first day.



In verses 6 and 7, God lifted the clouds off the ocean of water covering the Earth, producing our atmosphere. Here it is called the “raqia”, or expanse. If this is not the atmosphere, then there is no record of it being made in the creation account. Lifting a thick cloud covering to the height clouds begin today, about 6,500 feet, would further thin the clouds by making the same volume cover a larger area. In verse 8, God called it the sky, and there was the second day.



In verses 9 and 10, the global ocean covering the Earth parted to reveal dry land.



Now that there was dry land, light, and water, verses 11 and 12 say God called forth plants of all kinds to sprout from the ground. Verse 13 says that was the third day.

Genesis 1:11 - And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind,

- *American Standard Version*



The clouds surrounding the Earth were still in place. There was just enough light for a viewer on the surface of Earth to tell day from night, but in verses 14 to 18, on the fourth day, the cloud cover was dissipated to reveal the Sun, Moon, and stars, giving the Earth full daylight.

Genesis 1:14 - Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years." - *New Living Translation*

Genesis 1:15 - "Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. - *New Living Translation*

Genesis 1:16 and 17 are without doubt the main sources of the translation controversy, so we will look at them closely. Recall the Hebrew word "bara" in the first verse, when God created the

universe. In verse 16 there is a different word, “asah”. It has lots of meanings, 74 in fact, including “do” and “bring forth” as well as “make”. Biblical scholar Bernard Northrup says “asah” is consistently used for work which is performed on existing materials.

In English, “make” also has other meanings than “create”. It is used to arrange, as in make a bed, to accomplish, as in make a trip, to succeed, as in “he made partner in a law firm”, to compel, as in “I dare you to make me”, to recognize, as in “the lookout made the undercover cop”, to form or fashion out of something, and to earn, as in make money.

“Asah” is used in Jonah 1:9 where it says the God of heaven made the sea and dry land, that is, separated them. We already know the ocean was parted to reveal the dry land, and it is the same here, where the cloud cover was dissipated to reveal the Sun, Moon, and stars. “Bring forth” is probably the closest English translation in this case, and Gorman Gray is hardly the first to notice it. In a book published in 1871 that is still widely used today, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, who were known as conservative and orthodox teachers of the Christian faith, wrote, “The atmosphere being completely purified, the sun, moon, and stars were for the first time unveiled in all their glory in the cloudless sky; and they are described as ‘in the firmament’ which to the eye they appear to be, though we know they are really at vast distances from it.”

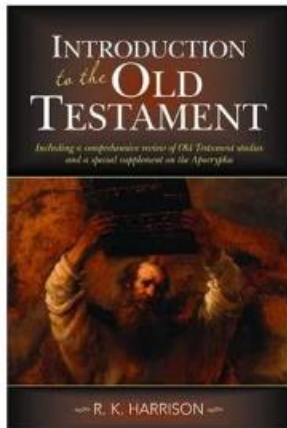


“Asah is consistently used for work which is performed on existing materials.” - Bernard Northrup, Wycliffe Bible translator

“The atmosphere being completely purified, the sun, moon, and stars were for the first time unveiled in all their glory in the cloudless sky” - Jamieson, Fausset, Brown; 1871



R. K. Harrison agrees, assuming a viewer on the surface of the Earth: “From such a standpoint the heavenly bodies would only become visible when the dense cloud-covering of the earth had dispersed to a large extent.”



“From such a standpoint [on the earth] the heavenly bodies would only become visible when the dense cloud-covering of the earth had dispersed to a large extent.” - R. K. Harrison

Verse 17 is usually translated to say some form of “God *put* them in the sky to give light to the earth.” The Hebrew word “nathan” most often means “give” in the Bible. It can also mean “put”, “set”, “make”, “deliver”, “appoint”, and many other things. Bernard Northrup says that in this verse it is used in the sense of appointing, the way nathan is used in Genesis 41:41 when Pharaoh appointed Joseph over all Egypt.

Genesis 1:17 - God **set** these lights in the sky to light the earth, - *New Living Translation*

nathan - give, put, set, make, deliver, appoint, etc.



Here, nathan is used as “appointing”, the way nathan is used in Gen 41:41 when Pharaoh appointed Joseph over all Egypt.

In the context of verses 14 to 18, it is clear to all these men that it talks about unveiling the Sun, Moon, and stars, and designating them as lights for the Earth, rather than creating them.



This becomes even more apparent when we see in verse 20 that birds fly in the same place as the lights in verse 17, the “raqia” or expanse, which is the atmosphere, “in the heavens”, “shamayim”. On the fifth day, in verses 20 to 22, God created sea creatures and birds.



On the sixth day, in verses 24 and 25, He created land animals.

Genesis 1:25 God **made** land animals according to their kind **asah** - fashioned



Lastly, He created Man, using the Hebrew word “bara” in verse 27, while He fashioned Man in His own image, using the Hebrew word “asah” in verse 26.

Genesis 1:26-27 God created man
asah - deciding to **fashion** man in God’s image
bara - actually **creating** man



So that's it. No cosmological pretzels and no conflict with the timing of distant starlight or radioisotope ratios. That is the Young Biosphere Creation model authored by Gorman Gray. Like the rest of the universe, the age of planet Earth is not disclosed in Gen. 1:1.

Exodus 20:11 superficially seems to tell a different story. It is usually translated "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them...". The King James version puts the first "in" in italics to show that it is not in the original Hebrew, and Young's Literal Translation goes a step further by correctly omitting it. Bernard Northrup agrees, and considers the mistranslation of this verse as a pivotal error that has led many astray. Once again the word "asah" was mistranslated as "made" rather than working on existing material, while heaven and earth should use their alternate meanings of sky and land to fit with the third part, the sea.



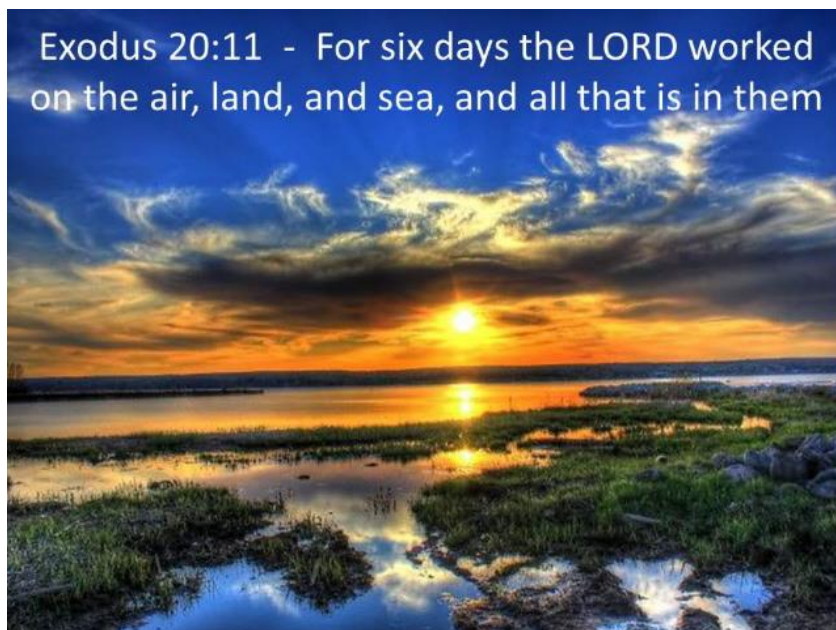
Exodus 20:11 - For six days the LORD **worked on...**

Here again, "asah" is work on existing material, not new creation

shamayim - heavens (stars) or sky (air)
erets - planet earth or land
yam - sea

Is it **stars, planet earth, and sea** or
air, land, and sea ?

If you think about it, it does not make sense to say God created the planet Earth and the sea, because the sea is included in the Earth. The correct translation of Exodus 20:11 and Exodus 31:17 is, " 'For six days Yahweh worked on the atmosphere, the continental land, and the oceanic sea, and all that is in them,'... that is, the biosphere."(Gray, p.52) From Dr. Northrup, "For six days the LORD worked on the sky, the land, and the sea, and all that is in them..."



And that is a good summary of the creation account in Genesis.

YBC contrasted with YEC and OEC.

YEC accepts the usual translation of the first chapter of Genesis. Gray highlights the problem YEC has with the time required for distant starlight to reach the Earth, the presence of substantial decay products from long half-life radioisotopes in Earth's rocks, and the awkward sequence of events in the first chapter of Genesis.(Gray, pp.84-85)

OEC aligns with conventional scientific opinion, adapting the first chapter of Genesis to it, and placing God in the narrative in various ways according to the version of OEC. Gray writes that "attempts to harmonize the assertions of evolutionary geology and biology with the Bible... simply cannot be done without stretching the language of Genesis."(Gray, p.128) Evolutionary biology has its own challenges, for scientific reasons, including:

- the failure of biochemists to make any form of life from chemicals
- the universal observation that life only comes from life
- the inadequacy of evolution theory's mutation/natural selection mechanism to build the complex, information-rich gene regulatory networks and biological systems networks found in all organisms that function only when every part is in place
- frequent resort to "convergent" and "parallel" evolution when there is no traceable "descent with modification" or inherited "changes in gene frequencies in populations" to explain traits such as wings or bioluminescence
- the natural trend toward increasing disorder (entropy) precludes the requirement of macroevolution for increasing order [<http://physics.bu.edu/~duffy/py105/Secondlaw.html>]
- the impossibility that random chemical reactions could produce only the "right handed" nucleotides or "left handed" amino acids required by living things [<https://www.newgeology.us/presentation32.html>]

On the other hand, YBC has the disadvantage of being relatively new (since 1996) and not widely known. It uses informed word translations that are unfamiliar to most creationists. YEC and OEC theories have active and devoted followers; many are not interested in alternatives.

Gorman Gray said this in a 2009 debate: "The late Dr. Henry Morris, to whom all creationists, including me, owe such a deep debt of gratitude, on a bus tour of the Grand Canyon area someone asked him 'what are the most difficult scientific problems creationists have?' His answer was, 'light from distant galaxies and radioisotope ratios in earth's crust.' I mentioned that to Danny Faulkner, a well-known Young Earth Creationist astronomer and queried him, 'and what are the most difficult problems for us today, 15 years later?' He said, laughing, 'light from distant galaxies and radioisotope ratios in the earth's crust. Either of these phenomena require billions of years to occur, not a good match for a 6,000-year-old universe.' "

In response to a critic, Gorman Gray wrote, “Sometimes I wonder if YEC people would prefer the misery of defending a 10,000-year-old universe and earth rather than accept this utterly simple solution [YBC], which is scripturally and scientifically sound. This simple interpretation, understandable to small children, does not require an old universe but allows it, and thereby solves all the creationist’s major problems”.

References

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Harrison, R.K. 1969. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Peabody, MA, 1344 pages.

Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, David Brown. 1871. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1591 pages.

Northrup, Bernard. 1994. Some Questionable Creationist Axioms Reexamined. In *Proceedings of The Third International Conference on Creationism*, Robert E. Walsh, editor, pages 387-405.

Scholarly support

The forward to the book *The Age of the Universe: What are the biblical limits?* is by David Eckman, Ph.D. in Hebrew Studies and Old Testament. He studied at Oxford University in England in the 1980’s, and is a member of the National Association of Hebrew Professors. In the forward he concurs with the 3 key points of YBC (above), although without addressing nathan.

Bernard Northrup, Th.D., was a Hebrew language scholar who taught the Tanakh (entire Hebrew Bible – Law, Prophets, and Writings) for 50 years. He concurred with key points 1 and 2 of YBC (above), not addressing point 3, in his paper referenced here, presented at the Third International Conference on Creationism in 1994.

R.K. Harrison was a professor of Old Testament studies at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, with a Ph.D. from the University of London. He served on the Executive Review Committee of the New King James Version of the Bible, and also translated several of the Minor Prophets for the New International Version. In his 1969 *Introduction to the Old Testament*, he concurred with key point 3 (above) (Harrison, p. 554).

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown authored their *Commentary on the Whole Bible* in 1871. It is a comprehensive, verse-by-verse exposition that is still recognized as one of the great whole-Bible commentaries. [<https://reformedbooksonline.com/commentaries/whole-bible-commentaries/#great>] Preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote “I consult it continually.” In their commentary on Genesis chapter 1 they concurred with key points 2 and 3 (above). [<https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=jfb&b=1&c=1>]