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Dear brother Ken:

I have read with great interest the thoughtful correspondence between yourself and Martin DeHaan of the Radio Bible Class and feel compelled to respond. The experience you have had is quite similar to one which I recently encountered along much the same lines.

During the past Christmas season an incident occurred in one of our worship services which did much to expose the prevalent thinking that Mr. DeHaan shares. In fact, the response that he provided could easily have been written from the same script that was shared with me by the parties involved in this circumstance.

Our denomination's seminary (a conservative Baptist school located in the Midwest) had prepared a devotional pamphlet intended to be shared with churches and their members as part of the Advent season. The third reading in the pamphlet entitled "A King's Birth in a Stable" was "inadvertently" shared during our early service and included the following paragraph:

So the newborn rested in a slop trough. The second person of the Blessed Trinity, who was in the bosom of his Father from eternity past; the divine agent of creation, who supplied the unimaginable power behind the Big Bang at the birth of the cosmos fifteen to twenty billion years ago (if scientific estimates are meaningful); the One appointed to unify all things in the coming end, as the Omega-point of the universe; this One, on becoming flesh, rested in a slop trough.

When the pastor was faced with this development he dismissed it as an unfortunate incident, going on to assert that the professor who wrote this piece probably went too far in his language, but that he had every right to his view. When this matter was brought to the attention of the deacon board of the church they failed to take any action relative to the incident. In essence, here were church leaders – as you suggest – who have gone to great pains to point out that they don't – and won't – take a stand, actually revealing the stand of Biblical ambivalence they've taken!

I then took it upon myself to contact the seminary in question and received an e-mail from the academic dean saying that he had failed to properly edit the pamphlet and he was sorry that it had caused such a fuss; that he had received contacts from others in the denomination regarding the language as well. He then introduced me (via e-mail) to the New Testament professor who authored this piece, and a lengthy correspondence ensued between the two of us.

I learned a great deal regarding the state of our churches and seminaries from this incident. I'd like to share with you some of these insights, coming from a lay person (I am a public high school teacher).

Because of a previous incident in our fellowship over the teaching of Hugh Ross material I (we) learned that our pastor and his associate are really old-earthers (though they openly say they don't know what kind of old-earthers they are – they are "open-minded"). Both of these individuals worked very hard at trying to gloss over these incidents. I (we) also learned that the lay leadership in the church is quite ignorant concerning the nature of the issue, and readily defers to the staff for direction!

I learned that the old-earth crowd like to define "the enemy" (see DeHaan letter, p.1) as naturalistic philosophy, materialism, evolution, atheism, etc., but choose to ignore the age issue (yet frequently denigrate young-earth teaching), and are ignorant concerning uniformitarian assumptions, both geologic and cosmic. It is as if they put so much emphasis on "defining the enemy" (while missing the target entirely) they are willing to sacrifice (compromise) the Truth! Since when do we seek (or should we seek) a ". . . balanced understanding of the Scriptures. . ." that DeHaan calls for? This view, by its very nature, calls for compromise, moderation, accommodation; eventually impotency and the impuissance of Biblical authority.

As you have clearly discovered, the RBC wishes to stand in the perilous middle of an issue where there is no middle ground! In my mind it is beyond belief that Mr. DeHaan would actually want you to inform "your public" that the Radio Bible Class is completely ambivalent on such a fundamental (foundational) matter of Christian faith:

"Please make it clear that RBC is not taking a position against a young earth or against six 24-hour days of creation. Neither are we affirming the position of progressive creationists or theistic evolutionists." In other words, an organization that teaches the Scriptures is unable to articulate a position on the Creation and history of the universe, the earth, life, mankind, from the Bible alone! This is a sad and tragic commentary indeed.

In addition, my suspicions about the nature of "theology" and theological education were confirmed through this experience. The voluminous correspondence between the professor and myself (nearly 100 pages) revealed all sorts of theological arguments as to why one can't read a 6-day, recent creation into (from?) the Genesis account, with the professor going so far as to send me pertinent items from the works of B.B. Warfield, Bruce K. Waltke, and Derek Kidner.

I learned that the "conservative" and "traditional" view held by the church over the past hundred years or so is actually an old earth position; and that the *radical!* (reformationist, if you will) view is the return to a literal teaching of Genesis, the 6-days, the genealogies and chronologies, and a view toward a recent (6,000) year history. Several within our church fellowship were shocked to learn this.

I also learned something else from the professor, something which greatly disturbed me. It seems that when one holds to the old-earth model (be it Gap, Day-Age, Progressive, Re-creation, theistic evolution, etc.) there emerges a different – subtle at first – view of our Savior, the Messiah of the Old and New Testaments.

As our discussion moved from the Creation Account to the genealogies the professor was quick to attack the idea that these records are complete and consistent. He (following Warfield in particular) is quick to find gaps of 10's, 100's, or even thousands of generations which are missing from these accounts.

And when our correspondence eventually turned to the accounts of Matthew and Luke I was dumbfounded to learn that this New Testament professor, the very one training our future pastors, did not know that these two lists represent the parentage of two different persons (Matthew for Joseph, Luke for Mary), and he failed completely to comprehend the importance of a clear understanding of this inspired information. The professor must never have read Dr. M.R. DeHaan's wonderful booklet "The Birth of the King" (December, 1963), was inadequately taught the New Testament himself, and fails to understand how indispensable and necessary to the Gospel message are the genealogies of Jesus as recorded by Matthew and Luke!

Since I am a history teacher it occurred to me that if one believes in billions of years and holds that the genealogies of the Bible are incomplete and of limited importance (as Warfield says, they are provided only to show the changes in the longevity of the advancing generations), then one no longer has any sort of historical/chronological reference in which to place Jesus. The logical outcome of such thinking plays into the hand of those who for years have said that Christ was not a real character of history. For the Christian who can't count on the genealogies as being a complete and consistent chronological record, there is no logical genealogical/chronological sequence to place our Savior in the history of the world.

Ken, I think you provided the best understanding of this when you wrote in "Dinosaurs and the Bible" (p.17) the following: "If you remove the evolutionary framework, get rid of the millions of years, and then take the Bible seriously. . . ." Many believers who should know better take their theology more seriously than their Bible. In fact, their theology in effect becomes the judge of what is to be believed, and what to be questioned in the Scripture. This process is most clearly seen in this problem over the clear understanding of Genesis. I must tell you, that I find in many professional church leaders a pride in their theological scholarship that is alarming.

I was finally able, after a great deal of effort, to get the Area Minister for the our conference to correspond with the seminary on this matter. Here in part is what he wrote:

I just wanted to go on record for you [the seminary president] and the seminary leadership that I am personally glad people read the article and reacted to it. I feel it was not only a poor choice of words, but also has the potential of being "the tip of the iceberg" that indicates other major concerns we might have. . . . I value teachers who have a high view of Scripture; they lift up the supernatural. This in no way diminishes the full discipline of hermeneutics, but the Scripture has not only a historical setting, which has to be considered, but it has relevance for today . . .

Personally, I do not prefer the terms "high" and "low" view of Scripture, but rather a *dynamic* (Hebrews 4:12) as opposed to a *limited* view of Scripture. This is where I found the professor of the New Testament when he ended our correspondence. He held the chronologies to be limited (based on Warfield, et al), the genealogies to be incomplete (perhaps with even huge gaps existing), and totally misinformed concerning the Matthew and Luke genealogies of Jesus, leading to a rather warped view of the Messiah. When he placed the Christ-child in a "slop

trough" (twice mentioned) rather than a manger, it could be taken as a profound statement about how the Creator saw fit to bring His Son into this world!

I thought that the second postscript paragraph in Mr. DeHaan's letter was most revealing, and since this is clearly the root of this whole controversy, he could well have given it at the outset: "[M]y grandfather, Dr. M.R. DeHann taught both an old earth and six literal 24 hour days of creation."

First of all, Mr. DeHaan needs to realize that his grandfather was not teaching a "six literal 24 hour day," as it is understood today. He was presenting what Waltke calls "The Restitution Theory" (one of the Gap Theories), and J.P. Moreland lists as a "re-creation theory," one of the so-called (according to Moreland) "Literal Interpretations!" Secondly, he is correct in recognizing that these (and all) gap-type theories have been rejected by most Bible students, yet it is curious why he would still find them to be "interesting and possible." Unless he can propose a totally new theory, this acknowledgment on his part is quite telling, and very disturbing.

It is as if Mr. DeHaan is living in the past, referring to a "1962" work by his grandfather (who, by-the-way, I greatly appreciated in his day), the 1977 "Would a Good Rock Lie?," and the spurious 1978 International Council on Biblical Inerrancy as the authority upon which he bases his present views. Those are clear examples of the need for an emergence from the dark ages of Warfield, Hodge, Scofield reference notes on Genesis 1, and theological interpretation generally. Needless to say, a great deal has transpired since those times, and we should all praise God for the work of Henry Morris, John Whitcomb, ICR, Answers in Genesis, and the other fine servants that have done so much to bring us back to Genesis and a correct understanding of God's Word.

If the truth be known, Mr. DeHaan could well harbor the same hostile attitude that my pastor, his associate, the professor, and others hold towards these individuals and organizations, seeing them as a divisive element in the church today. You perceive correctly: "Throughout this publication, the author repeatedly states that we must be 'humble' and 'gracious' if we disagree, yet at the same time, he subtly attacks those who hold to six literal days and a young Earth. Convenient! The author can attack those who hold a different perspective, but they aren't supposed to respond." I can't tell you Ken, just how frequently I have been called *dogmatic* by those who dogmatically assert that there is no way we can know for certain that God created in six days!

I think we have gained some very important insights concerning the state of the church (and para-church) today. It as if God has shielded us to a certain extent unto this time.

Bruce Schweigerdt, MA
(Address/phone #)

cc: Martin DeHaan, Radio Bible Class

PS. A note of caution: Be careful when you allow that there could be gaps in the Biblical genealogies – "Even if there were [gaps], one can't get millions or billions of years from the Bible." Ken, there are no gaps, period. For an excellent discussion of this matter see <http://www.custance.org/old/adams/ch1a.html>. Although Arthur Custance was a Gap Theorist, and held to a local Flood, he was a remarkable biblical scholar and provided us with a wonderful tool for this age. On the age (and Flood) issue he was simply an unfortunate member of the times (1950's - 70's) when most of us were vulnerable to such errant teaching. I share this note also to show how even a dear Christian brother can be so right in one area and terribly wrong in another.