



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 41
Issue 1003

The Original Creation

by — Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

The entire record of the original creation is given in the first verse of Genesis. “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.” This is all that is revealed in the book of Genesis concerning the original creation. No information is here given which will help us set the date of creation; nothing is revealed concerning the method used by the divine architect; nothing is revealed to tell us whether this was a few thousand or a few million years ago. We are not told whether the Heaven and Earth were called into existence in a split second of time, or whether the process of their formation covered a long interval of time. Speculation here is useless and irreverent. The bare fact is given as a statement of truth to be received.



When it is thus translated the period of original creation is fully recognized. The Rotherham Version translates Genesis 1:2, “Now the Earth had become waste and wild.”

GOD SETTLES THE MATTER

This matter can be settled by the Word of God. In Isaiah 45:18 we have the definite statement that God created the Earth “not in vain” but to be inhabited. The word used in this verse for “vain” is the same word used in Genesis 1:2. The latter verse says, “the Earth was without form and void,” the former verse says “He created it not a void.” Thus, we know from God’s own exact statement that, when He created the Earth originally, it was not in the waste and empty condition in which we view it in Genesis 1:2.

THE INFINITY PRINCIPLE

Here is an excellent example of the “infinity principle” of divine revelation. This principle is that God in His Word tells everything we need to know and gives all information necessary in the realm of the finite, but He confines Himself to simple declarations of fact in the realm of the infinite. By this, God teaches finite beings (men) to walk by faith in the unexplained infinite.

Traditional beliefs and teaching make it hard for many to see that there was a period of original creation, followed by a period of ruin long before the human race in Adam appeared on the scene. Most people confound the primitive creation of the first verse with the ruin into which it had fallen as revealed in the second verse. Genesis 1:2 should be translated “the Earth **BECAME** ...” instead of “the Earth was.”

We can rest assured that the original creation was worthy of the Creator Himself and that it reflected all of His perfections. In Deuteronomy 32:4 we are told, “He is the Rock, His work is perfect.” This was certainly true of His creative work described in Genesis 1:1.

He created it to be inhabited; therefore, it was inhabited, for God’s purposes do not fail. That it was inhabited is seen in the command of God to Adam to
(see **ORIGINAL**, last page)

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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Editor's Desk

“Even Some of Your Own”

Acts 17:28 (Rotherham)

The truth can't and won't be confined. “*Even Some of Your Own*” is a series that runs occasionally as a part of the *Editor's Desk*. It chronicles truth breaking forth from quite unexpected sources.

Free Will Is a Myth

Robert Sapolsky

In *Bible Student's Notebook* 912 we shared the story of Sam Harris, a neuroscientist, who holds that “free will is an illusion.” Though not a believer, his scientific finds were intriguing.

Likewise, Corinne Purtill writes in the Los Angeles Times, introducing us to Stanford University neurobiologist Robert Sapolsky (October 17, 2023), recent author of *Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will*,

Sapolsky has reached the conclusion that virtually *all* human behavior is as far beyond our conscious control as the convulsions of a seizure, the division of cells, or the beating of our hearts.

This means accepting that a man who shoots into a crowd has no more control over his fate than the

victims who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It means treating drunk drivers who barrel into pedestrians just like drivers who suffer a sudden heart attack and veer out of their lane.

“The world is really screwed up and made much, much more unfair by the fact that we reward people and punish people for things they have no control over,” Sapolsky said. “We’ve got no free will. Stop attributing stuff to us that isn’t there.”

“Free will is a myth, and the sooner we accept that, the more just our society will be.”

“If it’s impossible for any single neuron or any single brain to act without influence from factors beyond its control,” Sapolsky argues, “there can be no logical room for free will.”

“We know we make worse decisions when hungry, stressed or scared. We know our physical makeup is influenced by the genes inherited from distant ancestors and by our mothers’ health during her pregnancy. Abundant evidence indicates that people who grew up in homes marked by chaos and deprivation will perceive the world differently and make different choices than people raised in safe, stable, resource-rich environments. A lot of important things are beyond our control.”

But, like — everything? We have no meaningful command over our choice of careers, romantic partners or weekend plans? If you reach out right now and pick up a pen, was even that insignificant

(see *EDITORIAL*, last page)



148 pages

See [order form](#) under “Compilations.”

The Disruption of the World

A Compilation

A broad study of the crucial, but all-too-often overlooked teaching of Scripture of the events between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Sometimes known as “The Gap,” “The Overthrow,” or “The Disruption,” this key event in God’s ages lays the important foundation for the ministry of Paul, the Apostle.

This critical compilation of 13 chapters from 8 authors will be an essential part of a Bible student’s library. Authors include: E.W. Bullinger, A.E. Knoch, Edward Clayton and John Essex.



My Story

"We also believe, and therefore speak."

Testimonies of Believers #11

Ken Hicks

(as interviewed by Steve Martin)

A Lifetime of Seeking Truth

Hi everyone! I'm Ken, and I'm 80 years old. I have a story to share about my long journey, trying to understand faith, truth, and the many different paths I've taken.

When I was a kid, Sundays at the Baptist Church were a big deal for my family. My mom didn't think I was listening to the sermons, but I was! I would even re-preach them at home using my little apple box as a pulpit. We had a blind man visit us, and we'd all sing while my brother played the guitar on our front porch.

Those were simple, yet deep moments. Even though I loved preaching, reading aloud in Sunday school was a bit tricky for me because I was shy. Our church changed from Missionary Baptist to Southern Baptist, but back then people cared more about being together and less about the name of their denomination.

After high school, I was in the Marine Corps for six

years and even spent time in Vietnam. I got married and had a son, but we got divorced, and I didn't see my son for over 30 years. When we found each other again, it was a real blessing, even though we missed so much time.

I spent about 25 years in the Worldwide Church of God. It was a place where I found some truth, but I kept looking for more even after the church suffered divisions. My wife, Betty, helped me look for more truths on the internet.

Then, I met Clyde, who loved bluegrass music and the Bible just like me. We talked about music and Scriptures, and I learned a lot about faith. I learned about Paul, the apostle, and it made sense to me, fitting with the truths I was looking for.

I believe that everyone will be saved, a truth that became clear after studying different teachings. I learned about the Waldensians, who believed a lot like Paul, and Abraham Lincoln, who also believed

Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2

by — Arthur C. Custance

Considered a classic in Christian apologetics, this scholarly analysis of the biblical phrase "without form and void," from the opening chapter of Genesis, observes the rules of linguistics, grammar and syntax, and also examines how words are used in the rest of Scripture. This book has been described as the best argument that has ever been written for the Gap Theory.

A well respected Canadian scientist, and listed in the 1971 American Men in Science, Dr. Custance contends that we should not allow science to determine what Scripture says. Neither should we allow Scripture to determine what the scientist observes in the laboratory. Yet observed fact in the one cannot, ultimately, conflict with revealed fact in the other. Any conflict, then, is in the interpretation of the facts – not in the facts themselves.

292 pages

See [order form](#) under
"Other Authors."

that everyone will be saved. It's a belief that everyone has a purpose and that everything will return to Him.

My favorite Scripture is I Corinthians 15. Every time I read it, I find something new. I've learned that finding truth isn't just about looking for it, but being open to being found by it. When God takes away the stubbornness from your mind, that's when you can truly hear His call.

I've been through a lot, from playing basketball to dealing with health issues like high blood pressure and neuropathy from Agent Orange. But like Hank Williams said, "As long as I'm living, I'm okay." That's how I live too.

I'm still here, still learning, and still looking for truths in my faith. In my 80 years, I've learned that you can't mix the two gospels. It's either the truth, or it isn't. And for me, I'm thankful to have found the truth I was looking for, even if it took a lifetime to find it. My journey has been long, with many twists and turns, but it's been worth every step. And remember, we're all still learning as long as we're still living.

So, here's to looking for truth, finding it, and always, always keep learning. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Ken Hicks; My Story; Testimonies

Minor: Faith; Learning; Salvation of All; Truth



Tidbits of Truth #61

"Tidbits" is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

Believers

Believers are those whom God has called. We are not believers because we believe; we believe because we are called of God. God is solely in charge of who sees and who doesn't, and of the order and rate for those who do.

— De L. Trefethen

No One Has Been Overlooked

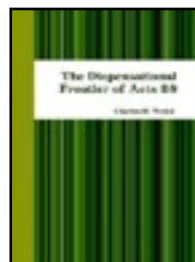
The mission of Christ was to destroy the enemy and to set the prisoners free. Now this word "destroy" does not mean to annihilate. In the Greek it means "to make of no effect." When Christ took the keys from the prison keeper he, Satan, lost all power and authority. Christ made his office of "no effect" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

While prophets of doom forecast calamity and destruction, the mind of Christ speaks and lights our world with the vision of universal restoration and reconciliation.

Paul told of a great victory where every knee would bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Paul did not say that only a small number will bow and confess, but he said "every knee" will bow, and every tongue will confess. And no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit. What a glorious day that will be when every knee shall bow!

We are not an accident! We are not a mistake! No one has been overlooked by the Creator. All of us are His jewels, the apple of His eye, His purpose, reason and will.

When we see God in all things, and realize that all things are in His hands for the eventual good of ev-



The Dispensational Frontier of Acts 28

by — Charles H. Welch
(1880-1967)

A survey of the significance of Acts 28 to dispensational truth.

62 pages (See [order form](#) under "Welch.")



everyone, then our lives will flow as peacefully as a river.

— Don Bruce

The Feet Ministry

The Inspiration of Ecclesiastes

This book formed part of the Hebrew Bible long before the time of Christ, and is therefore included in His Word, “the Scriptures” (Matthew 22:29; II Timothy 3:16, etc.). It is given in the list of canonical books by Josephus (A.D. 37), and is included in all of the Ancient Versions made before Christ. It has been rejected by some, or put to a late date, on account of its alleged Theology. Theology is man’s reasoning about the Word of God, as Science is man’s reasoning about the Works of God. Because Genesis does not agree with Science, that book is rejected by Rationalists. Because Ecclesiastes does not agree with Theology, this book is rejected, as uninspired, even by some Evangelical theologians.

True, the Bible contains an inspired record of what people said and did, and it does not follow that all that they said or did was inspired. Nevertheless, it is inconceivable that this can apply to a whole book, without a word of warning. Those who can imagine such a thing refuse the evidence that Christ in Luke 16:19-30 is using the language of His enemies, and in :31 giving His own Divine pronouncement. They strain out¹ the gnat and swallow the camel. They do not see that, if any one whole book is not a part of “THE ORACLES OF GOD,” every Christian doctrine loses its foundation. There could have been in that case no Divine selection or preservation of books, and no Divine CANON OF

1. [Editor:] “at, [KJV]”: A mistake perpetuated in all editions of the *Authorized Version*. All “the former translations” had “out.” – E.W. Bullinger, Note for Matthew 23:24, CB.

SCRIPTURE. If ONE book is thus ruled out, then another may be. Doubt is thus cast upon the whole Bible, and we have no “Word of God” at all! If this book is not part of the Word and words of God, then we have no reply to those who reject Genesis, Daniel, Jonah or the Apocalypse, who do so on the same ground of human reasoning. If the inner consciousness of each individual is to decide what is and what is not “Scripture,” there is an end of Divine Revelation altogether.

— E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

Companion Bible, p. 906

No Peace at This Time

It is not God’s object to fill the world with peace at the present time. It will help us in the terrible time we are going through to realize this. God wants to teach man that he cannot rule apart from Him. Man is made to rule and he is going to rule, but he is not able apart from the Deity.

— A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Unsearchable Riches, Volume 36, 1945

A Brief Overview of the Three Spheres of Glory

[To C.C.:] The first (base) sphere is the Earth, and is for Abraham’s “sand” seed, as well as the “righteous” and “meek.” A progression of the Kingdom revelation expanded this glory to a second (advanced) sphere. This sphere is for Abraham’s “star” seed – for the called from among Israel (an individual calling within a national calling).

The second sphere of glory is heavenly in nature, and



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is reserved for the out-called of Israel in the New Jerusalem, and will come down to them from Heaven as the capital city of Israel on the New Earth.

The third sphere is Celestial, a glory which is far up above all Heavens in the “*Super-Heavens*.” The 3rd sphere of glory exclusively belongs to Christ and “*the Church which is His Body*.” This hope of glory will be our reality at Christ’s Celestial appearing, prior to the beginning of the Pre-Millennial Kingdom.

The first sphere will encompass the earthly hope of the “*Day of Christ*” (the Pre-Millennial Kingdom) and the “*Day of the Lord*” (the Millennial Kingdom). The second sphere will be an expanded, heavenly glory of the out-called of Israel in the New Jerusalem during “*the Day of God*” (the Post-Millennial Kingdom).

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Our Lives Are in God’s Hands

[*Edited Excerpt:*] Men seek to “insure” their lives, but the whole procedure is based on the fact that their *death* is assured. [We] may be called on to face many hazards, endangering health and happiness and threatening [our] very lives, yet nothing but the divine decree can close the testimony of God’s slave. Each of His saints has his era. We should face the fu-



A History and Philosophy of Marriage:

Polygamy and Monogamy Compared

by — James Campbell
(originally published in 1869)
142 pages

A reprint of the Christian Philanthropist James Campbell’s classic work originally published in 1869 in Boston, Massachusetts.

(see [order form](#) under “*Histories*.”)

ture calmly and confidently. It is not in the hands of our friends. It is not in the hands of our enemies. It is in His hands ... Who cuts every career to conform to the great purpose of the eons.

— A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ

Concordant Publishing Concern, 1935, p. 318

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: [*Believers:*] Faith [*A Brief Overview of the Three Spheres of Glory:*] Spheres, Three [*No Peace At This Time:*] Peace; Government [*No One Has Been Overlooked:*] Salvation of All [*Our Lives Are In God’s Hands:*] Sovereignty [*The Inspiration of Ecclesiastes:*] Ecclesiastes



OUR BLOGS

blog: Pronunciation: \ˈblɒg, ˈblæg\
Function: noun

Etymology: short for Weblog: a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer; also: the contents of such a site.

— Webster’s Dictionary

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ORIGINAL (continued from front page)

“replenish the Earth.” This command shows that the Earth had been populated previous to the creation of Adam.¹ This same command was given to Noah in Genesis 9:1. Noah was to “replenish” the Earth which had been depopulated by the judgment of the flood.

Let it be fully understood that the inhabitants of the pre-Adamic Earth were not men. Adam was the first

1. [Editor:] SEC H4390 gives the meaning of “replenish” as “to fill or (intransitively) be full of, in a wide application (literally and figuratively).” Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines the intransitive form of the verb as “To recover former fullness.” Moreover, many dictionaries define the word as “to fill, complete, make full again, etc.”

man (I Corinthians 15:45). The Bible gives no statement as to who inhabited the Earth before Adam. The Bible gives no details on these points. **BSN**

— *The Word of Truth*, Vol. I, No. 3
August, 1936

(edited)

TOPICS:

Major: Creation; Disruption; Genesis 1:1-2; Pre-Adamic Earth

Minor: Adam; Isaiah 45:18; Replenish

EDITORIAL (continued from page 8445)

action somehow preordained?

“Yes,” Sapolsky says.

For fellow adherents of determinism — the belief that it’s impossible for a person in any situation to have acted differently than they did — Sapolsky’s scientific defense of the cause is welcome.

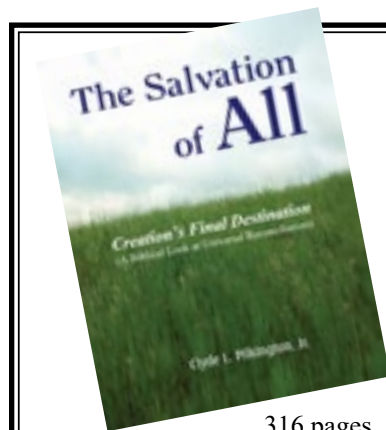
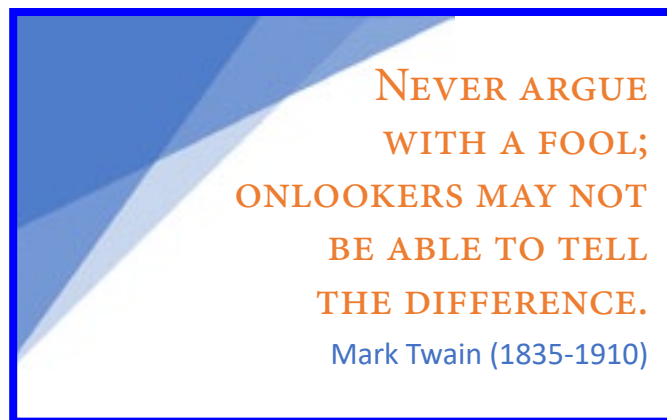
“We are machines,” Sapolsky argues ... “It is pointless to hate a machine for its failures.” **BSN**

(edited excerpt)

TOPICS:

Major: Editor’s Desk; “Even Some of Your Own”; Free Will; Robert Sapolsky; Sovereignty; Testimonies

Minor: Determinism



The Salvation of ALL: Creation’s Final Destination

(A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation)

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is truly better “Good News” than we could ever have imagined. It is far more glorious than religion would ever have us believe. *The Salvation of All* is a book about a “Good News” that will reach its final goal in the *salvation of all* mankind.

See [order form](#) under Clyde Pilkington.”

“*The Salvation of All*” – An excellent book. – **MI**

The Salvation of All is the most clearly written testimony to God’s ultimate grace and mercy towards man that I’ve seen in print. – **VA**

I’m sure I’ll be referring back to *The Salvation of All* for years to come. The issues you addressed in the book need

to be discussed among believers. – **IL**
The Salvation of All is worthy reading for people on both sides of the doctrinal fence. Regardless of whether or not those who read it will agree with you, I believe they will respect you for not serving up the regurgitated fodder that fills the shelves of religious bookstores. Very thought provoking! I’ll be recom-

mending it to many people! – **FL**

The Salvation of All, what an amazing book. I feel the veil has been lifted and finally I see clearly the glory of our Lord and Savior. What a joy to know the truth and understand just how amazing our God truly is to all. You are a sincere man of God whom I trust and respect. – **VA**