

“The Days of Creation” – Some Things to Consider

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The editor has been considerate in providing me an advance copy of brother Adams’ article which mentions Florida College and one of our teachers, Shane Scott.

Brother Adams quotes William D. Burgess, former biology professor at Florida College, who took the position that the “days” of creation were “days of ordinary length.” All of our present science faculty would concur with brother Burgess’ conclusion.

Brother Adams also refers to Hill Roberts. To my knowledge, no one at Florida College holds the position brother Roberts does on the age of the earth. Brother Roberts was invited to conduct a series of special classes during our 1999 lecture series on the use of technology in teaching the truth on the subject of evolution and related topics to a skeptical world. Having learned of his position on the age of the earth shortly before lectures, we talked with him and agreed that because the age of the earth was not part of his topic we would go forward with providing the benefit of his special knowledge and skill in the assigned area to those who wished to take advantage of it. We did not feel that his presence would injure anyone’s faith or promote his position.

Brother Adams mentions our publication of materials combating evolution. I would encourage every reader to examine for himself what we have said. I will be glad to supply a copy of the articles to anyone who asks. They may quickly be found on the Internet at <http://www.flcoll.edu/pdfs/colly.pdf> and <http://www.flcoll.edu/pdfs/dnorth.pdf>. Books containing our lecture manuscripts and tapes of both the oral lectures and the special classes are available through our bookstore. I would especially encourage interested readers to get copies of the lecture tapes of Ferrell Jenkins (Florida College Bible chairman) and Steve Wolfgang (Truth Magazine board member and staff writer) to see how our brethren have handled these issues in the past. A transcript of brother Jenkins’ class lecture on this topic is available on the web at <http://bibleworld.com>. Brother Wolfgang recently completed a doctoral dissertation entitled “*Science and Religion Issues Among 20th Century Restorationist Religious Groups.*” A brief summary of this material which contains footnote references to some of the quotations referred to in brother Wolfgang’s classes may be found in *A Tribute to Melvin D. Curry, Jr.* (published by Florida College, 1997, pp. 222-40) which is also available from the Florida College Bookstore or from Truth Bookstore.

The focus of brother Adams’ article is Shane Scott. It is true that brother Scott wrote an article in 1995 presenting the view that the word “day” (*yom*) in Genesis 1 is used in a figurative sense. The article was written at the request of Ken Chumbley who was editing a small section on “Evidences” in Floyd Chappellear’s paper, *Sentry*. The plan, as stated by brother Chumbley to brother Scott, was to provide a series of point/counterpoint discussions as a tool to bring both sides of certain issues before brethren. Brother Scott suggested that brother Chumbley invite Greg Gwin to respond. Brother Scott would not have written his article independently where there was no response. Such is an indicator of his long-time thinking about teaching on this topic.

While it is understandable that without some of this background one would see brother Scott as dogmatic about this topic, he is not. Although he does wrestle with correlating Genesis 1 and some statements in Genesis 2 with the literal day position, he has never questioned instantaneous creation by God of all that God created. He believes that God also created the processes of nature and that *some* things *may* have been created first in immature forms which grew to maturity. (He would cite the growth of vegetation referred to specifically in Genesis 2). He does not argue from science. His conclusion in the article was based on the implications of textual statements in which the Holy Spirit reveals what took place in the midst of and following the creative acts of God. The question with him has never been what God created or what God could have done. God is omniscient and omnipotent. He was not trying to fit what scientists think with Scripture. He is seeking to understand the meaning of what God says in Genesis 2 in light of what He said in Genesis 1. All of God’s Word is sacred, infallible, and true in brother Scott’s mind.

Furthermore, he does not advocate a figurative interpretation in his classes at Florida College. As all our Bible teachers have done for many years in studying Genesis 1, he feels that the responsibility in the college classroom is to inform students of the several positions identifying strengths and weaknesses of each position. Because of that, the bibliography in his course syllabus contains references to the writings of men on all sides of these issues; as would the bibliographies in other college courses on other subjects. This particular discussion is done as a part of only one lecture on one day in one course. It is preceded by an entire lecture in which brother Scott unquestionably sets forth the case against theistic evolution. Not only is he not dogmatic about setting an age for the earth, his position has changed from 1995 as he has studied and meditated on implications of various aspects of the issues involved. Because he admits to being unsure about parts of this study, he does not present a conclusion in class and does not discuss it publicly (other than in the one article mentioned and in a context of explaining the various views and allowing students to decide for themselves). For these reasons he has refused to engage in public debates on this topic.

While I do not concur with all his reasoning and/or personal conclusions, this teacher has a humble spirit, a tender heart, and a sincere desire to know and teach only the truth of God. Shane has great potential for good in the kingdom of God. He has a commitment to the Word that cherishes both the content and spirit of Truth. He has not, to my knowledge, taught error in the classroom of Florida College. He has, from the first discussion with me, indicated a willingness to study this subject and a desire to seek the truth on every Biblical teaching wherever that leads. I think that is the kind of teacher our brethren want for their children.

Brother Adams, too, is seeking to teach and defend the Truth. He has had my admiration over the years for his exegesis of the Bible text. I do not hesitate to say that we recognize the awesome responsibility we have in teaching young Christians. I have always gladly accepted constructive criticisms which will help us do our job in a way that will please God. In this case, brother Adams freely admits that he does not even know Shane Scott, and yet he has determined that employing him is inexcusable. I do know Shane Scott. I know what he teaches here. I could be wrong, of course, but I think I know the kind of person he is.

On a more general note, I and my colleagues here at Florida College have dedicated our lives to encouraging young men and women to serve the Lord in whatever capacity they are able. Sometimes they, like us, reach wrong conclusions. Sometimes they say things that are not right. Sometimes they say things in an inexperienced way that evidences they have not yet done all the study they will do on that topic or that they are naive about the implications of a position they are taking. That does not excuse the teaching of error at any time or age. It does not excuse any damage that might be done. I am, however, deeply thankful to the gracious God of heaven that my Dad, Jim Cope, Clinton Hamilton, and others helped me through my youth.

We all struggle with how best to serve the kingdom of God in these kinds of matters and do what is right. I have chosen in most cases to first try to help a brother see his way. If I do not know him, I have looked to the people I know who do know him; and unless he continues to press his position in an unbecoming way, I have trusted them to work with him. I have reflected (almost as much as on how many souls will be lost through what one says with which I disagree) on how many souls may be lost because of my impatience and persistence in discrediting a brother who is sincere and honest, who is leading many to greater knowledge and service, and who is studying diligently to know and teach the Truth. While I must not excuse the teaching of error or compromise the Truth, it seems to me to be an exercise in Truth “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).