

Dr. Hugh Norman Ross, President of Reasons to Believe, Inc. and Progressive Creationism

Born 1945; Christian speaker and author/ Ph. D. in astronomy, University of Toronto; Former Minister of Evangelism, Sierra Madre Congregational Church, Sierra Madre, California

Dr. Hugh Ross is a full-time speaker and author among evangelical and charismatic churches, schools and ministries. He has a weekly television program on the Trinity Broadcasting Network. He is currently the head of a non-denominational, worldwide ministry dealing with apologetics, especially Bible-science issues. He opposes atheistic evolutionism and teaches Progressive Creationism. Three beliefs listed below are particularly foundational to his teachings. This sheet also provides a partial list of other problems areas in his writings and lectures.

Due to the brief nature of this informational sheet, in most cases no attempt has been made to explain why Dr. Ross currently supports these beliefs; nor is there space to provide adequate refutation. The biblical and scientific reasoning why Dr. Ross's positions may be found in his various audio tapes, videos, pamphlets, newsletters and books, some of which are listed below.

The purpose of this fact sheet is not to criticize Dr. Ross as an individual. Our concern is with certain biblically erroneous teachings of Progressive Creationism, of which Dr. Ross is currently the most visible spokesperson.

Billions of Years Old Universe

Progressive Creationism	Biblical Response
<p><u>Billions-of-Years Old Universe?</u> This is the central belief that guides much of Dr. Ross's teachings. Again and again he states that the universe is billions of years old. Dr. Ross and other Progressive Creationists fervently believe that the size of the universe and various other astronomical discoveries prove this beyond any doubt. He rejects as nonsense all suggestions from science that earth and universe could be young. [See Hugh Ross, <i>Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy</i> (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994); Hugh Ross, <i>The Fingerprint of God</i>, second edition (Promise Publishing Co., 1991; etc.)]</p>	<p><u>Closer to 6000 Years?</u> Was Dr. Ross there billions of years ago? Certainly not, nor was any scientist. The Creator is the only one existing from the very beginning. Only He is in a position to know with certainty the age and true history of the universe. His Word to humanity is clear. The Bible indicates that all creation was completed during six revolutions of the earth. God's Word provides lists of generations between Adam and Jesus Christ. Even if there were a few gaps in the lists, it would be absurd to accept insertions of tens of thousand (or even millions) of years in the genealogy. Actually, a great majority of scientific age estimation methods indicate a young earth. Dr. Ross's bias is apparent in his willingness to accept only those scientific methods that agree with his belief of billions of years. In the final analysis, none of man's scientific age estimation methods can be considered foolproof, young or old. It is preferable to stick with the testimony of the only eyewitness, God.</p>

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<p><u>Death and suffering always?</u> Dr. Ross does not believe the Garden of Eden was free of death, pain, suffering or degeneration -- world creation in perfection. He believes that death and degeneration existed in the beginning and has continued for billions of years. He also teaches that neither the fall to sin nor the flood resulting in significant physical changes in Nature. [<i>Creation and Time</i>, pp 55, 65]</p>	<p><u>Paradise Lost?</u> According to the Bible, death (both physical and spiritual) entered the world through man's sin (Genesis 2:17, 3:19, Romans 5:12, 6:23, I Corinthians 15:20-23). The Bible indicates that our world is very different from the one, which God created and pronounced as "very good." The Bible clearly says that animals were not created carnivorous (meat eating); God originally commanded them to eat plants (Genesis 1:29-30, etc.). Because of man's sin, God cursed the ground and physical creation (Genesis 3:17). Scripture says the whole creation has been affected by man's sin, causing it to groan as it awaits freedom from bondage to decay (Romans 8:20-22). The global flood judgment changed earth even more (Genesis 8:21). One day God will restore paradise. Once again the lion will lie down with the lamb.</p>
<p><u>Dual Revelation!</u> Dr. Ross believes that Nature provides an accurate understanding of God and His plan for history. He holds the unorthodox view that "The plan of salvation as stated in the Bible can be seen through observation of the universe around us." For example, he teaches that Job "without the aid of scriptures...discerned all the elements of the gospel..." Dr. Ross frequently says that Nature is like the "sixty-seventh book" of the Bible. Nature is "on an equal footing" with the written revelation of God. Dr. Ross states that neither is "inferior or superior" to the other. They are simply "different, just like the content of Ezra is distinct from that of Romans." [<i>Creation and Time</i>, pg. 57]. He proceeds to accept most of the interpretations of secular science while attempting to maintain the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. He has accused young-earth creationists of believing in "Single-Revelation Theology" and denying "physical reality". [<i>Fingerprint of God</i>, second edition, (first quotation: pg. 179; second quotation: pg. 181, also see pgs. 144-145, 163-164; <i>Creation and Time</i>, pp. 11, 41, 55-57, 123; "Hugh Ross's Apologetics Hot Line", <i>Christianity Today</i> (March 11, 1991) pg. 23; Hugh Ross, "Creation Days", audiotope (Pasadena, CA: Reasons to Believe, 1990).</p>	<p><u>Dual Revelation?</u> Most, if not all, young-earth creationists believe in Dual Revelation. To believe otherwise would undermine the very words of Scripture. Obviously, mankind can learn many things about the physical laws and construction of God's creation. Through this, we are able to understand the basics of God's nature (His existence, His invisible attributes and His eternal power; see Romans 1:20). Dr. Ross extends Dual Revelationism. The gospel cannot be fully discerned by man in nature alone. It is important to understand that: (1) Nature has no speech or voice (Psalm 19:3). Therefore, Nature is subject to man's misinterpretation, as the history of science has repeatedly demonstrated. (2) Man is particularly limited in his ability to know the ancient past with certainty. Secular scientists who describe in great detail ancient animals and environments are guessing, making assumptions and hypothesizing. (3) The world and the universe have changed since their creation. The Fall and the global Flood of Noah greatly marred the perfection of God's creations. What we see now is different in many ways from what God originally created. (4) We humans are quite ungod-like in our abilities and understanding. We are sinful, finite creatures with an enormous inclination to believe in lies. Earth is under the dominion of the Father of Lies, Satan. Our understanding of this universe is very incomplete and fallible. Scientific opinions are often biased and change regularly, sometimes radically. Dr. Ross even goes so far as to make the claim that 'in addition to the words of the Bible being "God-breathed,... useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness,' so are the words of God spoken through the words of His hands." [<i>Creation and Time</i>, pg. 56]. Dr. Ross elevates the message of creation beyond its natural limitations. It is improper to rate sinful man's incomplete and changing understanding with this degenerating universe as equal in clarity with the Word of God! The Bible has demonstrated its beautiful accuracy again and again, in contrast to the "scientific" pronouncements of man which have frequently been wrong and often dominated by bias.</p>

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The Origin of the Universe, The Big Bang

Dr. Ross claims that the universe began with a God-engineered "Big Bang" about 17 billion years ago, plus or minus 3 billion years. He claims that the Big Bang Theory has been "undeniably" proven. He has taught the theory so strongly that if the majority of scientists ever abandon it, as one day may be the case, it will be a major embarrassment to his ministry.

[*Creation and Time*, pp. 91-118, 129; *Fingerprint of God*, pg. 158-159; Hugh Ross, "Why Big Bang Opponents Never Say Die," Facts & Faith Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter, 1990-1991)]

The Origin of Stars and Planets

In contrast to scripture, Dr. Ross teaches that the sun, moon and stars were not created on the fourth "day" of the Creation Week. He says that most of the stars existed long before earth's creation; approximately 10-15 billion years of stellar evolution occurred prior to the Creation Week. (Thus, he claims that not all of the heavens and earth were created in six days as stated in Exodus 20:11: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them...") Dr. Ross claims that Genesis 1 describes Creation from the point of view of one standing on the earth; and that the sun, moon and stars did not become visible until the fourth day. He believes the stars were not created instantaneously; rather they evolved by the physical laws of nature put into place by God. "This entire process of stellar evolution is by natural process alone. We do not have to invoke Divine intervention at any stage in the history of the life-cycle of the stars that we observe." According to Dr. Ross, many stars had long ceased to exist by the time of Adam's creation. "The planets and life-essential elements are the burned-up remains – i.e. ashes – of [the big bang's] hydrogen gas."

[*Fingerprint of God*, pp. 158-159, 165-169; *Creation and Time*, p. 52; "Why Big Bang Opponents Never Say Die", First quotation: Dr. Hugh Ross, "Species Development: Natural Process or Divine Action", audiotope (Pasadena, CA: Reasons to Believe, 1990); Second quotation: *Creation and Time*, p. 131 (emphasis added).]

Billions-of-Years Creation Week

According to Dr. Ross, the Creation Week has taken billions of years. He claims that "... each of God's creation days is several hundred million years long." He says earth was created about 4.6 billion years ago, and that some (or all) of the creation days partially overlapped. Dr. Ross teaches that we are currently in the 7th day—a day that began after God made Adam and Eve and which will not end until the beginning of the New Heavens and New Earth.

[*Creation and Time*, pp. 59, 91-118; *Fingerprint of God*, pp. 146-155; Quotation is from: Hugh Ross, Genesis 1: A Scientific Perspective, Revised Edition (Sierra Madre, CA: Wiseman Productions, 1983), p. 11]

The Origin of Death, Not a Result of Sin

Dr. Ross strongly teaches that the existence of physical death in our world is not due to Adam's sin. Death, suffering and animal predation existed for billions of years throughout the world prior to Adam's sin. Where did all these things come from? He says, God created them as a basic part of earthly existence since the beginning of life.

[*Fingerprint of God*, pp. 153-155, 159-160; "Reasons to Believe", 90 second radio spots No. 47 and 48 (February, 1991); Hugh Ross, "Focus on the Family" radio program (April 18, 1991).]

No Original Paradise

According to Dr. Ross, there was no original paradise, except in the sense that Adam walked with God, experienced less pain than we do and experienced no sin initially. Dr. Ross claims that our planet has always been subject to catastrophes and violent predation. He says that long before Adam, there were supernovas and collisions with meteorites that wiped out millions of animals and caused "mass extinction". There were floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, harmful mutations and diseases of all sorts. In other words, God used "random, wasteful, inefficiencies" to create the world into which Adam was placed.

[*Creation and Time*, pp. 65-69, 88; Hugh Ross, "Species Development: Natural Process or Divine Action", audiotope, tape 2, side 1 (Pasadena, CA: Reasons to Believe, 1990)]

The Origin of Species, Progressive Creations

Dr. Ross accepts a history of life very similar to that outlined by evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould. Gould's punctuated equilibrium theory describes slow progress by natural means, interspersed with mass extinctions and sudden, rapid advances. For Dr. Ross, the advances are the result of a multitude of divine miracles. He seems to accept far more miraculous creations ("hundreds of millions of species of life") than most Progressive Creationists when he claims to "deny any significant biological evolution over time scales long or short." Elsewhere, Dr. Ross seems to have a different attitude

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when he says that “many of the changes that take place within the biological arena [are]... by natural processes...natural selection, mutational advance.” Dr. Ross defines Progressive Creationism as “the hypothesis that God has increased the complexity of life on earth by successive creations of new life forms over billions of years while miraculously changing the earth to accommodate the new life.” He teaches that for billions of years before Adam, major disasters befell the animals, including supernovas, asteroid impacts, etc. As a result, animals frequently became extinct, never to be seen by man. God stepped in many times to create replacements or improved models – sometimes completely abandoning entire groups of animals, changing the previous course of life on earth.

[First quotation: Hugh Ross “Open Line” radio program (Moody Broadcasting Network, April, 1994); Second quotation: *Creation and Time*, p. 83; Third quotation: “Species Development”, audiotape; Fourth quotation: Hugh Ross, “Dinosaurs and Hominids”, audiotape (Pasadena, CA: Reasons to Believe, 1990)]

The Origin of Man

According to Hugh Ross, Adam and Eve were created from dust after the majority of earth’s history had already taken place, after billions of years of animal death. He says “If the time since the creation of the universe were scaled down to a single year, the whole of human history would be less than one minute.” Dr. Ross infers that man was created about 24,000 years ago (or perhaps as much as 60,000 years ago or as little as 6000).

[Quotation: *Fingerprint of God*, p. 178, also see p. 159-160; *Creation and Time*, pp. 140-141; Hugh Ross, “Open Line” radio program with Chris Febry (Moody Broadcasting Network, April and May, 1994).]

Man-like Animals

“Starting about 2 to 4 million years [or at least 1 million years] ago God began creating man-like mammals”. Although some of these creatures looked completely human (eg, Cro-Magnon, Neanderthal), “used tools...buried their dead and painted on cave walls,” they were actually animals and “had no spirits”, according to Dr. Ross. “The hominid species may have gone extinct before, or as a result of, the appearance of modern man.”

[First two quotations: “Genesis One, Dinosaurs and Cavemen”, (Reasons to Believe, 1989); Third quotation: *Creation and Time*, p. 88, etc.; *Fingerprint of God*, p. 160, also see pp. 159-160]

Pre-Flood World

According to Dr. Ross, the pre-Flood world was basically identical to the post-Flood world – same geology and paleontology, no significant environmental changes. He claims that rain began during the second Creation Day when the modern atmosphere was created billions of years before the creation of Adam. Dr. Ross has also claimed that before the Flood “... probably at least 19 out of 20 people were dying a death of murder... That’s what was keeping the people from living a long period of time.”

[Hugh Ross, “The Flood”, audiotape (Reasons to Believe, 1990)]

The Flood and the Ark

Dr. Ross teaches that the Flood of Noah did not cover the entire earth or all the mountains of the day. Rather, Noah and animals floated on a shallow, temporary inland sea (22 feet deep) somehow covering the Mesopotamian region. He claims that earth’s entire human population was limited to this area. The Bible clearly states that every land animal and bird on the face of the earth was wiped out (Genesis 6:7, 7:21-23). Dr. Ross teaches that most of the animals of the world were not affected, only those animals in Mesopotamia. Of course, few, if any, of these animals were unique to the region. According to Dr. Ross, all of today’s land animals and birds are not descended from the creatures on the Ark. In other words, God required Noah to consume 120 years of his life building a huge boat to save representative animals that really didn’t need to be saved. Most, if not all, of these animals were alive and well in other parts of the world. In Dr. Ross’s scenario, dry land is just over the horizon all along. Despite the lack of necessity, God keeps Noah trapped in this boat full of animals under these strange circumstances for over a year.

[*Creation and Time*, p. 73; Hugh Ross, *Facts & Faith*, Reasons to Believe’s quarterly newsletter, multiple part article on the Flood (1989-1991), especially parts 7 and 8 (Fall and Winter 1990); Hugh Ross, “Noah’s Floating Zoo”, *Facts & Faith*, Vol. 4 (Fall, 1990), pp. 4-5; Hugh Ross, “The Flood”, audiotape (Pasadena, CA: Reasons to Believe, 1990)]

A detailed critique of Dr. Hugh Ross’s book, *Creation and Time*, is available from Films for Christ. Additionally a seventeen (17) page document entitled “A Statement Concerning the Ministry of Dr. Hugh Ross” by B. Davidheiser, Ph. D. is available from Dr. Bolton Davidheiser, Box 22, LaMirada, CA 90637.