

What are the ‘waters above’?

The expression, ‘waters above’ (Genesis 1:6–8) as conceived by John Hartnett refers to a halo of ice objects surrounding the solar system in the Kuiper belt. Biblical justification is cited as 2 Peter 3:5 and Genesis 1:16–17. I propose a simpler, local explanation for the ‘waters above’ and correlate this view with the passages cited.

The present continuous action of the participle must be explicitly emphasized: ‘Let an expanse be in the midst of the waters, and let it be *separating* between waters and waters’ (Young’s literal translation). The participle represents an action or condition in unbroken continuity, a perfect description of the familiar hydrologic cycle. Continuous evaporation develops water vapour which continuously returns to the earth via precipitation. The earth was enveloped with a ‘cloud of thick darkness’ (like swaddling clothes envelope a newborn) and ‘darkness was on the surface of the ocean’ (Job 38:9 and Genesis 1:2). This was an atmosphere of pure water, opaque to light but without oxygen or nitrogen which constituted the ‘waters above’ directly contacting the ocean until the first day. Whether two weeks or two billion years no first day is possible unless the thick darkness envelope is reduced to translucence. God must have thinned the cloud to allow light on the ocean surface for Day One. ‘Let there be light’ refers only to the *specified place of darkness*, namely the surface of the ocean. The stellar heavens may have been shining for megayears before Day One. On Day Two He created the expanse where birds fly, the familiar ‘air’, inflating it between the ocean below and the ‘cloud of thick darkness’ above. The ‘waters above’ are, quite simply, the clouds and other water cycle phases. It is not complicated at all and meets the criteria for good textual exegesis.

Pre-Flood, when ‘mists’ watered the ground surface without rain, the entire globe *may have been* a uniformly pleasant terrarium, without deserts or ice fields, without mountain ranges, storms or weather extremes.

The six-day activity of creation records exclusively the development of the *biosphere*. Since the hydrologic water cycle is absolutely essential for the functioning of the biosphere, God recorded its establishment prominently on Day Two. Certainly this local interpretation is a more fitting view of ‘waters above’ than an invisible ice halo which no observer from Earth would even miss if it disappeared.

Contributors to the confusion are poor translations of 2 Peter 3:5. Preferred is, ‘For this they willingly forget that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth *standing out of the water and in the water*.’ Hartnett chooses the NIV, ‘formed out of water’ or the ASV ‘compacted out of water’, which are misleading for the following reasons:

Peter is *not* providing new revelation regarding the composition of the earth but he is *reminding* us of the already established revelation in Genesis. The blame he assigns to apostate scoffers (theologians, no less) who ‘willfully forget’ about the record of Genesis proves the point. Peter is warning that scoffers will come in the last days denying the global Flood record. They *ought to have known it* without any input from Peter: ‘Let the waters be gathered together in one place and let the dry land appear.’ The Flood reversed this third day work when the continent sank and/or the ocean basin elevated, thus causing the Flood. Then a year later the world began to return to equilibrium and the land reemerged (Psalm 104:3–8).

The record in Genesis says nothing about water as the primordial Earth material later transformed into a planet but it refers only to an ocean on our planet as it is today, except universal until Day Three. Peter refers to familiar, everyday geofeatures simply

and straightforwardly. The primordial ball of water idea is not simple, not straightforward and not directly derivable from a plain reading of Genesis. It depends on new revelation from Peter which Peter’s words deny as being new. If He meant transmutation of water into planet Earth, then Genesis must specify that.

The critical word is ‘standing’, *sunestosa* (perfect active participle). ‘The earth standing out of the water and in the water. By which the world that then was perished, being overflowed by water’ (KJV). Today we would say, ‘the land protruded or emerged out of the water’. It emerged after the great Flood just as it had emerged on Day Three.

Dr Hartnett also believes that because the great lights and stars are located *in* the expanse, this implies that the expanse extends out to astronomical distances, not just our atmosphere. Without space for a more detailed response, I will only mention that this assumption misses the point by literally billions of miles. The same principle applies when we commonly say during overcast weather, ‘There are no stars *in* the sky tonight.’ Or, ‘Here comes the sun’, when the clouds part. No one thinks the sun or stars enter the air, but sunlight and starlight certainly do and provide seasonal identification, the work assigned for celestial bodies on Day Four. No matter when the stars were created, the atmosphere must be made transparent on Day Four before the great lights and stars could begin functioning for seasonal identifiers. When the local water cycle is admitted for the verse 6 description, then the speculation that the *raqia* extends to astronomical distances is totally falsified and far, far from the intent of Genesis.

Dr Hartnett’s model has made a very simple concept unnecessarily complex. God defined his work activities with five utterly simple words: day, night, land, sea and air. Nowhere else in the Bible are terms defined by anyone, let alone God,

but those definitions leave the record crystal clear as to meaning. The entire purpose of definition is to explain unfamiliar entities or new activities with *familiar* concepts, not esoteric speculations.

Conclusions based on faulty assumptions (namely a mandatory young planet Earth and universe) will create all kinds of mistaken theories and unnecessary constructs.

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John Hartnett replies:

Gorman Gray makes a few points I will comment on. He is unequivocally an old-earth creationist who wrests the Scriptures to make it fit in with his preconceived notion of an old universe. He says I have misinterpreted Scripture. No doubt the ‘waters above’ could refer to the water in the atmosphere. That is one possible interpretation, which is probably most widely held today. I was merely offering a suggestion of an alternative. But a clear reading of Scripture both from Genesis 1 and 2 Peter 3 tells us that the form of the original creation had something to do with Noah’s Flood—i.e. water. I speculate on what that might be. Besides, 2 Peter 3 is merely telling us that the earth was made originally ‘of water and out of water’. I think that means it was made out of water. For his own preconceived assumptions Gray has to insist that it means ‘standing out of and in’ the water. But I don’t speculate on what the Lord meant when He said he took six literal Earth rotation days to create the universe—which Gray does in an effort to conform to the atheistic worldview, which has been determined by those who reject the simple plain reading of Genesis. Not only Exodus 20:11 but even more importantly Exodus 20:9 is impossible to consistently understand in light of Gray’s six days to *create the biosphere*, when the Lord clearly tells us he did *all* of his work in those 6 days, not just a part of it.

I take exception with his comments that the original creation was not from pure water. Gray says ‘The record in Genesis says nothing about water as the primordial Earth material later transformed into a planet but it refers only to an ocean on our planet as it is today, except universal until Day Three.’ Clearly the Genesis 1:2 says God formed the elements and refers to them as the ‘deep’. Water seems as valid or even better interpretation, in light of 2 Peter 3, as is Gray’s assumption that the earth was created the same as it is today but only completely covered with water. He insists the problem lay with ‘poor translations of 2 Peter 3:5’. But surely they can’t all be wrong—they mostly all say the earth was made of water. That seems plain simple reading to me. That is not too complex—6 days, Earth made from water. Gray warns against using 2 Peter 3 to interpret Genesis, but he himself misuses the poetry of Job to interpret it.

OK, I admit the icy halo is speculation—but not the 6-day creation, that couldn’t be plainer. Gray is arguing the point because he wants Scripture to say something it doesn’t and make it conform to his neo-gappist interpretation. He says ‘Conclusions based on faulty assumptions (namely a mandatory young planet Earth and universe)’. So his argument is not about correct interpretation here but about my assumptions. He prefers his assumptions—that the universe is billions of years old and he is trying to get a 6-day creation scenario of the *biosphere only* that occurs billions of years after God created the universe, Earth, stars, planets, etc. He says ‘Dr Hartnett also believes that because the great lights and stars are located *in* the expanse, this implies that the expanse extends out to astronomical distances, not just our atmosphere.’ I believe this because Scripture plainly says that God *placed the great lights in the expanse*. I am trying to see where that leads. Gray’s assumptions require he reject that because his expanse cannot include any part of the astronomical heavens because that would undermine

his notion that the earth was covered in dark clouds until Day 1 of creation, which he extracts from poetry and not the narrative of Genesis. I am trying to understand the extent of the expanse (*raqia*). But one thing I am clear on is that Genesis tells us that God took 6 normal days to create the whole universe—that is simple enough to me.

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Paleobiology databases

Kenneth Karle has done a good service in bringing the availability of *The Paleobiology Database* to our attention. We need such resources because global theories of life history (creation or evolution) can only be tested against global databases and global models. However, much more rigour is required in developing hypotheses and testing predictions using such data. When appropriate tests are applied to Karle’s data we find his conclusion that ‘There is no indication of fewer specimens with increased age’ is incorrect. There is a highly significant difference, with at least twice as many ‘young’ fossils compared with ‘old’ fossils. However, even this conclusion is ambiguous, and perhaps even meaningless, because other possible explanations exist than the one that Karle suggests.

Karle’s hypothesis was ‘old fossils have far more time to erode than young fossils’ and therefore should be less abundant in the fossil record. There are two ways of testing this hypothesis, and two different kinds of test that can be applied. We can compare fossil frequency in ‘young’ compared with ‘old’ strata, and/or we can look for a significant positive or negative trend with time. Karle’s plots of the data show uneven variances across the time sequence, so we can either