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# Light on the first day of Creation

*As I read the account of creation in Genesis, I find that on the first day of Creation God said, "Let there be light," and there was light" (1:3, NIV). A few verses later, however, I read that on the fourth day of Creation week God ordered into existence "lights in the expanse of the sky... to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness" (1:14-18). As a Bible-believing Christian, I wonder what was the source of the light that illumined our planet before the fourth day, if it did not come from the Sun.*

Havannah Beetson,  
Boroko, Papua New Guinea

Several explanations have been given. One possibility is that God's presence was the source of light on the first day of Creation. Psalm 104 is a stylized account of the creation story, and it mentions God covering Himself with "light as with a garment" in the section paralleling the first day of Creation (v. 2). During the first three days God could have separated the light from darkness (as He later separated light from darkness at the Red Sea, Exodus 14:19, 20). By God Himself being the light source for the first part of the week, He would be emphasizing the theocentric (God-centered), not the heliocentric (sun-centered) nature of Creation. This would forestall any temptation to worship the sun that might have been encouraged if the sun were the first object created.

A second option suggests that the sun was created before the fourth day, but became visible on that day as the cloud cover was removed. This would explain the evening/morning cycle before day 4. The Hebrew syntax of Gene-

sis 1:14 is different than the pattern of the other days of Creation. Verse 14 literally reads, "Let lights in the firmament of the heavens divide the day from the night" (not "Let there be lights...to divide..." as in most translations), perhaps implying that the lights were already in existence before the fourth day. The "greater" and "lesser" lights as well the stars could have been created "in the beginning" (before Creation week, v. 1; cf. John 1:1-3) and not on the fourth day. On the fourth day they were given a purpose, "to separate the day from the night" and "to mark seasons and days and years." A variant of this view is that the sun and moon were created before Creation week, but in their *tohu-bohu* ("unformed-unfilled") state like the earth (see v. 2), and on the fourth day were further formed into their fully-functional state (v. 16).

A third suggestion is that God created the physical properties of visible light and the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum on the first day. This idea, however, is not satisfactory if the universe and light from other galaxies are older than life on earth. Several passages of Scripture suggest that celestial bodies and intelligent beings were created before life was brought into existence on this planet (Job 38:7; Eze. 28:15). In addition, the Hebrew syntax of Genesis 1:16 doesn't require the creation of the stars on day 4, and in fact suggests that they were already in existence.

A fourth suggestion is that the literary structure of Genesis 1 dictated the order of the days of Creation: the sun on the fourth day to provide the light on the first; birds and fish on the fifth to

inhabit the air dividing the water on the second; animals on the sixth to live on the dry land and eat of the vegetation of the third. However, the symmetry seems reverse on the first and fourth days, since the light appears before its physical source.

A fifth answer suggests that the Genesis 1 creation story is intended to undergird the monotheistic religion of Israel, in contrast to the polytheism of the surrounding nations. The story deliberately altered the relationship of the sun, light, and daily cycle to convey the power of the Creator God. For example, the term translated "greater light" was used rather than the Hebrew word for sun, to avoid any confusion with the pagan sun-god. However, both this and the previous answer rely on a figurative rather than on a literal understanding of the Creation narrative.

Of the above options, the first two seem to be most in harmony with the biblical data. Perhaps a combination of these two views is possible: the sun and the moon may have been created (at least in their "unformed-unfilled" state) before creation week, but God Himself was the light source until day four. Genesis 1 is clearly intended by the author to be a literal account of Creation. (Note that the heading "these are the generations/accounts/history" is used in Genesis 2:4, as well as with the nine other sections of Genesis, indicating that the author intended the Creation to be taken just as literally as the rest of Genesis.) Part of suggestion four may also be true in that God seems to have artistically

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old Chinese songbook the title for hymn 115 was "Give Me the Bible!" A sudden flash of God's illumination! Amazing! Though I could not write out plainly in my censored letter, "Please send me a Bible." So I wrote, "Send me a 115 page-notebook" and underlined the number. I handed the letter to the prison guard with a silent prayer. When he checked it and said okay, he really did not understand the spiritual secret.

The same Holy Spirit who enlightened me also opened the eyes of my family members to give them insight to my secret message. At the assigned visitation time, our hearts were pounding. Eight minutes passed and just before my family members left, they told me: "When you use the soap, cut it in pieces." I nodded with an understanding smile. After we bade farewell, the police handed me the essential items, including a large bar of laundry soap.

Nothing was easy to do in a small cell room. I thought for a while how to take out what I suspected was inside the bar of laundry soap without being seen by the guard and others. It was near sunset. With my back to my cellmates and with the guard looking the other way, I put my dirty laundry in a basin. I used a thread to divide the soap into two halves. A lovely mini-pocket English New Testament wrapped in a piece of plastic came out. That was very exciting! I quickly put the Bible in my underwear pocket. I thanked God and prayed: "Oh Lord. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:7, 8, NIV).

The next morning, I saw several prisoners in line being paraded in the lobby. They had to confess that they were anti-reformists. They had been caught with prohibited articles, which now were being hung around their necks. One had candy, another cookies, still another lard inside a toothpaste tube that family

members had inserted. All these were detected, and the recipients of these smuggled items were punished. I learned later that someone had put a needle inside a bar of soap and it too was discovered and confiscated. It seemed the police had strained at a gnat but swallowed a camel! The police detected a small needle in a bar of soap but overlooked a New Testament. How amazed and grateful I was for God's power and love.

"So do not worry...your heavenly Father knows that you need [all these things]... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:31-33, NIV).

But how could I read my Bible under the constant watch by the guard? That is another story. I will never forget what God has wrought for me—one who was hungry and thirsty for His truth and righteousness. The Bible has truly become a light in my path and a never-failing guide amidst darkness. Moreover, the safest place and efficient way is to have God's Word in our heart, in our soul, and in our life.

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Robert Wong is director of Global Chinese Ministries. Address: 12/F Citimark, 28 Yuen Shun Circuit; Siu Lek Yuen, Shatin; Hong Kong. E-mail: robertw@cumsda.org

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## Faith...

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- Northern Arizona: Evidence for Underwater Origin," *Geology* 19 (1991): 1201-1204. Commentaries on this paper were published in: *Science News* 141 (1992) 4:5; *Geology Today* 8 (1992) 3:78, 79; and *Nature* 355 (January 9, 1992): 110.
11. See A. Cromer, *Uncommon Sense: The Heretical Nature of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 148; K. R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper and Row, 1999) pp. 31, 32.

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## Light...

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created in such a way that the first three days formed the *tohu* ("unformed") mentioned in verse 2, and the last three days filled the *bohu* ("unfilled") of verse 2. Part of suggestion five is also true in that God created in such a way (and had Moses accurately report the creation account in appropriate terms) to serve as a polemic against the polytheism of the surrounding nations.

Regardless of the answer(s) preferred, the Genesis story refutes the worship of nature, including the popular sun-god. Light and the daily cycle were created by God and are dependent on Him. Later in the Creation week, God gave these responsibilities in the heavens to the sun and the moon, just as He passed on to human beings the responsibility for stewardship of the earth, its natural cover, and its creatures. Ultimately, the heavens, the natural world, and any human ability to control or thoroughly understand them are still totally dependent on God who alone deserves our worship.

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Richard M. Davidson (Ph.D., Andrews University), the author of several articles and books, is chairman of the Old Testament Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A. E-mail: davidson@andrews.edu