03

Creation

God Makes

Thirteen points every follower of Jesus should know. A study by Pastor Andy Cisneros.

13 POINTS · 03

Creation: *God Makes*

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." GENESIS 1:1

According to the Scriptures creation is a gift from a loving Creator God. From the bodies we inhabit, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the beauty of plants and flowers, the water we drink, and the animals we love, to the pleasures we enjoy and destinations we visit on vacation, life is filled with good gifts for us to care for and enjoy.

There was little debate over the nature or date of creation until the last couple of centuries. Science began gaining credibility through the great advances in the so-called "Age of Reason" (also called The Enlightenment or Modernism) developed in the eighteenth century. Science increasingly became identified with the naturalistic worldview that stood in direct opposition to the theistic worldview. Scientific evidence became a weapon used by opponents of Christianity to attack the biblical worldview. Unfortunately, many Christians began to accommodate themselves to naturalism and rationalism. As the debates developed controversies about the date and nature of creation arose among biblical Christians.

Even this controversy can be another gift to us from God, compelling us to more deeply ponder His creative works and thereby grow to more clearly appreciate His Word, see His grace, and sing His praises.

Christianity and Science

There is no conflict between Christianity and science itself. This is because the Christian worldview which believes that God created the world with natural "laws" and orderliness is what undergirds the entire scientific enterprise. For example, inductive reasoning and the scientific method are based on the assumption of the regularity of the laws of nature. This means that scientists assume that water will boil tomorrow under the identical conditions that it does today. Without this kind of regularity we could not learn from experience, including the experiences of scientific testing. This also helps to explain why in cultures where creation is said to be an illusion or disorderly chaos because it was not created by an orderly God, the sciences have not historically flourished. The scientific method depends upon the kind of underlying worldview that a creating and providentially ruling God of the Bible provides.

There is total conflict between Christianity and scientific naturalism. Naturalism is the belief that all phenomena can be explained in terms of presently operating natural causes and laws. The only true knowledge is that which comes through observable experiments. When natural science is the arbiter of all truth claims, religion becomes superstition and God is omitted from the discussion.

The Bible in general, and the book of Genesis in particular, was not written with the intention of being a scientific textbook. It is a theological narrative written to reveal the God of creation. This means that its emphasis is on God and his relationship with humanity and not on creation. Genesis is far more concerned with the questions of who made the universe and why He made it, not on exactly when He did. The longest commentary of creation in Scripture, Genesis 1 and 2, is only a few pages of our Bible. It is as if the story of Scripture opens with the panoramic view of creation, and then the camera quickly focuses in on the creation of our first parents and the history that comes next.

One's view of the date of creation should not be the litmus test for Christian faithfulness. Within Christian theology there are open- and closed-handed issues. Biblical authority is a closed-handed issue. Christians receive what the Bible actually teaches as truth from God to be believed and obeyed. Regarding creation, anyone who claims to be a Bible-believing Christian must reject such things as the atheistic evolutionists' claim that there is no God and that creation is not a gift but rather an epic purposeless accident. Bible-believing Christians, as we will explore in this chapter, can and do disagree over the open-handed issues, such as exactly how God made the heavens and the earth, whether the six days of Genesis 1–2 are literal twenty-four-hour days, and the age of the earth. These sorts of issues must remain in the open hand.

What Does the Bible Say About Creation?

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, takes its name from its first words, "In the beginning," as *genesis* is a Greek word meaning "*beginning*." The book of Genesis in general, Genesis 1 to 3 in particular, records the beginning of creation and human history. Moses penned Genesis in roughly 1400 BC as the first of a five-part book called the Pentateuch, meaning "book in five parts." The Genesis account of creation was most likely directly revealed to Moses by the Holy Spirit since Moses was not present for the creation event. Genesis is not an exhaustive treatment of early history but rather a theologically selective telling of history that focuses on God and mankind while omitting such things as the creation of angels or the fall of Satan and demons.

The first line of Genesis says, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* The two subsequent chapters of the Bible are devoted to speaking about creation. The Bible opens with the one true, eternal God as both the author and subject of history and Scripture. Everything else in history and Scripture is dependent upon Him and is only good when functioning according to His intentions for it from creation. Only in the last few decades has undeniable evidence forced the natural sciences to reluctantly agree with what Scripture has always taught: the universe had a beginning. It is an amazing testimony to the truth of Scripture. The opening phrase, "In the beginning," speaks of an inauguration of a history, a space and a time when the LORD worked. It anticipates an end, a time when He will bring history to an end and create/restore a new heavens and a new earth.

In Genesis 1:1, the word used for created is the Hebrew word *bara*, which means "creation from nothing." The other Hebrew word used in a creative sense in Genesis is *asah,* translated "make" or "made," which means "to fashion or shape," or "to make something suitable," such as making loincloths out of fig leaves or making the ark. *Bara* emphasizes the initiation of an object, whereas *asah* emphasizes the shaping of an object. Along with statements where God does initial creation (the heavens and the earth), the only other things bara'd are the living creatures and human beings. When people create we are doing asah, not bara. We can take things that God has given us such as seed and land to plant crops and harvest food, but in so doing we are not creating food from nothing but rather creating it from the gifts given to us by God in creation. In the creation account we see that God created (bara) "the heavens and the earth." This phrase could be more literally translated "the skies and the land," since the heavens are not the place where God lives, but the place where stars move and birds fly. The Hebrew word *eretz,* usually translated "earth," in Genesis 1 does not mean the planet but the land under the water (Genesis 1:2) God separated water from the land where vegetation grows and animals roam. Elsewhere in Scripture this word *eretz* usually refers to the Promised Land. The phrase "skies and land" is a Hebraic way of saying "everything" from the skies above to the earth below, like saying from top to bottom or head to toe, including space-time, mass-energy, and the laws that govern them. In other places in Scripture, the phrase includes the sun and moon, which could, in turn, mean that the sun and moon were created as a part of this first creation.

The skies and the land are "*without form and void*" before God prepared them for humans. Ancient Greek cosmology said that what originally existed was essentially a formless hunk of mud which God then formed from chaos into cosmos. This idea has had great sway in many Christian interpretations of Genesis 1:2, including the first English translation of the Bible overseen by William Tyndale. He translated it as *"void and empty,"* thereby setting in motion a precedent for many future Bible translations and Bible commentators, including Martin Luther.

However, the same language for "without form *(tohu)* and void *(bohu)* used in Genesis 1:2 is used elsewhere in Scripture in reference to uninhabited land. Examples include Deuteronomy 32:10, which speaks of "a desert land, and in the howling waste (tohu) of the wilderness." Isaiah 45:18 says that God "formed the earth and made it (He established it; he did not create *[bara]* it empty *[tohu].* He formed it to be inhabited)." Perhaps the closest parallel is Jeremiah 4:23 where God prophesied the future state of Judah, a nation doomed to exile because of its sin: *"I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light."* Here, "without form and void" does not mean chaos, but it means empty of humans. "No light" does not mean there is no sun, but that the land is without God's blessing. Similarly, in Genesis 1:2 "without form and void" is the condition of the land before God made it good, filling it with light and life. The best understanding is not that God created primordial chaos and formed earth out of it, but that God created everything out of nothing and that the land existed for some unstated period of time in a desert-like, empty state.

The dawn of God's light signals the arrival of His blessing. Then, God took six literal days to prepare the land for human habitation, as recorded in Genesis 1–2. The creation of heavens and earth in the first verse is a concrete, historical, scientific fact. But, the text simply does not tell us when it happened, only that it was sometime before the preparation of the land for humans to dwell with God. "In the beginning" means that there was an inauguration, but not when that moment was. Genesis 1:1 leaves open both the possibilities of a young and an old earth.

The creation account goes to great lengths to make it clear that the God who created *(bara)* everything according to the first verse is the same God who prepared *(asah)* the land for humans to dwell with Him in the remainder of Genesis 1 and 2. The God of creation is also the God of covenant relationships

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Where Did Creation Come From?

The opening line of Scripture clearly reveals that creation comes from God. Genesis 1 and 2 further reveal God created the earth and prepared it for us solely by the power of His word. This is indicated by the repeated phrases, *"And God said"* and *"Let there be" or "Let the . . ."* When God spoke, creation obeyed His command, as is repeatedly demonstrated by the phrase *"And it was so."* After each act of creating, God pronounced the perfect and sinless nature of His creation with the phrase *"And God saw that it was good."* Therefore, creation came not from preexisting matter but out of nothing, by God's word.

The Bible teaches that God created all things *ex nihilo* (Latin for "out of nothing") in Hebrews 11:3, which says, *"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."* This is important because it negates the possibility of naturalistic evolution and an eternal universe. While God did not make creation from any preexisting matter, or the proverbial hunk of mud, creation did come into existence and was prepared for human inhabitation by the powerful word of God.

It is curious that God did not create from nothing on each of the six days of creation. Still, God did speak as both a prophetically and poetically on each day. There is a set pattern to God's words in Genesis 1. It is as follows:

1. Announcing: "And God said."

2. Commanding: "Let there be."

3. Separating: God separated the day and night, water and land, animals and plants.

4. Reporting: "And it was so."

5. Evaluating: "And God saw that it was good."

Some have suggested that Genesis 2 was written by another author because it uses a different name for God. Genesis 1 states that *Elohim,* the all powerful one, did the creating, while Genesis 2 uses a compound name, *YAHWEH Elohim*, the LORD God. (By the way, the first three verses of Genesis 2 would be better added to Genesis 1). It's quite obvious that the first account in chapter 1 is a comprehensive picture of the whole creation process while this second account in chapter 2 deals almost entirely with Adam and Eve. The use of God's name, Yahweh, indicates God's desire to have a close relationship with mankind. In essence He wants to be on a first name basis with them. This account in chapter 2 emphasizes God's intent.

In this pattern we see that God's word is living, active, and powerful, and that it accomplishes what He decrees. God declares this fact to Isaiah: *"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."* The rest of Scripture confirms that creation was prepared for us by God's powerful word. Genesis 1 portrays God's word as the most powerful force in all of creation. God's word brings order, makes things as good, and creates an environment in which life can exist, separates things, comes with unparalleled authority, and accomplishes exactly what God intends. We are not to dismiss, disdain, or distort God's word, as it is the source of life.

God brought creation out of nothing and prepared it for us because He cares for us. Because of this, in Jeremiah 10:16 we read, *"Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name."*

What Does Creation Reveal About God?

Genesis 1:1 reveals that "in the beginning, God created." In the same way that a piece of music reveals something of the composer, and artwork reveals something of the artist, so too creation reveals something of the Creator. In this way, creation is a form of general revelation (Psalm 19:1-2; Romans 1:20). Examining creation reveals thirteen points about God as Creator.

1. God is the only God. The opening line of the Bible does not say, for example, "In the beginning, nothing made everything," or, "In the beginning, Creator and creation were one and the same as they had been throughout eternity," or even, "In the beginning, the gods made the heavens and the earth." No, the opening line of the Bible reveals, "In the beginning, God created." Isaiah 45:18 says, "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is God!), who formed the earth and made it . . . 'I am the LORD, and there is no other.'"

2. God is eternal. This means that God eternally existed before creation, that God is not created, and that creation is not eternal.

3. God is living. Life in general and human life in particular does not spring forth from the "it" of unliving matter. Rather, God is living and he makes life and He breathes His life into human beings to give us life.

4. God is independent. While the rest of creation is dependent upon God, God himself is uncaused, independent, and without need, lack, want, or dependence upon anyone or anything. Everything apart from God is created by God and dependent upon God so that it simply would not have come into existence or continue to exist without God. This is what Paul preached: *"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything"* (Acts 17:24-25). Because God is independent, He alone can truly and purely love; since He does not need us, His interactions with us alone are out of pure motives.

5. God is unequalled. God is separate from His creation. There is a clear separation between Creator and creation that does not exist in pantheism, panentheism, radical environmentalism, Wicca, or the New Spirituality.

6. God is active in creation. Not only is God transcendent over creation, but contrary to the deists' claim, He is also actively at work in His creation, sustaining and providentially ruling over it.

7. God is personal. Because God is personal, He made mankind in a personal way and gives to us personality. God is a personal "He," not an impersonal "it." Apart from a personal God, there is no way to explain human personhood.

8. God is powerful. In creation, God's power is seen in that He made everything from nothing by Himself and that He rules over creation, even suspending natural laws as He wills to perform miracles.

9. God is creative. God could have creates air filtration machines. Instead He chose to create trees. God could have chosen to cast creation in black and white; He instead chose to paint in colors. Why? Because God is creative, and creation reflects His beauty with displays of splendor that cause us to rightly feel in the presence of something sacred so as to create in us wonder and worship.

10. God is holy. God is without evil, and creation originally reflected his holy purity until it was marred and stained by human sin. Our holy God moves in his sin-marred creation to make it pure. In re-creation, God will again restore all creation to a holy state, when he lifts the curse and removes its effects forever.

11. God still speaks. It was through speaking that God brought creation into existence by His word. Similarly, God also uses the preaching of His Word to bring forth life.

12. God is gracious. We see the grace of God in creation as He blesses his creation, including the man and woman who He makes in His image and likeness. From the opening pages of Scripture to its final line in Revelation 22:20–21, God speaks words of grace.

13. God is a sovereign king. As creator, God is king over all that is made, including Satan, demons, mankind, planets, stars, suns, moons, animals, and so on. All of creation comes from God, is ruled over by God, belongs to God, and will give an account before God. Our creator is far superior to any false tribal, local, or trade deity worshiped around the world.

From the first words of the Bible, the LORD is distinguished from the gods of the nations. The other gods—demons, really—are created beings that can't create anything. They are imaged by dead idols while God is imaged by living humans He created for a loving relationship with Him now and forever.

Differing Christian Views of Creation

Among Christians there are currently at least six primary interpretations of the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2. Personally, we find the first view to be the most persuasive biblically. But, as Paul says, we now see only in part, and one day in Jesus' presence we will know in full, and we will all be in complete agreement on this and other matters. Until that day may we worship our Creator together and graciously discuss and debate our differences without unnecessarily dividing over them.

VIEW 1: HISTORIC CREATIONISM

The Hebrew word used for "beginning" in Genesis 1:1 marks a starting point for what comes afterwards. It does not express any specific length of time, nor does it necessarily mean that the next thing stated follows immediately. What God created in the first verse existed for an undefined period of time (which could be anywhere from a moment to billions of years) before God began the work of preparing the uninhabitable land for the habitation of mankind. The preparation of the uncultivated land and the creation of Adam and Eve occurred in the six literal twenty four-hour days of Genesis 1, as echoed in Exodus 20:11. This view leaves open the possibility of an old earth, six literal days of creation, and a young humanity on the old earth.

VIEW 2: YOUNG-EARTH CREATIONISM

In this view, God created the entire universe, including Adam and Eve, in six literal twenty-four-hour days. As it seeks to be faithful to its reading of the biblical text, this view affirms that the entire universe is less than ten thousand years old. It interprets the data of science in terms of inspired Scripture, refusing to compromise God's teaching about the date and divine methods of creation with naturalistic scientific theories. It does have some biblical difficulties, such as the creation of sun and moon on day four while there is evening and morning on the first three days.

VIEW 3: THE GAP THEORY

In this view, Genesis 1:1 explains a first creation that happened perhaps billions of years ago. Then, a catastrophic event occurred. There is evidence off the Yucatan Peninsula where a very large meteor might have struck the earth sometime in the far distant past. Some believe that such an event could have created a dust cloud so large and so dense that sunlight couldn't penetrate it and all life forms were destroyed. It was a cloud God had to remove to allow sunlight back on the earth. Another possibility is that the fall of Satan from heaven left the earth in the destroyed condition of Genesis 1:2. God responded to this disaster by re-creating the earth again a few thousand years later in six literal days and

repopulating the earth as recorded in Genesis 1:3– 27. According to this view, the earth is old from the first creation and mankind is young because of the recent creation. It has been pointed out that the verb translated *was* in Genesis 1:2 (*"Now the earth was formless . . .*) can also be translated *became.* This is the case in Genesis 19:26 where it tells us that Lot's wife *"became a pillar of salt."* (The same Hebrew word is used there). Some believe that this makes an earlier creation possible, a world destroyed like the one in Noah's day. Could that be the answer to the dinosaur dilemma?

The problems with this view include the fact that nothing in the Bible speaks of two creations, one prior to Genesis 1:2 and the other more recently. Also, at the end of the six days of creation, God declared all that He had made "very good," which does not correlate with the claim that the earth had been made "very bad" and destroyed.

VIEW 4: LITERARY FRAMEWORK VIEW

In this view, Genesis 1 and 2 are intended to be read as a figurative framework explaining creation in a topical, not sequential, order. The six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are also to be interpreted metaphorically, not as literal twenty-four-hour days. The literary framework view is outlined here:

Forming Filling

Day 1: light and darkness separated Day 4: sun, moon, stars (lights in heaven)

Day 2: sky and waters separated Day 5: fish and birds

Day 3: dry land and waters separated; Day 6: animals and man

plants and trees

God speaks of creation creatively by including poetry in the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. Still, even when the Bible uses figurative and poetic language, it does so to communicate a literal truth, a fact that weakens this view.

VIEW 5: DAY-AGE VIEW

In this view God created the universe, including Adam and Eve, in six sequential periods of time that are geologic ages, not literal twenty-four hour days. The biggest problem with this view is that the order of events in the six days is not the same order as held by old-earth science (for example, the sun appears on day four). Another problem with this view is that the six days of creation seem clearly to be literal days, as we will further explore.

VIEW 6: THEISTIC EVOLUTION

In this view, God essentially began creation and then pulled back from working directly in creation to work instead through a natural process of evolution. For the most part, this view accepts the hypothesis of evolution, but seeks to insert God as the creator of matter and overseer of the evolutionary process.

The problems with theistic evolution are many, but we will look at three briefly. First, it inherits all the scientific impossibilities of evolution as a theory of origins. Second, evolution teaches that one species evolves into other species, while Genesis 1 says that each species had offspring "according to its kind," not another kind, as evolution theorizes. The scientific data completely agrees with Genesis on the impossibility of one species evolving into another. Third, the rest of Scripture portrays God as continually involved in the details of creation, including making the grass grow, feeding the birds, and feeding other creatures. Scripture clearly does not paint God as remote or only indirectly involved in creation.

Are the 6 Days of Creation Literal 24 Hr Days?

While the six Christian views of creation listed above are possible, the question remains, which is probable? To answer that question, we have to deal with the very important issue of whether the six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are in fact literal twenty-four-hour days. If someone believes that the six days of creation are literal twenty-four-hour days, then they must accept one of the first three views of creation (historic creationism, young-earth creationism, or the gap theory); if they do not believe that the six days of creation are literal twenty-four-hour days, then they can accept one of the last three views of creation (the literary framework view, the day-age view, or theistic evolution).

Those Christians who argue for a metaphorical view of the six days of creation rightly point out that the word used for day in Hebrew (*yom*), often refers to an extended period of time that is more than a literal twenty four hour day. As we read the Scriptures it seems apparent that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are literal twenty-four-hour days for two reasons:

1. Each day is numbered so that there is a succession of days. Further, each day is described as having a morning and evening, which is the common vernacular for a day. These details in Genesis 1 clearly indicate that the days are literal.

2. In Exodus 20:8–11, God says:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

God says that He made creation in six days and on the seventh day He rested. His work and rest are to be the precedent for us; His example explains why God's people in the Old Testament had a seven-day week with a Sabbath day for rest.

My view holds to historic creationism which emphasizes that the first two chapters of Genesis should be taken literally. God's inspired Word tells us that the God who created everything (angels, space-time, mass-energy, sun, moon, and stars, and all species of animals) prepared the land for human habitation in six literal, twenty-four-hour days. At the end of those days He shaped dust and breathed the breath of life into it, creating Adam. From Adam's rib God created the woman. They were created to be in relationship with each other and with God as their Creator and loving Father.

There have been ongoing debates by Jesus-loving, Bible-believing scholars, throughout the history of the church regarding whether the days of creation were literal twenty-four-hour days or not. So long as one's position on this issue does not become the litmus test for Christian faith ongoing spirited study and discussion can be helpful to God's people. It can force them to build their unity around what they do agree on.

How Old is the Earth?

There has been no shortage of attempts to determine and defend a particular age of the earth. For many Christians the Bible's teaching seems pretty simple: the earth was created on the first of the six twenty-four-hour days of Genesis which culminated with the creation of Adam, the first human. Adding up the genealogies in Genesis puts the age of the earth at about six thousand years. Other Christians, ancient and contemporary, have not seen the creation account in strict historical terms. They focus on God as creator rather than on six literal days and think we should not try to specify the date of the earth.

Still others seek to integrate the general scientific consensus (that the earth is around 4.5 billion years old) into their theology. They adapt their view of the Bible to accommodate science and teach that the earth must be old.

Archbishop James Ussher dated creation precisely to 4004 BC. According to traditional Judaism the year AD 2015 is actually year 5,775 since creation. The Jewish year of creation is the Gregorian year 3761 BC. Both Ussher and the Jews used the biblical genealogies (e.g., Genesis 5 and 10) and added up the number of years between Adam, Noah, and Abraham to arrive at their creation dates. That they differ somewhat on their dates indicates the difficulty of achieving high accuracy. Still, the method cannot be merely dismissed if one holds to inspired Scripture. Jews, Ussher, and many Christians agree within a couple hundred years because of the precision of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. They differ from the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, which show line of descent rather than specific lengths of time in each generation. The Genesis genealogies do not have large gaps. If one follows Scripture, Adam, the first human, was created about six thousand years ago.

Believing in a recent Adam does not require a young earth. If one sees the days other than six twenty-four-hour days, then the age of the earth is not a biblical teaching. Those who agree with Historic Creationism that the Genesis days are twenty-four-hours long still may not hold that Scripture mandates a young

earth. The creation of planet earth may not have been during those six days.

Many believe that Genesis 1:1 is a brief summary of an unspecified period of time, perhaps a minute or billions of years, since the Hebrew word for beginning, like its English translation, refers to inauguration rather than to a specific timeframe that preceded the six literal days of Genesis during which God prepared Eden on the already-created earth as the dwelling place of mankind.

In the end, we believe the date of the earth cannot be an agree or disagree issue. It seems to us that those who strongly advocate either a young or an old earth are inferring a position from the Bible that the Bible simply does not state absolutely. It must also be admitted that the age of the earth is not of great concern in the Bible. The great authors of the Bible, including David, Isaiah, and Paul, and Jesus himself, never referred to the age of the earth, even though they asserted God as Creator.

What the Bible actually teaches is absolute truth from God that must be believed, but it does not teach everything we want to know. We must be courageous to receive and teach without shame what it does say as closed-handed issues (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17; Titus 1:9; Jude 3), but humble enough to let unclear and unrevealed matters be openhanded issues, avoiding unprofitable controversies (Deut. 29:29; 2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9).

The question persists as to how we deal with the widespread scientific consensus that the earth is 4.5 billion years old and certainly appears to be old, even to nonscientists. Many solutions have been offered, including the following:

1. Though the earth appears old to most scientists, it is in fact young, and the scientists are simply mistaken. Christians who hold this view are often times considered unscientific and even stupid by the watching world. But, they believe that it is better to believe Scripture than the ever-changing theories of scientists.

2. The earth appears old because it was made mature like Adam was. If we had seen Adam and Eve just after they were created (remember, they were mature enough to be commanded to be fruitful and rule the earth) and asked them how old they were we might have been amazed at their answer.

3. The flood in Genesis 6 to 9 covered the earth universally, which compressed the geological layers and rearranged the topography so greatly that the earth appears to be old, especially when we assume geologic processes take long periods of time.

4. The earth is in fact old and the days mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2 are not literal twenty-four-hour days, but rather, extended periods of time.

5. The earth may be, or likely is, old. As our examination of Genesis 1:1 revealed God created the earth during an indefinite period of time before the six days of Genesis. That could in fact have been billions of years ago, which would explain the seemingly old age of the earth. Then, in six literal days, God prepared the earth for the creation of mankind and on that sixth day He made the first man and woman.

I like this view for four reasons:

1. It maintains a literal six-day interpretation of Genesis 1, which seems to be the point of the chapter.

2. It defines key terms biblically rather than scientifically. The word translated “heavens” is better understood as “skies”; “earth” (planet) as “land” (Promised Land); and “without form and void” (primordial chaos) as “uninhabited.”

3. It teaches that the first humans appeared recently.

4. It meshes with the findings of the scientific world from a biblical view.

The teachings of the Bible always have priority in our teaching, but, of the possible biblical views, we prefer a view that explains the most data with the fewest difficulties.

While there is great debate about the age of the earth there is much more agreement between the biblical and scientific data on the age of the first true Homo sapiens, that is, true humans who lived in villages and practiced agriculture. Scientists generally date the origin of true Homo sapiens to less than ten thousand years ago, even as they date other human-like beings much older. Even those people who are committed to naturalistic evolution and an old earth agree with the biblical data that, while the earth may be old, human life, as we know it, is relatively young. Their studies are now concluding that there was a first human female (“mitochondrial Eve”) and a first human male (“Y-chromosomal Adam”). These two original humans are genetically unconnected to other Homo species such as Homo neanderthalensis and Homo erectus. Even the most conservative Bible scholars and the most unbelieving naturalistic scientists agree that human life as we know it is, at most, roughly ten thousand years old.

Creationism and Naturalism

Naturalism views creation as merely the product of time, energy, and chance. “The ultimate explanation of everything from life to love is to be found in particle physics, string theory, and whatever governs the elements of the material world, because there is nothing beyond the physical world and its atoms”.

Likely the most famous proponent of naturalism is Charles Darwin (1809–1892). Darwin was an English naturalist who founded the modern theory of evolution. He published his proposal in the 1859 book *“On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life”.* The lengthy original title is often shortened to “*On the Origin of Species”*, both because of its length and its racist overtones. While it seems that Darwin never disbelieved in the existence of a God of some kind, his evolutionary theory has been used in an effort to explain the origin of life apart from God. In fact, atheist Richard Dawkins says that “although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”

As Christians we are free to accept the seemingly self-evident fact of micro-evolution. That species can and do adapt to their environments seems obvious. In fact, micro-evolution may be simply yet another evidence of the goodness and mercy of God upon His creation, since it helps a species adapt to its environment so as to help protect it from predators. Christians are not free to accept unproven and highly suspect theories of naturalistic and atheistic macro-evolution - that one species can evolve into another species entirely.

Although it reigned as the dominant paradigm for over one hundred years, Darwin's theory of evolution has recently come under intense criticism by both Christian and non-Christian scientists who have been persuaded by what has come to be known as "intelligent design." Even Antony Flew, the philosopher of atheism, abandoned his failed theory in 2004. The reasons for the decline of confidence in macro-evolution are many, but the following are some of the most implausible leaps of faith that macro-evolution makes, all of which require at least as much faith as believing in an eternal creator God.

1. Macro-evolution teaches that nothing made everything. Sometimes this claim goes by the term spontaneous generation. No-thing causes every-thing to spring into existence, although this is not considered a miracle because there is no God. Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, says, "I can't imagine how nature, in this case the universe, could have created itself. And the very fact that the universe had a beginning implies that someone was able to begin it. And it seems to me that had to be outside of nature." Macro-evolution is put in a pickle between the undeniable evidence that the universe had a beginning and the equally undeniable principle that nothing comes from nothing.

Most naturalistic and atheistic scientists give credence to the big bang theory which states that there was some sort of powerful explosion that set in motion events that, in time, led to the formation of the world as we know it. They believe that the "big bang" accounts for the continual expanding of the universe. Stephen Hawking wrote: "Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the big bang." While Christians would call this Big God rather than big bang, the point in either case is that the universe is not eternal but had a beginning.

To avoid the problem of a universe with a beginning, they speculate that there might be an infinite number of invisible parallel universes stretching back into eternity, without a shred of evidence to support their imagining. How can they criticize Christians for being people of blind faith? We have all the historical evidence for Jesus and his resurrection to support our faith, while they have absolutely nothing for their myths.

2. Macro-evolution teaches that chaos made order. The basic telling of the history of the universe according to atheistic naturalism is that the orderliness of our universe is the result of cataclysmic disorder, chaos, and chance that together resulted in great orderliness. As a general rule our life experiences confirm to us that great chaos and disorder do not, in and of themselves, lead to harmonious

order. The astronomer Fred Hoyle "claimed that the probability of life arising on earth (by purely natural means, without special divine aid) is less than the probability that a flight-worthy Boeing 747 should be assembled by a hurricane roaring through a junkyard."

Stephen Hawking even said, "The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the big bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications." Hawking even admitted, "It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us."

The teleological argument (telos means "purpose" or "design") seeks to convince from the order in all of creation that the world has been created by an Intelligent Designer who is God. In its simple form, the argument contends that when we see something that is designed, we assume that a designer created it. The more complicated something is, the more intelligent the designer must have been.

Classic advocates of the teleological argument from design include Christian philosophers Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and William Paley (1734–1805). Paley's watchmaker analogy stated that, if you came across something as complex as a watch, you would rightly assume that an intelligent designer made it. As we walk through the world, we continually encounter things made with far greater complexity than a watch, such as the eye you are using to read these words. Biochemistry professor Michael Behe made similar points in his argument for "irreducible complexity": that certain biological systems, like an eye, are too complex to have evolved from simpler predecessors. They had to come into existence as complete systems. We are logically compelled to believe that these things were intelligently designed by God.

In recent decades, the "fine-tuning argument" has also gained steam as a form of the teleological argument. Proponents say that these basic physical constants must fall within very narrow limits if intelligent life is to develop. For example, our world's constant gravitational force, the rate of universe expansion, the average distance between stars, the nature of gravity, earth's distance from the sun, earth's rotation period, and even our carbon dioxide levels are so finely tuned for life on our planet that no logical explanation other than God is tenable. Collins says: "When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants—the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and weak nuclear forces, etc.—that have precise values. If any one of those constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it. Matter would not have been able to coalesce. There would have been no galaxy, stars, planets, or people.

Even our own human bodies support this argument. Further findings in science continually increase our understanding of the wondrous complexity of the human body, including the fact that just one human DNA molecule holds roughly the same amount of information as one volume of an encyclopedia.

3. Macro-evolution teaches that impersonal matter made personal humanity. Naturalists have reasoned that in addition to the material world, immaterial things such as emotions and intelligence, are simply the result of impersonal, unfeeling, and unintelligent matter. Yet, this entire proposal defies logic. How can

matter that does not feel create people who cry? How can matter that does not think create not only the physical organ of the brain but the mental thoughts that accompany it? How can impersonal matter create a person with an identity and personality?

The burden of proof is on the naturalist to explain the unreachable, whereas the Christian simply states the biblical fact that our personal, passionate, and infinitely brilliant God made us with His glory and we have His image in our heart, mind, and personality. If our views of justice and morality were nothing more than neurochemistry hardwired into us, then we would lose the right to be morally outraged at such things as genocide, rape, murder, and racism

.

4. Macro-evolution teaches that evolution happened over long periods of time without transitional forms in the fossil record. If evolution were true, there would be numerous transitional forms of human life in the fossil record that would, in some way, reflect the evolutionary chart that many had growing up in school. The absence of transitional fossil forms is simply yet another evidence of the fact that macro-evolution did not occur.

5. Macro-evolution teaches to be unbiased science. Still, after one hundred years of attempts to replicate macro-evolution, all efforts have not worked. The atheistic naturalists continue to resist any evidence for the hand of God in the making of the world. This is what Romans 1:18 teaches, "*because they suppress the truth due to hardness of heart against God".* As a Harvard professor Richard Lewontin said, "We are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations." He continues to insist that this "materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door." Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg says, "I personally feel that the teaching of modern science is corrosive of religious belief, and I'm all for that!" He goes on to say: "From my own point of view I hope that this long sad story will come to an end at some time in the future, and I hope that this progression of priests and ministers and rabbis and ulamas and imams and bonzes and bodhisattvas will come to an end, that we'll see no more of them. I hope that this is something to which science can contribute and if it is, then I think it may be the most important contribution that we can make."

Yet, if all we are is simply the result of time and chance, and our thoughts are no more than the random collision of matter, why should we trust our minds to tell us anything truthful or to be a trustworthy guide in scientific discovery? The prominent atheistic philosopher Thomas Nagel asks if we can have any "continued confidence in reason as a source of knowledge about the non-apparent character of the world? In itself, I believe an evolutionary story speaks against such confidence."

There is no conflict between science and Christian faith. There is a conflict between Christianity and atheistic naturalism, which refuses to follow the truth wherever it leads expressly because it leads to a belief in God. Because of these reasons, as well as its clear conflict with Scripture, Christians should reject

atheistic naturalism and the teachings it offers to explain the universe apart from God as both flawed science and bizarre theology.

Christians should not abandon science. Instead, they should pursue it with great vigor and faith to learn more about God through what He has made as an act of worship to Him.

There has been a lot of bad information about the historical relationship between Christianity and science. I hope we can look at and refute some powerful yet untrue myths that have caused some to wrongly see Christianity as suppressing the truth while science pursues it.

1. Myth 1 is that, prior to Christopher Columbus's first voyage, people thought the world was flat. The truth is that, more than eight hundred years before Columbus's voyage, Bede the church historian taught that the earth was round, as did Thomas Aquinas. Furthermore, Sacrobosco's book *De Sphaera*, written around 1231, was the standard manual for elementary astronomy until the Renaissance. That work described a spherical earth some two centuries before Columbus.

2. Myth 2 is that when Copernicus wrote that the earth revolved around the sun, his conclusions were a revolutionary, and previously untaught, concept. The truth is that Copernicus was taught the essential fundamentals leading to his model by his Scholastic professors. Christian scholars developed the model gradually over the previous two centuries.

3. Myth 3 is that the "scientific revolution" of the seventeenth century invented science as we know it because Christianity had lost the power to prevent it. The truth is that three hundred years before Newton a Scholastic cleric named Jean Buridan anticipated Newton's first law of motion, that a body in motion will stay in motion unless otherwise impeded. It was Buridan, not an Enlightenment luminary, who first proposed that the earth turns on its axis. Science flourished only in Europe where the worldview was shaped by Christianity. Many civilizations had alchemy, yet only Christian-influenced Europe developed chemistry. Astrology was practiced everywhere, but only in Europe did it become astronomy.

Creation and Me

The Bible teaches that creation in general and human life in particular were made by God, belong to God, exist for God, are groaning apart from God, and will return to God. If you do not believe in the creation you likely believe that you came from no one, you are alive on the earth for nothing, and that when you die nothing else happens for you. The renowned atheistic philosopher Bertrand Russell summarizes this worldview:

"That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness

of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of the unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built."

The only logical option apart from the biblical doctrine of creation is "the firm foundation of the unyielding despair." Similarly, when Richard Dawkins was asked if his view of reality made him depressed, he replied, "I don't feel depressed about it. But if somebody does, that's their problem. Maybe the logic is deeply pessimistic, the universe is bleak, cold and empty. But so what?"

As a pastor who prays often with teenage women who continually cut themselves and comes from a long family history of alcoholism to deal with life's issues, I could not fathom encouraging people to build their lives on "unyielding despair" because "the universe is bleak, cold, and empty" only to flippantly disregard their pain and tears by saying, "So what?"

People who do not understand the doctrine of creation, and the doctrines that relate to it, want to die. Some die a little bit at a time, weeping until they are empty and can no longer fight. Others medicate themselves with prescriptions; antidepressants until they can't feel anything. Still others self-medicate with sex, food, alcohol, drugs, gambling, entertainment, video games, Internet surfing, and anything else that can serve as a diversion from the "unyielding despair."

What is even sadder than this sadness is the tragic fact that we have not learned from history and show no sign of doing so anytime soon. N. T. Wright has said: "There are three basic ways (with variations) in which we can imagine God's space and ours relating to one another. . . . Option One is to slide the two spaces [heaven where God dwells and earth where we dwell] together. . . . Since God, as seen in this option, doesn't hide in a corner of his territory but fills it all with his presence. God is everywhere, and—watch this carefully—everywhere is God. Or, if you like, God is everything, and everything is God.

This option is known as "pantheism." It was popular in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds of the first century. . . . It has become increasingly popular in our own times. . . . The main obligation on human beings then is to get in touch with, and in tune with, the divinity within themselves and within the world around. Wright goes on to explain that it is difficult for people to believe there is divinity in literally everything, including cancer, bugs, and hurricanes. So, the subtle variation of panentheism has become more popular. Pantheism teaches that God is in everything. Wright explains:

"The problem with pantheism . . . is that it can't cope with evil. Within the multigodded paganism out of which pantheism grew, when something went wrong you could blame it on a god or goddess who was out to get you. . . . But when everything (including yourself) shares in, or lives within, divinity, there's no higher court of appeal when something bad happens. Nobody can come and rescue you. The world and 'the divine' are what they are, and you better get used to it. The only final answer (given by many Stoics in the first century and by increasing numbers in today's Western world) is suicide."

“Option two,” Wright says, “is to hold the two spaces of heaven and earth firmly apart with great distance between God and us. This, of course, is the teaching of deism.” As Wright says, “Human beings should get used to being alone in the world. The gods will not intervene, either to help or to harm.” He goes on to explain that in the ancient world, if you were rich, powerful, healthy, successful, with a good home to live in, good food to eat, and slaves to tend to your every whim, you were often fine with the idea that you were on your own and that there was no divine help at your disposal. On the other hand, “if, like the great majority of the population, your life was harsh, cruel, and often downright miserable, it was easy to believe that the world where you lived was dark, nasty, and wicked in its very essence, and that your best hope was to escape it . . . by death itself (there we go again).”

Finally, “option three,” Wright says, “is not that heaven and earth are one and the same (pantheism and panentheism) or completely separated (deism), but rather, that God in varying ways interlocks His heaven with His creation. We see this throughout the Old Testament: Jacob saw a ladder coming down from heaven; a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night led God’s people in the wilderness; and the Tent of Meeting traveled with God’s people as a portable meeting place between heaven and earth until they had the temple where the ark of the covenant was kept in the Most Holy Place, which is a sort of interlocking place between heaven and earth.” Wright goes on to say that for the Christian, “the creation of the world was the free outpouring of God’s powerful love. . . . And, having made such a world, he has remained in a close, dynamic, and intimate relationship with it, without in any way being contained within it or having it contained within himself.”

The doctrine of creation sets the stage for the coming of Jesus Christ. He comes to connect heaven and earth as the mediator between the two. He comes on a rescue mission to save us from “unyielding despair” by dying for us, imprinting himself on us, and promising to return one day to rescue creation so that it is no longer “bleak, cold, and empty.” Just as God took a barren wasteland and prepared it for our first parents, He will again prepare creation for His people, and rather than saying “so what?” to our pain, the Bible promises that He will wipe every tear from our eyes (Rev.21:4) and establish a Kingdom on this earth. His son will come and perfect this creation for a thousand years and then hand over everything to God who will come and dwell with His creation forever. Amen

JOURNAL

Notes & Reflections

What stood out to you in this study? Write down questions, verses to look up, and what God is teaching you.