

## **Thinking About the Bible**

John McWilliams

thinkingaboutthebible.com

November 6, 2020

### **Creation 101**

As a Christian and a science teacher, I've dealt with this topic extensively. The evidence ranges from the simple observation of the orderliness of nature to discerning the complex origin of information in a molecule of DNA. Chapter 1 of Romans reminds us that there is so much obvious evidence for a Creator in nature (*things that have been made*), that all who refuse to believe are "without excuse..."

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:20-21).

Note that the issue of nonbelief isn't due to a lack of evidence or even the misinterpretation of the evidence. The sad indictment is pronounced on those who *refuse to acknowledge* the Creator despite *knowing the evidence*. And the judgment has consequences in the here-and-now: *Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

The creation is too often portrayed as a death match between science and faith. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, astronomer Johannes Kepler was one of many past scientists who had no issue with a universe of miraculous origin. Despite popular opinion, many contemporary scientists also see no discrepancy between science and Scripture.

And realistically, the *who* of creation is the easy part for Christians. It's the *how* that raises questions. Four primary views are common among scientists and others who consider origins. There are numerous subcategories, nuances, and overlaps, but we'll keep it simple...

1. *Young Earth Creationism* accepts the literal interpretation of events in Genesis. The days of creation were six, twenty-four-hour days. Earth's age is roughly 10,000-*ish* years. There was also a worldwide flood that brought about many features we observe on the earth's surface.

2. *Old Earth Creationism* asserts that the days in Genesis are figurative references to long periods of time (billions of years). God created slowly, perhaps intermittently, all that we observe today, on earth and in the cosmos. Living things, including humans, were supernaturally created at appropriate times and experienced death for millions of years before the fall of Adam.

3. *Evolutionary Creationism (theistic evolution)* is basically the same as old earth creationism except that proponents acknowledge God used the process of slow evolution to bring life forms from ancient to modern. Little or no supernatural intervention was needed except perhaps in the very beginning.

4. *Naturalism (Darwinian evolution)* assumes only the physical universe. No intelligent, personal creator was needed, only random evolutionary processes. This is presumed to take long time spans to bring us to the present.

I appreciate the hard work of so many Bible-believing scientists who sift through piles of data from biology, geology, cosmology, and other fields related to origins. Like everyone else, I have my own view of creation events, but I've heard compelling arguments for the beliefs listed above (and several others).<sup>1</sup> There are still many questions to

---

<sup>1</sup> My personal view of origins would be considered *young earth*. I realize there are data that seem to indicate a universe of extremely old age. I also see evidence that seems to contradict this, thus I've yet to find a good scientific reason for concluding one or the other. Because of this, my belief derives more from theology than from science. In my opinion, young earth

answer regarding *how* God created, and I would hope a healthy dialog will eventually resolve some of these.

It's one thing, however, to base views on legitimate data, yet quite another to disregard or eliminate particular alternatives simply because of their ties to supernatural intervention. I have a great deal of respect for scientists who might disagree with my take on origins because they have data that seem to support their conclusions. My problem is with Christian scientists who profess the supernatural as one of the bases of Christian doctrine, then reject it arbitrarily in practical applications to real events in the physical realm.

For example, the most flagrantly supernatural creation scenario is a literal six-day event, about 6000 years ago, in which God brings from nothingness the entire functioning universe, with strata and stars appearing to be of great age. Whether this is exactly true or not, the point is that often opinions rest on the degree of supernatural intervention with which one is comfortable: "If we are uncomfortable with the supernatural appearance of age, let's discard that and add a few million years. If the miraculous arrival of millions of fully formed species is a problem, let's throw in slow evolution." Again, *God can do a big miracle as easily as a little one*. Beliefs should not be based on the *least supernatural* explanation.

---

creationism is the only alternative that addresses the sin/death issue. According to Scripture (New and Old Testaments), death entered the universe by Adam's sin. There have been many attempts to circumvent this allegorically or etymologically, but the results are less than satisfying. And, I have absolutely no problem with God's supernatural intervention in any way he desires. I suppose I'll remain in the young earth camp until I find a good theological explanation for death without sin or a Savior with no need to save us.