

## *Hot Topics*

# Creation and Evolution

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**Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)**

*Hot Topics: Creation and Evolution*

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### **Background Notes**

**Key Scripture Texts:** Genesis 1-2, and others.

### **Introduction**

The question of origins is significant and perplexing. At one time or other, human beings contemplate their source in the larger scheme of the cosmos. Living in the age since the scientific revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, we are privileged to benefit from fresh insights into the natural order of things, along with the technology such understanding makes possible. Who gets credit for the birth of modern science? Probably Galileo (1564-1642) who has been called the "father of modern observational astronomy," the "father of modern physics," the "father of science," and "the Father of Modern Science." Stephen Hawking has written, "Galileo, perhaps more than any other single person, was responsible for the birth of modern science."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, another giant preceded him: Copernicus (1473-1543) who gets credit for the real revolution. Copernicus' epochal book, *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, published just before his death in 1543, is often regarded as the starting point of modern astronomy and the defining epiphany that began the scientific revolution. His heliocentric model, with the Sun at the center of the universe, demonstrated that the observed motions of celestial objects can be explained without putting Earth at rest in the center of the universe. His work stimulated further scientific investigations, becoming a landmark in the history of science that is often referred to as the Copernican Revolution.

Both of these men have another thing in common: they faced a Church hostile to their work, unwilling to re-think long-standing interpretations of the Bible in light of it, and intent on destroying not only the ideas but the inventors of them. Given a mass of observable data about the form and nature of the universe, the fathers of Christendom failed to allow "all truth to be God's truth." Mistaking interpretations of the Sacred Text for the text itself, they defiantly and foolishly entrenched themselves behind a received interpretational tradition rather than following the truth wherever it led. And they did these things to their own shame and to the discredit of the Church bought with Christ's blood. They were, in fact, worshipping and serving one interpretation of the Bible in ways akin to making an idol of God, poorly formed and slavishly adored. What they ended up defending was not Sacred Scripture, but a graven image crafted from the words of human interpretation.

Living some one thousand years before the time of Copernicus and Galileo, St. Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo, issued a caution to readers of Genesis 1-2:

It not infrequently happens that something about the earth, about the sky, about other elements of this world, about the motion and rotation or even the magnitude and distances of the stars, about definite eclipses of the sun and moon, about the passage of years and seasons, about the nature of animals, of fruits, of stones, and of other such things, may be known with the greatest certainty by reasoning or by experience, even by one who is not a Christian. It is too disgraceful and ruinous, though, and greatly to be avoided, that he [the non-Christian] should hear a Christian speaking so idiotically on these matters, and as if in accord with Christian writings, that he might say that he could scarcely keep from laughing when he saw how totally in error they are. In view of this and in keeping it in mind constantly while dealing with the book of Genesis, I have, insofar as I was able, explained in detail and set forth for consideration the meanings of obscure passages, taking care not to affirm rashly some one

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<sup>1</sup> "Galileo and the Birth of Modern Science," *American Heritage's Invention & Technology*, Spring 2009, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 36.

meaning to the prejudice of another and perhaps better explanation" (*The Literal Interpretation of Genesis 1:19–20*, 408 C.E.).

Augustine speaks frankly and humbly in this passage, and those are qualities sorely needed in the debate presently raging about the topic of this week's study. Notice how this great father of the church concedes that non-Christians may actually know more about matters of science than a Christian. See also how he chastises those who interpret Scripture in such inflexible ways as to bring their faith into direct conflict with other discoveries of human knowledge. Can you fault him for using words like "disgraceful, ruinous, idiotically, scarcely keep from laughing..."? Yet we face a time when the rancorous debate includes claims and counter-claims which reflect badly on the Christian faith, as well as on the objectivity of science. Augustine concedes that there might in fact be "another and perhaps better explanation" of the Biblical text than that which the received interpretation maintains.

Throughout this week's study, we will consider a fresh consideration of the Biblical text of Genesis 1-2. At the same time, we will trace the contours of conflict between the Bible and science which have prompted the advancement of several competing positions. We would do well, in the course of our study, to refer back to Augustine's sage advice, and perhaps, God willing, allow "prejudice" to fall away and the light of truth, wherever it leads, to suggest "another and perhaps better explanation." That is our prayer and hope as we commence our *Background Notes*.

### **This Week's Main Text: Genesis 1-2**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. 9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights- the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night- and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. 20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." 21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. 24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds- livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face

of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground- 7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

## General Remarks

The readers of Genesis 1-2, regardless of their particular interpretational bias, cannot help but be struck by the sheer majesty and splendor portrayed in the space of few words. Were we to compare the *Genesis* account with its pagan counterparts, the contrast would be striking. Among the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, stories of warring gods and dismembered carcasses form the stuff of cosmology. Human beings do not assume their royal roles as the images of the gods, but appear to irritate their creator gods and serve them as lackeys. Conflict rather than creation is the signature of the pagan accounts. Representative of these stories is the famous "Babylonian Genesis" known as the *Enûmah Elish*: literally, "when above..."<sup>2</sup> Written in praise of the god Marduk, this document offers reasons why he was promoted as chief of the deities. As an epic poem, it begins at a time when nothing but the gods Apsu (sweet-water ocean), Ti'âmat (salt-water ocean) and their son Mummu (mist/clouds) existed. From the mingling of these three, the basic matter of the world was made. Human beings, according to one variation of the story, were formed with the blood of two gods; according to another, with the flesh and blood of a slain god mixed with clay.

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<sup>2</sup> A full text translation, with commentary, appears in Alexander Heidel's *Babylonian Genesis*, The University of Chicago Press, 1951 [1942].

When we compare the pagan with the biblical readings, we find, by contrast, one God who existed before all things, and who created the world "at its inception" (*berêshîth*). The implication is that God made the world "out of nothing," or, as my old philosophy professor, Dr. McMahon would insist: "God *didn't* make the world out of *anything*," reminding us that "nothing" is not "something"! We call this *ex nihilo* creation, since it assumes that God did not start with pre-existing matter or even with the substance of His own being, but wholly brought into existence "heaven and earth" without the use of any pre-existing materials. Neither water, earth, air or fire were present "in the beginning," and, we must also argue, not even time itself existed, making the opening phrase, *berêshîth* ("in beginning") itself a part of the creative process. Put simply: "God was and the world was not," followed by, "God created and the world was." *Genesis* cosmology is not pantheistic, making the world and God of a continuous nature. Nor is it polytheistic, seeking to account for origins in the sometimes bloody conflict of many gods/goddesses with each other. The pagan stories must begin with elaborate accounts of how the gods came into existence and by establishing divine blood-lines, naming the deities and their exploits. No such *theogony* (birth-history of the gods) appears in Genesis 1-2, but the absolute assumption that God has always existed, while the world has not. God requires no certificate of origin. To borrow from Paul Tillich's famous dictum: "God is not a being among beings; God is the ground of all being."<sup>3</sup>

What sort of literature is Genesis 1-2? Answering this question requires cautious attention to comparative literatures in the ancient world. Although we reject the cosmology of the *Enûmah Elish* and similar epics, we can learn a great deal about the structure and pattern of poetry, metaphor, and extended analogy. Reputable scholars of the biblical material regularly resort to careful comparisons and often discover surprising solutions to linguistic puzzles. Difficult phrases, unknown word meanings, and unusual literary forms have constantly challenge students of the sacred text. But the periodic discovery of ancient documents from adjacent cultures guide the researcher in her efforts to tease meaning from problematic forms. At a minimum, Genesis 1-2 bears resemblance to the epic form of the ancient world, but combines it with the hymn of praise and the simple narrative. Repetition, parallelism, recapitulation, and chiasmus each appear in the space of the text we are considering, and these features point to a poetic style. On the other hand, Genesis 1-2 tells a story, and in this role presumes that the reader witnesses the unfolding of events with characters and a plot.

But it is a unique story, told from the perspective of God Himself Who alone witnessed all of the events. The writer of *Genesis*, whom we take to be Moses, embodied that story in the language and literary forms available to him. Accepting the claim of Acts 7:22 "Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," we surmise that he had at his disposal a cache of documents reflective of current cosmologies. Yet, raised in his mother's house until placed in the care of Pharaoh's daughter, he also carried in his memory the great stories of the Hebrew people, and their shared understanding of Yahweh God, Creator/Possessor of heaven and earth. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these combined sources take shape as the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, with *Genesis* as their head. For God, however, the story of Creation exists apart from human observation. Indeed, it is difficult to describe in human terms, the unfolding of the great Creation acts, since their occurrence took place independently of earth-bound witnesses.

God is, therefore, telling His story from His point of view. What that means specifically about the text is that the "beginning" is in relationship to God, and the "days" are His days. Seen as story, Genesis 1-2 speaks truth but not necessarily with human frames of reference in mind. The reality of Creation *for God* is grander and more majestic than it could ever be *for us*. That said, we still stand in awe of it, for no less reason than that the climax of creation is achieved when God makes humankind in His image. God tells the story of the cosmos precisely so that He might tell the story of the human drama. In large measure, Genesis 1-11 serves as dramatic backdrop for God's call of Abraham and His covenant-making activities with both him and his descendents. Once human beings consciously enter the story, a fresh point of view appears in the text: that of the human players in the drama.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, University of Chicago Press, 1973, pp. 235, 238.

With this important point in our grasp, we approach Genesis 1-2 as God's story of His creation of the world, told, as it were "in His own words," shaped by the cultural requirements of an ancient audience, including grammar, semantics, and literary forms. This is an old text — an ancient text — telling a real story in human terms with God's words. One possible mistake — a category mistake — would be to treat the text as pure prose, absent its real-world context. Or, perhaps, to imagine that the ancient writer was privy to 21<sup>st</sup> century science and somehow buried his treasure within the words of his account. Attempts to compare these chapters with a textbook on science might meet with some correspondence in fact, but largely different is the literary world of Genesis 1-2 from that of formal science. Both accounts of nature approach their subject matter with specific and unique objectives. They each read nature's book with different aims. At times, their subject matters overlap, but are addressed with tools apropos to their tasks. One will not, for example, find a copy of the Periodic Table of the Elements in the first chapters of *Genesis* or elsewhere in the Bible. That is no fault of Scripture, not being its intended purpose to provide such information. Moreover, a Mesopotamian reader would hardly make sense out of such a thing were it to surface in holy writ. What good would it do for Abraham to have it? Would Moses make a better Tabernacle with that chemical reference at hand? On the other hand, God gave Moses the necessary "pattern" to do the work that was before him, as was God's design throughout all of Scripture (see Exodus 25:9, 40; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5).

If we approach Genesis 1-2 in this fashion, we leave matters of scientific detail to those who do the work of science. History bears witness that when interpreters of the sacred text fail to honor the form in which Scripture has been given, they may well reach conclusions about matters which are not the primary subject matter of the sacred text. Let us not forget the troubles sustained by the Church when it presumed to correct the natural science of Copernicus and Galileo in its efforts to maintain a geo-centric view of the universe, based on a literalistic reading of certain passages it found in the Bible.<sup>4</sup> At that time, the only response to conflict between the Bible and science was the fiery heretic's stake! We are convinced of better things, and want to avoid the errors of a previous generation.

A few quotations from John Polkinghorne are useful at this juncture:

Why is the kettle boiling? Answer#1: The kettle is boiling because the burning gas heats the water. True. Answer#2: The kettle is boiling because I want to make a cup of tea and would you like to have a cup with me? True. There is no conflict between those two answers; they are in fact complementary. In an exactly similar way I don't have to choose between science and religion. "The universe sprang into being about fifteen billion years ago through the fiery explosion of the big bang." That is true, but it does not preclude my also saying, "The universe came into being and remains in being because of the Word of a Creator whose mind and purpose are behind all of the scientific truths that we perceive."<sup>5</sup>

The remarkable insights that science affords us into the intelligible workings of the world cry out for an explanation more profound than that which it itself can provide. Religion, if it is to take seriously its claim that the world is the creation of God, must be humble enough to learn from science what that world is actually like. The dialogue between them can only be mutually enriching. The scientist will find in theology a unifying principle more fundamental than the grandest unified field theory. The theologian will encounter in science's account of the pattern and structure of the physical world a reality which calls forth admiration and wonder. Together they can say with the Psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom thou hast made them all."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Church eventually lifted the ban on Galileo's *Dialogue* in 1822, when it was common knowledge that the Earth was not the center of the Universe. Still later, there were statements by the Vatican Council in the early 1960's and in 1979 that implied that Galileo was pardoned, and that he had suffered at the hands of the Church. Finally, in 1992, three years after Galileo Galilei's namesake spacecraft had been launched on its way to Jupiter, the Vatican formally and publicly cleared Galileo of any wrongdoing. On 31 October 1992, Pope John Paul II expressed regret for how the Galileo affair was handled, and officially conceded that the Earth was not stationary, as the result of a study conducted by the Pontifical Council for Culture. Pope Benedict XVI later praised Galileo.

<sup>5</sup> "Is Science Enough?" September, 1994, lecture at the University of the South.

<sup>6</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation*, Abingdon Press, 1988, p. 117.

What we wish to maintain in our study of Genesis 1-2 is summed up in two distinct but complementary statements:

1. Through faith we can experience an intimate relationship with the Creator, but science allows us to appreciate more fully the majesty of the Creator and the grandeur of creation.
2. Through science we can acquire an intimate knowledge of the character of creation, but without knowledge of the Creator it is an incomplete knowledge, a knowledge that is limited and ultimately unsatisfying.

A word about humility is in order here. The work of interpreting the Bible is never finished, and the task of the theologian is always ongoing. If the sacred text is as rich as its adherents believe it to be, then a whole life-long quest is scarcely sufficient to scratch the surface, and after we have done everything possible to make the meaning plain, we, in the end, must fall on our faces before God and accept the teaching of Jesus;

So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty" (Luke 17:10).

Similarly, the scientist's work, confronted as she is with the vastness of nature, is never done. But when the two meet, when scientist and theologian share the same room, across the table from each other, what then? Once more, Polkinghorne:

As a scientist I am often struck by theologians' persistent fear of getting it wrong. [In science] a willingness to explore ideas which might prove mistaken, or in need of revision, is a necessary price of scientific progress. One would have thought that the intrinsic difficulty in doing theology would encourage a similar intrepidity. At times (the patristic period, the Reformation) that has been so, but not always. I am not of course, denying the existence of many wild flights of contemporary theological fancy, but saying that within the sober core I detect a degree of disinclination to take intellectual risk, particularly where it involves interaction with another discipline. Hence the widespread neglect of natural science by theologians.<sup>7</sup>

Mutual respect and constructive engagement are marks of Christian maturity both for the Church and for the individual. Our intent in this study is to approach the text on its own terms, examining the clear affirmations as they affect our understanding of God's creative work. At the same time, we recognize the continuing investigations of the scientific community whose efforts yield results both for theoretical knowledge and for the benefit of human life. Our paths as theologian and scientist will often cross, and, insofar as both professions have interest in the topic of origins, each will bring to that question complementary results.

However, the potential for conflict also exists. Recent virulent attacks of thinkers like Dawkins, Hitchens and Dennet on religion and faith are not taken lightly. We recognize that scientists and philosophers can overstep their own fields of expertise, and, in so doing, fail to acknowledge the contributions of theologians and biblical scholars to the overall quest for understanding of the cosmos. Theirs is not the work of science, but of scientism — that general belief (and it is a *belief*) that all of reality can be subsumed under a single framework for the pursuit of knowledge. By contrast, we endorse the view that faith itself is a way of knowing and is itself a capacity to grasp the world from a specific point of view not available to ordinary science. Our appeal is also to those who want to thin down the richness of the word "know" and limit it to the methods of science alone. For us, the account of Creation in Genesis 1-2 encompasses a faith-based approach to knowledge which seeks meaning behind the method.

### **Outline and General Structure**

Following the pattern of Hebrew poetry, Genesis 1:1-2:3 shares the common strophic ("verse-like") structure found in other parts of the Old Testament (such as the *Psalms* and large sections of the writing Prophets). What we witness in these verses is a series of creation pictures, rendered like snapshots and placed within the framework of a six work-day week, followed by a Sabbath. The use of the number "seven" to characterize God's activities is well-established through the Bible. Units of seven are applied to years and to groups of years in the ordering of Israel's sacred calendar, yielding what is sometimes called the "Sabbatical." Applying this scheme to the Creation story, Genesis 1:1-2:3 stands at the head of the canon in its role as shaper of sacred time.

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<sup>7</sup> *Science and Christian Belief*, SPCK Publishing, 1994, p. 44.

The ten commandments follow this lead with their consecration of the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:8-11), and ground this pattern in the *Genesis* Creation "week." The earthly experience of work weeks and Sabbaths finds its archetype in God's story of Creation with its own sabbatical pattern.

An independent heading (1:1) declares the simple fact that God created everything, using the couplet "heavens and earth," a literary form known as *hendiadys*.<sup>8</sup> Though "everything" is intended, the writer branches off this composite in 1:2 and focuses attention on *earth*, the second member of the phrase. That is, while God created heaven and earth, the special emphasis of 1:2 and following will be on *earth*, the setting for the great drama about to be told. This verse also sets up the conditions of earth at its primeval stage of formation by using the words "without form" and "void."

Then, starting with 1:3, the Creation story is acted out, panel by panel, in a framework consisting of parallel "days,"<sup>9</sup> divided into two triads. Each triad addresses the conditions depicted in 1:2.

Creation Kingdoms	Creature Kings	Creator King
<i>Form in place of formlessness</i>	<i>Fullness in place of emptiness</i>	
Day 1 Light (1:3-5)	Day 4 Luminaries (1:14-19)	Day 7 Sabbath (2:1-3)
Day 2 Sky (1:6-8) Seas	Day 5 Sea creatures (1:20-23) Winged Creatures	
Day 3 Dry Land (1:9-13) Vegetation	Day 6 Land animals (1:24-31) Humankind	

Also present in the outline of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is the existence of an "upper" and "lower" framework, consisting of "heavens" and "earth." Of special interest is the dual use of the words "heaven" and "earth" as illustrated in the following diagram:

Upper Register	Invisible Cosmos (Heaven <sub>1</sub> )
Lower Register	Visible Cosmos (Earth <sub>1</sub> )
	Upper: Star-studded sky (Heaven <sub>2</sub> )
	Lower: Planet (Earth <sub>2</sub> )

The role of the "upper register" is to serve as a pattern or template for what happens in the lower register. **Heaven<sub>1</sub>** is the dwelling of God, created by Him for His heavenly throne, the angels and future glorified human beings. As the uppermost register, **Heaven<sub>1</sub>** is the invisible, yet real, realm of God from which He issues His commands, and in which *He* experiences the week of Creation as described in Genesis 1:2-2:3. The lower register consists of **Earth<sub>1</sub>**, which consists of the entire visible universe, including planet earth and the astronomical heavens. Such an organization of existing reality appears in the Apostle Paul's cosmology:

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16).

Approaching the universe in a two-layered fashion finds further support in other biblical texts:

The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man (Psalm 115:16).

Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: 19 that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth (Psalm 102:18-19).

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? 2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD (Isaiah 66:1-2).

<sup>8</sup> The basic idea is to use two words linked by a conjunction to express a single complex idea. Three Greek words compose this literary term: *hen*="one" + *dia*="through" + *dys*="two."

<sup>9</sup> The framework approach to Genesis 1:1-2:3 was pioneered by Arie Noordtjij in his 1924 work, *Gods Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis*, Kampen, 1924. Much of this work received treatment in English through N. H. Ridderbos in *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* Eerdmans, 1957.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Colossians 3:1-2).

12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man (John 3:12-13).

31 He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all (John 3:31).

47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47-49).

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5:1).

What these texts clearly show is the "upper" and "lower" dimensions to the whole of reality, or, considered from a different angle, the "invisible" and the "visible" aspects of the universe. Each can rightly be called a real place. The upper and lower, the invisible and visible are all the result of God's creative work. From time-to-time, in biblical history, those given revelation from God were privilege to peer into the invisible realm and report in Scripture what they saw.

When the invisible heaven is opened, we invariably see God as the King of glory enthroned in the midst of myriads of heavenly beings (Isa. 6:1-3; Dan. 7:9-10; Ezek. 1:5-28; Rev. 4:1-5:14). These heavenly beings are gathered around the King as His servants, courtiers, and advisors who constitute the judicial "council of the holy ones" (Ps. 89:5-7)...Heaven is the invisible dimension of the *created* cosmos.

Because it is invisible, believers ordinarily perceive the upper register only by faith. "The things which *are seen* are temporal, but the things which *are not seen* are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). In our current position in redemptive history, we can see this realm only with "the eyes of [the] heart" (Eph.1:18; 2 Cor. 5:7). However, this state of affairs has not always been the case. At times God has given His people supernatural perception to see the upper register. When God opened up that dimension to human perception, it appeared that the very ground where the angels stood was the gate of heaven (Gen. 28:16-17). Stephen "gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). Similarly, Elisha's servant was granted a special illumination from God to see that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire" (2 Kings 6:17).<sup>10</sup>

**Heaven<sub>1</sub>** and **Earth<sub>1</sub>** (upper and lower) are dimensions of a single universe. On this reading, the upper register is not a galaxy "far, far away," but a reality present within the universe — our universe — where God rules and where Christ sits at His right hand. Eventually this invisible reality will "appear" and be joined with the visible as a continuum of the New Creation (Revelation 21:2-3, 10-11).

What does this interpretive model for Genesis 1:1-2:3 offer us? It suggests that the "day" framework originates within the upper register and refers to the days which God experiences in the invisible realm, independent of the counterparts in the lower register, **Earth<sub>1</sub>**. Put simply, the "days" of the Creation week belong to the upper register. They are "real days" and not merely literary conventions; they truly belong to God's story of Creation. But if they are "heaven-measured" days, then they are not bound by the Earth-Sun relationship, and therefore are not "earth-measured" days. However, these upper register days, belonging as they do to the created dimension called **Heaven<sub>1</sub>**, are not detached from their **Earth<sub>1</sub>** counterparts. Instead, **Earth<sub>1</sub>** is an image of **Heaven<sub>1</sub>**, and what we *see* within the lower register supplies a rich source of ideas about the realities of upper one. The upper register is the archetype (model, pattern, blueprint) for the lower register.

A *rainbow* overarches the divine presence upon the throne (Ezek. 1:28; Rev. 4:3). Awesome pyrotechnic displays of *lightning* and other fearful aspects of the *thunderstorm* are connected with the upper register (Ps.

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<sup>10</sup> Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, "Part Three: The Framework View," in *The Genesis Debate*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, Crux Press, 2001, pp. 237-238.

29:3, 7; Ezek. 1:4). The *wind* is said to be God's chariot (Ps. 18:9-14), on which He rides accompanied by the crushing power of the *hailstorm* (Rev. 11:19). *Stars* are frequently employed as figures for the angels (Isa. 14:13; Rev. 1:20; 12:4). The blinding brilliance of the light of the *sun* itself is a favorite image for the glorified, exalted Christ (Matt. 17:2; Acts 26:13; Rev. 1:16; 21:23).<sup>11</sup>

When *Genesis* speaks about "days" or "evenings and mornings," it is using metaphorical language to describe heavenly realities in much the same way as the Scriptures cited above use images of lightning, sun, etc. to depict upper register realities. Earth-time becomes the analogue for Heaven-time, with the full recognition that the two refer to different levels of reality.

Again, to emphasize the special organizational structure which arises from this analysis, we use the following diagram:

The Two Registers in Genesis 1:1-2:3					
Registers	1:1	1:2	Days 1-6	Day 6	Day 7
Upper	Heaven	Spirit	"Let There Be"	God	God's Rest/Rule
Lower	Earth	Deep	"And it was So"	Man as Image	Sabbath Law

Upon closer scrutiny, the two main poles, "heaven and earth," are distributed according to a pattern throughout the six days, as indicated by this representation:

Day 1	Heaven	
Day 2	Heaven	
Day 3		Earth
Day 4	Heaven	
Day 5		Earth
Day 6		Earth

We have a classic "cross-over" pattern, found elsewhere in the Old Testament. In this case, H-H-E-H-E-E, which is a bit like tying a knot in the center. The center falls at the transition from Day 3 to Day 4.

### Some Implications

Gathering together each of the schema we have presented above, we can now affirm the non-literal and non-sequential nature of the material in this week's text. The framework uncovers the recapitulation of days 1-3 in days 4-6, with each corresponding day offering a fresh element but not in chronological order. What we are saying here is that the "order" is synchronic but not diachronic. True coherence exists in the presentation of material, but the reader is seeing the "order" from God's point of view and cannot infer from that the unfolding of the upper register pattern in chronological order within the lower register. On that question the text remains neutral, even agnostic. God made the world in *His time* and according to *His order*. How that played out in space-time cosmology is simply beyond the intent of the text to say.

When Genesis 1:1 asserts "in the beginning" (Hebrew: *berêshîth*), it is not describing a starting point within the lower, **Earth<sub>1</sub>** register, but instead is depicting the starting point for God's Creation process as seen from the upper register frame of reference. Only in this way can we avoid the inconsistency of a "beginning" *within* time, when, in fact, we are talking about a beginning which includes *time*. Subsequently in the text, when Genesis 2:1-3 concludes the creation week with a "Sabbath," it is referencing, once again, something that happened in the upper register. The "seventh day" originates with God and refers not to fatigue from creating but to finality. On the seventh day, God assumes His posture as enthroned ruler of all He has made, an event taking place "in heaven" with definite consequences "on earth." God's Day of Rest remains in effect from the standpoint of the upper register: it is God's eternal day. The New Testament interpretation of that designation clarifies how this is so:

<sup>11</sup> *Genesis Debate*, p.239-240.

4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." ... 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his (Hebrews 4:4, 9-10).

Notice how the use of "day" extends into the future, since Sabbath is something which "remains" (Greek: *apoleipō*, leave behind, remain, left open). Later in the passage, the writer invites his audience "to enter" the open door offered by the *continuing* Sabbath of God.<sup>12</sup>

### Recurring Formulae

Eight works of creation appear in the text, along with ten divine commands which are executed within the six days. If we examine the recurring formulae, the following general pattern takes shape:<sup>13</sup>

1. **Announcement:** "And God said..." (Hebrew: *wayyō'mer*). Ten times this occurs: 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29. The particle *wa* is ordinarily translated "and," but has additional meanings. In this case, it is prefixed to the word *'āmar*, "speak," which is in the imperfect. This construction is known as the *wa* - consecutive and is common in narration of events, marking the main clause — in this case, what is being narrated is the fact that God *spoke*. The word *wa* has other uses: 1) introductory, 2) adversative ("but, however"), 3) explicative ("namely, that is"), 4) connective ("heavens *and* earth").<sup>14</sup> Several different uses appear in Genesis 1:14. Thus, not all uses imply sequence.<sup>15</sup>
2. **Command:** "Let there be..." or "Let us make..." (Hebrew: *yēhî*) Eight instances in the text: 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26. The Hebrew verb forms are either jussive or cohortative, indicating either a direct *command* or the *enjoining of oneself* to act. Theology has long referred to this creative command as the divine *fiat*, a word which comes from the Latin: "let it be done", the 3rd singular present subjunctive of *fieri* "to become, be done." The implication of *fiat* creation is a command or act of will that creates something without or *as if* without further effort. It has the function of "a dictate," or authoritative determination. What's important to note is that God creates the world *as a command issued by His own Word*. Throughout the Creation story, God issues such commands. God creates as King, commanding the universe into existence, thus *ordering it* by His own design. The command originates in the upper register.
3. **Fulfillment:** "And it was so..." (Hebrew: *yahēhî*). Found seven times: 1:3, 7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30. The command is obeyed within the creation process. The fulfillment takes place in the lower register. Nothing in the created order fails to obey the royal command of the Creator God. Nothing is implied about the temporal *duration* of the process, but its *inception* is assumed to be immediate. The whole process enjoined by the *fiat* gets under way as soon as the command leaves the mouth of God. That is the implication of the *fiat* mode of creation.
4. **Execution:** "And God made, (or other verbs describing what God *did*) ... " Used seven times: 1:4, 7, 12, 16, 21, 25, 27.
5. **Approval.** "And God saw...that it was good..." (Hebrew: *wayyar' + kî-tōb*) Occurs seven times: 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).
6. **Naming or Blessing.** "And God called, or, blessed..." (Hebrew: *wayyiqrā'*, or, *wayēbārek*). Seven times: 1:5 (2x), 8, 10 (2x), 22, 28.
7. **Day Designation.** "There was evening and there was morning... day one, second, third, etc." Including references to Sabbath, seven times: 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2.

### About the Use of *Yôm*: "Day"

Considerable debate gathers around the intended meaning of the Hebrew word for "day:" *yôm*. Those who believe in a young-earth would insist on a 24-hour creation day because it is the normal, expected, and literal meaning of the word. Considering that Genesis 1 is framed as a "week" of work, God finally reaching his

<sup>12</sup> See John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, Eermans, 1957, pp. 30-32.

<sup>13</sup> We are indebted to Gordon J. Wenham for his analysis of this material. See *Genesis*, Volume 1, in the Word Commentary series, Word Books, 1987, p.6, 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> See discussion by Bo Reicke, *Genesis*, Volume 1, in the Anchor Bible, Doubleday, 1964, pp. lxvi-lxvii.

<sup>15</sup> Irons and Kline, *Genesis Debate*, p. 183.

finality on the seventh day, it is the most natural reading of the text to take the days in their solar-day sense. We are accepting of this assessment but within a different literary framework, as indicated in our discussions above. Though at the surface level they are ordinary days, read as part of an extended chronological metaphor, they form a nexus of meaning which transcends their ordinary designation. Such images occur throughout Scripture, including one in Luke 13:32 where Jesus calls Herod the Tetrarch, "that fox." In order to understanding the referential meaning, we must consider all the literal qualities of a fox which made it a suitable symbol for Herod. Among them, is the sly nature of the animal which, by transference, comes to describe Herod. In point of fact, Herod was not a furry carnivorous mammal, but he was a sly, devious man nonetheless. Moses does the same thing with *yôm* in Genesis 1:1-2:3. Yes, from the standpoint of the lower register, it has a solar-day meaning. But in this case it is pressed into service to describe an upper register unit of time that does not require any relationship between earth and sun.

We are not arguing for any particular upper register *length* of the day, since that dimension pertains to the abode of God where "a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day" (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8). Even that assertion contains its own metaphorical content. In Hebrew usage, the word *'eleph* (thousand) was sometimes taken to mean "a very large number," without indicating the precise amount. Other words for "time" in the Hebrew Bible share a similar ambiguity, such as *'ôlām* which sometimes translates as "eternal" or "eternity," but which actually means something like "world" or "age" (see Ecclesiastes 3:11). Usually that word combines, in the plural, with a word like *'ad* which denotes extent, limit, or far distance: thus, "*as far as the ages of the as-far-as,*" a clumsy but literal handling of the expression (see Isaiah 45:17). Or, as in Isaiah 57:15, "the one dwelling *as far as...*" Such attempts to express the idea of "eternal" or "forever" require a metaphorical handling of otherwise quite literal terms for extent or distance.

Perhaps a helpful text for showing the connection between the upper and lower, invisible and visible, heaven and earth is one we have cited in previous studies:

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Would not our understanding of Genesis 1:1-2:3 be enhanced by hold firmly the ideas expressed in this passage? Speaking from the heights of heaven, God utters the cosmically significant words, "Let there be....," and does so for the benefit of the earth below. Yet can we grasp the wisdom and power present in His creative words? Can we imagine what a creation day was like except to see it in terms of one of our ordinary work weeks? But having done so, we confess our ignorance of any higher knowledge or more profound meaning of the word "day" when applied to the singularity of creation itself.

Even the writer of *Genesis* caught the immensity of the creation task when, in 2:4, he penned these words:

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

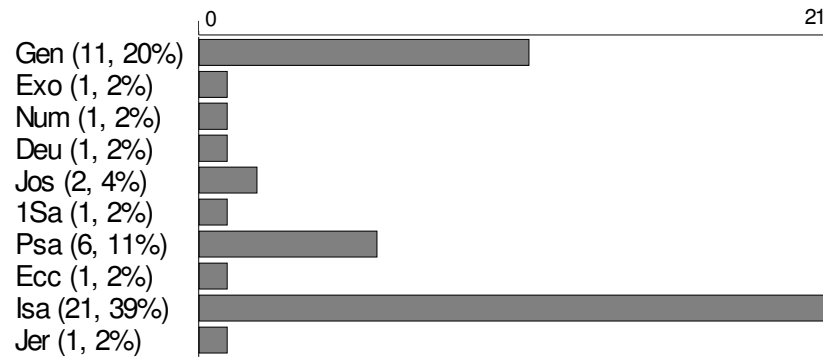
In this case, the *whole creation process* is subsumed under the single word "day," such that we might aptly speak about the first great *Day of the Lord* as His marvelous deeds in bringing all things into being. That phrase appears throughout the Old Testament (17x), and a few times in the New Testament (5x). It ordinarily describes the day of judgment when God calls the whole world to account. Used in the context of Creation, it has the meaning of God's day of triumph when He snatched "being" from the mouth of "non-being," and when His "light shone in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" (see John 1:5).

### **Create and Make**

The primary word which launches the acts of God in Genesis 1:1 is from the Hebrew term *bāra'* which ordinarily is translated "create." As we noted in our opening remarks, the theological sense drawn from the whole creation account is that God created *ex nihilo* — "out of nothing." Some scholars insist that such a meaning already lives inside *bāra'*. What do we know about this word?

1. God is always the subject of *bāra'*
2. No raw material is ever specified when the process involves this word. God is the sole agent and cause.

3. When God creates: he produces humankind (1:27); unusual things (Numbers 16:30; Isaiah 65:17); sea creatures (1:21); mountains (Amos 4:13); animals generally (Psalm 104:30).
4. The word is used some 54 times in 46 distinct passages, with the following distribution throughout the Old Testament:



5. The usage is not limited for "creation out of nothing," but, for example, applies also to:
  - a. Creation of Israel (Isaiah 43:1, 15).
  - b. Renewal of the earth (Isaiah 41:20).
  - c. A series of circumstantial events involving already existing things (Isaiah 45:7).
6. Though it does not have a strictly singular meaning, the term points to God's effortless, totally free and unbound creating, his sovereignty."<sup>16</sup>

Also present in Genesis 1:1-2:3 are other terms which pertain to creation, but, on the surface, seem to have a more circumscribed meaning:

1. The word *'āsāh* which means "do, make, produce, cause." It appears in this week's text in the following places:
  - a. 1:7 — God makes the expanse above the earth.
  - b. 1:16 — God made sun, moon and stars.
  - c. 1:25 — God made beasts, livestock and creeping animals.
  - d. 1:26 — God determines to make human beings in "our image."
  - e. 1:31 — God saw "everything" he made.
  - f. 2:4 — God made the earth and the heavens. Note: in this case, oddly, the word *bāra'* is also used to describe God's producing of the heavens and earth. A poetic flair reverses the order so that the net result is: "the heavens and the earth were created; God made the earth and the heavens."
  - g. If we examine a text like Isaiah 45:7, we discover a rich collection of words associated together in a poetic tapestry of meaning, all of which have to do with creation in some regard: "I form (*yātzar*) light and create (*bāra'*) darkness, I make (*'āsāh*) well-being and create (*bāra'*) calamity, I am the LORD, who does (*'āsāh*) all these things."
2. The producing of human beings involves the use of more than one term:
  - a. "Let us make the human in our image..." — *'āsāh* (1:26).
  - b. "God created the human...in the image of God He created the human...as male and female He created the human..." All instances of *bāra'*.
3. Genesis 2:7 offers its own special nuances: "then the LORD God formed (*yātzar*) the human of dust from the ground and breathed (*naphaḥ*) into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became (*wayēhî*) a living creature." Of special interest is the notion of "forming," as it applies to God, especially since it involves the use of existing materials in conjunction with a special endowment with "the image of God." The following article from the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, sheds some light on the shades of meaning:

<sup>16</sup> Wenham, p. 14.

The basic meaning of this root is "to form," "to fashion." While the word occurs in synonymous parallelism with *bārā'* "create" and *‘asâ* "make" in a number of passages, its primary emphasis is on the shaping or forming of the object involved.

As with many Hebrew words of theological significance, the root *yāšar* may be used of human as well as divine agency. When used in its secular sense it occurs most frequently in the participial form meaning "potter," i.e. one who fashions (clay). The word is used in this form frequently in the prophets where "the potter" provides an apt vehicle for the communication of the prophetic message (Isa 29:16; Jer 18:2, 4, 6; Zech 11:13).

The concept of "fashioning" is particularly clear in Isa 44:9-10, 12 where an idol is pictured as being shaped (*yāšar*) by hammers (v. 12). See also Hab 2:18. The same concept is evident in the use of the word in Psa 94:20 where wicked rulers use the law to devise or frame means of wrongdoing.

When used of divine agency, the root refers most frequently to God's creative activity. It describes the function of the divine Potter forming man and beasts from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7-8, 19). It occurs in association with *bārā'* "create" and *‘asâ* "make" in passages that refer to the creation of the universe (Isa 45:18), the earth itself (Jer 33:2), and the natural phenomena (Amos 4:13; Psa 95:5). See also Psa 33:15; Psa 74:17; Psa 94:9; Jer 10:16; Jer 51:19; Zech 12:1).

The word also occurs in the sense of God's framing or devising something in his mind. It is used of his preordained purposes (2Kings 19:25; Isa 37:26; Isa 46:11; Psa 139:16) as well as his current plans (Jer 18:11).

The root is used of God's forming the nation of Israel in the sense of bringing it into existence. It is used in this way only by Isaiah and always connotes God's activity in this regard (Isa 43:1, 7, 21; Isa 44:2, 21, 24).

The participial form meaning "potter" is applied to God in Isa 64:7 where mankind is the work of his hand.

When applied to the objects of God's creative work, the emphasis of the word is on the forming or structuring of these phenomena. The word speaks to the mode of creation of these phenomena only insofar as the act of shaping or forming an object may also imply the initiation of that object. In this way the root *yāšar* is an appropriate surrogate for *bārā'* but not an exact synonym.<sup>17</sup>

## What About Evolution?

Most Evangelical Christians find evolution incompatible with their Christian faith. The recent movie, *Expelled*, reinforced the perception that an anti-religion, anti-God bias exists within the academy, especially on matters of cosmology and human origins. A slippery slope is sensed when Christian scholars give ground in this regard. In general, biological evolution belongs to the culture wars being waged, at least in the United States. The phrase "conflict thesis" is used to describe this viewpoint. What dangers do Christians see in evolutionary views of origins? We list a few general concerns raised by many, listed in random order:

1. Accepting evolution as a true account of origins requires abandoning a plain reading of the biblical text, particularly Genesis 1-2.
2. Evolution implicitly requires a bent toward atheism or agnosticism since it does not need God, by its own account, to bring the world into existence.
3. If evolution is a correct account of origins, then living things coming into being, become extinct, and inevitably die in large numbers *before* the appearances of humankind, probation in Eden, sin and the "Fall."
4. Since the *Genesis* account of origins advocates creation by divine *fiat* ("Let there be..."), evolution cannot be true since it entails a thousand instances of trial and error, extinction, constant formation of new species across millions of years of purposeless chance.

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas McComiskey, "yatzar," [898] in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Volume 1, Moody Press, 1980, p. 396.

5. According to the *Genesis* version of life's appearance, living things are created by God in fixed classifications, and then reproduce only "after their kind," something which is not supported by evolutionary theory.
6. The creation of humankind, in the *Genesis* story, involves a single human pair, created within the fairly recent past, who had no genetic connections to other forms of life, whereas evolution argues for the rise of the entire biosphere from a few living forms until the highest complexity is reached in *homo sapiens*.
7. Theological issues hang in the balance with evolutionary theory since the innocence of a single human pair in Eden, facing temptation and moral choice, cannot be reconciled with multiple human offspring the contemporaneous result of a slow process of human evolution.
8. Moreover, human evolutionary theory explains only the physical and biological dimensions of life, treating human beings as merely complex animals but not beings created especially in the image of God.
9. Or, put another way, it is demeaning to the dignity of human beings to declare that they are "descended from monkeys."
10. If human beings are told that they are descended from animals, they will live like animals without the bounds of moral constraint found in believing they are made in the image of God.
11. The long periods of time required by evolutionary theory detract from the power and creative genius of God who "spoke and the world came into being."
12. Evolutionary theory would place thousands of "secondary causes" between God and the final product of Creation.
13. The presence of many "secondary causes" would make God the Creator into a Deist's God — an absentee landlord within His own universe.
14. Accepting the evolutionary account of origins inevitably leads to the adoption of a purely materialist view of the world where things like soul, spirit and God have no place.
15. The processes proposed by evolutionary theory — mutations, natural selection, survival of the fittest — have ramifications within the social order, leading to forms of race supremacy, selective breeding, genetic engineering, and the legitimizing of war.
16. Evolution explains the origin of the higher human faculties — thought, reason, choice — as the result of an ever-increasingly more complex brain and gives no room for belief in the human soul or spirit.
17. If the concept of sin did not originate as the *Genesis* account claims, but grows out of the social and psychological behaviors of an evolving species, then the biblical account of salvation is seriously undercut.

The issues raised by these statements all share a common inquiry: Can Genesis 1-2 be reconciled or harmonized with the findings of evolutionary theory or with other related scientific disciplines? A number of responses to those questions take shape in several approaches to the Bible and science. We'd like to survey, in some cases superficially, the broad outlines of those approaches in order to familiarize the reader with the current state of the discussion.

My own training is in biblical languages, history, philosophy and related studies, and I do not consider myself at all competent to address matters of a scientific nature. While I can follow a scientific argument, yet I am a pure spectator in matters of detail and evidence collection. As a philosopher, I'm well aware of the distinctions between concepts such as theories, facts, laws, hypotheses, and the like. What counts as a theory, for example, by no means is contrary to the simple collection or observation of data. Theories have both explanatory and predictive powers, and are capable of both confirmation and disconfirmation. Science deals in such concepts. The Bible by its very nature does not. We may, however, form theories about the *interpretation* of the Biblical text, insofar as it consists of words, grammatical structure, historical settings, and literary forms. On the other hand, the Bible does not purport to set forth theories in the sense that science uses the word "theory," but instead contains general principles for understanding the nature of God, salvation and living the holy life.

That said, the encounter between the Bible and science can be the object of descriptive studies, and in what follows we will briefly lay out several proposals offered by considerate thinkers on the subject. We have relied

on readily available online resources, in particular the general articles by the *Wikipedia* site, but have fact-checked these by additional resources noted at the end of each position. The reader of these *Notes* is encouraged to use the material for general orientation only, and then proceed to investigate the suggested sources for further depth. In a paper like the present one, we can hardly comprehend the gamut of conversation currently underway on Creation and evolution. My personal viewpoint is that we need much more interaction among the positions and considerably less accusation. In researching this material, I was reminded again and again how emotionally charged the topic has become since the Scopes money trial of the 1920's. The time has come to convene a summit of scientists and theologians in the Evangelical world, and begin building paths to mutual understanding and respect across the range of disciplines affected. Simple practices like peer review and field experience must replace mere verbal analysis and isolated position formation. Perhaps through reading these brief summaries, some among the readers will catch the flame and shed more light than heat on the subject through their own vocations.

We present, then, several positions. In doing so, we've tried to avoid caricature as much as possible, and if we have failed in the effort, we ask in advance the forgiveness of those who believe their views have not been fairly represented.

### **Young Earth Creationism**

Young Earth creationism (YEC) is a form of creationism holding that the Heavens, Earth, and life on Earth were created by direct acts of God during a short period, sometime between c. 5,700 and 10,000 years ago. Its adherents are those Christians and Jews who believe that God created the Earth in six 24-hour days, taking the Hebrew text of Genesis as a literal account. Some adherents believe that existing evidence in the natural world today supports a strict interpretation of scriptural creation as historical fact. Those adherents believe that the scientific evidence supporting evolution, geological uniformitarianism, or other theories which are at odds with a literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account, is either flawed or misinterpreted.

Many Young Earth creationists (YECs) are active in the development of creation science, an endeavor that holds that the events associated with supernatural creation can be evidenced and modeled through an interpretation of the scientific method. This has led to the establishment of a number of Young Earth Creation Science organizations such as the *Institute for Creation Research*, *Creation Research Society* and *Creation Ministries International*.

Young Earth creationists claim that the lack of support for a Young Earth theory in professional science journals or among professional science organizations is due to discrimination and censorship.

The rise of fundamentalist Christianity at the start of the twentieth century saw a revival of interest in YEC, as a part of the movement's rejection of the explanation of evolution. In 1923, George McCready Price, a Seventh-day Adventist wrote *The New Geology*, a book partly inspired by the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* in which Seventh-day Adventist prophet Ellen G. White described the impact of the Great flood on the shape of the Earth. Although not an accredited geologist, Price's writings, which were based upon reading geological texts and documents, rather than field or laboratory work, provide an explicitly fundamentalist perspective on geology. The book attracted only a small following, with its advocates almost all being Lutheran pastors and Seventh-day Adventists in America. Harry Rimmer was another prominent exponent of similar views, at least during some of his evangelizing career (Rimmer appears to have also subscribed to "gap creationism", and a local flood, at least at some times).

In the 1950's, Price's work came under severe criticism, particularly by Bernard Ramm in his book *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. Together with J. Laurence Kulp, a geologist and in fellowship with the Plymouth Brethren, and other scientists, Ramm influenced Christian organizations such as the *American Scientific Affiliation* (ASA) in not supporting flood geology.

Price's work was subsequently adapted and updated by Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb Jr. in their book *The Genesis Flood* in 1961, a book which strongly influenced my earlier thinking. Morris and Whitcomb argued that the Earth was geologically recent and that the Great Flood had laid down most of the geological strata in the space of a single year, reviving pre-uniformitarian arguments. Given this history, they argued, "the last refuge of the case for evolution immediately vanishes away, and the record of the rocks becomes a tremendous witness... to the holiness and justice and power of the living God of Creation!" This became the foundation for a new generation of YEC thinkers, who organized themselves around Morris' *Institute for Creation Research*. Sister organizations such as the *Creation Research Society* have sought to re-interpret geological formations within a YEC viewpoint

In 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy developed the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which included the following:

WE DENY that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about Earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

As of 2008 a Gallup poll indicated that 36% of US adults agreed with the statement "human beings developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process.", 14% believed that "Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God had no part in this process." and 44% of US adults agreed with the statement "God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so."

Selective Sources:

Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, Expanded Edition. Harvard University Press, 2006.

Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1961.

John D. Morris, *The Young Earth*, Master Books, 2007.

Larry Vardiman, Andrew Snelling, and Eugene F. Chaffin, Editors, *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth*, Institute for Creation Research, 2000.

### **Old Earth Creationism / Progressive Creationism**

Old Earth creationism (OEC) is an umbrella term for a number of types of creationism, including Gap creationism and Progressive creationism. Their worldview is typically more compatible with mainstream scientific thought on the issues of geology, cosmology and the age of the Earth, in comparison to Young Earth creationism; however, they still generally take the accounts of creation in Genesis more literally than theistic evolution (also known as evolutionary creationism) in that OEC rejects the scientific consensus accepting evolution.

Gap creationism states that life was immediately and recently created on a pre-existing old Earth. One variant rests on a rendering of Genesis 1:1-2 as: "In the beginning ... [when] the earth became formless and void." (It is argued that the word 'was', *hayah*, can also be correctly translated as 'became'.)

This is taken by Gap creationists to imply that the earth already existed, but had passed into decay during an earlier age of existence, and was now being "shaped anew". This view is more consistent with mainstream science with respect to the age of the Earth, but still often resembles Young Earth creationism in many respects (often seeing the "days" of Genesis 1 as 24-hour days). This view was popularized in 1909 by the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Progressive Creationism is the religious belief that God allows certain natural process (such as gene mutation and natural selection) to affect the development of life, but has also directly intervened at key moments in life's history to guide those processes or, in some views, create new species altogether (often to replenish the earth). This view of creationism allows for and accepts fluctuation within defined species but rejects transitional evolution as a viable mechanism to create a gradual ascent from unicellular organisms to advanced life. Progressive creationists point to multiple destructive events in the earth's history (such as meteoric impacts and large-scale global volcanic activity) and geological evidence for rapid subsequent speciation as evidence for distinct, typically limited intervention by a Creator. This view can be applied (as it often is) to virtually any of the other Old Earth views.

The Framework interpretation (or framework hypothesis) notes that there is a pattern or "framework" present in the Genesis account and that, because of this, the account may not have been intended as a strict chronological record of creation. Instead, the creative events may be presented in a topical order. This view is broad enough that proponents of other old earth views (such as many Day-Age creationists) have no problem with many of the key points put forward by the hypothesis, though they might believe that there is a certain degree of chronology present. The current set of *Background Notes* has interpreted Genesis 1-2 in light of this model.

Day-Age Creationism is an effort to reconcile the literal Genesis account of Creation with modern scientific theories on the age of the Universe, the Earth, life, and humans. It holds that the six days referred to in the Genesis account of creation are not ordinary 24-hour days, but rather are much longer periods (of thousands or millions of years). The Genesis account is then interpreted as an account of the process of cosmic evolution, providing a broad base on which any number of theories and interpretations are built. Proponents of the Day-Age Theory can be found among theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists.

The Day-Age Theory tries to reconcile these views by arguing that the Creation "days" were not ordinary 24-hour days, but actually lasted for long periods of time—or as the theory's name implies: the "days" each lasted an age. Most advocates of Old Earth creationism hold that the six days referred to in the creation account given in Genesis are not ordinary 24-hour days, as the Hebrew word for "day" (*yôm*) can be interpreted in this context to mean a long period of time (thousands or millions of years) rather than a 24-hour day. According to this view, the sequence and duration of the Creation "days" is representative or symbolic of the sequence and duration of events that scientists theorize to have happened, such that Genesis can be read as a summary of modern science, simplified for the benefit of pre-scientific humans.

Gerald Schroeder puts forth a view which tries to reconcile 24-hour creation days with an age of billions of years for the universe by noting, as creationist Phillip E. Johnson summarizes in his article "What Would Newton Do?": "The Bible speaks of time from the viewpoint of the universe as a whole, which Schroeder interprets to mean at the moment of 'quark confinement,' when stable matter formed from energy early in the first second of the big bang." Schroeder calculates that a period of six days under the conditions of quark confinement, when the universe was approximately a trillion times smaller and hotter than it is today, is equal to fifteen billion years of earth time today. This is all due to space expansion after quark confinement. Thus Genesis and modern physics are reconciled. Hugh Ross's *Reasons to Believe* claims that Schroeder puts the creation of the Earth approximately eight billion years earlier than modern scientific theories and it may be incorrect with respect to the viewpoint of creation. Schroeder states in an earlier book, *Genesis and the Big Bang*, that the Earth and solar system is some "4.5 to 5 billion years" old and also states in a later book, *The Science of God*, that the Sun is 4.6 billion years old.

Selective Sources:

*Answers in Creation* (AIC) is a privately held non-profit organization founded in 2003. AIC is a web-based creation science ministry with a focus on challenging Young Earth Creationism. *Reasons to Believe* was started by Hugh Ross.

Gerald, Schroeder, *Genesis and the Big Bang Theory: The Discovery of Harmony Between Modern Science and the Bible*, 1991.

Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, 2004.

Samuel A. Elder, *The God Who Makes Things Happen: Physical Reality and the Word of God*, 2007.

### **Intelligent Design**

Intelligent design is the assertion that "certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection." It is a modern form of the traditional teleological argument for the existence of God, but one which avoids specifying the nature or identity of the designer. The idea was developed by a group of American creationists who reformulated their argument in the creation-evolution controversy to circumvent court rulings that prohibit the teaching of creationism as science. Intelligent design's leading proponents – all of whom are associated with the *Discovery Institute*, a politically conservative think tank – believe the designer to be the God of Christianity.

The concept of intelligent design originated in response to the 1987 United States Supreme Court *Edwards v. Aguillard* ruling involving separation of church and state. Its first significant published use was in *Of Pandas and People*, a 1989 textbook intended for high-school biology classes. Several additional books on the subject were published in the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, intelligent design proponents had begun clustering around the *Discovery Institute* and more publicly advocating the inclusion of intelligent design in public school curricula. With the *Discovery Institute* and its *Center for Science and Culture* serving a central role in planning and funding, the "intelligent design movement" grew increasingly visible in the late 1990s and early 2000s, culminating in the 2005 Dover trial which challenged the intended use of intelligent design in public school science classes.

In *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, a group of parents of high-school students challenged a public school district requirement for teachers to present intelligent design in biology classes as an alternative "explanation of the origin of life". U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III ruled that intelligent design is not science, that it "cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents", and that the school district's promotion of it therefore violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Intelligent design is presented as an alternative to natural explanations for the origin and diversity of life. It stands in opposition to conventional biological science, which relies on the scientific method to explain life through observable processes such as mutation and natural selection. The stated purpose of intelligent design is to investigate whether or not existing empirical evidence implies that life on Earth must have been designed by an intelligent agent or agents. William A. Dembski, one of intelligent design's leading proponents, has said that the fundamental claim of intelligent design is that "there are natural systems that cannot be adequately explained in terms of undirected natural forces and that exhibit features which in any other circumstance we would attribute to intelligence". In a *Discovery Institute* manifesto known as the *Wedge Document*, the supporters of the movement were told:

We are building on this momentum, broadening the wedge with a positive scientific alternative to materialistic scientific theories, which has come to be called the theory of intelligent design. Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.

Proponents of intelligent design look for evidence of what they term "signs of intelligence": physical properties of an object that point to a designer. For example, intelligent design proponents argue that an archaeologist who

finds a statue made of stone in a field may justifiably conclude that the statue was designed, and may reasonably seek to identify its designer. The archaeologist would not, however, be justified in making the same claim based on an irregularly shaped boulder of the same size. Design proponents argue that living systems show great complexity, from which they infer that some aspects of life have been designed.

Intelligent design proponents say that although evidence pointing to the nature of an "intelligent cause or agent" may not be directly observable, its effects on nature can be detected. Dembski, in *Signs of Intelligence*, states: "Proponents of intelligent design regard it as a scientific research program that investigates the effects of intelligent causes ... not intelligent causes per se". In his view, one cannot test for the identity of influences exterior to a closed system from within, so questions concerning the identity of a designer fall outside the realm of the concept.

The modern use of the words "intelligent design", as a term intended to describe a field of inquiry, began after the Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987), ruled that creationism is unconstitutional in public school science curricula. A Discovery Institute report says that Charles Thaxton, editor of *Of Pandas and People*, had picked the phrase up from a NASA scientist, and thought "That's just what I need, it's a good engineering term". In drafts of the book over one hundred uses of the root word "creation", such as "creationism" and "creation science", were changed, almost without exception, to "intelligent design", while "creationists" was changed to "design proponents." In June 1988 Thaxton held a conference titled "Sources of Information Content in DNA" in Tacoma, Washington, and in December decided to use the label "intelligent design" for his new creationist movement. Stephen C. Meyer was at the conference, and later recalled that "the term came up".

Use of the terms "creationism" versus "intelligent design" in sequential drafts of the book, *Of Pandas and People*. *Of Pandas and People* was published in 1989, and was the first book to make frequent use of the phrases "intelligent design," "design proponents," and "design theory", thus representing the beginning of the modern "intelligent design" movement. "Intelligent design" was the most prominent of around fifteen new terms it introduced as a new lexicon of creationist terminology to oppose evolution without using religious language. It was the first place where the phrase "intelligent design" appeared in its present use, as stated both by its publisher Jon Buell, and by William A. Dembski in his expert witness report. The book presented all of the basic arguments of intelligent design proponents before any research had been done to support these arguments, and was actively promoted by creationists for public school use.

Selective Sources:

Michael J. Behe. *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, New York: Free Press, 1996.

Michael J. Behe, William A. Dembski, Stephen C. Meyer. *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe* (Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute), Ignatius Press 2000.

Percival Davis and Dean H. Kenyon, *Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins*, 1989 (2nd edition 1993).

Jonathan Wells (2006). *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2006.

Denyse O'Leary, *By Design or By Chance? The Growing Controversy on the Origins of Life in the Universe*, Augsburg Books, June 2004.

Phillip E. Johnson. *Darwin on Trial*, Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991.

**Theistic Evolution / Evolutionary Creationism**

Theistic evolution and evolutionary creationism are similar concepts that assert that classical religious teachings about God are compatible with the modern scientific understanding about biological evolution. In short, theistic evolutionists believe that there is a God, that God is the creator of the material universe and (by consequence) all life within, and that biological evolution is simply a natural process within that creation. Evolution, according to this view, is simply a tool that God employed to develop human life.

Theistic evolution is not a theory in the scientific sense, but a particular view about how the science of evolution relates to religious belief and interpretation. Theistic evolution supporters can be seen as one of the groups who reject the conflict thesis regarding the relationship between religion and science – that is, they hold that religious teachings about creation and scientific theories of evolution need not contradict. In describing early proponents of this viewpoint, it is sometimes described as Christian Darwinism. A very similar view is evolutionary creationism.

The term was used by National Center for Science Education executive director Eugenie Scott to refer to the part of the overall spectrum of beliefs about creation and evolution holding the theological view that God creates through evolution. It covers a wide range of beliefs about the extent of any intervention by God, with some approaching deism in rejecting continued intervention. Others see intervention at critical intervals in history in a way consistent with scientific explanations of speciation, but with similarities to the ideas of Progressive Creationism that God created "kinds" of animals sequentially.

Theistic evolution holds that the theist's acceptance of evolutionary biology is not fundamentally different from the acceptance of other sciences, such as astronomy or meteorology. The latter two are also based on a methodological assumption of naturalism to study and explain the natural world, without assuming the existence or nonexistence of the supernatural. In this view, it is held both religiously and scientifically correct to reinterpret ancient religious texts in line with modern-day scientific findings about evolution. St. Anselm described theology as "Faith seeking understanding" and theistic evolutionists believe that this search for understanding extends to scientific understanding.[citation needed] In light of this view, authors writing on the subject, such as Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, say that "The best science and our best thinking about God belong together." Peters and Hewlett see science as a means of evaluating, understanding, and using to our benefit the intricacies of the world that God has created for us.

This synthesis of science with the teleology underlying faith and religious teachings can still be described as creationism in holding that divine intervention brought about the origin of life or that divine Laws govern formation of species, but in the creation-evolution controversy its proponents generally take the "evolutionist" side. For this reason, some on both sides prefer to use the term "theistic evolution" over "evolutionary creationism" to describe this belief.

The Church of the Nazarene sees "knowledge acquired by science and human inquiry equal to that acquired by divine revelation," and, while the church "'believes in the Biblical account of creation' and holds that God is the sole creator, it allows latitude 'regarding the "how" of creation'" (*Newsweek*, September 11, 2007, "Can God Love Darwin too?"). While Richard G. Colling, author of *Random Designer* and former professor at Olivet Nazarene University, received criticism from elements within the denomination in 2007 for his book (published in 2004), Darrel R. Falk of Point Loma Nazarene published a similar book in 2004, and Karl Giberson of Eastern Nazarene, the first Nazarene scholar to publish with Oxford University Press, has published four books since 1993 on the tensions between science and religion, including his most recently published *Saving Darwin*. Theologians of note in the denomination whose work on science and religion shows the promise of cooperation include Thomas Jay Oord (*Science of Love, The Altruism Reader*), Michael Lodahl (*God of Nature and of Grace*), and Samuel M. Powell (*Participating in God*). These theologians see no major problem reconciling theology with the general theory of evolution.

The Nazarene *Manual*, a document crafted to provide Biblical guidance and denominational expression for Church members, states: "The Church of the Nazarene believes in the biblical account of creation ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . ."—Genesis 1:1). We oppose any godless interpretation of the origin of the universe and of humankind. However, the church accepts as valid all scientifically verifiable discoveries in geology and other natural phenomena, for we firmly believe that God is the Creator. (Articles I.1., V. 5.1, VII.) (2005).

Selective Sources:

Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, 2006.

Darrel Falk, *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the Worlds Between Faith and Biology*, 2004.

Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*, 1999; *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, 2003.

## Concluding Thoughts

Our intent in these *Notes* has been two-fold: to offer coherent interpretation of Genesis 1-2 within a comprehensible framework; to point out the options for engagement between the Bible and science on matters which seem to bring the two into conflict. As we indicated from the outset, not all questions find answers in what we have written. Our desire has been to provoke thought and encourage further conversation among those with differing views on Creation and Evolution.

We affirm that God is the Creator of all things, and that His existence preceded the cosmos itself. God operates independently of all temporal systems, since time itself is the product of His creative work. When Genesis 1-2 speaks of God's creative task, it does so using language familiar to the first audience in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.E., including the prevailing creation stories found in Mesopotamia. But the God of Genesis 1-2 is not like the gods of the pagans, and His work ultimately fulfills His kingdom project as symbolized in His Sabbath rest. We have yet to see the work of creation reach its goal, at least from the standpoint of time-bound human history. Along the historical timeline, we witness significant epochal events which have significantly transformed the unfolding of God's eternal purpose. Not the least of these is the appearance with human history of God's Son, the Word, who was the active agent of God's creation and finally the redemptive Lord of God's reconciliation. Several key texts bear witness to this, and in them lies the deeper meaning of God's creation project:

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Hebrews 1:1-4 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 11:1-3 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation. 3 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.

Colossians 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Romans 1:19-20 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 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.

The counsels of God were held by Him in the depths of eternity before time began. Scripture speaks openly about God's relationship to His Son "before the foundations of the world" (John 17:24), and discloses the purpose of His redemptive program for humankind using precisely the same language (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). Of His own existence, we hear the solemn declaration:

Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or before you formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

God's Son, personified under the symbol of "wisdom," also pre-dated the creation of all things:

Proverbs 8:22-31 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. 23 Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, 26 before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. 27 When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.

The language is majestic, poetic, symbolic and highly nuanced. Yet we grasp plainly the meaning: God enjoyed the creation of His world and everything in it, working as He did, alongside personified wisdom, His beloved Son. God is described using the metaphor of the master workman, using His symbolic measuring line and inscribing His will on the matter of earth. Without offering detailed scientific process or disclosing His precise methods, God reveals the simple truth that He is the Creator of all things, acting according to His wisdom, and rejoicing in the achievement of creation.

Whatever else we imagine exists within the words of Genesis 1-2, let us pause and worship at the awe-inspiring fearsome works of God as He brings the world into existence. "Know Yahweh, He is God! It is He who has made us, and we are His..." (Psalm 100:3).

**For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)**

Glory to God! Amen.

**Digger Deeper: Hot Topics: Creation and Evolution**  
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *Hot Topics: Creation and Evolution*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website <http://notes.chicagofirstnaz.org>, or pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the **Information** desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

1. What observations have you made previously about the relationship between the Bible and science, especially as it pertains to the question of origins? What roadblocks did you encounter in your thinking? What conflicts resulted from talking about your views with those holding a different point of view?
2. Define the word "creation," as you understand it from your reading of Genesis 1-2.
3. Define the word "evolution," as you were taught it during the course of your collective educational experience.
4. At any point in your life, did you ever attempt to reconcile the two views or were they seen as utterly without agreement? Explain your reasons.
5. How important is the affirmation that God is the Creator of all things?
6. Explain the statement: Before Creation, God was and the world was not. Why is that important to believe as an article of faith? What errors does that belief correct?
7. Spent some time reading Genesis 1:1-2:3, examining the text as if you had never read it before. Assume for a moment that you had no knowledge of science whatsoever as it pertains to the question of origins. What key ideas does the *Genesis* passage teach that seem to be absolutely essential to the idea of Creation?
8. What kind of literature is Genesis 1:1-2:3? Be specific, considering options like narrative, story, poetry, epic and myth. What about the text led you to classify it in the way you have? What features did you reject as completely inapplicable to the passage?
9. From whose point of view is this passage told? How does knowing the point of view change the way you understand some of the key elements in the text?
10. Explain the following words or phrases: heaven, earth, beginning, without form, void, day. How does the passage arrange those concepts in telling the story of Creation?
11. How are heaven and earth related to each other throughout the Bible (Psalm 102:18-19; Isaiah 66:1-2; Colossians 3:1-2; John 3:12-13, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:47-49; 2 Corinthians 5:1)? How does this understanding guide us in interpreting Genesis 1:1-2:3? Read also Isaiah 55:8-9 as you think through your answer.
12. How does Day 4 relate to Day 1? Does that tell you anything about the "sequence" of the creation "week"?
13. What is the crowing achievement of Creation? Why?
14. What is the meaning of the Sabbath in 2:1-3? Did the Sabbath end or is it a continuing experience for God (see Hebrews 4:4, 9-10)? What implications does your answer have for understanding the other days of Creation?
15. Compare the six days of Creation. What "pattern" is duplicated in each of these days? Why does the writer arrange his material in this fashion?
16. When the New Testament makes reference to Creation, what specific features does it emphasize (John 1:1-5; Hebrews 1:1-4; 11:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Romans 1:19-20)? How does this help us in sorting through the essentials found in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and avoid getting distracted by peripherals?
17. What affirmations about God the Creator appear in Psalm 100:3 and Romans 11:36, and what do they lead us to do?