**Creation Series - A La Carte**
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**The BioLogos Foundation**
A couple of weeks ago, John MacArthur received a letter from Darrel Falk, president of The BioLogos Foundation, informing him of their intention to refute his critique of Uniformitarianism with a series of posts. The three-part series launched June 12 with the bold title, “The Biblical Premise of Uniformitarianism: A Response to John MacArthur.”

As the days passed, we waited for the series to deliver on the promise of its title, anxious to engage the debate. It was disappointing. Falk and his contributors utterly failed to deliver. Not only did they fail to provide a biblical premise, they were a complete no-show in the arena of John MacArthur’s arguments. They simply asserted what they were trying to prove.

Phil Johnson, GTY’s Executive Director, has provided an incisive critique of The BioLogos Foundation here. Go read it. And while you’re away from the GTY Blog, check out Al Mohler’s Ligonier Conference message, “Why Does the Universe Look So Old?” Tim Challies has provided an excellentsummary here (we’ll have to stay tuned for a link to the audio).

**Uniformitarian Geology**
Speaking of Uniformitarianism, I’d like to highlight one of its fundamental problems. “The present is the key to the past,” a summary of the uniformitarian hermeneutic, says the processes we see today are the processes that have always been. Natural phenomena like flowing water, wind patterns, volcanic activity, and changes in temperature account for what we see in the geological record, the layers of sediment that cover the earth.

More recently, uniformitarian geologists have allowed certain cataclysmic events into their model, like regional flooding and earthquakes. But, level-headed scientists that they are, they will not allow “religious myths” to influence their interpretations. Events in the biblical record—creation ex nihilo, the Fall, and the global Flood—are quaint relics of an unscientific era, but they have no place in the practice of real science.

But just suppose for a moment that the Flood, as described in Scripture, actually happened. It was an unprecedented, never-to-be-repeated upheaval of the earth’s crust and radical change in the earth’s atmosphere. Would the change in conditions affect radiometric dating? Would they help explain the fossil record, the geologic column, the resulting landscape and geographic features on the earth?

Most scientists will never ask those questions because they *a priori* reject the biblical account of the global Flood.

One fundamental problem with Uniformitarianism, like all non-biblical worldviews, is the circularity of its reasoning. I once had an honest geology professor who told his students, “Folks, when you’re looking at rocks and strata, you’re not looking at time; you’re looking at rocks and strata.” (Zactly.) So I asked him how geologists justified the dating of the geological column, the chart that traverses time from the Cryptic era (starting from 4.5 billion years) to the Cenozoic era (up to today).

***Geology Prof**: “Well, we date the eras by the strata that belong to that era.”*

***Me**: “How do you date the strata?”*

***Geology Prof**:”By the fossils embedded in each stratum.”*

***Me**: (Now we’re getting somewhere.) “So, since carbon dating is used for recent dating, and since radiometric dating isn’t used for dating fossils, how do you determine the ages of the fossils?”*

***Geology Prof**: “By the strata in which we find them.”*

***Me**: “Isn’t that circular? I mean, if you date the fossils by the rocks, and the rocks by the fossils, isn’t that circular reasoning?”*

***Geology Prof**: “Yes, I suppose it is. But that’s the best we can do.”*

I appreciated the honesty, especially considering the discussion took place in a packed classroom of secular college students. But I weary of the Uniformitarians I encounter, particularly among professing Christians, who refuse to acknowledge the circularity of their position. Like the BioLogos crowd, they keep asserting what they claim to prove—“The present is the key to the past”—but without the proof.

Here’s the Christian view: “The *Bible* is the key to the past, present, and future.” Taking God at His Word allows true scientific inquiry to take place because it provides the preconditions for rational thought.

- Creation of all matter by an eternal God (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3) makes more sense than the eternality of matter and infinite regress.
- Creation and the Fall can account for the inherent sense of morality shared by every human being (Rom. 2:14), along with the sense of guilt and shame when we break moral law (v. 15); no other worldview, secular or religious, is able to account for those phenomena consistently.
- And the biblical record of a worldwide Flood that covered all the high mountains under the whole heaven (Gen. 7:19-20) and killed all creatures except those in the ark (vv. 21-23), makes better

sense of the fossil record than anything put forth by uniformitarian geology.

It's time for Christians to return to the self-attesting authority of God's Word and forsake the "vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so called."

**Appearance of Age**

And speaking of opposition, some of our opponents in the comment threads and around the internet have been trying to frame our positions for us. According to them, we're saying God created the universe with "the appearance of age," as if He were trying to trick us. They say the young earth position ascribes some level of insincerity to God, even a subtle deception, whereas old earth positions actually uphold the integrity of God—the universe appears old because it *is* old.

Clever, ain't it.

Here's what we're saying, and here's how we want to say it: God created the universe to be fully functional and immediately useful for Adam and Eve, the crowning jewels of His creation. A mature Adam and Eve were able to make immediate use of the garden for their sustenance and pleasure. How is that deceptive?

When God told Adam how he and the rest of the garden came into existence, can you imagine Adam charging God with deception? See what you think of this hypothetical conversation:

***Adam****: "Wait a sec, God…me, Eve, and the rest of these plants and animals didn't develop like this overnight. You think I was born yesterday?!"*

***God****: "Well, yes…formed from the dust rather than born; but essentially, yes, you were born yesterday."*

So, Adam is left to believe it or not. He can either take God at His word, or reject His account of creation. That's the position we're in as well.

When Jesus created bread and fish for the multitudes, those who didn't know better could assume they were eating bread harvested from grain and fish caught in the fisherman's net. But we know better because God told us in His Word that Jesus created bread and fish that was immediately useful for consumption by the hungry crowds (Matt. 14:13-21; 15:32-38).

Those who insinuate some level of deception by God, like the serpent of old (Gen. 3:1), cast shadows on His character. Taking God at His word, particularly with this matter of origins, does not make God out to be a deceiver. Rather, it's the humble position of faith—"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" (Heb. 11:3).

So, what do we do when we discover data that don't seem to fit the Genesis record of a literal, six-day creation? Some have pointed to the appearance of a supernova in 1987; because of its position in space, it supposedly took 168,000 years for SN 1987's light particles to travel to earth. (Note that the Bible acknowledges such phenomena—like the light from the star in Matthew 2:2—while at the same time affirming the historical accuracy of the Genesis creation account, cf., Matt. 19:4; Rom. 5:12-21.)

How does 168,000 years fit into the history of the universe, which the Bible says is less than 10,000 years? If the Bible has its proper place in our thinking, we'll interpret what we see and experience in light of what we read in God's Word. What is in doubt, therefore, is the 168,000 years, not the biblical timetable of creation. We interpret the data within the framework of a literal, six-day creation. We subject the data, along with our scientific inquiry to understand it, to Scripture; we don't force the Scripture to fit into an old-earth framework.

With regard to SN 1987, here are a few things to think about:

- What if forces exist that affect how light particles traverse the universe? What if the Lord, who superintends every molecule He created (Col. 1:17), created laws in the universe that govern the movement of light in ways we haven't yet discovered?
- What assumptions are at work to conclude 168,000 light years (distance) equals 168,000 years (time)?
- What questions are we failing to ask in the absence of more data, in the ignorance of other phenomena?

If we're still discovering things about the planet on which we live, we ought to be just a tad bit more humble about the far reaches of the universe we've never visited.

**Pulling Out the Roadmap**

Which brings me to a final subject: Where is this series going?

We started this series back in March, showing the irrationality of the evolutionary worldview and its destructive impact on modern society. We then exposed the limitations of science to answer questions about origins. God asked Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" That question has never been answered, and it still confronts the modern scientific community.

Scientists can't answer questions about origins by investigating general revelation because science deals with the observable, and they weren't there to *observe*. Thankfully, God gave us special revelation which includes His account of how it all began.

So, we're now asking questions about hermeneutics: If God gave us the Genesis record, how do we interpret it? We're defending a literal, grammatical-historical approach to Scripture that takes the biblical account at face value. We believe God created the earth in six, literal days.

Soon we'll move from interpretation to implication—how we interpret the creation account affects our view of the Fall in Genesis 3, the Flood in Genesis 6-9, and every other fundamental doctrine in Scripture. How we interpret Genesis sets our trajectory, so we've got to get it right.

Stick around. More good stuff from John MacArthur is on the way!

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