A Stopping Point on the Dividing Line
(creation series summary and conclusion)
Scripture: Genesis 1:1
Code: B100804

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

Darwin's idea "is the most powerful and the most comprehensive idea that has ever arisen on earth. It helps us understand our origins…" (Sir Julian Huxley, "Education and Humanism," in *Essays of a Humanist*, 1964).

The quotations above represent two competing worldviews—Christian theism and naturalistic evolution. One follows the biblical storyline, affirming the recent creation of the heavens and the earth thousands of years ago. The other adheres to philosophical materialism in which a cycle of life and death has been in motion for billions of years. This modern conflict—creation vs. evolution—represents a fundamental dividing line between faith and unbelief.

The Grace to You blog has engaged this controversy for the past several months with articles from John MacArthur, audio and video clips from his sermons, and interaction in the comment threads. Today's article makes fifty posts in the series—a lot has been said—so I intend this as a summary and conclusion to the series. Throughout this article, you'll find links to each post in the series. That'll allow you to catch up on anything you've missed, study the issue in greater depth, and perhaps share the series with someone else.

Before I start summarizing, I'd like to recommend John's entire sermon series, *The Battle for the Beginning*, along with the well-documented book of the same title. We're obviously not able to accomplish in a series of blog posts what John did in his sermon series and book. You'd benefit by becoming better acquainted with his carefully reasoned, biblically consistent apologetic for the Christian perspective of origins.

Now, here's the summary…

At the heart of John MacArthur's perspective on origins is a commitment to the Bible; he reads all of life through the lens of Scripture. And that's the difference between the two competing worldviews—Who do you choose to believe? God, or someone else? It's a matter of ultimate authority.

After framing the argument in biblical terms, only one position is possible—young earth creation. The Bible teaches the recent creation by divine fiat of the heavens and the earth, plant life and animal life; the subsequent special creation of Adam and Eve; and the subsequent fall of Adam and Eve into sin, which introduced death into the world God created. Even the atheistic enemies of Scripture understand that. You either believe that, or you don't.

Ultimately, Satan is the source of evolutionary theory. It's a lie, an alternative reality, a replacement narrative for the unbeliever. Satan used that same strategy when he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, and it's worked well for him ever since. Evolution is simply the latest in a long chain of lies to aid the rebels' cause, waging war against their Creator.

Evolution is essentially an attempted murder—it helps people replace the triune God with a false trinity of matter, time, and chance. For those who embrace the lie that God is dead, there are massive implications and devastating consequences. If God didn't create us, then He doesn't own us, His law is irrelevant, and He has no right to judge us. Removing the troublesome yoke of divine sovereignty liberates people to create and define their own realities. Morals and ethics become matters of individual preference or social convention—universal, transcendent authority is relegated to the unenlightened past.

The consequences of that are severe and brutal. Without a universally-binding, transcendent authority, there is no basis for justice. And who needs justice? If there's no such thing as the special creation of man, and man is nothing more than an animal with opposable thumbs and a more sophisticated, nuanced set of grunts, what's the point of justice?

There's no justice in the dog-eat-dog animal kingdom, and no protection from the strong. Brutality and sensuality reign. There's no sense of loyalty to family or morality, no sense of purpose or meaning. Life in the evolutionary worldview is inherently nihilistic. The masses forage through life, like brute beasts, mindful only of gratifying sensual desires.

That preferred version of reality is all the evolutionist has to look forward to—a cold, hard dystopia. Huxley is right about evolution's comprehensiveness and power, but the landscape in that world is utterly bleak and hopeless.

By contrast, the biblical worldview, predicated on the thoughtful creation by a loving God, paints an entirely different picture. Here is reality, and it is truly the *most* powerful and the *most* comprehensive idea on earth because it is what God revealed in His Word. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

The biblical account of creation is comprehensive because it explains everything. The Bible declares the origin of the heavens and earth, mankind, marriage, evil, language, government, culture, technology, nations, alternate religions, the six-day workweek; it explains where a large portion of the fossil record came from; and provides a chronology of the earth's history. While there may be *apparent* conflicts, there is no evidence that *truly* contradicts what God told us in His Word. Gathering facts and investigating the evidence continues to vindicate the biblical record and devastate Darwinian evolution.

The Bible's creation account is also powerful because it reveals the glory and the purpose of our Creator. From that very first day, God prepared an earth that would be useful for Adam and Eve. God made man in His image, as the pinnacle of His creation, and put him at the center of His plan to glorify Himself in creation and redemption. And Genesis explains why we need redemption at all—the Fall of man helps us understand why evil exists in the world, while providing hope in God's salvation through Jesus Christ. That's the biblical storyline, as told by the Creator, Judge, and Redeemer of the earth. What idea could be more powerful than that?

At the end of the day, you either look to God as the first cause, or you look to something else. You're either a materialist, believing in the eternality of matter, or you are a supernaturalist, believing in the eternality of God. The choice you make at the beginning—your *a priori* set of presuppositions, the assumptions you choose to believe—will determine what you accept as your final authority, how you look at the evidence, and what conclusions you're prepared to accept.

That's why it's so difficult to understand why professing Christians try to make peace with evolution.

Science studies what it can observe, what can be predictably repeated; so science is out of its depth when it tries to answer questions about metaphysics. The scientific method cannot be applied to a non-repeatable supernatural act, like the inception of the universe by divine fiat, or any subsequent miracle.

Evolutionary devotees sometimes seem more like cultists than rational scientists. Many act oblivious to the faith-based nature of their operating assumptions, and are therefore wholly uncritical about their starting point. Here are just a few examples:

- Abiogenesis is impossible; everything can't come forth from nothing.
- Biologists must account for the information we find in DNA; something of greater complexity and intelligence must have put it there.
- Uniformitarian geology makes unjustified and non-proven assumptions in its dating methods, and shows irrational hostility toward the biblical record of the global flood catastrophe(ignoring the warnings of Scripture).

In every field of study, evolutionists make massively consequential, determinative assumptions; and yet they act as if it's all settled, proven science that is beyond question.

Even though the conclusions of science remain a moving target, there are many professing Christians—in fact, *most* Christian institutions—who have caved in to the pervasive, evolutionary viewpoint. Many of them hope to gain credibility with the scientific establishment, and they're willing to sacrifice the Bible to get it.

Inserting long ages into the biblical account of creation, which is required if you're going to make the Bible compatible with evolutionary theory, twists the text of Scripture, compromises inerrancy, and sometimes even undermines the gospel. Theistic evolution and the Framework Hypothesis are two disastrous attempts to reconcile the two mutually exclusive worldviews. Whenever you put literal death before a literal Adam and Eve, you disagree with the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, and other New Testament writers who affirm the historicity of the creation account. Death before Adam, therefore, is an abandonment of any credible claim to biblical fidelity.

In His wisdom, God tied every aspect of redemption to real history, which He recorded and interpreted in His Word. And it all starts with a literal view of the creation account, the special creation of a literal Adam and Eve, and the Fall of mankind into sin. What you believe about creation affects primary doctrines of the Bible. It is a litmus test of biblical fidelity that reveals your commitment to Scripture as the final authority.

And here are some concluding thoughts…

"No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord" (Proverbs 21:30).

The prevailing philosophies of secular humanism, materialism, and naturalism inform and bias most scientific inquiry and conclusions in favor of evolutionary theory. Evolution is indeed a powerful narrative that presents a tremendous challenge to the church. And yet, John MacArthur, along with the cadre of professors at The Master's College and The Master's Seminary, the leadership of Grace Community Church, and the leadership of Grace to You, have all stood firm against the rising tide and dominant winds of evolution. God will honor all those who honor His Word; those who do not honor His Word will be put to shame.

Therefore, in the interest of glorifying God by holding fast to His Word, when there is a way that seems right to today's men (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25), we'd like to offer a few short, concluding observations, in no particular order.

The Foundational Issue of Ultimate Authority

The nature of ultimate, transcendent authority is that it is self-attesting. That means, an ultimate

authority answers to no one and nothing above itself, otherwise it ceases to be ultimate.

If I tell you, “A massive storm is coming to your part of the country.” Since I’m no meteorologist, you’d be right to challenge me and demand the source of my information. I might point you to your local newscast, and again, you could challenge their authority to make such a claim. If your local weather service predicts the weather as well as mine does, well… So, you look beyond me, your local weatherman, and try to find some authority figure you trust before stocking up for the big one or evacuating the area.

That’s especially the case when it comes to metaphysical narratives that attempt to answer the big questions—Where did we come from? Why are we here? Darwinian philosophy offers one narrative, Hindu philosophy offers another, Christian philosophy another, and there are others. But the question we must ask is, “Who says?”

Time, chance, and progress stand in the place of God for the evolutionist, promising an endless “ocean of facts [with] no bottom and no shore” (Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 80). It’s hard to pin down their ultimate authority because it’s mutable, ever-changing, and even contradicting itself.

God is the ultimate, immutable, self-attesting authority, as demonstrated in Hebrews 6:13: “For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself.” Every Christian knows God to be the ultimate authority, and His Word to be the only reliable source of truth, but some act inconsistent with that, especially when it comes to evolutionism.

The dominant “isms” of our day seem so great, so insurmountable. But their splendor quickly fades and their edifices come crumbling down when you contrast them with the God of Scripture.

The Consistent Hermeneutics of Biblical Fidelity

If we claim that God is the only self-attesting, transcendent authority (and we do), and if we claim that the Holy Bible is God-breathed, inerrant, and sufficient (and we do), then how we interpret it becomes a matter of grave importance. People have obviously misinterpreted the Bible and used it to justify all manner of error and even wickedness. It’s important to get it right.

Time and space won’t allow me to go beyond a bare assertion at this point—we’ll have to blog about it one day—but the only consistent approach to interpreting the Bible is the grammatical-historical approach. You use the rules of grammar (lexical, syntactical study) and the facts of history (setting, background study) to determine the plain sense of the text in its context.

When you apply the grammatical-historical method of interpretation to Genesis, you come out the other side with a literal, six-day creation, a literal Adam and Eve, a literal Fall, the worldwide Flood, and a young earth based on the genealogical records. With other methods of interpretation, you have

the luxury of predetermining your conclusions before you start. It may not be what God intended to say, but hey, you'll find ready acceptance in the BioLogos comment threads.

The Scientific Method and Young-Earth Creationism

Young-earth creationists are a hearty bunch. They bear the scorn and disdain of the scientific community, can't get positions at colleges and universities, and are denied funding because their research starts with "religious," not scientific, presuppositions. I call that unfair.

Now, I'm no scientist; but here's how I remember the scientific method (with a little recall help from the Internet): (1) observe, (2) ask a question, (3) form a hypothesis, (4) test your hypothesis, (5) analyze the data to either accept or reject your hypothesis, and (6) accept your hypothesis or revise it and test again.

Why can't young-earth creationists conduct scientific inquiry, using the scientific method, but within the boundaries of Scripture? Old-earth creationists do the same thing, but remain within boundaries set for them by materialism, naturalism, and secular humanism. So, why must young-earth creationists play by the rules of a God-rejecting worldview? Shouldn't Christians demand it be the other way around?

The Error of Evidentialist Apologetics

By observing the comment threads on our blog, Phil Johnson's blog, and the BioLogos blog, I noticed a number of times that the motivation for a number of old-earth creationists is to maintain Christian credibility with the unbelieving world, particularly those within the scientific community. They believe we need to do science according to the evolutionary model, and win them to Christ by showing them what good thinkers we are.

That's obviously a bit of an unfair caricature, an oversimplification (forgive me), but it helps me make a couple of points. Whenever you appeal to human reason to adjudicate metaphysical questions (like origins), you set it above God as the final arbiter of reality. But human reason faces natural, creaturely limitations (e.g., bound by space, time, finite capacity). Human reason is unable to be objective because it is hindered by noetic effects of sin, affecting the ability to think; it also suffers the effects of a sin nature, which affects the will to think in a godly way. Do you really think God and His Word will get a fair hearing?

Furthermore, 1 Peter 3:15, that classic apologetic text, tells us to "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts," and in that manner, "make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account." If Christ is Lord, then His Word is the supreme authority for you as a Christian. And the same hermeneutic that upholds His humanity and deity, His death, burial, and resurrection, and all the other primary truths of Scripture, should be the same hermeneutic you employ to interpret Genesis 1 and 2. Young-earth creationism is consistent with the lordship of Christ; you must not compromise that when

preaching the gospel to evolutionists.

How then do you deal with the evolutionist? Stick to what God has said, trust Him completely, and put Proverbs 26:4-5 into practice—“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes.”

First, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.” That is, don’t enter into the evolutionist’s foolish thinking, don’t accept his set of presuppositions, don’t leave his assumptions unchallenged. If you do, you’ll become like him. That’s the lesson of the BioLogos fiasco (here, here, and here; also, take a look at the excellent posts by Phil Johnson here, here, and here).

Second, “Answer a fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Don’t deny the data, and don’t deny that their conclusions have the appearance of validity—maybe you have something to learn. But take the time to demonstrate (1) the folly of his assumptions and presuppositions, and (2) that the creationist framework can give an answer for the evidence (even if it doesn’t satisfy the skeptic). The point isn’t to convince the unbeliever; the point is to please the Lord and leave the unbeliever without excuse (“lest he be wise in his own eyes”).

Doing science within a young-earth creationist framework may be lonely and difficult (especially because the funding isn’t there), but it’s worth it to maintain your credibility and integrity before God and men.

The True Tone of Compromise

I found it interesting to see the comment count rise when we called out the evangelical compromises with evolutionary theory. We had little disagreement about the threat of evolution, increased disagreement about the limitations of science to answer metaphysical questions, but outright hostility, even scoffing, when John exposed the inconsistency and compromise of those who deny the straightforward, literal reading of Genesis.

Hermeneutics is clearly ground-zero in the battle. As I said, we’ll have to come back to that.

But it was also instructive to see the different types of dissenting voices in the comment thread. I’ve labeled them the Bullies, the PoMos, and the Armchair Critics.

The Bullies led out with their education and experience—PhDs and decades in the field. Some would swagger into the comment thread like boisterous gunslingers, flipping over tables and trying to intimidate all the paying customers. I suppose they gained the advantage of shock and awe, but once the dust settled, they manifested insurmountable weakness in biblical fidelity, consistency, and presuppositions.

The PoMos entered the thread gently, just trying to learn. They seemed so genuinely conflicted about the controversy, even to the point of losing sleep. They just wanted to learn from their young-earth creationist brothers, but they couldn't get over the nagging evidences they were confronted with in the universities. But peeling away the soft, fuzzy layers of superficial agreement, we found a bedrock layer of unbelieving presuppositions and biblical inconsistency. If only they would take Scripture as seriously as they take other fields of study…

The Armchair Critics are always among the most frustrating to deal with. They tend to be lazy and brash, always casting doubts into the mix, but never taking responsibility to put forth a consistent, much less superior, alternative viewpoint. I tend to think of them in the same light as the factious man of Titus 3:10, whom we're to reject after the first and second warning. But that's not easy to do in a blog setting; after all, this isn't your local church.

Well, so much more could be said, but only one thing really needs to be said. Here's the dividing line: Do you believe the Bible, or do you not?

While you're welcome to interact with any of the points above, we'd really like to hear from you about the impact this series has had on you. Let us know.

Thanks again for the robust commenting, and for sticking with us through the past few months—you've been a great group! We'll see you in a couple of days in a brand new series.

Travis Allen

Managing Director

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).