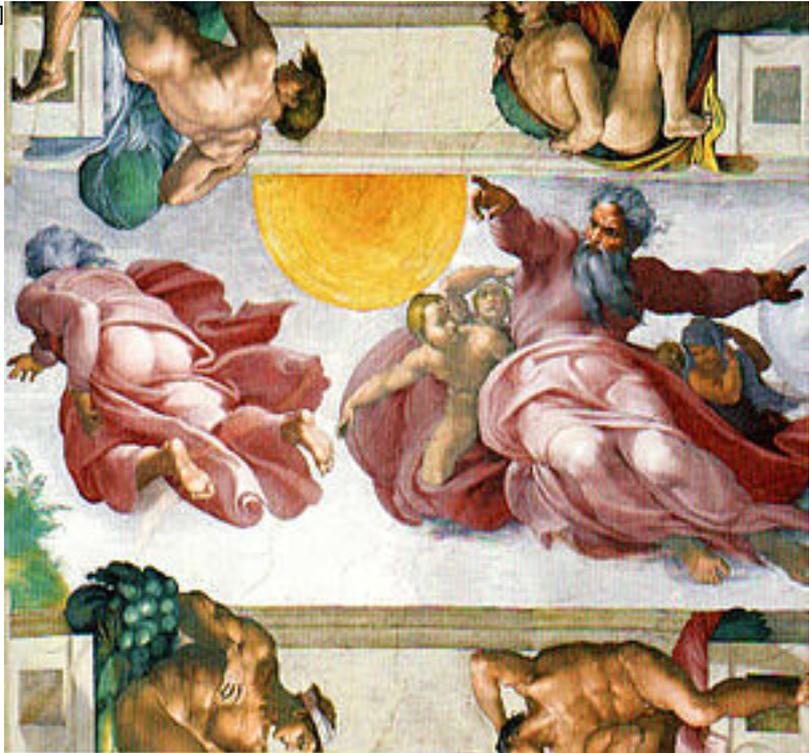


Genesis 1:1-2

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God creating the Sun, Moon and Earth, Michelangelo, from the Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (Photo credit: Wikipedia)[/caption]

In the Beginning

I just got through reading an interesting article by respected evangelical theologian R.C. Sproul about how he changed his mind about the Genesis 1-2 creation account. He is now a literal six day, young earth creationist. He changed his mind not because of any scientific discovery, but because he believes every major Christian doctrine proceeds from the first two chapters of Genesis. For instance, what is at stake includes the power of God, the special nature of man as created in God's image, the nature of marriage, the nature and consequences of sin, the relationship of man to the rest of creation, and much more. If man just naturally came to be through some kind of 4 billion year evolutionary process, then God's power is not on display in the creation, man is not created in the image of God to have a special relationship with God, and marriage is not a special relationship created by God between one man and one woman. Furthermore, it changes our moral/ethical relationship with sin and its consequences. If we just evolved, then evil is just self preservation, and it's not our fault, so there should be no eternal consequences like hell. If we are nothing but an evolved higher form of beastly animal with no moral sense, then we have no special loving relationship with God, and I see no reason for God to send His Son to suffer and die for our sins—especially since evolution redefines or eliminates sin.

Sproul says that he used to hold to what may be called the "framework hypothesis". This states that the six days of creation in Genesis are just artistic devices to create a "framework" for a more lengthy period of development. This works well if you are determined to resolve the conflict between the Genesis creation account and science. Sproul says he attempted to believe in the "Big Bang" theory while still maintaining biblical inspiration of Genesis 1-2. Now, he believes it is necessary to his theology, and the biblical doctrines that he teaches to give up such compromises and embrace the literal interpretation of Genesis 1-2. Nevertheless, his failure to take a stand on the young earth vs. old earth question proves how complicated these issues are. The scientific proof for an old earth is giving evangelicals a difficult task in taking a dogmatic stand on the earth and creation only being about 6000 years old when science seems to be indicating it is somewhere between 3 and 12 billion years old.

The Gap Theory

I am very much like Sproul in that I want to hedge my bets, by believing in the literal creation account, but also leaving some flexibility for science. For instance, I read where we can now see through space telescopes so far out into space that it would take the light from certain stars we see millions of years to get here. In other words, what they are seeing existed millions of years ago. I don't know what to do with that! One theory that might work is the "gap theory" made popular by the Scofield Reference Bible. It is also called the "ruin-reconstruction" theory. The idea is that there was a previous creation which was destroyed which is seen in Genesis 1:1, and the creation of Genesis 1:2 is a re-creation with an undetermined amount of time between. In this gap you could put the angelic conflict and the old age of the earth by scientist's standards, and the dinosaurs could be explained as being in that previous creation. This gap could also explain the sedimentary layers and the age of the fossils. Some smart guys like D.G. Barnhouse and W.A. Criswell taught the gap theory.

Intelligent Design

In the last twenty years a popular theory about creation has developed among scientists, who also happen to be Christians, called "intelligent design". Simply stated they have proven that the creation, and particularly mankind, has the appearance of being designed. In the same way that if you were to find a watch on the ground, it would have order and complexity and is clearly designed for a purpose; the human body has the appearance of intelligent design. It is interesting that critics openly admit that the creation has the appearance of being designed, but they maintain that appearance is all it is. These scientists that are Christians and hold to intelligent design, believe in the creation account of Genesis, but have a different view of the age of the earth. They typically hold to one of two views: "the day=an age" view, or the "literary framework view". They point out that the Hebrew word for day is "yom" and is often used in Genesis to refer to an era or age, just as we say "back in the day" to refer to a time period of indefinite length. The literary framework view is that the six days are just a literary framework for a more lengthy time period. Under both of these views they accept the old age of earth, and that the fossils and geologic strata deposited slowly over ages. Again, there are some very impressive evangelical Christians in this group like Norm Geisler, J. Boyce, and Charles Hodge.

Who Wrote Genesis Anyway?

A related, and therefore important issue to the creation account is the identity of the author. Sadly, in the last two hundred years there has been a progressive movement to prove that Moses was not the author of the first five books of the Bible. In spite of the fact that the Bible clearly says Moses is the author, the traditional church has always believed Moses is the author, and Judaism has always maintained Moses as the author, the philosophic theologians of the 19th century and the scientific leaning theologians of the 20th and 21st centuries have pushed hard for what is called the "documentary hypothesis". In the aftermath of the "Enlightenment" of the 17-18th century's rationalistic movement, theologians began searching for a more rationalistic anti-supernatural approach to the Bible. Theologians began doing what they called "source criticism" to point out what they saw as inconsistencies in the text of the first five books of the Bible. Their main argument was that the divine names were different in different sections. In the first section, the predominant name was Yahweh or in English, Jehovah, so they called that section by the letter J. In the second section God was called Elohim so they called it by the letter E. The third

section they called by the letter D for Deuteronomy, and the last section was P for priestly. Supposedly then there were four different authors of the Torah (first 5 books), and they wrote the different sections between 950 BC and 500 BC. Sometime after that they maintain that some editor, probably a priest, combined the different documents into the Torah and ascribed Moses as the author for tradition's sake. They also point out that there are differences in style and vocabulary in the sections that point to different authors.

Even though this has become the majority view in the church today, I don't buy it for a minute. Do you realize the size and complexity of the "cover up" if Moses is not the author? Repeatedly in the Torah itself are references to Mosaic authorship. Also many other Old Testament books name Moses as the author. In the 6th book of the O. T., Joshua 1:7-8, the law is associated with Moses, and Joshua and the people are commanded to meditate on it and obey it. Joshua says they are to read and meditate on this "book of the law". Therefore, after Moses' death, they had the Torah in written form and it was recognized as the authoritative Word of God. Also in the New Testament, Jesus and the Apostles all quoted from Moses as the author. Therefore the biblical critics would have us believe that all the successive authors of the Bible were either wrong or participated in some kind of massive fraud and cover up. Because of the poor writing materials and the need for many copies to be circulated, there would also need to be hundreds, even thousands of professional scribes involved in this conspiracy. As far as the style and vocabulary, keep in mind the Torah was written by Moses over a 40 year period. The Law of Exodus 20 was given by God when they first came out of Egypt, but Moses gave the sermons of Deuteronomy forty years later to a different generation. Do you really think that the different messages over 40 years to different audiences about different subjects wouldn't vary? How about you going back forty years and reading some of your letters, have things changed? DUH !

The question then is why these brilliant theologians would go so far and jump through such hoops to discredit Genesis through Deuteronomy? The historical narrative has such a continuity that the author must be an eyewitness and be the same Moses it says it is. The unified content and style of Genesis can hardly be accounted for by some redactor who came along 1000 years later. Every indication is that it was organized and produced by the one man Moses. Obviously there were a few parts like Moses' death that were added by Joshua, but it is the work of Moses. I can only conclude that theologians today are determined to discredit the Bible in order to rule out the supernatural element of the stories. They like the teachings of Moses and of course Jesus, but they want only a rationalistic, naturalistic explanation for the creation, sin, the consequences of sin, and the means of salvation.

Who, When, Where, and How ?

These are the typical questions that we would like to have answered, but God has really only answered clearly the Who question. The Bible is clear, and we can be sure that God created all things and continues to maintain all things. I find it interesting that the critics who want to disprove that God created the earth and all that's in it, use the when, where, and how questions to disprove God. The Bible does not give the details on the when, where, and how—only that God was behind it, therefore we need to maintain some flexibility. When we were created or how old the earth is, is not a salvation issue, but whether God created us is a salvation issue. Therefore the only issue we should be dogmatic about is the who question—God created. Amazingly, the scientific, non-Christian crowd is very dogmatic about the when, how, and where questions. I have been told and read that they believe evolution is a fact, an absolute truth, so I always ask them the who, when, how, and where questions. The answers I get back are as follows:

Who---nobody, no cause, something came into being out of nothing

Where--- don't know exactly. Many believe man first evolved in Mesopotamia, but others say Africa, and some Europe

When---wide range of answers between 3 billion years and 30 billion years, but the predominant view is 4.5 billion years, give or take a half billion

How---many theories on the beginning of life like the Big Bang Theory, primordial soup, and even aliens. Richard Dawkins is a leading spokesperson for evolution, and against Christianity. I saw him interviewed. He was asked "How did life begin?" He said "Nobody knows. It had to be from a molecule capable of self replication, but where did that come from? I don't know, but possibly from intelligent beings from another solar system." Really?

Conclusion

So let me recap their argument that evolution is a fact and not a theory---Something came out of nothing, we don't know where exactly, we think the earth is 4.5 billion years old give or take a half billion years, and we don't know how, and THOSE ARE THE FACTS. If evolution were a provable fact there would be a wealth of transitional forms, but all we have is a few controversial ones. We all need to step back and allow some flexibility on issues like this, but when it comes to WHO, we are inflexible and dogmatic, because without God as our creator we have no purpose, no meaning, no salvation, and no eternal life.

CHARLIE TAYLOR