

The Spectrum of Christian Faith

How did we get here?

Opening Questions

How did the world/universe begin?

How did we get here?

How do you interpret the opening chapters of Genesis?

How do modern science and the Bible relate?

Common Ground

There is much common ground among the options we will discuss today. Each of these views hold that

- God is the author of creation and God created with a plan and purpose.
- God is still active in our lives and the world.
- Humans are created in God's image.
- Jesus is our King and died for our sins.

Everyone that hold these views would assent to the Apostles' and Nicene creed and takes the Bible seriously and are committed to the Great Commission.

The Spectrum

Young Earth
Creationism

Answers in Genesis

Old Earth
Creationism

Reasons to Believe

Evolutionary
Creationism

Biologos

Concordist

God created the earth in
the sequence of events
described in Genesis 1

Non-concordist

God created using a different
timing and order of events than
those described in Genesis 1.

God

No Conflict

Nature

Scripture

Human Interpretation

Human Interpretation

Science

Biblical Interpretation

Influenced by

Potential Conflict

Influenced by

Worldview,
Politics

Theology,
Church Tradition

From Answers in Genesis:

The Bible

Young Earth Creationism

The 66 books of the Bible are the unique, written Word of God. The Bible is divinely inspired, inerrant, infallible, supremely authoritative, and sufficient in everything it teaches. Its assertions are factually true in all the original autographs. Its authority is not limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes but includes its assertions in such fields as history and science (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Revelation 22:18–19).

God's Two Books?

No apparent, perceived, or claimed evidence in any field of study, including science, history, and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture obtained by historical-grammatical interpretation. Of primary importance is the fact that evidence is always subject to interpretation by fallible people who do not possess all information (Numbers 23:19; 2 Samuel 22:31; Psalm 18:30; Isaiah 46:9–10, 55:9; Romans 3:4; 2 Timothy 3:16).

Young Earth Creationism

- The account of origins presented in Genesis 1–11 is a simple but factual presentation of actual events, and therefore, provides a reliable framework for scientific research into the question of the origin and history of life, mankind, the earth, and the universe.
- The various original life forms (kinds), including mankind, were made by direct, supernatural, creative acts of God (i.e., not by natural, physical processes over millions of years). The living descendants of any of the original kinds (apart from man) may represent more than one species today, reflecting the genetic potential within each original kind. Only limited biological changes (including mutational deterioration) have occurred naturally within each kind since creation (i.e., one kind does not change over time into a different kind: Genesis 1:11–12, 1:21, 1:24–25, 30:37–42; 1 Corinthians 15:39).

Young Earth Creationism

- The great flood of Genesis was an actual historic event, worldwide (global) in its extent and catastrophic in its effects. At one stage during the flood, the waters covered the entire surface of the whole globe with no land surface being exposed anywhere—the flood of Noah is not to be understood as any form of local or regional flood. The Noachian flood was a significant geological event, and most fossiliferous sediments were deposited at that time (Genesis 7:19–20; 2 Peter 3:5–7).
- Scripture teaches a recent origin of man and the whole creation, with history spanning approximately 4,000 years from creation to Christ.

Young Earth Creationism

- The days in Genesis do not correspond to geologic ages but are six consecutive, 24-hour days of creation; the first day began in Genesis 1:1, and the seventh day, which was also a normal 24-hour day, ended in Genesis 2:3 (Genesis 1:1–2:3; Exodus 20:8–11, 31:17; Hebrews 4:3–4).
- The gap theory, progressive creation, day-age, framework hypothesis, theistic evolution (i.e., evolutionary creation), functionality–cosmic temple, analogical days, day-gap-day, and any other views that try to fit evolution or millions of years into Genesis are incompatible with Scripture.

From Reasons to Believe

The Bible

Old Earth Creationism

We believe the Bible (the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God, written. As a “God-breathed” revelation, it is thus verbally inspired and completely without error (historically, scientifically, morally, and spiritually) in its original writings. While God the Holy Spirit supernaturally superintended the writing of the Bible, that writing nevertheless reflects the words and literary styles of its individual human authors. Scripture reveals the being, nature, and character of God; the nature of God’s creation; and especially his will for the salvation of human beings through Jesus Christ. The Bible is therefore our supreme and final authority in all matters that it addresses.

God’s Two Books

Conviction #1: God’s revelation in the words of Scripture and in the world of nature is wholly trustworthy and will always prove consistent when thoroughly understood because God is the Source of both.

Old Earth Creationism

- Conviction #2: Scripture and nature deserve humble, careful, and prayerful investigation/interpretation. We must look at all available research data, making every effort to mitigate personal, political, and cultural biases.
- Conviction #3: We are called by God to present our findings and engage with others—those who agree with our views and those who disagree—in earnest, respectful dialogue that supersedes our desire to argue or persuade.
- We believe that the physical universe, the realm of nature, is the visible creation of God. It declares God's existence and gives a trustworthy revelation of God's character and purpose. In Scripture, God declares that through his creation all humanity recognizes his existence, power, glory, and wisdom. An honest study of nature—its physical, biological, and social aspects—can prove useful in a person's search for truth. Properly understood, God's Word (Scripture) and God's world (nature), as two revelations (one verbal, one physical) from the same God, will never contradict each other.

Evolutionary Creationism

From Biologos:

The Bible

We believe the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God. By the Holy Spirit it is the “living and active” means through which God speaks to the church today, bearing witness to God’s Son, Jesus, as the divine Logos, or Word of God.

God’s Two Books

We believe that God also reveals himself in and through the natural world he created, which displays his glory, eternal power, and divine nature. Properly interpreted, Scripture and nature are complementary and faithful witnesses to their common Author.

Evolutionary Creationism

- We believe that God typically sustains the world using faithful, consistent processes that humans describe as “natural laws.” Yet we also affirm that God works outside of natural law in supernatural events, including the miracles described in Scripture. In both natural and supernatural ways, God continues to be directly involved in creation and in human history.
- We believe that the methods of science are an important and reliable means to investigate and describe the world God has made. In this, we stand with a long tradition of Christians for whom Christian faith and science are mutually hospitable. Therefore, we reject ideologies such as Materialism and Scientism that claim science is the sole source of knowledge and truth, that science has debunked God and religion, or that the physical world constitutes the whole of reality.

Evolutionary Creationism

- We believe that God created the universe, the earth, and all life over billions of years. God continues to sustain the existence and functioning of the natural world, and the cosmos continues to declare the glory of God. Therefore, we reject ideologies such as Deism that claim the universe is self-sustaining, that God is no longer active in the natural world, or that God is not active in human history.
- We believe that the diversity and interrelation of all life on earth are best explained by the God-ordained process of evolution with common descent. Thus, evolution is not in opposition to God, but a means by which God providentially achieves his purposes. Therefore, we reject ideologies that claim that evolution is a purposeless process or that evolution replaces God.

Evolutionary Creationism

- We believe that God created humans in biological continuity with all life on earth, but also as spiritual beings. God established a unique relationship with humanity by endowing us with his image and calling us to an elevated position within the created order.
- We believe that conversations among Christians about controversial issues of science and faith can and must be conducted with humility, grace, honesty, and compassion as a visible sign of the Spirit's presence in Christ's body, the Church.

Views on Genesis 1 and 2

Concordist Interpretations

Young Earth Interpretation

Creation occurred about 6,000 years ago, during six 24-hour days, in the order described. A scientific study of the earth should confirm this.

Gap Interpretation

Earth was created long ago (Gen 1:1), became “formless and empty” (Gen 1:2), and was restored about 6,000 years ago during six 24-hour days.

Day-Age Interpretation

Creation occurred over billions of years. Each “day” of Genesis 1 corresponds to a long epoch. Events occurred in the order given in the text, but stretched out over a longer time period.

Appearance of Age Interpretation

Creation occurred about 6,000 years ago during six 24-hour days, but it was created to look like it had a long history of billions of years.

Views on Genesis 1 and 2

Non-concordist Interpretations

Proclamation Day Interpretation

The days of Genesis 1 took place in God's throne room, wherein God proclaimed each step of creation. The throne-room days are not related to days or time periods on earth.

Creation Poem Interpretation

The number and ordering of the "days" of Genesis 1 are chosen for poetic and thematic reasons rather than historical reasons.

Temple Interpretation

God inaugurates the cosmos as his temple. The six days establish the *function* of each creature and do not refer to the formation of physical material.

Ancient Near Eastern Cosmology Interpretation

Genesis 1 matches the physical picture of the world believed in Ancient Near East religions, but presents a dramatically different theological picture, proclaiming one God as creator of all rather than many gods.

Some Ancient Advice

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and the seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience. Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation.

Augustine of Hippo

Some Old Advice

What shall we say of the mathematical sciences? Shall we deem them to be the dreams of madmen? Nay, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without the highest admiration; an admiration which their excellence will not allow us to withhold... But if the Lord has been pleased to assist us by the work and ministry of the ungodly in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other similar sciences, let us avail ourselves of it, lest, by neglecting the gifts of God spontaneously offered to us, we be justly punished for our sloth.

John Calvin

My Journey

Young Earth
Creationism

Answers in Genesis

10th grade paper on why
Creationism should be
taught in school

Old Earth
Creationism

Reasons to Believe

11th grade witness to a
Christian classmate tear
down a Christian teacher
for mentioning evolution.

Evolutionary
Creationism

Biologos

Family discussion on
evolution during
board game where 3
out of 4 Pahlow's
agree on evolution.

My Findings

- Christianity and science are not at war with each other.
- Evolution ≠ atheism, fascism, Marxism or any other -ism.
- Multiple studies list “the church being anti-science” as one of the top reasons young people leave the church or their faith. Let’s not make our young people make a false choice between their faith and science.
- Most churches/denominations (including the EPC) do not have an official stance on science and faith.
- Christians are defined by who they are for (Jesus!) and not what we are against.

Meet René Padilla

Padilla was an Ecuadorian theologian and missiologist who coined the term *integral mission* to articulate Christianity's dual priority in evangelism and social activism. He gave a major speech at the Lausanne conference in 1974 that was the impetus for including the Christian Social Responsibility section of the Lausanne Covenant.



Further Reading

- René Padilla and Missio Alliance:

<https://www.missioalliance.org/>

- *Genesis: History, Fiction or Neither* by James K. Hoffmeier, Gordon J. Wenham and Kenton L. Sparks, Zondervan Counterpoints, 2015
- *Understanding Scientific Theories of Origins* by Robert C. Bishop, Larry L. Funck, Raymond J. Lewis, Stephen O. Moshier and John H. Walton, IVP Academic, 2018

Further Reading

- *The Lost World of Genesis One* by John H. Walton, IVP Academic, 2009
- *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* by John H. Walton, IVP Academic, 2015
- *Creation: The Apple of God's Eye* by Justo González, Abindon Press, 2015
- *Where the Conflict Really Lies* by Alvin Pantinga, Oxford University Press, 2011
- *Origins: Revised Edition* by Deborah B. and Loren D. Haarsma, Faith Alive, 2011

Further Reading

- *Old-Earth or Evolutionary Creationism: Discussing Origins with Reasons to Believe and Biologos* edited by Kenneth Keathley, J.B. Stump and Joe Aguirre, InterVarsity Press, 2017
- *The Fool and the Heretic* by Todd Charles Wood and Darrel R. Falk, Zondervan Academic, 2019
- *How I Changed my Mind about Evolution*, Katheryn Applegate and J.B. Stump editors, IVP Academic, 2016
- *Beginnings: Ancient Christians Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* by Peter C. Bouteneff, Baker Academic, 2008
- *Why Science Does Not Disprove God* by Amir Aczel, William Morrow, 2014