

Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution

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Evolutionary creation claims that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the universe and life through an ordained, sustained, and design-reflecting evolutionary process.¹ This view of origins fully embraces both the religious beliefs of biblical Christianity and the scientific theories of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution. It contends that the Creator established and maintains the laws of nature, including the mechanisms of a teleological evolution. In other words, evolution is a planned and purpose driven natural process. This position also argues that humans evolved from pre-human ancestors, and over a period of time the Image of God and human sin were gradually and mysteriously manifested. Evolutionary creationists experience the Father's love and presence in their lives. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they drink deeply from the Bible and enjoy an everlasting source of spiritual nourishment for their soul. And these Christian evolutionists meet the Lord Jesus in a personal relationship, which at times involves both dramatic and subtle answers to prayer as well as miraculous signs and wonders.

To be sure, the category of evolutionary creation seems like a contradiction in terms. This would indeed be the case if the words "evolution" and "creation" were restricted to their popular meanings. That is, if the former is fused to an atheistic worldview, and if the latter refers exclusively to creation in six literal days about six thousand years ago. But evolutionary creationists reject the black-and-white categorization of origins and move beyond the so-called "evolution vs. creation debate." Regrettably, this common approach traps individuals into a dichotomy, leaving them with only two options, and limiting their ability to make informed choices. The either/or view of origins has led many both inside and outside of the church to assume that there is a conflict or warfare between scientific discoveries and Christian faith. Evolutionary creation rejects this simplistic understanding of the relationship between science and religion, and underlines that the origins dichotomy is a *false dichotomy*.

The most important word in the term evolutionary creation is the noun "creation." These Christian evolutionists are first and foremost thoroughly committed and unapologetic creationists. They believe that the world is a creation that is absolutely dependent for every instant of its existence on the will and grace of the Creator. The qualifying word in this category is the adjective "evolutionary," indicating simply the method through which the Lord made the cosmos and living organisms. This view of origins is often referred to as "theistic evolution." However, such a word arrangement places the process of evolution as the primary term, and makes the Creator secondary as merely a qualifying adjective. Such an inversion in priority is unacceptable to me and other evolutionary creationists.

Another reason for the category of evolutionary creation is that the word "theistic" carries such a wide variety of meanings today. Derived from the common Greek word for god (*theos*), the proper definition of theism refers to belief in a personal god, like the God of Christianity. But as everyone knows, there are many different gods, and consequently, countless uses of this word. Therefore, the term

1. The term intelligent design is quite controversial today. It is important to distinguish the biblical and traditional understanding of intelligent design from that promoted by the Intelligent Design Movement (Intelligent Design Theory; e.g., Phillip E. Johnson, Michael Behe). The latter is a narrow view of design and claims that design is connected to miraculous interventions (i.e., God-of-the-gaps miracles that introduce creatures and/or missing parts) in the origin of living organisms. For example, parts of the cell like the flagellum are said to be "irreducibly complex," and as a result, they could not have evolved through natural processes. Since this is the case, ID Theory should be termed *Interventionistic Design Theory*. In contrast, I uphold the scriptural and Christian view of intelligent design, which simply states that the creation impacts everyone, declaring God's glory and revealing His eternal power and divine nature (Ps 19:1-4; Rom 1:18-20). This traditional view of design asserts that beauty, complexity, and functionality in the world strike people powerfully, leading most to believe that these features reflect the mind of a creative intelligence .

evolutionary creation distinguishes conservative Christians who love Jesus and accept evolution from the evolutionary interpretations of deists (belief in the impersonal god-of-the-philosophers), pantheists (everything in the universe is god), panentheists (the world is god's body and god is the world's mind/soul), new-age pagans (god is a divine force or entity in nature), and liberal Christians (Jesus is only an enlightened human who never rose physically from the dead).

The Embryology-Evolution Analogy

In order to explain their view of origins, evolutionary creationists begin by pointing out the remarkable parallels between evolution and human embryological development in the womb. They argue that God's action in the creation of each person individually is similar to His activity in the origin of the universe and life collectively. Four analogous features between embryology and evolution include:

First, embryological and evolutionary processes are both teleological and ordained by God. In other words, the creation of each person and the origin of the whole world were planned for a purpose. Neither are a fluke or mistake. At conception, the DNA in a fertilized human egg is fully equipped with the necessary information for a person to develop during the nine months of pregnancy. Similarly, the Creator loaded into the Big Bang the plan and capability for the cosmos and living organisms, including humans, to evolve over 10–15 billion years.

Second, divine creative action in the origin of individual human beings and everything in the world is through sustained and continuous natural processes. No Christian believes that while in his or her mother's womb the Lord came out of heaven and dramatically intervened to attach a nose, set an eye, or bore an ear canal. Rather, everyone understands embryological development to be an uninterrupted natural process that God subtly maintains during pregnancy. In the same way, evolutionary creationists assert that dramatic divine interventions were not employed in the creation of the cosmos and living organisms, including people. Instead, evolution is an unbroken natural process that the Lord sustained throughout eons of time.

Third, human embryological development in the microcosm of the womb and evolution in the macrocosm of the world reflect intelligent design. That is, each is a natural revelation authored by the Creator. Notably, these are non-verbal (Latin *verbum*: word) divine disclosures in that they do not use actual words. The psalmist praises his Maker, "For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:13–14). In a similar way, evolutionary creationists view evolution as a "knitting" process that results in a world which cries out that it is "fearfully and wonderfully made." Indeed, the Big Bang "declares the Glory of God," and biological evolution "proclaims the work of His hands" (Ps 19:1).

Finally, spiritual mysteries are associated with both the embryological and evolutionary processes that created humans. Men and women are utterly unique and distinguished from the rest of creation because they are the *only* creatures who bear the Image of God, and they are the *only* ones who have fallen into sin. Christians throughout the ages have debated where, when, and how these spiritual realities are manifested in the development of each individual. Yet history reveals that the church has not come to a consensus on these questions, leading to the conclusion that these issues are beyond human understanding. In other words, they are mysteries. Similarly, evolutionary creationists believe that the manifestation of God's Image and the entrance of sin into the world during human evolution are also a mystery. Christian evolutionists accept without any reservation the reality of these spiritual characteristics, but recognize that comprehending their origin completely is beyond our creaturely capacity to know.

Intelligent Design in Nature

To explain their view of origins further, evolutionary creationists are also quick to point out to fellow Bible-believing Christians that their approach offers an expanded and more robust understanding of intelligent design in nature. This version of the design argument for God’s existence appeals to more physical evidence than that proposed by young earth creation (divine interventions created the entire world in six literal days six thousand years ago; e.g., Henry Morris, Ken Ham) or progressive creation (divine interventions introduced origin of living organisms at different times through six geological periods over 4.5 billion years of earth history; e.g., Hugh Ross). At one level, evolutionary creation is in full agreement with these anti-evolutionary positions in that design is evident in nature’s current structures and operations. For example, consider the most complex structure known—the human brain. This organ is an electrical circuitry marvel with trillions of synaptic connections, and incredibly much of it develops in the womb beginning from only one fertilized egg. The structure, function, and embryological development of the brain offer a breath-taking level of elegant complexity that few deny reflects the work of an Intelligent Designer.

At another level, evolutionary creation moves beyond the anti-evolutionary positions to argue that intelligent design is also expressed in the processes and mechanisms of evolution. The *evolutionary intelligent design argument* underlines the majesty, foresight, and rationality mirrored in the natural processes that created the universe and life across the eons of time. According to this position, the declaration of God’s glory in the creation extends beyond the manifestations seen today to include the incredible self-assembling character of the natural world during the distant past. More specifically, design is evident in the finely-tuned physical laws and initial conditions necessary for the evolution of the cosmos through the Big Bang, and design is also apparent in the biological processes necessary for life to evolve, including humans with their incredibly complex brains. Therefore, evolutionary creation offers a wider and stronger design argument than the traditional formulation presented in young earth creation and progressive creation by having an evolutionary component. This position also predicts that as the evolutionary sciences advance, research will reveal a Creator with unimaginably more power, planning, and splendour than previously believed in earlier generations. To the surprise of many, evolutionary creationists enjoy a greater and more complete intelligent design argument for God’s existence than their anti-evolutionist Christian brothers and sisters.

Many people today find it difficult, if not impossible, to see a relationship between evolution and intelligent design. The leaders of the Intelligent Design Movement/Theory are responsible for this situation. These anti-evolutionists, most of whom are basically progressive creationists, have thrust a large wedge between design and evolution, creating a dichotomy. But this is another false dichotomy. Let me offer an analogy to explain an evolutionary creationist perspective on the biblical fact that nature reflects intelligent design and the scientific fact that the universe and life evolved entirely through natural processes.

Imagine that God’s creative action in the origin of the world to be like the stroke of a cue stick in a game of billiards. Divide and label the balls into three groups using the words “heavens,” “earth,” and “living organisms,” and let the 8-ball represent humanity. The young earth creationist depicts the Creator making single shot after single shot with no miscues until all the balls are off the table. No doubt about it, that is remarkable. A progressive creationist sees the opening stroke that breaks the rack of balls as the Big Bang, from which the inanimate universe evolves by natural processes. All of the billiard balls labelled heavens and earth are sunk by this initial shot. Then God sinks the balls that signify living organisms and humans individually. That is even more impressive.

Evolutionary creationists assert that the God-of-the-individual-shots, like the God-of-the-gaps who intervenes intermittently in creating the world, fails to reveal fully the power and foresight of the Designer. According to this Christian view of evolution, the breaking stroke is so finely tuned and incredibly precise that not only are all the balls sunk, but they drop in order. It begins with those labelled heavens, then earth, followed by living organisms, and finally the 8-ball—the most important ball in billiards—representing humans. And to complete the analogy, the Lord pulls this last ball out of the pocket and holds it in His hands to depict His personal involvement with men and women. Is such a God not infinitely more talented than that of the anti-evolutionists? Are His eternal power and divine nature not best illustrated in the last example? Does not the evolutionary creationist portrayal of the Creator provide the most magnificent reflection of intelligent design? This is how I see design in evolution. Yet despite differences between Christians on *how* intelligent design arose in the world, we must never forget that we stand united in affirming *that* nature clearly reflects the designing intelligence of our Creator.

Interpreting the Biblical Accounts of Origins

The greatest problem with evolutionary creation is that it rejects the traditional literal interpretation of the opening chapters of Scripture. Church history reveals that most believers have understood the biblical accounts of origins to be a record of actual historical events. Even more troubling for evolutionary creation is the fact that the New Testament writers, including Jesus Himself, refer to Genesis 1-11 as literal history (Matt 19:4-6; Rom 5:12-14; Heb 4:4-7; 2 Pet 2:4-5). Therefore, the burning question is: “How do evolutionary creationists interpret the early chapters of Holy Scripture?”

In response, these Christian evolutionists first emphasize without any reservation the foundational principle of biblical revelation. As Hebrews 1:1-2 clearly states, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” Evolutionary creationists are also quick to add theologian George Eldon Ladd’s observation that “the Bible is the Word of God given in the words of men in history.” Stated another way, the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical authors at a specific point in ancient history, using their languages, literary conventions, and ideas, including their conception of the natural world. The ancient intellectual categories of the inspired writers were not set aside, but employed in the process of biblical revelation. Christian evolutionists contend that there certainly is science in the Bible, for that matter, state-of-the-art science. However, it is the science-of-the-day a few thousand years ago in the ancient Near East. And like most science over time, it is improved, if not completely replaced, with a better understanding of nature.

Evolutionary creationists recognize that the opening chapters of Scripture are a special type of literature. That is, it is a unique genre, and most biblical scholars see Genesis 1-11 as a separate literary unit. Consequently, conservative Christians today must respect the distinctive character of these biblical passages and *learn not to read their modern assumptions, expectations, or agendas into them*. An appreciation of the type of literature that the Holy Spirit employed in biblical revelation is fundamental to grasping the inerrant Messages of Faith. In particular, Genesis 1-11 features three characteristics: divine theology, ancient science, and ancient poetry.

1. Divine Theology

First and foremost, the purpose of Genesis 1-11 is to offer a divine theology concerning the Creator and His creation with special regard to men and women. This Holy Spirit-inspired revelation includes foundational truths of the Christian faith: God created the world, the creation is very good, humans are the only creatures

made in the Image of God, every man and woman has fallen into sin, and God judges humanity for their sinful acts. These are Messages of Faith that change lives and upon which joyous and successful lives are built. Evolutionary creationists assert that this divine theology is delivered by using an ancient scientific understanding of nature and ancient poetic literary techniques. In the same way that the Lord personally meets each of us wherever we happen to be, the Holy Spirit came down to the level of the ancient biblical writers and employed their conceptualization of the physical world and their style of literature in order to communicate as effectively as possible inerrant spiritual truths.

Therefore, evolutionary creation recognizes that the opening chapters of Genesis feature two basic components: the *Message of Faith* (inerrant divine theology), and an *incidental vessel* which contains this divine revelation (ancient science/ancient poetry). In qualifying the vessel as “incidental,” there is no intention to suggest that it is unimportant. On the contrary, the ancient science and ancient poetry are absolutely essential in delivering the eternal messages to an ancient audience. They act like a cup that holds the “living waters” (John 4:10). But these features of the Scripture are not the life-changing spiritual truths. Other sciences and literary devices could have been used at different times in history to transport the identical revelation. For example, if Genesis 1 were written today, the literary style might include a scientific format with mathematical formulas, and the science could feature the evolutionary discoveries of modern cosmology, geology, and biology. Evolutionary creationists emphasize that separating the Message of Faith from the incidental ancient vessel is critical in understanding the biblical accounts of origins.

2. Ancient Science

Genesis 1-11 features an ancient science of the structure, operation, and origin of the universe and life. **Figure 1** presents the world as conceived by ancient Near Eastern peoples, including God’s chosen people, the Hebrews. It may come as a surprise to most Bible-reading Christians, but a 3-tier universe is found in the Word of God. A few of these ancient conceptions of the natural world include:

The earth is flat. The word “earth” appears over 2500 times in the Old Testament (Hebrew: *’eres*) and 250 times in the New Testament (Greek: *ge*). Never once is this word referred to as spherical or round. Instead, the universe in the Scripture is compared to a tent with the earth as its floor (Ps 19:4, Ps 104:2, Is 40:22).

A circumferential sea borders a circular earth. Proverbs 8:22–31 and Job 26:7–14 describe the creation of the world. The former states, “God inscribed a circle on the face of the deep” (v. 27); and the latter, “God has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters” (v. 10). The Bible also asserts that the earth is circular. Isaiah writes, “God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in” (Isa 40:22).

The earth is immovable. The Bible records three times that “the world is firmly established; it cannot move” (1 Chr 16:30, Ps 93:1, Ps 96:10). The stability of the earth is understood to be like that of a building set on the solid foundations. The biblical writers frequently refer to this solid base as “the foundations of

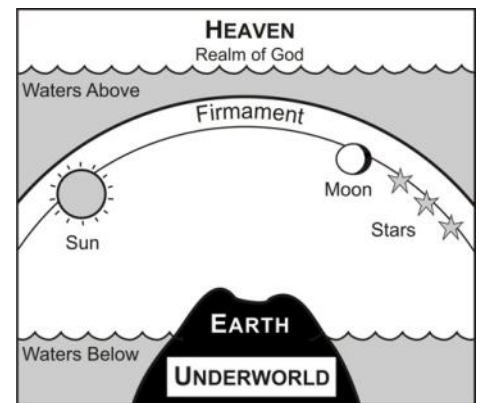


Figure 1. The 3-Tier Universe. The regional geography led ancient Near Eastern people to the reasonable conclusion that the earth was encircled by a sea. Journeys in any direction eventually led to a body of water: the Mediterranean Sea is west, Black and Caspian Seas north, Persian Gulf east, and Arabian and Red Seas south.

earth” (Job 38:4-6, Prov 8:29, Jer 31:37). For example, “God set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved” (Ps 104:5).

A solid domed structure holds up a body of water over the earth. Created on the second day of creation, the firmament separated the “waters above” from the “waters below” (Gen 1:6-8). Notably, this heavenly dome and body of water did not collapse during Noah’s Flood. As the psalms of David’s day reveal, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims the work of His hands” (Ps 19:1); and God “stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of His upper chambers on their waters” (Ps 104:2-3).

The sun moves across the sky. Created and placed in the firmament on the fourth day of creation, the daily movement of sun is found in King Solomon’s observation: “The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises” (Eccl 1:5). It also appears in the psalmist’s praise, “The sun rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other” (Ps 19:6).

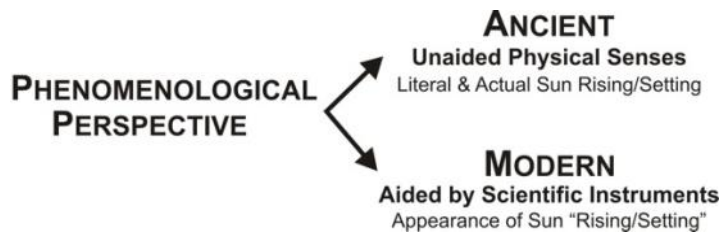


Figure 2. Phenomenological Perspectives.

Of course, many Christians are quick to point out that all of passages cited above are only “appearances” in nature. That is, these are phenomenological descriptions (Greek *phainomenon*: appearance). The earth “looks” flat, “seems” to be surrounded by water, and “feels” stationary; the sky gives the “impression” of being a blue body of water overhead; and the sun “appears” to cross the dome of the sky, rising and setting every day. However, to ancient

peoples like the biblical authors, these are descriptions of the actual structure and operation of the universe. As history reveals, the notion that the earth was immovable and that the sun moved daily across the sky was part of astronomy up until the early seventeenth century. In fact, this was the issue of the Galileo controversy.

Scripture does indeed employ phenomenological language to describe the natural world. But there is a critical and subtle difference between what the biblical writers saw and believed to be real in the universe, and what we see and know to be a scientific fact. Observation in the ancient world was limited to unaided human senses, like the naked eye. Today scientific instruments, like telescopes, have broadened our view and understanding of the cosmos. As a result, it is essential to appreciate that statements in Scripture about nature are from an *ancient phenomenological perspective*. What the biblical authors and other ancient peoples saw with their eyes, they believed to be real, like the literal rising and setting of the sun. In contrast, we view the world from a *modern phenomenological perspective*. When we see the sun “rising” and “setting,” we know that it is only an appearance or visual effect caused by the rotation of the earth. Therefore, it is crucial that these different viewpoints of nature not be confused and conflated together. This is the problem with the so-called “phenomenological language argument” (or poetic language argument) often heard in churches—it reads the ancient science in Scripture through a modern mindset and perspective. To correct this situation, we must read our Bible through ancient eyes. **Figure 2** distinguishes between ancient and modern phenomenological perspectives.

It is important to note that ancient peoples also understood the origin of life from an ancient phenomenological point of view. Biological evolution was not even a consideration because in the eyes of the ancients, hens laid eggs that always produced chicks, ewes only gave birth to lambs, and women were

invariably the mothers of human infants. Living organisms were therefore static and never changed. In conceptualizing origins, they used these day-to-day experiences and retrojected (to cast back) them to the beginning of creation. Ancient peoples came to the very reasonable conclusion that life (and the universe) must have been created quickly and completely, “after their kinds” as stated ten times in Genesis 1. Termed “*de novo* creation” (Latin *de*: from; *novus*: new), this was the best origins science-of-the-day. It appears in most ancient creation accounts and it involves a divine being/s who acts rapidly through a series of dramatic interventions, resulting in cosmological structures and living creatures that are mature and fully formed. With this being the case, it becomes evident that the God-of-the-gaps model of divine creative action is ultimately rooted in *de novo* creation, an ancient origins science.

Recognizing that the Word of God features an ancient science is troubling to most conservative Christians, because they believe that statements in Scripture about the physical world are inerrant and absolutely true. Many assume that the Holy Spirit revealed scientific facts in the Bible thousands of years before their discovery by modern science. In other words, these Christians accept “concordism” (or better “scientific concordism”). They take for granted there is an accord or alignment between Scripture and science. In contrast, evolutionary creationists make no apologies for the obvious ancient science in God’s Word. Instead, they attempt to understand Holy Spirit’s revelatory process in the light of this feature. In the same way that the powerful Messages of Faith in Scripture penetrate our heart and remodel our mind (Heb 4:12, Rom 12:2), Christian evolutionists contend that the incidental ancient science in the Bible must also penetrate and remodel our understanding of biblical inerrancy.

Evolutionary creationists are not disturbed by the fact that Scripture includes an ancient science. For that matter, they expected it, and draw a parallel to God’s greatest Act of Revelation—the Incarnation. The Creator not only came down from heaven and took on human flesh in the person of Jesus, but He also embraced the intellectual categories-of-the-day. The Lord spoke Aramaic, the common person’s language in first century Palestine; and He preached using parables, indicating that He used the ordinary ideas and concepts of the people at that time. For example, Jesus often employed the agricultural knowledge of His listeners in the parables of the good sower (Mk 4:1-9), the weeds (Matt 13:24-30), and the mustard seed (Matt 13:31-32). Of particular interest is the last parable. The Lord used the botany-of-the-day in stating that the mustard seed is “the smallest of all seeds” when in fact many seeds, like orchids, are much smaller. In other words, Jesus accommodated or descended to the knowledge level of His ancient audience.

In a way similar to the Lord’s teaching ministry, the ancient science in the biblical accounts of origins is an accommodation by the Holy Spirit to the conceptual level of the inspired authors and their readers. For example, they believed the blue of the sky was a body of water that God made on the second day of creation. But today modern science has determined that this is a visual effect due to the scattering of short wave light in the upper atmosphere. Despite these radically different understandings of the physical world, the inerrant Message of Faith remains steadfast: the blue body/effect overhead was created by God. Evolutionary creationists emphasize that it is inconsequential to the divine theology whether or not statements about nature in Scripture are scientifically accurate and actually describe physical reality. The powerful spiritual truths concerning the natural world transcend the incidental vessel of the ancient science that transports them. Or stated another way, the biblical notion of creation does not focus on *how* God created, but *that* He created.

3. Ancient Poetry

Genesis 1-11 includes ancient poetry. Of course, the term “poetry” carries a number of meanings. But using the most basic definition, it refers simply to a structured writing style in contrast to a free flowing narrative. **Figure 3** reveals that the six day creation account features two parallel panels. This passage opens with the Spirit of God hovering over a formless and empty earth shrouded in darkness and submerged under water. The description of the earth using rhyming Hebrew words (*tohu*: formless; *bohu*: empty) immediately attracts the attention of ancient readers and points to the structure of Genesis 1. In the first three days God deals with the problem of formlessness, while during the last three days He resolves the emptiness. Striking parallels also emerge between the two panels. On the first day of creation, God makes light. This corresponds to the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day. The Creator then separates the waters above from the waters below during the second day, providing an air space for birds and a sea for marine creatures made on the fifth day. On the third creation day, God commands dry land to appear in anticipation of land animals and humans created during the sixth day. The so-called “contradiction” of the creation of light before the sun disappears if the panel structure is respected, because obviously it is poetic license on the part of the inspired writer.

FORMLESS

Tohu

Day 1

Separate
Light / Dark

Day 2

Separate
Waters Above/
Waters Below

Day 3

Separate
Water / Land

Day 7

Sabbath
God's Day of Rest

EMPTY

Bohu

Day 4

Decorate
Sun, Moon & Stars

Day 5

Decorate
Birds &
Sea Creatures

Day 6

Decorate
Land Animals & Humans

Figure 3. Genesis 1: Creation Account Parallel Panels.

- A Noah & his sons Shem, Ham & Japheth (6:9-10)
- B Promise to flood & to establish Covenant (12-18)
- C Preservation of life & food for sustenance (19-22)
- D Command to enter ark (7:1-3)
- E 7 days waiting for earth to flood (4-10)
- F 40 days waters increase & ark floating (11-17)
- G 150 days waters prevail (18-24)
- CENTER GOD REMEMBERS NOAH (8:1)**
- G' 150 days (end of) waters abate (2-5)
- F' 40 days (end of) waters decrease & ark resting (4-6)
- E' 7 days (periods of) waiting for earth to dry (7-14)
- D' Command to leave ark (15-22)
- C' Multiplication of life & food for sustenance (9:1-7)
- B' Promise not to flood again & to remember Covenant (8-17)
- A' Noah & his sons Shem, Ham & Japheth (18-19)

Figure 4. Genesis 6-9: Flood Account Chiasm.

generations of Christians is that the Lord remembers righteous men and women despite any flood of trouble that may inundate and submerge them.

In light of the poetic structures present in the biblical creation and flood accounts, evolutionary creationists doubt that Genesis 1-11 offers a historical record of actual events. As most Christians know, real history simply does not unfold in chiasms and parallel panels. For example, does Israel's history as a nation develop in a chiasm? Is the historical record of the church structured in parallel panels? Or better, do the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus emerge in these brilliantly crafted poetic structures? The answer to all these questions is “no” because these examples are actual historical events. In contrast, the

Figure 4 shows that ancient poetry also appears in Noah's flood account. Genesis 6-9 is framed on a chiasm. This is a common literary device used by ancient Near Eastern writers, including the Holy Spirit-inspired biblical authors. A chiastic structure is made up of two parts. The first half is a mirror image of the second half, producing a reversed sequence of ideas or words. Especially noticeable in the biblical flood chiasm are the matching days of 7s, 40s, and 150s. Such a technique facilitated ancient peoples to memorize these accounts. In particular, the chiasm focuses the reader to the middle of the structure and the main message of the passage, which in the flood account is that “God remembered Noah” (Gen 8:1). Therefore, the central spiritual truth in this passage to all

poetic frameworks in Genesis 1-11 are calling out to us not to read these passages as literal facts of history. That is, the Bible *itself* is pointing away from the traditional literal interpretation.

To be sure, suggesting that the first chapters of Scripture are not an account of actual events in the origin of the universe and life is threatening to most conservative Christians. However, this does not in any way undermine God’s Word. The Holy Spirit inspired these passages, and they are central to the Christian faith. Instead, this proposal only challenges our traditional *assumption* that scientific concordism is an inerrant feature of Genesis 1-11. Of course, it is reasonable to assume an accord or alignment between Scripture and science. After all, God is both the Creator of the world and the Author of the Bible. But the question is this: Is scientific concordism true? And the answer is “no” because the Word of God features an ancient science. Once again, the Scripture *itself* is pointing away from the traditional literal interpretation.

Consequently, in reading the biblical accounts of origins, Christians today must separate, and not conflate, the inerrant Messages of Faith from their incidental ancient scientific and poetic vessel. To illustrate the application of this Message-Incident Principle of scriptural interpretation, consider one of the most important passages in the New Testament—the Kenotic Hymn (Phil 2:5-11). In highlighting the fact that God emptied Himself and came down to the level of humans in the person of Jesus, the apostle Paul writes:

Therefore, God exalted Him [Jesus] to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, [1] in heaven and [2] on earth and [3] under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (v. 9-11)

Regrettably, English Bibles do not translate fully the original Greek. “Under the earth” should be rendered “the underworld” [see Figure 1]. In fact, the Greek word *katachthonion* in this verse refers to the beings down (*kata*) in the chthonic (*chthonios*) or subterranean realm (cf., Matt 12:40; Eph 4:9–10; 1 Pet 3:19). Nevertheless, the Message of Faith in this passage is clear—Jesus is Lord of the entire creation. And Paul delivers this inerrant spiritual truth by using the incidental science-of-the-day—the 3-tier universe. Similarly, in the opening chapters of Genesis, we must separate the eternal Messages from the incidental vessels as presented in **Figure 5**.

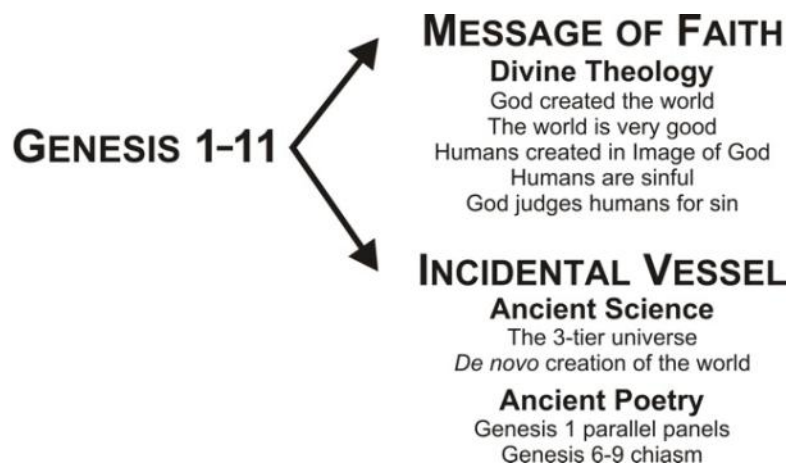


Figure 5. Genesis 1-11 and the Message-Incident Principle.

The Two Divine Books in a Complementary Relationship

Evolutionary creation embraces the time-honored belief that divine revelation flows from two major sources—the Book of God’s Words and the Book of God’s Works. This position supports a complementary relationship between Scripture and science in understanding origins. The Latin *complere*, from which derives the word “complementary,” means “to finish” and “to fulfill.” The verb “to complement” refers to the act of

adding something that is lacking in order to make complete. Therefore, together the Two Divine Books fulfill each other; alone they are incomplete. Science reveals *how* the Creator made this spectacular design-reflecting world, while the Bible declares precisely *who* created it—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The most compelling argument for evolutionary creation is that it accepts without any reservations both biblical faith and modern science. This position frees us from the chains the origins dichotomy and the science-religion warfare myth, both of which have imprisoned many minds throughout most of the twentieth century. Evolutionary creation meets the yearning of a scientific generation in search of spiritual meaning. In particular, it offers an intellectually satisfying worldview for those who experience the Lord in a personal relationship and know His creation through science. Though this position recognizes that science and religion operate within their respective domains, it does not suffer from the intellectual schizophrenia of placing them in isolated airtight compartments. Instead, evolutionary creation features an integrated worldview and takes pleasure in a respectful and fruitful dialogue between the best science today and the foundations of historic Christianity.

Evolutionary creationists also enjoy freedom from scientific concordism. Instead of tearing the words of Scripture out of their lexical and historical contexts in order to harmonize them with modern science, these Christians are neither embarrassed nor apologetic for the obvious ancient science in the Bible. For example, there is no need to twist and manipulate the Hebrew word *raqia'* (traditionally and best translated as “firmament”), and then claim that it refers to the atmosphere or outer space. Scripture clearly states that God created a hard dome overhead, and evolutionary creationists recognize that this is an accommodation to ancient peoples by the Holy Spirit, in order to reveal the Message of Faith that He is the Creator of the heavens. In light of the ancient science in God’s Word, it is evident that the Bible is not a book of modern scientific facts revealed before their discovery, but a book of inerrant, life-changing, spiritual truths.

Christian evolutionists are free as well from the God-of-the-gaps. This idea of divine creative action sees the Creator as a tinkering meddler who intervened sporadically into the world to add creatures and/or missing parts. From this perspective, God made the original creation incomplete. But instead of looking for “gaps” where He purportedly entered to create, evolutionary creationists assert that His divine power is apparent in the robust self-assembling character of the evolutionary continuum of life, from the first molecules to human beings. And instead of fearing the Creator’s retreat from the world because of the loss of supposed “gaps” in nature, evolutionary creationists welcome scientific discoveries that fill gaps in our knowledge and claim these as declarations of the Lord’s glory. In particular, advances in the sciences dealing with evolution proclaim the faithfulness of God’s natural processes in an evolving creation.

Evolutionary creation is the only Christian view of origins that offers a unified vision of science. It does not postulate that those practising certain scientific disciplines are intellectually incompetent or spiritually deceived. There is no discrimination between sciences dealing with the daily operation of the world and those investigating its past origins. And evolutionary creation does not segregate evolutionary biology from cosmology and geology. For example, young earth creation has a disjointed understanding of science. On the one hand, it rejects the evolutionary sciences. Yet on the other hand, these anti-evolutionists support and even practice modern engineering and medical sciences, accepting research built on the assumption that natural processes feature robust regularity. Similarly, progressive creation has a double standard in its science. It affirms the evolution of the inanimate universe as offered by cosmological and geological sciences, but dismisses the unifying principle of biological science that life evolved.

However, these are false dichotomies that originate ultimately from the assumption that Scripture features scientific concordism and a God-of-the-gaps understanding of divine creative action. In contrast,

evolutionary creationists uphold the unity and coherence of all the natural sciences, because scientific discovery is ultimately rooted in God. They believe that the Creator has made a world that faithfully follows His ordained and sustained natural laws and processes, and they embrace the belief that He has gifted us with marvellous minds and the ability to investigate the physical world. Through science, we can think God's thoughts after Him and discover His method of creating the universe and life. In fact, Christian evolutionists believe that every scientific discipline is a gift from the Lord, including the evolutionary sciences.

To conclude, evolutionary creation offers a healthy and balanced complementary relationship between modern science and Christian faith. This position notes that the church's struggle in the early seventeenth century with Galileo's astronomy offers a valuable insight into understanding the evolutionary sciences and the biblical accounts of origins. This historic episode led many believers to realize that the Bible is not a book of science, but a book of salvation. Christians who accept evolution as God's method of creation are especially inspired by the famed aphorism that Galileo popularized: "The intention of the Holy Spirit is to teach us how one goes to heaven and not how heaven goes." Rewritten for the church today, evolutionary creationists encourage their brothers and sisters in Christ to understand:

***The intention of the Bible is to teach us that God is the Creator,
and not how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created.***



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