

## WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF CREATION?

Among Bible-believing Christians there are currently at least six primary interpretations of the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2. Personally, we find the first view to be the most persuasive biblically. But, as Paul says, we now see only in part, and one day in Jesus' presence we will know in full, and we will all be in complete agreement on this and other matters. Until that day, may we worship our Creator together and graciously discuss and debate our differences without unnecessarily dividing over them.

### *View 1: Historic Creationism*

The word used for “beginning” in Genesis 1:1 is *re’shit* in Hebrew, which marks a starting point for what comes afterwards. It does not connote any specific length of time, nor does it necessarily mean that the next thing stated follows immediately. What God created in the first verse existed for an undefined period of time (which could be anywhere from a moment to billions of years) before God began the work of preparing the uninhabitable land for the habitation of mankind. The preparation of the uncultivated land and the creation of Adam and Eve occurred in the six literal twenty-four-hour days of Genesis 1, as echoed in Exodus 20:11. This view leaves

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<sup>29</sup>Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:19–21; Col. 1:16.

open the possibility of an old earth, six literal days of creation, and a young humanity on the old earth.<sup>30</sup>

### *View 2: Young-earth Creationism*

In this view, God created the entire universe, including Adam and Eve, in six literal twenty-four-hour days. As it seeks to be faithful to its reading of the biblical text, this view affirms that the entire universe is less than ten thousand years old. It interprets the data of science in terms of inspired Scripture, refusing to compromise God's teaching about the date and divine methods of creation with naturalistic scientific theories. It does have some biblical difficulties, such as the creation of sun and moon on day four while there is evening and morning on the first three days.

### *View 3: The Gap Theory*

In this view, Genesis 1:1 explains a first creation that happened perhaps billions of years ago. Then, a catastrophic event, likely the fall of Satan from heaven, left the earth in the destroyed condition of Genesis 1:2. God responded to this disaster by re-creating the earth again a few thousand years later in six literal days and repopulating the earth as recorded in Genesis 1:3–27. According to this view, the earth is old from the first creation and mankind is young because of the recent creation. The problems with this view include the fact that nothing in the Bible speaks of two creations, one prior to Genesis 1:2 and the other more recently. Also, at the end of the six days of creation, God declared all that he had made “very good,” which does not correlate with the claim that the earth had been made “very bad” and destroyed.

### *View 4: Literary Framework View*

In this view, Genesis 1 and 2 are intended to be read as a figurative framework explaining creation in a topical, not sequential, order. The six days of

<sup>30</sup>Historic creationism is best articulated by John Sailhamer in *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), esp. pp. 44–45, and *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 81–100. His insights on the Pentateuch, in general, and Genesis, in particular, are brilliantly perceptive.

creation listed in Genesis 1 are also to be interpreted metaphorically, not as literal twenty-four-hour days. The literary framework view is outlined here:

### **Forming**

Day 1: light and darkness separated

Day 2: sky and waters separated

Day 3: dry land and waters separated;  
plants and trees

### **Filling**

Day 4: sun, moon, stars (lights in heaven)

Day 5: fish and birds

Day 6: animals and man

Admittedly, God speaks of creation creatively by including poetry in the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. Still, even when the Bible uses figurative and poetic language, it does so to communicate a literal truth, a fact that weakens this view.

### *View 5: Day-Age View*

In this view, God created the universe, including Adam and Eve, in six sequential periods of time that are geologic ages, not literal twenty-four-hour days. The biggest problem with this view is that the order of events in the six days is not the same order as held by old-earth science (for example, the sun appears on day four). Another problem with this view is that the six days of creation seem clearly to be literal days, as we will further explore.

### *View 6: Theistic Evolution*

In this view, God essentially began creation and then pulled back from working directly in creation to work instead through the natural process of evolution. The only exception was God involving himself directly again in the making of the human spirit. For the most part, this view accepts the hypothesis of evolution but seeks to insert God as the creator of matter and overseer of the evolutionary process.

The problems with theistic evolution are many, but we will look at three briefly. First, it inherits all the scientific impossibilities of evolution

as a theory of origins. Second, evolution teaches that one species evolves into other species, while Genesis 1 says that each species had offspring “according to its kind,”<sup>31</sup> not another kind, as evolution postulates. The scientific data completely agrees with Genesis on the impossibility of one species evolving into another. Third, the rest of Scripture portrays God as continually involved in the details of creation, including making the grass grow,<sup>32</sup> feeding the birds,<sup>33</sup> and feeding other creatures.<sup>34</sup> Scripture clearly does not paint God as remote or only indirectly involved in creation.

## ARE THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION LITERAL TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR DAYS?

While the six Christian views of creation listed above are possible, the question remains, which is probable? To answer that question, we have to deal with the very important issue of whether the six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are in fact literal twenty-four-hour days. If someone believes that the six days of creation are literal twenty-four-hour days, then they must accept one of the first three views of creation (historic creationism, young-earth creationism, or the gap theory); if they do not believe that the six days of creation are literal twenty-four-hour days, then they can accept one of the last three views of creation (the literary framework view, the day-age view, or theistic evolution).

Those Christians who argue for a metaphorical view of the six days of creation rightly point out that the word used for *day* in Hebrew (*yom*), often refers to an extended period of time that is more than a literal twenty-four-hour day.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, if we read the Scriptures, it seems apparent that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are literal twenty-four-hour days for two reasons.

First, each day is numbered so that there is a succession of days. Further, each day is described as having a morning and evening, which

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<sup>31</sup>Gen. 1:21, 24, 25.

<sup>32</sup>Ps. 104:14; Matt. 6:30.

<sup>33</sup>Matt. 6:26.

<sup>34</sup>Ps. 104:21, 25–30.

<sup>35</sup>E.g., Ps. 20:1; Prov. 11:4; 21:31; 24:10; 25:13; Eccles. 7:14.

is the common vernacular for a day.<sup>36</sup> These details in Genesis 1 clearly indicate that the days are literal.

Second, in Exodus 20:8–11, God says:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

God says that he made creation in six days and on the seventh day he rested. Additionally, his work and rest are to be the precedent for us; his example explains why God's people in the Old Testament had a seven-day week with a Sabbath day.

We hold to historic creationism, which emphasizes that the first two chapters of Genesis, God's inspired and inerrant Word, tell us that the God who created everything (angels, space-time, mass-energy, sun, moon, and stars, and all species of animals) prepared the land for human habitation in six literal twenty-four-hour days. At the end of those days, he shaped dust and breathed the breath of life into it, creating Adam. From Adam's rib, God created the woman. They were created to be in relationship with each other and with God as living Creator and loving Lord.

Nonetheless, there have been ongoing debates by Jesus-loving, Bible-believing scholars throughout the history of the church regarding whether the days of creation were literal twenty-four-hour days. So long as one's position on this issue does not become the litmus test for Christian orthodoxy, ongoing spirited study and discussion can be helpful to God's people; it can force them to build their unity around what they do agree on, such as the fact that the Trinitarian God of the Bible created the heavens and the

<sup>36</sup>Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.

earth and lovingly fashioned them as a gift to us and home for us in which to worship and enjoy him.<sup>37</sup>

## HOW OLD IS THE EARTH?

There has been no shortage of attempts to determine and defend a particular age of the earth.

For many Christians, the Bible's teaching seems pretty simple: the earth was created on the first of the six twenty-four-hour days of Genesis, which culminated with the creation of Adam, the first human. Adding up the genealogies in Genesis puts the age of the earth at about six thousand years.

Other Christians, ancient and contemporary, have not seen the creation account in strict historical terms. They focus on God as creator rather than on six literal days and think we should not try to specify the date of the earth.

Still others seek to integrate the general scientific consensus—that the earth is around 4.5 billion years old—into their theology. They adapt their view of the Bible to accommodate science and teach that the earth must be old.

Archbishop James Ussher dated creation precisely to 4004 BC. According to traditional Judaism, the year AD 2010 is actually year 5,770 of creation. The Jewish year of creation is Gregorian year 3761 BC. Both Ussher and Jews used the biblical genealogies (e.g., Genesis 5 and 10) and added up the number of years between Adam, Noah, and Abraham to arrive at their creation dates. That they differ somewhat on their dates indicates the difficulty of achieving high accuracy. Still, the method cannot be merely dismissed if one holds to inspired and inerrant Scripture. Jews, Ussher, and many Christians agree within a couple hundred years because of the precision of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. They differ from the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, which show line of descent rather than specific lengths of time in each generation. The Genesis

<sup>37</sup>E.g., see Westminster Theological Seminary's statement regarding the days of creation: <http://www.wts.edu/about/beliefs/statements/creation.html>.

genealogies do not have large gaps. If one follows Scripture, Adam, the first human, was created about six thousand years ago.

However, believing in a recent Adam does not require a young earth. If one sees the days other than six twenty-four-hour days, then the age of the earth is not a biblical teaching. Those who agree with us that the Genesis days are twenty-four-hours long still may not hold that Scripture mandates a young earth. The creation of planet earth may not have been during those six days.

Many believe that Genesis 1:1 is a brief summary of an unspecified period of time—perhaps a minute or billions of years, since the Hebrew word for *beginning*, like its English translation, refers to inauguration rather than to a specific timeframe—that preceded the six literal days of Genesis during which God prepared Eden on the already-created earth as the dwelling place of mankind.

In the end, we believe the date of the earth cannot be a closed-handed issue. It seems to us that those who strongly advocate either young- or old-earth dates are inferring a position from the Bible that the Bible simply does not state unequivocally. It must also be admitted that the age of the earth is not of great concern in the Bible. The great authors of the Bible, including David, Isaiah, and Paul, and Jesus himself, never referred to the age of the earth, even though they asserted God as Creator.

As Augustine rightly said, the Bible is not a scientific textbook seeking to answer the ever-changing inquiries of science but rather a theological textbook seeking to reveal God and the means by which he saves us. What the Bible actually teaches is inerrant truth from God that must be believed, but it does not teach everything we want to know. We must be courageous to receive and teach unashamedly what it does say as closed-handed issues<sup>38</sup> but humble enough to let unclear and unrevealed matters be open-handed issues, avoiding unprofitable controversies.<sup>39</sup>

The question persists as to how we deal with the widespread scientific consensus that the earth is 4.5 billion years old and certainly appears to be

<sup>38</sup>2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17; Titus 1:9; Jude 3.

<sup>39</sup>Deut. 29:29; 2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9.

old, even to nonscientists. Many solutions have been offered, including the following:

- 1) Though the earth appears old to most scientists, it is in fact young, and the scientists are simply mistaken. Admittedly, Christians who hold this view are considered unscientific and even unintelligent by the watching world, but they retort that it is better to believe Scripture than the ever-changing theories of scientists.
- 2) The earth appears old because it was made mature, like Adam was. If we had seen Adam and Eve just after they were created (remember, they were mature enough to be commanded to be fruitful and rule the earth), and asked them how old they were, we would have been astonished at their answer.
- 3) The flood in Genesis 6 to 9 covered the earth universally, which compressed the geological layers and rearranged the topography so greatly that the earth appears to be old, especially when we assume geologic processes take long periods of time.
- 4) The earth is in fact old, and the days mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2 are not literal twenty-four-hour days but rather extended periods of time.
- 5) The earth may be, or likely is, old. As our examination of Genesis 1:1 revealed, God created the earth during an indefinite period of time before the six days of Genesis. That could in fact have been billions of years ago, which would explain the seemingly old age of the earth. Then, in six literal days God prepared the earth for the creation of mankind and on the sixth day made the first man and woman.

We find this last view quite compelling for five reasons. (1) It maintains a literal six-day interpretation of Genesis 1, which seems to be the point of the chapter. (2) It defines key terms biblically rather than scientifically. The word translated “heavens” is better understood as “skies”; “earth” (planet) as “land” (Promised Land); and “without form and void” (primordial chaos) as “uninhabited.” (3) It teaches that the first humans appeared recently. (4) It was the most common view of early Christians, such as Augustine, and did not fall out of favor until the rise of modern science. (5) It correlates with the findings of the scientific world from a

biblical worldview. The teachings of the Bible always have priority in our theologizing, but of the possible biblical views, we prefer a view that explains the most data with the fewest difficulties.

While there is great debate about the age of the earth, there is much more agreement between the biblical and scientific data on the age of the first true *Homo sapiens*, that is, true humans who lived in villages and practiced agriculture. Scientists generally date the origin of true *Homo sapiens* to less than ten thousand years ago, even as they date other human-like beings much older. Even those people who are committed to naturalistic evolution and an old earth agree with the biblical data that, while the earth may be old, human life as we know it is relatively young. Their studies are now concluding that there was a first human female (“mitochondrial Eve”) and a first human male (“Y-chromosomal Adam”). These two original humans are genetically unconnected to other *Homo* species such as *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo erectus*. Therefore, even the most conservative Bible scholars and the most unbelieving naturalistic scientists agree that human life as we know it is, at most, roughly ten thousand years old.

## HOW DOES CREATIONISM DIFFER FROM NATURALISM?

Naturalism views creation as merely the product of time, energy, and chance. As Carl Sagan famously said, “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”<sup>40</sup> Or, to say it another way, the ultimate explanation of everything from life to love is to be found in particle physics, string theory, and whatever governs the elements of the material world, as there is nothing beyond the physical world and its atoms.

Likely the most famous proponent of naturalism is Charles Darwin (1809–1892). Darwin was an English naturalist who founded the modern theory of evolution. He published his proposal in the 1859 book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. The lengthy original title is

<sup>40</sup>Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 1.

often shortened to *On the Origin of Species*, both because of its length and racist overtones. While it seems that Darwin never disbelieved in the existence of a God of some kind, his evolutionary theory has been used in an effort to explain the origin of life apart from God. In fact, atheist Richard Dawkins says that “although atheism might have been *logically* tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”<sup>41</sup>

As Christians we are free to accept the seemingly self-evident fact of micro-evolution—that species can and do adapt to their environments. In fact, micro-evolution may be simply yet another evidence of the goodness and mercy of God upon his creation, since it helps a species adapt to its environment so as to help protect it from predators. However, Christians are not free to accept the yet unproven and highly suspect thesis of naturalistic and atheistic macro-evolution—that one species can evolve into another species entirely.

Although it reigned as the dominant paradigm for over one hundred years, Darwin’s theory of evolution has recently come under intense criticism by both Christian and non-Christian scientists who have been persuaded by what has come to be known as “intelligent design.” Even Antony Flew, the preeminent philosopher of atheism, abandoned his failed theory in 2004.<sup>42</sup> The reasons for the decline of confidence in macro-evolution are many, but the following are some of the most implausible leaps of faith that macro-evolution makes, all of which require at least as much faith as believing in an eternal creator God.

1) Macro-evolution purports that nothing made everything. Sometimes this claim goes by the term *spontaneous generation*. Essentially, no-thing causes every-thing to spring into existence, although this is not considered a miracle because there is no God. Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, says, “I can’t imagine how nature, in this case the universe, could have created itself. And the very fact that the universe had a

<sup>41</sup>Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1996), 6, emphasis in original.

<sup>42</sup>Antony Flew, *There Is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

beginning implies that someone was able to begin it. And it seems to me that had to be outside of nature.”<sup>43</sup>

Macro-evolution is put in a quandary between the undeniable evidence that the universe had a beginning and the equally undeniable principle that nothing comes from nothing.

Most naturalistic and atheistic scientists give credence to the big bang theory, which states that there was some sort of powerful explosion of sorts that set in motion events that in time led to the formation of the world as we know it; thus, the big bang accounts for the continual expanding of the universe. Stephen Hawking wrote: “Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the big bang.”<sup>44</sup> While Christians would call this Big God rather than big bang, the point in either case is that the universe is not eternal but had a beginning.

In desperation to avoid the quandary of a universe with a beginning, they speculate that there might be an infinite number of invisible parallel universes stretching back into eternity, without a shred of evidence to support their imagining. How can they criticize Christians for being people of blind faith? We have all the historical evidence for Jesus and his resurrection to support our faith, while they have absolutely nothing for their mythology.

2) Macro-evolution purports that chaos made order. The basic telling of the history of the universe according to atheistic naturalism is that the orderliness of our universe is the result of cataclysmic disorder, chaos, and chance that together resulted in great orderliness. As a general rule, our life experiences confirm to us that great chaos and disorder do not, in and of themselves, lead to harmonious order. On this point, the astronomer Fred Hoyle “claimed that the probability of life arising on earth (by purely natural means, without special divine aid) is less than the probability that a flight-worthy Boeing 747 should be assembled by a hurricane roaring through a junkyard.”<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Steve Paulson, “The Believer,” interview with Francis Collins, *Salon.com*, 3, <http://salon.com/books/int/2006/08/07/collins/index2.html>.

<sup>44</sup>Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, *The Nature of Space and Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 20.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in Alvin Plantinga, “The Dawkins Confusion,” *Books & Culture* 13 (March/April 2007): 21.

Additionally, Stephen Hawking has said, “The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the big bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Hawking admitted, “It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.”<sup>47</sup>

The *teleological argument* (*telos* means “purpose” or “design”) seeks to convince from the amazing harmony in all of creation that the world has been ordered by an Intelligent Designer who is God. In its simple form, the argument contends that when we see something that is designed, we rightly assume that an intelligent designer created it. Further, the more complicated something is, the more intelligent the designer must have been.

Classic advocates of the teleological argument from design include Christian philosophers Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and William Paley (1734–1805). Paley’s watchmaker analogy stated that if you came across something as complex as a watch, you would rightly assume that an intelligent designer made it. Likewise, as we walk through the world, we continually encounter things made with far greater complexity than a watch, such as the eye you are using to read these words. Biochemistry professor Michael Behe made similar points in his argument for “irreducible complexity”: that certain biological systems, like an eye, are too complex to have evolved from simpler predecessors.<sup>48</sup> They had to come into existence as complete systems. Therefore, we are logically compelled to believe that these things were intelligently designed by God.

In recent decades, the “fine-tuning argument” has also gained prominence as a form of the teleological argument. Proponents note that these basic physical constants must fall within very narrow limits if intelligent life is to develop. For example, our world’s constant gravitational force, the rate of universe expansion, the average distance between stars, the nature

<sup>46</sup>Quoted in Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 75.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>See Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

of gravity, earth's distance from the sun, earth's rotation period, and even our carbon dioxide levels are so finely tuned for life on our planet that no logical explanation other than God is tenable. Collins says:

When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants—the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and weak nuclear forces, etc.—that have precise values. If any one of those constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it. Matter would not have been able to coalesce, there would have been no galaxy, stars, planets, or people.<sup>49</sup>

Even our own human bodies support this argument. Further findings in science continually increase our understanding of the wondrous complexity of the human body, including the fact that just one human DNA molecule holds roughly the same amount of information as one volume of an encyclopedia.

3) Macro-evolution purports that impersonal matter made personal humanity. Naturalists have reasoned that in addition to the material world, immaterial things such as emotions and intelligence are simply the result of impersonal, unfeeling, and unintelligent matter. Yet, this entire proposal defies logic. How can matter that does not feel create people who weep? How can matter that does not think create not only the physical organ of the brain but the mental thoughts that accompany it? How can impersonal matter create a person with an identity and personality?

Indeed, the burden of proof is on the naturalist to explain the untenable, whereas the Christian simply states the biblical fact that our personal, passionate, and infinitely brilliant God made us with bits of his glory in our heart, mind, and personality. Furthermore, if our views of justice and morality were nothing more than neurochemistry hardwired into us, then we would lose the right to be morally outraged at such things as genocide,

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<sup>49</sup>Steve Paulson, "The Believer."

rape, murder, and racism. When we deny the dignity of humanity as created in God's image, we saw off the branch upon which we sit to defend it.

4) Macro-evolution purports that evolution happened over long periods of time without transitional forms in the fossil record. If evolution were true, there would be numerous transitional forms of human life in the fossil record that would, to some degree, reflect the evolutionary chart that many were subjected to growing up in school. Yet, the absence of transitional fossil forms is simply yet another evidence of the fact that macro-evolution did not occur.

5) Macro-evolution purports to be unbiased science. Still, after one hundred years of attempts to replicate macro-evolution, all efforts have been in vain. Further, the atheistic naturalists continue to resist any evidence for the hand of God in the making of the world. This is, as Romans 1:18 states, because they suppress the truth due to hardness of heart against God. As Harvard professor Richard Lewontin said, "We are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations."<sup>50</sup> He continues to insist that this "materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door."<sup>51</sup>

In addition, Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg says, "I personally feel that the teaching of modern science is corrosive of religious belief, and I'm all for that!"<sup>52</sup> He goes on to say:

From my own point of view, I can hope that this long sad story will come to an end at some time in the future and that this progression of priests and ministers and rabbis and ulamas and imams and bonzes and bodhisattvas will come to an end, that we'll see no more of them. I hope that this is something to which science can contribute and if it is, then I think it may be the most important contribution that we can make.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review of Books*, January 9, 1997, 150.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>"Free People from Superstition," *Freethought Today*, April 2000, <http://www.ffrf.org/fttoday/2000/april2000/weinberg.html>.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

Yet, if all we are is simply the result of time and chance, and our thoughts are no more than the random collision of matter, why should we trust our minds to tell us anything truthful or to be a trustworthy guide in scientific discovery? On this point, the prominent atheistic philosopher Thomas Nagel asks if we can have any “continued confidence in reason as a source of knowledge about the nonapparent character of the world? In itself, I believe an evolutionary story tells against such confidence.”<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, there is no conflict between science and Christian faith. However, there is a conflict between Christianity and atheistic naturalism, which refuses to follow the truth wherever it leads expressly because it leads to a belief in God. Because of these reasons, as well as its clear conflict with Scripture, Christians should reject atheistic naturalism and the teachings it offers to explain the universe apart from God as both flawed science and aberrant theology.

Christians should not, however, in any way abandon the sciences; instead, they should pursue them with great vigor and faith to learn more about God through what he has made as an act of worship to him.<sup>55</sup>

Tragically, there has been much misreporting about the historical relationship between Christianity and science. Thus, we want to refute some powerful yet untrue myths that have caused some to wrongly see Christianity as suppressing the truth while science pursues it.<sup>56</sup>

The first myth is that, prior to Christopher Columbus’s first voyage, people thought the world was flat. The truth is that, more than eight hundred years before Columbus’s voyage, Bede the church historian taught that the earth was round, as did Thomas Aquinas. Furthermore, Sacrobosco’s book *De Sphaera*, written around 1231, was the standard manual for elementary

<sup>54</sup>Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 135.

<sup>55</sup>Francis Collins is an example of a Christian doing just that. In the same year that atheist Richard Dawkins published *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), Collins published *The Language of God*. Collins is an eminent research scientist and head of the Human Genome Project. In his book he speaks about how his study of creation led him down a path following the truth until it led him to his Creator and he converted from atheism to Christianity.

<sup>56</sup>See Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Philip Sampson, *Six Modern Myths about Christianity and Western Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); and Vinod Ramachandra, *Subverting Global Myths* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

astronomy until the Renaissance. That work described a spherical earth some two centuries before Columbus.

The second myth is that when Copernicus wrote that the earth revolved around the sun, his conclusions were a revolutionary, and previously untaught, concept. The truth is that Copernicus was taught the essential fundamentals leading to his model by his Scholastic professors, that is, Christian scholars who developed the model gradually over the previous two centuries.

The third myth is that the “scientific revolution” of the seventeenth century invented science as we know it because Christianity had lost the power to prevent it. The truth is that three hundred years before Newton, a Scholastic cleric named Jean Buridan anticipated Newton’s first law of motion, that a body in motion will stay in motion unless otherwise impeded. It was Buridan, not an Enlightenment luminary, who first proposed that the earth turns on its axis. Furthermore, science flourished only in Europe, where the worldview was shaped by Christianity. Many civilizations had alchemy, yet only Christian-influenced Europe developed chemistry. Likewise, astrology was practiced everywhere, but only in Europe did it become astronomy.

In closing, we would commend those whom God has gifted to love God with all their mind and to do so in the sciences to God’s glory and their joy, as has always been the case with God’s people.