

Let The Earth Bring Forth

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In majestic terms the Bible tells of the origin of the heavens and the earth. It says, "In the beginning God created ---." For reasons known only to God the Bible does not say "when" or "how" God created. It simply says He did. Religion should tell us "why." The forever mission of science is to tell us "how" and "when." The words "created heaven" do suggest a process. The term "shamaym" can be read "heaved up things."

Cosmology theorists and their astronomy colleagues generally agree that everything was heaved up. A widely accepted "beginning" model postulates a singularity. All matter was in an atomic nucleus of infinite density. Nature (read God) abhors infinite density and afforded relief by an ineffable explosion. This came to be called the Big Bang.

Four forces of nature, strong nuclear, weak nuclear, electromagnetic and gravity became operative in the time and space created by the big bang. The ensuing creation and interaction between elementary particles, subparticles and antiparticles were the building blocks of the universe.

The universe created at the big bang is expanding. It is being heaved up. The velocity and distances of celestial bodies receding from a beginning point in space/time indicate that the big bang happened about 15 billion years ago. Stellar gas and debris from exploded stars furnished building materials for the earth that was formed about 10 billion years later. The earth is about four to five billion years old.

Christians, scientists, philosophers and theologians are vitally interested in the beginning. The Bible does not represent itself to be a book of science. There are, however, many instances where Biblical revelation and scientific law or theories complement the other remarkably well. There are numerous, almost startling, coincidences.

The Genesis account, "In the beginning God (began) creating" indicates a continuing process. Creation is ongoing. Many of the world's mountain ranges, notably the Alps, Himalayas and Andes, are growing measurably. They are being created. Others including the Appalachians and Ozarks are subsiding. They will, in time, be peneplained to extinction. God's hand can be observed in the orogenic processes of mountain building. Erosion and the Colorado River continue to create the Grand Canyon. Because God is eternal, creation is unending.

The principal messages of Genesis are: 1) There was a beginning, 2) in the beginning was God, 3) He is the Creator of the universe and 4) all life on earth, plant and animal, was made from the elements of the earth. 5) God set in motion laws of nature to govern His masterpiece. "Let the earth bring forth." God commanded and the earth responded.

The sequence of events in the Genesis account of creation enhances the credibility of its source. The heavens are created before the earth. This narrative was written many generations before Copernicus postulated and Galileo proved that earth is not the center

of the universe. Before the Copernican revolution, human logic would have dictated, or demanded, that earth, the hub of the universe be created first.

“Without form and void.” The swirling cloud of stellar gas and dust that was earth in the making became molten from nuclear fission. The fledging planet was without form and void in the chaos of this stage of its creation. “Let there be light.” The sun had been created with the heavens. It illuminated the roiling, broiling mass of gas and matter that was becoming planet earth.

“Let there be a firmament separating the waters---“ As the earth cooled water accumulated on the “face of the deep.” Earth became a water planet. Ocean covered the surface and clouds graced the sky. In meteorological parlance, the hydrosphere and atmosphere had been created.

“And God said let the waters be gathered together in one place and let dry land appear.” Colliding tectonic plates pushed Pangaea above the water as a continuous massive landmass. Continued tectonic action separated the super continent into two gargantuan islands imaginatively named Gondwanaland and Laurasia. These island giants further fragmented into present-day continents, islands and archipelagos. Host tectonic plates carried them to the now locations. A Psalmist said it well:

Thou coverest the foundations of the earth with the deep as with a garment.
The waters stood about the mountains.
At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thunder they hasted away.
They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys into the place thou
hast founded for them.
Thou set a bound that they may not pass over. They turn not again to cover the
earth.

Earth scientists call tectonic plate migration continental drift. As restless continents continue their never-ending quest for isostatic equilibrium, mountains are thrust up and seafloors expand. The floor of the Atlantic Ocean rift is spreading at about one inch a year. Active mountains are growing at a similar rate. In the seemingly aimless wandering of continents and the lateral expansion of seafloors that is continental drift, God is at His post. Creation continues.

“Let the earth bring forth with grass and herb yielding seed---” “Grass” refers to primitive lichens, ferns and spore-bearing plants without seeds. “Herb yielding seed” are angiosperms that bear fruit and have seed. Plant life appeared on earth eons before the advent of animal life. The order of appearance of these species in the biblical account is correct.

“Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light ---.” During the molten stage, all earth water was suspended in massive multi-thousand feet thick clouds. Genesis 2 speaks of mist so pervasive that it watered the earth and allowed plants to grow. This is indicative of the density of the primeval atmosphere. It was only after the sky had cleared and clouds dispersed that light from sun, moon and stars could penetrate the vapor. The mechanism for charting days, nights and seasons had been put in place.

“Let the waters bring forth abundantly ---.” Animal life originated in the sea. The Devonian Period is called the age of fishes. Devonian Age rocks outcrop in the Catskill Mountains of New York. An exposed ledge near Callicoon Center is a solid mass of brachiopod fossils with hardly more cementing material than necessary to bind the shells together. The waters did, indeed, bring forth abundantly when this formation was deposited. This Devonian Formation is covered with 20,000 feet of sedimentary rocks at Canadian, Texas. There it is the host rock for the world’s largest natural gas well.

“Let the earth bring forth living creatures after his kind.” “Let the earth bring forth.” These words succinctly and perfectly describe the evolutionary methods by which God created life. The earth did indeed bring forth abundantly. God had so commanded. So it was.

“After his kind,” is repeated after each animal group. God ordained sexual reproduction by the higher animals. Life emerged from the sea, and land animals developed. The appearance of animal life on earth is in proper geological time sequence.

“Let us make man in our image ---.” “And the Lord formed man (kind) from the dust (elements) of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living soul.” Male and female He created them. “And God blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth ---.” “And God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good.”

Of all His creation man only was created in the image of God and he alone was given a soul. In some believers’ acceptance, man was a unique and therefore a special creation. Others maintain man’s body evolved and his soul is created by, and in the image of God. Either interpretation can be embraced without apology.

The Roman Catholic Church bases its doctrines on scripture, authority, tradition, inspiration and reason. Being universal, it is continually subjected to unrelenting pressure from constant worldwide scientific discovery. The advent of the atomic age and the ensuing explosion of scientific knowledge made it requisite for the Church to address the myriad theological problems posed by the theory of biological evolution.

Citing the rule of reason Pope Pius XII acknowledged the canonical acceptability of the theory of evolution. In 1950, he issued an encyclical entitled “Humani Generis” (Human Origin). In this decree, he indicated that creation by evolution does not violate the tenet of the Church. In 1996 Pope John Paul II in “Origins” revisited this encyclical. The pontiff stated that discoveries since 1950, “in various fields of knowledge, the convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of the theory.” Fresh knowledge has led to the recognition that evolution can be considered as more than mere hypothesis. Indeed it has.

It is perfectly respectable to hold a 24-hour day creation view. The word translated day in “Yom.” It means a period of time. To some this can mean 24 hours. To others it can mean billions of years. Background, experience and denominational necessity will

affect a believer's interpretation of the length of a Genesis day. There is little doubt that a nomadic herdsman contemporary to Moses hearing an oral account of the creation story would hold a different view than would a modern day quantum theorist. The genius of the Bible is that it can be comprehended and revered by both. Being the Word of God, the Bible must be true for all men of all ages.

Interpretations will be different. Some see an incongruity in an eternal God who remained somnolent until 6000 years ago. Others are convinced that textual context points to literal 24-hour creation days. It is incumbent on Christians to realize that persons of good will hold differing views. God's noblest creation should not make any belief a test of fellowship that his Maker did not establish as a condition of salvation.

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Editor's Note

My thanks go to Garner Stroud, 800 Ironwood, Olathe, Kansas 66061 for this insightful essay and for permitting me to publish it. We are acquainted only through two brief exchanges of mail. About fifteen years ago, I ventured to include "The Six Days of Creation" in my second book, "Free To Speak." Then in my "Freedom's Ring" mailout I included "The Great Belly-Button Controversy," in issue No. 9; "Adam and Eve," in No. 37; "Refining Our Faith," in No. 38; and "A 'Hands-On' Creator," in No. 39. The positive response that I have received indicates that many hold these views privately though they receive no assurance from the pulpit or our schools. Knowing the intimidation that limits preachers and teachers, I wanted to publish this to let all know that they can hold differing views without jeopardizing their souls. I do not mean that to sound ugly or that I am being heroic, but I know first-hand what fierce reactions such teaching can bring from those to whom we are beholden. Thank God, in my present circumstance, I am free from those who would control me. ~Cecil Hook (March 2001)

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