

THEOLOGY ROUNDTABLE

Creation



Peninsula Bible Church
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Introduction

“Creation” is an immense and dynamic topic. Previous theology roundtables dealt mostly with questions from within a Christian framework; debates among believers concerning what the Bible and Christian history teach us. However, the origin and nature of the universe are matters of concern for thinking people of all stripes — philosophers, scientists, followers of various religions, random pundits. Scientific data increases every day. Scholarship proliferates. The internet and other media allow for ever-expanding and volatile disputation. An immense and dynamic topic indeed.

3 frameworks:

1. Deism: belief in a God who created the world but has since remained indifferent to it
2. Atheism: belief that God does not exist; all phenomena have a natural explanation
3. Deity: belief in a personal God who creates with a purpose, intends to be known and invites our participation/response to Him

The essential starting point is humility.

Do we bow before God in humble gratitude and from this posture observe the world or do we turn from God and proceed as if the human observer is above all things? The question of God’s place pervades our experience, has eternal consequences and presents us with mystery. All concern for mechanics of the universe are vastly less significant than question of God.

Interpreting the bible and the physical world are difficult endeavors.

Some conclusions will change over time. We don’t have answers to all of the biblical or scientific questions. The history of science is replete with examples of firm convictions being overturned in the face of better arguments and new data. The bible is true and trustworthy, but no interpretation is above scrutiny. The reliability of scripture does not stand or fall because faithful believers read Genesis 1-2 in different ways.



Terms and Categories

Young Earth Creationism holds that God created the universe less than 10,000 years ago. It asserts that the first chapter of Genesis must be read as describing events that occurred in six, consecutive twenty-four days. Radioisotope dating is considered unreliable. Catastrophic events (like Noah's flood) explain some anomalies.

Answers in Genesis (answersingenesis.org), authors—Henry Morris, Jason Lisle

Old Earth Creationism also teaches that the first chapter of Genesis is written to speak in literal terms about the creation of the universe, holding that God creates by means of miraculous interventions. It differs from YEC in understanding the term 'day' as referring to long (though finite) length of time rather than a period of 24 hours. From this perspective the earth can be dated at 4.6 billion years old.

Reasons to Believe (reasonstobelieve.org); authors — Hugh Ross, Fazale Rana

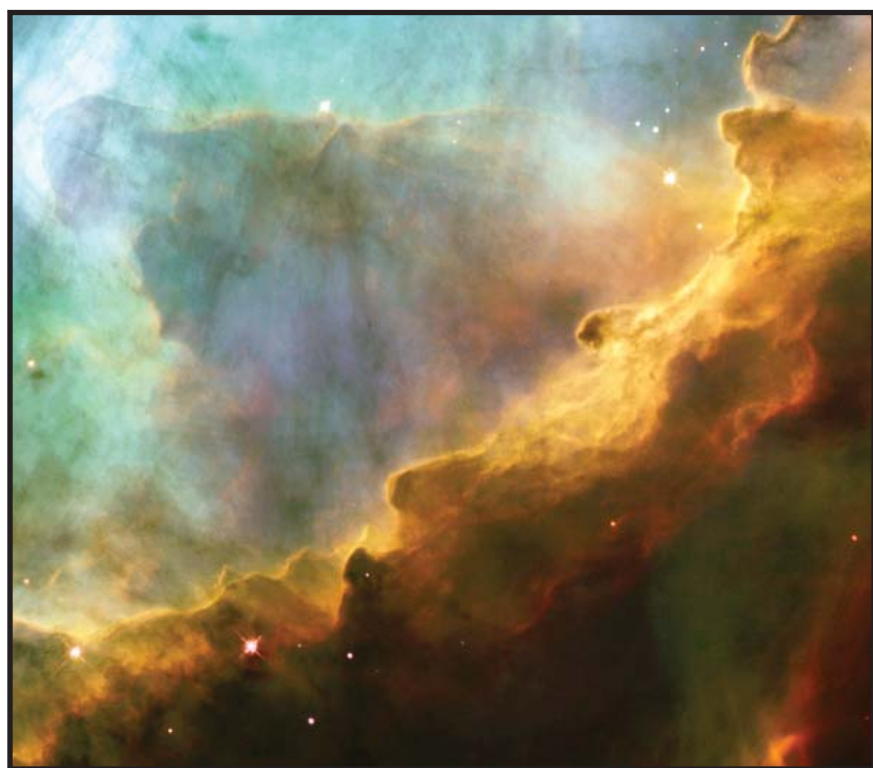
Intelligent Design challenges the notion that natural processes can explain the complex universe we observe. This movement does not claim to be Christian or refer to God as He is revealed in the bible. In the case of evolution ID asserts that, at crucial junctures in the unfolding process, intervention by an 'intelligent being' is required to account for a complex outcome that could not slowly occur by natural selection.

Discovery Institute (discovery.org/csc/); authors—William Dembski, Michael Behe, Philip Johnson

Theistic Evolution holds that God creates by using natural processes established by Him to bring about all we can observe in the wider universe and in life on earth. He is revered as the God disclosed in the bible, the One who acts in guiding history, in miracles, and supremely in Christ, but no acts of 'intervention along the way' are required to understand what is observed by cosmologists or biologists. In this view Genesis 1 is viewed as speaking poetically.

BioLogos (biologos.org); authors—Francis Collins, Denis Alexander, Karl Giberson

Sermons by Bernard Bell, Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino: pbcc.org/sermons/media/1563.pdf, pbcc.org/sermons/media/1564.pdf, pbcc.org/sermons/media/1565.pdf



The Heavens and the Earth

Design in a fine-tuned universe

1. If the initial explosion of the big bang had differed in strength by as little as 1 part in 10^{60} to the 60th power, the universe would have either quickly collapsed back on itself, or expanded too rapidly for stars to form. In either case, life would be impossible. (John Jefferson Davis points out that an accuracy of one part in 10^{60} can be compared to firing a bullet at a one-inch target on the other side of the observable universe, twenty billion light years away, and hitting the target.)
2. Calculations indicate that if the strong nuclear force, the force that binds protons and neutrons together in an atom, had been stronger or weaker by as little as 5%, life would be impossible.
3. Calculations by Brandon Carter show that if gravity had been stronger or weaker by 1 part in 10^{40} , then life-sustaining stars like the sun could not exist. This would most likely make life impossible.
4. If the neutron were not about 1.001 times the mass of the proton, all protons would have decayed into neutrons or all neutrons would have decayed into protons, and thus life would not be possible.
5. The existence of carbon depends on a microscopically precise balance in the energy levels of the strong and electromagnetic forces.

Freeman Dyson, *"The more I examine the universe and the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the Universe in some sense must have known we were coming."*

Beauty

Psalm 1:1

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Luke 12:27

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

1 Corinthians 15:40-41

There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

Psalm 104:24-25

How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small.



In God's Image

The opening chapters of Genesis speak first and foremost of the nature and authority of the divine Creator. And his attention is focused on humankind. Men and women are made in his image and likeness, fashioned by his hands, animated by his breath. The original human pair was sinless and chose disobedience which 'bound the creation itself to the process of decay' and caused all of their descendants to be born broken. The most difficult aspect of the 'creation debate' will continue to focus on the question of what it means to be human.

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Romans 5:16-17

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

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Notes

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