

Sharing Life, Sharing Faith

Discussion #11

I. Biblical Creation

A. God Created the Universe and all things in it, including all matter, space, and time.

1. God's Account of Creation

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1)

This is the literal translation of this verse, and there is no room for “creative interpretation” here. **God created the heavens and the earth.** This also explains how God, as the creator of time, is outside of time, which gives Him foreknowledge of all events.

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוֹ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם

Now the earth was **formless and empty**, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (Gen. 1:2)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי־אֹר

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ

God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning-- **the first day.** (Gen. 1:3-5)

2. The significance of the Hebrew word, יוֹם, (*yom*) in the creation account.

The word יוֹם (*yom*) “day”, and בַּיּוֹם (*b'yom*) “in the day” are found in the Hebrew Scriptures 765 times. Almost without exception, this word, in the singular form, is used to indicate a 24-hour day. Even when the plural form of the word is used, it indicates a specific period of time, such as 40 days. Other words are generally used to refer to an indefinite time period, such as זְמַן *z'man* (time period) or עֵתִים *itim* “times”). Throughout the creation account, this specific word is used in this specific way to indicate that he is talking about a **24-hour day** יוֹם אֶחָד (Gen. 1:5)

The Biblical record makes it plain that the days of creation are literal days, not long indefinite ages. As we examine the actual wording of these verses, this becomes clear. Even a cursory examination of the text clearly demonstrates that Moses used language that explicitly left no doubt about the literal nature of the days. If Moses had desired to convey the idea that these "days" were, in fact, long geological periods, then certainly he could have used terms that would have clarified that far better than those he selected. **(Rev. Richard Bolland)**

Note that this is a view common to both Orthodox Christianity and Judaism. All the ancient sages agree about a 6-day creation, and that those days are 24-hour days. The medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides wrote that conflicts between science and the Bible arise from either a lack of scientific knowledge or a defective understanding of the Bible.

Gen.1:5 "there was evening and there was morning" *v'yihe erev v'yihe boker* The cycle of the day is completed. Ramban (Nachamides) cites the above view that 'one day' refers to a twenty-four hour rotation of the sphere upon the earth during which there is light and darkness in opposite places. "yom echad" - day one - and not "yom rishon" -the first day- the use of the cardinal number echad, instead of the ordinal number rishon is correct because the use of first implies the presence of a second while here the second had not yet come into existence. This follows Ibn Ezra who adds that 'one' here indicates one complete cycle of the revolution of the spheres. **(Ramban, Bereishis Commentary, Mesorah Publishing)**

B. Probability Theory - Could Creation have occurred spontaneously?

Once computer technology became available that could handle the kind of numbers, (millions and million years and millions and millions of generations), mathematicians made a remarkable discovery... The mathematical probability that random chance could have produced a single cell was found to be: $10^{-40,000}$. **(Rev. Richard A. Bolland)**

It's true that probability never says never, but all of physics, which means all of nature, is based on the understanding that the very very very unlikely never happens. Without this basic understanding, there is no foundation for any assumptions of physics or cosmology.¹ **(Gerald Schroeder, "The Science of God")**

There is a serious conflict between the theory of evolution and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. In speaking about the systems entropy inherent in all living things, the Second Law of Thermodynamics postulates that "...all things are breaking down and becoming more random." Conversely, the theory of evolution insists that all things are becoming more organized and highly structured. Both of these statements cannot be true! **(Rev. Richard A. Bolland)**

C. Evolution Theory

The theory of evolution was first proposed by Charles Darwin in his book, "The Origin of Species", in 1859. He hypothesized that all life as we know it began as amino acids, which somehow formed spontaneously into a single-cell living organism, such as a protozoa. From this first cell of life, a gradual process of mutation and growth occurred in order to form the myriad higher forms of life as we know it.

As we have discovered, a single-cell, in itself, is marvelously complex. Even the cell plasma membrane is capable of selectively permitting certain molecules to pass through it while blocking others, based on their ion state and the membrane potential (how many other ions, both positive and negative, are in the immediate area). Cells also have many complex structures, such as mitochondria, which the cell uses to manufacture energy to support its life. In a very complex process called the Krebs's cycle, one molecule of glucose and two of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) are converted to 36 molecules of ATP. "Of the total 686 kilocalories (kcal) of energy present in one mole of glucose, as much as 262 kcal can be captured in the bonds of ATP molecules. The rest is liberated as heat. This corresponds to an energy capture of about 38%, which is far more efficient than any manmade machine, which uses only 10 to 30% of the energy available to them." ²

Proponents of the theory of evolution point to the similarities, indeed, the almost identical nature of DNA between all life forms in an attempt to prove this point. The theory states that, in this mutation process, there must have been a clear line of progress, with all phases of transitional forms present at some point. Unfortunately for proponents of this theory, the fossil record does not support this contention in any way. Additionally, the notion that all living creatures share a very common DNA chain does nothing to prove evolution at all, but rather is very clear evidence that all creatures were designed and made by the same Creator.

The magnificent Natural History Museum in London devotes an entire wing to demonstrating the fact of evolution. They show how pink daisies can evolve into blue daisies, how gray moths change into black moths, how over a mere few thousand years, a wide variety of cichlid fish species evolved in Lake Victoria. It is all impressive. Impressive, until you walk out and reflect upon that which they were able to document. Daisies remained daisies, moths remained moths, and cichlid fish remained cichlid fish. These changes are referred to as micro-evolution. In this exhibit, the museum's staff did not demonstrate a single unequivocal case in which life underwent a major gradual morphological change. ³ **(Gerald Schroeder, "The Science of God")**

Evolutionary theory proposes that life forms start out at a very simple level and then, by natural selection, eventually become more and more complex as changes occur. Biochemical and molecular biological research continue to gather convincing evidence that the living cell is totally useless unless, and until, it reaches its final form. When cells reach their final form, science has found that any change at all destroys, not enhances, its function. Darwin's greatest challenge comes from the question of how the individual cell developed. Scientist studying this issue have described the living cell as "irreducibly complex." What seems increasingly clear is that behind creation, at any level, there is clear evidence of intelligent design. ⁴ **(A.L. Barry)**

The thought that life in general and humans in particular had developed from lower life forms through random mutations was simply unacceptable to the church. We have discovered during the past three decades that it is also substantially unacceptable to science as well. ⁵ **(Gerald Schroeder, "The Science of God")**

The statement Darwin repeats several times in Origin of Species, "natura non facit saltum" - that nature does not make jumps - is simply false. Transitional forms are totally absent from the fossil record at the basic level of phylum and rare if present at all in class. Only after basic body plans are well established are fossil transitions observed. Darwin would have been much closer to the truth had he written "natura solum facit saltum" - that nature only makes jumps. To the amazement of the scientific community, fossil evidence was discovered that showed life started, not after the predicted billions of years, but immediately on the cooled earth. ⁶ **(Gerald Schroeder)**

Genesis 1:21-25 explains that the species are set in their pattern and cannot mutate into some other species. Our own experience in interbreeding stock confirms the boundaries that God has set between the species. Certainly there is variation within a species, but not between species. There are many different kinds of dogs, but dogs do not become goats. There is great variety within the plant kingdom, but corn does not become orange trees. (Rev. Richard A. Bolland)

Again, a similar conclusion is drawn by the ancient Jewish sages.

Gen. 1:24 "Let the earth bring forth" implies a concealed, dormant presence being transformed into existence; the potential for everything was created on the first day; it was subsequently only necessary to bring them forth. ⁷ (Rashi, Bereishis Commentary, Mesorah Publishing)

D. Conclusion

The only proper way to interpret Genesis 1 is not to "interpret" it at all. It is far better to accept the words for what they say: The days are literal 24 hours day. The events described occurred as they are described. The six days of creation and the days of rest comprise the first week of the earth's history, not an allegory trying to explain man's beginnings. (Rev. Richard A. Bolland)

II. New Age Thought⁸

A. Old Lies for a New Age

The ideas and concepts of the New Age movement are not new at all. In fact, they go all the way back to the Garden of Eden, and are, in a large part, a restatement of the question, "Did God really say....?"

"**You will not surely die,**" the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it **your eyes will be opened,** and **you will be like God,** knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also **desirable for gaining wisdom,** she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Genesis 3:4-6)

The New Age Movement may be defined as a network of otherwise dissimilar people intent on replacing the reality of personal God with the idea that humanity is the center of all things. Indeed, it is claimed that each person is God, one with a universal energy, and only needs to develop the potential of divinity to the fullest.

Because it is attractive to sinful human nature and because of its subtle deceptiveness, the new Age Movement has become a major challenge to Christianity in our time.

B. Jewish Mysticism and Cabala (the Zohar)

The Zohar, or “Book of Lights”, was written in Safed, Israel in the 16th century, primarily by Rabbi Isaac Luria. It teaches that God’s word, the Torah, can be read on many levels. By moving “above” the literal meanings, there are metaphorical and mystical levels, in which many new teachings may be discerned. For example, Gen. 1:1 (see above) is translated, “In the beginning SOMETHING created gods, the heavens, and the earth”. This is based on the fact the the Hebrew verb, **בָּרָא** *bara*, “created” is masculine singular, yet the word for God, **אֱלֹהִים** *elohim*, is plural. Therefore, they reason, that it cannot refer to the traditional Judeo-Christian God as we understand it, so this SOMETHING created gods, and those gods are all little sparks of that SOMETHING within each of us. They ignore the fact that the Hebrew plural form is often used to indicate vastness without measure. The very word **שָׁמַיִם** *shamayim* “heavens”, which is found in the same verse, is of this form as well. As you can see, they translate this correctly as “heavens”.

The Cabala is still studied today, and is the source of much of the mysticism found in the New Age movement.

C. Occult New Age Principals

1. Reincarnation

The westernized version of reincarnation expresses the belief that the immortal soul/spirit, the true inner self, passes from one human body to another in a continuous cycle of death and rebirth. Reincarnation assures New Agers they will live again when the evolutionary transformation of the human race finally reaches the “golden age” of global peace and harmony.

2. Karma

The balance of good and evil is the controlling agent for each subsequent incarnation. Karma is the Hindu law of cause and effect - good produces good and evil produces evil. Some New Agers speak of karma as the instrument by which each person chooses the experiences of his or her next life. In order to rid oneself of vast amounts of negative karma, a person may elect to be aborted or born handicapped, suffer from cancer, live in extreme poverty, etc.

3. Channeling Spirit Guides

Mediums, or channelers, claim to contact the spirits of those who have lived before. These spirits tell about their lives and offer advice and guidance to those who contact them. The channelers are often fully “overtaken” by these spirits, speak with a different voice, and don’t remember anything they said while under the influence.

4. Crystals

New Agers use quartz crystals, a pretty, but very common substance, and invest them with magical attributes, such as healing, power, and wisdom. Note that this is not a new idea. Ancient paganism also assigned powerful magic to pretty rocks. New Agers may tape crystals to carburetors to increase gas mileage, place them in drinking water to promote healing, or wear them around their necks to increase energy and mind power.

5. UFO's and extraterrestrials

Distant star systems are believed to be inhabited by highly cultured races that are spiritually and scientifically millions of years ahead of earthlings. These "intelligences from space" apparently share their advanced knowledge through specially chosen human contactees.

6. Divination practices

There are many different practices in which attempts are made to see the future. This too is not a new phenomenon.

Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. (Deut. 18:10-12)

D. Humanist New Age Principals

Humanist New Age thought dispenses with the magic and pagan practices. While it shares some common thought with Secular Humanism, it is more blatantly anti-God. While Secular Humanism does not discard the notion of God, New Age Humanism is an attempt to replace God with humanity and to instill the belief that the attributes of God rightfully belong to human beings.

New Age human philosophy is very prevalent in our public schools and in the field of psychology in general, and is much more insidious, and therefore dangerous, than the occult practices.

From *A Practical Guide to Value Clarification*, by Father Maury Smith:

"Value clarification as a methodology considers this moralistic stance to be an imposition upon the individual of predetermined values, and it seeks instead a method whereby individuals can discover their own values. Thus, value clarification does not tell a person what his values should be or what values he should live by; it merely provides the means for him to discover what values he does live by." (pg. 5)

From *Gods of the New Age*, by Caryl Matrisciana

“Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural Being, toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity. It is up to you teachers to make all of these sick children well by creating the international children of the future.”

(quoting Dr. C.M. Pierce, Professor of education at Harvard University pp. 170-171)

E. Ideas Common to All New Age Thought

1. All is one: therefore all is God.

The New Age God is impersonal and does not have an identity apart from creation. This idea is also identified with the Eastern religions.

2. Humanity, like all creation, is divine and has unlimited potential.

Since people are all divine and creating their own reality, there is no absolute apart from the reality of right and wrong that each person creates for himself. This idea blends perfectly with the post-modern culture in which we find ourselves, and explains in part the interest and growth in New Age thought.

3. Humanity’s basic flaw is its ignorance of divinity and oneness with all things

Therefore, according to this way of thinking, the only barrier to humanity’s full evolution to godhood is ignorance of our own divinity. This barrier can be eliminated by the “enlightenment” of mankind as to our real identity as gods. Note once again the similarity to Eastern thought.

4. Humanity’s only need, therefore, is transformation - the awareness of divinity.

Notice that the idea of sin is totally alien to this way of thinking. When there is no sin, when all we really need is education and enlightenment, then we have no need of a savior for the consequences of those sins.

5. Transformation can be produced by a wide variety of techniques.

These techniques include sensory isolation, chanting, biofeedback, psychodrama, hypnosis, meditation, magical rites, human potential seminars, dream journals, syncretistic religions, self-healing, such as guided imagery, Therapeutic Touch, acupuncture, use of crystals, and so forth.

6. Personal transformation is the springboard to global transformation.

New Agers believe that once all people have experienced this transformation, we will experience global unity. We will all speak one language, and there will be no more war, violence, racism, disease, hunger, or death.

F. A Christian Witness in the New Age

1. **Be a friend.** Listen to their viewpoints and ask questions appropriately. Learn what your friend actually does believe, because each person has different beliefs. New Age thought is heavily influenced by our post-modern times, so the idea of absolute truth is also rejected. This is always a good starting point for discussions. As in discussions with those of the post-modern mindset, these people do not believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth, and that individual perception causes individual truth. **Focus on the truth of God's word, and that truth is something external to the individual.**
2. **Recognize that there are problems in the world.** This may be a good starting point. There are serious problems confronting us today; war, crime, poverty, hunger, racism, and so on. You can let them know that Christians too are concerned about these problems. This may also give you the opportunity to discuss the idea of that God's creation was perfect, but that through our sin, these problems were brought into the world.
3. **Discuss the idea of "personal worth" in the context of law and gospel.** Many New Agers are seeking confirmation that they do have personal worth. They are looking within for the "essential goodness" that all people have in their "godhood". But as we know, looking within honestly leads only to despair and doubt, for what we find there is not "god" nor is it "goodness", for God has written His law on every heart, and none of us measure up. You may mention that God has attached such great personal worth to each individual that he did not spare His own Son in order to redeem us from our broken relationship with Him. In other words, remember your law and gospel message!
4. **Do not get caught up in arguments over philosophy or other social concerns.** Try to keep the focus on God, His Word, and what He has revealed in it. Many of these people are hungry for this message, and many of them are not all that certain about what they do believe. Rather, they are "experimenting" with various ideas in the course of their search for truth and meaning.

III. Scenarios

A. Scenario #1

The vacant house next door to you has been sold, and soon you notice a couple moving in. Before long, you notice Buddhist prayer flags hanging on the deck, crystals hanging in all the windows, and they seem to be outside a lot working on their garden. You wave to them from time to time, but you would like to talk with them. How would you initiate a conversation? Once you've started, continue the conversation for a little while.

B. Scenario #2

Your child is attending the public school, and it's time for parent-teacher conferences. Your child's teacher begins the session by saying this. "You know, it can sometimes be very difficult to teach a group of children when they all come to the school with such a different background and such different beliefs. Your little Timmy, for example, keeps telling the other children about Jesus. Well, that's fine if you want to teach him that in the privacy of your home, but you need to tell him to respect other people's beliefs and not push his own views on them. Each child has to develop his own values, and it doesn't help when Timmy tells them things like this. Can you tell him to stop, please?" What do you say next?

IV. Journal Sharing

V. Next Month

- A. Angels**
- B. Masonry and the Lodge**
- C. Scenarios**
- D. Journal Sharing**
- E. Summary and Conclusion of the Program**

¹ Schroeder, Gerald, "The Science of God", © 1997 The Free Press, Reprinted by Simon and Shuster, pg 26

² Marieb, Elaine N., "Human Anatomy and Physiology" , © 1998, Benjamin/Cummings Science Publishers, Menlo Park, CA, pg. 932

³ Schroeder, Gerald, Op. Cit., pg 31

⁴ Barry, A.L., "What about Creation and Evolution?" pamphlet, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Office of the President, pg 2

⁵ Schroeder, Gerald, Op. Cit., pg 8

⁶ Schroeder, Gerald, Op. Cit., pg 10

⁷ Rashi, Bereishis Commentary, © 1995 Mesorah Publishing, Brooklyn NY, Vol Ia, pg 65

⁸ Lochhaas, Phillip H., "The New Age Movement: How to Respond", © 1988, 1995 Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO (all information from this section taken from this source)

