

From Acorn to Oak
Who is God, and what is he like? Part 8: Creator
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Not long ago I had the privilege of attending a conference of 450 scientists and theologians who met in Los Angeles to examine what was presented as “a biblically based scientifically testable model of origins.” Astronomer and astrophysicist, Hugh Ross, led the three-day event.

It was a great joy to hear Christians in those fields including astrophysics, astronomy, geology, chemistry, biochemistry, and physics share how their work illustrates the teaching of the Bible regarding creation, how God’s providential care can be seen in what he made, and their strong conclusion that when the Bible is properly interpreted its texts integrate perfectly with the findings of careful science. When, for example, in Genesis 1 the Hebrew word, יוֹם *yôm* (day), is interpreted as an indefinite period of time, as it is sometimes used, rather than a twenty-four-hour period, as it is also used elsewhere in the Old Testament, we see the Bible’s account of God’s creative acts occurring as scientists have discovered in their research. Though this contention is disputed, the scientists at this conference presented compelling and convincing data to substantiate that claim.

God is the Creator.

Moreover, only God creates. In the Bible God is the sole subject of the verb to create, בָּרָא *bārā*, i.e., to make something without using a preexistent substance (ex nihilo, out of nothing). No human is ever the subject of *bārā*, which is why in my understanding of God and his revelation of who he is, what he is like, and what he does, I believe it is important to classify this characteristic of God as one of his incommunicable attributes, characteristics of his being that he does not share with human beings.

Of course, in the English language we speak of people having creativity and functioning creatively. I even used that expression in the subtitle of my first book, though I wish I’d chosen a different term to convey what I was trying to say, especially with some of the meaning the word has come to have in our society. However, I am reminded by my friend and fellow church educator, Jim Found, that the English words we use to try to translate and explain God’s Word, which was originally written mostly in Hebrew and Greek, are from a secular source, the meaning of which is shaped to a considerable extent by a secular worldview and the common parlance of our society. Therefore, since we have to use the same language as the people with whom we’re trying to communicate, when we use secular terms to express Biblical truths, it is important to point out the differences in the Biblical use of those terms.

God has accomplished his creating in and through his Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. All things originate in the Father but come through the Son (Colossians 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 8:6) in the sense of holding together and are renewed. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Christ was the Father’s agent in creation. (Colossians 1:16 ff.)

Two of the great themes that run throughout the Bible are creation and redemption. Without the latter, the former would be destroyed. As we will consider further and more closely, God is holy, and he will not compromise his integrity by fellowshiping with that which is sinful and evil. Yet because his being is essentially love, which includes justice, he is not willing to destroy his creation but chooses to redeem it, and at great cost to himself.

As we study the Bible, praying for and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we sense part of the mind of God as to his will for his creation and in particular how he wants people to care for it and function within it. We also obtain a glimpse of God's magnificent and transcendent mind as we study mathematics and the natural sciences. For example, when we observe the highly complex equations and formulas in algebra, geometry, and calculus as well as the laws of physics and chemistry we're amazed at how God fashioned all that is by constructing this system. It gives us great joy to discover some of the principles he created and used in the formation of the universe and its components. As you help your child or grandchild with his or her homework, work these understandings into your conversation and help him or her to see more of the broader picture and especially God's involvement in it.

While God formed the universe by creating many things out of nothing, he also used some of those things to make others. For example, in Genesis 1:16 we read that God had made (translating the verb, אָסָה 'āsāh to make, as being in the pluperfect tense) the sun and the moon (implied in 1:3-5, "Let there be light..."). The verb 'āsāh is also used with humans being the subject, and involves the use of materials already in existence to fashion new entities. Scientific research helps us discover countless aspects of God's general revelation, that which he has built into his creation for all to see (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20). In his excellent book, *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*, Dr. Ross explains many exciting discoveries. Consider some which give us a glimpse into how God likely made the moon.

According to analysis of lunar rock samples brought back from the Apollo moon mission, the earth existed for some 340,000,000 years without the moon but with conditions too inhospitable to permit life, such as too heavy and thick an atmosphere. From evidence discovered, astronomers believe that about 4.25 billion years ago a body at least the size of Mars and one-ninth the mass of Earth struck our planet almost head-on, becoming absorbed for the most part into Earth. That blast propelled the thick atmosphere into outer space, and replaced it with an atmosphere and other elements that would permit life as we know it; made a cloud of material that would coalesce to form the moon; slowed Earth's rotation to a rate that would permit life; and stabilized the tilt of Earth's rotation axis to protect the planet from climatic extremes that would extinguish life.

The astronomer concludes, "this amazing collision, for which we have an abundance of circumstantial evidence, appears to have been perfectly timed and designed to transform Earth from a 'formless and empty' place into a site where life could survive and thrive...the number of conditions that must be fine-tuned—and the degree of fine-tuning

needed for each of these conditions—for life to possibly survive that is manifested in this single event argues powerfully on its own for a divine Creator. Even if the universe contains as many as 10 billion trillion (10^{22}) planets, we would not expect even one, by natural processes alone, to end up with the surface gravity, surface temperature, atmospheric composition, atmospheric pressure, crustal iron abundance, tectonics, vulcanism, rotation rate, rate of decline in rotation rate, and stable rotation axis tilt necessary for the support of life. To those who express the desire to see a miracle, we can assure them they are looking at one whenever they gaze up at the moon.”¹

More Practical Benefits for Us

Again, we see how practical our theology is. Since the world in which we live and all within it have been created, and since the Creator, as we’ll see further is essentially loving, good, and sovereign, we observe countless evidences everyday that we are not accidents in a chaos that is out of control.

Having been planned, we have a profound sense of value and purpose. Recognizing the mathematical precision in which the elements of the universe have been formed and function, we sense meaning in the cosmos and its components. Our being here is significant; our lives matter. In fact, we even have a vocation, a calling, a subject we’ll return to in later chapters.

From this understanding emerges a well-spring of aesthetic appreciation of the natural phenomena all about us. From now on can you ever think of the moon in a mundane manner? Further, as we learn more about the aspects of creation, we see beyond them and learn more about and regard more deeply their Creator! “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made....” (Romans 1:20)

As we study God’s creation scientifically and in the reflections of our mental processes, we are struck with the magnitude of who God is and what he is like, and how small, even though significant, we are. This humility is healthy, for “[p]ride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:8) Such falls are frequently very painful, not only to ourselves but to many others, and a practice of continually keeping in perspective who we are and what we are like is highly beneficial and keeps us out of much trouble. “Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.” (Proverbs 18:12 TNIV) Likewise, Jesus said, “those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:12 TNIV)

Another benefit of the doctrine of creation is the flexibility within stability, the freedom within form that we enjoy. As Dr. Neal Plantinga has observed, “To have a creation—something with both deep structures and also continuous change and process—is to have a place that is both stable and dynamic. In a creation of this kind we may make enduring commitments, confident that God’s handiwork is anchored into *God’s* enduring

¹ Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 1998), pp. 32-33.

commitments.”² Such an environment has made science and its manifold contributions possible. It is no accident that science grew out of a Biblical worldview.

Recognizing that we are part of God’s creation, and in humility accepting our place in that creation, gives us a strong sense of security. Our sovereign and loving Creator is able to protect what he has created and what belongs to him. This reality is exceedingly comforting! Sleep well tonight, and live in the peace and joy which transcends understanding tomorrow and in the days ahead.

² Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God’s World: A Reformed Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), p. 43.