

Evolutionary Creation

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Evolutionary creation claims the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created the universe and life through an evolutionary process. This position fully embraces both the religious beliefs of conservative Christianity and the scientific theories of cosmological, geological and biological evolution. It contends that God ordains and sustains the laws of nature, including the mechanisms of evolution. More specifically, evolution is 'teleological,' and features plan, purpose and promise. In particular, this view of origins asserts that humanity evolved from primate ancestors, and during this natural process the Image of God arose and sin entered the world. Evolutionary creationists experience God's presence and action in their lives. They contend that the Lord meets men and women in a personal relationship, which at times involves both dramatic and subtle miraculous signs and wonders.

The term 'evolutionary creation' to most individuals seems like a contradiction in terms. This would be the case if the words 'evolution' and 'creation' were restricted to their popular meanings. That is, if the former is bound to an atheistic world view, and if the latter refers exclusively to literal 6 day creation. However, evolutionary creation moves beyond the common use of these terms and the simple 'evolution vs. creation' debate. The most important word in this category is the noun 'creation.' Evolutionary creationists are first and foremost thoroughly committed and unapologetic creationists. They believe that the universe is a created reality that is absolutely dependent for its every moment of existence on the will and grace of the Creator. The qualifying word in this term is the adjective 'evolutionary,' indicating the method through which God created the world. This view of origins is often referred to as 'theistic evolution.' However, that categorization places the process of evolution as primary term and makes the Creator secondary as only a qualifying adjective. Such an inversion in the order of priority is unacceptable to evolutionary creationists.

Within Protestant evangelical circles, evolutionary creation is held by a small but growing number of individuals educated in both science and Scripture. In particular, a majority of these Christians trained in the biological sciences accept this position. The leading evangelical evolutionary creationist today is Howard Van Till. He spent most of his career at Calvin College, an institution considered to be the leading evangelical college in the United States supporting this view of origins. Van Till claims that God created the world 'fully-gifted' from its inception so that all the universe and life would evolve without subsequent Divine interventions. Evolutionary creation best describes the official position of the Roman Catholic Church, though it is often referred to in this tradition as 'theistic evolution.' In 1996 Pope John Paul II made international headlines by claiming that "new knowledge leads to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis."

In order to explain this view of origins to other conservative Christians, evolutionary creationists begin by pointing to the remarkable parallels between human development in womb and the evolution of the universe and life. They underline that God's hand in fashioning of each person individually is similar to

His activity in creating every part of the world collectively. Four significant and instructive parallels include:

- Human development and the evolution of the world are teleological natural processes ordained by God. At conception, the DNA in a fertilized human egg is fully equipped with the information for a human being to develop during a 9 month pregnancy. Similarly, the plan and capacity for the universe and life, including humanity, to evolve 10-15 billion years after the Big Bang was ordained and loaded into the fabric of the cosmos at its inception.

- Divine action in the creation of an individual human and the entire world is through subtle providential activity. No Christian believes that while in their mother's womb the Lord descended out of heaven and dramatically intervened to attach a nose, set an eye, bore an ear canal, etc. Rather, everyone understands human development as a continuous natural process that God sustains throughout pregnancy. In the same way, evolutionary creationists assert that dramatic Divine interventions were not employed in the creation of the cosmos and life. Instead, evolution is an uninterrupted process that was sustained through time by the Creator.

- Human development in the microcosm of the womb and the evolution in the macrocosm of the world provide natural revelations authored by the Creator. As the psalmist praises,

For You created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psalm 139:12-14

So too, evolutionary creationists view the evolution of the universe and life as a "knitting" process that results in a world that is "fearfully and wonderfully made." Indeed, the Big Bang "declares the Glory of God," and biological evolution "proclaims the work of His hands" (Ps 19:1).

(4) Spiritual mysteries are associated with the developmental and evolutionary processes. Humans are distinguished from the rest of the creation because they bear the Image of God and they are sinful. Christians throughout the ages have debated where, when and how these spiritual realities are manifested in the individual. Yet Church history reveals that believers have not come to a consensus on these questions, indicating that these issues are beyond human understanding. In other words, these are mysteries. Similarly, evolutionary creationists believe that both the manifestation of God's Image and the entrance of sin during human evolution are also mysteries. Christian evolutionists firmly uphold these spiritual realities, but admit that understanding their origin fully is beyond our creaturely capacity to know.

Evolutionary creationists are also quick to point out to fellow conservative Christians that their view of origins offers an expanded and more robust understanding of intelligent design in nature. This version of the design argument for God's existence appeals to more physical evidence than that proposed by young earth creation or progressive creation. At one level, evolutionary creation is in full agreement with these two anti-evolutionary positions in that there is a traditional intelligent design argument which points to the design evident in nature's current structures and operations. This classic approach argues that the incredible beauty and complexity in the organization and function of the creation presently before us reflects the mind of an Intelligent Being. For example, consider the most complex structure known-the human brain. This organ is an electrical circuitry marvel with trillions of synaptic

connections, and incredibly most of it develops in the womb beginning from only one fertilized egg. The structure, function and embryological development of the brain offers a breath-taking level of elegant complexity which few deny reflects the work of an Intelligent Designer.

At another level, evolutionary creation moves beyond the anti-evolutionary positions and argues that intelligent design is also expressed in the processes and mechanisms of evolution. The evolutionary intelligent design argument underlines the foresight, majesty and rationality mirrored in the natural processes which created the universe and life across the eons of time. According to this position, the declaration of God's glory in the creation extends beyond the present manifestations to include the self-assembling character of the natural world in the distant past. More specifically, design is evident in the finely-tuned physical laws and initial conditions necessary for the evolution of the cosmos through the Big Bang, and design is also apparent in the biological processes necessary for life to evolve, including humans with their incredible brains. Therefore, evolutionary creation offers a wider and stronger design argument than the traditional formulation presented in young earth creation and progressive creation by having an evolutionary component. This position also predicts that as the evolutionary sciences advance, research will reveal a Creator with unimaginably more planning, splendor and power than previously believed in earlier generations. To the surprise of many, evolutionary creationists enjoy a more powerful intelligent design argument for God's existence than their anti-evolutionist Christian brothers and sisters.

In understanding origins, evolutionary creation proposes a mutually exclusive yet complementary relationship between science and Scripture. This position asserts that God reveals through both nature and the Bible, and it respects the limits and differences of each revelation. Science discovers how the Creator made the world, while Scripture offers the ultimate meaning of the creation. Together these revelations from God's Works and Words complement each other in providing a complete view of origins.

More concisely, evolutionary creationists claim that through an ordained and sustained evolutionary process God created the entire universe and all of life, including human beings. They firmly argue that the Bible is not a book of science and contend that the purpose of Scripture is to reveal the Lord and His will. According to this position, the science in God's Word typifies the 'science of the day' when the Biblical authors were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This ancient science is a vehicle used by God to communicate as effectively as possible His spiritual truths to men and women. In addition, evolutionary creationists assert that the Creator intended science to reveal physical truths like the origin of the world. That is, God's actual creative method is found through scientific discovery and not by reading the opening chapters of Scripture. This position claims there exists overwhelming physical evidence for cosmological, geological and biological evolution. Therefore, evolutionary creation recognizes the Book of God's Words and the Book of God's Works are radically different in character, yet they complement each other. In this way, Scripture and science reveal that this 10-15 billion year old evolved world is a very good creation. More importantly, they declare to us that we arose from lower forms of life to become the only creatures bearing the Creator's Image, but fallen into sin.

Three features distinguish evolutionary creation from other positions on the origin of the universe and life. This view of origins firmly: (1) believes in a personal Creator and the evolution of the world, (2) upholds the foundational

principles of conservative Christianity and modern science, and (3) rejects the 'God-of-the-Gaps.'

Evolutionary creationists believe in a God who both created the world through evolution and is personally involved with men and women. Certainly, such a belief is not often seen today. But this conceptual blindness reflects the entrenchment of the 'evolution vs. creation' debate in the mind of most in modern society. On the one hand, the majority view the personal God of the Bible as one who only acts through dramatic interventions in the creation of life and in personal relationships with humanity. On the other hand, evolution is seen as a self-sufficient natural process free of any Divine interference because no God exists. However, the Creator exists and He can act in any which way He chooses. In particular, God is not restricted to any creative method. Evolutionary creation recognizes the importance of distinguishing different types of Divine action. In the origin and operation of the world, this position claims God's activity is providential. That is, the Creator works subtly through His ordained and sustained natural processes. Within personal lives, evolutionary creationists experience both dramatic and subtle Divine action. In particular, these conservative Christians believe that the Lord reserves miraculous signs and wonders for personal relationships with men and women.

Evolutionary creation fully embraces the foundational beliefs of the conservative Christian faith and the basic principles of the modern evolutionary sciences. Of course, such a view is rarely seen, especially within the conservative Church. But again, it is only minds entrenched in the simple 'evolution vs. creation' debate that cannot envision this view of origins. Evolutionary creationists first and foremost place their faith in the Holy Trinity. They staunchly uphold the central mystery of Christian faith-the Incarnation. These believers experience the redeeming and transforming power of God's grace. They believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead and look forward to eternal life with the Lord. Evolutionary creationists also maintain that the Creator has ordained and sustains a set of faithful natural mechanisms and processes. This regularity in the physical laws is not only the basis for investigating the processes in nature today, but it allows science to peer back into the distant past to discover the creation of the world. This view of origins also insists that God is not deceptive. Rather, the Creator has given humanity the ability to discover the structure, function and assembly of nature. Evolutionary creationists conclude that the sciences of cosmology, geology and biology are all based on God's faithfulness both to His creation and to His special creatures exploring the world.

Finally, evolutionary creation staunchly rejects the 'God-of-the-Gaps.' Instead of fearing the Creator's 'retreat' from 'gaps' once thought to be sites where He had intervened directly, this position welcomes new scientific discoveries that fill gaps in our knowledge and claims these as declarations of God's glory. That is, advancing science provides a greater appreciation of the majesty, beauty and rationality inscribed into the fabric of the creation. For example, consider Big Bang cosmology. As research has progressed under the scientific principle that the processes of nature are unbroken and regular, it has become common knowledge in physics that an incredibly complex and elegant set of laws describe cosmological evolution. Moreover, if any of the physical constants or conditions in the early universe were slightly different, then the cosmos would not have evolved. This evidence has led many prominent physicists to speak of the 'finely-tuned' character of the universe and for some of these scientists to suggest that it points to the existence of a 'Fine-Tuner.'

Similarly, evolutionary creationists predict that as biology advances, fine-tuning arguments for the evolution of life will be discovered. Therefore, instead of looking for 'gaps' in nature where God purportedly intervened to create living organisms, these Christians see the Creator's glory expressed in the robust continuum of life from the first cells to human beings. The faith of evolutionary creationists is strengthened with every new finding in biological evolution because each discovery declares the faithfulness of God to His living creation.

The most compelling argument for evolutionary creation is that it fully accepts Biblical faith and modern science while respecting their strengths and limits. It recognizes that the primary purpose of Christianity is to reconcile men and women to God through the sacrificial death of His Son on the Cross. The power of Biblical religion is seen throughout history in the lives and communities that have been transformed by a personal relationship with Jesus. This view of origins also realizes that the central aim of science is to investigate the structure, function and assembly of the physical world. The fruits of the scientific method impact the lives of everyone today. Evolutionary creationists recognize that, for the most part, science and religion function within their respective domains. Consequently, conflict and warfare cannot characterize their relationship. Of course, certain issues are relevant to both science and religion, like the breathtaking beauty and complexity of the world indicative of intelligent design. In these overlapping areas, this view of origins enjoys a necessary and respectful dialogue between science and religion. Evolutionary creation employs personal religious experience and the growing understanding of the physical world to meet our yearning for a complete world view.

In particular, evolutionary creation is the only conservative Christian view of origins that offers a unified vision of science. This position does not postulate that certain scientific disciplines are logically flawed or even ungodly; nor does it discriminate between sciences that deal with the daily operation of the world from those investigating its origins. In contrast, young earth creation does not share in such a unified view of science. On the one hand, these anti-evolutionists reject the findings and conclusions of the sciences dealing with origins-cosmology, geology and evolutionary biology. Yet on the other hand, they do not hesitate to support, and even practice, all the modern engineering and medical sciences, accepting research built on the assumption of the robust regularity in nature's processes. Similarly, progressive creationists have a divided vision of science since they affirm the evolution of the inanimate universe as offered by cosmology and geology, but they reject the evolution of life proposed by biological science. Evolutionary creation rejects these artificial and unnecessary divisions in science proposed by the anti-evolutionary positions, and it underlines the coherence and consistency of all the natural sciences.

The greatest problem with evolutionary creation is that it contradicts the traditional literal interpretation of the opening chapters of the Bible. Church history reveals that nearly all believers have understood the creation accounts to be a record of actual historical events. Even more troubling for evolutionary creation is the fact that the Biblical authors, including Jesus Himself, often refer to the early chapters of Genesis as literal history. In addition, the origin of physical death poses a particularly acute problem for conservative Christians who accept biological evolution. The Scriptures clearly state that death came after the creation of humanity and that it was a Divine judgment on the world for Adam's original sin. However, according to evolutionary biology death existed for billions of years prior to the appearance of the first humans. Therefore, the

burning question is, "How do evolutionary creationists interpret the first chapters of the Bible?"

In response, evolutionary creationists first emphasize without any reservation the foundational Christian principle of Biblical revelation. As Hebrews 1:1-2 clearly states, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." Evolutionary creationists are also quick to add theologian G.E. Ladd's observation that "the Bible is the Word of God given in the words of men in history." That is, the Holy Spirit inspired the Biblical writers at a point in ancient history, using their languages, literary conventions and ideas, including their understanding of the natural world. In this way, the ancient intellectual categories of the inspired authors were not set aside, but employed in the process of Biblical revelation. Evolutionary creationists contend that there certainly is science in the Bible, for that matter, 'state of the art' science. However, it is the 'science of the day' 3500 years ago in the Ancient Near East, and like most science over time, it is improved, if not completely replaced, with a better understanding of nature.

Evolutionary creationists recognize that the opening chapters of the Bible are a special type of literature. Most Scripture scholars define Genesis 1-11 as a separate and unique literary unit. Consequently, conservative Christians today must respect the special character of these Biblical passages and learn not to read in their modern assumptions, expectations or agendas. An appreciation of the type of literature the Holy Spirit employed in revelation is fundamental to understanding the Message of Faith. In particular, Genesis 1-11 features three characteristics: (1) Divine theology, (2) ancient science, and (3) ancient poetry.

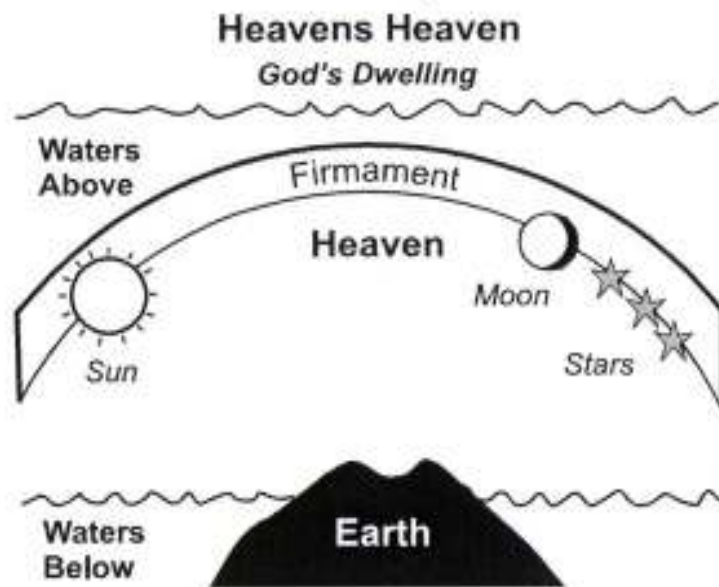
The primary purpose of Genesis 1-11 is to offer a Divine theology concerning the Creator and His creation with special regard to men and women. This Holy Spirit inspired revelation includes the foundational spiritual truths that God is the Creator, the creation is very good, all humanity is created in the Image of God, and human sin is utterly real and utterly significant. Evolutionary creationists assert that this Divine theology is delivered using an ancient scientific understanding of nature and ancient poetic literary techniques. In other words, the Holy Spirit came down to the knowledge level of the ancient Hebrew writers and their readers in order to communicate as effectively as possible the Lord's revelation. Therefore, evolutionary creation recognizes that the Bible's opening chapters feature two basic components: (i) the Message of Faith (fundamental spiritual truths), and (ii) the incidental vessel which holds this Divine revelation (ancient science/ancient poetry). In qualifying the vessel as 'incidental,' there is no intention to suggest that it is unimportant. On the contrary, the ancient science and ancient poetry are absolutely essential in delivering the Message to an ancient audience. But these features of the Scripture are not the Message. Other sciences and literary devices could have been used at different times in history to transport the identical revelation. For example, if Genesis 1 were written today, the literary style might include a scientific format with mathematical formulas, and the science could feature the discoveries of modern cosmology, geology and biology. Evolutionary creationists emphasize that distinguishing between the Message of Faith and the incidental ancient vessel is critical in understanding the Biblical creation accounts.

Genesis 1-11 features an ancient science of the structure, operation and origin of the universe and life. **Figure 1** pictures the world as understood by Ancient Near Eastern peoples, including God's chosen people the Hebrews. This

may come as a surprise to most conservative Christians, but this is the construction of the cosmos found in the Bible. A few of these ancient features include:

- The earth is flat. The word 'earth' appears over 2500 times in the Old Testament ('eres) and 250 times in the New Testament (ge). Never once is this word referred to as spherical or round. Instead, the universe in the Scriptures is compared to a tent with the earth as its floor (Ps 19:4, Ps 104:2, Is 40:22).
- The earth is immovable. The Bible records three times that "the world is firmly established; it cannot move" (1 Chr 16:30, Ps 93:1, Ps 96:10). The stability of the earth is understood to be like that of a building set on the solid foundations. The Biblical writers frequently refer to this stable base as "the foundations of earth" (Job 38:4-6, Prov 8:29, Jer 31:37). For example, "He [God] set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved" (Ps 104:5).
- A body of water is held up over the earth. Created on the 2nd day of creation, the 'waters above' were lifted using the firmament (Gen 1:6-8). This heavenly body of water remains in place even after Noah's Flood. As the psalmist notes, God "stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of His upper chambers on their waters" (Ps 104:2-3). Similarly, the Psalter calls, "Praise Him [God] you highest heavens and you waters above the skies" (Ps 148:4).
- The sun moves across the sky. Most Christians are aware of the miraculous 'stopping' of the sun in the middle of the sky during Joshua's battle with the Amorites (Josh 10:12-14). This ancient astronomy is found in King Solomon's observation, "The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises" (Eccl 1:5). It also appears in the psalmist's praise, "It [the sun] rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other" (Ps 19:6).

Figure 1 World According to Ancient Science



Of course, many conservative Christians will be quick to point out that all these features reflect 'appearances' in the world. That is, these are phenomenological descriptions. The earth looks flat and does not seem to move, the sky is a changing blue similar in colour to a body of water and rain falls from above, and the sun rises and sets every day. However, to ancient peoples like the Hebrews these are actual descriptions of the structure and operation of the universe. As history reveals, the notion that the earth was immovable remained in astronomy up until the 17th century and the Galileo controversy.

Recognizing that the Bible features an ancient science is troubling to most conservative Christians because they assume that statements in Scripture about the physical world are inerrant and infallible. That is, they believe the Holy Spirit revealed scientific facts thousands of years before their discovery by modern science. In other words, the majority of these Christians accept 'concordism' (or better 'scientific concordism'). They believe there is an accord between the Bible and science. In contrast, evolutionary creationists make no apologies for the obvious ancient science in the Bible. Instead they attempt to understand God's revelatory process in the light of this feature. In the same way that the powerful Message of Faith penetrates our heart and remodels our mind (Heb 4:12, Rom 12:2), evolutionary creationists contend that the Scripture's incidental ancient science should also penetrate and remodel our understanding of Biblical inerrancy and infallibility.

Evolutionary creationists are not disturbed by the fact that the Scriptures feature an ancient science. For that matter, they expected it. These Christian evolutionists draw a parallel to God's greatest Act of Revelation-the Incarnation. The Creator came down from heaven and took on human flesh in the person of Jesus in order to reveal His unending love for us. The Lord spoke Aramaic, the common person's language in 1st century Palestine, and He preached using parables, indicating that He employed the ordinary ideas and concepts of the people at that time. For example, Jesus often used the agricultural knowledge of His listeners in the parables of the good sower (Mk 4:1-9), the seed growing secretly (Mk 4: 26-29), the weeds (Matt 13:24-30) and the mustard seed (Matt 13:31-32). Of particular interest is the last parable. The Lord utilized the 'botany of the day' in stating that the mustard seed is "the smallest of all seeds" when in fact many seeds, like orchids, are much smaller. In other words, Jesus accommodated or descended to the knowledge level of His ancient audience.

Evolutionary creationists claim that the ancient science in the creation accounts is an accommodation to the conceptual level of the ancient Hebrews, similar to that used by Jesus in His teaching ministry. This position underlines that before the Holy Spirit reveals to humanity that the world is His creation, men and women must have some sort of understanding about the nature. That is, a science is needed before anyone can grasp the theological notion of creation. In the case of the ancient Hebrews, the science of their day was an Ancient Near Eastern conception of the structure, operation and origin of the universe and life. Evolutionary creationists emphasize that it is inconsequential to the Message of Faith whether this understanding of the world is scientifically accurate and actually represents physical reality. The powerful Divine Message concerning the creation transcends the incidental vessel of the science that transports it. For example, the ancient Hebrews believed the blue of the sky was a body of water overhead. Today, modern science has determined that this is a

steadfast-the blue waters/effect above is a creation of the Creator. By employing the ancient science of the Hebrews in Genesis 1, the Holy Spirit descended to their knowledge level in order to communicate as effectively as possible that God was the Creator of the extensive blue structure that was before their eyes. Stated another way, the Biblical creation accounts are accommodated to an ancient audience in the same way that Jesus accommodated to us by taking on human flesh.

Finally, ancient poetry appears in Genesis 1-11. **Figure 2** shows that the Six Day Creation Account features two parallel panels. This passage opens with the Spirit of God hovering over a formless and empty earth shrouded in darkness and submerged under water. The description of the earth using rhyming Hebrew words (tohu, formless; bohu, empty) immediately attracts the attention of ancient readers and points to the structure of Genesis 1. In the first three days God deals with the problem of formlessness while during the last three days He resolves the emptiness. Striking parallels also emerge between the two panels. On the 1st day of creation, God makes light. This corresponds to the creation of the sun, moon and stars on the 4th day. The Creator then separates the waters above from the waters below during the 2nd day, providing an air space for birds and seas for marine creatures later made on the 5th day. On the 3rd creation day, God commands dry land to appear in anticipation of land animals and humans created during the 6th day. The so-called 'problem' of the creation of light before the sun disappears if the panel structure is respected because it is obviously due to poetic license on the part of the inspired writer. Thus, the creation events in Genesis 1 reflect a topical order cast in a poetic framework rather than a chronological order of actual Divine activity in the past.

Figure 2 Creation Account Panels (Gen 1)

Formless

Tohu

Day 1

Separate
Light/Dark

Day 2

Separate
Waters Above/
Waters Below

Day 3

Separate
Water/Land
(Plants)

Empty

Bohu

Day 4

Create
Sun, Moon, & Stars

Day 5

Create
Flying Creatures &
Sea Creatures

Day 6

Create
Land Animals & Humans
(Plants for Food)

Day 7

Sabbath

Genesis 1-11 features another poetic structure that is often found in ancient literature. **Figure 3** reveals that Noah's Flood Account is framed on a chiasm (or palistrophe). This is a common literary device used by Ancient Near Eastern writers, including the inspired Biblical authors. The chiastic structure is made up of two parts. The first half is a mirror image of the second half, producing a reversed sequence of ideas or words. Especially noticeable in the Biblical Flood palistrophe are the matching days of 7s, 40s and 150s. Such a technique facilitated ancient peoples to memorize these accounts and stories. In addition, the chiasm is used to focus the reader to the middle of the structure and the central message of the passage, which in the Flood account is that "God remembered Noah" (Gen 8:1). In other words, the Divine theology revealed in this passage to believers throughout the ages is that the Lord remembers righteous men and women despite any flood of trouble that may inundate and submerge them.

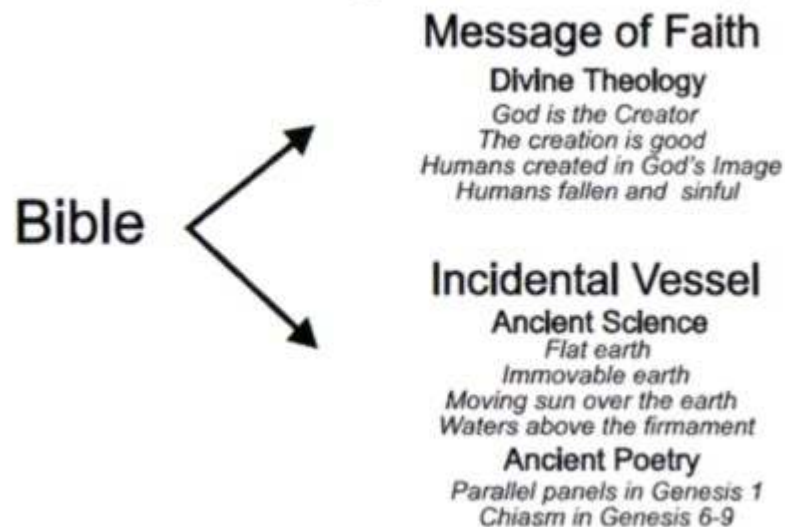
Figure 3 Flood Account Chiasm (Gen 6-9)

A	Noah (6:10a)
B	Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10b)
C	Ark to be built (14-16)
D	Flood announced (17)
E	Covenant with Noah (18-20)
F	Food in ark (21)
G	Command to enter ark (7:1-3)
H	7 days waiting for flood (4-5)
I	7 days waiting for flood (7-10)
J	Entry to the ark (11-15)
K	Yahweh shuts Noah in (16)
L	40 days flood (17a)
M	Waters increase (17b-18)
N	Mountains covered (19-20)
O	150 days waters prevail (21-24)
CENTER	GOD REMEMBERS NOAH (8:1)
O'	150 days waters abate (3)
N'	Mountain tops visible (4-5)
M'	Waters abate (5)
L'	40 days (end of) (6a)
K'	Noah opens window of ark (6b)
J'	Raven and dove leave ark (7-9)
I'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (10-11)
H'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (12-13)
G'	Command to leave ark (15-17 [22])
F'	Food outside of ark (9:1-4)
E'	Covenant with all flesh (8-10)
D'	No flood in future (11-17)
C'	Ark (18a)
B'	Shem, Ham and Japheth (18b)
A'	Noah (19)

record of actual events. As most Christians know, history simply does not unfold in parallel panels and chiasms. For example, does Israel's history as a nation develop in parallel panels? Is the historical record of the Church structured in a chiasm? Or better, does the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus emerge in these brilliantly crafted poetic structures? The answer to all these questions is 'no' because these examples are actual historical events. In contrast, poetic techniques in Genesis 1-11 are calling out to us not to read these passages literally. That is, the Bible itself is pointing away from the traditional literal interpretation. Suggesting that the opening chapters of the Bible are not historical might at first seem threatening to conservative Christians, but this does not in any way undermine God's Word. The Holy Spirit inspired these passages, and they are central to the Christian Faith. Of course, it challenges our traditional assumption and expectation that Genesis 1-11 provides a literal historical record. However, the Holy Spirit can reveal in any way He chooses, including the use of poetic license and non-historical literary techniques. The primary purpose of the early chapters of Scripture concerning human origins is to reveal that we were created in God's Image and that we have sinned against God. Genesis 1-11 looks forward to the restoration of our relationship with the Creator through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

To be sure, the greatest problem with evolutionary creation is that it challenges the traditional literal reading of the first chapters of the Bible. In response, this position underlines the importance of recognizing that the Scriptures feature a Message of Faith and an incidental vessel that delivers this inspired revelation. More specifically, the early chapters of Genesis have a Divine theology, an ancient science and an ancient poetry. The Divine theology is the Message of Faith that the Holy Spirit reveals to humanity. The ancient science and ancient poetry are incidental to this inspired message, yet they are vital in communicating this revelation to a level that is within the grasp of the ancient Hebrews. Figure 4 summarizes these features in Scripture and presents the evolutionary creationist understanding of the Bible. This view of origins emphasizes that modern Christians must respect these characteristics as they read the Scripture. Most importantly, evolutionary creationists conclude that Biblical inerrancy and infallibility rest not in the incidental transporting vessel, but rather in the Message of Faith.

Figure 4 Evolutionary Creation & Scripture



In conclusion, evolutionary creationists are conservative Christians who accept evolution. They have a personal relationship with Jesus and are shaped by the Message of Faith in the Bible through the Holy Spirit. These Christian evolutionists see the reflection of intelligent design in nature, including the natural process of evolution. This view of origins moves beyond the 'evolution vs. creation' debate to offer a healthy relationship between science and religion.

Evolutionary creation recognizes that the relationship between science and Scripture is the key to developing a Christian view of origins. This position notes that the Church's past struggle to relate the Bible and Galileo's astronomy provides valuable lessons for believers today wrestling with the creation accounts and the evolutionary sciences. Conservative Christians accepting evolution as God's method of creation are inspired by the famed aphorism that arose during this 17th century controversy, "The intention of the Holy Spirit is to teach us how one goes to heaven and not how heaven goes." Rewritten for the 21st Church, evolutionary creationists encourage us to understand:

The purpose of the Bible is to teach us that God is the Creator,
and not how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created.

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