

# A Loving God in a Scientific World

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## Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 The First Creation Narrative in Genesis

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> And the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the face of the deep, and God's Spirit (breath, wind) was moving over the waters.

(Day 1) <sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw the light that it was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

(Day 2) <sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the vault "heavens." And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

(Day 3) <sup>9</sup> And God said, "Let the water under the heavens be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry ground "earth," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the earth that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth sprouted vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

(Day 4) <sup>14</sup> And God said, "Let there be lamps in the vault of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lamps in the vault of the heavens to give light on the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made two great lamps – the greater lamp for governance of the day and the lesser lamp for governance of the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the vault of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

(Day 5) <sup>20</sup> And God said, "Let the water swarm with swarms of living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the vault of the heavens." <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living creature that moves with which the water swarms, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." <sup>23</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

(Day 6) <sup>24</sup> And God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that creep along the ground, and animals of the earth, each according to its kind." And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the animals of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make a human [adham] in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the heavens, over the livestock and all the animals of the earth, and over all the creatures that creep along the ground."

<sup>27</sup> So God created the human in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the heavens and over every living creature that moves on the earth." ... <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

(Day 7) <sup>2:1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast host. <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

<sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

## Living in the World of Science and Faith

We breathe the air of science and technology: a smartphone is a powerful computer connected to a vast network. We share in a stream of discoveries in medicine, genetics, microbiology, physics, chemistry, geology, cosmology, archeology, paleontology, various fields of biology, etc.

We also live in a world of Biblical faith, the reality of Jesus, which reveals the deep meaning and purpose of human life, its freedom and brokenness, its hope and destiny. This event and story was firmly in place before modern technology. We embody the interplay of modern and ancient, both part of us, both flowing into the future. We feel the tension. Who are we? What is right? Does our life have purpose? We're thinking, conscious beings, and our every thought has intention, is about something. Do we live in a world without mind, intention, purpose?

## Learning to Read the Book of Scripture

Often tensions grow from not letting the scriptures be themselves. They were given to us long before modern science, which grew up based on the Biblical view of a world created by a wise, consistent God. Scriptures don't speak in scientific terms even for their own day. In telling of creation, Genesis uses an everyday view of the world to teach about God and humans: vault, lamps, no planets, two different narratives. Not the scientific "Ptolemaic system."

Modern Christians decided God could not use such a non-factual story to teach anything. Gen was re-conceived as scientific fact, distorting what God gave us into what moderns desired.

## Loving God's Book of Creation

Scriptures reveal God through human history but also point to God's revelation in creation itself. The world is magnificent to the naked eye. But new instruments like the telescopes of Galileo, supporting the conceptual leap of Copernicus, reveal new marvels on every level: the very distant, very small, measures of time, speed, radiation, electricity, etc., from subatomic particles to quasars. God's creation contains vast information about itself and its history. It's hard to read but tells the truth of the age of the creation, its orderly but counter-intuitive ways of working (relativity, quantum mechanics), its vast evolution from precise constants, to earth's life, to self-reflective consciousness. It embodies God's non-verbal work.

Every discovery of the natural world reveals God's invention and choices in creation. Christians need to be active in the great enterprise of scientific research, understanding our world.

## Naturalism – Methodological and Metaphysical

Christian faith does not depend on science to prove God. Science can't do it. Belief that God created the world and pervades it does not mean that we know at all how He does it as scientific explanation. We don't know how our own thoughts work! God's work is completely invisible / inaccessible to us unless he chooses to make it a sign. Discovery is wonderful.

Scientific inquiry seeks understanding through explanations that are natural and within reach. This is methodological naturalism. It is completely appropriate for Christians to use.

For some, however, naturalism becomes metaphysical. Nothing but the material exists. There is no intelligence in the universe as a whole. No direction or purpose. Mind is illusion. God is delusion. Since Epicurus many desire a universe without meaning. The conflict is very real.

But for those with eyes to see, science is a profoundly theological activity. Not in a sense that it brings us salvation, but in that its entire subject matter is the prior work of God, the invention of his own mind and heart, flowing from a love that unites science and faith in God.

