
Because we're called to "humbly bear the transforming presence of Jesus into the heart of Ann Arbor" and surrounding communities, the Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor has an obligation to thoughtfully, prayerfully, and biblically engage this question of science & faith at the crossroads of creation, this pesky question of origins: of the universe, the earth, and ourselves. This is the stuff of meaning: where are we? who are we? who's are we? and what are we here for?

I said it before and will say it again: I hope when we're finished with this series, you won't feel the slightest obligation to agree with my particular leanings on how science & faith intersect. I do hope you'll love Jesus more, have a deeper appreciation for his book, and a wider love for the world he loves; so that together, we'll be more useful to Jesus in his passionate pursuit of the world his father made and holds in being still.

My motive for tackling this topic is not intellectual curiosity, but missionary zeal. I'm a Jesus freak, who believes Jesus is on a mission from God in search of humanity--that he is God in search of humanity.

I've also arrived at the conviction that the evangelical church in America, now the dominant form of religion in our society, has made a fundamental and strategic error in presenting herself (and by association the gospel) in a posture of protest toward mainstream science. I speak as one who loves the evangelical tradition and believes it to be the source of great good in the world and in my own life. The aid to developing countries (and, on the home front, the region devastated by Katrina) that flows through the mission efforts of everyday evangelical Christians is a staggering force for good in the world. The care for people that occurs in evangelical churches makes the world a better place. Evangelicals introduced me to Jesus, gave me a love for his book, and played an important role in stabilizing my life and marriage. So I offer this particular critique of the evangelical movement in America, with a sense of gratitude for the work of evangelicals in serving their master.

There are four main perspectives held by Christians on the issue of science and faith at the crossroads of creation: young earth, old earth, intelligent design, and theistic evolution. Each is a different strategy for engaging the story of science. In the heat of the controversy that swirls around this issue it is easy to forget that Genesis 1-3 deal with important issues unrelated to science, per se. Regardless of your viewpoint on the intersection of faith and science, it's important to remember that Christians hold much more in common regarding the meaning of Genesis 1-3 than is often realized in this contentious climate. After all, the question of how Genesis 1-3 fits with the scientific understanding of origins is a
very specific question of interpretation, and one could argue, not the most important one.

I know people who hold each of these positions with intelligence and integrity. Dear friends of mine hold different views than my own and I'm thankful for their friendship. It is a lovely thing, indeed, to be loved in spite of one's mistaken views! My concern is with the view (often asserted or implied) that faithfulness to Jesus and his book requires a position which involves substantial protest toward the story of science.

History cautions us against this stance. At the turn of the millennium John Paul II, one of my heroes, expressed deep regret for the way Catholics rejected the findings of Galileo that the earth revolved around the sun. Not only did they reject his findings, they also declared his views beyond the pale of Christian orthodoxy and intimidated him into renouncing what he knew to be so. Protestant leaders of the time did likewise and all did so on what they thought were solid biblical grounds. How many people who agreed with Galileo kept their distance from the church (and her savior) during this time because they were not willing to renounce what they sincerely thought to be true? We'll never know.

What if the current objections of many Christians toward science turn out to be unjustified? What if we've been reading the science and our bibles wrong? Then we will have been guilty, once again, of placing a human obstacle in the path of those in need of the gospel. Serious business, according to the gospel. But even if the current objections turn out to be justified, it's bad missionary strategy.

I saw a wonderful film recently, The End of the Spear, based on the true story of missionaries sent to an unreached people group along the Amazon. The tribal people in question had a homicide rate of sixty percent. After the gospel was introduced into that society, the homicide rate plunged to normal levels, according to anthropologists who studied the matter.

How did those missionaries approach their task? First, they learned the language, thought forms and defining stories of the culture in order to share the gospel within that framework, so that the gospel could become a "transforming presence from within" rather than a force for change from without. They took a non-confrontational approach. The first words they learned in the tribal language were, "I want to be your friend." These words were the last words one of the missionaries uttered at the end of a literal spear, plunged into his body.

You don't say "I want to be your friend" to a culture then blast their "how the world works" story without giving it a careful listen, looking for how the story of God in search of humankind might fit with this story so as to enhance or transform it. We've not done that well with the story of science. In some churches, if you try such a thing, you might find yourself at the end of a spear, figuratively speaking.
Mainstream science tells a story: with a beginning (16 billion years ago, give or take a few billion!) a middle, and an end (as reported recently in the ABC New Special Report: The Last Days on Earth). Science functions in our society as one of the stories that orient us to the world we live in. Every society has ‘em. Science is just a very influential and powerful one. (This is not the only function of science, but it is an important one, and the most important function for those who are sent to this culture with the message of the gospel.)

Science has its authorized story tellers, the scientists in the primary disciplines: physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, anthropology, etc. Science has its popularizers: educators, magazines like Discover, Nature, and National Geographic, programs on the Discovery Channel, and Nova on PBS, not to mention Star Trek. And there is a mass audience for this story--the millions of people in our nation who may not have mastered the details of science but who identify with mainstream science as one of their stories.

Many who identify with this story have never been socialized to the American evangelical, Bible-belt culture: they've never heard of Focus on the Family, don't have a clue what "NIV" stands for, have never even read A Purpose Driven Life. This group of people constitutes a large segment of the population on the outside of faith looking in. And the American evangelical movement is not well positioned to reach them. This is simply not acceptable.

Let's get dicey. There are two findings of mainstream science that many conservative evangelical Christians object to: the theory of evolution, and global warming.

Evolution in a nutshell goes like this (I am indebted to Joan Roughgarden, an evolutionary biologist at Stanford for the language of this simple summary): First, all life is related in a great "tree of life" with a common root. Second, species change over time through natural breeding. (Populations become more like the individuals in the population who do the most breeding.) Over long periods, as populations adapt through natural breeding to different environmental challenges, and as portions of the population become isolated from each other, a single species can branch into two or more distinct species. This mechanism accounts for life's vast diversity.

The theory of climate change in a nutshell goes like this: our home planet is getting warmer and our output of hydrocarbons is partly responsible for this warming. If the warming continues at this pace, a lot of human and animal life will be disrupted within the foreseeable future, so it would be wise to do something about the part we can control.

Thoughtful people disagree with mainstream science on both issues. It's good for science, in fact, to have perspectives outside the scientific mainstream; it keeps the mainstream honest, and sometimes changes the course of the mainstream.
But in the United States, conservative evangelicals constitute a considerable power-bloc. We've learned quite well how to throw our weight around. We're not a minority sect within a powerful Empire; we are mainstream culture in many respects. Reasonable people can get the impression it's the Christian agenda in the United States to forbid teaching the theory of evolution in schools, or to teach it alongside a preferred-by-evangelicals alternate view as though each had equal weight in the scientific community. One could get the impression that the prevalence of evangelical faith makes it less likely our society will decide to do something about global warming.

A friend recently told me of an interaction she had with a neighbor. My friend, Emily, told her neighbor she was planning to go on a mission trip. The normally mild mannered neighbor launched into a tirade: "How can you join the global culture war like that by trying to proselytize people in other cultures? I don't get it. You evangelicals don't seem to care about global warming because Armageddon's coming anyway, so why bother? You seem to be in a culture war with science, trying to keep evolution out of the schools. What's up with that?"

Emily had the grace to engage her friend in conversation for about an hour. She reassured her friend that not all evangelicals in America had the same views on global warming and evolution and that some evangelicals didn't think the findings of mainstream science in those areas contradicted faith in Jesus or the teaching of Scripture. Her neighbor was shocked to hear this, but comforted. The next day, the woman stopped over with a pie, and they spoke in depth about issues of faith.

I'm not saying conservative evangelicals in America don't have a right to protest the findings of mainstream science on these issues. It's America, and we all have a right to disagree. But I wonder if we are more concerned about asserting our rights than yielding them for the sake of the gospel. We seem to have forgotten that the gospel advances best when Christians are willing, in obedience to Jesus, to yield their rights, as those missionaries depicted in End of the Spear did, when they yielded their right to self density and died as martyrs. (I'm not saying yielding our rights in every circumstance is the Christian way, but the willingness to yield our rights for the sake of the gospel is the Christian way.) Perhaps we just don't realize what damage the evangelical posture toward mainstream science is doing to the cause of the gospel. If you're not convinced, go to any Starbucks in one of the "blue states." Sit there with a copy of the New York Times, and ask, "What's up with those evangelicals and science?" to anyone who will give you the time of day. Be ready for an earful.

It's a simple fact: many people, including our neighbors, co-workers and family members, keep their distance from Christianity because of this posture of protest against mainstream science. We had better be quite certain that Jesus himself views this posture toward mainstream science as part of the required cost of
discipleship before we allow this situation to continue a single day longer. If it is not, and we are simply advancing this agenda to make America a friendlier nation for evangelicals, with no concern about the impact of this posture on the cause of the gospel, well then, we should be ashamed of ourselves, not to put too fine a point on it, if we consider ourselves to be "evangelicals."

Believe it or not, that was just a warm up. Now let's dig into what the Bible teaches on different ways of knowing. Because science and faith are different ways of knowing, and we won't know how they might intersect without taking this difference into account.

Two ways of knowing are contrasted in the Bible, sight and faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7) Faith, like sight, is a way of knowing.

"Faith is assurance of things hoped for, conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1) Assurance and conviction are "knowing" words. Faith is a way of knowing.

Jesus is more interested in faith as a way of knowing than sight, though he valued both. When one of his homeboys, after reports of resurrection said, "I won't believe 'til I put my fingers in his wounds!" Jesus appeared, and said, "Go ahead!" Thomas touched the Lord, and fell at his feet in worship. Jesus, unimpressed, said, "Because you've seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed." Jesus wants to be known by faith, more than he wants to be known by sight.

Sight, in this instance, stands for the natural senses by which we are able to know the natural world around us, the world of matter and energy. By extension it represents other ways of knowing like math. Some ancients knew the world was a sphere (this was known by some in time of Christ) because of geometry and math. Science is simply an extended way of knowing "by sight."

Science not something God created; we did! (I'm sure God's very proud of us for it and delights in what our hands have made.) But science is a human invention, a human set of lenses.

Science operates according to a set of rules: if it doesn't agree with experiment, it's wrong; if an experiment can't be duplicated, forget it; if it can't be measured or connected somehow to things that can be measured, it can't be known scientifically. This is how the game of science is played.

Science is an incredibly powerful, breathtaking, beautiful way of knowing, but one that is subject to the limitations of our humanity. Science has ramped up our capacity for good and evil. It's a mixed blessing, because we are.

Stay with me now, because this part is important. Many Christians are concerned, and understandably so, with what seems like the posture of protest many scientists adopt toward faith. Where does this seeming hostility toward
faith come from, when it exists? Since all scientists are human beings this
hostility can come from a number of sources. Think about your own hostility to
God over the course of your life, and you'll appreciate how some scientists might
feel.

Often this hostility comes, not from science itself, but from a philosophical
assumption about the nature of reality. Scientists are divided over the question of
whether the reality knowable through science is all there is to reality. Given the
extent of our limitations, it seems absurd to think we could know there isn't
anything beyond the lens of science, that the realm of nature or the universe
itself as we perceive it through the lens of science is all there is. If science thrills
you, it might be tempting to think, "This is all so wonderful, it must be all there
is." But science itself doesn't assert that.

That position is called "philosophical naturalism": when it comes to reality, what
you see is what you get. If Maxwell, the Scientist, loves his silver hammer, he
tends to see everything as a nail, because a nail is a wonderful occasion to use
his hammer!

When scientists adopt a posture of protest toward faith, they are often
expressing their philosophical view that the natural realm is the full extent of
reality. Or they are simply frustrated that so many evangelicals are so suspicious
of mainstream science. (Do you see the makings of a vicious cycle?) This
point of view is especially strong among some (but by no means all) evolutionary
biologists.

Here's a "tale of two evolutionary biologists." : Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary
biologist from Oxford, wrote a book titled The God Delusion. Dawkins compares
belief in God to a computer virus. And that's among his milder assessments!
Many in his field think that when he talks like that, Dawkins is beyond his
expertise. Simon Conway Morris, an evolutionary biologist from Cambridge,
wrote a book called Life's Solution. I read (most) of the book and got the feeling
this guy might be a believer, so I sent him an email and asked him flat out what
his faith convictions were. This is the response I received from Simon Conway
Morris: "I am a thorough-going supernaturalist, and although I don't claim to
understand them, am sure the universe without Incarnation and Resurrection
doesn't make any sense. But I still think trilobites (and humans) evolved." Not
all scientists are philosophical naturalists.

So much for science-knowing. Let's go back to faith knowing. Faith is a different
way of knowing than sight, a mysterious way of knowing, because what's to be
known is mysterious. In biblical thought faith is not the same as "blind faith"
because faith takes evidence into account. (If it weren't for the evidence of Jesus
of Nazareth, I don't think I would be able to have faith in the existence of a
loving God.)
In the realm of relationships we proceed by faith and by sight. We have faith in people (or should) based on how they behave. But there’s always an element of risk in trusting anybody, because people change and because we can’t always read people well. But we can’t survive (or at least thrive) without faith. We have to place our bets or die with all our chips unused, which isn’t any fun. We have to pick an auto mechanic, doctors, people to marry and share our dirty secrets with, and that requires more than just sight; it requires faith too.

Faith goes deeper because faith is an assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. If there is a transcendent dimension, something beyond the natural realm, then for beings like us, creatures made of matter and energy, the only way to perceive it is through something beyond mere sight, or mere science. And that something is called faith. Again, it doesn’t mean we don’t need evidence to arrive at faith. It just means the evidence is of a much broader and more subtle and mysterious sort than the evidence of sight-knowing.

"By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was made out of what was not visible." (Heb. 11:3) Science can’t settle the question of whether the universe was formed at God’s command or not. So far as I know, science has no means to detect God. God is a being who is both involved in the system and outside the system. This is unique in the universe! I don’t think science will ever have a lens wide enough to detect God. Faith is the wider lens we need for that.

The Bible also says: "we know in part." Paul is writing to the Jesus movement in Corinth. Many in that church were on a knowledge kick. Apparently the gospel has imparted such a powerful new knowledge that they’ve gone off the deep end. They think they have perfect knowledge. Like God himself! Paul says, "You're full of it, and I don't mean God and I don't mean knowledge either." Read 1 Cor. 13: 8-12. The underlying theme of that text is, "we know in part."

We humans have a tendency to fall off the horse. Every horse has two sides. We fall off the side that says, "I give up! I can't know anything!" Postmodern philosophies lean this way. We all have a point of view that's subjective; we don't know what we don't know, which means we don’t know if we know what we think we know, because what we don't know might change what we think we know, so why don't we just be honest with ourselves and say the only thing we can know for sure is that we can't really know anything. But like a dog chasing his or her own tail, as soon as you say that, you say back to yourself, "How can I know that I can't know?"

To that, St. Paul says, "we know...." Some things we can know. At least enough to be accountable for what we do with what we know.

The other side of the horse is a kind of arrogance about our capacity to know. We are as gods! We can know everything! That's what got the earliest humans in
trouble, hunger for a kind of knowing they weren't ready for: "Give me some of that, so I can be like God!"

To that, St. Paul says, "we know, but we know in part."

Conservative religion feels more comfortable saying, "We can know!" We can know God's love, we can know God's way. We can know the answers! Proceed with confidence! But if that's all we know about what the Bible teaches about knowing, that confidence turns into arrogance doesn't it? This is the danger of fundamentalism: fundamentalist religion is certainty run amok!

Liberal religion feels more comfortable saying, "We can't know! Celebrate the quest and don't get hung up on the destination. Celebrate the questions and don't trust the answers. Proceed with humility. Which is fine, but why proceed with the questions if you've no hope of finding any answers? If the search is all there is, when do we get to rest?

But St. Paul says to all this: "Hello! There's a horse we can ride, and not just one to fall off of: "we know, but we know in part."

Think about your own life as a story. Say you've got 85 years and you're 47 now. You know, but you know in part. You're pretty well oriented to the middle and not just because yours is expanding. You know where you live, maybe even where you cars keys are right now. You know that you're tired of eating Fiber One for breakfast every morning but you also know you're running out of options. That's a lot of confident knowing. But when you look to the beginning of your story, a thicker fog sets in. Certain things can be known, but only through a thicker fog. As you look to end of story, it's the same thing.

Jesus himself, who is highly regarded among Christians, said, "I don't know." He said this about something you'd think he should know! He's talking with his disciples about the end one day and he anticipates a reasonable question: when's it going to happen? "I don't know, only the Father knows." Even for Jesus the statement held: "we know, but we know in part."

Maybe God gives us just enough to proceed with some measure of confidence. (Maybe that's all we can be trusted with!) We're in the middle of story, so we can count on his giving us enough to muddle our way through, the especially next step. We're given enough information about our beginnings to know who we are and who's we are and where we are what we're for. But when it comes to the question of origins we're in a realm of thicker fog. Our knowledge, precious and necessary as it is, is partial. So maybe we should be a little more humble when we apply Genesis to science and vice versa, and when we apply Revelations to today's events. "We know, but we know in part, what we need to know, and sometimes that just barely"
Let's apply this to those four points of view about how science and faith intersect at the crossroads of creation: young earth, old earth, intelligent design and theistic evolution. [Remember, these four positions represent just a thin slice, and not most the important one, of the meaning and the interpretive issues surrounding Genesis.]

In each of the four views, how much intersection do we have between faith and science—sight? Sight, being the narrow lens, used to perceive natural realm; faith, the wider angle lens used to proceed in the natural realm in light of the transcendent dimension that is beyond and maybe shot through the whole natural realm. I've worked hard to summarize these views accurately. Cut me some slack, because there are multiple versions of each position, so this is an honest attempt at a reasonably fair representation. If you think I've seriously misrepresented any view, let me know by sending me your sources and I'll check them out and make any corrections in the online version.]

**Young Earth:** This position says the earth was created six to ten thousand years ago. Each species was created separately with no common biological root. Once each species was created, it remains fixed. Small changes are allowed, but none so great that they eventually result in two species where there was once only one.

Of the four positions, this maintains the maximum disagreement with mainstream science: including geology, which says the earth is about 5 billion years old; including paleontology, which says those fossils we've found are dinosaurs which existed millions of years before humans and became extinct about 65 million years ago. The Young Earth position, as far as I can tell, disagrees with the science that says the sun must have existed before plant life. (Since Day 3 of creation brought plants, while Day 4 brought the sun. God must have provided the warmth for the plants without the sun, since the sun came the next day.) Well known writers of this view are Ken Hamm and Henry Morris. Evangelicals who hold this position include a very influential group of leaders, including John MacArthur, Josh McDowell, Greg Laurie, Chuck Swindoll, Max Lucado, John Maxwell, and Charles Stanley. T

**Old Earth:** This position says the earth could be as old as mainstream scientists say; the six days of creation in Genesis 1 could be six eras, when each species (though species may be defined flexibly) was separately created, with no descent from common ancestors. The theory of evolution has no merit, except to account for changes within a given species that never produce over time different species. This position maintains much disagreement with mainstream science, though less than the Young Earth position. A primary writer is Hugh Ross and the prominent evangelical leaders in the U.S. who hold this view are too numerous to mention.

**Intelligent Design:** This position is a relative newcomer to the debate, championed by writers like Philip Johnson. However, it's difficult to assess this
view because its advocates hold a wide range of views. Many who hold the Young Earth and Old Earth positions also advocate this position at least in public debate. Others, like Michael Behe, author of *Darwin's Black Box*, leave much room for evolutionary process. Behe, however, articulates what he views as a key weakness in evolutionary theory, what he calls "irreducible complexity." Some biological structures (like the inner workings of the cell and certain clotting mechanisms) are so complex that it's difficult to imagine how an evolutionary process could account for them, since at each step along the path to such complexity, the structure would have to be functional, and that's difficult to demonstrate given what is known about such structures. The key point is that Intelligent Design is both a philosophical and scientific critique of evolution, which means that the science itself, as science, points to an intelligent designer who interrupted the natural process at key points to introduce these irreducibly complex structures. There are so many using the language of Intelligent Design these days, that it's difficult to estimate how much disagreement with mainstream science the position entails: it varies, but certainly Behe's position involves less disagreement than the Young Earth and Old Earth positions, but it is still substantial.

**Theistic Evolution:** This position says that God, working through evolution, created. Keith Ward summed it up as follows: "there is every reason to think that a scientific evolutionary account and a religious belief in a guiding creative force are not just compatible but mutually reinforcing." (Michael Ruse, quoting Keith Ward p. 11)

Theistic evolution objects to scientists who step beyond their science to say that evolution proves that there cannot be a creator God. These are scientist who, like Richard Dawkins, and before him Thomas Huxley (who coined the term "agnostic") claim that since we have in evolution a mechanism that accounts for the diversity of life as we know it, then it follows that there is no creator God, no purpose in creation, and no design, not even in a big picture or theological sense. Theistic evolution says, "That's just importing atheism into science; nothing in the science itself that justifies that conclusion." Many big guns, even in the field of evolutionary biology, agree. Theistic Evolution has many variations but certainly many who hold it would claim that Genesis is not meant to be read as scientifically accurate, since the rules of science were not made up back then. God is very much the author, the text is inspired, reliable and authoritative. It simply isn't meant to convey a scientific understanding of origins.

In the U.S. today, this is a decidedly minority view among evangelicals. Many pastors would lose their jobs holding this view. But respected Christians have taken this position. Because they are less well known among evangelicals, I'll take a little more space to mention them. Much in the writings of C.S. Lewis suggests that he held this view. B.B. Warfield, an early responder to Darwin's theory of evolution, and a contributor to *The Fundamentals* (the book that gave modern
Christian fundamentalists their name,) a very conservative scholar who championed the "inerrancy" doctrine of Scripture, held to a version of the theistic evolution position. Francis Collins, head of the Genome Project, is an evangelical who advocates this view. This was the view of Pope John Paul II.

My reason for swimming in these shark infest waters is not to say "Christian orthodoxy requires you to adopt one or another of these views." There is freedom in Christ to integrate science & faith as we see fit or not at all. Many of us have bigger fish to fry! The only reason we need to fry these particular fish is our mission to the heart of Ann Arbor: God in search of Ann Arbor and Ann Arbor in search of God!

This, at long last, is my point: for the sake of the evangelical mission to Ann Arbor and communities like Ann Arbor, we cannot, at this point in history, take our cues from the evangelical church in America which is content, too often, to assert or imply that adopting a posture of protest toward mainstream science is part of the cost of discipleship. (In fact, we've done pretty good at that, but less good at saving our marriages or breaking free of porn or reducing domestic abuse, or doing something about injustice, or actually helping the poor. Shaping opinions is easier than making disciples, so this should not surprise us.) Furthermore, by adopting this posture of protest, we're less able to speak prophetically to the culture (including mainstream science) because we are viewed, and not without reason, as those who haven't taken the time to listen.

I would go even further and assert that we American evangelicals don't seem to be at all concerned that we're making it easier for those who identify with story of science to remain on outside of faith looking in. No! The more we beat up their story, the better evangelicals we are! With respect: shame on us! It's possible to be so right, we're wrong, and this, I think is one of those times.

The voice I'm hearing is the voice of Jesus crying out to his church: "I have other sheep, that are not of this fold, not part of evangelical mainstream in America right now; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice--if only you will let them hear it!

On May 20, 2001, we dedicated this church "to Christ for the lost." We placed the names of loved ones who were on the outside of faith looking in on slips of paper and placed those slips of paper on the dedication stone that we would later place in the corner of our building. You can see the stone in the wall of the church each week as you walk into church. Behind it are those slips of paper with names written on them. People have told me that loved ones with those names written on them are now believers, some attending this church, and one now on our staff!

At our dedication ceremony we lifted up those slips of paper and that stone and with solemn prayer dedicated the Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor "to Christ, for the
lost." I put a name on one of those slips and it grieves me that I wouldn't invite the person named to many evangelical churches because she'd get the idea you have to bristle when you hear the word "evolution" to be a disciple. Whatever view we may hold on the intersection of science and faith at the crossroads of creation--or no view at all, a perfectly legitimate position--this much about the way we're going about our mission must change.