

ANTHEM CHURCH POSITION PAPER ON CREATION

I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

The elders at Anthem are committed to preserving unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace among Christians when we address controversial subjects such as this. The diversity of beliefs regarding our origins, and the intensity with which those beliefs are held, cause schisms in our culture and regularly even separate Christians from one another. We seek to be guided by the Romans 14 principle of grace toward those who hold different opinions on debatable matters, allowing latitude in matters where Scripture is not clear (secondary doctrine) while holding firm to teachings that Scripture makes very clear (primary doctrine). (In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.)

Recognizing the need for clarity, knowing that committed Christians hold a variety of views regarding the age of the earth and the beginning of life, and heeding Paul's teaching in Romans 14, we have developed this paper to clarify the elders' biblical understanding of creation and origins.

Genesis 1 introduces us to the God who created the universe and everything in it. While ancient pagan cultures worshipped the sky, sun, moon, stars, seas, and many other created things, Genesis 1 dismantles that common pagan world view by revealing the true nature of these objects of worship as simply parts of creation spoken into being by the true creator God. Our modern culture, similar to the culture of Paul's day as described in Romans 1, has exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for a "god" of an entirely different nature – in this case the natural forces collectively labeled "evolution" (In this paper, the word "evolution" refers to macro-evolution, (as opposed to micro-evolution) the process by which life is assumed to have arisen from non-living material and then diversified into all life forms).

The popularizers of Charles Darwin's theory have exalted impersonal and uncaring forces of evolution as the origin of life and rejected the God described in Genesis who created humanity and who desires a close personal relationship with humankind. Linked to the question about the origin of life are questions about the age of the universe and the age of the earth.

While science and the Bible agree that the universe had a beginning, views regarding the age of the universe and the age of the earth diverge widely, even within the church. Although Christians agree that the universe was created by God, Christians continue to divide into camps regarding the exact nature of the six days of creation recorded in Genesis. Even among scholars who are united by a high view of Scripture as the authoritative word of God and who believe

that the text is a true record inspired by God, the text of Genesis 1 is subject to a variety of interpretations.

It is worth remembering that differences of opinion regarding the time involved in the days of creation arose within the church early in its history, centuries before the advent of modern science and the writings of Darwin. For example, the early church father Augustine in the 5th century proposed that the six days of creation were not to be understood literally (*De Genesi ad litteram* 4.1.1, in *idem*, 241). Today, continuing the tradition of divergent interpretations, some assert that creation occurred in six consecutive 24-hour creation days, some assert that the days represent long eras or are representative days in a long era, some maintain that the record of creation is set in a literary framework not intended to be chronological, and some propose other alternative interpretations.

While the specific interpretation of the time span of creation is debatable, Anthem's elders assert that God did indeed create the earth and all it contains. The vast diversity of life is not the result of a purposeless natural evolutionary process. All life was purposely created. Human beings are not simply highly evolved animals. Rather, we are made in the image of God – the personal God who purposely created everything for His glory. Because we are created in God's image, we have worth and purpose, and we have someone to whom we are ultimately accountable.

Because of our commitment to love, we will approach the subject of origins with humility, recognizing that Scripture leaves some questions unanswered, and acknowledging the history of occasionally bitter divisions regarding interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 (Pr. 15:1; 19:11; Matt. 5:5; Eph. 4:1-3; Titus 3:1-2). Because of our commitment to truth, we affirm:

- That the biblical record of creation in Genesis is true in all that it affirms. The Old Testament is filled with references to God's act of creation. One notable example is in Job, where God describes the events of creation in his response to Job's challenge (Job 38:4-11). Jesus refers to creation (Mark 13:19). Many passages in the New Testament refer to God's creative action (e.g., Mark 10:6; Acts 17:24-27; Heb. 1:10).
- We assert that the universe had a beginning, and that God created it (Genesis 1:1; Ps. 33:6, for example).
- We assert that God created the earth and the living things upon it, including human beings. This is the uniform testimony of Scripture from beginning to end: examples include Gen. 1:1-2:25; Ex. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33:6, 9; 136:4-9; Is. 42:5; 43:7; 45:12, 18; Jer. 10:12, 16; John 1:3; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24-25; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11. We assert that human beings are made in God's image and thus distinct from animals (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; James 3:9).
- We assert that people, male and female, have value and dignity because they are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 5:2).
- We assert that Adam and Eve were real people. Jesus refers to the creation of man and woman, quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in Matthew 19:4-5 and Mark 10:6-8. Jesus

believed that Abel was a real person (Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51). Luke traces Jesus' genealogy to Adam in Luke.

- We maintain that the Genesis record includes everything that the author, as prompted by God, considered important for us to know. However, we do not believe that the Genesis record is an exhaustive account of the creation events, nor is it intended to be a scientific treatise. God leaves some things as mystery. He purposely does not explain everything in a detailed scientific manner (Deut. 29:29).
- We believe that God has provided us with all of the information about creation that we need in order to live godly lives (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- We do not believe that the theory of evolution provides a satisfactory explanation for the origin of life. The text of Genesis emphasizes that God specifically created humans (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2:7). Plants were created to reproduce after their own kind (Gen. 1:11-12). Aquatic creatures and birds were created after their own kinds (Gen. 1:21). Land creatures were created after their own kinds (Gen. 1:24-25).
- We do not believe in Theistic Evolution, the view that God guided the process of evolution to produce the desired outcome. God was personally involved in creation, not distant (Ps. 33:6, 9; 139:13; Is. 40:26; 42:5). Humans were not selected or modified from pre-existing hominids but created by a direct act of God (Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:7). Eve, in particular, was not a preexisting hominid chosen to be Adam's partner. God had presented to Adam all of the land animals and birds for his review and during that review no suitable helper was found (Gen. 2:20). Had there been a suitable preexisting female hominid, this would have been the opportunity to present her to Adam. Instead, the suitable helper, Eve, was fashioned from Adam himself (Gen. 2:21-23; 1 Cor. 11:8).
- We affirm that God continues to be active in creation, sustaining it (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).
- We encourage study of the sciences and scientific investigation of God's creation. God created a rational and orderly universe (Gen. 1; Jer. 31:35) in which cause and effect can be studied (Ps. 111:2). The universe points to God as the creator (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20).
- When apparent contradictions between science and the Bible arise, we encourage our church to consider three possibilities: The given scientific explanation is incomplete or in error; our understanding or interpretation of Scripture is incomplete or in error; both the scientific explanation and our understanding of Scripture are in error.

Because of our commitment to grace: We recognize that committed, theologically conservative, Bible-believing Christians differ regarding the interpretation of the Genesis creation account – some believing that the account points to a young earth and some believing that the account permits an old earth. We deliberately do not take an official position regarding the earth's age.

A very special thanks to our brothers and sisters in Cole Community Church, whose wisdom and encouragement in this matter have been irreplaceable. May God continue to richly bless you as you faithfully and wisely engage with our dear Savior in His mission for Boise and our entire world. God bless you.