



Creation & Providence

Saturday 8th November 2025

Teaching by Tom O'Toole

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Creation – Introducing the Issues

Gen 1:1 - In the beginning,
God created the heavens
and the earth.

*This seems like a simple verse, but
questions of how God created
have led to lots of debate about
science, geology and the text of
the Bible itself.*

Ten questions from
Andrew Wilson to help
us think about this issue.



Question	Your Answer...
1. Was God responsible for creation?	
2. How old is the earth?	
3. In what order were things created?	
4. Was creation perfect before the fall?	
5. Did animals die before the fall?	
6. Did humans die before the fall?	
7. Was Adam descended from pre-human creatures?	
8. Was Eve descended from pre-human creatures?	
9. Are all human beings descended from Adam and Eve?	
10. Is the fall historical?	

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Creation – Two Books of Revelation

The Book of the World

“General Revelation”

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth...

(Psalm 19:1-4)

The Book of the Word

“Special Revelation”

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes...

(Psalm 19:7-8)

Which of these books will should we expect to be a source of truth?

Which of these books needs to be interpreted carefully to avoid making mistakes?

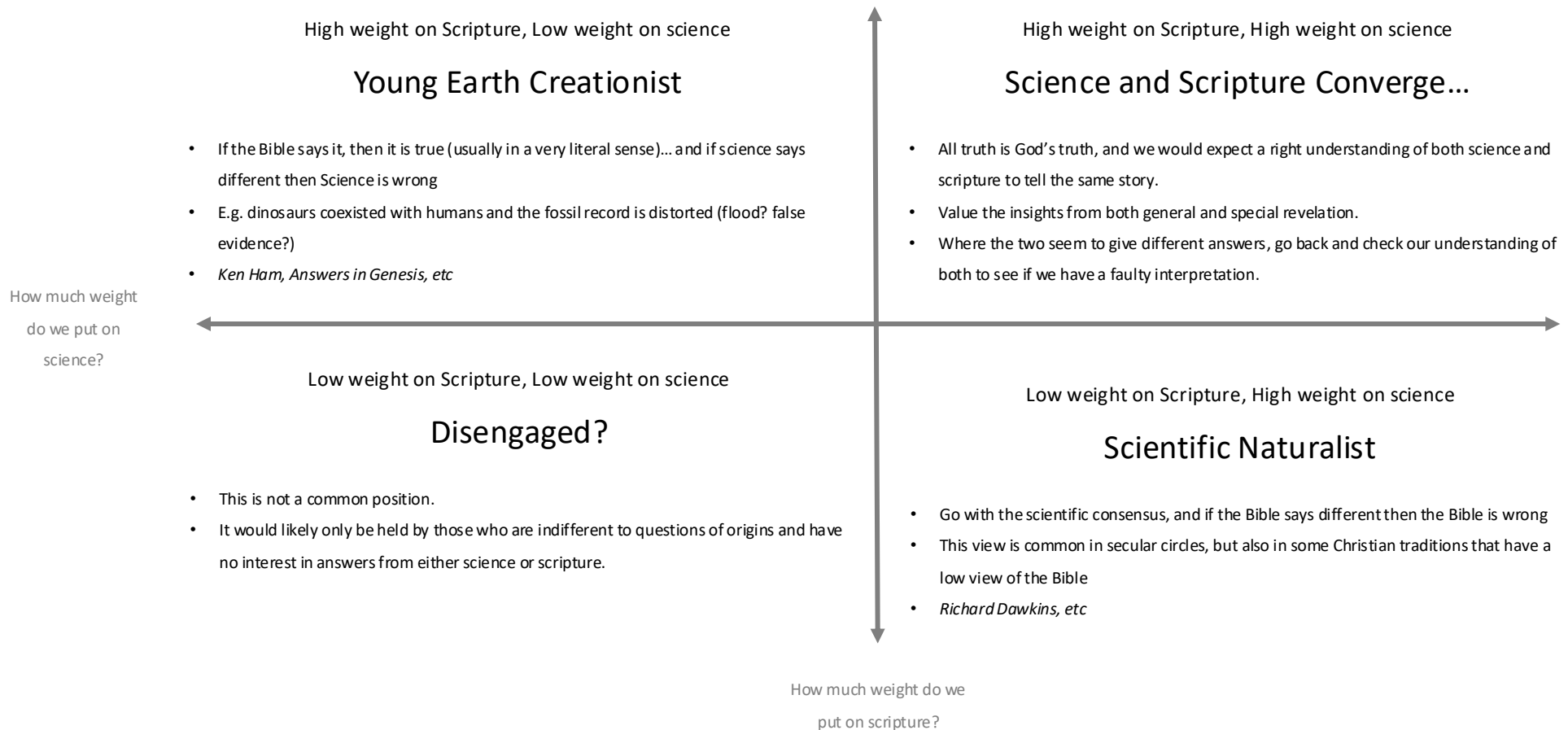
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Creation – Science vs Scripture?



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Creation – When Science and Scripture Seem to Disagree

When it seems like Scripture and Science disagree, we should review our interpretations of **both**.

Example 1 - 15th & 16th Century – *The sun orbits the earth?*

Example 2 – Early 20th Century – *The universe is eternal?*

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Creation – Looking at Science From a Top Right Perspective

The universe had a beginning

The intelligibility of the universe

The fine-tuning of the universe

“A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

Fred Hoyle

“The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.”

Stephen Hawking

“The entire universe is balanced on a knife-edge, and would be total chaos if any of the natural ‘constants’ were off even slightly.”

PCW Davies

Fine Tuned Constant	If a Little Smaller...	If a Little Larger...	Scale
Strength of Gravity	Everything would collapse and burn out quickly leaving no time for life.	Matter would have never coalesced into stars and planets.	1 in 10^{60}
Strong Nuclear Force	Only Hydrogen exists	All Hydrogen immediately fuses to heavier elements – no water or Sun	1 in 10^{30}
Cosmological Constant	Everything contracts in a big crunch	The universe expands too fast for galaxies to form	1 in 10^{120}
Distance of Earth to Sun	Water boils off (like Venus)	Water freezes (like Mars)	1 in 100



Just a few examples of 20-30 constants that are fine-tuned for life.

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Creation – Looking at Genesis From a Top Right Perspective

Natural Processes

Within the text of Genesis, God does not create everything directly, but delegates creative responsibility to the land, leaving space for natural processes.

Genesis 1:11, 24-26

Meaning of 'Day'

The Hebrew word "yom" is used in a range of ways, sometimes indicating 24-hours and sometimes an (unspecified) longer period of time.

Genesis 2:4; 4:3

Other People

Genesis 4 seems to allude to other humans existing at the time of Cain, despite only two children of Adam and Eve being mentioned (and one is dead).

Genesis 4:15, 17

Poetic Structure

The account in Genesis 1 is structured as poetry, drawing attention to God creating and filling spaces much more than particular mechanisms used.

Genesis 1

Other ANE Accounts

Gen. 1 shares features with other Ancient Near Eastern stories but differs at key points. It is subverting common views of the day to teach truth about God.

Genesis 1

Humans In His Image

There seems to be a particular focus in the text on humans as different to the rest of creation – made in the image of God, and with his breath of life.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7

Historical Adam

The historicity of Adam and the fall has theological importance elsewhere in the Bible. The argument of Romans 5 is based on all humans being 'in Adam'.

Romans 5:12-17

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Creation – Wilson's Questions Revisited...

Question	Top Left Quadrant (e.g. Ham)	Bottom Right Quadrant (e.g. Dawkins)
1. Was God responsible for creation?	<i>Yes. God made all things, including life– not through gradual processes but through direct creative activity.</i>	<i>No. Everything came about through natural processes, starting with a big bang, then the chance emergence of life and development through genetic mutation and natural selection.</i>
2. How old is the earth?	<i>The earth was created in six 24-hours days approximately 6,000 to 10,000 years ago.</i>	<i>The earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old, and the universe almost 14 billion years old, based on a variety of scientific dating methods.</i>
3. In what order were things created?	<i>Things were created in the order described in Genesis, and the sun, moon and stars were not created until the day after plant life.</i>	<i>The sun and stars formed billions of years before any plant or animal life emerged on earth.</i>
4. Was creation perfect before the fall?	<i>Yes. God declared creation to be “very good” and so there were no hurricanes, tornados, volcanoes etc. before the fall.</i>	<i>The earth has always been a turbulent mess and has always had these kind of phenomena.</i>
5. Did animals die before the fall?	<i>No. Death did not enter the world until after Adam and Eve rebelled against God.</i>	<i>Yes. Animals have been dying for over a billion years, and survival of the fittest drives natural selection. Many species became extinct long before humans existed.</i>
6. Did humans die before the fall?	<i>No. Death entered the world with the fall.</i>	<i>Humans gradually evolved into what we are now and our ancestors have always died.</i>
7. Was Adam descended from pre-human creatures?	<i>No. Adam was made from the dust of the ground animated by God's breath.</i>	<i>Yes. Humans descended from pre-human hominids, who were themselves the result of a long process of evolution.</i>
8. Was Eve descended from pre-human creatures?	<i>No. Eve was created by God from Adam's rib.</i>	<i>Yes. Humans descended from pre-human hominids, who were themselves the result of a long process of evolution.</i>
9. Are all human beings descended from Adam and Eve?	<i>Yes. All humans who ever existed can trace our lineage to Adam and Eve (and indeed to Noah and his family)</i>	<i>No. Modern humans have a large group of ancestors and we cannot all trace our lineage to the same human couple.</i>
10. Is the fall historical?	<i>Yes. The fall narrative as described in Genesis 3 did happen in history. As a result, the land was cursed and death entered the world.</i>	<i>No. The fall as described never happened, and there was never a moment that humans began to die physically having not previously done so. Death has always been part of human existence.</i>

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Providence – Introducing the Issues

God is in control and sovereign over all things.

Humans have free will and real responsibility for our actions.



How do these two truths
hold together?

Two Extremes

Deism

God created the world and set things in motion, but he is not actively involved with creation in an ongoing way.



Most of us will be somewhere between these extremes.

Determinism

God is in control of everything and humans are like robots, doing what has already been decided for us.

Often churches or Christians can lean more towards one of these truths than the other in their emphasis.

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Providence – The Practical Implications

	What happens if you lean towards God’s sovereignty but neglect human responsibility?	What happens if you lean towards human responsibility but neglect God’s sovereignty?
Prayer		
Evil and Suffering		
Evangelism		

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Providence – Holding These Truths Together

Preservation

God holds all things in being. The reason we continue existing moment by moment is because of God sustaining us.

Colossians 1:17

Governance

God has plans and purposes, and he is directing the universe towards the fulfilment of his purposes.

Ephesians 1:11

Concurrence

God uses the real choices that people make for his purposes, even if those choices were made with very different motives.

Genesis 50:20; Acts 2:23

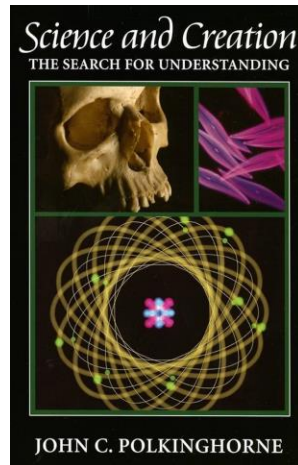
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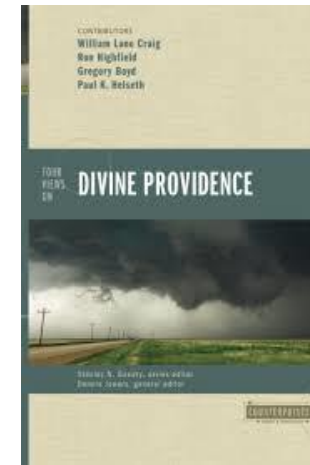


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Recommended Resources



Creation and Science



Four Views on Divine
Providence

