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BIB 303: Christian Thought

4/15/2023

Research Proposal : Is the earth young or old

With controversy concerning the origins of humanity, people often debate the age of the earth. As a result of research that has been conducted within this century, scientists have been able to create an accurate estimate (while this is a probability and not a definite answer). Genesis 1 records the beginning of life as we know it, using scriptures and biblical context theologians have been able to come to the conclusion that the earth is projected to be somewhere around 6000 years old. This would be considered the young earth theory, with the old earth theory deriving from secular evidence, stating that the earth is at least 4 billion years old. Which theory should Christians believe, and should we alter our beliefs around this theory (as creation is directly correlated to every aspect of both the new and old testament)?

Science and Christianity share a very unique relationship. Science originates from philosophy (as a sector). Most of our modern philosophical idols advocated on behalf of God's existence, using theological principles to simplify life. Science does this in a similar nature, essentially stemming from theology (as one may consider science the third generation of intellectual inquiry). While “geologists were not able to arrive at any definite conclusion as to the sequence of disturbed beds, or to evaluate the time significance of an unconformity”,(Vokes, “How Old Is the Earth? Science Answers the Question”) the bible is capable of calculating the

age of the earth using Abrahams age, speculating he lived around 2000 B.C (concluding that Abraham lived around 4004 B.C). This date may not be accurate as there is an inconsistency depending on who is reporting that data (with a 1 to 2 thousand year margin).

While this evidence would be considered subpar compared to other modern scientific explorations, it still remains validatable. Geology as a whole is fairly new science, with lots of conundrums or phenomena that are unexplainable (the age of the earth being one). William Smith, commonly known as the “Father of English Geology” invented stratigraphy; a process in which geologists analyze the structure of rocks, determining how old each layer is . If the rocks remained in the same position throughout history, analysis would be incredibly easy. Rocks are also composites, being created with various elements, limiting the likelihood of examination via compare and contrast. This is currently one of the scientific processes used to determine the age of the earth; sampling historic locations for details and information. While not every Christian understands archeology, or geology, basic scientific principles have been ingrained via education. While reading Genesis 1 , humans must remember that these philosophical concepts did not exist. Using such to determine the accuracy of the earth's age poses an incredibly difficult task. This becomes an endless rabbit whole, with henry morris stating: “The data of geology, in our view, should be interpreted in light of Scripture, rather than distorting Scripture to accommodate current geological philosophy.Both men agree that the Bible is inerrant, but Morris in claiming that i is also perspicuous, in effect denies that it, like nature, must be interpreted-- a view that he cannot consistently sustain”(Young, Davis A., et al. "Christianity and the Age of the Earth." *SPONS AGENCY PUB DATE* (1982): 69). While God intends to influence all of our lives, scriptures were recorded to impact the lives of previous generations (who were not

scientifically defining everything, and looking for principals to confirm possibilities and the likelihood of events).

These findings support the young earth theory, while the old earth theory is in conflict with some of the the ideology stated above. As humans we must remember that while these theory's contrast each other, they depict similar if not the same story of creation. After conducting a survey on a christian college, asking them which theory resonates with them the most, analysts were able to determine that the more faithful students (that are affiliated, and identify themselves with the church), display an traditional view of God, with a significant amount of students believing in a mixture (the author states is science-theology): "when connected with religious practices, beliefs, science knowledge, and beliefs about the nature of science, an interesting story emerges. Students who are more engaged with their faith and more knowledgeable about basic science are more likely to be identified with one of the science-theology paradigms"(pg. 41, Scott, Tyler D. "EBSCO Discovery Service - Academic Libraries: EBSCO." *EBSCO Information Services, Inc.* | *Www.ebsco.com*, DOI, 1 Mar. 202AD,).

Prochronism is defined as "an anachronism marked by the assignment of something (as an event) to a date earlier than the actual historical one"("Prochronism Definition & Meaning." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster). One may use this concept to describe the events of genesis 1, as our insight into the past is relatively figurative. A question proposes in contrast to the young earth theory, Did God deceive us making the earth appear older or than it actually is ? Fossils support the old earth theory, with scientists accounting billions of year old forms of life on planet earth. These findings have ultimately led to the increase in atheism in the 19th century.

The article *Did God Make Fossils ? To The History Of One Idea** states this early on: “When natural philosophy takes God out of the equation when considering the beginning of things, this is just a mental device that allows a better understanding of created nature, taken in itself, and by no means a claim to describe the true state of affairs . The concept of conventional truth was useful to Rene Descartes (1596-1650), who is considered one of the founders of scientific cosmology”. (pg. 30, Khramov, Alexander. “Directory of Open Access Journals.” *Вестник Православного Свято-Тихоновского Гуманитарного Университета: Серия I. Богословие, Философия*, St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, 1 Dec. 2022,) This pertains to prochronism, and essentially confirms, (as previously stated in this paper) that our modern interpretation of creation may be inaccurate. The author of this article goes on to reference Christian philosopher Descartes who ultimately believes; the world was created perfectly, with Adam and Eve being created as adults, and that our general understanding of nature should be influenced by God and not by scientific fact. While this may diverge off of the topic at hand, Christians must use fossils to depict the wrath of God, and not to disprove creation. “The Flood—an unheard-of catastrophe whose traces are visible all over the Earth, reminding us of the wrath of God and the inevitability of punishment for sins—was a real fixation idea of biblical geology. Authors who attributed the creation of all fossils to God have thereby drastically downplayed the significance of this event, and therefore they should not be confused with biblical geologists per se, but rather considered as a separate ideological group. Among its representatives we can mention the Anglican priest Mellor Brown (1796-1867), who in his essay "Reflections on Geology" (1838) wrote that when creating the world, God accelerated natural processes many times over, just as a steam

engine quickly performs work” (pg. 33, Khramov, Alexander. “Directory of Open Access Journals.” *Вестник Православного Свято-Тихоновского Гуманитарного Университета: Серия I. Богословие, Философия*, St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, 1 Dec. 2022,)

While secular evidence influences society to believe otherwise, the earth being an age of around 6000 years old is still plausible. Christians must take into account that our quest for knowledge can be sinful, and that God did not create the world around us for our understanding (but out of love). Our definition of nature has consistently proven to be different from the natural order of the universe and world, and is mis-aligned with God's intention.

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