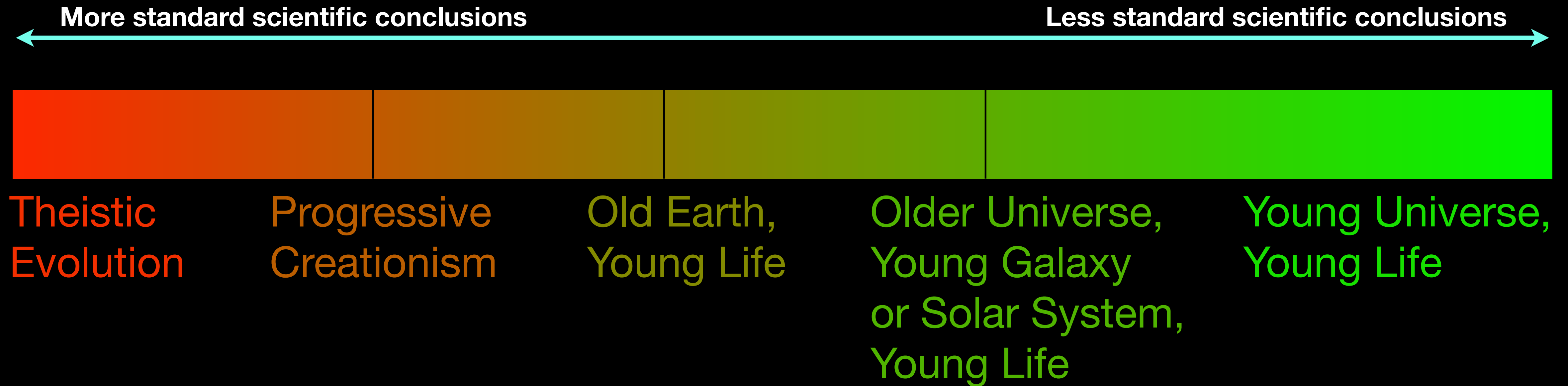


Theological Implications Of Alternative Models Of Origins

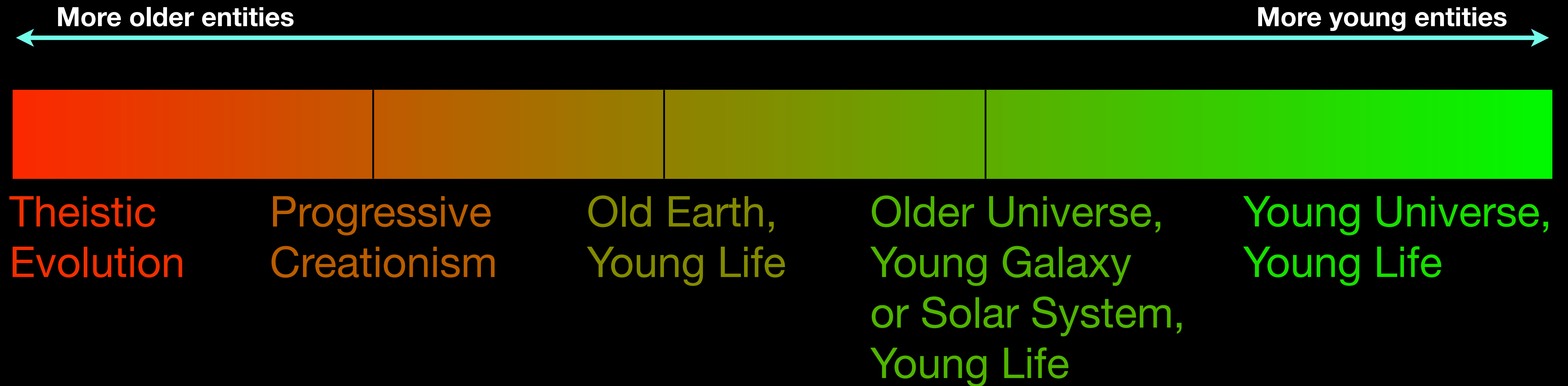
Dr. Sven Östring



The Spectrum of Origins Positions



The Spectrum of Origins Positions



	Theistic Evolution	Progressive Creationism	Old Earth, Young Life	Older Universe, Young Galaxy or Solar System, Young Life	Young Universe, Young Life
Big Bang Cosmology	✓	✓	—	—	✗
Standard Geological Dating Models	✓	✓	—	✗	✗
Standard Paleontological Dating Models	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Neo-Darwinian Evolutionary Mechanisms & Common Biological Ancestry	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

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THEISTIC EVOLUTION

Theistic evolution fully integrates standard scientific conclusions with theism:

- God was the transcendent cause of the Big Bang approximately 13.8 billion years ago;
- Galaxies, stars and planets coalesced and formed according to natural processes described by astrophysical laws established by God;
- God supervised the process of evolution but did not intervene in any empirically detectable way;
- A recent human couple or group of humans acquired the property of having the “image of God”.



Theological System

The background of the slide is a black field filled with a complex, glowing green geometric pattern. This pattern consists of numerous concentric circles and radial lines that intersect to form a grid-like structure. The lines are more densely packed in the center and become more sparse towards the edges, creating a sense of depth and perspective, similar to a tunnel or a vortex. The overall effect is a futuristic and abstract visual.

DEISM

- ▶ **Merriam-Webster:** A movement or system of thought advocating natural religion, emphasizing morality, and in the 18th century denying the interference of the Creator with the laws of the universe.
- ▶ **Wikipedia:** Deism is the philosophical belief which posits that although God exists as the uncaused First Cause—ultimately responsible for the creation of the universe—God does not interact directly with that subsequently created world. Equivalently, deism can also be defined as the view which asserts God's existence as the cause of all things, and admits its perfection (and usually the existence of natural law and Providence) but rejects divine revelation or direct intervention of God in the universe by miracles.



METHODOLOGICAL NATURALISM

- ▶ **Eugenie Scott:** “Science neither denies or opposes the supernatural, but ignores the supernatural for methodological reasons.”
- ▶ **Ernan McMullan:** “the methodology of natural science gives no purchase on the claim that a particular event or type of event is to be explained by invoking God’s creative action directly.”
- ▶ For a Christian scientist who is committed to methodological naturalism, and as a result to theistic evolution, the underlying theological system is **pragmatic deism**.





The basic assumption that God is removed from nature logically implies a Deistic God, one who is less than the God of Scripture.

Norman Gulley, "What Happens to Biblical Truth if the SDA Church Accepts Theistic Evolution?" *JATS* 15/2 (Autumn 2004): 40.

A Biblical Theological System

The Bible contains a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. It is the book that makes us wise unto salvation. It tells us how to reach the abodes of eternal happiness. It tells us of the love of God as shown in the plan of redemption, imparting the knowledge essential for all—the knowledge of Christ. He is the Sent of God; He is the Author of our salvation. But apart from the Word of God, we could have no knowledge that such a person as the Lord Jesus ever visited our world, nor any knowledge of His divinity, as indicated by His previous existence with the Father. *The Signs of the Times, June 25, 1902.*



A Christ-centred Theological System

Christ is the complete system of truth. He says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” [John 14:6.] All true believers center in Christ, their character is irradiated by Christ, all meet in Christ, and circulate about Christ. Truth comes from heaven to purify and cleanse the human agent from every moral defilement. It leads to benevolent action, to kind, tender, thoughtful love toward the needy, the distressed, the suffering. This is practical obedience to the words of Christ. *Manuscript 34, 1894.*



The Sanctuary Theological System

The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people... Light from the sanctuary illumined the past, the present, and the future. *The Great Controversy*, 423.





Sanctuary Theological System

- Continual work of salvation, symbolised by the daily sanctuary services
- Major historical events, symbolised by the annual calendar of festivals

Great Controversy Theme

Salvation history extends beyond the human horizon



Pragmatic Deism

- **Source of Knowledge:**
Empirical observations
- Assumes that God does not miraculously intervene in creation for the objective of developing natural laws
- Does not appeal to the Scriptures as divine revelation as a source of scientific knowledge

Salvation History

- **Source of Knowledge of Salvation History:**
sola-tota-prima Scriptura
- God is unfurling His salvation within the spatiotemporal order of His creation
- The Sanctuary serves as a complete model of salvation history that was divinely revealed to Moses and John
- Jesus: “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” **John 5:17**
- God typically sustains His creation in regular, predictable ways, but is also constantly working towards the salvation of human beings
- God performs signs, wonders and miracles within His creation to supernaturally reveal Himself and His salvation to human beings, with the purpose of drawing them to Himself

A Restricted View of Reality

Alvin Plantinga: And this means that the scientific evidence base is importantly different from a Christian evidence base. The Christian's evidence base includes belief in God as well as belief in the main lines of the Christian faith; the former does not include these things.

Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion & Naturalism* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 173.

Fernando Canale: The difference boils down to a different “index of reality.” Creationists have a broader index of reality than evolutionists.

Fernando Canale, “Evolution, Theology, and Method - Part 2: Scientific Method and Evolution” *AUSS* 41(2), 183.



Implications

Hermeneutical: There is a significant dissimilarity with Genesis 1-2—theistic evolution is not a conclusion that would be drawn from the text itself.



Implications

Sabbath: Theistic evolution undermines the historical basis for the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.



Implications

Sin: Theistic evolution erodes the definition and nature of sin, because sinful thoughts and actions were being committed prior to Adam and Eve's selection (if they even existed).



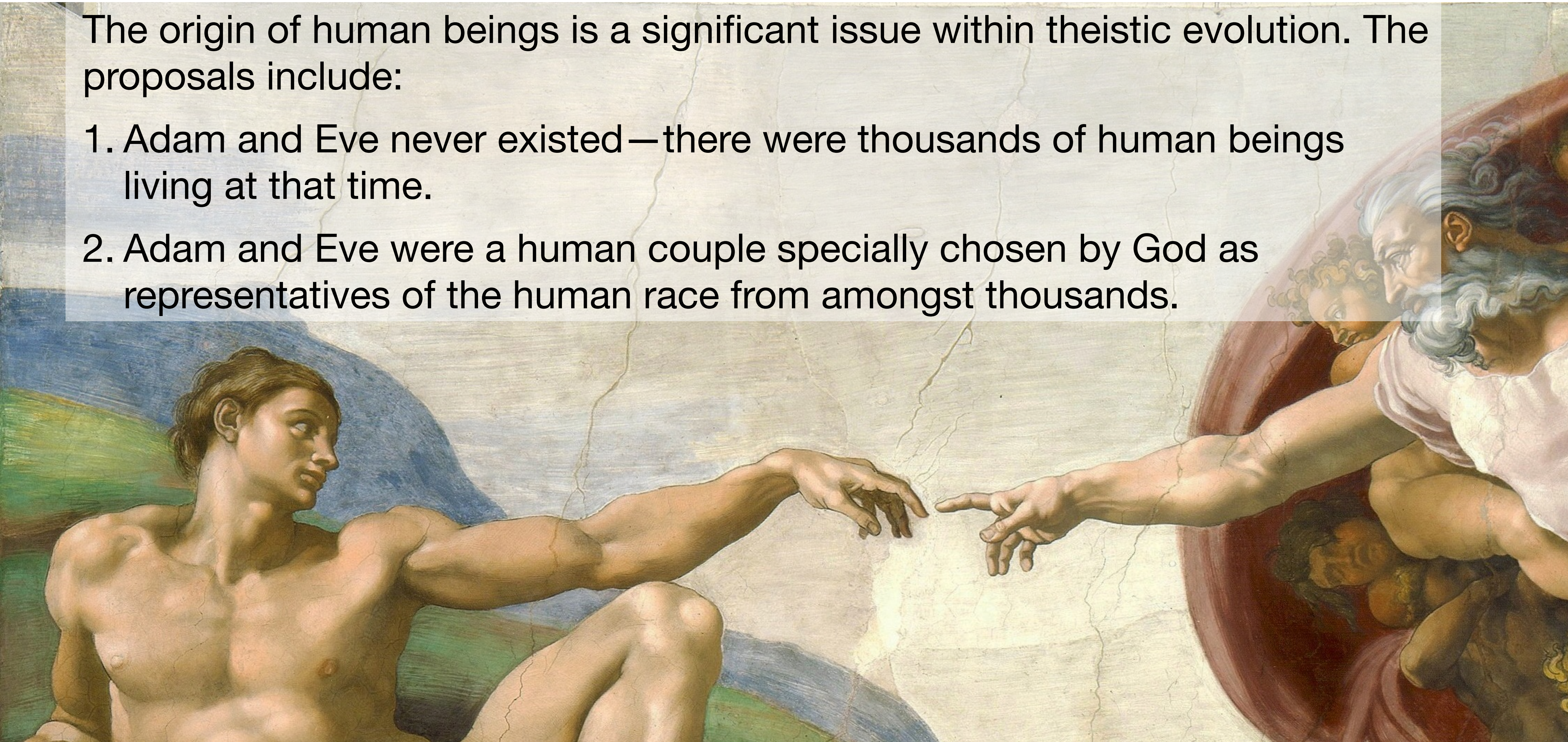
Implications

Death is a necessary feature of nature that is required for the diversification of life. It has been occurring for billions of years and is not the result of human sin.

The Issue of Adam and Eve

The origin of human beings is a significant issue within theistic evolution. The proposals include:

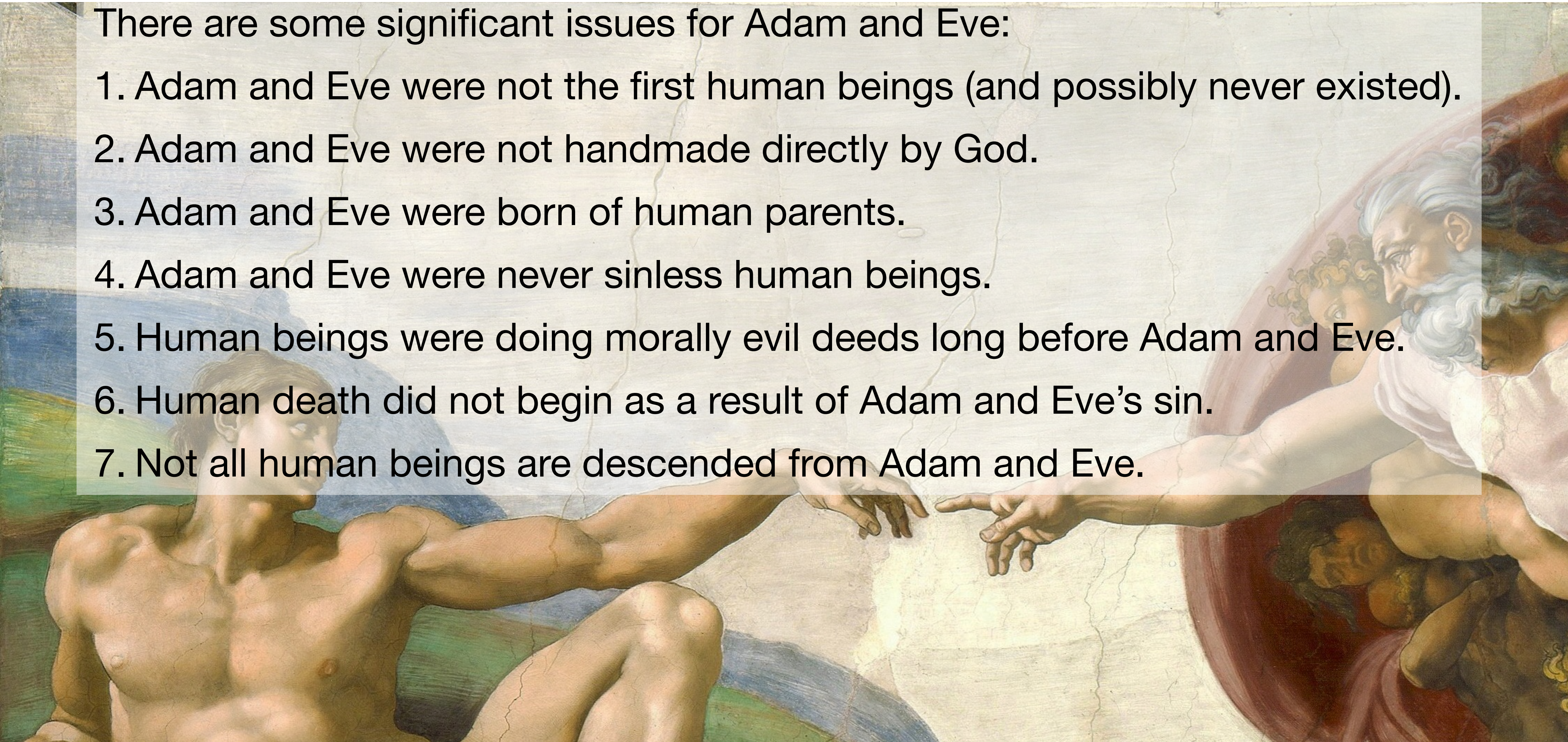
1. Adam and Eve never existed—there were thousands of human beings living at that time.
2. Adam and Eve were a human couple specially chosen by God as representatives of the human race from amongst thousands.



Implications for Adam and Eve

There are some significant issues for Adam and Eve:

1. Adam and Eve were not the first human beings (and possibly never existed).
2. Adam and Eve were not handmade directly by God.
3. Adam and Eve were born of human parents.
4. Adam and Eve were never sinless human beings.
5. Human beings were doing morally evil deeds long before Adam and Eve.
6. Human death did not begin as a result of Adam and Eve's sin.
7. Not all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve.



The first man

The first Adam



For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.



The second man

The last Adam



If a perfect world, where there was no sin and death, never existed in the past...

what does this mean for the Bible's
promise of a new earth in the future, where
there is no more death or mourning or
crying or pain, where the old order of
things has passed away?

If because of sociological, cultural, or political reasons, some Adventists continue to believe that Adventist theology should reject Genesis 1 as theological history and accept deep time/evolutionary history, they should explain to the rest of the worldwide body of believers the systematic consequences of such a paradigmatic change *in theological detail*.

Fernando Canale, "Adventist Theology and Deep Time/Evolutionary Theory: Are They Compatible?" *JATS* 15/1 (Autumn 2004), 102.





Implication

Confidence in Jesus' Teachings: Theistic evolution erodes our confidence in Jesus' knowledge and teachings, when He points us directly back to the Creation account.



Implications

Plan of Salvation: If humans are the result of a progress within natural evolutionary development, then there is no place for their fall, for death through sin, no need of God's law, of divine revelation in Scripture, of salvation through Christ, of the new creation work of the Holy Spirit, or of Christ's present intercession, second coming, or final judgment.

Norman Gulley "What Happens to Biblical Truth if the SDA Church Accepts Theistic Evolution?" 43.



Implications

Mission: The endorsement of both a recent six-day creation and deep-time origins will undermine the effectiveness of our witness.

In Genesis 1-3, Scripture teaches essential truths about the activity of God in creation, the origin of the universe, the creation of plants and animals on the earth, the origin and unity of the human race, the creation of manhood and womanhood, the origin of marriage, the origin of human sin and human death, and man's need for redemption from sin. Without the foundation laid down in those three chapters, the rest of the Bible would make no sense, and many of those doctrines would be undermined or lost. It is no exaggeration to say that those three chapters are essential to the rest of the Bible.

Wayne Grudem, "Biblical and Theological Introduction: The Incompatibility of Theistic Evolution with the Biblical Account of Creation and with Important Christian Doctrines" *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical and Theological Critique*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 62.



In conclusion, evolutionary theory challenges much more than the deep historical-theological meaning of Gen 1-2. It calls for a wholesale deconstruction and reinterpretation of the fundamental principles of Adventist theology and the rejection of the historical understanding of salvation as presented in Scripture. Accommodation to evolutionary history implies rejecting and replacing the theological revolution from which Adventism originated. In turn, the community will lose the uniqueness that is its reason for existing. Adventists need to consider these points carefully before harmonizing Seventh-day Adventist beliefs with evolutionary patterns and history.

Fernando Canale, "Evolution, Theology, and Method, Part 3: Evolution and Adventist Theology," *AUSS* 42(1) (2004), 38.



In summary, a denial of a recent creation six-day creation week requires the abandonment of the creation of a historic pair of ancestral humans—Adam and Eve—their literal Fall, the entrance of sin and death into the world, and the need of Christ's atoning death on the cross. Historically, Adventists have found the Bible's own view of how salvation works, including the origin of sin through the Fall, its spread to all humanity and nature, and its eradication by Jesus on the cross, as the most complete, convincing, and satisfying explanation.

Randall Yonker, "Consequences of Moving Away from a Recent Six-day Creation," *JATS* 15/2 (Autumn 2004), 68.



PROGRESSIVE CREATIONISM

Progressive Creationism holds that:

- God was the transcendent cause of the Big Bang approximately 13.8 billion years ago;
- Galaxies, stars and planets coalesced and formed according to natural processes;
- God supernaturally and progressively intervened to create different life forms on Earth.
- God specially created Adam and Eve as the first human couple.



Eclectic Theological Sources

- **Sources:** *prima Scriptura* and science
- Knowledge of God comes from multiple sources, including the Bible, human reason and science.
- Changes in scientific conclusions may mean that theological beliefs may need to be changed.

Salvation History

- **Source of Salvation History:** *sola-tota-prima Scriptura*
- The Bible is the divinely inspired record of God's work of salvation throughout history
- Paul writing to Timothy: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." **2 Timothy 3:14-17**
- "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." **Hebrews 4:12**



Problem

Concordism: The mistaken use of the hermeneutic of concordism, which advocates interpreting Scripture in the light of modern science.



Problem

Inconsistent Application of Methodological Naturalism: Progressive Creationism applies methodological naturalism to cosmological and geological evidence, but abandons it for biological origins and evidence.



Problem

God-of-the-gaps Problem: A gap in scientific knowledge or explanation is seen as an opportunity for a supernatural explanation.



Problem

Order of Creation: There are inconsistencies between the order that life appeared, as described in modern science and the Biblical data.



Implications

Sabbath: Progressive Creationism also undermines the historical basis for the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.

Animal Death Before Human Sin



Progressive Creationism contradicts the Biblical record that God created all animals and birds to have plant-based diets prior to the Fall.



Implication

Animal Death: Animals were subjected to pain, suffering and death, not as a consequence of human choice and sin, but by God's creative plan.



Implication

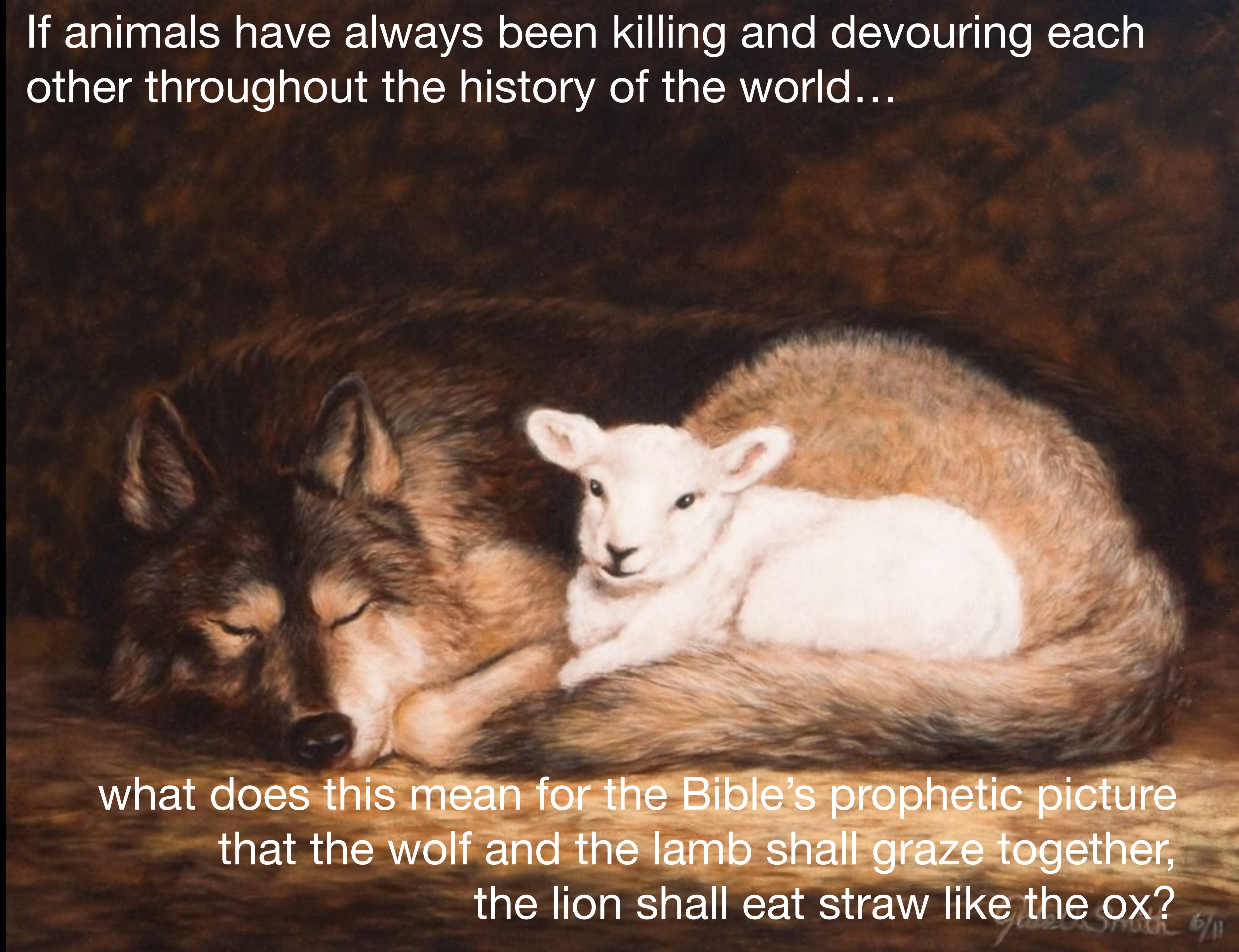
Character of God: God's merciful character, in asking us to give Sabbath-rest to animals and noticing when a sparrow falls, is compromised.



Implication

Confidence in Jesus' Teachings: Progressive Creationism erodes our confidence in Jesus' knowledge and teachings, when He points us directly back to the Creation account.

If animals have always been killing and devouring each other throughout the history of the world...



what does this mean for the Bible's prophetic picture
that the wolf and the lamb shall graze together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox?

Great Controversy Theme

Salvation history extends beyond the human horizon



Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For,
“Yet a little while,
and the coming one will come and will not delay;
but my righteous one shall live by faith. **Hebrews 10:35-38**



