

## Script: Role Play of Three Christian Views of Creation

Note: Each teacher should present this role-play in his or her own way. The script is offered primarily as a resource for those who might not have a deep understanding of the three views. The monologues below are intended to guide students box by box in filling out the handout, "Overview: Three Christian Views of Creation." Keep in mind that this script is simplified; many individuals hold more complex views than the ones presented here. The characters in the role-play are representative of many but not all who hold these views.

### Young-Earth Creation View

Hello class. I am [Dr. Jung Ert?] and I am delighted to have been invited to speak with you.

Your teacher tells me each of you has a copy of this sheet [Hold up a copy of the teacher key for "Overview: Three Christian Views of Creation"] and my task is to help you fill in the blanks for my view. I will try to go box by box, in order, so raise your hand and stop me if I skip something or you miss it.

There are certainly beliefs that I hold in common with Christians who have other views of origins. You can fill in the first four boxes in all three columns with Yes. All Christians agree that God made everything, creation shows his glory, the Bible is God's word, and people are created in God's image. Of course, because we are Christians, we also believe Jesus is God incarnate, died for our sins, rose from the dead, is coming again, and so on, but those things are not listed on a hand out about creation views. Yet I believe that believing in evolution is incompatible with the Bible, and that this is a question that matters; putting evolution and the Bible together distorts the Christian faith.

I accept that my evolutionary creationist friend, whom you will meet, loves Jesus. Sometimes Christians have the idea that one cannot be an evolutionist and a sincere, godly Christian but that is unfair. I think his view on evolution is wrong but I know he is trying to honor God with it. He is sincere but mistaken. I will let him say more about that.

So, how do I understand Genesis? I take the creation account in Genesis chapter one to mean what it sounds like it means to most readers: Genesis one is history and when God talks about the first day, second day, and so on, "day" means a normal, 24-hour day. This affects my view of just about everything else on this sheet.

Now we get to the question that gives my view its name: the age of the earth. I believe

the Bible is quite clear about when creation happened: roughly 10,000 years ago. Write that in the next two rows, as the age of the earth and of the universe. Some young-earth creationists like a lower number and some might go as high as 20,000 but most are comfortable with a round number of 10,000 and it is easy to remember.

Why do I think Earth is the same age as the universe when your other two guests are going to say God made the universe long before he put Earth in it? The simplest answer is that Genesis 1:1 starts by saying, “In the beginning, God created the heavens”—that’s the universe—“and the earth.” So, the Bible says God made the universe and Earth in it on the first day of creation. My two friends think I am misunderstanding the Bible about this timing of creation—and I think they are misunderstanding it. We both agree that God made the heavens and the earth. Our disagreements matter—I think the way they interpret the Bible is dangerous; but our agreements are also important.

The next question asks about how God made stars and planets. I believe he did it as Genesis 1 says, he spoke and suddenly they appeared, fully formed. That is a miracle, so write M in the box. Some stars and planets might be forming now by natural processes but I believe the Bible teaches that this is not the way God made the first ones. It is rather like human babies. We know the natural process by which God makes babies today but that does not mean Adam and Eve were made that way. I think the Bible says they and the first planets and stars were all specially, suddenly created.

The next two questions are about how God makes living things. First, how does he make the first really new things, like the first cells, birds, or people? I believe the Bible says these were miracles; M goes in my box. Neither the scientific nor biblical arguments for large scale evolution (creating these things by natural processes) are strong enough to convince me. Besides, if I am right about how old Earth is, there was not time enough for all the different forms of life we see today to develop from single cells by natural processes. I don’t believe God designed life to develop that much by natural processes.

The next question is about how God causes minor changes in living things, the small changes that result in new varieties of the same basic kind of creature you had at first. For example, how did God make African and Indian Elephants different from each other? I agree that God uses natural processes to do that, so put NP in my box . . . and in the other two views, too. We agree that adaptation, small changes in already-existing kinds, happens by natural processes. We can observe it happening, such as when certain bacteria become antibiotic-resistant. (These small changes are part of microevolution but this is not the kind of evolution people argue about. People argue about macroevolution, such as the first birds developing from reptiles.)

Did the universe begin with the Big Bang? If you don't know what the Big Bang theory says, you can see a brief explanation on your handout. Write No in my box. As I said earlier, I believe God spoke the universe into existence, suddenly and more or less like it is today. He did not use billions of years of natural processes, beginning with the Big Bang.

Should we trust radioactive dating when it gives us ages of millions and billions of years for rocks? No. I believe the Bible makes it clear that the universe is much younger than this. I believe radioactive dating can be useful for some relatively recent objects, such as carbon-dating of wood or cloth from ancient Egyptian tombs, but there are serious problems using it on older objects. Conditions in the distant past might have been different in ways that affected how radioactive decay proceeded. I don't have time to explain these problems right now (and some get quite technical) but you can learn more from young-earth creationist books and websites.

Did Noah's flood reshape the earth's surface? Yes. The Bible says the flood waters covered the planet for about a year; water moving over the surface that long and then draining off into ocean basins (as the continents lifted up after the flood) is going to move a lot of sediment and bury huge numbers of creatures. When those sediments solidified into rock after the flood, many of those shells, bones, and so on were preserved as fossils. The important thing about this question is that it explains how we can have layers of water-deposited sedimentary rock that are miles deep and full of fossils, if we only have thousands of years for them to form. It also explains how features like the Grand Canyon, that look like they should take millions of year to form, could have formed quickly as flood waters flowed off the North American continent after the flood, eroding a deep gulley in not-yet-solidified sediment deposited by the flood.

It's time for me to go now. Let me finish by saying that I respect my two friends but believe they are wrong about some important things and that my view does the best job of explaining nature in light of what God says in the Bible. To me, the other two views are too quick to assume we must be misunderstanding the Bible when modern science raises questions about what it means. I think this is a risky approach and unstable in the long term. It is this threat to faith in the Bible that makes this an important issue. See what you think after you hear from them.

It has been fun sharing with you. Thanks for your kind attention.

## Old-Earth Creation View

Hello everyone. My name is [Dr. Ollie Derth?; most folks just call me Ol: Ol Derth]. Your teacher invited me to tell you about old-earth creationism. You have a handout to fill in, right? Let's go through it box by box.

I understand my friend [Jung] already told you how to fill in the first four boxes for my view, that rascal! [Smile] So you already realize that all three of us agree on some basic Christian beliefs. Even though the things we disagree about are important, I don't think anyone is going to heaven or hell based on his view of the age of the earth.

So, let's look at what God is telling us in Genesis. I agree with [Jung] that Genesis is teaching us history; God wants us to know how he created. What we disagree about is the Hebrew word for day in Genesis one. The word is yom (as in the Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement) and it can mean a longer period of time than a normal day—write that in the box. Genesis 2:4 uses it for the entire creation week. [The NIV says, “When (in the yom) the LORD God made the earth and heavens....”] We do the same thing in English when we say, “in Lincoln's day,” meaning the period when he lived. I think Genesis tells us God created in stages labeled the first day, second day, etc., over very long periods of time.

If God created using long periods of time, how long were they? I don't believe God is teaching creation's age in Genesis one; he expects us to study the creation itself to learn that. If God did not mean to teach us about that in the Bible, then it is not dishonoring the Bible if we do not try to find that answer there. Presently, our data show that Earth is about 4.5 billion years old and the universe is about 13.8 billion. So the universe is three times older than our solar system. Write those dates in the boxes: 4.5 billion years for Earth and 13.8 billion years for the universe.

Sometimes people ask me why God would “waste” so much time before creating people. It's a fair question but it assumes that time God spends is “wasted” if it does not make sense to us. I believe God cares a lot less about time than we do. For God, passing billions of years might be no more wasteful than the time it takes to walk across a room for us. This illustration might help: Your teacher spent time preparing the classroom before you arrived this year. That shows love and care for you. If God chose to spend time preparing the universe for us (for example, creating in star cores the elements he used to make Earth and us), that might show his love and care.

If the universe is very old, there was plenty of time for God to use natural processes to make stars and planets and I believe we have strong evidence that this is how he did it. Put NP in the next box.

Now when it comes to how God created the main kinds of living things (the first cells, the first birds, etc.), I agree with [Jung]. The Bible teaches that God used miracles to create life. Some old-earth creationists believe God used natural processes to produce larger changes than [Jung] might accept but they still agree with Jung that there is a limit to what God does with natural processes. God chose to create at least some new life by doing miracles. Put M in the box.

The next box is something else we all agree on: Yes. It is clear that God uses natural processes to make small changes in living things.

Did the universe begin with the Big Bang? Yes. I think the evidence that God did this is very strong. By the way, if God did do it this way, it is amazing. The expansion rate and density of the infant universe had to be just right or we would not be here to talk about it today. This does not prove God was behind it but it is certainly good evidence that he was. We don't have time to talk more about this today but you can learn more by searching online with phrases like, "fine tuning of the Big Bang" or "fine tuning of the universe."

Should we trust radioactive dating? Yes. Like any complicated process, it has to be done carefully and everyone knows that some samples do not produce good results. But we have strong evidence that conditions in the past did not change in a way that affected this method and that these dates are reliable.

Last, did Noah's flood greatly reshape Earth's surface and bury many or most of the fossils? No. Most geologists, including most Christian geologists, disagree strongly with young-earth creationists about this one. For example, if the Earth is young, dinosaurs and humans lived at the same time; both were created on day six. If Noah's flood then buried all sorts of creatures, why don't we ever find dinosaur and human fossils in the same rock layers? And it is not just dinosaurs and humans. We don't find mixing of any creatures—plants or animals—that most scientists now think lived millions of years apart. This is puzzling if the flood buried all or most of them. It seems better to me to explain the rock layers and their fossils as having been deposited in lots of ways (sometimes floods) over millions of years. This does not mean Noah's flood did not happen, just that it is not an effective way to explain rocks and fossils without millions of years of history.

Now, is it possible that [Jung] and other young-earth creationists are correct about those fossils and everyone else wrong? Yes; God could have done it any way he wished.

Thanks for letting me share with you today.

## Evolutionary Creation View

Hello. I am [Dr. Evo Lution?]. I'm happy to introduce you to the evolutionary creation view. You have a sheet to fill in? Good.

The first four boxes are easy: Yes. Just like my friends [Jung and Ol], I believe God created everything; nothing is an accident. It is not true that Christian evolutionists think humans are just smart animals or here by accident; we believe people are created in God's image. Also, I believe the Bible is God's word. Miracles happen; Jesus walked on water and rose from the dead. Just because I disagree with the other views of creation does not mean I don't think the Bible is true.

So what makes my view different from the others? First, I think God is doing a lot more in Genesis 1 than telling us history or science. The ancient people God was addressing were not curious about the same kinds of historical and scientific questions that interest us today. They wanted to know who was in charge of the world, how they fit in, and the purpose of it all. The Genesis account is a carefully written piece, focusing more on the relationship between almighty God and his people than on what happened and when. God created the world from nothing and people in his image but how and when he did it is not the point of the passage. Individual evolutionary creationists have different views about how much the creation story in Genesis reflects what actually happened—how historical it is—but they agree that trying to make Genesis one and two historical or scientific accounts of creation is a mistake; this is not what God's word is teaching here. This might sound strange at first! My point is that evolutionary creationists believe God is telling us true and important things in Genesis. We learn that God is the creator, that nothing is an accident, that humans are special and loved by God, and that we sinned and need to be saved. We might not learn details about how and when God created; that was not God's purpose. Those things did not matter to God's people in the ancient world and he knew modern people could learn them by studying the creation itself, so accepting the Bible as God's word does not mean we have to find geological data there. Similarly, when we talk about "evolution" or the "big bang" we use these only as scientific terms for what happened, not as ideas that stand in opposition to the idea that God was creating the world. Write this in the box: "The main purpose of Genesis 1 is not to teach details of history or science, but to teach vital truths in terms the original audience would understand."

The next two boxes are easy. We agree with the old-earth creationists: 4.5 billion years for Earth and 13.8 billion years for the universe.

The next three boxes are all the same: NP. Natural processes are just a name for the

normal patterns God follows in operating his universe. When science discovers how something in nature works—the natural processes it follows—we have just discovered how God does it, not that God didn't do it. The Bible gives God credit for things we know are natural processes, like rainfall (Jeremiah 14:22). It is not biblical to think that God is only glorified by things science cannot explain, by things we think require miracles. God is also glorified by what science can explain. For example, if God used natural processes (evolution) to make the first birds from reptiles, this shows his power and genius. They did not appear by themselves.

The scientific evidence that God created the amazing creatures we see today by natural processes (evolution) is overwhelming and gets stronger every year. Some of the strongest evidence today is from fossils that show gradual and major changes (such as from dinosaurs to birds) and from DNA (such as broken, inactive genes in humans that are active in other creatures). Ignoring this evidence means failing to use the rational capacities God gave us and to honor the evidence before our eyes. Our ability to reason and evaluate evidence is how we learn things, whether we learn them from reading the Bible or studying creation. If we can't trust overwhelmingly obvious interpretations of creation, then how can we trust our ability to read and interpret the Bible? I think rejecting evolution is dangerous, and in the long run will undermine the authority of Scripture.

I believe God's guidance of evolutionary processes shows his genius and power. It also raises tough questions, such as whether animal death is part of God's good plan for creation, but God often does things in ways we do not understand. The disciples did not understand at first what was happening when Jesus was crucified.

In the last three boxes, we agree with old-earth creationists: Yes, Yes, No.

I think the biggest difference between evolutionary creationists and the other two views is that evolutionary creationists think God usually creates in the same way he sustains and operates creation every moment (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3), by actively using natural processes. We believe this shows his greatness in wonderful and mysterious ways.

It has been a pleasure being with you. Thank you for listening graciously.