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Should Christians Surrender the Origins Issue?

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Tom Krattenmaker of *USA Today* argues that Christians are fighting a losing battle when it comes to defending a biblical worldview in terms of creation. His solution:

A suggestion to creationists: Let science be science, and let religion prevail in the vast areas where science has little or nothing to offer. It's not as though science has an answer for everything of consequence. The purpose and meaning of life, the existence of good and evil and love and hate, the nature of a human soul and what becomes of it at death, the existence and will of the divine — these are questions that belong to ethics, philosophy and, of course, religion.

The “let science be science” and “let religion prevail” elsewhere argument assumes that the question of origins is of scientific, rather than theological importance. This is an unsustainable argument, of course, since every worldview must offer an account of origins and the meaning of the cosmos.

Krattenmaker suggests, in effect, that those who would defend a biblical framework for dating the earth are dragging Christianity into an unnecessary and avoidable credibility crisis. In his words:

No amount of scientific evidence will convince an ardent creationist of the validity of human evolution or that the Earth is billions of years old.

Nevertheless, the question frames a problem with the stance of the anti-science creationists that threatens not only their version of the world's origins, but also the credibility of their religion itself. Because by attempting to marshal empirical evidence in support of their beliefs, they enter the debate on the scientists' terms — terms that cannot possibly work in favor of a literal reading of the Bible. By playing in this arena, haven't the creationists already lost the argument?

His argument sounds like that offered by the late [Stephen Jay Gould](#) of [Harvard University](#), one of evolution's most ardent champions. Gould, known for his own theory of “punctuated equilibrium” in evolutionary development, argued that science and Christianity represented “non-overlapping magisteria” or NOMA. By this, Gould meant that science and religion are not actually dealing in any way with the same objects of knowledge, so there can be no conflict. He described NOMA as “a blessedly simple and entirely conventional resolution” to the battle between evolutionary science and Christian belief.

The problem with NOMA is that it stands on an entirely false premise. Science and Christianity do deal with the same objects of knowledge and areas of interest. Every worldview offers some account of origins and some argument concerning the meaning of life. Christianity offers such an account and argument based on the Bible. Modern naturalistic science also offers such an account and argument, and this account necessarily entails a very different understanding of the meaning of life and the purpose of the cosmos. The problem with NOMA is that modern science and Christianity overlap in concerns *all the time*.

Sorry Mr. Krattenmaker, we can't accept your call to “let science be science” and thus leave the question of the origin and meaning of the cosmos to those with naturalistic commitments. The Bible begins with an account of creation for a very important reason — everything flows from that account. Take that away, either by outright denial or by subtle accommodationism, and the entire biblical witness is undermined.

We discussed this controversy on Tuesday's edition of *The Albert Mohler Program* [[listen here](#)]. My guest was Dr. Kurt Wise, Professor of Science and Theology and Director of the Center for Theology and Science at [The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#). Dr. Wise earned his Ph.D. degree at [Harvard University](#) under the supervision of Stephen Jay Gould. He is cited in the [USA Today](#) article mentioned above, and also in [this article](#) in Monday's edition of *The New York Times*.

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