

PROLOGUE

This is my story. I am a scientist and a Christian and a young-age creationist. I am driven by curiosity about God's works. I wonder about the stars and planets, the mountains and valleys, and the plants and animals that God made. I wonder how they came to be the way they are. I wonder *why* they came to be the way they are. I've spent most of my life studying God's creation and trying to understand it better.

I grew up in a Christian home, and I've been a creationist as long as I can remember. I went to Christian schools from Kindergarten through my college graduation. I even thought about studying theology in graduate school, but science was always my passion. In my graduate work, I studied evolution—not just “microevolution” but the full-blown macroevolution of all organisms. Because I was so interested in the origin of life and the diversity of species, I felt like I needed to really understand evolution. Using computer tools and protein sequences, I studied the purported evolution of the cells from which everything else supposedly evolved. After graduate school, I spent some time working on the rice genome project, and then I joined the Center for Origins Research at Bryan College, where I would develop much of my understanding of creationist biology and especially created kinds.

My background, with its amalgamation of creation studies and evolutionary biology, makes some people extremely uncomfortable.

If you listen to my critics, I'm supposed to suffer from something called "cognitive dissonance," which according to Wikipedia is a "mental discomfort (psychological stress) experienced by a person who simultaneously holds two or more contradictory beliefs." Because I can (and do) articulate and explain evolution like an actual evolutionist, creationists wonder how I can "believe" evolution and still be a creationist. For the same reason, evolutionists can't understand why I would still believe such "nonsense" about God and creation.

To be honest, until people pointed it out to me, I never knew that my way of thinking was so difficult. It just came naturally to me, and I never really thought about *how* I thought. I just did it. Over the past twenty years, I've interacted with a lot of different people with a lot of different views about creation and evolution. I'm happy to report that I'm not the only one who thinks the way I do about these questions. I've discovered lots of like-minded creationists with a good understanding of evolution and a strong commitment to young-age creationism.

I've also discovered that most people are confused (and a little threatened) by the way I think and talk about creation and evolution. I've had to work hard to articulate not just what I think but the *way* I think. To be honest, *what* I think is always changing, mostly because I'm always learning. I could tell you a little about what I think (and I will), but how I got to that point is really more important.

The most important thing, though, is where I'm going next. I've come to see my life as a quest. Life is full of challenges and problems and hard questions. Most of the time, the answers aren't obvious. Occasionally we see glimpses of God's plan after the fact, but often we find ourselves called to trust him without knowing how things are going to turn out. I'm on a journey, but it's not just any journey. I know exactly where I'm going. I'm on my way to a better understanding of God's creation and ultimately God Himself. As I think about this search for understanding, I like to think of it as a quest. It's not simply a journey, where I have a map and know how to get to my goal. It's not an expedition either, where I'm just randomly exploring. "Quest" implies a goal without knowing exactly how to achieve it.

The following chapters will guide you as you explore the quest. We begin with the most basic conflict that every Christian faces: How do I reconcile God's Word with my own experiences? With this dilemma in mind, we will then look at different ways Christians respond and the advantages of the quest. I'll illustrate how the quest has functioned in my own research and how it has shaped my thinking. The final chapters will examine the moral dimensions of the quest and our life together as the body of Christ.

Throughout the book, we'll stop and examine parts of God's creation to remind ourselves of the awe and wonder of the Creator. These pauses come between the chapters, and I've labeled them *Adoremus*, Latin for "let us worship." The name is inspired by listening to "O Come All Ye Faithful" in Latin on my parents' old record player, where the chorus repeats the phrase *venite, adoremus*, "come, let us worship." If you'd prefer to follow the flow of the book, you could skip these worship interludes. If you do, I hope you return and read them once you've finished the chapters. Because if you only approach the quest as a puzzle to solve or a problem to be worked out, you've really missed the point. The quest begins with curiosity inspired by the amazing and beautiful things that God made. We should all stop and remind ourselves regularly of the power and majesty and glory of the Creator we pursue. He alone makes this quest worthwhile.

So this is my quest. My goal is understanding God and his creation. I'll be on this quest my entire life. I probably won't reach my goal this side of the kingdom, but the quest brings me more joy and satisfaction than anything else I could spend my time on. As you read this book, I hope the quest will make sense to you. I hope you'll see how thrilling and wonderful the quest can be. Most importantly, I hope that you'll join me and experience the quest for yourself.