



Reflections on The Big Story Transcript

From the time we are little children, we all love a story, and we never seem to outgrow it. In fact, we not only love stories, we make sense of life through stories. If someone were to ask you, “Tell me about yourself,” what you say will be more like a story than a list of times and places and events.

We also live by bigger stories; scholars call them *metanarratives*. Your family, your church, your country has a story. One could argue that the best historians are really story-tellers. That does not mean they make up the facts, but that they shape the facts in order to make a meaningful story line.

More and more, bible scholars are recognizing that the Bible is a huge meta-narrative. Biblical scholar N.T. Wright calls it “The true story of the whole world”. It is the epic, sweeping, and continuing story of God that stretches from creation to new creation. It tells the grand adventure of redemption in Jesus Christ.

The biblical metanarrative tells that story in a multitude of forms and from a multitude of perspectives. There is theological history, poetry, drama, wisdom, prophecy, gospel, letters, apocalyptic. And it is told by people who are embedded in their own time and place and culture over a period of about a thousand years. But, amazingly, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is recognizably one story.

A large part of the focus of BioLogos is on the very beginning of that biblical story, the first few chapters of Genesis. We are committed to show how widely accepted scientific discoveries about the origins of the world, like the vast age of the universe and the process of evolution, are in fact compatible with God’s revelation in the Bible.

On the BioLogos website you will find evangelical theologians and scientists who offer alternative readings of the early chapters of Genesis that can help us to understand what those original authors actually intended. And they demonstrate that these chapters were not meant to give us a literal historical or scientific description of the creation. They were meant as a counter-story; a counter-story to the creation stories that were around them in ancient near eastern cultures.

In those other ancient near eastern creation stories the Earth was created as a playground for the gods, with humans as their enslaved playthings. The biblical counter-story, the true and inspired revelation of God, tells us that God made all things in an act of love and delight. That the world is God's beautifully ordered temple, and human beings are the image of God, created to rule and care for the world that he made.

Christians today actually live in a situation that is similar to our ancient ancestors in at least one way. Our biblical story now stands as a counter-story to the completely naturalistic story that is built on scientific evidence, but told with no Creator at its center. It is the story of a random, meaningless universe rather than an integrated, meaningful cosmos.

It is a false story, but we cannot simply repeat the biblical story as if today's science of origins were irrelevant. If we remove our story from the realm of scientific understanding we also take it out of the realm of reality and of history, and that is fatal to Christianity. So we need a counter-story that tells the biblical truth about God and humanity and salvation in Jesus Christ, but also includes the scientific truth about God's creation.

I recently ran across an online study guide funded by the Gates Foundation called "Big History." This engrossing, accessible study guide tells the story of history from the Big Bang to the development of human history. And what I found fascinating is that it describes five basic thresholds to growing complexity in this history: the Big Bang, the formation of the stars, the solar system, life on Earth, and, finally, human life.

And each one of these thresholds requires what the study guide calls a "Goldilocks moment"-you know, not too hot not too cold, but just right. These "Goldilocks" moments are the crucial but incredibly narrow, almost impossible, passageways to more complexity in the universe. And the biggest Goldilocks moment of all is that it all happened out of nothing in the first place.

The famous physicist and atheist Fred Hoyle once remarked that in order to make conscious human life possible, "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with the physics, as well as with the chemistry and biology."

It is not hard for Christians to see how this big story with its "Goldilocks moments" can be told as the story of creation that was initiated by God and guided by God. But I want to be clear about this: This

is not a science lecture. I am not saying that I know exactly how God was involved in the whole billion years long process of evolution. Nor am I simply placing God in the gaps of these Goldilocks moments. But my faith, guided by the Bible and reason, tells me that God is the creator and sustainer of this universe.

So, what if we told that grand biblical narrative with the scientific knowledge of the origins of the universe that the ancients did not have? And what if we were to tell it in the poetic and imaginative style of Genesis 1, Job 38, Psalm 104, or Proverbs 8. What would it be like? Let's call it The Big Story.