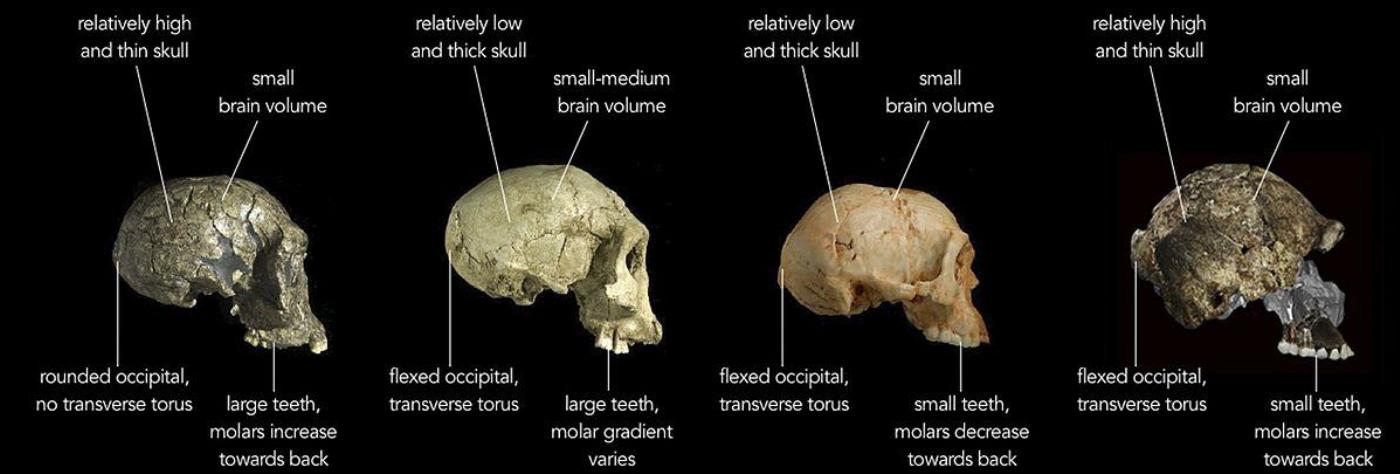


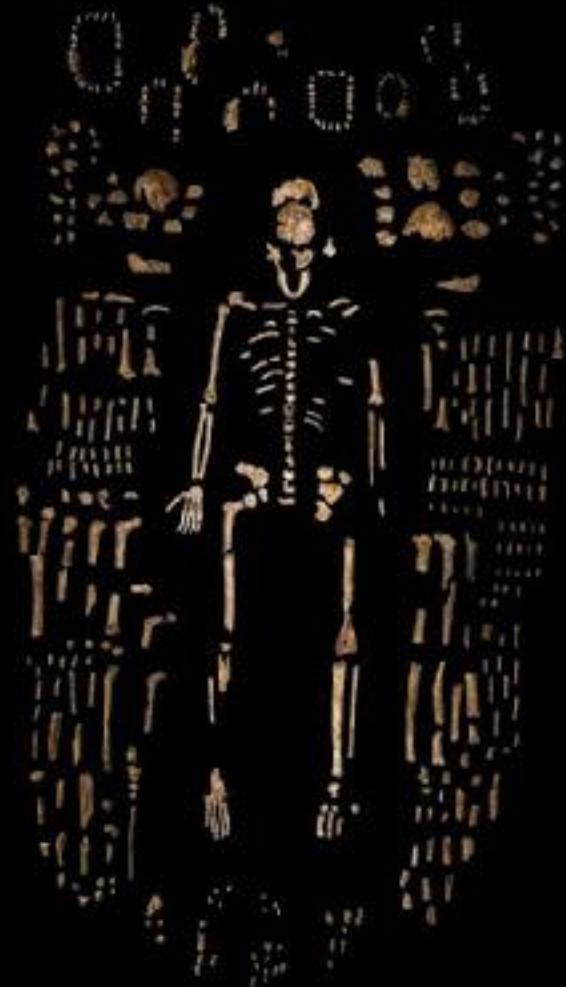
# Approaches to the Book of Genesis and Modern Science

September 27, 2015  
Thom Rowe





*Homo naledi* – 2.5 to 2.8 million years old





“I don’t think that there’s any conflict at all between science today and the Scriptures. I think we have misinterpreted the Scriptures many times and we’ve tried to make the Scriptures say things that they weren’t meant to say, and I think we have made a mistake by thinking the Bible is a scientific book. The Bible is not a book of science. The Bible is a book of Redemption, and of course, I accept the Creation story. I believe that God created man, and whether it came by an evolutionary process and at a certain point He took this person or being and made him a living soul or not, does not change the fact that God did create man... whichever way God did it makes no difference as to what man is and man’s relationship to God.”

- Billy Graham



# *Prolegomena*

1. There are multiple views on the relationship between the Bible/theology and scientific questions of the beginning of the universe and humanity.
2. All views are not equal, on a scientific or a theological basis.
3. “Let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master.” – St. Augustine
4. We are finite creatures who only see dimly the majesty and love of God.
5. Beware of ANYONE who says they have the issues totally figured out, scientifically or theologically.

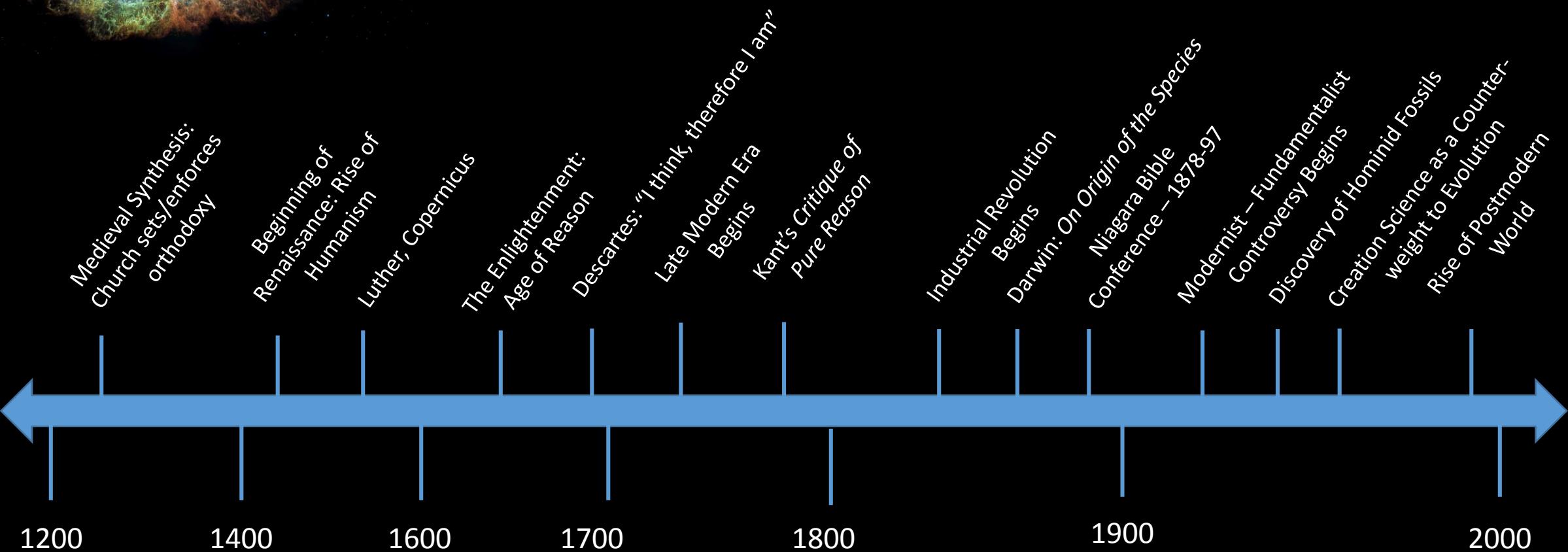


# *The Doctrine of Creation*

1. The self-existent God created *ex nihilo*: Rom. 4:17, Heb 11:3
2. God is not the same as creation: Rev. 4:11
3. God ordered and structured creation for his purposes & glory:  
1 Cor. 1:16-17
4. Creation is continually dependent upon God for its existence  
and value (Providence): Ps. 19:1
5. General Revelation – reveals God through nature and  
conscience, but not a salvific revelation: Ps. 19:1-6
6. Special Revelation – reveals the personhood of Christ and his  
work on the cross, a salvific revelation: Heb. 1:1-2a



# How Did We End Up Here?





# *Definitions*

**E**volution: The scientific view tied to Naturalism that posits all creatures evolved into the current life forms over billions of years in a closed system.

**E**volution: The scientific view that organisms developed over billions of years into our current life forms but takes no position on philosophical or religious questions as being outside the realm of scientific inquiry.



# *Definitions*

**Creation Science (Creationism):** An approach to Genesis and creation that seeks to harmonize “evidence” between the Bible and the larger body of scientific knowledge to demonstrate the veracity of Scripture. In general, the view also holds to the following criteria:

1. A “plain” or “literal” reading of Genesis (six 24-hour periods of creation)
2. A rejection of evolution in favor of the creation of “kinds” of species
3. The geologic idea of “catastrophism” – that the Noahic Flood is responsible for all geological features



# Definitions

Intelligent Design: A viewpoint that argues the existence of complex biological forms and organisms *infer* the creative force of an outside intelligence, which is not typically specified by ID adherents (some though have suggested aliens or God).

- Teleological argument (Thomas Aquinas – 13<sup>th</sup> c. CE): Things are designed and work so intricately that logic demands the work of “an intelligent by whom all natural things are directed to their end.”



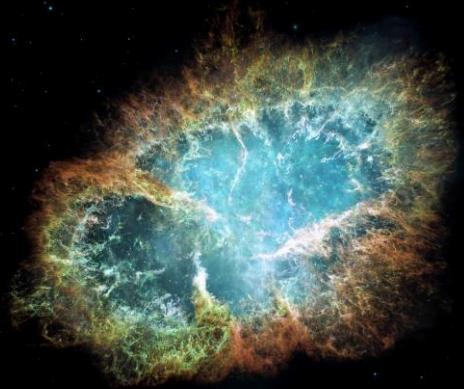
# *Definitions*

Progressive Creation: A viewpoint that sees creation as a long-term process where God creates “kinds” of animals over the course of millions of years. Distinguished from traditional creationism by their disavowal of reading Genesis as a modern science book, progressive creationists allow for evolution on a small scale, but are generally mixed in their acceptance of evolution from species to species.



# *Definitions*

Theistic Evolution: A viewpoint that argues God is immanent and active in creation but uses evolutionary processes in order to develop organisms into the modern species known today. God's activity does not limit the effects of natural selection or cause new life forms to arise directly. Evolution of organisms on a wide scale is accepted (eg., dinosaurs into birds).



# *How Old is the Earth?*

- 4.54B years old (+/- 0.05B)
- Radiometric dating of rocks (lead-uranium isotopes) from 3 sources:
  - Meteorites – formed at the time of planet formation
  - Earth samples – Archean lead ores of galena (uranium decays into lead)
  - Sun – using helioseismic models (amount of helium related to hydrogen)
- A single landmass – Pangea:
  - Common fossils
  - Common geology
  - Plate tectonics (which also causes earthquakes)



# *How Old is the Earth?*

- Science holds to the view called “uniform geology,” the idea that the same processes, although sometimes at different speeds, shaped the landscape
  - Sedimentary rock beds laid down over a long period of time as seas expanded, receded, etc while the rocks themselves were weathered as well
  - Geological features such as the Grand Canyon took millions of years to form, based on accepted radioactive dating techniques



# *How Old is the Earth?*

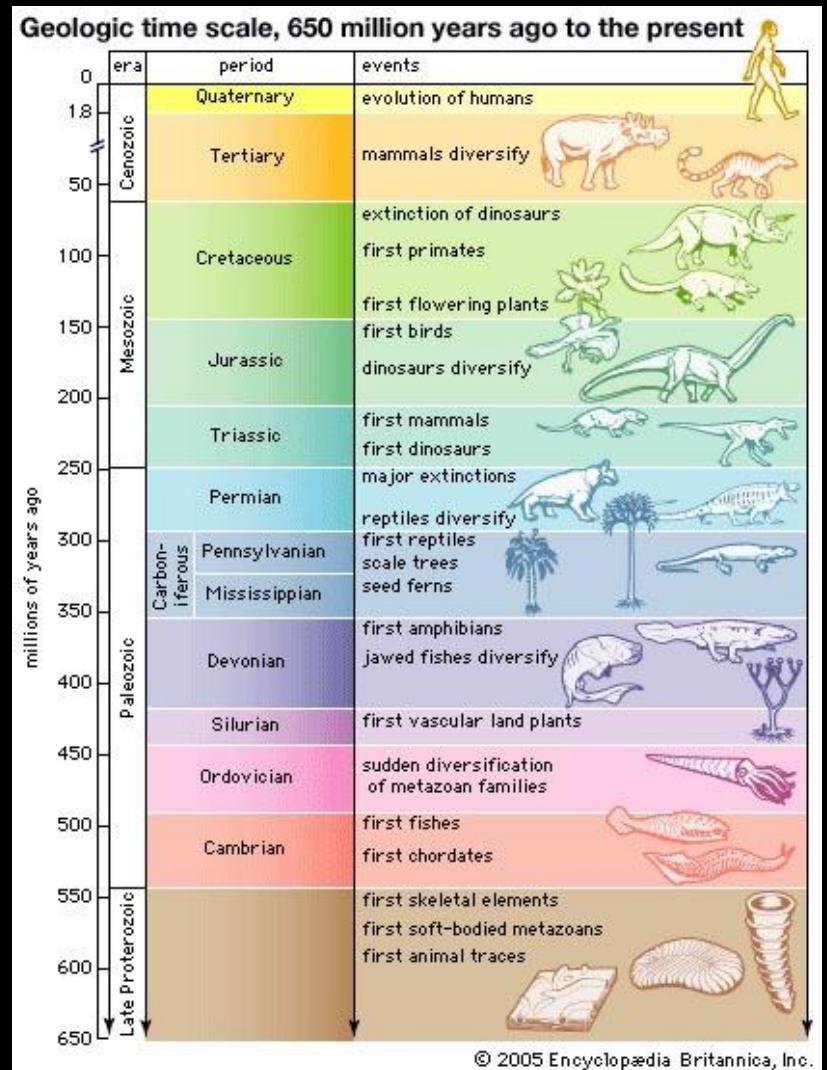
Young Earth Creationists (ICR, Answers in Genesis)

- Calculations of generations from Bible
- Infer date from creation stories of other cultures
- Point to unreliability of multiple modern dating techniques
- The Flood of Noah as a key to interpreting the data, a “hydrothermal transport model”
  - Explains radioactive decay issues
  - Explains variances in differing models of dating
- Mount St. Helens vs Mt. Vesuvius –
  - K-Ar dating technique



# What about Dinosaurs?

- Lived 100 – 250 million years ago
- First mammals and live on through birds
- Wide variety of dinosaurs and coloring just like animals today, even feathers
- Also coincided with the rise of flowering plants
- Extinction caused by meteorite
- Rise of smaller mammals to fill ecological niche





# *What about Dinosaurs?*

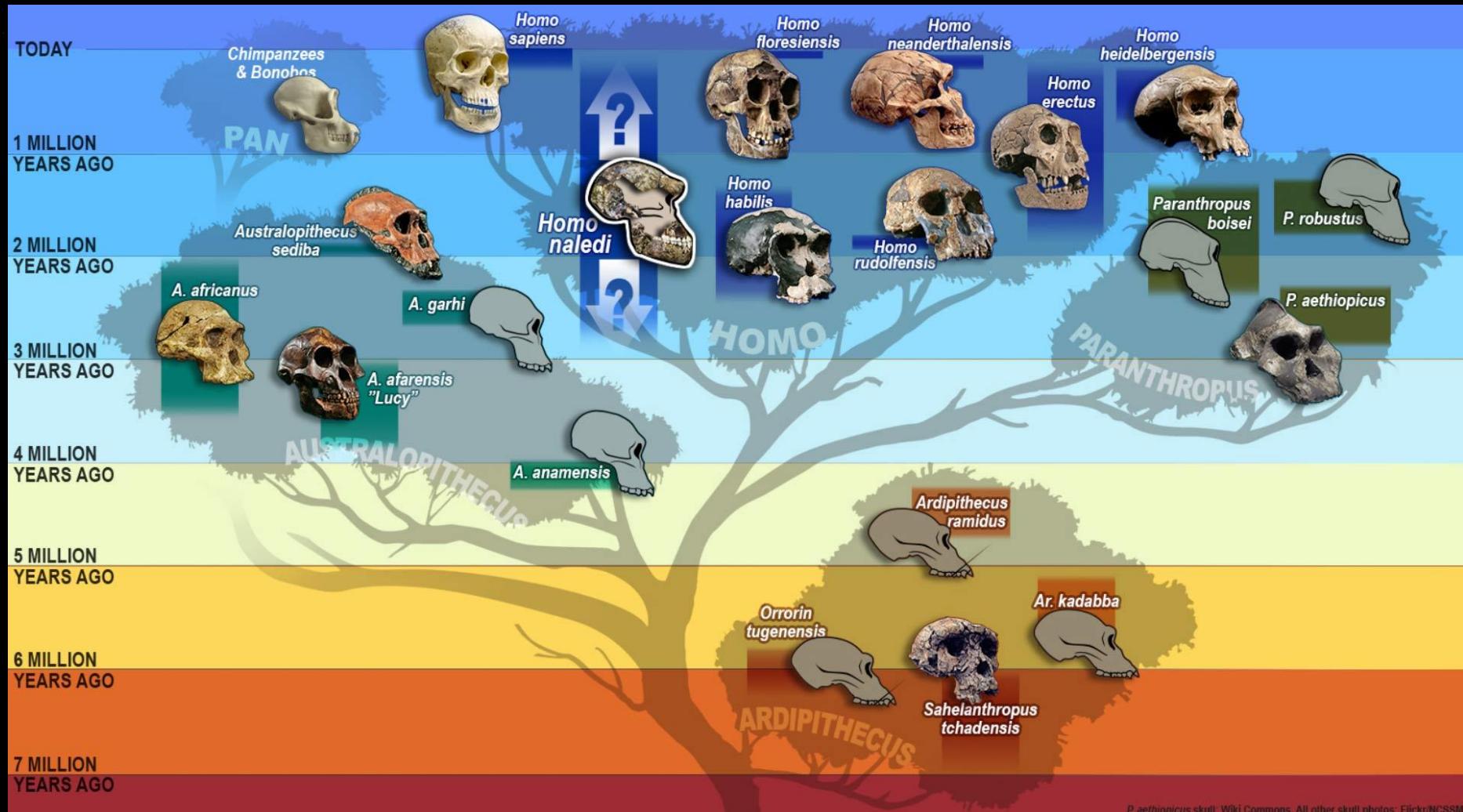
Young Earth Creationists (ICR, Answers in Genesis)

- God creates “kinds” of animals – reptiles
- Humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time
  - Can’t trust dating techniques
  - Tracks
  - Biblical references (“behemoth” in Job)
  - Extra biblical references – dragons, etc
- Dinosaur extinction at the Flood



# How Old is the Human Race?

- What do you mean by “human”?
- *Homo sapiens* – 200,000 years ago

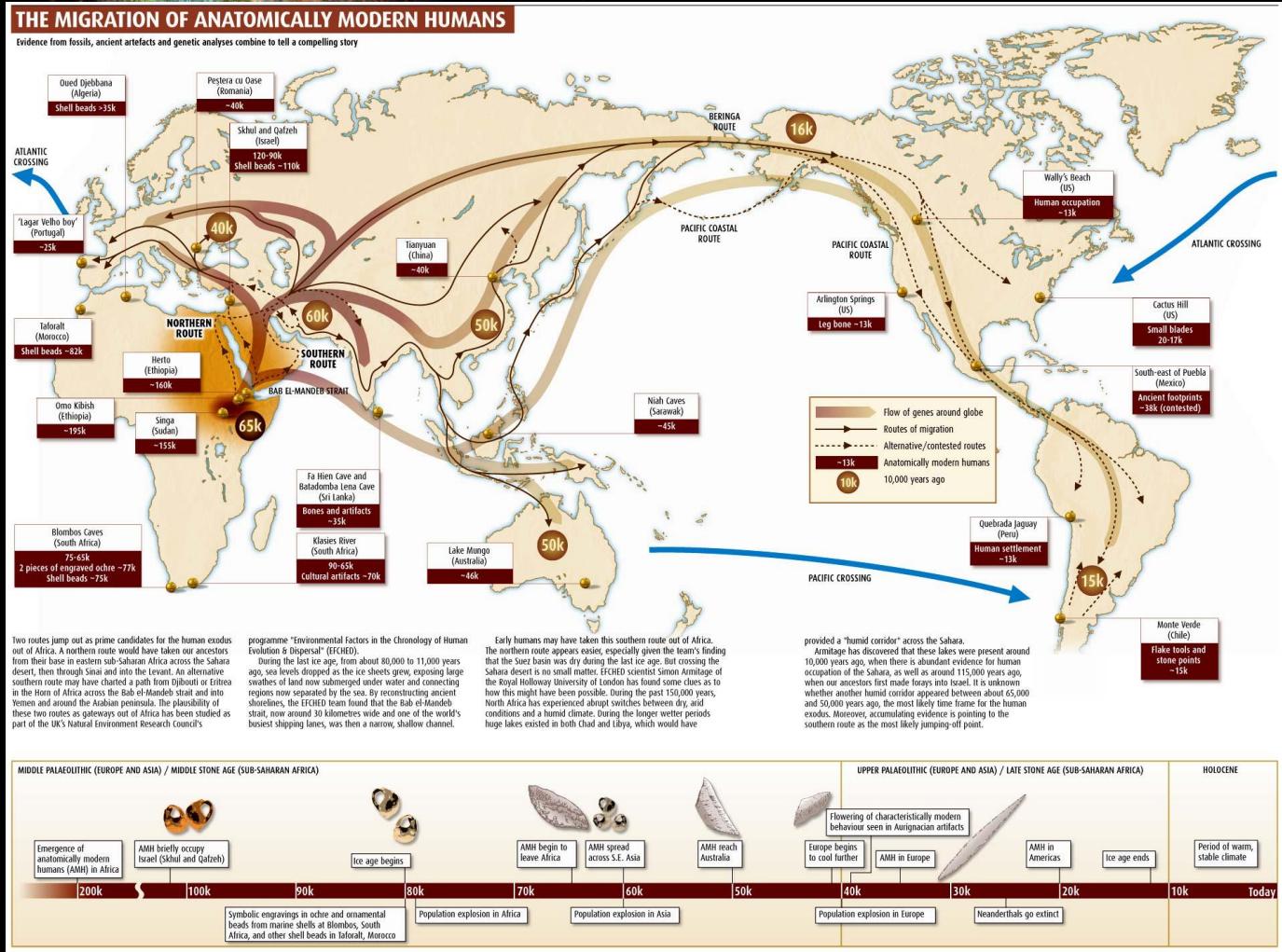




# *How Old is the Human Race?*

- *Homo sapiens* defined by:
  - Bone Structure:
    - Large brain size
    - Specific features of the bones via comparative studies - thumb length
    - Walk upright – spinal cord placement, leg length, etc.
  - Capabilities
    - High usage of stone tools, fire to cook food
    - Debated as to whether religious and communal attributes are unique

# How Old is the Human Race?



- Neolithic settlements: 10 - 12,000 BCE
- Agricultural revolution: 5 – 8,000 BCE
- Bronze Age: 3,500 BCE with Sumer in Mesopotamia
- Egyptian Pyramids: 2,700 BCE
- Can trace genetic markers as humans expanded throughout the world



# *How Old is the Human Race?*

## *Views of Young Earth Creationists*

- What scientists call *Homo sapiens* were created by God (Adam & Eve) – no link to previous forms, apes, or other animals
- Hominid fossils must be interpreted in light of Scriptural teachings on creation rather than on comparative study – any interpretation that does not support an interpretation in line with the Bible has been tainted by “evolutionary bias”
- Other hominids cannot be older than modern humans (b/c radioactive dating is not reliant) and represent other people groups or apes that died out
- The evidence that *Homo sapiens* and *Neanderthals* lived during the same time and interbred demonstrate that “hominids” lived with modern humans



# *Evaluation*

1. Reject Evolution/Naturalism as a worldview non-compatible with Christian faith
2. evolution:
  - Incomplete scientific understanding
  - Will be refined, if not replaced, in the future
  - Not a “band aid” to put over science issues – it brings up other questions:
    - Adam and Eve – historical figures?
    - The Fall & sin
    - What does being created in “the image of God” mean?
    - How should we understand the Genesis account?



# *Evaluation*

## Creationism / ID:

- Pros:
  - Trying to establish a way to speak to 20<sup>th</sup> century world
  - Successfully positioned their viewpoint
  - Are using scientific analysis, in a very limited way
- Theological Issues:
  - Reading a modern scientific viewpoint back into the Bible – *eisegesis*
  - Held more by scientists than theologians
  - “Wooden” view of Scripture and lexical meaning
  - Danger of conflation with General and Specific Revelation



# *Evaluation*

## Creationism / ID:

- Philosophical Issues:
  - Can't prove existence of God – puts Reason over faith
  - Inferring something is not the same as proving something
  - Dependence upon Aristotelian philosophy – arguing backwards
  - Greater focus on culture wars than scholarship
- Scientific Issues:
  - Some of the “scientific evidence” doesn’t hold up under scrutiny
  - No alternative theory to compete with evolution – strategy of “murder by a thousand paper cuts”



# *Evaluation*

## Progressive Creation:

- Pros:
  - Does take into account some of the scientific evidence
  - Doesn't treat Genesis as a modern scientific textbook
  - Wide view with multiple options
  - Evangelical theologians have gravitated towards this view
- Philosophical Issues:
  - Can't insert God as an “x factor” to make everything work
  - Relationship between faith and science in tension – flexible or just a weak argument?



# *Evaluation*

## Progressive Creation:

- Scientific Issues:
  - Need to prove that there are not “bridge” species
- Theological Issues:
  - Opens a Pandora’s box of issues about creation
  - How do we meaningfully interpret Genesis in light of this view?
  - Simple harmonization of science and Genesis but not faithful to each
  - How do we understand the beginning of the human race?



# *Evaluation*

## Theistic Evolution:

- Pros:
  - Does fit with current scientific knowledge
  - Doesn't treat Genesis as a modern scientific textbook
  - New take on an old issue
- Philosophical Issues:
  - Can easily use same argument for *deistic* evolution
  - What happens if/when scientific consensus shifts away from evolution?
  - Are there unreconcilable differences between Evolution and Theism?



# *Evaluation*

## Theistic Evolution:

- Theological Issues:
  - Opens a Pandora's box of issues – Adam/Eve, the Fall
  - How do we meaningfully interpret Genesis in light of this view?
  - Challenges traditional orthodoxy on personal nature of creation - immanence not equal to Providence
  - Are we just shifting science/Reason over faith?



# *A Way Forward*

1. All truth is God's truth – we don't need to be afraid of truth in its many forms (just FYI - not everything that parades as truth really is)
2. We need to have high standards for Christian scholarship in all disciplines
3. Understand the way Academia works – it's a constant discourse
4. We won't know all the answers so expect some intellectual and spiritual dissonance until we get to heaven – that's why we have faith
5. We don't need to harmonize both science and theology all the time – sometimes they will agree, sometimes they will disagree



# *How Do I Talk to Kids?*

1. Doubt is not the enemy of faith
2. Be straightforward - they will have to answer these questions at some point; better you work through it with them
3. Contextualize – kids are looking for simple touch points
4. God is big enough



# *Conclusion*

Psalm 19:1 – 4, 14:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

<sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.