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ORDAINED SERVANT



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ORDAINED SERVANT

Statement Of Purpose

Ordained Servant exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal Ordained Servant will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

Editorial Policy

1. Ordained Servant publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of Ordained Servant or of the Church.

2. Ordained Servant occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ordained Servant does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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We apologize for the difficulty you have probably already experienced in using the cumulative index to *Ordained Servant*, published in the previous issue of this periodical. Evidently the use of compressed type—by which we had hoped to save space—just did not work. If you would like to replace these difficult-to-read pages you can do so in either of two ways: (1) you can download the entire issue in PDF file format at <http://www.opc.org> (then go to *Ordained Servant*) to access the file, download it and print out the pages you want to replace; or (2) you can ask our printer to send you a print out of these pages, to replace what you have, by calling *The New Salem Journal*, at 701-843-7567 and asking for 'Rocky.'



As you will note, we devote this entire issue of *Ordained Servant* to what seems to have become a hot-button issue in North American Presbyterian and Reformed circles. It is our hope that these articles will provide good food for thought, and that they will contribute to a calm and reasoned discussion of this issue. One of the distinguishing marks of the OPC, in our opinion, has been its jealousy to safeguard the right to be heard and to give full consideration to issues before reaching any conclusions. It is our hope that this will characterize present and future discussion of the doctrine of creation, and that this issue will make a worthwhile contribution to that end.



In the next issue of *Ordained Servant* we plan to feature articles—pro and con—on the proposed revision to the *Directory for Worship*. This is a very important matter and perhaps *your* concern ought to be expressed in these pages. If so, please send your contribution to the editor as soon as possible (by Feb. 1, 2000, at the latest)!



“If resurrection takes place ‘in a moment’ (en atoma) ‘in the twinkling of an eye’ (εν ριπε οφθαλμου, 1 Cor. 15:52), why not also creation? If Satan could show to Christ all the kingdoms of the world “in a moment of time” (εν στιγμη χρονου, Lk. 4:5), why could God not create them in a moment? If the various miracles were wrought in a moment, why not creation also? And God could as easily create in a moment the light, the sun, the stars and the planets, as the angels and the soul of Adam (viz., by his sole command and word). Nor could it have been done otherwise because in the very moment that nothing ceased, something began to be: and when light started forth, the darkness vanished.

It is one thing to say that the time in which things were produced was successive: another that the production itself was successive. The mode of production could be momentary, but not the mode of existence in time.” - *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, by Francis Turretin



“If we follow the *analogia Scripturae* principle of hermeneutics enunciated in the Westminster Confession of Faith to the effect that “the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly” (I/ix), then the “ordinary day” view has most to commend it since Moses grounds the commandment regarding seventh-day Sabbath observance in the fact of the divine Exemplar’s activity: “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exod 20:11; see also 31:15-17). - *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, by Robert L. Reymond



Herman Bavick on Creation

Excerpts from

“Our Reasonable Faith”

△

Creatures, because they are creatures, are subject to time and space, though not all of them are this in the same way. Time makes it possible for a thing to continue existing in a succession of moments, for one thing to be after another. Space makes it possible for a thing to spread out to all sides, for one thing to exist next to another. Time and space therefore began to exist at the same time as the creatures, and as their inevitable modes of existence. They did not exist beforehand as empty forms to be filled in by the creatures for when there is nothing there is no time nor space either. They were not made independently, alongside of the creatures, as accompaniments, so to speak, and appended from the outside. Rather they were created in and with the creatures as the forms in which those creatures must necessarily exist as limited, finite creatures. Augustine was right when he said that God did not make the world in time, as if it were created into a previously existing form or condition, but that He made it together with time and time together with the world.¹

△ △

Although we cannot speak on this point with absolute certainty, we may consider it likely that the heaven of heavens, the dwelling place of God, was brought into existence by the first creative act of God reported in Genesis 1:1 and that then the angels also came into existence. For in Job 38:4-7 the Lord answers Job from the whirlwind that no man was present when

¹ 'Our Reasonable Faith,' p. 170

He laid the foundations of the earth and set the cornerstone of it, but that He did complete that work accompanied by the song of the morning stars and the shouting of the sons of God for joy. These sons of God are the angels. The angels therefore were present; at the completion of the earth and the creation of man.

For the rest, very little is told us about the creation of the heaven of heavens and its angels. After having mentioned it briefly in the first verse, the account of Genesis proceeds in the second verse to the broader report of the finishing of the earth. Such a finishing or arrangement was necessary, for, although the earth had already been made, nevertheless it existed for a while in a wild and empty state and was covered with darkness. We do not read that the earth *became* wild, that is, without form. Some have held that it was so, and in taking this position they thought of a judgment that had accrued through the fall of the angels to the already perfected earth. But Genesis 1:2 reports merely that the earth *was* without form, that is, that it existed in a formless or shapeless state, undifferentiated into light and darkness, the several bodies of water, dry land and sea. It was only the works of God, described in Genesis 1:3-10, which put an end to that formlessness of the earth. Just so it is reported that the original earth was void. It lacked the garnishing of plant and tree, and was not yet inhabited by any living being. The works of God, summed up in Genesis 1:11ff., put an end to this emptiness of the earth, for God did not create the earth for it to be void, but in order that men should live in it (Isa. 45:18). Clearly, therefore, the works of God in the arrangement or completion of the void and formless earth are divided into two groups. The

first group of works or acts are introduced by the creation of light. It brings differentiation and distinction into being, form and shape, tone and color. The second group begins with the forming of the bearers of light, sun and moon and stars, and serves further to populate the earth with inhabitants—birds and fishes, and animals and man.²

△ △ △

The whole work of creation—according to the repeated testimony of the Scriptures³—was completed in six days. There has, however, been a good deal of difference of opinion and freedom of speculation about those six days. No one less than Augustine judged that God had made everything perfect and complete at once, and that the six days were not six successive periods of time, but only so many points of vantage from which the rank and order of the creatures might be viewed. On the other hand, there are many who hold that the days of creation are to be regarded as much longer periods of time than twenty-four hour units.

Scripture speaks very definitely of days which are reckoned by the measurement of night and morning and which lie at the basis of the distribution of the days of the week in Israel and its festive calendar. Nevertheless Scripture itself contains data which oblige us to think of these days of Genesis as different from our ordinary units as determined by the revolutions of the earth.

In the first place we cannot be sure whether what is told us in Genesis 1:1-2 precedes the first day or is included within that day. In favor of the first supposition is the fact that according to verse 5 the first day begins with the creation of light and that after the evening and the night it ends on the following morning. But even though one reckons the events of Genesis 1:1-2

with the first day, what one gets from that assumption is a very unusual day which for a while consisted of darkness. And the duration of that darkness which preceded the creation of light is nowhere indicated.

In the second place, the first three days (Gen. 1:3-13) must have been very unlike ours. For our twenty-four hour days are effected by the revolutions of the earth on its axis, and by the correspondingly different relationship to the sun which accompanies the revolutions. But those first three days could not have been constituted in that way. It is true that the distinction between them was marked by the appearance and disappearance of light. But the Book of Genesis itself tells us that sun and moon and stars were not formed until the fourth day.

In the third place, it is certainly possible that the second series of three days were constituted in the usual way. But if we take into account that the fall of the angels and of men and that also the Flood which followed later caused all sorts of changes in the cosmos, and if, in addition, we notice that in every sphere the period of becoming differs remarkably from that of normal growth, then it seems not unlikely that the second series of three days also differed from our days in many respects.

Finally, it deserves consideration that everything which according to Genesis 1 and 2 took place on the sixth day can hardly be crowded into the pale of such a day as we now know the length of days to be. For on that day according to Scripture there occurred the creation of the animals (Gen. 1:24-25), the creation of Adam (Gen. 1:26 and 2:7), the planting of the garden (Gen. 2 :8-14), the giving of the probationary command (Gen. 2:16-17), the leading of the animals to Adam and his naming them (Gen. 2:18-20), and the sleep of Adam and the creation of Eve (Gen. 2:21-23).⁴

² *Op.cit.* p. 171

³ Gen. 1:2; Ex. 20:11 and 31:17.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 172,173

INERRANCY OR DESIGN?

Old Princeton and Evolution

by

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether



In July of 1925, William Jennings Bryan wrote to J. Gresham Machen to see if fundamentalism's best known scholar would testify for the prosecution at the Scopes Trial. By this time Machen had a reputation for not backing down from a fight. In fact, his biggest battles were yet to come, both at Princeton Seminary and in the missions controversy of the 1930s. But in this particular case Machen was remarkably sheepish and declined Bryan's request. His reasons, judiciously stated, had to do with his lack of expertise in Old Testament studies and biology. But what Machen did not communicate to Bryan may have been even more significant than his official reasons for not going to Dayton, Tennessee. Even though he was deeply opposed to liberalism and showed unparalleled chutzpah in combating Presbyterian modernists, Machen believed evolution was a side issue in the controversy dividing liberals and conservatives. In fact, his book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, arguably his most important, makes no mention of evolution or Darwin.

Machen's intention...was to hold on to the view that the origin of man was not simply the product of nature, but instead involved the direct intervention of God.

This is not to say, however, that Machen was oblivious to questions about evolutionary theory and its implications for the Christian doctrine of creation or interpreting the first chapters of Genesis. In addition to the invitation from Bryan, Machen received many letters containing questions about

whether evolution and Christianity could be harmonized. Still, he did not write about the subject for publication until the very end of his life when in the series of radio talks that made up the book, *The Christian View of Man*, he somewhat clumsily argued, on the basis of parallels between the first and last Adams, that the creation of man was supernatural in ways similar to the virgin birth of Christ. He wrote, "if there was an entrance of the immediate power of God in connection with the origin of the human life of Jesus, why may there not have been also an entrance of the immediate power of God in the case of the first man who ever appeared upon the earth?" (140). Machen's intention here was to hold on to the view that the origin of man was not simply the product of nature, but instead involved the direct intervention of God. Interestingly, he did not go directly to Genesis 1 or 2 for conclusive proof, an omission suggesting that in his mind the Genesis narrative did not resolve such questions.

Aside from this one stab at the issue of evolution, Machen invariably replied to inquirers by referring them to the teaching of his mentor, Benjamin B. Warfield, longtime professor of theology at Princeton Seminary. Even in the quotation above, Machen was following Warfield's well-worn distinction between God's creative and providential acts.

In the former, God either creates out of nothing or intervenes into the created order to do something new and supernaturally miraculous. In cases of providence, according to Warfield, God still orders all things but does so through secondary means. This distinction was pivotal to the Princetonian's effort to accommodate evolutionary theory. He did so because, as someone reared in rural Kentucky with experience in horse breeding, he had first hand knowledge of what had led Darwin to hypothesize about the evolution of species. At one point in his life, Warfield admitted that he was an evolutionist of the "purest water." But as a Christian, he also knew that reconciling evolution and Christianity was not an easy affair.

And that is why Warfield looked to the distinction between creation and providence. He believed that God's original creation was supernatural. But he also believed it was theoretically possible for the variety of species to have evolved by God's providence, from an originally created substance. The thing that made the origin of man miraculous, according to Warfield, was the direct intervention of God to impart a soul to Adam. Thus, man was not simply a continuation of the evolutionary process. In fact, what made man unique from all other creatures was the image of God implanted in him, which was the direct and creative act of God. Warfield, then, was a kind of theistic evolutionist. God controlled all aspects of creation and the origin of man, but he did so both through acts of creation and works of providence, with evolution being the mechanism of God's providential control.

This was the view that Machen learned while a student at Princeton, and the one he

recommended to those who asked him questions about the matter. But it was by no means the only view taught at Old Princeton. In fact, anyone who knows something about the history of the relations between science and theology in the United States, also knows that Machen's and Warfield's predecessor at the seminary, Charles Hodge, wrote a book, often quoted as much as it is ridiculed, under the title *What is Darwinism?* Though his argument was subtler than his answer to the book's title, Hodge's response—Darwinism is atheism—has been regularly cited as a prime example of conservative Protestant hostility to scientific advance.

Hodge and Warfield agreed on the main premise that the only way evolution could be harmonized with Christianity was to put God firmly in control of the process.

The issue for Hodge was design in nature. He believed that Darwin's notion of natural selection removed God entirely from the creation and development of the natural world and substituted an impersonal or brute force. That is why he thought Darwinism the equivalent of atheism. It wasn't that Hodge disagreed with some of Darwin's observations about the natural world or even that God created each and every species by divine fiat. Instead, Hodge's bottom line was that Darwinism, as he understood it, removed God altogether by making nature the only causal factor in scientific explanation. And without God, creation lacked purpose, order and design.

Hodge's understanding helps to explain why Warfield strove to accommodate Darwinism in the way he did. On the surface it might look as if both men are far apart, the older saying evolution was atheism, the younger baptizing it with providence. But in fact Hodge and Warfield agreed on the main premise that the only way evolution could be harmonized with Christianity was to put

God firmly in control of the process. Hodge reacted against Darwin's formulation of natural selection, and on this point Warfield agreed. Darwin's views were atheistic. But a conception of evolution that affirmed God's superintendence through providence was different from Darwin's views. And that is why Warfield took the position he did. He was by no means naive; he did not think that most scientists were theists, nor was he unaware of the anti-Christian uses to which evolution was being put. His point was only to say that a Christian understanding of the process made room for a theistic account of biological evolution. Machen merely continued in the tradition, denying atheistic explanations, while affirming Warfield's view.

Warfield even affirmed the literal and historic creation of Eve from the rib of Adam. He was not trying to circumvent the difficult passages of Scripture.

What is especially interesting to note is that all of these Princeton divines affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture while debating the merits of evolution. Warfield's position is probably the most remarkable since his formulation of inerrancy was one of the most profound articulations of the Westminster Confession's doctrine of Scripture. And yet, given his understanding of biblical authority and infallibility, he, like Hodge before him, did not regard evolution as a threat to the truthfulness of specific portions of the Bible, especially Genesis 1-3. Warfield even affirmed the literal and historic creation of Eve from the rib of Adam. He was not trying to circumvent the difficult passages of Scripture. Instead, the issue for Princeton was the general one of God's authority over and superintendence of all things. For them, evolution raised questions about design in nature, not the truthfulness of the Bible.

For this reason the Old Princeton position on evolution fits right in with current

debates among scientists. Rather than discrediting scientific theories on the basis of biblical exegesis, some Christian as well as non-Christian scientists are arguing forcefully, a la Hodge, Warfield, and Machen, that notions like chance and necessity are insufficient on scientific grounds to account for the world as we know it. Instead, they contend that the only adequate account of the created order, given its sheer scope and complexity, is intelligent design. Indeed, the debate over design is one of the most fiercely contested in the biological community. Chris-

tians interested in science should well take note of these discussions. To be sure, considerations of design in nature will not resolve questions about how to interpret the first chapters of Genesis, prove

the existence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or substantiate the ancient Hebrew cosmology which Moses assumed. But they offer a better opportunity for credibly engaging the scientific community and meaningfully defending the truth of Christianity than the one now promoted by scientific creationists.

D. G. Hart and John Muether are coauthors of *Fighting the Good Fight, A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. Both are OPC ruling elders — Mr. Hart at Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA and Mr. Muether in Lake Sherwood OPC, in Orlando, FL.



THE FRAMEWORK INTERPRETATION

An Exegetical Summary

By

Lee Irons

Genesis 1:1-2:3 presents us with the picture of God's performing His creative work in the space of six days marked off in order by the rhythmic cadence of the six-fold evening-morning refrain. The framework interpretation is the view that this picture functions as a figurative framework in which the eight divine fiat's are narrated in a non-sequential or topical order. The days are ordinary solar days, but taken as a whole, the total picture of the divine work week is figurative. Although the temporal framework has a non-literal meaning, the events narrated within the days are real historical events of divine creative activity. What is the exegetical support for such a view?¹

The First Three Days

We begin by observing that on the first day of creation God created daylight and the alternating cycle of day and night. The divine naming of this phenomenon "day" (Gen. 1:5) establishes its permanent meaning and significance both during and beyond the creation period. On the very first day of creation, and from that moment on – until the sun is replaced by the immediate light of the divine radiance in the eschatological new creation (Rev. 22:5) – the created reality "day" has existed. Nothing in the text leads us to hypothesize that the light of the first three days was some undefined supernatural illumination different from what obtained after the creation of the sun on day four. Arguably, the use of the terms "day," "evening,"

and "morning," which presuppose ordinary solar processes, dictate that the first three days are in fact solar days.²

But what about the fourth day itself? Does not the fact that the luminaries were created later, four days after the creation of day and night, prove that the first three days were non-solar? That is one possible interpretation of the fourth day, although the difficulties raised above would still remain (e.g., why did God name these allegedly sunless days "days," complete with sunset and sunrise?).

Another explanation, which we believe to be more plausible, is that we have here an example of temporal recapitulation. Oswald T. Allis explains this feature of Hebrew narrative in his defense of Scripture against the higher critics. "The sequence in which events are recorded may not be strictly chronological... We often find in describing an event, the Biblical writer first makes a brief and comprehensive statement and then follows it with more or less elaborate details."³ Taking our cue from Allis, it is possible that when Moses comes to the fourth day of creation, he returns to events that had already been narrated on day one to describe them in greater detail. Day one narrates the creation of light and its basic physical result – the establishment of the day/night cycle. Day four returns to the same event to narrate the divine creation of the solar mechanism that stands behind

1 For more on the framework interpretation, see Mark Futato, "Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3," *WTJ* 60.1 (Spring 1998) 1-21; Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, "The Framework Interpretation," in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the "Days" of Creation*, ed. by David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, forthcoming); Meredith G. Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained," *WTJ* 20.2 (May 1958) 146-57; *ibid.*, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48.1 (April 1996) 2-15.

2 Long before modern geology and astrophysics, Augustine concluded, on the basis of this argument, that the days of creation were "beyond the experience and knowledge of us mortal earthbound men." Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 41 in *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. J. Quasten, et al (New York: Newman Press, 1982), pp. 134f. 3 O. T. Allis, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Critics* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), pp. 97, 82. Allis cites the placement of man in the garden in Gen. 2:15 as a clear example of temporal recapitulation, for that event had already been narrated in verse 8. Cp. E. J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (P&R, 1964), pp. 73f.

the results of day one as their physical cause. This interpretation would explain why the first three days seem so ordinary, without so much as a hint that they existed apart from the sun.⁴

The Two Triads

Confirming the plausibility of this approach is the presence of similar parallels between days two and five, and days three and six. Just as days one and four are very closely related (dealing with light and luminaries), the other remaining days also reveal strong parallelisms. Day two narrates the creation of the firmament, which divides the waters above the firmament (the clouds of the sky) from the waters below (the seas). Day five is thematically linked to the sky/seas of day two in an unmistakable manner: on the fifth day, God creates the denizens of the seas and of the sky. Likewise, on day three, God forms the dry land – which will be inhabited by the living creatures of day six – and the vegetation. To what creature of day six does the vegetation correspond? Man. The linking of vegetation and man anticipates the close connection in Gen. 2 between man and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which will function as the probationary element of the covenant of works. Most modern commentators recognize the validity of this two-triad structure.⁵

Differences exist on how to classify the two triads, but Meredith G. Kline's analysis is suggestive: the first triad (days 1-3) narrate the establishment of the creation kingdoms, and the second triad (days 4-6), the production of the creature kings. Furthermore this structure is not without theological significance, for all the created realms and regents of the six days are subordinate vassals of God who takes His royal Sabbath rest as the Creator King on the seventh day. Thus the seventh day marks the climax of the creation week.⁶

CREATION KINGDOMS	CREATURE KINGS
Day 1. Light	Day 4. Luminaries
Day 2. Sky Seas	Day 5. Sea Creatures Winged Creatures
Day 3. Dry land Vegetation	DAY 6. Land Animals Man
THE CREATOR KING	
Day 7. Sabbath	

This deliberate two-triad structure, or literary framework, suggests that the several creative works of God have been arranged by Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in their particular order for theological and literary, rather than sequential, reasons. For this reason we believe the days of the creation week are a figurative framework providing the narrative structure for God's historical creative works.

“Because It Had Not Rained” (Gen. 2:5)

Although the above considerations make the framework interpretation a plausible understanding of the days of creation, we recognize that we have not yet demonstrated the impossibility of a sequential understanding of the creation days. One might still argue that day four need not be taken as a recapitulation of day one, proposing instead that God could have sustained day and night for the first three days by supernatural means prior to the creation of the sun, moon and stars. But Gen. 2:5 rules out such an explanation and further strengthens the link between days one and four in a figurative framework.

Gen. 2:5a states that “no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted,” and verse 5b provides a very logical and natural explanation for this situation: “for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground” (NASB). Then, in verses 6-7, we are told how God dealt with these exigencies. In verse 6, the absence of rain is overcome by the divine provision of a rain cloud (“a rain cloud began to arise from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground”);

4 The framework interpretation thus rejects the attempt of the day-age theorists to take yom (“day”) in Gen. 1 as denoting a finite but extended period of time, since Gen. 1:5 clearly defines the days as ordinary solar days.

5 E.g., Cassuto, Sarna, Wenham, and many others.

6 Kline, “Space and Time,” p. 6.

and in verse 7, the absence of a cultivator is overcome by the creation of man.⁷

Notice that Moses offers his audience (ca. 1400 BC, long after the creation period) a perfectly natural explanation for the absence of vegetation. The Israelites would have been familiar with the idea that some form of water supply is necessary for plant growth – whether God-sent rain or man-made irrigation. So when Moses states that God didn't create vegetation until He had established the natural means of sustaining that vegetation, i.e., the rain cloud (verse 6), he is assuming that the Israelites would recognize the logic of this situation based on their own experience. The very fact that Moses would venture to give such an explanation indicates the presence of an unargued presupposition, namely, that the mode of providence in operation during the creation period and that is currently in operation (and which Moses' audience would have recognized) are the same. Since the mere giving of a natural explanation presupposes providential continuity between the creation period and the post-creation world, we may infer a general principle, applicable beyond the case of vegetation, that “God ordered the sequence of creation acts so that the continuance and development of the earth and its creatures could proceed by natural means.”⁸ In other words, during the creation period, God did not rely on supernatural means to preserve and sustain His creatures then once they were created.

With this principle in hand, we now return to the problem of daylight, and evenings and mornings, prior to the sun. Although the sequential view attempts to explain this problem by hypothesizing that God sustained these natural phenomena by some non-ordinary means for the first three days, this speculation of human reason is contradicted by the disclosure of divine revelation

that God employed ordinary means during the creation period to sustain His creatures. Thus, we are cast back upon our original suggestion that the fourth day is an instance of temporal recapitulation, narrating the creation of the normal physical mechanism God established to sustain the daylight/night phenomenon throughout the creation period and beyond. Gen. 2:5 necessitates a non-sequential interpretation of the creation account, and non-sequentialism in turn demonstrates that the week of days comprises a figurative framework.

The Seventh Day

The final exegetical observation that ultimately clinches the case is the unending nature of the seventh day. “On the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:2). The seventh day is unique in that it alone lacks the concluding evening-morning formula, suggesting that it is not finite but eternal. Further cementing this impression, the author of Hebrews equates the seventh day of creation with God's eternal rest (“My rest”) when he writes: “... although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works,' and again in this passage, 'They shall not enter My rest'” (Heb. 3:4-5). Hebrews interprets Ps. 95:11 in light of Gen. 2:2. Although the works were finished from the creation of the world, that is, although God's own rest has been a reality ever since the conclusion of the sixth day of creation, yet it is incumbent on the covenant community that they not passively assume that their participation in God's rest is a *fait accompli*. Rather, they must “be diligent to enter that rest” by mixing the gospel message with faith (Heb. 4:1-2, 11).

God's rest is an eternal, ongoing reality, to which the covenant community of all ages is called to enter. It began on the seventh day of creation and so, according to the terms of the covenant of works, Adam was called to enter that rest as signified by the weekly observance of the Sabbath after the divine pattern (Gen. 2:3). The eternal

⁷ Futato writes: “The ... problem with its two-fold reason will be given a two-fold solution” (p. 5). Due to space constraints, I must refer the reader to Futato's article for a defense of the translation “rain cloud.” The Hebrew word mistranslated “mist” (KJV, NASB) occurs only one other time in the Bible, where it is translated “cloud” in the LXX (Job 36:27).

⁸ Kline, “*Space and Time*,” p. 13.

divine rest continued after the fall, and so the offer was reissued in the covenant of grace on the basis of faith, but the wilderness generation failed to enter because of unbelief (Heb. 3:18-19). The divine rest continues in the new covenant administration of the covenant of grace, for the church is called to enter it “today” by responding in faith to the gospel message (Heb. 3:13; 4:7-9). Evidently, God’s seventh-day rest did not end when the sun rose on the first day of the week! It continues even “today” and will continue for eternity, when the elect, who by sovereign effectual calling had been granted rest-entering saving faith, are ushered into the eternal Sabbath rest of God at the blessed appearing of our glorious rest-giver, the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 5:29; Matt. 11:28; 2 Thes. 1:7; Heb. 4:8-9).⁹

If the seventh day of creation is not a literal, finite day measured by the sun-earth relationship which defines our experience of time, it must belong to another temporal arena. The divine Sabbath rest must not be viewed from the earthly point of view, as if Gen. 2:2 were merely telling us that creative activity ceased on earth, though that is certainly true. No, in Gen. 2:2 the veil is parted that we might behold a heavenly scene in the invisible world above—God’s royal enthronement in the heavenly sanctuary (Ps. 132:7-8, 13-14; Isa. 6:1). Thus, as Kline writes, “It is heaven time, not earth time, not time measured by astronomical signs.”¹⁰

And if the seventh day marks the passing of heaven time, then the whole picture of God’s performing His creative work within a “week,” must be heavenly, and thus figurative, as well. The two-triad framework underscores the theological import of the days, marked off by the six-fold evening-morning refrain and brought to their climactic zenith in the seventh day of rest, as forming a grand picture of God’s creating with a

sabbatical teleology in view. The six days of creation have no independent, earthly meaning apart from the concluding capstone of the seventh day which completes the sabbatical picture and gives it meaning. Thus, to arbitrarily sever the seventh day from the preceding six by asserting that the seventh day is heavenly, while the six days are earthly, is to sever the head from the body, leaving a truncated torso of six days emptied of eschatological significance.

The fourth commandment has been appealed to by critics of the framework interpretation as proof that the creation days are literal (Ex. 20:11). However, this argument presses the relationship between God’s work-rest pattern and man’s too far, as if the two are identical rather than analogical. The weekly cycle of work and rest appointed for man may still be modeled on God’s work week of creation even if the divine archetype is calibrated according to heaven time.

Evolution Disclaimer

One final issue. What do proponents of the framework interpretation teach concerning evolution? Before answering this question, it should be pointed out that the framework interpretation itself is limited to the exegetical question of whether the picture of God’s performing His creative work in a week of days is literal or figurative. So evolution is logically a separate issue. However, in today’s climate of debate, it is best to be clear on this point to avoid misunderstanding.

Kline states explicitly that he understands Gen. 2:7 to exclude an evolutionary scenario for the origin of man’s body, since that text makes clear that the same act of divine inbreathing that constituted Adam in his specific identity as the image of God, also constituted him a living creature. Divine revelation therefore rules out the possibility that God impressed the divine image on a pre-existing biological organism.¹¹

With regard to the other (non-human) living creatures, I believe that Gen. 1 teaches that God

⁹ John Murray agrees: “There is the strongest presumption in favour of the interpretation that this seventh day is not one that terminated at a certain point in history, but that the whole period of time subsequent to the end of the sixth day is the sabbath of rest alluded to in Genesis 2:2.” *Principles of Conduct* (Eerdmans, 1957), p. 30.

¹⁰ “Space and Time,” p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15, n47.

created all the various plant and animal “kinds” by direct acts of supernatural creation, apart from any processes of biological change or ancestry, allowing only for microevolutionary processes of differentiation within the basic “kinds.” (Most scholars recognize that the Hebrew word “kind” [min] has a broader range than the modern scientific term “species.”)

But many critics of the framework interpretation are concerned that, though the current defenders of the view do not espouse evolution, a figurative approach could eventually lead down the slippery slope to macroevolution. But this fear would only be justified if the figurative view were adopted in spite of the text, out of the desire to achieve harmony with science. While God's revelation in nature and God's revelation in Scripture can never be in conflict since God is the author of both, God's revelation in Scripture has presuppositional priority over natural revelation. Thus, if there is an apparent conflict, the only role that natural revelation can (and should) play in the interpretive process is to serve as a warning flag suggesting that our interpretation of Scripture may need to be reexamined.¹² We reject as invalid

¹² Due to the noetic effects of sin, it is equally possible that the interpretation of natural revelation is what needs to be modified in light of the teaching of Scripture.

any interpretation of Scripture which achieves harmony with natural revelation at the price of sound exegesis. All Biblical interpretation must conform to the analogy of Scripture, which is the ultimate touchstone of exegetical validity. These hermeneutical presuppositions flow from sound Reformed principles, and ensure a correct handling of God's authoritative self-revelation in Scripture.

Conclusion

The framework interpretation agrees with the 24-hour view that at the literal level Gen. 1 speaks of ordinary solar days. In fact it is even more consistently literal since it insists on this meaning even for the first three days. What sets the framework interpretation apart is its claim that the total picture of the creation week is figurative. The creation history is figuratively presented as an ordinary week in which the divine craftsman goes about His creative toil for six days and finally rests from and in His completed work on the seventh. To insist on taking this picture literally is to miss the profound theological point – that the creation is not an end in itself but was created with the built-in eschatological goal of entering the eternal Sabbath rest of God Himself in incorruptible glory.

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“IN THE SPACE OF SIX DAYS”

by

Rev. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D.

The great reformer John Calvin asserted that “God himself took the space of six days” to create the world (*Genesis*, at 1:5). Our church's Confession agrees, declaring that God created the world “in the space of six days” (WCF 4:1). But recently this clear temporal affirmation based on the opening narrative of God's Word has been radically reinterpreted by some reformed theologians. Was Calvin correct? The divines? Did they “accurately handle” the word of God? Or were they naive children of their times?

In this article I will introduce several compelling reasons for interpreting the days of Genesis 1 in a straightforward manner that demands both their chronological succession and 24-hour duration. Then I will briefly consider common objections to Six Day Creationist exegesis.

The Argument for Literal, Chronological Days

1. Argument from Primary Meaning. The preponderant usage of the word “day” (Heb. *yom*) in the OT is of a normal diurnal period. The overwhelming majority of its 2,304 appearances in the OT clearly refer either to a normal, full day-and-night cycle, or to the lighted portion of that cycle. In fact, on Day 1 God himself “called” the light “day” (Gen 1:5), establishing the temporal significance of the term in the creation week. As Berkhof declares in defending a six day creation: “In its primary meaning the word *yom* denotes a natural day; and it is a good rule in exegesis, not to depart from the primary meaning of a word, unless this is required by the context” (*Systematic Theology*, 154).

2. Argument from Explicit Qualification. So that we not miss his point, Moses relentlessly qualifies each of the six creation days by “evening and morning.” Outside of Genesis 1 the words “evening” and “morning” appear in statements thirty-two times in the OT, presenting the two parts defining a normal day (e.g., Ex 16:13; 18:13; 27:21). Robert L. Dabney observed in defending a six day creation: “The sacred writer seems to shut us up to the literal interpretation by describing the days as comprised of its natural parts, morning and evening” (*Systematic Theology*, 255).

3. Argument from Numerical Prefix. Genesis 1 attaches a numeral to each of the creation days: first, second, third, etc. Moses affixes numerical adjectives to *yom* 119 times in his writings. These always signify literal days, as in circumcision on the “eighth day” (Lev 12:3; cp. Nu 33:38). The same holds true for the 357 times numerical adjectives qualify *yom* outside the Pentateuch.

(Hos 6:2 is no counter example. It either refers to the certainty of Israel's national resurrection, using the literal time period at which a body begins to decompose [Jn 11:39] to underscore their hope. Or it may be alluding to Christ's resurrection on the third day as Israel's hope [1 Cor 15:4].) As Gerhard Hasel observes: “This triple interlocking connection of singular usage, joined by a numeral, and the temporal definition of ‘evening and morning,’ keeps the creation ‘day’ the same throughout the creation account. It also reveals that time is conceived as linear and events occur within it successively. To depart from the numerical, consecutive linkage and the ‘evening-morning’ boundaries in such direct language would mean to take

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extreme liberty with the plain and direct meaning of the Hebrew language” (“The ‘Days’ of Creation,” *Origins* 21:1 [1984] 26).

4. *Argument from Numbered Series.* In a related though slightly different observation, we note that when yom appears in numbered series it always specifies natural days (e.g., Ex 12:15-16; 24:16; Lev 23:39; Nu 7:12-36; 29:17ff). Genesis 1 has a series of consecutively numbered days for a reason: to indicate sequentially flowing calendrical days. As E.J. Young observes over against the Framework view: Derek Kidner agrees: “The march of the days is too majestic a progress to carry no implication of ordered sequence; it also seems over-subtle to adopt a view of the passage which discounts one of the primary impressions it makes on the ordinary reader” (Genesis, 54-55). Wayne Grudem concurs: “The implication of chronological sequence in the narrative is almost inescapable” (*Systematic Theology*, 303).

5. *Argument from Coherent Usage.* The word yom in Genesis 1 defines Days 4-6—after God creates the sun—expressly for marking off days (Gen 1:14, 18). Interestingly, Moses emphasizes Day 4 by allocating the second greatest number of words to describe it. Surely these last three days of creation are normal days. Yet nothing in the text suggests a change of temporal function for yom from the first three days: they are measured by the same temporal designator (yom), along with the same qualifiers (numerical adjectives and “evening and morning”). Should not Days 1-3 demarcate normal days also?

6. *Argument from Divine Exemplar.* The Scripture specifically patterns man's work week after

God's own original creation week (Ex 20:9-11; 31:17). And as stated there, such is not for purposes of analogy, but imitation. Besides, to what could the creation days be analogous? God dwells in timeless eternity (Isa 57:15) and does not exist under temporal constraints (2 Pe 3:8). Irons states that: “God has not chosen to reveal that information” (Irons, “*The Framework Interpretation Explained and Defended*,” [1998], 66). But “then the analogy is useless” (Joseph Pipa, *Did God Create in Six Days?*, 172). Nor may we suggest that the days are anthropomorphic days, for anthropomorphic language “can be applied to God

alone and cannot properly be used of the six days” (Young, *Genesis One*, 58).

To make Genesis 1 a mere literary framework inverts reality: Man's week becomes a pattern for God's! As Young, following G. C. Aalders, remarks: “Man is to ‘remember’ the Sabbath day, for God has instituted it...The

human week derives validity and significance from the creative week. The fourth commandment constitutes a decisive argument against any non-chronological scheme of the six days of Genesis one” (*Genesis One*, 78-79). If God did not create in six days, we have no reason for Israel's work week—for Israel employed a six day work week followed by the day of rest before Genesis was written.

7. *Argument from Plural Expression.* Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 also teach that God created the heavens and the earth “in six days” (yammim). As Robert L. Reymond reminds us: “Ages are never expressed by the word yammim” (*Systematic Theology*, 394). In fact, the plural yammim occurs 858 times in the Old Testament, and always refers to normal days. Exodus 20:11 (like Gen 1) lacks any kind of poetic structure; it presents a factual

“If Moses had intended to teach a non-chronological view of the days, it is indeed strange that he went out of his way, as it were, to emphasize chronology and sequence....It is questionable whether serious exegesis of Genesis one would in itself lead anyone to adopt a non-chronological view of the days for the simple reason that everything in the text militates against it” (E.J. Young, *Genesis One*, p. 100).

accounting. By this shorthand statement, God sums up his creative activity in a way that not only comports with, but actually demands a six day creative process.

8. *Argument from Unusual Expression.* Due to the Jewish practice of reckoning days from evening to evening, the temporal pattern “evening and morning” may seem unusual (because it assumes the day began in the morning, passes into evening, and closes at the next morning). Cassuto comments: “Whenever clear reference is made to the relationship between a given day and the next, it is precisely sunrise that is accounted the beginning of the second day” (Genesis, 1:28). For example, Exodus 12:18 has the fourteenth evening at the conclusion of the fourteenth day (cp. Lev 23:32). Therefore, Genesis 1 presents literal days reckoned according to the non-ritual pattern— evening closing the daylight time, followed by morning which closes the darkness, thereby beginning a new day (e.g., Gen 19:33-34; Ex 10:13; 2Sa 2:32).

9. *Argument from Alternative Idiom.* Had Moses intended that six days represent six eras, he could have chosen a more fitting expression: *olam*. This word is often translated “forever,” but it also means a long period of time (e.g. Ex 12:24; 21:6; 27:20; 29:28; 30:21). Furthermore, he should not have qualified the days with “evening and morning.”

10. *Argument from Scholarly Admissions.* Remarkably, even liberals and neo-evangelicals who deny Six Day Creationism recognize Moses meant literal days. Herman Gunkel: “The ‘days’ are of course days and nothing else” (cf. Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation,” 21). Gerhard von Rad: “The seven days are unquestionably to be understood as actual days and as a unique, unrepeatable lapse of

time in the world” (*Genesis 1-11*, 65). See also: James Barr (*Fundamentalism*, 40-43); Brown-Driver-Briggs *Lexicon* (p. 398); Koehler and Baumgartner's *Lexicon* (p. 372); Holladay's *Lexicon* (p. 130); and Jenni and Westermann's *Theological Lexicon* (528). Evangelical Old Testament scholar Victor Hamilton states the matter dogmatically: “Whoever wrote Gen. 1 believed he was talking about literal days” (*Genesis*, 1:54), as does Wenham (*Genesis*, 1:19).

In summary: Moses informs us that God created the whole universe in the span of six chronologically successive periods of 24-hours each. Nevertheless, Framework and Day Age advocates see problems.

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Problems for Literal, Chronological Days

1. *Objection:* “Genesis 2:4 speaks of the entire creation week as a ‘day,’ showing that ‘day’ may not be literal.” Response: The phrase here is actually *beyom*, an idiomatic expression meaning “when” (NIV, NRSV, NAB; cp. TDOT 6:15). Besides, even had Genesis 2 used “day” in a different sense, Genesis 1 carefully qualifies its creative days (see points 2-5 above).

2. *Objection:* “Genesis 2:2-3 establishes the seventh day of God's rest, which is ongoing and not a literal day. This shows the preceding six days could be long periods of time.” Response: (1) Contextually, this is an argument from silence— one which contradicts Exodus 20:11. (2) If true, it would imply no fall and curse (Gen 3), for then God would be continually hallowing and blessing that “ongoing day.” In fact, God does not bless his eternal rest, but a particular day. (3) Days 1-6 (the actual creation period) are expressly delimited; Day 7 is not. (This is, however, because the creation week has ceased. To mention another “morning” would imply another day followed in

that unique period.) Since this is the seventh in a series of six preceding literal days, how can we interpret it other than literally?

3. *Objection:* “On Day 4 God creates the sun to provide light; but light was created on Day 1. This shows that the days are not chronologically ordered, but thematically cross-linked.” Response: This “problem” is answered in the context. On Day 1 God declares “good” the newly created light, but not his separating it from darkness to form “evening and morning.” This is because the final, providential mechanism for separating (the sun) is not created until Day 4. Thus, when Day 4 ends we finally read: “it was good” (Gen 1:18). This is similar to the separation of the waters above and below on Day 2, which is not declared “good” until the final separation from the land on Day 3 (Gen 1:9). Or like Adam's creation not being “good” (Gen 2:18) until Eve is separated out of him. Also, Scripture elsewhere suggests light was created separately from the sun (2 Cor 4:6; Job 38:19-20) and can exist apart from it (Rev 22:5).

Besides, most of the material in Genesis 1 demands chronological order—even for Framework advocates. This suggests that the surprising order of light-then-sun is also chronological. Not only is Genesis 1 structured by fifty-five waw consecutives, indicating narrative sequence, but note: Separating the waters on Day 2 requires their prior creation on Day 1 (Gen 1:2d). Creating the sea on Day 3 must predate the sea creatures of Day 5. Day 3 logically has dry land appearing before land vegetation later that day. Day 3 must predate Day 6, in that land must precede land animals and man. Day 6 must appear as the last stage of creation, in that man forms the obvious climax to God's creation. Day 6 logically has man being created after animal life (Days 5 and 6) in that he is commanded to rule over it. Day 7 must con-

clude the series in that it announces the cessation of creation (Gen 2:2). And so on.

4. *Objection:* “The parallelism in the triad of days indicates a topical rather than chronological arrangement: Day 1 creates light; Day 4 the light bearers. Day 2's water and sky correspond to Day 5's sea creatures and birds. Day 3's land corresponds to Day 6's land animals and man.” Response: (1) Such parallelism can be both literary and historical; the two are not mutually exclusive.

God can gloriously act according to interesting patterns. For instance, just as the land arises from the water on the third day, so Jesus arises from the tomb on a third day. Likewise, in John 20:15 Mary Magdalene sees Jesus, the Second Adam, in a garden (Jn 19:41) and assumes he is the gardener. Is this a new Eve encountering the New Adam in a new garden under the new covenant? This

theological imagery may very well be true here. But she really did see the resurrected Jesus. (2) We must not allow the stylistic harmony in the revelation of creation to override the emphatic progress in the history of creation. The chronological succession leaves too deep an impression upon the narrative to be mere ornamentation. (3) Numerous discordant features mar the supposed literary framework: For instance, “waters” are created on Day 1 (Gen 1:2), not Day 2—disrupting the parallel with the water creatures of Day 5. In addition, the creatures of Day 5 are to swim in the “seas” of Day 3. Consequently, the “seas” separated out on Day 3 have no corresponding inhabitant created on its “parallel” day, Day 6. Additional illustrations are pointed out by Young (Genesis One, 71-73), Grudem (Systematic Theology, 302-03), and others.

5. *Objection:* “God employed ordinary, slow

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providence as the prevailing method of creation: Genesis 2:5 demands that the third day had to be much longer than 24 hours, for the waters removed early on Day 3 leave the land so parched that it desperately needs rain to clothe the landscape with verdure. Yet a full panoply of vegetation appears at the end of that very day, Day 3 (Gen 1:11)."

Response: This novel, minority interpretation of Genesis 2:5 misses Moses' point. In Genesis 2 Moses is: (A) Setting up Adam's moral test, while (B) anticipating his failure. Note first the setting: (1) Genesis 2:4 introduces us to what becomes of God's creation (Young, *Genesis One*, 59-61). (2) In describing the whole creative process, Genesis 1 uses only God's name of power (Elohim); Genesis 2 suddenly introduces his covenant name (Jehovah God). (3) Unlike how he creates the animals (en masse by fiat), God creates Adam individually and tenderly (2:7). (4) Genesis 2 focuses on the beautiful garden (2:8-9) and God's gracious provision of a loving helper for Adam (2:18-24). (5) God provides abundant food for Adam (2:16). Thus, the Lord God loves Adam and well provides for him. Would Adam obey him in such glorious circumstances?

Note second, the anticipation. Opening this new section with the words of Genesis 2:5, the narrative intentionally anticipates Adam's fall and God's curse—preparing the reader for the prospect of death (Gen 2:17): (1) Genesis 2:5 is stating that before God cursed the ground with the thorny shrubs (cp. Gen 3:18a) and before man had to laboriously "cultivate the ground" (cp. Gen 3:18b-19a), God provided him with all that he needed. (2) The narrative notes God's creation of Adam from the dust (Gen 2:7), anticipating his rebellion and return thereto (Gen 3:19b). (3) It tests Adam in terms of his eating due to God's abundant provision (Gen 2:16-17), which foreshadows his struggling to eat, due to his failing God's singular prohibition (Gen 3:17-19a). (4) We learn that at their creation Adam and Eve were "naked and not ashamed" (2:25), anticipating their approaching shame (3:7).

Thus, Genesis 2:5 anticipates moral failure, rather than announces creational method.

Conclusion

Leading Framework advocate Meredith Kline argues that "as far as the time frame is concerned, with respect to both the duration and sequence of events, the scientist is left free of biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins" ("Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 48 [1996]: 2). The Scripture clearly teaches that "from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female" (Mk 10:6). But Kline allows billions of years of creating (from the original ex nihilo to Adam), teaching that we have only just recently left creation week!

Certainly much more needs to be stated. But I believe the above sufficiently demonstrates the validity of our Confession, which declares: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good."

For these reasons I am a Six Day Creationist.

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GENESIS AND MYTH

by

Robert Letham

Over the past year or two many correspondents have urged the OPC to commit itself to a binding belief that the days of Genesis 1 are periods of twenty-four hours. Throughout these communications two myths constantly recur.

Myth #1: The idea that the days of Genesis 1 are not to be interpreted literally is a recent development. It follows that those who read Genesis this way are capitulating to evolutionary theory. This is simply wrong. A figurative interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 was advanced a millenium and a half before Darwin was ever heard of.

As early as the third century Origen (c.185-254) dismisses a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 as impossible. “Nor even do the law and the commandments wholly convey what is agreeable to reason. For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? and that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky?” *De Principiis* (4:1:16). See also *Contra Celsus* (50, 60).

In *De Civitate Dei* (11:6-7) Augustine (354-430) argues that the meaning of the details of Genesis 1 surpass our ability to grasp. “What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say!...but what kind of light that was, and by what periodic movement it made evening and morning, is beyond the reach of our senses; neither can we understand how it was.”

Earlier, in his important *De Genesi ad Litteram* (The Literal Meaning of Genesis) he develops at length a view of simultaneous creation. God created only one day, recurring seven times (4:20, 26)

“...and it is not to be taken in the sense of our day, which we reckon by the course of the sun; but it must have another meaning, applicable to the three days mentioned before the creation of the heavenly bodies. This special meaning of ‘day’ must not be maintained just for the first three days, with the understanding that after the third day we take the word ‘day’ in its ordinary sense. But we must keep the same meaning even to the sixth and seventh days” (4:26).

These days “...are beyond the experience and knowledge of us mortal earthbound men. And if we are able to make any effort towards an understanding of the meaning of those days, we ought not to rush forward with an ill-considered opinion, as if no other reasonable and plausible interpretation could be offered. Seven days by our reckoning, after the model of the days of creation, make up a week. By the passage of such weeks time rolls on, and in these weeks one day is constituted by the course of the sun from its rising to its setting; but we must bear in mind that these days indeed recall the days of creation, but without in any way being really similar to them.” (4:27)

Augustine is not dogmatic about this. He says “I certainly do not advance the interpretation

given above in such a way as to imply that no better one can ever be found” (4:28). In Genesis 1 God accommodated himself to the capacities of those unable to grasp simultaneous creation. Elsewhere in Scripture it is written that God created all things simultaneously - “Those who cannot understand the meaning of the text, He created all things together, cannot arrive at the meaning of Scripture unless the narrative proceeds slowly step by step” (4:33).

Much later, Anselm of Canterbury (c1033-1109), in *Cur Deus homo?* (1:18) in discussing the abstruse (and to us absurd) question of whether God intends the elect to make up the number of the fallen angels, refers to one’s interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 as having tangible effect on the issue. While he does not commit himself to any particular view, he considers Augustine’s proposal as a legitimate option. “But if the whole creation was produced at once, and the ‘days’ of Moses’ account, where he seems to say that the world was not made all at once, are not to be equated with the days in which we live, I cannot understand how the angels were made in that complete number”.

Calvin (1509-1564) in his *Commentary on Genesis* does not address the question. But, in the midst of some superb exposition of the theology of creation and God’s self-revelation in it, he stresses that God is accommodating himself to our limited human understanding, speaking to us on a simple, barbaric level. It is written like this ‘for our sake’ (on v 4) for Moses ‘accommodated his discourse to the received custom’ (on v 5). He continues, on verse 16:

“Here lies the difference; Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without instruc-

tion, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend...but because he [Moses] was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned, he could not otherwise fulfil his office than by descending to this grosser method of instruction.”

Myth #2: Those who interpret the days of Genesis 1 in a non-literal manner are basing their interpretation of Scripture on anti-Christian scientific theory. They prefer to follow modern science rather than the plain teaching of the Word of God.

In the documents of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1649) the most obvious reading supports the literal view of the six days. However, the Westminster divines were not ignoramuses. They knew and read Augustine, Origen and Anselm. Their statements simply reflect the language

of Genesis 1 and make no attempt to define it further. (WCF 4:1, WSC 9, WLC 15)

Myth #2: Those who interpret the days of Genesis 1 in a non-literal manner are basing their interpretation of Scripture on anti-Christian scientific theory. They prefer to follow modern science rather than the plain teaching of the Word of God.

This is a serious accusation. If true, it would justify charges of violating ordination vows. It implicitly impugns the integrity of those who hold this position. Conversely, if false it borders on slander.

Reasons for taking a nonliteral view of the days of Genesis 1 stem from the Bible, the text of Genesis itself, and it should be on that basis that the issue is discussed.

The word *yom* (day) is used in four different ways in the context;

(1) for daylight as opposed to darkness, in 1:5,

(2) for the seventh day, of which no end is specified, in 2:2-3 (cf Heb 4:1-11, where the seventh day is equated with eternity, God's rest, which he calls us to enter),

(3) for the one day in which God created the heavens and the earth, in 2:4 (obscured by the NIV translation), and

(4) the sense under discussion. Of course, it does not necessarily follow that because yom has these other meanings elsewhere in the context that it does here too. But it at least poses a major question mark over adopting a literal reading here and so restricting valid interpretations of Genesis 1 to but one. On the other hand, the absence of the sun and the moon in the first three "days" reinforces the likelihood of a flexible and figurative meaning at this point too.

Again, the literary structure of Genesis 1 shows two parallel sets of three days. In the first three days God creates light, the expanse and dry land, while in the second set of three days he creates objects and sentient beings to inhabit or direct these spheres. This argues more for a topical than chronological interest in Genesis 1 and so for a figurative, rather than literal, view of the six days.

I am not arguing here that the literal view of the days of Genesis 1 is impermissible, nor even that it is wrong. After all, it has the weight of Karl Barth to back it, in his extensive exegesis of the chapter in his Church Dogmatics 111/1:99-228. Sufficient to say that it is not the only interpretation of this passage that can claim the sanction of Scripture. Speaking for myself, the text of Scripture is determinative, for it is the word of God.

However, this chapter has yet to disclose all its secrets.

These myths rest on ignorance and misrepresentation. The first is lamentable, but can be corrected in time. The other is far more serious. It affects the way we treat other people. Attacking people's motives is a dangerous business. It calls for more than a realignment of our exegesis.

These myths rest on ignorance and misrepresentation. The first is lamentable, but can be corrected in time. The other is far more serious. It affects the way we treat other people. Attacking people's motives is a dangerous business. It calls for more than a realignment of our exegesis.

As an antidote I suggest a thorough reading of Calvin's commentary on Genesis. He does not address this topic but what he does do is immeasurably better. He unfolds the lavish theology of creation taught here. More attention to this would do wonders. In many ways the cre-

ation science debate has brought in its wake pernicious damage, robbing the church of its birthright. Amidst the rich jewels of the Scriptural revelation of God, man and creation in Genesis 1, many are looking in the wrong direction, at minute pebbles that have nothing to do with the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures or with the awesome grandeur of God's infallible revelation in creation.

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WERE THE 'DAYS' OF GENESIS 1 & 2 ORDINARY DAYS?

by

Robert W. Eckardt

Thesis: Since a 'straightforward' reading of Genesis 1:1 to 2:2 raises a number of unanswered questions, it is wise not to insist that only one (favored) interpretation is possible. Specifically, it is important for Christians not to question the orthodoxy of another Christian simply on the basis of his interpretation of this passage.

Question No. 1: According to Dr. Edward J. Young of Westminster Theological Seminary, the first sentence of Genesis can be paraphrased as follows: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and especially the earth.*" How much time elapsed between the creation of the heavens and then the earth? In other words, how old the universe ("*heavens*") is, is not dealt with in Genesis.

Question No. 2: How long did the conditions set forth in Genesis 1:2 prevail?

Question No. 3: The scientific definition of light is as follows: "The form of electromagnetic radiation that acts upon the retina of the eye, making sight possible" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). In other words, it refers to only certain bands of the electromagnetic spectrum, which, in total, consists of radio, infrared, visible light, ultraviolet, X-ray, gamma ray, and cosmic ray waves. **Would God create just part of the electromagnetic spectrum without creating the rest?** If not, why doesn't the Bible say that God created the electromagnetic spectrum? If the answer is that He used unsophisticated, everyday language, then could not other language in this passage be of the same type and thus open to further scientific and technical explanation?

Question No. 4: What is a 24-hour day? Before clocks existed, a day was measured by the rotation of the earth in relation to the sun. One day was morning to morning or noon to noon, for example. Since morning begins at sunrise and noon is the moment when the sun is highest in the sky, there is no morning and no noon, and therefore no means of measuring the day until the sun is in the sky. However, there was no sun until Genesis 1:14-19, the fourth day. Note that one specific purpose of the sun is to mark days.

Question: How were days marked before the fourth day? If by some other means, how can we be sure that they were ordinary days? (Incidentally, "*He also made the stars*" [vs. 16] can be translated: "*He had also made the stars*"—perhaps a reference back to vs. 1.)

Question No. 5: When does a day begin? If we say at sunrise, for example, we know that the earth is a sphere and thus the sun only appears to rise as the earth turns toward the sun on its axis. But to whom does it so appear, if no person is on the earth until the sixth day?

Some say that the Hebrew word "yom," translated "*day*" throughout the passage always means a "24-hour day." Not so. See Genesis 1:5a, 2:4 (KJV,RSV), 2:17 (KJV,RSV), Psalm 20:1 (KJV, RSV). (Notice that in the latter three instances, the meaning of the word is so far from a 24-hour day that the NIV paraphrases the word away.)

Notice that the seventh day cannot be an ordinary day (Genesis 2:2; John 5:16,17).

The implication of Genesis 1:11,12 is that the vegetation came forth from the earth (See also Genesis 2:5. Genesis 2:4 and following fills in various details concerning the events of chapter 1.) Wouldn't it take longer than an ordinary day for this to happen?

God created both Adam and Eve on the sixth day. Yet Genesis 2:15-22 (filling in the details) tells us that between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve, Adam named all the animals and fell into a deep sleep. Wouldn't all this take longer than an ordinary day?

Though officially retired Rev. Robert W. Eckardt is still active in serving the OPC. He is presently busy teaching the Form of Government for the Ministerial Training Institute.



OF CREATION DAYS AND THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

by

Dr. James Gidley

Would a Presbytery want to be remembered for having considered John Murray to be unfit for the gospel ministry? Not only a Presbytery has this distinction, but a Synod, that of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Murray's Northern Presbytery having remitted his case to the Synod in 1930.

The reason was that Murray was judged to be lax on the Sabbath commandment. Though he could not, in good conscience, himself ride on public transportation on the Lord's Day, yet by the same conscience he could not bar members from the Lord's Table who traveled on public transportation in order to attend Sabbath worship.¹ In hindsight we may judge that such reasoning was mistaken. But at the time, it must have seemed to the Synod to be a resolute exercise of the power of the keys of the kingdom.

The purity of the church's membership must also be guarded. I know a man who, many years ago, was denied admission to membership in a Bible-believing Presbyterian church for some doubts he had about the doctrine of infant baptism. He was childless and single at the time, but he professed his willingness to have his children baptized, should the Lord grant him any. This was not sufficient for the Session.²

¹ For details of the Sabbath controversy and its providential effect on Murray, Westminster Theological Seminary, and the OPC, see Iain Murray, "Life of John Murray", Collected Writings of John Murray, Vol.3, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh and Carlisle, Penn., 1982, pp. 32-45.

² The session did reverse itself at a later meeting, when an influential elder who had swayed the Session to the negative vote was not present. The man later married and had two children, both of whom were baptized as infants.

Presbyteries must indeed be zealous to guard the gospel ministry from candidates who hold unbiblical views on important matters of faith and practice. This zeal has been codified in our Form of Government in the system of examinations required of men seeking entrance into the ministry. For example, if just above 25% of the presbyters present at a theological exam of a candidate for licensure or ordination are dissatisfied with the candidate's performance, the candidate does not pass the exam. This is a wise regulation.

But can it be abused? Suppose, for example, a little more than 25% of a Presbytery are in favor of exclusive Psalmody. They can plead their cause from the Confession and the known views of the Westminster divines. They can become so zealous for this position that they vote against candidates for licensure and ordination who do not hold their view. Thus, otherwise godly and orthodox men who do not believe in exclusive Psalmody cannot be ordained in this Presbytery. Are you opposed to the behavior of such presbyters? What if a little more than 25% of a Presbytery determines that no man shall be ordained if he does not hold to a particular view of the creation days?

The genius of Presbyterian church government is the plurality of elders and their mutual accountability to each other. Virtually every decision of a Session is subject to review by its Presbytery, and those of the Presbytery by the General Assembly. Sometimes the lower judicatories are painfully aware of this. A contentious member can lodge complaints incessantly and bring the judicatory to a standstill in examining

past decisions. A rebellious defendant in a disciplinary case can appeal to Presbytery and GA, bringing the minutiae of every ruling of the trial judicatory into question. Painful as this is, we live with it because we know that all judicatories are subject to sin and error. The doctrine of total depravity demands that we do not set ourselves up as autonomous authorities. The doctrine of the unity of the Church demands that we do not act independently.

But what of a Session's decision to deny someone admission into membership in the Church? The person denied has no standing in the Church to complain against this decision or appeal it to the Presbytery. Unless a current member of the Church is willing to undertake these actions on his behalf, he is left without any recourse but humble re-application to the Session.

Likewise, a candidate for licensure or ordination is not a member of the Presbytery and thus has no right to complain against or appeal an adverse decision on his theology exam. Further, even if current members of the Presbytery are disposed to complain on the candidate's behalf, how can they prove their case? Those who vote negatively on a theology exam need not record their reasons, and may in fact have various different reasons. How can a complainant show that the Presbytery erred when the Presbytery clearly has the right to fail a candidate's theology exam and need not officially specify reasons?

This is not merely a hypothetical problem. Just such a decision by an OPC Presbytery was complained against, and the complaint, having been denied by the Presbytery, was appealed to the 1998 GA. At the last moment, the complaint was withdrawn because the complainants were persuaded that they could not prove their case. They concluded that they had no way of showing that the Presbytery had acted on im-

proper reasons in failing the candidate's theology exam.

Is it true that under our present Book of Church Order, decisions of Sessions to deny people entrance into church membership, and decisions of Presbyteries to deny candidates entrance into the gospel ministry, cannot be reviewed by a higher judicatory? At best, this would be an anomaly in the Presbyterian system of mutual accountability; at worst, an instance of autonomous authority at an important point in the exercise of the power of the keys.

How then are we to maintain our mutual accountability in these circumstances? First, accountability to each other is of little value without accountability to God. It is a solemn prospect to consider that we will give account of our eldership to God Himself (Hebrews 13:17). Undoubtedly it is that sense of accountability that drives us to maintain high standards for admission to church membership, and higher standards still for entrance into the gospel ministry. Amen, so let it be!

But in our zeal to keep the Church pure, might we not fall into the opposite error of treating Christ's sheep and Christ's shepherds with undue severity? We must consider what are sufficient reasons for keeping an adherent of the Church from entering its membership, and what are sufficient reasons for keeping a candidate for the gospel ministry out of it. We should be just as unwilling to deny ordination to a man whom Christ has truly called to the ministry as we are to ordain a man whom Christ has not called.

Just as accountability to each other without accountability to God is lifeless, accountability to God without accountability to each other is dangerous. Total depravity is not only a doctrine to be professed, and unity is not an at-

tribute of the invisible church alone. Our Form of Government says: “The lower assemblies are subject to the review and control of the higher assemblies, in regular graduation. These assemblies are not separate and independent, but they have a mutual relation and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate body.” (FG XII.2).

Should just over 25% of a Presbytery be able to hold the Church hostage to its particular views and ensure that none but those who hold their views shall be ordained? It is not that we should amend the Form of Government to allow a man to pass a theology exam on a bare majority vote. We should not want a man to be ordained if only 51% of a Presbytery could vote to sustain his theology exam. The required 75% vote is a righteous safeguard to insure that a man’s theological views commend themselves to a large majority of the Presbytery.

Further, it should never become a routine matter for a General Assembly to reverse the decision of a Presbytery regarding a theology exam, nor for a Presbytery to reverse the decision of a Session regarding the receiving of a member into the Church. We must respect the decisions of our fellow elders. A large part of that respect consists in assuming that the lower judicatories are competent and that they act conscientiously and wisely upon the basis of their first-hand knowledge of the candidates before them.

Yet we must acknowledge that Presbyteries and Sessions can and at times do err in such matters. When a Session or Presbytery seems to have erred, the avenue of redress is the complaint. Despite the difficulties that I have described above, I believe that the complaint is still a viable means of reviewing a Presbytery’s failure to sustain a candidate’s theology exam. The complaint should simply allege that in view of the candidate’s manifest adherence to our

Confessional standards and his manifest qualifications for the office of minister, the Presbytery’s failure to sustain his theology exam was an error. The complainants could then argue their case by describing the candidate’s qualifications and theological views. Those opposed to the complaint would be morally bound to declare why they believed the candidate’s views were contrary to the Confession or why they believed his qualifications were deficient. While they could not be compelled to adopt such reasons on motion or even to present them in writing, their case might look weak on appeal to the General Assembly if they gave no reasons.

Occasionally an issue is of such magnitude that it affects the whole Church. To this writer, the debate over the days of creation seems to be such an issue. When such an issue arises, it is necessary for the whole Church to discuss the matter, and it is helpful for the discussion to take place apart from the personalities and idiosyncrasies involved in particular cases. We hope that the articles in this issue will be helpful in that discussion. The Church may also need to study the matter formally at the Presbytery level, the General Assembly level, or both. Indeed, the Presbytery of Southern California is currently studying the issue. The time may have arrived for the General Assembly also to erect a study committee on the creation days and to give advice to the Presbyteries.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON CREATION

by

G. I. Williamson



As one who has been in the ministry for nearly half a century, I still don't have all the answers on the subject of creation. But, at the same time, there are some things in this debate that have become more and more firm in my thinking. Here they are:

1. *I cannot accept a view of creation that is so highly technical and involved—maybe I should say 'convoluted'—that the rank and file of the people of God are simply bewildered by it.* I believe it was the truth that the Lord revealed to Moses on the subject of creation. I believe it was intended for all the people of God in all ages. I therefore cannot accept the idea that it was never understood until the 20th century. The truth of God is not simple in the sense that it is not profound. But it *is* simple in that by the work of the holy Spirit it is intelligible even to those who are not erudite scholars.

2. *I cannot accept any view of creation that requires me to redefine the meaning of words.* Any view of creation, therefore, that requires me to change the word 'day' into—not merely 'year'—but millions and millions of years, is simply unacceptable. God, who gave the revelation of his work of creation to Moses, certainly could have said 'age' or 'ages' if that is what he intended us to understand as the time-periods of creation. That he did not do so, and instead used the universally familiar word 'day' makes it impossible for me to make that shift in meaning.

3. *I believe that Dr. David Hall has decisively demonstrated that the framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith (and Catechisms) meant 'days'—not years, not ages, but days—when they said creation was accomplished by God 'in the*

space of six days.'¹ I also think Dr. Hall is right when he says our starting point in any discussion of creation in the church today should begin with the acknowledgement that anything other than (1) *instant* creation (Augustine), or (2) *six day* creation—whether it be defensible or not—never has had a recognized place in the historic Christian church before the rise of the modern theory of evolution.

4. *In much of the discussion of creation that I've been reading I also find a shared assumption that I am not at all persuaded of.* I speak of the *uniformitarian* assumption. (a) It seems to me that those who advocate the framework hypothesis build much of their argument on this very assumption. (b) But I also think this is the case with at least some who defend the more traditional view of six-day creation. What else can they mean when they speak of the creation days as 'ordinary' or 'normal?' It seems to me that, in using these terms, they are *assuming* that things were operating *then* just as they are *now*. And of this I am not at all certain. Doesn't the Bible tell me that the world that then was (that is, the world as it existed *before* the flood) perished *by means of* the flood? How do I know, then, that those days were *exactly* like they are today—normal, ordinary, usual etc. I do not think the day Hezekiah saw the sun dial move backwards was just another 'ordinary' day, nor that the day when the sun stood still in the valley of Aijalon was just another 'ordinary' day. I do not think that it is Scriptural to just assume a uniformitarianism. The very use of such terms as 'ordinary' or 'normal' with respect to the days of

¹ Consult Chapter 2 of the book entitled "Did God Create in Six Days?" Ed. Pipa & Hall, published by the Southern Presbyterian Press, Greenville, SC and The Covenant Foundation, Oak Ridge, TN.

creation is therefore, for me, a problem. *How do I know those days were of exactly the same duration as they are today?* But—at the same time—I hasten to add that it was God himself who describes the six time-periods used in creation as *days*—not *ages* or *eons*. I believe he used that term to convey accurate information to ordinary people in all ages of history. It would therefore seem to me that the time-periods used in creation were more *like* our days, today, than any other time period with which we are familiar. I cannot see, in other words, how they can legitimately be stretched out so as to extend not only for years, but even thousands and millions of years.

5. *I also think it is a mistake to use scientific terminology in our theological definitions of those days.* To speak of creation as something that occurred in precisely 144 hours (for example) strikes me as an example of being what John Murry called ‘pedantic.’ A much better way to deal with this matter, in my judgment, is that which was exhibited a few years ago in the work of the Confessional Conference that spoke this way about the days of creation:

Article VII. WE AFFIRM that the numerically sequential days of the creation week in Genesis 1, consisting of an evening and a morning, were the very first chronological days of genuine history, of the same general duration of days in a conventionally understood week, and that step by step through these days God made the heavens and earth a well ordered cosmos, inhabitable for man, after which God ceased His work of physical creation.

WE DENY that the “days” of Genesis 1 were ages or long periods of time.

² This Confessional Conference—sponsored by the Alliance of Reformed Churches—was held on the campus of Wheaton College in July of 1994

WE DENY that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 represent a reconstruction of the world subsequent to God’s original act of creation and a catastrophe which befell the world.

WE DENY that ages or long periods of time intervened between the separate days mentioned in the creation week of Genesis 1.

WE DENY that the days of the creation week in Genesis 1 are merely a literary figure of speech or poetic device providing a pedagogical framework for affirming that God created all things.

WE DENY that believers may, in a faithful handling of God’s word, espouse non-chronological views of the days mentioned in Genesis 1 out of a desire to escape the difficulties which might exist between Genesis 1 and the alleged findings of natural science.

WE DENY that the diversity, order, harmony and inhabitable quality of the world can be attributed to any inherent features or forces within the world itself, or to any other factor but the resplendent wisdom and supreme power of God Himself.

6. *I remain convinced of the analogy between the work of creation (as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2) and the miracles of Jesus.* In a cogent article by the late Oswald T. Allis (reproduced in Vol. 4, Issue #4 of *Ordained Servant*) Dr. Allis wrote:

“The miracle of the changing of the water into wine (John 2:1-10) is a most striking example of almighty power dispensing with time and with process. How long would it take to change water into wine by natural processes? Even if there had been a grape

seed or a handful of seeds in the water, it would have been a long, time-consuming process involving months and even years. But there was nothing there but water; and it became wine in a period of time so brief as to be practically instantaneous.

The same applies to the feeding of the five thousand, a conspicuous and amazing miracle which is recorded by all four of the Evangelists (e.g. Matthew 14:15-21). The Lord blessed and broke the five loaves and two fishes and five thousand men besides women and children were fed. It is characteristic of these and of other miracles (e.g. 2 Kings 4:1-7) that the time factor is negligible if not entirely lacking. In them we have examples of fiat creation as in Genesis 1. Omnipotence is not dependent on or limited by time.

A second feature of great importance for our discussion which is illustrated by the last miracles referred to is the naturalness of the product. The wine of the marriage feast was not merely wine. It was better wine than that which the bridegroom had provided. The loaves and the fishes were multiplied into loaves and fishes sufficient to feed five thousand men; and John tells us that 12 basketfuls of the fragments of the loaves

were collected. The real bread and the real fish which formed the little lad's lunch became thousands of real loaves and thousands of real fishes under the creative hand of the Lord."

If the Reformation doctrine of the analogy of Scripture is right—and I believe it is—then the most important thing to study is that which is analogous to the original work of creation. I believe this is what we have in the creation miracles of the Lord Jesus. John tells us that all things were created by him in the first place. Who, then, can give us a better exhibition of what creation is? If I can believe that some of the best wine ever was created instantly by Jesus, then how can it be a problem for me to believe in six-day creation?

7. *The bottom line—in my opinion—is, and will remain, this: do I believe in a wonder working God? I claim to believe in an instantaneous new creation (or, more accurately, re-creation) of my body at the second coming of Jesus—in other words the *bodily* resurrection. Why, then, should it be too much for me to believe in an original six-day creation?*

8. Therefore I continue to believe in six-day creation.