

The 71st General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church received a *Report of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation*. After discussing the report and the recommendations found in the report the assembly passed the following motions with regard to the Report of the Committee on Views of Creation:

1. That the General Assembly recommend that presbyteries should expect a ministerial candidate to articulate his view on the days of creation with a proper recognition of the hermeneutical, exegetical, and confessional considerations involved. The following kinds of questions should be used by presbyteries when examining a candidate, whatever his view of the days of creation, in order to show that his doctrine of creation is consistent with Scripture and the subordinate standards:

A. Does the candidate affirm the following and can he articulate what he understands by them:

1. creation ex nihilo
2. the federal headship of Adam
3. the covenant of works
4. the doctrine of the Sabbath
5. the sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture
6. the historicity of the creation account

B. Does the candidate understand and affirm the priority of Scripture in the relationship between special and general revelation?

C. Does the candidate understand and affirm the hermeneutical principles that are expressed in Scripture and in the subordinate standards?

D. Is the candidate able to address and refute the errors of the theory of evolution both exegetically and theologically?

E. Can the candidate articulate and affirm the covenantal structure of the plan of redemption as found in Genesis 1-3?

2. That the General Assembly urge members of presbyteries and sessions to uphold the peace of the church by addressing theological issues within the church primarily through educational, administrative, judicial, or other constitutional means, and not merely by voting for or against candidates for office.

3. That the General Assembly encourage the Committee on Christian Education and its Subcommittee on Ministerial Training to seek ways of working more closely with the candidates and credentials committees of presbyteries in order to bring ministerial candidates to a fuller understanding of the confessional standards, the *Book of Church Order*, the *Minutes of the General Assembly* and the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

4. That the General Assembly refer the report to the presbyteries and sessions for their study and thank the members of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation for their arduous labors and for their expressed desire to maintain the purity, peace and unity of the church. The General Assembly recognizes that the concept of the *animus imponentis* (the intention of the

imposing body) is new to many people in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Therefore, the Assembly draws attention to the following:

...the concept of the *animus imponentis* may not be employed so as to make a wax nose of the Standards and to pit the church's interpretation of the Standards against the plain words of the Standards themselves, particularly inasmuch as the Standards generally are thought to contain but few obscurities. Rather, *animus imponentis*, rightly understood and employed, means simply that the church as a whole in its integrity interprets its own constitution and that such interpretation, and not those of private individuals or lesser judicatories, is decisive. (*Report of the Committee on the Views of Creation*, pages 1659-1660, lines 2704-2710)

Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
July 16, 2004

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE VIEWS OF CREATION

PREFACE

The Committee to Study the Views of Creation was established by the Sixty-eighth General Assembly in 2001 in order “to examine the Scriptures and our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, to assist the church in its understanding of the biblical doctrine of creation with respect to the various views of the days of creation (e.g. the days of ordinary length, the day-age view, the framework view, and the analogical view), thereby assisting sessions and presbyteries in their dealing with officers and candidates who hold differing views.”

The Committee consisted of Messrs. Leonard J. Coppes, Bryan D. Estelle (Secretary, from October 2003), C. Lee Irons (Secretary until October 2003), John R. Muether, Alan R. Pontier (Vice-Chairman), Alan D. Strange (Chairman), and Peter J. Wallace. All members continue to serve on the Committee, with the exception of Mr. Irons who resigned from the Committee in October 2003. Our previous meetings are detailed in the Minutes of the 69th and 70th General Assembly. During the past year we met in Dyer, Indiana (October 2003), Escondido, California (January 2004) and Orlando, Florida (March 2004).

We give to our Triune God all glory, honor, and praise for the blessings of the last three years together. We are thankful for the opportunity that we have had to study the Scriptures, Standards, and Church Order together and to work hard in seeking to fulfill the mandate given to us by the General Assembly. We have grown in mutual respect and affection for one another and humbly submit our work for the edification of the church and the glory of our gracious covenant God.

We rejoice that we have achieved unity on what we believe to be most significant in the Scriptures and in the Standards respecting the doctrine of creation. We have not been able to come to complete unity, however, over the nature and duration of the creation days. It is our hope, nevertheless, that the work that we have done together in this report would contribute in a marked way to the purity, peace and unity of the church. We are presenting a unified report (with differences expressed in the sections setting forth the different views and in the appendices). We would hope that our working together as brothers, in spite of our differences, might serve as a model for the church in addressing these issues. Our encouragement to the church as she continues to study the doctrine of creation is that she would do so in a way that maintains “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” We would pray that this issue would not further divide us and that we would continue to esteem one another even in the face of our divergence.

The Committee has understood its mandate as three-fold: first, to offer exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological assessments of several views of creation held by officers in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; secondly, to study how the standards of our church instruct our understanding of creation; and thirdly, to suggest ways in which the assemblies of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church can reach greater unity in their deliberations on this issue.

The committee presents the following report in its effort to comply with the directive of the 68th General Assembly. It is comprised of four sections: this introduction, a series of reports on exegetical and historical subjects, a set of recommendations, and appendices that include individual reflections from members of the Committee.

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INTRODUCTION AND SYNOPSIS

1) EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Word of God stresses the doctrine of creation with the very first words of biblical revelation. It is appropriate for the church to seek a greater understanding and deeper unity on this doctrine. Our analysis of that doctrine should begin with a review of the significant areas where the Committee itself and the church at large are in profound agreement. A characteristic expression of the long-held doctrinal consensus in the OPC was a 1968 statement on creation by the Presbytery of Southern California. Seven of the eight affirmations on creation read as follows:

1. The one true and living God existed alone in eternity, and beside Him there was no matter, energy, space or time.
2. The one true and living God according to His sovereign decree, determined to create or make of nothing, the world and all things therein, whether visible or invisible.
3. That no part of the universe or any creature in it came into being by chance or by any power other than that of the Sovereign God.
4. That God created man, male and female after His own image, and as God's image bearer man possesses an immortal soul. Thus man is distinct from all other earthly creatures even though his body is composed of the elements of his environment.
5. That when God created man, it was God's inbreathing that constituted man a living creature, and thus God did not impress His image upon some pre-existing living creature.
6. That the entire human family has descended from the first human pair, and, with the one exception of Christ, this descent has been by ordinary generation.
7. That man, when created by God, was holy. Then God entered into a covenant of works with the one man Adam. In the covenant Adam represented his posterity, and thus when he violated the requirement, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him into an estate of sin.

Beyond these affirmations, much more can be said about the agreement within the Committee. The Committee also finds itself in essential agreement about how Genesis 1 and 2 are to be understood. The narrative must be interpreted literally: we are to find the meaning that the author intended. The narrative must be understood historically: it is not myth, but a record of what happened in space and time. Finally, the narrative contains metaphorical elements: there are figures of speech and literary features within the account that Moses records. The task of the exegete is not to determine whether the text is scientific or historical on the one hand or literary on the other. Instead the exegete must be sensitive to all of these elements in the narrative.

In addition, the Committee is in agreement as to the purposes of the creation account. While the account is not given to us to encourage historical or scientific speculation, it does give us an inspired and authoritative account of the history of God's work of creation that does proscribe certain scientific theories of our origins. In addition, the text of Genesis 1-2 is also the beginning of the two great themes of Scripture: "what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." The ordinances of Sabbath, work and marriage are rooted in the revelation of the six days of work and one day of rest. Moreover, in the light of the complete revelation of the Word of God, we understand that the work of creation is the work of the Triune God; that the doctrine of God's covenants is rooted in the work of creation; that Christ, as the Word that was in the beginning, is set forth as the "firstborn over all creation" by whom and for whom all things consist. Christ is the author and the finisher of creation, and so any study of the creation narrative must point to Christ, the heir of all things as the last Adam. Indeed, our understanding of the redemptive work of Christ, as the last Adam, is dependent upon our acceptance of the history of the first Adam.

The Committee urges that the church take pause and reflect on these significant areas of agreement.¹ They must form the context for constructive and charitable dialogue within the church over its areas of disagreement.

¹ The Committee also commends the united affirmation of our brothers in the Presbyterian Church in America in its Creation Study Report (<http://www.pcanet.org/history/creation/report.html>): "We affirm that Genesis 1-3 is a coherent account from the hand of Moses. We believe that *history*, not *myth*, is the proper category for describing these chapters, and furthermore that their history is true. In these

The aforementioned 1968 report of the Presbytery of Southern California included another affirmation:

God performed His creative work in six days. (We recognize different interpretations of the word “day” and do not feel that one interpretation is to be insisted upon to the exclusion of others.)

Here is where the Orthodox Presbyterian Church appears to be presently divided. Must one interpretation of the character of the days of creation be accepted to the exclusion of others? In recent practice some presbyteries in the church have so insisted, to the chagrin of other presbyteries.

In its own study, the Committee has not achieved exegetical unity on the days of creation, and this report will disappoint those who expected all of its differences to be resolved. There is disagreement within the Committee regarding the length of the days. More significantly, the Committee disagrees on the character of the days, and specifically whether or not the proper exegesis of the text entails that the days of creation and the separation of the creative events must be, need not be, or cannot be chronological. Furthermore, the Committee does not agree on the precise meaning of the historical nature of the six days.

There are various views on the days of creation that find advocates in Reformed churches today and within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The Committee has examined five of these views. They are the days of ordinary length view, the day-age view, the days of unspecified length view (the view of E. J. Young), the framework view, and the analogical view. In the pages that follow, the Committee offers brief descriptions and exegetical assessments of each view, including arguments for and against sequentiality of the days of creation.

It bears noting that these views may have non-Reformed advocates. All of them can be hijacked to serve causes that are hostile to Reformed orthodoxy. (For example, the ordinary day theory has been widely championed by Seventh Day Adventists and the day-age and framework theories are employed by advocates of theistic evolution.) Yet it is critical for the church to resist the temptation to construct slippery-slope arguments, because non-Reformed applications of these views are not inherent to the arguments themselves. Instead, each view must be carefully weighed on its own exegetical merits.

With any doctrinal controversy, there is the temptation for sound bites and bumper stickers to drown out the quieter voices of careful exegesis. As historian Mark Noll observed in his analysis of creation debates, “it is anything but a simple matter to move from the central meaning of early Genesis (that God is to be worshiped as the source of matter, life, and human civilization) to detailed explanations of how God brought about that creation.”² The Committee offers these exegetical assessments not as the last word, but rather to encourage the church to even deeper corporate reflection on the doctrine of creation.

chapters we find the record of God’s creation of the heavens and the earth *ex nihilo*; of the special creation of Adam and Eve as actual human beings, the parents of all humanity (hence they are not the products of evolution from lower forms of life). We find further the account of an historical fall, that brought all of mankind into an estate of sin and misery, and of God’s sure promise of a Redeemer. Because the Bible is the word of the Creator and Governor of all there is, it is right for us to find it speaking authoritatively to matters studied by historical and scientific research. We also believe that acceptance of, say, non-geocentric astronomy is consistent with full submission to biblical authority. We recognize that a naturalistic worldview and true Christian faith are impossible to reconcile, and gladly take our stand with biblical supernaturalism.” (“Report of the Creation Study Committee,” *Minutes of the 28th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America* [Atlanta: Presbyterian Church in America, 2000] 123.) The Committee is greatly indebted to that report, which was very helpful in the Committee’s work, as the following pages will indicate.

² Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 198.

173 2) THE DAYS OF CREATION AND CONFESSIONAL SUBSCRIPTION

174 According to our Shorter Catechism, “The work of creation is, God’s making all things of nothing, by
175 the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good” (Q&A 9). What does the catechism
176 mean by the phrase, “in the space of six days” and what understanding of the phrase does subscription
177 require? The committee believes that the current debate in our church about the days of creation owes
178 as much to its confusion over the nature of confessional subscription as disagreement over the exegesis
179 of the creation narrative.

180
181 Recent claims have been made by several students of the Westminster Assembly and its work that the
182 Westminster Divines held to an ordinary-day interpretation of the creation week. Two things should be
183 observed in the context of that claim however.

184
185 First, the Westminster Standards were written, as were all of the Reformation confessions, as consensus
186 documents, and the Divines often expressed themselves in language that could be understood in
187 different legitimate senses. In his groundbreaking study of Reformed scholasticism, Historian Richard
188 Muller emphasizes that confessions have a two-fold function: they establish both *unity* in the faith and
189 *diversity* in the faith. Confessions are not designed to solve all theological disputes; instead, they are
190 intentionally crafted to leave some questions unanswered. Rightly understood, Confessions encourage
191 theological creativity by establishing the conditions under which exegetical and theological
192 investigation can take place.³ With respect to the phrase, “in the space of six days,” even if one grants
193 that the Divines meant ordinary days by that expression, it does not necessarily follow that they
194 intended to *restrict* the meaning of that phrase in that way. And even if they intended such a restriction,
195 they did not indicate such an intention explicitly in the language that they used.

196
197 Secondly, the original intent of the Westminster Divines does not exhaust our understanding of the
198 meaning of our Confession and Catechisms. In determining whether a particular position deviates from
199 the standards of the church, another principle must come to bear. In addition to the historical meaning
200 of the church’s standards, we must consider the *animus imponentis* of the standards, which is the
201 “intention of the party imposing the oath.”⁴ Through the *animus imponentis*, the mind of the whole
202 church establishes the application of the meaning of the standards, to protect it from individuals who
203 interpret the standards in their own sense. (In this regard, it is important to note that *animus* refers to the
204 spirit of the *whole church*. In American Presbyterianism, presbyteries have power to ordain but not
205 autonomy. In credentialing their members they must work in submission to the whole church.)

206
207 For the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, this communal understanding of the church’s constitution
208 involves the sense in which it was adopted by the church in the second General Assembly in 1936 as
209 well as subsequent developments in its corporate understanding of the phrase. Current debates about the
210 nature of confessional subscription often set the confession’s “original intent” against its contemporary
211 interpretations. However the authority of the standards depends not on an either/or approach but a
212 both/and assessment of original intent and *animus imponentis*.

213
214 In writing the Confession and Catechisms, the Westminster Divines achieved a remarkable consensus in
215 Reformed orthodoxy. In adopting its confession of faith and catechisms in 1936, the OPC also
216 established a consensus. In neither case was an exhaustive expression of biblical truth set forth. In what
217 was included or excluded, and in the spirit in which they were adopted, the Westminster Standards and
218 their Orthodox Presbyterian Church adopters outlined the essential points in biblical revelation and
219 what was non-essential for the life and health of the church.

220
221 With respect to the days of creation, then, what does confessional subscription in the OPC require?
222 Officers “receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms” of the OPC “as containing the
223 system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.” The OPC has understood this to mean subscription to

³ Richard A. Muller, “Confessing the Reformed Faith: Our Identity in Unity and Diversity” *New Horizons* 15:3 (March 1994) 8-10 and 15:4 (April 1994) 20-1.

⁴ Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1878) 319.

all of the doctrines that the standards contain, because they represent in their *entirety* the system of doctrine found in Holy Scripture. This includes the doctrine of creation “in the space of six days.”

What does subscription not require? Officers are not required to subscribe to the very words of our standards, but rather must be in essential agreement with *each* doctrine. This is important to remember especially when considering the words, “in the space of six days.” The meaning of these words is not exhausted merely by observing that “six days are six days,” because this is begging the question. Instead, we believe that the *doctrine* of six-day creation can be preserved through different permissible understandings of the word, “day.”

When a presbytery determines that a candidate’s view on “in the space of six days” falls beyond the pale of the church’s standards, the presbytery should make such a judgment only when convinced that his views violate both the historical meaning of the words of the confession and the *animus imponentis*. Secondly, the church should make a negative judgment about the candidate as a whole only when the church finds a deviation that undermines the candidate’s essential agreement with the system of doctrine and entails his denial of the integrity of that same system. The presbytery should not make its examination of ministerial candidates the primary battleground over its theological differences.

At the same time, the Committee appreciates the frustration that presbyteries have voiced when candidates express vagueness on the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2, or appear ignorant of, and indifferent toward, the confessional consequences of their position on the days of creation. Presbyteries are right to expect that candidates express their views with cordial submission to the church’s standards. A defender of any of these views must earn the confidence of his presbytery that his theology is safeguarded from potential undesirable consequences.

The relation that the Committee advances here between the historical meaning of the standards and the *animus* of the church may frustrate those in the church who yearn for a simple constitutional device for determining theological orthodoxy on creation or other issues. But the Committee does not believe that responsible confessionalism will yield such a simple solution. Rather, the interplay between the standards and the community that interprets them lies at the very heart of the genius of confessional Presbyterianism.

It is the judgment of the Committee that none of the five different views expressed in this report necessarily entails a denial of the integrity of the system of doctrine of our standards. Some of the members may find elements in some of the views to violate certain confessional positions without destroying the integrity of that system. (One member does not agree that in such cases the integrity of the system is unchallenged.) Within the Committee we vary in our judgments of their exegetical and hermeneutical strengths and weaknesses.

This report recommends to the church a series of affirmations about creation that ministers and ministerial candidates should make, affirmations that are consistent with the Standards and the church’s *animus*. However, it does not seek to erect a set of extra-confessional doctrinal standards, nor reduce the church’s confession into a list of “fundamentals” or “essentials,” for fundamentalism and essentialism, in establishing a “confession within a confession,” are ultimately destructive of confessionalism. Instead, the Committee hopes that its report will aid the church in understanding confessional subscription and in refining its *animus* concerning the standards’ teaching with regard to the days of creation.

3) CREATION, CREDENTIALING AND CORPORATE CULTURE

The Committee would be delinquent in the execution of its mandate if it failed to address the question, *why* the present controversy? Since the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, its ministerial members have held a variety of views on the days of creation. Why has it now erupted into such a strident controversy? The Creation Study Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America, in its report to the 2000 PCA General Assembly, suggested several reasons for the recent debate in that denomination. These included:

1. The novelty (real or perceived) of some non-literal views “accounts for some of the unfriendly reaction” to them. Moreover, proponents of these views have not always expressed them before presbyteries with sufficient knowledge and humility.
2. Recent movements in the church (such as Christian Reconstruction and home schooling) tend to emphasize a day of ordinary length view as well as a young earth creation perspective. At times their advocates have expressed themselves very polemically against other views in the church.

3. The increasing hostility of the church's surrounding culture has pitted Christians in a "culture war" against unbelieving forces of materialism, naturalism, and evolutionism. In this context, the doctrine of creation has taken on heightened importance, as it forms the foundation of a Christian worldview, and some in the church have regarded criticism of a day of ordinary length view as tantamount to an accommodation to secular culture.

4. Within the church many are persuaded that non-literal interpretations of the creation account undermined the inspiration and authority of the Bible.⁵

In the Committee's judgment, the PCA Creation Study Committee report helps to explain the current tensions within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as well, and so an analysis of the OPC debate must take them into account. It is especially vital for the ministers and the ministerial candidates of the OPC to express their views on creation with fidelity to Scripture and cordial attachment to the Standards.

There are other reasons. Another factor to consider is the increased use of the Internet. Despite the apparent potential of our high-tech information age for advancing the work of the church, the telecommunications revolution has often served to debase and coarsen much of the theological discourse within the church today, even within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Email, websites, discussion groups, and list serves are not mechanisms that generally enhance thoughtful, deliberate, and charitable theological reflection. Used incautiously, they tend further to polarize the theological divisions that exist within the church. Nuance, moderation, and temperance are often sacrificed when advocates in electronic debates yield to the easy temptation to caricature their adversaries. The creation debate is a reminder of the need for the church to cultivate more wisdom and restraint in the use of these communication vehicles.

There is yet another reason for the current strife, which is unique to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The OPC has experienced doctrinal controversies through its history, and some of them have been serious enough to prompt individuals and churches to leave. But none of them escalated into a confessional crisis. The OPC has gone so long without a general debate on confessional subscription or a particular debate on creation because the church has cultivated a community of interpretation that has sustained confessional integrity among its ministerial membership without imposing over-exacting standards of confessional subscription or achieving complete uniformity in its understanding of creation.

The most important factor in establishing and maintaining this community of interpretation has been the function of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia as the OPC's *de facto* denominational seminary. In training the vast majority of the early ministerial membership of the OPC, Westminster Seminary did not devote excessive attention to the days of creation nor to the Westminster Standards. But what WTS accomplished that averted a creation or confessional crisis was *inducting Orthodox Presbyterian ministerial candidates into a culture of interpretation*. The effect was to cultivate a hermeneutic of trust within the church, as ministers had confidence in the training of their colleagues, even if they differed in their views. Westminster performed that function ably, and for a long time, about thirty years, from the founding of the OPC in 1936 to the death or retirement of the founding faculty at WTS (who were all members of the OPC) in the 1960s.

As that faculty passed from the scene and as Westminster began to expand and to attract other constituencies, the OPC lost the "induction" function of Westminster for its community of interpretation. In the years that have followed, several Reformed seminaries have flourished in the free-market of American theological education, and the OPC is receiving ministerial candidates from an increasingly wide range of sources. Some of these schools, have made the creation debate a means of establishing their pedagogical distinctiveness.

This point must not be overlooked. *The creation debate within the OPC owes in significant measure to the entrepreneurial character of the contemporary theological education*. In their efforts to recruit students, some theological schools are especially promoting their teaching on creation in such a way as to sometimes cast suspicion on other schools. The winners and losers in this competition will be determined by the success that such schools experience at marketing their particular theological emphases.

⁵ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 132-33.

344 For the OPC, the result has been the gradual disappearance in the church and its assemblies of a shared
345 community of interpretation. As Presbytery meetings and General Assemblies become gatherings of
346 strangers, a hermeneutic of suspicion and distrust replaces interpretative confidence and charity.
347 However this committee may serve to promote peace and unity in the church over the debate over the
348 days of creation, it will be a band-aid on the larger problem of the disappearance of our consciousness
349 as an interpretive community. This committee will most effectively serve the church by suggesting
350 ways for the OPC to reestablish its shared confessional consciousness.

351
352 Specifically, what is urgently needed is the reconnection of two worlds that are dangerously untethered
353 for OPC ministerial students: the program of theological education and the process of ministerial
354 credentialing.⁶ Although it might be unrealistic to expect the OPC to establish a denominational
355 seminary, the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC (MTIOPC) provides a measure of hope that
356 these worlds can be reconnected. In addition to providing supplemental theological education for
357 ministerial candidates, MTIOPC should expand to provide training and resources for candidates and
358 credentials committees of presbyteries. For their part, presbyteries should work harder at encouraging
359 their ministerial candidates to enroll in MTIOPC courses.

360
361 Failing that, the creation debate will likely prove to be only the first of many confessional battles that
362 will confront the OPC. If the church loses its confessional consciousness and the unity and vitality of its
363 *animus imponentis*, on creation and other confessional issues, the result will be as Charles Hodge
364 predicted 130 years ago: “we shall soon split into insignificant sects, each contending for some minor
365 point, and all allowing ‘the system of doctrine’ to go to destruction.”⁷

⁶ This is not to suggest that the OPC has been completely neglectful of this problem. The church has spoken by establishing its “Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation” (*Book of Church Order*, 189-197), and ministerial candidates are not left in the dark about the educational requirements expected of them.

⁷ Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, 335.

I. EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

A. BACKGROUND TO THE CURRENT DISCUSSION OF CREATION DAYS

While numerous pastors and theologians throughout the history of the church have discussed their beliefs regarding the length and nature of the creation days, it has never before been discussed in the church courts with the intensity that it has in the last twenty years. But even in our own day, its importance cannot be ranked with the more substantive debates within the Reformed tradition, such as the ones regarding covenant, justification, hermeneutics, or the broader debates within modern theology regarding Open Theism and the ordination of homosexuals.

This is not to say that the debate over the creation days is irrelevant and unimportant. It is no accident that the debate over the creation days has occurred in the context of sweeping changes both in the culture and in the church. Genesis 1-3 is foundational, not only for the narrative of Scripture, but for the narrative of the church—and of each individual Christian. This is not only the story of the origin of the world (cosmogony), it is also the story of one's own family. At a time when the foundations of society appear imperiled, it is not surprising to see conflict over the most foundational of all biblical passages. Some people fear that any compromise of the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1-3 will undermine the Christian faith entirely, while others believe that the traditional interpretation is flawed in certain respects. In order to provide some perspective on this debate, it is useful to consider the history of interpretation with respect especially to the nature and length of the creation days.

THE DAYS OF CREATION BEFORE WESTMINSTER¹

In the early church there were two basic views of the creation days. Origen (c. 185-254) and Augustine (354-430) held to a figurative or allegorical view of the creation days, suggesting that since there was no sun, moon or stars on the first three days, they could not be considered ordinary days. Augustine suggested that the creation might have been instantaneous, and that “these seven days of our time, although like the seven days of creation in name and in numbering, follow one another in succession and mark off the division of time, but those first six days occurred in a form unfamiliar to us.”² Throughout the middle ages many commentators agreed with Augustine, but as the literal interpretation of Scripture gained ground in the late middle ages, Augustine’s view became less and less common.

Most commentators agreed with Basil of Caesarea (330-379) who taught that the days were of ordinary length. It is perhaps worth hearing Basil explain his view in his own words:

Why does Scripture say “one day the first day”? Before speaking to us of the second, the third, and the fourth days, would it not have been more natural to call that one the first which began the series? If it therefore says “one day,” it is from a wish to determine the measure of day and night, and to combine the time that they contain. Now twenty-four hours fill up the space of one day—we mean of a day and of a night; and if, at the time of the solstices, they have not both an equal length, the time marked by Scripture does not the less circumscribe their duration. It is as though it said: twenty-four hours measure the space of a day, or that, in reality a day is the time that the heavens starting from one point take to return there. Thus, every time that, in the revolution of the sun, evening and morning occupy the world, their periodical succession never exceeds the space of one day. But must we believe in a mysterious reason for this? God who made the nature of time measured it out and determined it by intervals of days; and, wishing to give it a week as a measure, he ordered the week to revolve from period to period upon itself, to count the movement of time, forming the week of one day revolving seven times upon itself: a proper circle begins and ends with itself. Such is also the character of eternity, to revolve

¹ Those who desire a more thorough study should look to David Hall and Robert Letham for further details. David H. Hall, *Holding Fast to Creation* (Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 2000) and Robert Letham, “‘In the Space of Six Days’: The Days of Creation from Origen to the Westminster Assembly” *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999) 149-174, provide significant excerpts from numerous theologians from the early church through the seventeenth century.

² Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, John Hammond Taylor, trans. (New York: Newman Press, 1962) 1.125

upon itself and to end nowhere. If then the beginning of time is called "one day" rather than "the first day," it is because Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity. It was, in reality, fit and natural to call "one" the day whose character is to be one wholly separated and isolated from all the others....Thus it is in order that you may carry your thoughts forward towards a future life, that Scripture marks by the word "one" the day which is the type of eternity, the first fruits of days, the contemporary of light, the holy Lord's day honoured by the Resurrection of our Lord. And the evening and the morning were one day.³

Thus, besides the Augustinian view of instantaneous creation (which had significant support for a thousand years), the discussion of the creation days tended to focus on attempts to explain the source of light prior to the sun, the nature of "days" without the sun, and other related topics. Luther, Calvin, and the great body of the Reformers are known to have taught that the days were twenty-four hours in length.⁴

THE DAYS OF CREATION IN AND FOLLOWING THE ERA OF THE WESTMINSTER DIVINES

From the work of David Hall and Robert Letham, it is apparent that all of the known references from the Westminster Divines on the nature and length of the creation days are consistent with the view that says that the days were generally twenty-four hours in length. There are certain caveats, however. Prior to the Assembly, William Perkins (1551-1600) made it clear that the first three days could not be solar days, because there was no sun. While opposing the instantaneous view of Augustine, he does not speculate as to their length, but declares that the days are "distinct spaces of times."⁵ At least one member of the Assembly, John Lightfoot, argued that the first day was 36 hours, and that the seventh day was everlasting.⁶

While there are several accounts of the debates in the Westminster Assembly, none of them mention any discussion whatsoever of this phrase (though in the section on the original intent of the Westminster Assembly, there is a treatment of the use of the phrase "consisting of 24 hours"). While the Westminster Divines generally appear to have believed that the days were twenty-four hours long, they do not appear to have stipulated such as the only acceptable position (see below on original intent, page 1703-05).

In the years following the Assembly, as noted in the PCA report, "We find little if any difference over the matter [of the views of creation and the length of the creation days] within the Reformed community until the nineteenth century. The earliest commentators on the Confession and Catechisms (Watson, Vincent, Ridgeley, Henry, Fisher, Doolittle, Willison, Boston, Brown, and others) affirm *six days* without the kind of specificity that John Lightfoot provides, reject the Augustinian view, and generally concentrate more on the assertion of creation *ex nihilo*. This suggests that there was no significant diversity on the matter of the nature of the creation days in the Reformed community between 1650 and 1800. Indeed, it would be 1845 before a commentary on the Confession or Catechisms would explicitly discuss varying views of the Genesis days."⁷

³Basil, Hexaameron homily, 2.

⁴Presbyterian Church in America, *Report of the Creation Study Committee*, 146; Robert Letham, "In the Space of Six Days': The Days of Creation from Origen to the Westminster Assembly" *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999) 149-174.

⁵*The Workes of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins* (London: Iohn Legatt, 1612) 1:143-144, cited in Robert Letham, "In the Space of Six Days': The Days of Creation from Origen to the Westminster Assembly" *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999) 171.

⁶John Lightfoot, "A Few, and New Observations, Upon the Book of Genesis", *The Works of the Reverend And Learned John Lightfoot D.D.*, Vol. 1, (London, 1684) 691, 693.

⁷Minutes of the General Assembly of the PCA 129-30.

454 THE DAYS OF CREATION IN THE MODERN ERA

455 By the end of the eighteenth century, the findings of geologists were raising questions about the age of
 456 the earth. The work of geologists such as the Scot, James Hutton (1726-1797), suggested that the
 457 present geological structure of the earth could not have been formed in the six thousand years allowed
 458 by the traditional interpretation of Scripture.⁸ Various proposals regarding the interpretation of Genesis
 459 1 arose in response. By the 1840s (more than a decade before Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in
 460 1859) several alternatives had been embraced by various Reformed writers.

461
 462 Among orthodox Presbyterians, there were two common alternatives to the traditional interpretation.
 463 The Day-Age view was articulated by believing geologists Robert Jameson (1774-1854), Georges
 464 Cuvier (1769-1832), and Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864).⁹ Many, like Free Church Presbyterians Hugh
 465 Miller (1802-1856), defended the Day-Age view, arguing that the days of Genesis 1 corresponded to the
 466 geological ages of earth's development.¹⁰ In America, ruling elder Dr. S. Annan published a lengthy
 467 series on geology in the *Presbyterian Advocate* in 1841 arguing that the geological data indicated that
 468 the earth underwent "a gradual preparation for the reception of [man]," and suggested that all his
 469 readers would come to this conclusion if they would "examine the subject with an unprejudiced
 470 mind."¹¹ But relatively few were persuaded by the Day-Age view due to the difficulty of making "day"
 471 mean "age."

472
 473 The more favored theory was the Gap theory, which suggested that there was an indefinite period of
 474 time in between Genesis 1:1 and the six days of creation. Thomas Chalmers of Scotland was one of the
 475 view's initial proponents. Lewis Green, president of Hampden-Sydney College, suggested that the six
 476 literal days of creation were a microcosm of the ages that preceded it.¹² One author in the *Watchman of*
 477 *the South* claimed that we learn from Scripture of the creation of man a few thousand years ago, and
 478 that we learn from nature of the creation of the world several million years before.¹³ Another writer in
 479 the *Princeton Review* agreed—claiming that Moses was concerned "only with the history of man, he
 480 enters not into any account of the length of time which the earth lay without form and void, or how long
 481 the darkness was upon the face of the deep before the sun and moon were called into existence, and the

⁸Hutton's *Theory of the Earth* (Edinburgh, 1788) was one of the first books to argue for an ancient earth.

⁹All three were prolific writers in the field of geology and the earth sciences. Jameson, a professor at Edinburgh University, translated Cuvier's *Essay on the Theory of the Earth* (Edinburgh, 1813), adding his own preface. Cuvier (a Frenchman) seems to have been one of the first to propose the Day-Age theory, whereas Jameson suggested that the earth's rotation may have been incredibly slow, causing one rotation of darkness and light to last for millions of years. Benjamin Silliman, a professor at Yale, wrote *An Introduction to Geology* (New Haven, 1833). The only significant attempt by an Old Testament scholar to defend this position in the 1830s was George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Genesis; Designed as a General Help to Biblical Reading and Instruction* (New York, 1839). Bush, a Princeton Seminary alumnus (1823), was professor of Hebrew and Oriental Literature at New York City University.

¹⁰Miller, who published several volumes defending the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland, and later the Free Church, articulated his geological views in *The Old Red Standstone* (Edinburgh, 1841), *Rudiments of Geology* (Edinburgh, 1845), and *The Footprints of the Creator* (London, 1849). Miller's views were encouraged in Scotland by many leading ministers, including David King, *Principles of Geology* (New York, 1851). The *Princeton Review* applauded such efforts: 23:1 (January 1851) 164.

¹¹Dr. S. Annan, "Geology" *Presbyterian Advocate* 3.49 (Sept 2, 1841).

¹²"Science and Revelation" *Watchman and Observer* 6.24 (March 27, 1851) 130. Thomas Chalmers and other leading Scottish Presbyterians defended this approach. Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 through the Ages* (London: Thomas More Press, 1992) 226.

¹³"Antiquity of the Earth" *Watchman and Observer* 6.8 (Oct 3, 1850) 32.

land and water were separated and both fitted for the habitation of those beings who now occupy them.”¹⁴

A variation on the Gap theory was suggested in 1851 by the retired Old School minister Sayrs Gazlay. He concurred with Miller that “the earth existed for a long time prior to the Mosaic period of creation....[and that] the history of creation was revealed for a specific object, even our faith, leaving the details of physical science to human investigation.” But Gazlay had a different explanation than others, claiming that before Genesis 1 the earth “was a planet of another solar system; and that in those periods, its coal and other fossils were matured and deposited in the earth; that at the beginning of the creation recorded by Moses, the earth was brought here, its former dynasties destroyed, and its whole surface reduced to a chaotic state of earth and water commingled, over which silence and darkness brooded.” After all, if the sun was only created on the fourth day, then the Gap theory demands that the earth once had a different sun. Indeed, Gazlay was confident that further scientific investigation would demonstrate that the earth did not originally belong to this solar system.¹⁵

One of the most well-known opponents of the geological theories was the Rev. Gardiner Spring. Spring rejected both the Day-Age and Gap theories as forcing the text beyond the bounds of plausible interpretation. “If human science is inconsistent with the sacred record, so much the worse for human science.”¹⁶ But those who opposed the old earth views never suggested that other views should be excluded from the church. Instead they confidently declared that true science would vindicate Moses from the claims of the geologists.¹⁷ While the twenty-four hour view seems to have remained the majority position among Old School Presbyterians (other leading advocates included Ashbel Green and Robert L. Dabney), the most frequent reason given was that the science seemed too new to require any change.¹⁸

One writer in the *Princeton Review* thought that the Day-Age theory was “forced and unnatural,” but preferred to wait for further study and discussion before committing himself to one view or another.

The only thing which weighs with us in settling this controversy is the exhibition of facts which are totally incompatible with the belief that the material of the earth was created only a few days before man....If such facts are clearly made out, we will promptly receive the inference without a single fear either for the truth or the plenary inspiration of the sacred record.¹⁹

He concluded by warning both sides:

There is not, we confidently believe, the smallest probability that geology will ever make good its demand for a greater change in the received interpretation of the scriptures, than did the Copernican system of astronomy; nor have harsher denunciations been dealt out against modern geologists, than were poured upon Galileo by the misguided friends of religion. Let us profit by the instructions of history. Before we lay down our pen, we wish to suggest a similar caution on the other side of the

¹⁴James C. Moffat, “Cory’s Ancient Fragments,” *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 11.4 (October 1839) 483.

¹⁵Sayrs Gazlay, “The Bible and Geology” *Presbyterian of the West* 6.31 (April 24, 1851) 122.

¹⁶Gardiner Spring, “God’s First Work: Geological Theories” *Watchman and Observer* 6.29 (May 8, 1851) 153.

¹⁷John G. Morris, a Lutheran friend of the Old School champion Robert J. Breckinridge, had translated K. C. von Leonhard’s *Popular Lectures on Geology* (Baltimore, 1839) which had advocated a version of the Day-Age view. Breckinridge published a refutation of this position in the *Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine* 5.12 (December 1839) 529-562; 6.2 (February, 1840) 79. Nominis Umbra, “Geology and the Bible--the Six Days’ Creation” *St Louis Presbyterian* 14.28 (Jan 14, 1858).

¹⁸“Days of Creation” *Presbyterian* 9.45 (November 16, 1839) 178; A Layman, “Review of Geological Cosmogony” *Presbyterian Advocate* 5.52 (Sept 27, 1843).

¹⁹Matthew B. Hope, “The Relation between Scripture and Geology,” *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 13.3 (July, 1841) 384.

question. Philosophers, we are compelled to think, show a strong tendency to generalize too hastily, and to speak too confidently of the truth of their hypotheses.²⁰

Unlike some modern writers, our forefathers believed that the geological questions of the nineteenth century were related to the astronomical questions of the seventeenth century. By adopting a literal, historical interpretation of Scripture, Protestants also encouraged a literal, historical interpretation of nature. No longer was the investigation of Scripture bound to church tradition—and no longer was the investigation of nature bound to church authority.²¹ Most Presbyterians were convinced that science and Scripture should be harmonized, but as science progressively freed itself from traditional authorities, many Presbyterians became more and more nervous.²²

Herman Bavinck, writing around the turn of the twentieth century, suggests that there were four basic theories respecting the creation days, which he categorized in two groups: harmonizing theories and antigeological theories. In the harmonization camp he found three basic types: 1) the ideal theory—“The six days are not seen as chronologically ordered periods of longer or shorter duration but only different perspectives from which the one created world can be viewed”—advocated by Philo, Origen, Augustine, and more recently Zollman, Dillman, and others;²³ 2) the restitution theory—which placed a gap between Gen 1:2 and 1:3 and claimed that the original creation was laid waste—advocated originally by the Remonstrants, Episcopius and Limborch, but developed more fully after 1800; and 3) the concordist theory—commonly known as the day-age view—which he claimed had been hinted at by Descartes in the seventeenth century, but was fully worked out by Hugh Miller in the 1830s and had been advocated by Delitzsch, Ebrard, Zockler, and others. The anti-harmonistic view, what Bavinck called the antigeological theory, emphasized the flood as the means of explaining geological features. Bavinck pointed out that flood geology was a novel position, since exegetes had debated partial versus universal flood since the patristic era: “the flood acquired geological significance only after Newton.”²⁴

But Bavinck did not name this last theory accurately. It was not anti-geological, nor was it anti-harmonistic. It is true that it rejected the discoveries of modern geology, but it still attempted to

²⁰ Hope, *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 390.

²¹Peter Harrison argues persuasively that the rejection of the allegorical method of the middle ages had effect not only on biblical hermeneutics, but also on the interpretation of nature. “The literalist mentality of the reformers thus gave a determinate meaning to the text of Scripture, and at the same time precluded the possibility of assigning meaning to natural objects. Literalism means that only words refer; the things of nature do not. In this way the study of the natural world was liberated from the specifically religious concern of biblical interpretation, and the sphere of nature was opened up to new ordering principles....It is commonly supposed that when in the early modern period individuals began to look at the world in different way, they could no longer believe what they read in the Bible. In this book I shall suggest that the reverse is the case: that when in the sixteenth century people began to read the Bible in a different way, they found themselves forced to jettison traditional conceptions of the world.” Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge, 1998) 4.

²²It is worth noting that the *Princeton Review* was occasionally chastised for its support for various geological theories. In the nineteenth century Princeton Seminary was considered the most “progressive” seminary in the Old School on scientific issues—and yet it remained the most orthodox seminary in the 1920s. While some have tried to argue that the adoption of progressive scientific views was the bane of American Presbyterianism, the example of Princeton would seem to suggest that a more nuanced argument is necessary.

²³ Herman Bavinck, *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999) 114.

²⁴ Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, 114-118. Bavinck cited the case of Thomas Burnet who in 1682 suggested that the flood was virtually a recreation, so nothing from the antediluvian era remained—which was vehemently opposed by Spanheim and other orthodox Reformed theologians. Also see Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge, 1998) chapter 4.

550 harmonize science with Scripture, and claimed that Moses taught the same thing as modern science, so
551 long as science was rightly understood.²⁵

552
553 Bavinck's own view, which the PCA Report declares "difficult to categorize in our terms," probably fits
554 best with E. J. Young's "Days of Unspecified Length" view (although the Analogical view also claims
555 parallels with its approach). While he does not differentiate it from the three "harmonistic" views, it
556 does not neatly fit any of them. It is perhaps most accurate to say that Bavinck, Kuyper, Young, and
557 others were dissatisfied with the Day-Age view because they believed that it twisted the text of
558 Scripture to fit a geological paradigm, but did not believe that the text of Genesis required a twenty-four
559 hour day.

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561 In the last few decades, at least two other views have gained a hearing in the church. In 1958, M.G.
562 Kline articulated the outlines of the Framework view, in his *WTJ* essay, "Because It Had Not Rained."
563 Furthermore, in 1994, C. J. Collins articulated the Analogical Day view. Both stemmed from the
564 conviction that Genesis 1 is communicating historical facts through a highly stylized literary narrative.
565 Other Reformed writers who share that conviction include J. Ward and W. Robert Godfrey.

566
567 It is interesting to note that some harmonizing views (Day Age, Gap) have not come under attack in the
568 same way that the literary views (Framework, Analogical) have. This suggests that the fundamental
569 issues are not science, or even history as generally conceived—because literary structure is necessary
570 for all historical reporting and exegesis—but hermeneutics (including the nature of historicity) and
571 exegesis.

²⁵ For a thorough treatment of the development of creation science in the twentieth century, see
Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists*.

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B. THE DAY OF ORDINARY LENGTH VIEW

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DEFINING THE ORDINARY DAY VIEW

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For the purposes of this study, the Ordinary Day view is defined as the doctrine that God created all things out of nothing, and that the work of creation was accomplished in six days of normal length, i.e., approximately twenty-four hours. This has also been called the traditional view, the 24-hour day view or the literal view. The traditional view insists that the Genesis creation account, with all of its details, presents the history of God's work of creation in the sequence in which it took place and in the time frame of six days with a seventh day of rest. This view has been the majority position throughout the history of the church and was held with virtual unanimity by the reformers. It is the view that was held without known exception by the authors of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.¹ Today, even with the rise of alternative theories, the twenty-four hour day view remains the majority position in conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

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The following books and articles, while in no way providing an exhaustive reading list, may be useful in further understanding and defending the traditional doctrine of the length and nature of the days of creation:

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Duncan, J. Ligon, III and Hall, David W., "The 24-Hour View" in *The Genesis Debate*, Mission Viejo: Crux Press, 2001

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Hall, David W., "The Westminster View of Creation Days: A Choice between Non-Ambiguity or Historical Revisionism." Center for the Advancement of Paleo-Orthodoxy, (CAPO.org), 1998.

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_____, "What Was the View of the Westminster Assembly Divines on Creation Days?" Center for the Advancement of Paleo-Orthodoxy, (CAPO.org) 1999

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Kelly, Douglas F., *Creation and Change*. Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications (Mentor), 1997.

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Pipa, Joseph A., Jr. and David W. Hall, eds. *Did God Create in Six Days?* Taylors, South Carolina: Southern Presbyterian, 1999. (See specifically Dyer, Sid, "The New Testament Doctrine of Creation." Shaw, Benjamin, "The Literal Day Interpretation" and Pipa, Joseph, "From Chaos to Cosmos.")

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Presbytery of Southern California (OPC), *The Report of the Minority of the Committee to Study the Framework Hypothesis*, 2001.

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Weeks, Noel, "The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11." *Themelios* 4 (Sept. 1978) 12-19

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_____, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988.

¹ It is sometimes claimed that John Lightfoot was an exception to the 24-hour day view held by the Assembly. Lightfoot held that the days of the creation week were twenty-four hours in length with the exception of the first day. The first day, he believed, consisted of a twelve-hour period of darkness followed by the regular twenty-four hour period of light and dark that compose our normal day. ("Twelve hours did the heavens thus move in darkness; and then God commanded, and there appeared, light to this upper horizon—namely, to that where Eden should be planted for that place especially is the story calculated; and there did it shine other twelve hours, declining by degrees with the motion of the heavens to the other hemisphere, where it enlightened other twelve hours also; and so the first natural day to that part of the world was six-and-thirty hours long." John Lightfoot, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 333-34). This is not a material exception to the twenty-four hour position since Lightfoot believed that once the cycle of days began, they were all composed of the normal period of light (day) and dark (night) and of normal duration.

Young, Edward J., *Studies in Genesis One*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964.
 (While E. J. Young did not believe that Genesis 1-2 taught a specific length of the creation period, his
 hermeneutic and exegetical insights are, for the most part, consistent with the traditional interpretation.)

APPROACHING THE TEXT

No one approaches the text of Scripture, or any other written document for that matter, without some set
 of principles that will guide his interpretation of the text. We call that set of principles a hermeneutic.
 According to the hermeneutic that a person has adopted, some interpretations will be favored and others
 discarded.

What principles should compose the hermeneutic of a reader of Scripture in general and Genesis 1-2 in
 particular? While it is not our purpose to develop a detailed presentation on this subject, it is desirable
 to address an area that is often overlooked. Whatever the elements of a particular hermeneutic might be,
 it is essential that the theory and method of interpretation be consistent with and guided by a faith in the
 Scriptures as God's Word. We might say that it is the *hermeneutic of faith*.² The Bible teaches,
 "...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he
 exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6 NIV). How do we believe that
 God exists and rewards those who seek him? We believe these things because we believe the revelation
 that God has given. Whether we are looking at the expanse of the heavens, with their testimony to the
 glory of their Creator (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-20), or at the written Word with its clearer, more
 complete revelation (Psalm 19:7-11; II Timothy 3:16-17), we examine God's revelation with a desire to
 think His thoughts after him. We do not come as skeptics. We do not come looking for "problems" in
 the text. We come to be taught by the True and Living God. In him we have confidence that he
 communicates his truth in a clear, understandable manner so that the church may be built up until we
 reach a unity of faith that stands firm against every wind of false doctrine (Ephesians 4:12-14).

This *hermeneutic of faith* is illustrated for us in the very context of our discussion of the creation issue.
 Hebrews 11:1-3 states:

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is
 what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what
 is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Where do we find the understanding (knowledge) that "the universe was formed at God's
 command?" We find the revelation of that claim in Scripture. We believe that what God has
 said in Scripture is not only true, but that he communicates clearly. Therefore, we understand
 that the universe was formed by a Divine command. Where in Scripture do we find such a
 claim? It is, of course, in the very passage that is under such scrutiny in the current discussions
 on the days of creation. Genesis 1 is the foundational passage that tells us that the origin of all
 things was the command, "Let there be..." combined with its appropriate statement of
 fulfillment.³

² Perhaps a good statement of this concept can be found in the following from Dr. Tremper Longman
 III, "The lens that the Bible invites us to put on is a perspective that understands the Bible to be the
 Word of God. It thus calls us to approach its pages in faith, believing in the universe it describes, even
 when our senses may not directly confirm what it says. Otherwise, we approach the Bible with
 skepticism and subject the Bible's worldview to critical analysis rather than letting the Bible analyze
 every other theory of existence" Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind*
 (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997) 57. See also Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR:
 Wipf and Stock, 1999) 28. "First of all, the true interpreter needs a disposition to seek and know the
 truth. No man can properly enter upon the study and exposition of what purports to be the revelation of
 God while his heart is influenced by any prejudice against it, or hesitates for a moment to accept what
 commends itself to his conscience and his judgment."

³ Genesis 1:3 "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."; Genesis 1:6-7 "And God said,
 'Let there be an expanse...So God made the expanse..."; Genesis 1:9 "And God said, 'Let the water
 under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so."; Genesis 1:11 "Then
 God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation...And it was so.'"; Genesis 1:14-15 "And God said, 'Let
 there be lights in the expanse of the sky...' And it was so."; Genesis 1:20-21 "And God said, 'Let the

The writer of Hebrews is illustrating this *hermeneutic of faith* when he takes us back to the first chapter of the Bible and draws an article of faith from a literal reading of the chapter. There is no attempt to draw out any other meaning or significance of the words of the Divine command than that which is contained in the plain sense of the words. There is no searching for clues in the literary form of the text that would somehow render the plain sense insufficient, unclear or misleading.⁴ The words of the opening chapter of the Bible are seen as plain, true, authoritative and sufficient. They form a trustworthy foundation upon which to build an essential article of faith. Those who would please God will approach his Word in this way.

With magisterial insight, Calvin brings together the significance of Genesis 1 and the necessity of faith in the following passage:

For by the Scripture as our guide and teacher, he not only makes those things plain which would otherwise escape our notice, but almost compels us to behold them; as if he had assisted our dull sight with spectacles. On this point, as we have already observed, Moses insists. For if the mute instruction of the heaven and the earth were sufficient, the teaching of Moses would have been superfluous. This herald therefore approaches, who excites our attention, in order that we may perceive ourselves to be placed in this scene, for the purpose of beholding the glory of God; not indeed to observe them as mere witnesses but to enjoy all the riches which are here exhibited as the Lord has ordained and subjected them to our use. And he not only declares generally that God is the architect of the world, but through the whole chain of the history he shows how admirable is His power, His wisdom, His goodness, and especially His tender solicitude for the human race. Besides, since the eternal Word of God is the lively and express image of Himself, he recalls us to this point. And thus, the assertion of the Apostle is verified, that through no other means than faith can it be understood that the worlds were made by the word of God, (Hebrews 11:3.) for faith properly proceeds from this, that we being taught by the ministry of Moses, do not now wander in foolish and trifling speculations, but contemplate the true and only God in his genuine image.⁵

Of course, the necessity of faith in the heart of the interpreter of Scripture does not preclude the need to use the more technical tools of interpretation. However, it does caution us against theories of interpretation that call into question the clarity, authority or sufficiency of the text. It warns against searching for hidden meanings or engaging in speculative theories that run beyond (or even against) the statements of Scripture. Nor does it develop obscure arguments drawn from one part of Scripture in

water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.’ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, ...and every winged bird...”; Genesis 1:24 “And God said, ‘Let the land produce living creatures...’ And it was so.”; Genesis 1:26-27 “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image...’ So God created man in his own image.”

⁴ That is not to say that literary analysis of a text is invalid. It is, rather, that conclusions drawn from literary form criticism may enhance, but can never contradict the meaning derived from a careful grammatical-historical reading of the text. Great care must be used when determining and analyzing supposed literary elements of the text. Literary aspects of a text operate at a different level than the bare words. Literary elements may heighten our emotions, create a “sense” rather than convey specific information, attract our aesthetic appreciation, facilitate memorization, etc. Yet, there is a great deal of subjectivity in ascertaining when a literary device is being employed. In Genesis 1 is there really a triadic structure? Some are convinced that there is, others see parts of the text that do not fit the triadic theory. Perhaps the structure of the text is a reflection of the actual sequence of the creation work. Is there literary OR historical significance to the lack of the “morning and evening” formula at the end of the seventh day? Even when one is sure that a literary device has been found, what, then, do we make of it? Can the “sense” created by literary features contradict the natural sense of the words? If not used carefully, literary analysis can become a quagmire of subjectivity that robs the Scriptures of any clear testimony.

⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998) 26.

order to darken the sense of a perfectly clear passage. This tendency would contradict a basic principle of interpretation that is found in our Confession of Faith:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture... (WCF 1.6)

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them (WCF 1.7).⁶

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 (WCF 1.9).

All three of these passages from the Confession reflect on the perspicuity of Scripture. The Bible is not a book full of incomprehensible riddles. Nor do we need some secret code or recently discovered theological perspective to unlock its mysteries. It is, by and large, plain enough to be understood through ordinary means. Even when it proves difficult to understand one passage, others that are clearer will help the reader understand.

We think, then, of the *hermeneutic of faith* neither as a substitute for the precepts which should govern the interpretation of Scripture, nor a substitute for the actual work of exegesis, but as a foundational orientation of the heart, mind and will to receive the Scriptures as authoritative, clear, necessary and sufficient for our instruction.

Having laid this foundation, we proceed to the next section.

INTERPRETING THE TEXT

The man, woman or child who opens his Bible to its first page will encounter the most foundational chapters of all written revelation. All the rest of Scripture proceeds to develop the story that is begun in the account of the creation. Even the important theme of redemption rests on the foundation of the creation account for its historical and theological context.

We should expect, then, that the text of these chapters would be treated with the same respect that an obedient child would give heed to the words of instruction that come from a father's lips. Yet, such a cacophony of divergent opinions has been raised over the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, that the voice of the Father is barely discernible.

However, when we put the din of debate behind us, and turn once again to the account of creation, we find such majestic simplicity that the doxological purpose of Genesis 1:1-2:3 stands forth. An overview of the passage makes clear, though, that the doxology that is drawn from us as we contemplate the work of God at the dawn of creation is as much due to the manner in which he created all things as the fact that he did create all things.⁷ We are to behold the power, wisdom and goodness of God in all the details

⁶ It is at this point that some will object that the Confession only claims this clarity for those parts of Scripture that have to do with salvation. No doubt the teaching of Scripture regarding salvation is clear, but it would be an unwarranted opinion to hold that everything else could be obscure. Salvation is highlighted because of the important place it has in Scripture and in the life of the readers of Scripture. But the Confession also implies that Scripture is clear in other areas when it describes "saving faith". "By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." Notice, again, the special emphasis on the gospel itself, yet it is assumed that a Believer can understand the rest of Scripture in order that his faith may be trained by it.

⁷ The doxological intent of the creation account is captured in the Westminster Confession of Faith's statement: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his

that the text communicates to us. Moreover, if the text is not, in fact, relating to us an actual history of the creation events, then its revelatory significance is greatly reduced.⁸

We read the text of Genesis 1:1-2:3 as historical narrative. The Bible contains poetic reflections on the work of creation, such as Job 38:1-11; Psalm 33:6-9; and Psalm 104, but these poetic passages presuppose the historical trustworthiness of the original account in Genesis 1.⁹ The fact that there are perceived signs of some artistic embellishments with which the narrative is adorned takes nothing from the historical character of the text. Evidence of an underlying structure must be carefully interpreted so as not to contradict the very clear message of the text itself. Moreover, structural elements in the passage may just as well reflect the pattern of the creation work of God as any kind of unstated purpose on the part of the author.

The narrative of creation begins with: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It is a short declarative statement that is all encompassing in its scope. "Heavens and earth" describes all things from the heavens above to the earth beneath. They were all created in the beginning. Some interpret the verse as a beginning summary of the rest of Genesis 1. In other words, the body of the chapter is an explanation of how God created the heavens and earth in the beginning. Others, and this is the view of this writer, hold that the opening verse is a statement of the absolute beginning. The initial act of creation was *ex nihilo*. The rest of the creation narrative relates how the Lord differentiated the "stuff" of creation so that it took the form that we see in the present.

The state of the primal creation is described in the second verse: "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." This description of the original state of the physical realm tells us that the "heavens and earth" that were created did not appear originally in the state that we now observe them. Three characteristics of the primal creation made it unsuitable to be the home of mankind. The creation, with particular, but not exclusive, focus on the earth, was undifferentiated or without organization (formless), without the living things over which mankind would be given dominion (empty) and dark. Giving form, filling with creatures and bringing light into the darkness summarizes the work of God in the rest of the creation week.¹⁰

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" (WCF 4.1) Manifesting the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness is the controlling context for the specific affirmations of *ex nihilo* creation ("or make of nothing"), the duration of the creative work ("in the space of six days") and the perfection of the creation ("all very good"). Interpretations of the days of creation that obscure their historical character also obscure the intention of the Creator to glorify himself by completing the work in the space of six days.

⁸ Dr. Sid Dyer writes: "Forsaking the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 reduces its revelatory significance. The literary framework hypothesis reduces the entire chapter to a general statement that God created everything in an orderly fashion. How God actually did create is left unanswered. We end up with too much saying too little. The literal interpretation, on the other hand, takes the entire chapter in its full revelatory significance. Rather than seeing Genesis 1 as presenting God as a creative author, it sees God as the author of creation, who brought it into being by His spoken word." (Sid Dyer, "The New Testament Doctrine of Creation" in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press and Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1999) 237.

⁹ "Biblical symbolism relies heavily upon the preceding history. We have only to note the use of Old Testament types in the presentation of Christ to realize the importance of images derived from past history. Genesis 1-3 has no past history upon which to build. It has no store of persons and events to produce images. Its presence in Scripture is the beginning of the store from which future biblical writers will draw" Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988) 104.

¹⁰ At this point it might be good to note that the text itself suggests the rational behind the perceived parallel triad structure that M.G. Kline and others have suggested governs the interpretation of Genesis 1. Kline, et al, argue that there is parallelism between the actions of the first triad (days 1-3) and the

The Spirit of God hovered over the newly made creation. This particular mention of the Spirit's presence is without further explanation. However, there does seem to be some sense in which the Spirit's "hovering" is likened to the protection and care given by a bird to its young. The hatchling is not capable of finding food or protecting itself. It needs the special care of the parent until such time as it is ready to strike out on its own. Similarly, the infant earth is not yet organized and filled in such a way that the complex relationships of secondary natural causes are able to maintain themselves. This should be kept in mind because it seems to answer the issue raised by some about the uniformly natural mode of providence used by God during the creation week. The special note that the Spirit hovered over the deep (the waters that covered the whole earth) indicates that, whatever providential arrangements the Lord may have used during the work of creation, the exercise of direct supernatural governance for the nurturing and preservation of the infant creation cannot be ruled out and, in fact, is to be expected. Natural modes of providence are based on complex causal relationships that presuppose a completed creation order. In other words, prior to the completion of God's work on the sixth day, completely normal modes of providence were not in place.

With the third verse of Genesis 1 we find ourselves confronted with the issue of the days of creation.¹¹ The first Divine command brings into being a physical phenomenon called "light". The light appears in the midst of the original state of darkness. Subsequent to the first *fiat* God performs a second action that separates the light from the darkness. With this separation there are now two states that are distinguished, light and dark. God names the light "day" and the darkness is named "night."

Genesis 1:3-5 tells us about the organizing of phenomena that are part of the created order of things. How did we come to live in a world in which there is a regular cycle of a period of light, called "day," and a period of dark, called "night?" The answer is provided for us in these verses. The regular cycle of days, composed of a period of light and dark, begins at the point at which the separation takes place. This conclusively decides the issue of whether the days of Genesis 1 are historical or literary. The days are the result of God's creational activities. They are part of the created order and are never conceived of in Genesis 1 or any other part of Scripture as anything other than the first days of earth's history.

The interpretation of the days of the creation week as historical days is further strengthened by the act of God in naming the two states of darkness and light. In the naming of these physical phenomena, God is exercising his dominion over the creation. He is assigning a name and a function to the alternating light and dark that will be later recognized by the man that he creates in his own image. If the days were

second triad (days 4-6). The first three days portray the creation of the "kingdoms" of air, sea and land. The last three days portray the creation of the "kings", i.e., the creatures that would rule over the kingdoms. Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," *Perspectives in Science and Christian Faith*, vol. 48 (1996) 2-15, (see page 6). This is, supposedly, a topical arrangement rather than chronological, and thus is a clue that the days of Genesis 1 provide a literary framework, but are not meant to be understood as literal days. The text, however, suggests that the differentiation of sky, waters and land was accomplished to bring form to the "formless" (*tohu*) in order to provide the needed environment for the living creatures that would fill the "void" (*bohu*) that existed. Of course, if this is the case, then the chronological order of the passage need not be challenged. It would be necessary to create the environments before they could be filled. The pattern of Genesis 1 is not based on literary artifice but simply the necessity to create environments before the living creatures that will inhabit them.

¹¹ Unfortunately, the debate on the days of creation has been framed as a debate over the length of the days. The issue is much deeper than the length of the days. It concerns the nature of the days. Are the days historical or metaphorical? Are the days part of the created order of "heaven and earth"? Or, are they "analogical", i.e., God's workdays revealed as something analogical to our workdays? Even the Day-Age view, though it is concerned with the historical development of the cosmos, cannot take the days of Genesis 1 as they are presented to the reader. With the Day-Age view the "days" are divorced from all the defining details that mark the days of Genesis 1 and simply become metaphors for undefined ages of time. However, this leads us even further into the foundational debate on hermeneutics. The real issue is defining the limits of how far we can manipulate Scripture by means of reading scientific paradigms into the text (Day-Age view) or the use of biblico-theological paradigms to reinterpret the text (Framework and Analogical Day views).

anything other than the days that we recognize as part of our existence then the naming of the days has no significance to us.

At the end of verse 5, there is the first of the daily refrains that mark the march of days throughout the rest of the creation week. "And there was evening, and there was morning..." The introduction of these two terms, evening and morning, signify the passage from day to night and night to day. In other words, a full cycle of the light and darkness makes up a regular day.

The work of the first day of creation is complete. However, there is something missing. On days 3-6 the Lord took note of a specific completed work and announced, "It was good." The first *fiat*, the creation of light, includes the statement of divine approval, however with the next act of God, the separation of light and dark and the beginning of the daily cycle, the appreciative observation is missing. Why? Both the creation of the original day (included in the work of day 1) and the separation of waters (the work of day 2) will require more work on God's part before they are brought to the point of completion. In the case of the first day, it will not be until the work of the fourth day is complete that the days and nights are under their normal "governors," the sun and moon. The work of separating waters will not be complete until the lower waters that have been separated by the sky from the upper waters are themselves separated from the land. On the fourth day the forming of the sun, moon and stars bring the night and day to the point of completion. At that time, and not before, the statement of Divine appreciation is appropriate. This point reinforces the chronological character of the narrative. Day four must be subsequent to day one since the work of day one is not completed until day four. Similarly, day three must be subsequent to day two since the work of separating the waters is not complete until then.

The days of the creation week all partake of the character of the first day. The boundaries of the days are the "morning and evening," denoting the cycle of day and night. Therefore, they are historical days. The revelation of God's creative work found in Genesis is inextricably tied to the actual history of his work. We cannot drive a wedge between revelation and event as the non-literal interpretations do.

At this point we might do well to discuss the meaning of the Hebrew word *yom*, always a prominent feature of the discussion of the days of creation. We find five meanings distributed through Scripture. They are: "1. The period of light (as contrasted with the period of darkness, 2. The period of twenty-four hours, 3. A general vague 'time,' 4. A point of time, 5. A year (in the plural...)" There is a special usage of *yom* when combined with the prefix *b^e*. It is translated as "when."¹² These five meanings are the lexical range of *yom*, yet the context of the passage under question determines the meaning in any single usage.

In its first usage in Genesis 1:5 it is found after the words "God called the light..." This is a definitive narrowing of the range down to one possible meaning. In Genesis 1:5a, *yom* is clearly used to denote the period of light in contrast to darkness which is called "night."

In the very next sentence (Genesis 1:5b), *yom* occurs again, but the relationship to the surrounding words gives us a different meaning. Here *yom* is immediately followed by '*echaad* and preceded by "And there was evening, and there was morning..." '*Echaad* can be used as a cardinal number (one) or an ordinal number (first). In sequence with the following numerical designations that follow in Genesis 1, it is the ordinal "first" which seems preferable. The words preceding *yom* in Genesis 1:5b define the limits of the day. It is the cycle of morning and evening. The complete cycle is *yom echaad* "day one" or "first day". In this usage we are clearly led to understand, as Moses' first audience would have understood, that *yom* means a period of twenty-four hours, i.e., the second definition in the above lexical range. The crucial point in this examination is that the day is an earth day. It is a day of light and dark. It is the first of the six day / night cycles in which God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. Finally, the form *b^eyom* is found in Genesis 2:4. As noted above, in this form the word is an idiom that is usually translated "when."

The contextual study demonstrates that in Genesis 1:1-2:4 *yom* may mean either the period of light in contrast to darkness, or the full cycle of day and night (24 hours). The usage rules out the meaning of a point in time or an extended indefinite period. The usage also ties the phenomenon of "day" to the natural cycle of light and dark. The idea of "day" as a non-literal marker by which a passage is arranged topically is not only without any biblical precedence, but is decisively contradicted by the contextual evidence.

¹² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980) 370.

The fourth day of the creation week often comes in for closer scrutiny since it argued by some that the presence of light must indicate the presence of the sun, moon and stars. If that is true, then the order of the creation events cannot be as they are presented in the text. Others say that the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day indicates that the length of days 1-3 could not be the same as a normal solar day.

The first objection rests on an unstated assumption that light can only come to the earth from the celestial "light bearers." No other possibility can be allowed. First, let it be noted that Scripture goes out of the way to teach that light existed before the "light bearers" that we see today. Casting doubt upon the explicit teaching of Scripture for whatever reason is to be shunned. The very order of creation events suggests a Divine intention to draw mankind's attention away from those two heavenly objects that have become the objects of worship in unbelieving cultures. The sun and moon are not gods that give life. They are creatures made for a specific purpose and under the dominion of their Creator.

Though written several centuries ago, Calvin's words seem to anticipate this very objection. It did not, however, happen from inconsideration or by accident, that the light preceded the sun and the moon. To nothing are we more prone than to tie down the power of God to those instruments the agency of which he employs. The sun and moon supply us with light: And, according to our notions we so include this power to give light in them, that if they were taken away from the world, it would seem impossible for any light to remain. Therefore the Lord, by the very order of the creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon.¹³

A more contemporary critique of this objection can be found in the Report of the Creation Study Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America.

This argument—first made by the ancient pagan Celsus—fails to recognize the anti-mythological polemic of Moses. Since the sun and moon were worshiped by both the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, Moses reports that God did not even create them until the fourth day, clearly demonstrating that they were therefore not necessary for the establishment of day and night, thus strongly asserting their creatureliness and the utter contingency of the created order. God Himself determines the nature of a day on the first (and every other) day, not celestial bodies or pagan objects of worship. ["He also made the stars." Gen 1:16] God alone rules all of His creation, including time, which is ultimately contingent upon Him alone.¹⁴

The second objection based on a supposed difficulty with the fourth day, is not so much a critique of Ordinary Day creationism as with the contention that the days of the week are twenty-four hour days, that is, that the days prior to the fourth day are the same in length as the solar days that existed from the fourth day. This objection does not arise from a claim that the sun and moon must have been present in order for light to exist, rather it objects to "reading backward" the normal solar day that is present in days 4-7 into days 1-3. While the text of Genesis 1 does not explicitly state the length of the days of creation, it ought not to be seen as any trouble for the Lord to conform the time of the first three days to the time of the rest of the days of the week. The fact that nowhere in Scripture are we given any evidence that the days of the entire week were anything other than the normal length of days ought to mute this criticism. Had the Lord intended us to understand that the first three days were of a different duration than the last four, he had ample opportunity to clarify this. Rather, by using the common term "day" for the days of the creation week, and by specifically linking the days of the creation week with the days that we experience (Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:17), he seems to go out of his way to show us that there is an underlying continuity between the first days of history and the subsequent days with which we are familiar.

The sixth day of the creation week is sometimes held up as a reason for questioning the normal length of the creation days. It is said that there is too much activity on the sixth day to fit into a 24-hour period. The text of Genesis 1 tells us that on the sixth day God created living creatures on the land, made man, brought the animals to man for naming, caused Adam to sleep, created woman and made a garden for them to live in. Of course, since God created by the "word of his power", and was not limited in his ability to form living creatures or gardens instantaneously, this objection runs the risk of arbitrarily

¹³ Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 33.

¹⁴ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 148.

limiting God's power. However, it may be argued that Adam, as a finite creature, would have needed more time than a twenty four hour day would have afforded him to name the animals, take a nap, and participate in the first marriage ceremony.

There seems to be an unstated assumption in this objection that Adam had to have named all the creatures on the sixth day. This is certainly not the case. The narrative does not tell us that every creature came to Adam to be named by him on the sixth day. Adam's naming of the creatures no doubt was the work of many days. In fact, the naming and classifying of newly discovered species continues to the present time. The text seems to emphasize, though, that Adam saw enough of the newly made creatures to realize that there was no creature that corresponded to him in the way that he saw male and female genders of the other animals. That point having been made to Adam in the parade of animals that were brought to him, God went on to create the suitable helper for Adam and unite them as man and wife.

Perhaps the most complex argument against the natural length of the days of creation is based on a particular interpretation of the seventh day. It is argued that the seventh day is a perpetual day. It still continues and, therefore, if the seventh day is not a literal day, then the other days of the week must not be literal days. In support of this theory it is claimed that the usual refrain, "And there was evening, and there was morning..." is missing from the text. Its absence indicates that the seventh day does not end. In addition to this argument is another based upon a reading of Hebrews 3:1-4:7 that claims the references to a "Sabbath rest" that yet remains for the people of God prove that the seventh day has not yet ended.

The first element of this argument is relatively easy to explain. In the progress of the days of creation, the notation of each day's passing (morning and evening, the 'Nth' day) leads immediately to a description of the creation work of the next day. The consecutive nature of the narrative is emphasized by the repeated use of the *waw* consecutive introduction to "God said..." (*wayyomer elohiym*). In other words, not only does the "morning and evening" refrain serve as an endnote to the work of one day, it also serves as a bridge to the *fiat* command of God that began the work of the next day. However, there was no eighth day of the creation week. With the close of the sixth day, God's creation work had ended. The seventh day God rested. Since the creation work did not again begin on the eighth day there was no need for the refrain to act as a bridging statement.¹⁵

If we assume that the absence of the morning and evening refrain means the seventh day is an unending day, we are not only guilty of a somewhat wooden method of interpretation, but also of creating a radical discontinuity between the seventh day and the other six days. We would have six days that are clearly part of the created order followed by a seventh day that is excised from the created order and still, somehow, somewhere, continuing on. Such a method would inject an element of a-historical fantasy into the most historically foundational chapter of the Bible.

The theory of an unending seventh day has also been supported by an argument developed from Hebrews 4. The author of Hebrews linked the "rest" of the eternal state of the redeemed with the seventh day rest of Genesis 2:2-3 by a line drawn through the unfulfilled "rest" of the people of Israel, who did not enter the land of Canaan after their rebellion at Meribah (Psalm 95:7-11).¹⁶ The writer of

¹⁵ "The formula 'there was evening and there was morning' is used as a connective between the days of the creation week, and thus does not occur following the seventh day, because a description of the eighth day does not follow. That obviously does not mean there was not an eighth day, or that the seventh day continues indefinitely. Adam and Eve in the Garden observed their first full day as a Sabbath of rest and communion with God" PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 143.

¹⁶ The historical references behind Hebrews 4:3 need some elaboration. The writer of Hebrews begins the chain of biblical references by citing Psalm 95:11 ("So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"). The Psalm cites the names "Meribah" and "Massah" as those given to the place where the people of Israel quarreled with God and tested Him. These two names appear in the episode of Israelite unbelief found in Exodus 17. The people complained against God and Moses because they had no water. But the actual oath that is referenced in Hebrews 4:3 seems to be found in yet another passage. Numbers 14:28ff records that God swore on His own Being that the people who had refused to enter Canaan because of their lack of faith would not enter the land, but would fall in the desert. The writer of Hebrews appears to be conflating two historical events to emphasize the unbelief of the ancient people. Whether for thirst or for fear of the Canaanites, unbelief in God's promise and,

Hebrews, in the midst of an extended exhortation to persevere, contrasted the hoped for faithful perseverance of his New Covenant audience with the failure the people of Israel. Those who persevere in faith will enter into eternal rest, unlike the failure of the generation of Israelites who were prohibited from entering Canaan. Since Israel failed there yet remains a rest to be possessed by believers. In making his practical point, the writer draws on two prior biblical references to God's rest. God rested on the seventh day of the creation week, and "my" (God's) rest that was in store for the inheritors of Canaan. However, the practical point is based on figurative usage of the idea of "rest". The "rest" of the Christian's inheritance does not require us to deny that the seventh day was an actual historical day. The day was a historical day in earth's history. However, God's rest from his work of creation continues. The first Sabbath day was a solar day following the other six days of creation. However, the resting of God from his work of creation continues from that time forward and, in that sense, it is a rest that persevering saints will enter.

This concludes the study of Genesis 1:1-2:3. Now we turn to examine evidence for the traditional view that is drawn from outside of the creation account.

REFLECTIONS OF THE CREATION ACCOUNT IN SCRIPTURE

Our Confession of Faith teaches that there is only one infallible standard (rule) of interpretation of the Scriptures; that is, the Scriptures themselves (WCF 1.9). Due to the inspiration of the Spirit there is an internal consistency to the Bible that enables it to act as its own interpreter.

Usually the self-interpreting character of the Bible is useful when questions arise over the interpretation of one passage that must be resolved by appeal to passages that are clearer. In the case of Genesis 1 questions of interpretation have arisen not so much because the passage is unclear, but because, for one reason or another, the literal meaning of the text has become unacceptable to some portions of the church.

We now turn to other passages of Scripture to see how they reflect back on the first chapter of the Bible. Do these passages assume a literal or metaphorical interpretation of the creation account? Does the rest of Scripture assume that the account is a historical account? These are the key questions.

Exodus 20:8-11

8 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.
 11 For 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.

The same author of Exodus 20:8-11 wrote Genesis 1:1-2:3. This is true whether we consider the Divine author or the human author. In fact, Exodus 20:8-11 is a direct statement from God that is copied and relayed to us by Moses. It is, then, a completely Divine statement that self-consciously reflects back on the creation account for the purpose of justifying the Fourth Commandment.

The Fourth Commandment relies for its rationale on God's work of creation. But more than that, it relies upon the account of God's work of creation as found in Genesis. It assumes the complete historical truthfulness of the Genesis account without any hint of qualification. In fact, verse 11 is a summary of the account that is specifically an affirmation of the historical nature of the account.

"For in six days..." is an affirmation of the duration of the work of creation. The six days of God's work are the foundation for the six-day workweek that man is commanded to observe. There is no sense in the text that there is a radical discontinuity between the nature of the six days of man's workweek and the six days of God's work of creation. In fact, given the close proximity of the two references (verses 9 and 11) the simplest and clearest understanding is that there is a direct correspondence between the two.

therefore, disobedience to His instruction, were the proof of their perpetually hard hearts and stiff necks.

1013
 1014 "...the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them..." is a summary of the creation of the
 1015 different environments and the creatures that inhabit them. There is direct confirmation of the
 1016 completion of creation "within the space of six days."
 1017
 1018 "...but he rested on the seventh day..." We have already noted that claim that the seventh day is an
 1019 unending day and, therefore, the other six days are not to be taken as literal days, has no good
 1020 foundation based on scriptural exegesis. But, again, we emphasize that there is no indication of a
 1021 discontinuity between the six historical days of creation and the seventh day of God's rest.
 1022
 1023 "Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." This statement confirms the fact that
 1024 the seventh day of the creation week is a part of the created order. The day is a recipient of the Divine
 1025 action of blessing and separating. There is no good reason to separate the Sabbath of Genesis 2:2 and
 1026 that of Genesis 2:3. The day that God rested from his labor of creation was also the day that he blessed,
 1027 as it was also the first full day of Adam's life.¹⁷ In addition we may cite Mark 2:27 "Then he said to
 1028 them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'" The sanctifying of the Sabbath in
 1029 Genesis 2:2-3 was the point in time when "the Sabbath was made for man."
 1030
 1031 The force of the Fourth Commandment is lost if the "reason annexed" to the commandment is read as
 1032 anything other than a confirmation of the historical foundation of the commandment.
 1033
 1034

Psalm 33:6-9

1035 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of
 1036 his mouth.
 1037 7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses.
 1038 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him.
 1039 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.
 1040

1041 These few verses compose a brief poetic recounting of specific parts of the creation account of Genesis
 1042 1. The Psalmist includes these creation references as reasons for the people of God to praise him. How
 1043 do the people of God know that he made the heavens, the starry host and the waters of the sea in the
 1044 way that the Psalmist says? Because they have the history of his creation work in Genesis 1.
 1045

1046 Verse 6 refers to the work of God recorded in Genesis 1:14-19 (possibly also Genesis 1:6-8); verse 7
 1047 refers to Genesis 1:9-10. "The word of the LORD..." is a reference to the *fiat* acts of creation recorded
 1048 throughout the chapter ("And God said..."). The final verse of the passage confirms the sense of
 1049 immediacy that is communicated in Genesis 1 when the *fiat* is followed by the statement of fulfillment
 1050 ("...and it was so"). If we allow for long ages of "ordinary" processes to account for the formation of
 1051 the land, then the doxological force of the Psalm is lost. Rather, God is to be feared by all mankind
 1052 because he demonstrated the majesty of his power in speaking a word that was immediately fulfilled.
 1053
 1054

Psalm 104:1-9

1055 1 Praise the LORD, O my soul.
 1056 O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty.
 1057 2 He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent
 1058 3 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his
 1059 chariot and rides on the wings of the wind.
 1060 4 He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.
 1061 5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.
 1062 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the
 1063 mountains.
 1064 7 But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;
 1065 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you
 1066 assigned for them.

¹⁷ This, apparently, is the way that the authors of the Confession of Faith have understood the teaching of Scripture. They wrote, "...he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, *from the beginning of the world* to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week..." (WCF 21.7). Genesis 2:2-3 is cited as a proof text for this assertion.

9 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.

The doxological intent of the Psalm is clear in the first verse, however, in contrast to Psalm 33, the one who is praising God is the individual rather than the nations of the earth.

As with Psalm 33 there are specific references that rely on the historical truthfulness of the Genesis account to make their point with force. The passage presupposes a literal understanding of Genesis 1. How do we know that God is "clothed with splendor and majesty?" Because we have read in the account of creation that he spoke light into being (Genesis 1:3), created an expanse separating the waters above and below, separated the seas from the dry land. Historical foundations underlie the poetic call to worship.

Of particular interest in this passage is the reference to God wrapping "himself in light as with a garment." This adds weight to the position that the light was created before the sun and moon. The source of light was a supernatural act of God that demonstrated his splendor and majesty. There is no dimming of the splendor of God behind a reference to sun and moon as the source of light. Instead the light is an immediate creation of God.

II Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The Apostle draws an analogy from the creative command, which resulted in the shining of light out of darkness, to the gracious command, which results in the light of the glory of salvation in Christ shining into the darkness of our unregenerate hearts. As we see in other passages, the force of the passage is lost if the creative act was not a historical act. Paul has read and utilized the Genesis account as literal history.

CONFESSONAL AND SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES AND SIX DAY CREATIONISM

Previous mention has been made of the all but unanimous commitment of the Divines of the Westminster Assembly to the Ordinary Day view. External evidence from their own writings as well as the internal evidence from the Confession and Catechisms themselves all indicate that the Assembly viewed the creation week as the first week of earth's history, sharing the same nature and length as the succeeding weeks. Some have noted, however, that while the evidence is overwhelming that the Divines shared a commitment to the ordinary length of the creation days, they did not state in their Confession and Catechisms that the days of creation were specifically twenty-four hours in length. What, then, was the original intent of the authors of the Confession? Can we definitively interpret the Confession based on the other writings of the members of the assembly? Or, are we constrained to take the words of the Confession as they appear with no specific reference to the duration of the days? An analogous situation might be found in the debate over the meaning of the First Amendment to our United States Constitution. Appeal is made by some to a letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists in which he states that there should be an unbreachable wall between the state and the church. Can Jefferson's absolute statement in a private letter be used to determine the original intent of the constitutional convention? It is a piece of evidence that must be weighed judiciously, just like the non-confessional writings of the Westminster Divines, but in and of itself it may not decisively settle our understanding.

However, if we cannot say with absolute certainty that the Divines intended to rule out all possible views other than a strict twenty-four hour view (remember, Lightfoot had a variation of the twenty-four hour view), it must also be said that it does not follow, therefore, that all views are encompassed in the teaching of the Confession. There is strong internal evidence that the Divines saw the creation week as contiguous with and having the same character as the succeeding weeks of history. Views that challenge the historical and chronological understanding of the creation days are at odds with any rational interpretation of the Confession's phrase "in the space of six days."

Another consideration is the spirit in which the 1936 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church adopted the Confession and Catechisms as the doctrinal standards of the church (*the animus impenitentis*). Did the General Assembly allow for some divergent opinion on the length of the creation days? Yes, it did. Does that mean that all private opinions and new theories must be tolerated? Not at all. In fact it would be a violation of the theory of the *animus impenitentis* to claim that toleration for some views necessitates toleration for all views.

1129 The facts of both the Confession's history and our denomination's history must be weighed carefully.
 1130 Any natural hermeneutic applied to the Confession is going to yield an interpretation of the days of
 1131 creation that insists that the days are historical, sequential and of short duration. Yet, the OPC, in its
 1132 administration of officer's vows, has never insisted that this is the only view allowed within the
 1133 church.¹⁸
 1134
 1135 To insist now that only the twenty-four hour day view be allowed would cause major disruption in the
 1136 church. Many ministers and elders who had taken their vows with complete integrity under the tradition
 1137 of tolerance would suddenly find themselves reduced to second-class status or, perhaps, in danger of
 1138 discipline. On the other hand, when original intent is abused and stretched beyond reason and tolerance
 1139 has no boundaries, chaos will overtake us and the unity of our faith and testimony will be compromised.
 1140 It is certainly fear of the latter that has awakened a number of Ordinary Length Day creationists to a
 1141 new sense of urgency in the ongoing debate.
 1142
 1143 The challenge for Six Day Creationists is to advance what we believe to be the biblical, Confessional
 1144 and majority view of the days of creation while recognizing that the denomination as a whole probably
 1145 will never adopt an *animus* that mandates only one position. Indeed, some progress has been made
 1146 toward strengthening what is already the majority view in the church. But will it ever become the
 1147 exclusive view of the church? While we might hope so, it is not likely. On the other hand, the challenge
 1148 for those who hold alternative views is to realize that there is a growing resistance to extending the
 1149 tolerance that the church has had to any and all views. In other words, a general practice of tolerance
 1150 would continue, but, upon study, some views of the days of creation might be looked at with such
 1151 disfavor that those who hold them might not be seen as viable candidates for office. It might be fair to
 1152 say that the *animus* of the OPC will not be overthrown, but it may be tightened.
 1153
 1154 While the discussion of "liberty of conscience" is usually framed in such a way as to bring comfort to
 1155 men who hold alternative views of the creation days, there is another side that must be considered.
 1156 When called upon to cast a vote during licensure and ordination exams the conscience of those who are
 1157 convinced that some views violate both Scripture and Confession must also be respected. If a man is
 1158 convinced in his own mind that a certain view of the days of creation violates the non-negotiable
 1159 principles of historicity and sequence, then he has not only liberty, but also a duty to protect the purity
 1160 of the church by voting according to his conscience. Liberty of conscience is ultimately freedom from
 1161 the commandments and traditions of men, not a freedom to develop novel interpretations.
 1162
 1163 In our church's corporate sanctification God calls us to "a long obedience in the same direction." That
 1164 is, we who hold to the Ordinary Length Day view must realize that this issue will not be resolved by an
 1165 edict from the highest church court. We should work to make progress in the propagation of the
 1166 majority position by continuing to defend, explain and teach what we hold to be the literal truth of the
 1167 creation account. We should not be afraid to enter the debate wholeheartedly and use all available
 1168 means to uphold the clearest and most straightforward interpretation of the Bible's creation record.

¹⁸ We think it is important to make a distinction between *interpreting* the Confession and *administering* the Confession, or, rather the oath of office by which we receive and adopt the Confession. Interpretation is determined by the original intent of the authors of any document. Interpretive communities, much less individual people, can work all manner of mischief by holding that a document may have multiple equally valid meanings. In such a case our Confession would quickly cease to be a definite testimony to anything. On the other hand, the General Assembly, presbyteries and sessions of the OPC administer the Confession through the credentialing and disciplining processes. As an example we might think of the decision of the 2nd General Assembly of the OPC (November 1936) to continue the tradition of eschatological liberty. This was not a decision to allow multiple interpretations of the relevant Larger Catechism questions (87 and 88). It was an administrative decision to leave in place a tolerance that had been inherited from the old church.

1169

C. THE DAY OF UNSPECIFIED LENGTH VIEW

1170 This view of the creation days accepts the days of the creation account as seven contiguous days of
 1171 unspecified length. Adherents may hold the days as very brief in duration or may allow them to be very
 1172 long. This view accepts the days of Genesis as historical reporting of separate and actual events
 1173 occurring within the successive contiguous space-time days as reported. This view rejects macro-
 1174 evolution as a possible explanation of the days of creation or as consistent with biblical creation, but
 1175 does not deny, for example, that once the various kinds of fish and animals, for example, were created
 1176 these original creatures may have diversified within the kinds.

1177
 1178 This view pursues the path traversed by many reformed scholars of renown. Although this is not the
 1179 place to defend these analyses, it is affirmed that scholars such as W. H. Green, Herman Bavinck, B.B.
 1180 Warfield, and E.J. Young held to this view (but they seem to *allow* for an age-day view).¹ Young
 1181 represents but one voice in a long succession of voices that may be called the Princeton tradition. In his
 1182 *Introduction to the Old Testament* written toward the beginning of his teaching career, he wrote, "The
 1183 length of these days is not stated..."² Again at a somewhat later date, he stated in *Thy Word is Truth*,

1184
 1185 Surely, however, it will be said, Genesis is in error in declaring that the heaven and the
 1186 earth were brought into being in six days. To this we may reply that there is serious
 1187 question whether we are to understand the reference in Genesis to six days such as we
 1188 know them now or whether the writer rather desired us to understand the days as
 1189 longer periods of time. There is good evidence to support the latter position, although it
 1190 must be insisted that God certainly could have brought all things into being in the
 1191 space of six [ordinary] days.³

1192
 1193 Still later in his *Studies In Genesis One* he wrote, "The length of the days is not stated."⁴ Finally,
 1194 shortly before he died in 1968, in a series of lectures delivered during 1967 and published posthumously
 1195 under the title *In the Beginning* he stated,

1196
 1197 "One matter that Christians like to talk about is the length of these days. It is not too
 1198 profitable to do so, for the simple reason that God has not revealed sufficient for us to
 1199 say very much about it."⁵

1200
 1201 Like others of this school, he granted that the days may be longer periods of time but, unlike the
 1202 advocates of the day-age view, he did not insist on it. The scholars of this school of thought agreed that
 1203 the Bible does not assign a length to the days of Genesis, and natural science does not fix the date of
 1204 things, the origin of the universe and the length of the days of creation, either. Thus, they did not
 1205 entirely leave the length of the days up to natural science, because they warned, with Bavinck:

1206
 1207 Natural scientists have repeatedly interpreted the facts and phenomena they discovered
 1208 in a manner, and in support of a worldview, which were justified neither by Scripture

¹ This is illustrated by Young's comments in his *In The Beginning* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976) 43, "The first three days are not solar days such as we now know. The sun, moon, and stars were not in existence, at least in the form in which they are now present. That I think we are compelled to acknowledge. And the work of the third day seems to suggest that there was some process, and that what took place occurred in a period longer than twenty-four hours." It should also be noted that Dr. Young was in correspondence with Dr. Whitcomb as he and Dr. Morris wrote their book, *The Genesis Flood* and that the latter authors speak of a lot of geological activity occurring on the third day of creation.

² Edward J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Tyndale Press, 1949) 48.

³ Edward J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1957) 165.

⁴ Edward J. Young, *Studies In Genesis One* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964) 108.

⁵ Edward J. Young, *In the Beginning* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976) 43.

nor by science. For the time being it would seem advisable for geology-which, though it has already accomplished a lot, has still a vast amount of work to do to restrict itself to the gathering of material and to abstain from forming conclusions and framing hypotheses. It is still utterly incapable of doing the latter and must still practice patience for a long time before it will be competent and equipped to do it.⁶

In light of the work of some contemporary believing scientists, some of whom are affiliated with the Institute for Creation Research, there appears to be good reason for continuing to question much of what is offered on the basis of, or is in agreement with, the assumptions and interpretations of that “worldview, which [is] justified neither by Scripture nor by science.” Moreover, such scientists argue for a very young earth.

It is needful to point out that this “day of unspecified length” view does not violate the perspicuity of Scripture. That doctrine should not be understood to support a first hand (*prima facie*) interpretation of Scripture or a view biased by a predisposed theology. Arminians, Amyraldians and Baptists all hold that various aspects of reformed theology violate the perspicuity of Scripture. Reformed and Presbyterian believers point out that in spite of what these detractors assert, the Scripture teaches what the Westminster Confession sets forth even if the detractors’ conclusions are based on relatively sophisticated reasoning and exegesis. It is held that these detractors often hold a naïve understanding of Scripture (e.g., the Baptists) or see the Scripture through the glasses of a predisposed theology (Arminians, etc.). Many have correctly pointed out how believers argued against the views of Copernicus from “clear” biblical texts including the creation record itself. The question in evaluating the day of unspecified length view should be, does the Bible teach this view? Sometimes natural science leads theologians to reconsider certain exegetical and theological conclusions. To reconsider is not to abandon the truth but to see it from a different angle. Former reformed scholars, anxious for and committed to the principle of an educated but orthodox view of the creation days attest that the day of unspecified length view does not violate the perspicuity of Scripture nor does it rest with a naïve view. This view lets the text speak for itself.

The two primary subjects of a discussion of the days of creation are (a) the straightforward historical nature and presentation of the biblical creation account and (b) the length of the creation days. Such a discussion should be guided by the statement of the principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) expressed elsewhere in this report.

A. The Historical Nature of the Creation Account

The first subject, then, is the affirmation and defense of the straightforward historical nature of the creation account. This entails the principles that Genesis one is a special revelation from God, and as a historical presentation it relates matters which actually happened and in the order they happened. The following arguments support the historicity of the creation account:

1. It is accepted as an historical account in the rest of the Bible – several details of the creation account and the rest of Genesis 1-3 are presented elsewhere in the Bible as trustworthy factual history.⁷
2. It is an integral part of a historical book (Genesis) to which it serves as the assumed background and introduction.
3. John 1 assumes the creation account is true history. John opens with the words of Genesis 1:1, and teaches that Christ created all the things that were created (verses 1 and 3). This passage also argues, together with Exodus 20:11, that the creation account begins with Genesis 1:1.

⁶ Bavinck, *In The Beginning*, 121.

⁷ Ps. 33:6, 8-9, 96:5, 148:1-6; Isaiah 37:16; Jer. 10:11-12; John 1:1, 3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 19:4-5; Mark 2:27; John 8:44; Romans 4:6, 5:12-20, 8:20-22, 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 15:45-47; 2 Corinthians 6:16, 11:3, 9; Ephesians 4:22-24, 5:31; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Hebrews 3:7-4:13, 11:3; James 1:13-17, 3:9; 2 Peter 3:5.

4. The rest of Bible accepts *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing) as describing what happened from the beginning of all that was created, a truth that most certainly is reflected in and rests upon the creation record (John 1:1, Isaiah 40:26, Hebrews 11:3, Revelation 4:11).
5. Moreover, the Hebrew grammar of Genesis 1:1 through 1:3 ties these verses together grammatically so that verses 2 and 3 grammatically and logically and, therefore, didactically (as to their teaching) are a unit. Thus, if elsewhere in the Bible it is taught that Genesis 1:1 is historical and factual, the entire sequence to which these words belong must be historical and factual.⁸
6. Exodus 20:8-11 presents the creation record as six sequential and contiguous days followed by a climactic seventh and, moreover, summons Israel to “remember” those days in terms of remembering them as factual history faithfully reported. This is a summons to remember what they knew from their most ancient roots (Genesis 2:4) and not merely a summons to remember the Sabbath as an observance of what is being instituted for the first time (or in comparatively recent times).
7. The grammatical distinctives of historical reporting dominate the creation account. Thus the grammar presents the account as history.

Therefore, it is concluded that the creation account is to be understood as straightforward history (presented with some unique stylistic characteristics), and that it is intended to set forth the creative events and days sequentially, contiguously and accurately.

Ancient Near Eastern studies support the biblical defense of the historicity and accuracy of the biblical creation account. Specifically, it supports the conclusion that the biblical material was intended to be understood as a sequentially contiguous account. The following material summarizes the relevant Ancient Near Eastern materials:

1. At least one of the Egyptian writings says that the creation was the product of one god; that writing and others agree that the creation came into existence by the primary god’s word, that there was a primal abyss (deep), and that the god was pleased with the creating work. Also, the Egyptian stories of creation are presented in a sequential story format.
2. The Babylonian creation account presented in the *Enuma Elish* offers 8 points of agreement with the biblical order of the creation (there was a primal abyss; there was primal light without light producers; the primal water(s) was divided into waters above and waters below; the heavens were created//surveyed; the seas were measured and set in place; the skies were filled (the void was “populated”); the moon was made to be the regulator of the times and seasons; mankind was made out of divine elements and non-divine elements). This account is also sequentially presented. (It should be noted that the ancient world offers no extra-biblical creation story in a framework format.)
3. At several points in the ancient Near Eastern writings the 6 + 1⁹ pattern (with the seventh day being a climactic day) is used to speak of sequentially, contiguous, real days and of other sequentially, contiguous things.¹⁰
4. Many ancient writings employ a 2-unit literary structure where the first unit sets forth a survey and the second unit further details one or more of the items of the survey.¹¹

⁸ Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 69, cf., 30-38.

⁹ The fact that this 6 + 1 pattern appears in differing forms of presentation does not diminish the force of that presentation as setting forth things (including days) that are sequential and contiguous.

¹⁰ cf. Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 71ff..

¹¹ Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 116.

1311
1312

B. The Length of the Creation Days

1313 There are several exegetical matters undergirding a proper understanding of the length of the days of
1314 Genesis. When one reads the Genesis record in Hebrew he meets many lexicographical, grammatical
1315 and stylistic peculiarities each of which summons an exegetical decision. Young's *Studies in Genesis*
1316 deals with many of these matters: e.g., the significance of the opening phrase "in the beginning," the
1317 exegetical function and interdependence of the first three verses, the historicity of the report, the
1318 weaknesses in the non-literal interpretation (e.g., the framework understanding) etc.

1319
1320 At this point, consider some of the questions encountered in the record of the six days themselves that
1321 especially relate to the length of the creation days.

- 1322
1323 1. One must consider carefully the semantic distribution of the Hebrew word rendered "day,"
1324 and select that connotation which best suits the context. How is this semantic distribution
1325 answered by one's view of the length of the days?
- 1326 2. Moreover, assuming the writer's intent was to speak of an ordinary day, this grammar
1327 encases a very unusual use of the words "evening" and "morning" (as will be discussed
1328 below). The reader familiar with Hebrew idioms expects that the night and day previously
1329 mentioned would be used to close the day. Does a particular view of the length of days
1330 respond properly to the use of these Hebrew idioms?
- 1331 3. How does one's understanding of the days of creation harmonize or not harmonize with
1332 the days of Israel's week (the rest of the Old Testament)?
- 1333 4. The grammar of the coda is unusual, viz., "and there was an evening, and there was a
1334 morning." This grammar is quite unique and unexpected. What does this unusual
1335 grammar tell the reader?
- 1336 5. The order of things reported as occurring in the first day (Genesis 1:2-3) is an important
1337 consideration in discussing the length of the creation days. How does it fit into a particular
1338 view of those days?
- 1339 6. The problems introduced by understanding the coda as signifying an ordinary day are
1340 most perplexing. What is a proper response to these problems?
- 1341 7. Does the use of the ordinals in the creation account determine the connotation of the
1342 Hebrew word rendered "day?"
- 1343 8. Does the absence of the coda in the record of the seventh day help in determining the
1344 connotation of the word rendered "day?"
- 1345 9. There is the unusual grammar of the phrase "first day." One expects "*the* first day." The
1346 absence of the definite article in the Hebrew phrase "first day" is most unusual. This
1347 problem is enhanced when one reads the rest of the account and encounters the expected
1348 definite article at the end of both days 6 and 7. This argues that the unusual omission of
1349 the definite article is not just a stylistic variation. How does this unusual grammar and the
1350 concomitant facts relate to a proper view of the length of the creation days?
- 1351 10. How does the matter of death before the fall affect one's view of the days of creation?

1352
1353 All these unusual features tell the Hebrew reader that there is no intention that the evening and morning
1354 phrase, the coda, be understood as representing either an ordinary day or a nighttime of an ordinary
1355 (solar) day.

1356
1357 The above questions will, for the most part, be answered in the order they were presented (the exception
1358 is the treatment of questions 5 through 7).

1359 1360 1. The Word "Day"

1361
1362 The meaning and use of the Hebrew word translated "day" is very important to this discussion. A word-
1363 study substantiates that this Hebrew word has a diversity of connotations ranging from a point in time (a
1364 moment), an ordinary day, the entire period of the six days of creation, and a period of time whose
1365 length is not specified in the text (e.g., Lamentations 2:15; Psalm 18:18, 95:7-11, 78:42; Isaiah 2:11-12,
1366 7:5-11, 11:10-11). In all the occurrences of the word in the Hebrew Bible it represents a temporal line in
1367 created history. Moreover, these results are useful in understanding 2 Peter 3:8, and they support the
1368 interpretation that Peter, in referring to Psalm 90:4, uses "day" to represent a period of historical time of
1369 unspecified length. Thus, 2 Peter 3:8 stands as a good illustration, outside the creation account, of the
1370 use of the word "day" to represent a day of unspecified length just as it does in the creation account. It
1371 is the conclusion of this view that the creation account uses "day" to represent a period of created time
1372 whose length is not specified in the text.

1373

2. The Hebrew Idioms

A detailed study of the couplet use of the words “evening and morning” produces significant results. It demonstrates that there are 37 occurrences of this couplet outside the Genesis creation account (it occurs there 6 times) and that it never signifies an ordinary day. Usually it is used of the two parts of an ordinary day (35 times), i.e., of dusk and dawn, as is suggested by the English words translating the originals. It is especially noteworthy that the two words together infrequently stand at the termini of a nighttime, as some think they do in the creation account, and such a usage always involves a preposition or prepositions to specify this particular meaning. Outside the creation account there is no non-prepositional usage where the couplet signifies a nighttime. This challenges the conclusion that these two words in the creation account mark the termini of a nighttime because such a conclusion flies in the face of the text. Moreover, the use of this couplet tells us that someone familiar with Hebrew idioms would see the use of the couplet evening and morning as such, and, moreover without any prepositional specification, as a most unusual thing and as probably not referring to an ordinary day.

A study of the couplet day and night also offers important supporting information. It shows that this couplet, appearing some 47 times, is the ordinary Hebrew idiom for a solar day. It is used of an ordinary day whether it is modified by definite articles or no definite articles and whether there are prepositional phrases or whether there are none. This is the particular or usual idiomatic couplet for an ordinary or solar day. Note that the absence of this couplet in the coda of the first day (and the fourth day) is particularly remarkable, indeed is problematical if the intent was to speak of an ordinary day, since both in day one and day four the expected and required words, night and day, are readily available. This study, and the obvious choice not to use the couplet day and night, demonstrate how in the Hebrew idiom these were not ordinary days in length while the use of the word “day” requires that these are periods of time in created history.

The key to understanding the six uses of the couplet evening and morning in the Genesis record lies in the two asyndetic uses of the couplet in Daniel 8:14, and 26 where it descriptively represents a “day” – although not an ordinary (solar) day (cf., E. J. Young’s discussion in his *Commentary on Daniel*, 263ff.). He argues that these ‘days’ of Daniel do not add up to the historical time they represent and, in support, refers to cf., Dan. 12:9-13 where the number of days is symbolic of the time until Christ appears. This usage points back to those uses of the couplet indicating the times of the daily sacrifices, viz., that they were offered in the evening and in the morning in actuality. This use of evening and morning to denote the two separate parts of an ordinary day, in turn, points to their representative function whereby the sacrifices although offered at two distinct times every day were continuous in significance and, hence, they are called the continual burnt offering – the couplet has a symbolical significance. It is relevant to the current issue because the order of the two words morning and evening in nearly every mention of the sacrifices is evening and then morning. So, although in such cases the couplet does not describe an ordinary day or represent a nighttime, the continual evening and morning offerings symbolically accomplish the offering all day, every day. God in His infinite wisdom tied the worship days to the creation days – they are related by the order evening and morning.

3. The Relation Between the Creation Days and Israel’s Ordinary Days

If one argues that the “evening-morning” couplet of the creation days marks the conclusion of a day, then the creation days go from morning to morning, i.e., they consist of a daytime (they open with a morning dawning) and then a nighttime (they conclude with nighttime closing, i.e., another morning dawning). This sets up an internal tension in the biblical record. It argues that the worship day goes from evening to evening, i.e., a nighttime and then a daytime (it opens with an evening starting and concludes with a daytime closing, i.e., another evening starting) while the creation day goes from morning to morning – the first ends with an evening and the second ends with a morning. Understood this way, the creation days (the days upon which society built, Exodus 20:11) and the worship days (the day(s) upon which society was built) do not harmonize. This lack of harmony is most striking in view of what appears to be an intentional patterning of the worship times to correspond to the words of the creational coda, i.e., evening and then morning. As just implied, it is a problem in light of the fourth commandment that specifically mentions the seven days of creation as the divine exemplar or pattern upon which society is to be built. So, man is to pattern his week upon the creation week, but he is not to pattern his days upon the creation days. This is most perplexing. Indeed, it urges one to find some understanding of the days of creation that harmonizes with the days of man’s sacramental-ordinary week. But the problem is removed if on the basis of the use of the couplet in Daniel, one understands the creation days to move from evening (a nighttime) to evening (a daytime concluding when evening starts).

Thus, it was affirmed that these Daniel uses accord well with the use of the couplet in the creation

1437 account where it descriptively represents, i.e., describes a day, but not an ordinary day.

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4. The Unusual Grammar of the Coda

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Understood in this way (descriptively) the evening and morning couplet of the Genesis account makes more sense. Something strange is being said, so unusual grammar is employed – the syntax of the two clauses embodying the two words announces the unusual usage. For the same reason, an unusual idiom is used, viz., the evening-morning couplet. The order of the two words “evening” and then “morning” conforms to the order of the divine work as recorded in Genesis 1:3 – viz., there was darkness and then light was created.

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5-7. The Problems of the Coda

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(6) If one seeks to build an ordinary day view on the proposition that the evening and morning phrases describe respectively a nighttime and a daytime, he faces great difficulties. The first difficulty is that the words evening and morning are used instead of night and day. The latter couplet is the normal idiom for an ordinary day while the former idiom (evening and morning) are never used of a day of ordinary length (outside of the creation days). Also, these two words only describe a nighttime and daytime in Daniel 8:16 and 24 where they do not represent an ordinary day. So, the only other place in the Bible where this descriptorial use appears argues that they do not represent an ordinary day. Thus, one appears to be guilty of special pleading – this exegesis bears no support elsewhere in the Bible and even contradicts what is said elsewhere, but is true in this instance because it is true. Also, since he is arguing that we know these are ordinary days because they are described as such, viz., they are nighttimes and then daytimes, he still faces the problem of the lack of this description on the seventh day (the seventh day is not described as an ordinary day).

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If one builds an ordinary day view on the understanding that evening and morning in the coda of the creation days delimit a nighttime, he still faces another great difficulty.

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(5) Unless one denies that the creational work began in Genesis 1:1¹² (i.e., the days of creation began there), all that appears in Genesis 1:1-5 occurred on the first day. The same problem exists even if one says the first day consisted of Genesis 1:2-5. In either case, the opening darkness is part of the first day. Therefore, the things included in the first day are the first darkness, the light God created, and the concluding period of darkness. Either this is an ordinary day with two darkness periods in it or it is not an ordinary day (insofar as it is longer than an ordinary day). In the first case, the day may be understood as of ordinary length but it includes two dark periods. It is not an ordinary day in that sense. In the second case, the day described as “the first day” is not an ordinary because it is longer than an ordinary day.

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(7) Therefore, the existence of the first darkness invalidates many arguments advanced in defense of the ordinary day view, e.g., the argument from (a) the primary use of the word day, (a) the argument from explicit qualification, (c) the argument from numerical prefix (first, second, etc.), (d) the argument from numbered series, and (e) the argument from coherent days. Thus, the biblical description of the first day of creation argues that this was no ordinary day in nature and length. Also, taking the concluding phrases, or the coda, as phrases that not only conclude the section but close the day, argues that the seventh day has no closing.

8. The Use of the Definite Article with the Ordinals

¹² It might be suggested that Genesis 1:1 speaks about the heavens where God dwells and not the heavens of this creation (i.e., the area above the surface of the earth) but this means that the heavens of Genesis 1:1 is not subsequently mentioned in the rest of the creation account. It appears to violate the intent of the entire account *per se* insofar as it means the “heavens” of verse one is not the heavens of verses 9, 14, 15, 17, and 20). This interpretation also is not consistent with passages such as Psalm 89:11 where we are told the God founded (or created) the heavens and earth. In context the heavens are earth signify this present creation, i.e., the earth and all that is above it. Also, cf., Psalm 102:25 that tells us that God created the heavens and the earth “of old,” and that “they will perish, but You [God] will endure.”

When one holds that there is no concluding coda to the seventh day, it raises a problem. How can we tell from the creation record that the seventh day concluded? That is, if one holds that the seventh day continues until the end of history, how can he harmonize this with Exodus 20:11 where the seventh day is presented as part of a concluded week? In other words, how can one hold that the creation week concluded but the seventh day continues on? The answer to these questions is suggested by the strange use of the definite article prefixed to the ordinals in the creational day codas. The ordinals of days one through five have no definite articles and days six and seven have them. It should be understood that the normal Hebrew idiom requires a definite article on the adjective modifying a noun if the adjective-noun unit is definite (the *n*th day), but days one through five say “a *n*th day” in Hebrew. That this is not simply a stylistic peculiarity is established by the introduction of the definite article in the coda of days six and seven. This strange phenomenon sets these two days apart from their fellows. So, the question is why are the last two days of the week set apart as different? Or, in other words, how are they different than all the other days? If one wanted to mark both of them as the end of a sequence and say that they are concluding days logically (so to say), while presenting the seventh day as a day that is open-ended temporally (but as truly a “day”), this is the way such a goal might be accomplished in Hebrew. Hence, the sixth day is marked as the end of days one through six, and the seventh day is marked as the end of days one through seven. At the same time, the seventh day is called a real day (a period of time in created history) but an open-ended day.

9. The Absence of the Coda on the Seventh Day

The seventh day of the creation account lacks the concluding and closing coda but does evidence the definite article appended to the word day in its coda. These phenomena are consistent with the conclusion that the seventh day is the last day of the creation week, but a day that continues on after the creation account itself is finished.

This conclusion finds additional support in the way the seventh day is used and presented in Hebrews 4 and John 5:16ff. These two texts present God’s seventh day as continuing until the end of the creation. As such, the seventh day, as it is presented in the creational record, also argues against many of the propositions being offered in defense of the ordinary day view. This means that the use of the word “day,” the use of the ordinal, etc., all offer no evidence for the ordinary day argument because, for example, all of these items are attached to the seventh day of the creation that Jesus (John 5:16ff.) and the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 4) understand to be still continuing. If these arguments (offered in support of the ordinary day view) do not prove the seventh day is an ordinary day, they do not prove the other days are ordinary days.

The continuation of the seventh day is not contradictory to what is said in the fourth commandment because the commandment offers a *comparison* between God’s days of creation (whose length cannot be determined from the Bible) and man’s days of ordinary providence. A similar comparison appears in 2 Peter 3:8. To understand the fourth commandment otherwise requires one to view what it says as an *equation* of God’s days of creation and man’s days of ordinary providence. Such an equation also runs contrary to many Old Testament passages teaching that God’s day is not simply to be equated to man’s days, and what the creation account itself teaches (as just summarized).

10. The Question of Death Before the Fall

As for the question of death before the fall, the following should be noted (1) this issue is no obstacle, exegetically speaking, to many of the views of the days of Genesis and (2) perhaps not problematic for any of the views.

There is a historical argument supporting these assertions. Former scholars such as Warfield and Young labored hard to be orthodox and are widely acknowledged both as orthodox and careful, painstaking exegetes. It is unimaginable that they ignored the question of death before the fall, and yet they held the days of creation might have been long periods of time. Perhaps their reasoning resembled what Bavinck said:

Calvin and most Reformed theologians were of the opinion that eating meat was permitted to humans even before the flood and the fall [Emphasis added]. The fact that Genesis 1:29 does not expressly mention it cannot, as an argument from silence, be of service here. In Genesis 1:30 only the plant world is divided between man and animal, nothing is said about man’s dominion over and claims upon the animal world. The animal world had already been placed under human dominion in Genesis 1:28, an act which certainly includes, especially with respect to the fish of the sea, the right to kill and use animals. Immediately after the fall God himself made garments of animal skins

(3:21) and Abel made a sacrifice that was surely followed by a sacrificial meal. The practice of eating meat, moreover, was certainly in use before the flood and, if God did not authorize it before Genesis 9:3, it would have been unlawful and sinful before that time. Genesis 9:1-5 does not present a new commandment, but renews the blessing of creation; a new feature is only the prohibition to eat meat with its life, that is, its blood. The ground for the injunction against killing human beings (Gen. 9:5-7) is not present in the case of animals, for they were not made in God's image. Incomprehensible, finally, is why of all times God should permit mankind to eat meat after the fall and after the flood; one would expect the contrary, namely, that the rights and rule of man would be restricted after the fall. One would expect that, to counter lawlessness and degradation, the use of meat would be abolished and that vegetarianism would be considered much more in accord with the post-fall and post-flood state of mankind than the practice of eating meat.

In all these issues Reformed theology was able to make such sound judgments because it was deeply imbued with the idea that Adam did not yet enjoy the highest level of blessedness. Sin undoubtedly has cosmic significance. As is evident from the phenomenon of death, sin also impacts our physical existence and has brought the entire earth under the curse. Without sin the development of humanity and the history of the earth would have been very different though still unimaginable. Still, on the other hand, the state of integrity cannot be equated with the state of glory.¹³

Bavinck cites the following relevant comments of Calvin on Genesis 1:29, "And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.'" (cf., his commentary on *Genesis*). Thus it is attested that death before the fall, even among animals, was taught by reformed scholars long before the rise of Darwinism.

Some infer, from this passages [sic] that men were content with herbs and fruits until the deluge, and that it was even unlawful for them to eat flesh. And this seems the more probable, because God confines, in some way, the food of mankind within certain limits. Then after the deluge, he expressly grants them the use of flesh. *These reasons, however are not sufficiently strong:* for it may be adduced on the opposite side, that the first men offered sacrifices from their flocks. This, moreover, is the law of sacrificing rightly, not to offer unto God anything except what he has granted to our use. Lastly men were clothed in skins; therefore it was lawful for them to kill animals. *For these reasons, I think it will be better for us to assert nothing concerning this matter.* Let it suffice for us, that herbs and the fruits of trees were given them as their common food; yet it is not to be doubted that this was abundantly sufficient for their highest gratification. For they judge prudently who maintain that the earth was so marred by the deluge, that we retain scarcely a moderate portion of the original benediction. Even immediately after the fall of man, it had already begun to bring forth degenerate and noxious fruits, but at the deluge, the change became still greater. *Yet, however this may be, God certainly did not intend that man should be slenderly (sic) and sparingly sustained; but rather, by these words, he promises a liberal abundance, which should leave nothing wanting to a sweet and pleasant life. For Moses relates how beneficent the Lord had been to them, in bestowing on them all things which they could desire, that their ingratitude might have the less excuse [Emphasis added].*¹⁴

If the days were long periods of time, perhaps such scholars would point out that the Genesis record presents matters in broad strokes and does not detail whether death came upon parts of the creation (other than upon mankind) at the fall. The record does not tell us if once the sun began to provide light, this meant that the sun lost energy, or began to run down (i.e., began to die). While it does imply that before the fall death came upon the seed plants that were eaten (John 12:23-24): Were bugs eaten by birds or small insects and animal life by the fishes?

Moreover, logically speaking, holding that the days were long periods of time does not necessitate the conclusion that things died during those periods of time, perhaps God miraculously preserved things so

¹³ Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, 211-12.

¹⁴ Bavinck, *In The Beginning*, 211-12.

1608 that they did not die. It is also important to note that such scholars did not say these days must have
1609 been long periods of time. An advocate of the day of unspecified length view might agree with some
1610 contemporary “creation” scientists that the days were very short. Hence, this issue is no block to the day
1611 of unspecified length view.
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1613 Thus, it is affirmed that the creation account is to be understood as straightforward history with each
1614 day occurring one immediately after the other. The creative events also occurred in the order they are
1615 presented in the account. The creation account may appear in an exalted style, but the content is history
1616 that teaches us a factual cosmogony (how the universe originated both as to fact and sequence) and a
1617 true cosmology (how the universe is ordered). Finally, the length of the days cannot be determined from
1618 what the Bible tells us – they are days of unspecified lengths.

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D. THE DAY-AGE VIEW**1620 DEFINITION OF THE DAY-AGE VIEW**

1621 The day-age view can simply be described as a view that holds to the creation days at the beginning of
 1622 creation (as described in Gen 1) as allowing for long durations of time. According to Classical biblical
 1623 Hebrew, "day" (*yom*) can connote 24 hour periods as well as long periods of time just as "day" does in
 1624 other languages (e.g., English "the day of your calamity," "the day of salvation," "the day of the Lord,"
 1625 "the day of judgment"). Therefore, one should not foist a particular view of "day" upon the Genesis
 1626 account in such a way that does injury to the possible connotations of the word and the current scientific
 1627 data at our disposal.

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1629 The day-age view is not to be confused with the so-called gap theory, a prominent view among pre-
 1630 World War II fundamentalists which was promoted by the Scofield Reference Bible.¹ The gap theory
 1631 teaches that Gen 1:1 refers to a dateless past while Gen 1:2 refers to a cataclysmic change in the
 1632 cosmos. Scofield and his followers (of which there were more than a few, both before and after World
 1633 War II) wanted to accommodate scientific geological ages by positing a gap between Gen 1:1 and 1:2
 1634 which in turn allowed for an old earth. The view has been totally discredited from a linguistic point of
 1635 view.²

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1637 By contrast, in the day-age view, *yom* (day) has certain elasticity to it as used by writers of Classical
 1638 biblical Hebrew (prose and poetry). This allows for the integration of current scientific theories about
 1639 the age of the universe with the biblical data. If science, having arrived at some currently accepted
 1640 conclusion about the age of the universe should tell us that the universe is very old, and the scriptural
 1641 data about the age of the universe should allow us to interpret the word *yom* (day) as spanning a long
 1642 period of time, then by all means we should allow for the harmonization of the scriptural data and the
 1643 scientific data in order to make sense out of the creation account in Genesis 1, and in order to allow for
 1644 the integration of the book of nature and the book of special revelation (i.e., holy Scripture).

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1646 WHO HAS HELD THE VIEW?

1647 If broken down into "typologies" (i.e., to show family similarities but also to allow for distinctions),
 1648 then there have been many orthodox Reformed theologians, biblical scholars, and Pastors who have
 1649 been adherents of this view including the Hodges (both) and Machen. Consider, for example, what
 1650 Charles Hodge says:

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1652 In favour of this latter view [day-age versus "gap theory"], it is urged that the
 1653 word day is used in Scripture in many different senses. . . It is of course admitted
 1654 that, taking this account [i.e. Gen 1-2] by itself, it would be most natural to
 1655 understand the word in its ordinary sense; but if that sense brings the Mosaic
 1656 account into conflict with facts, and another sense avoids such conflict, then it
 1657 is obligatory on us to adopt that other. Now it is urged that if the word "day"
 1658 be taken in the sense of "an indefinite period of time," a sense which it
 1659 undoubtedly has in other parts of Scripture, there is not only no discrepancy
 1660 between the Mosaic account of the creation and the assumed facts of geology,
 1661 but there is a most marvelous coincidence between them.³

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1663 It is beyond doubt that Dr. J.G. Machen, founder of Westminster Seminary and the Orthodox
 1664 Presbyterian Church, also held to the day-age view:

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¹ Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Kopf, 1992) 71.

² Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982).

³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol.I (Repr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982) 570-71.

The Book of Genesis seems to divide the work of creation into six successive steps or stages. It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty-four hours each. We may think of them rather as very long periods of time.⁴

In recent years the number of ministers adhering to the day-age view in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has become less.

Many others within the orbit of Reformed orthodoxy could be cited as adherents of the view.⁵ Outside of the Reformed tradition, the day-age theory has had its adherents as well. For example, in order to assert that the day-age view is not just a response to the tenets of modern science, some day-age proponents are quick to enlist among their ranks a long pedigree of early church leaders which predate the rise of Darwinian science and modern geological theories.⁶ Whether their assertions are specious or not is a matter for historians to determine.

Nevertheless, the rise of Darwin and modern geology ushered in a more vigorous line of defense from scientific creationism and a stronger impulse towards concordism in the form of day-age adherents than the church had known heretofore. For example, in the late nineteenth century, the defense of creationism fell largely upon the shoulders of Canadian geologist John William Dawson and the Frenchman Arnold Guyot, who landed a job at the College of New Jersey.⁷ Later, the day-age theory would gain such adherents as the influential George Frederick Wright and William Jennings Bryan, of evolutionist controversy fame. In our own day, Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer have been some of the most outspoken proponents of the day-age view.⁸

The quest for harmonization between modern science and the biblical text is conspicuous in some proponents of the day-age view. In the next section we note some of the rationale for the view. There will necessarily be a greater or lesser emphasis on some of the following rationales depending on which author is espousing the day age view (e.g., Hodge vis-à-vis H. Ross).

RATIONALE FOR THE VIEW

1. Concordism

There are many brothers both living and dead who have held a day-age view in seeking to take seriously the findings of scientific disciplines. Such crucial questions as the relationship of the Christian faith to contemporary natural science theories summon a response faithful to the biblical record. Day-age adherents are very concerned about some of the anti-intellectual trends in the church with respect to cosmology, earth science, biology and astronomy; in a word, anti-intellectualism should be a current concern in the OPC as well.

As an example from 1884, consider the elegant words of Mr. Guyot:

The great spiritual truths emphatically taught by the narrative are: a personal God, calling into existence by his free, almighty will, manifested by his word, executed by His Spirit, thing which had no being [sic]; a Creator distinct from His creation; a universe, not eternal, but which had a beginning in time; a creation successive -- the six days; and progressive -- beginning with the lowest element, matter, continuing by the plant and animal life, terminating with man, made in God's image; thus marking the great steps through which God, in the course of ages, gradually realized the vast

⁴ J.G. Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (London: Banner of Truth, 1937) 115.

⁵ See, for example, the PCA's *Report of the Creation Study Committee*, 152-62.

⁶ Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1994) 16-24.

⁷ See Numbers, *The Creationists*.

⁸ See Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, "The Day-Age View," in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (ed. David Hagopian; Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001) 123-214.

1712 organic plan of the cosmos we now behold in its completeness and unity, and which he
 1713 declared very good. These are the fundamental spiritual truths, which have
 1714 enlightened men of all ages on the true relations of God to his creation and to man. To
 1715 understand them fully, to be comforted by them, requires no astronomy nor geology.
 1716 To depart from them is to relapse into the cold, unintelligent fatalism of the old
 1717 pantheistic religions and modern philosophies, or to fall from the upper regions of light
 1718 and love infinite into the dark abysses of an unavoidable skepticism . . . but thinking
 1719 men, as well as men of science, crave still another view of this narrative; an intellectual
 1720 view we may call it. They wish fully to understand the meaning of the text when it
 1721 describes the physical phenomena of creation. Are the statements relating to them a
 1722 sort of parable to convey the spiritual truths just mentioned, or are they facts which
 1723 correspond to those furnished by the results of scientific inquiry?⁹
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1725 Such concordist impulses noted in the quote above can be easily found in our own day as well. For
 1726 example, Hugh Ross says, "The abundant and consistent evidence from astronomy, physics, geology
 1727 and paleontology must be taken seriously."¹⁰
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1729 2. Biblical & Theological

1730 Regarding the lexical material, day-age adherents would assert that the word *yom* allows for a range of
 1731 meaning that goes beyond 24 hours, both in the canonical context and in the immediate context of Gen.
 1732 1 & 2 (e.g., Isaiah 11:10-11; Leviticus 25:10; Judges 17:10 etc...).¹¹ This assertion is supported by any
 1733 of the standard Hebrew lexicons, for example. In the Day-age view, the days are taken as basically
 1734 sequential although some proponents would view the days as possibly overlapping.

1735 Day-age adherents sometimes accuse "young earthers" of unfairly mishandling the lexical data.
 1736 Proponents of the day-age view maintain that "young earthers" often say that the Hebrew word '*olam*
 1737 would have been used (as opposed to *yom*) in order to indicate a long period of time. Such a view is
 1738 fallacious for a number of reasons, not the least of which is an overly facile use of the lexical material.¹²
 1739 The bottom line, as most of the day-age adherents recognize, is that the current debates about the length
 1740 of the creation days will not be resolved in either direction by lexical studies alone.

1741 One possible theological rationale for this view is that God does not deceive and therefore, what you
 1742 see in creation and the natural world is what you get. In other words, true information about the age of
 1743 the Universe may be ascertained based upon current accepted models of scientific analysis. Consider
 1744 Ross' comments:
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1746 Our view of creation must take God's character into account. Whatever
 1747 object of His creation we subject to scientific analysis will reveal their true age -
 1748 provided the analysis is theoretically valid, correctly applied, and accurately
 1749 interpreted. For created things to show a deceptive appearance of age would
 1750 seem a direct violation of God's own stated character and purpose.¹³
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1752 Some defenders of Day-age view have charged the young-earthers with employing the "Gnostic
 1753 Factor." Ross and Archer, for example, say, "The young-universe interpretation gives rise to a more
 1754 subtle problem: it forces a gnostic-like theology – a belief that the physical realm is illusory and that
 1755 only the spiritual realm is real."¹⁴
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⁹ Arnold Guyot, *Creation: or, The Biblical Cosmogony in the Light of Modern Science* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884) 20-3.

¹⁰ Ross, *Creation and Time*, 54.

¹¹ Cf., The PCA report (154-55) and Longacre's understanding of Gen 2:4 and *yom* in Gen 1.

¹² For the definitive work on '*olam*, see E. Jenni's work listed in the bibliography.

¹³ Ross, *Creation and Time*, 54.

¹⁴ Ross and Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, 128-29.

Once again, one is able to see that the real issues here are not going to be solved by a mere word-study or lexical approach alone; rather, the more significant issue is the relationship between the books: i.e., the book of nature and the book of God's special revelation as contained in Holy Writ.

3. Evangelistic

This particular issue (i.e., methodology and the seriousness with which one engages the book of nature) has legs to it. One's attitude towards science and how that attitude is incorporated into one's methodology has a profound impact upon evangelism. Consider the following, "As circumcision distorted the gospel and hampered evangelism, so, too, does young-universe creationism."¹⁵

In yet other places in his work, Ross goes another step and states, "To win these people [i.e. scientists & scientific thinkers] to Christ and to welcome them to participate in our church ministries is to pave the way for the greatest ingathering the church has ever seen."¹⁶ Ross and Archer continue along similar lines:

The day-age interpretation we have presented here is uniquely consistent with Christ's evangelistic mandate. Why did God reveal Himself in a written document, the Bible, if not to draw people into the eternal relationship for which He paid the supreme price? . . . According to the apostle Paul, we are responsible to test what we are taught and hold fast to that which proves true and good. When we test the assertions of the 24-hour-creation-day interpretation, we find that they do not hold true, either biblically or scientifically. Unfortunately, because of this failure to withstand rigorous testing, young-earth creationism has become a frequent excuse for rejecting the Christian gospel and worldview.¹⁷

The day-age proponents realize how divisive the issue of the length of the days has become. They are not timid about pointing out possible reasons for the growth in divisiveness. For example, they assert that fear drives much of the divisiveness and negative views towards science.

Some of the day-age proponents encourage the adoption of certain Christian virtues that have been sorely lacking in the discussions surrounding this volatile issue heretofore, e.g. gentle correction and not harsh condemnation which only leads to further intransigence.¹⁸ Numerous other points that our PCA brothers pointed out in their recent report could be added at this point.¹⁹

Some have considered, with good reason, that many proponents of the day-age theory may have a science driven hermeneutic.²⁰

The 4th creation day remains a problem. Some day-age proponents would argue for "point of view" to explain the sun "appearing" in order to untie the Gordian knot of the 4th day, i.e., the creation of the Sun. By such straining, it seems that they garble the narrative of the text.

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¹⁹ See PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 161-62.

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- 1807 Guyot, Arnold. *Creation: or, The Biblical Cosmogony in the Light of Modern Science*. New
1808 York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884.
- 1810 Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Repr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982.
- 1812 Jenni, Ernst. "Das Wort 'olam im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche*
1813 *Wissenschaft* 64, 1952 & *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 65, 1953.
- 1814 Jenni's ideas in English translation may be found in:
1815 Jenni, Ernst, and Claus Westermann, eds. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament: Vol. 2*.
1816 Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997.
- 1817 Anthony Tomasino, "Entry 6409." Pages 345-51 in *New International Dictionary of Old*
1818 *Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. Grand Rapids: Zondervan,
1819 1997.
- 1820 Numbers, Ronald L. *The Creationists*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Kopf, 1992.
- 1822 Machen, J. G. *The Christian View of Man*. London: Banner of Truth, 1937.
- 1823 Ross, Hugh and Gleason L. Archer. "The Day-Age View." In *The Genesis Debate: Three*
1824 *Views on the Days of Creation*. Ed. David G. Hagopian. Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001.
- 1826 Ross, Hugh. *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date*
1827 *Controversy*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1994.
- 1829 Ross, Hugh. *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*. Colorado
1830 Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1998.

E. THE FRAMEWORK VIEW

DEFINITION OF THE FRAMEWORK VIEW

There are several varieties of the framework view, some of which recognize the inspired, historical nature of the creation account, and some of which do not. In some cases, the framework view is also combined with an evolutionary viewpoint, although this is not necessary to the view itself. The Committee did not deem such liberal/evolutionary views of creation to be within the scope of its mandate, and so they are not included here in the definition of the framework view.

Most who hold to the framework view in the OPC, while not necessarily agreeing with every detail, would probably regard the following treatments as accurately representing their position in its conservative form:

Blocher, Henri. *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984.

Fesko, J.V. *Protology: Genesis 1-3 in the Light of Christ*. Unpublished Manuscript. 2003.

Futato, Mark. "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.

Irons, Lee with Meredith G. Kline. "The Framework Interpretation." In *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*. Ed. David G. Hagopian. Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001.

Kline, Meredith G. "Because It Had Not Rained." *WTJ* 20.2 (May 1958) 146-57.

_____, "Genesis." In *The New Bible Commentary*. Third Edition. Eds. Donald Guthrie and J. A. Motyer. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

_____, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48.1 (April 1996) 2-15.

Ridderbos, N. H. *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.

Ross, Mark. "The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3." Pp. 113-30 in *Did God Create in Six Days?* Eds. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall. Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press and Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1999.

According to the framework view, the six days of creation are *presented as* normal solar days. This distinguishes it from the day-age view, which argues that *yom* can represent a long era of time, as well as from the view that the length of *yom* is indeterminate (E. J. Young). Advocates of the framework view acknowledge that *yom* can be used to refer to longer periods of time in some contexts, but they argue that in this context *yom* is defined as a normal solar day composed of the normal period of darkness called "night" and the normal period of light called "day" (Genesis 1:3-5). However, advocates of the framework view go on to argue ...

Of course, we part ways with the 24-hour view when we insist that the *total picture* of the divine workweek with its days and evening-morning refrain be taken figuratively. The creation history is figuratively presented as an ordinary week in which the divine Workman/Craftsman goes about His cosmos-building labors for six days with intervening pauses during the night between each day, and finally rests from His work on the seventh day ... God's workweek of creation, which is revealed in Genesis 1:1-2:3 as a sabbatically structured process, was the archetype (original), while the weekly pattern of life appointed for God's human image-bearer is the ectype (copy).¹

¹ Lee Irons, and Meredith G Kline, "The Framework Interpretation." In *The Genesis Debate: Three*

1891 In other words, the *days* are presented as normal days, but they function within the larger picture of the
 1892 divine *workweek*, which is figurative. "It is possible to treat the terminology of the week as figurative
 1893 language, but at that moment 'day' has its ordinary meaning and *with that meaning* plays a figurative
 1894 role".²
 1895
 1896 At this point the framework view and the analogical view begin to converge and appear almost
 1897 indistinguishable. However, the framework view differs from the analogical view when it argues that
 1898 the Day 1/Day 4 problem is an instance of nonsequential or topical arrangement in the creation account.
 1899 The analogical view agrees with the framework view in interpreting the creation week
 1900 anthropomorphically so that there is an analogical correspondence between God's archetypal workweek
 1901 and Sabbath rest, and man's workweek and Sabbath rest. However, the analogical view maintains that
 1902 the order of the creation account is sequential.
 1903
 1904 What then is the framework interpretation? It is that interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3
 1905 which regards the seven-day scheme as a figurative framework. While the six days of
 1906 creation are presented as normal solar days, according to the framework interpretation
 1907 the total picture of God's completing His creative work in a week of days is not to be
 1908 taken literally. Instead it functions as a literary structure in which the creative works of
 1909 God have been narrated in a topical order. The days are like picture frames. Within
 1910 each day-frame, Moses gives us a snapshot of divine creative activity. Although the
 1911 creative fiat-fulfillments ... refer to actual historical events that actually occurred, they
 1912 are narrated in a nonsequential order within the literary structure or framework of a
 1913 seven-day week. Thus, there are two essential elements of the framework
 1914 interpretation: the nonliteral element and the nonsequential element.³
 1915
 1916 THE GENRE OF GENESIS 1:1-2:3

1917 Before surveying the arguments appealed to by framework advocates, the genre of the creation account
 1918 must be determined. On the one hand, the fact that the creation account is found in the book of Genesis,
 1919 which is itself part of the Pentateuch, is one indicator that the creation account is normal history.
 1920 Furthermore, Genesis 1:1-2:3 opens a vast historical narrative that continues down to the flood, the call
 1921 of Abraham, and the rise of the Israelite nation. The creation account initiates a historical sweep that
 1922 those of us who are committed to the inspiration and authority of Scripture consider to be a factual
 1923 record of events that occurred in space and time. Thus, the historical nature of the larger narrative of
 1924 biblical history would be cast into doubt if the initial account that anchors the whole is not taken as
 1925 historical fact.
 1926
 1927 On the other hand, the determination of the genre question in favor of history does not automatically
 1928 eliminate the possibility that the human author, under the sovereign direction and supervision of the
 1929 divine author, employed certain literary features to provide a structure for the account. Framework
 1930 advocates point to a number of such features in the creation account. For example, each day of creation
 1931 is carefully crafted and generally follows the same pattern:
 1932
 1933 FIAT: And God said, "Let there be light."
 1934 FULFILLMENT: And there was light.
 1935 SURVEILLANCE: And God saw that the light was good.
 1936 CONCLUSION: And there was evening and there was morning, day one.
 1937
 1938 It is the repetition of this four-fold pattern that gives the account a kind of rhythmic or strophic quality
 1939 unlike any other historical account in Scripture. "Its structure is strophic and throughout the strophes
 1940 many refrains echo and re-echo".⁴

Views on the Days of Creation. Ed. David G. Hagopian. (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001) 84.

² Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984) 45.

³ Irons, *The Genesis Debate*, 219.

⁴ Meredith G. Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained." *Westminster Theological Journal* 20.2 (May 1958) 146-57, 155.

Scholars have long noted that the account is structured in another way as well: there are a total of eight fiat-fulfillments, and these are distributed over the six days according to the following pattern:

1 creation fiat Let there be light	1 creation fiat Let there be lights
1 creation fiat Let there be an expanse to separate	1 creation fiat Let the waters teem and let birds fly
2 creation fiats Let the dry land appear Let the earth sprout vegetation	2 creation fiats Let the earth bring forth living creatures Let us make man

Thus, both days 3 and 6 have two creative acts each, whereas the other days only have one each. "This arrangement of 1 + 1 + 2 followed by 1 + 1 + 2 makes the parallel nature of Days 1 through 3 and Days 4 through 6 obvious".⁵

The history of creation has been shaped to a high degree by a rather pronounced literary structure. Thus, although the creation account is history and not poetry, it is still appropriate to recognize that there are figurative and literary features in this historical account.

THE TWO-TRIAD FRAMEWORK

But the parallels do not stop there. Many scholars have noted that Days 1 and 4 are very closely related (dealing with light and luminaries). Similarly with Days 2 and 5. Day 2 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 5 is thematically linked to the sky/seas of Day 2, since on Day 5 God creates the rulers of the seas and of the sky. And on Day 3, God forms the dry land and vegetation, which will be ruled by the living creatures of Day 6. Most modern commentators recognize the validity of this two-triad structure (e.g., Cassuto, Sarna, Wenham, and many others).

Differences exist among framework interpreters on how to classify the two triads. Some medieval commentators described the first three days as *separation* and the last three days as *adornment*. Henri Blocher argues that the conclusion of the account provides the key: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished [Days 1-3], and all the host of them [i.e., the great crowds of all that filled the heavens and the earth]".⁶ The result is that God separates the spaces on Days 1-3, and then populates them with their respective "hosts" on Days 4-6. Kline offers a similar analysis, but one that enables him to integrate the Sabbath as well. 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*. "The second triad of days presents creature kings whose roles in the hierarchy of creation are earthly reflections of the royal rule of the Creator enthroned above".⁷ Finally 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. (See *The Genesis Debate*, pp. 224-26).

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	

⁵ 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." *Westminster Theological Journal* 60.1 (Spring 1998) 1-21, 14.

⁶ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 52 (Words in brackets are his).

⁷ Meredith G. Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48.1 (April 1996) 2-15, especially 6.

1976 Commenting on the literary significance of the two triads, N. H. Ridderbos (quoting framework pioneer
1977 A. Noordtzij) summarizes the two-triads as follows:

1978
1979 The six days of Genesis 1 are obviously intended as the sum of two triduumms which
1980 consequently reveal a clearly pronounced parallelism, while the total arrangement is
1981 intended to place in bold relief the surpassing glory of man who attains his true destiny
1982 in the sabbath ... Given this plan of the creation account we may infer meanwhile that
1983 the author consciously used days and nights, evenings and mornings, as a literary
1984 framework.⁸

1985
1986 TOPICAL ARRANGEMENT

1987 There is no principal reason why other views (including the literal view that the days are days of
1988 ordinary length) could not recognize the existence of this two-triad structure. What distinguishes the
1989 framework view from all other views is that it sees the relationship between Days 1 and 4 more
1990 precisely as one of temporal recapitulation. Day 4 recapitulates Day 1. Temporal recapitulation occurs
1991 frequently in the Bible and is a species of the larger literary category of nonsequential, topical
1992 arrangement that can be observed throughout the Bible.

1993
1994 For example, scholars have long puzzled over the differences between Genesis 1 and 2. Mark Ross
1995 describes one of the differences:

1996 The narrative order of the Genesis Two account, if taken as a chronological sequence,
1997 stands in contradiction to the narrative order of Genesis One, if that too is taken as a
1998 chronological sequence. The most glaring difficulty is that it appears that the creation
1999 of man precedes the creation of the animals. Removing this apparent contradiction is
2000 not difficult. While admitting that a *prima facie* tension exists between the two
2001 narratives, it can easily be shown that in the Genesis Two account it is topical rather
2002 than chronological concerns that have determined the structure of the narrative ... Not
2003 chronology but theology structured the narrative, *despite its sequential, chronological*
2004 *appearance*.⁹

2005
2006 This is merely one example of topical arrangement in biblical narrative. But within that category there
2007 is a specific type of topical arrangement known as temporal recapitulation – or, more technically,
2008 synopsis-resumption/expansion. Futato, building on other biblical scholars, defines this narrative
2009 technique as follows: "A Hebrew author will at times tell the whole story in brief form (synopsis), then
2010 repeat the story (resumption), adding greater detail (expansion)."¹⁰ To illustrate the concept, Futato cites
2011 the account of the garden of Eden and man's placement therein in Genesis 2:8-15:

2012
2013 Synopsis (Genesis 2:8)

2014
2015 a. "The LORD God planted a garden of Eden eastward;
2016 b. and there He *placed* the man whom He had formed"

2017
2018 Resumption/expansion (Genesis 2:9-15)

2019
2020 a. Vv. 9-14: Description of the garden itself – resumption-expansion of v. 8a
2021 b. V. 15: "Then the LORD God took the man and put *him in the garden of Eden* to
2022 cultivate it and keep it" (expansion in italics). Resumption-expansion of v. 8b

2023
2024 Futato comments:
2025

⁸ N. H. Ridderbos, *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 11.

⁹ Ross, Mark. "The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3." Pages 113-30 in *Did God Create in Six Days?* Eds. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall. (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press and Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1999) 124-25.

¹⁰ Futato, "Because it Had Rained" 12.

[T]he verb translated "took" in v15 is a waw-relative, that, if taken to indicate chronological sequence, would result in Adam being placed in the garden in v8 and then being placed in the garden a second time in v15. I suppose one could argue that Adam was put in the garden in v8, was removed from the garden or that he left the garden without our being told, and was subsequently put back in the garden in v15, but such straining to maintain a chronological reading of the text is unwarranted, especially since there is an easier solution, one that is explicable within the conventions of Hebrew style.¹¹

Having established that the literary device of temporal recapitulation (or synopsis-resumption/expansion) occurs in the near context, advocates of the framework view argue that this phenomenon occurs within the creation week itself on Days 1 and 4:

Synopsis (Genesis 1:3-5)

"God said, 'Let there be *light*'
And God *separated* the *light* from the *darkness*"

Resumption/expansion (Genesis 1:14-18)

"God said, 'Let there be *lights*'
And God gave them ... to *separate* the *light* from the *darkness*"

Noting the repetition of language that binds Days 1 and 4 together, Futato argues that the same Hebrew stylistic technique obtains here as well:

What did God *accomplish* on Day 1 by means of the creation of light? "God divided the light from the darkness" (*wayyabdel elohim ben haor uben hahosek*) and the result was "day" (*yom*) and "night" (*layla*). So by the end of Day 1, God had successfully divided the light from the darkness and established the sequence of day and night. Now, what was God's *purpose* in creating the luminaries on Day 4? We are given a variety of purposes, e.g., they will serve as signs and will rule the day and the night. But what is the overarching purpose? The overarching purpose is indicated by the repetition of "to divide" (*lehabdil*) in v14 and v18, a repetition that forms an inclusio around Day 4. In v14 we are told that God created the luminaries "to divide the day from the night" (*lehabdil ben hayyom uben hallayla*). But God had already divided the day from the night on Day 1! In v18 we are told that God created the luminaries "to divide the light from the darkness" (*lehabdil ben haor uben hahosek*). But God had already divided the light from the darkness on Day 1! These linguistic parallels between Day 1 and Day 4 must not be overlooked ... In other words, Days 1 and 4 are another application of the synopsis-resumption/expansion technique employed on a variety of levels in Genesis 1 and 2. There is a consistent style of narration employed in both texts: just as Gen 2:15 is not chronologically sequential to Gen 2:8b, but is a repetition with additional information regarding the placing of the man in the garden, so Day 4 is not chronologically sequential to Day 1, but is a repetition with additional information regarding the creation of light.¹²

For these reasons, framework advocates argue that Day 1 narrates the creation of light and its basic physical result – the establishment of the day/night cycle. Day 4 returns to the same event to narrate the divine creation of the solar mechanism that stands behind the results of day one as their physical cause. The fact that the first three days of creation – all three of which are placed in the narrative prior to the account of the creation of the sun on Day 4 – each have an evening and a morning, that is, a *sunset* and a *sunrise*, confirms that the creation of the sun is presupposed and thus not sequentially later than Day 1.

¹¹ Futato, "Because It Had Rained" 11-2.

¹² Futato, "Because It Had Rained" 15-6.

2081 PROVIDENCE AND THE CREATION WEEK

2082 A common response to this interpretation on the part of those committed to interpreting the creation
 2083 account sequentially is to propose that God sustained day and night for the first three days by non-
 2084 ordinary means prior to the creation of the sun, moon and stars. In response to this hypothesis, M.G.
 2085 Kline argued in 1958 that Genesis 2:5 rules out such an explanation. Genesis 2:5a states that "no shrub
 2086 of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted," and verse 5b provides a very
 2087 logical and natural explanation for this situation: "for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth,
 2088 and there was no man to cultivate the ground." Then, in verses 6-7, we are told how God dealt with
 2089 these exigencies. In verse 6, the absence of rain is overcome by the divine provision of a rain cloud ("a
 2090 rain cloud began to arise from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground"); and in verse 7,
 2091 the absence of a cultivator is overcome by the creation of man. Kline's translation of *ed* by "rain cloud"
 2092 is defended at length by Futato (pp. 5-9). Further reinforcing Kline's exegesis, Futato points out that
 2093 Genesis 2:5-7 is given in the form of a tight logical argument (p. 10):
 2094

Problem	Reason	Solution
No wild vegetation →	No rain →	God sent rain
No cultivated grain →	No cultivator →	God formed a cultivator

2095
 2096 While there may be uncertainty about various details of the exegesis of Genesis 2:5-7, the point is that
 2097 the text nevertheless gives a *natural* explanation for the absence of vegetation sometime during the
 2098 creation week:
 2099

2100 Gen. 2:5 tells us that God did not produce the plants of the field before he had
 2101 established an environment with a watering system, the natural, normal precondition
 2102 for plant life. The assumption underlying Gen. 2:5 is clearly that a natural mode of
 2103 divine providence was in operation during the creation "days" ... This unargued
 2104 assumption of Gen. 2:5 contradicts the reconstructions of the creation days proposed
 2105 by the more traditional views.¹³
 2106

2107 With this principle in hand, Kline returns to the problem of daylight, and evenings and mornings, prior
 2108 to the sun. One common sequential view attempts to explain this problem by hypothesizing that God
 2109 sustained these natural phenomena by some *non-ordinary means* for the first three days. But Genesis
 2110 2:5 informs us that God employed *ordinary means* during the creation period to sustain His creatures.
 2111 Rather than assuming a hypothetical light source – an assumption which would contradict the disclosure
 2112 of Genesis 2:5 concerning God's providence – the framework view posits that Day 4 is best understood
 2113 as an instance of resumption of the events already narrated on Day 1, with a further expansion upon
 2114 those events, explaining the physical mechanism (our solar system) God established to sustain the
 2115 daylight/night phenomenon throughout the creation period and beyond.
 2116

2117 If Gen. 2:5 obviates certain traditional interpretations of Genesis 1, by the same token
 2118 it validates the not-so traditional interpretation which regards the chronological
 2119 framework of Genesis 1 as a figurative representation of the time span of creation and
 2120 judges that within that figurative framework the data of creation history have been
 2121 arranged according to other than strictly chronological considerations.¹⁴
 2122

2123 THE SEVENTH DAY

2124 The seventh day is another significant exegetical observation that supports the framework view,
 2125 although not exclusively, since it also supports the analogical view. No matter what view one holds of
 2126 the six days of creation, the seventh day clearly contains some non-literal elements. Framework
 2127 advocates argue that there are two non-literal elements in the seventh day: (1) the fact that God's rest on
 2128 the seventh day is a figurative rest, and (2) the fact that God's seventh day of rest is eternal.
 2129

2130 First, the figurative nature of God's rest on the seventh day is fairly non-controversial. On the one hand,
 2131 Isaiah 40:28 teaches that "the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not
 2132 become weary or tired." And yet the divine rest on the seventh day is described in a highly figurative
 2133 manner, as if God needed to rest because he was tired:

¹³ Kline, "Space and Time" 13.

¹⁴ Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained" 154.

Exodus 31:17. The Sabbath is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He rested from labor, *and was refreshed*.

Rather than interpret Exodus literally as denying the teaching of Isaiah 40:28, it makes more sense to assume that God's seventh day of rest is an anthropomorphic figure rather than a literal rest.

The second non-literal element of the seventh day, according to framework interpreters, is that the seventh day is eternal. This is implied in the creation account itself: "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" (Genesis 2:2). The seventh day is unique in that it alone lacks the concluding evening-morning formula, suggesting that it is not finite.

One might be tempted to assume that the seventh day ended, whereas God's rest continues eternally. But the author of Hebrews *equates* the two: "For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.' ... So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself rested from his works, as God did from His" (Heb. 4:4, 9-10). Hebrews interprets God's rest "on the seventh day" as an upper-register reality—an eschatological, heavenly rest to which the people of God are called to enter by faith in Christ. According to this inspired New Testament commentary on Genesis 2:2, the seventh day itself is equated with the Sabbath rest that awaits the people of God. And this Sabbath rest is an ongoing, eternal reality. It was offered to the people of God in the wilderness in Numbers 14 (Heb. 3:16-4:3). It was offered to the Israelite church in Psalm 95 (Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7). It is still being offered "today" if we will hear His voice (Heb. 3:7, 13). Therefore, God's Sabbath rest is clearly eternal.¹⁵

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 Genesis 2:2 were merely telling us that creative activity ceased on earth, though that is certainly true.

The divine rest which characterizes the seventh day is the reign of the finisher of creation, enthroned in the invisible heavens in the midst of the angels ... At the Consummation, God's people will enter his royal rest, the seventh day of creation (Heb. 4:4, 9, 10), but until then that seventh creation day does not belong to the lower register world of human solar-day experience. It is heaven time, not earth time, not time measured by astronomical signs. Not only the identification of the Sabbath rest with God's royal session on high, but the unending nature of that seventh day of creation differentiates it from earthly, solar-days. Consisting as it does in God's status as the one who has occupied the completed cosmic temple as the King of Glory – a status without possibility of any interruption or limitation – the seventh day is in the nature of the case unending.¹⁶

Thus, if the seventh day is non-literal in these two senses – in that it is anthropomorphic and eternal – then the whole picture of God's performing His creative work within a "week" must be figurative.

The six evening-morning days then do not mark the passage of time in the lower register sphere. They are not identifiable in terms of solar days, but relate to the history of creation at the upper register. The creation "week" is to be understood figuratively, not literally – that is the conclusion demanded by the biblical evidence.¹⁷

The words that Kline himself uses to conclude "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," serve as a fitting summary here:

¹⁵ Irons, *The Genesis Debate*, 245.

¹⁶ Kline, "Space and Time" 10.

¹⁷ Kline, "Space and Time" 10.

2189 [T]he false conflict between the Bible and science disappears, when we recognize that
 2190 the creation "week" is a lower register metaphor for God's upper register creation-time
 2191 and that the sequence of the "days" is ordered not chronologically but thematically.¹⁸
 2192

2193 In contrast with other interpretations of the days of creation that attempt to resolve the apparent conflict
 2194 between Scripture and modern geology (e.g., the day-age view), the framework view makes a more
 2195 serious effort to base itself on objective exegesis of the text of Genesis itself. It does not read modern
 2196 scientific ideas into the text as some proponents of the day-age view seem to do.
 2197

2198 Another strength of the framework view is its sensitivity to the literary dimensions of Hebrew narrative
 2199 in the context of Ancient Near Eastern literature and cosmology. Whether or not one agrees with the
 2200 framework view itself, stylistic features such as the two-triads, topical arrangement, and synopsis-
 2201 resumption/expansion, are well-established in contemporary biblical scholarship and cannot be easily
 2202 dismissed.
 2203

2204 The force of the framework appeal to the seventh day has yet to be reckoned with by critics of the
 2205 framework view. John Murray concluded that "there is the strongest presumption in favour of the
 2206 interpretation that this seventh day is not one that terminated at a certain point in history, but that the
 2207 whole period of time subsequent to the end of the sixth day is the sabbath of rest alluded to in Genesis
 2208 2:2."¹⁹
 2209

2210 The fact that the framework view is a recent view (20th century) is a cause of concern to many.
 2211 Exegetical novelty can sometimes be a source of theological error and thus needs to be guided by the
 2212 historic traditions and confessions of the church.
 2213

2214 In ordinary historical narratives, chronological and sequential indicators (e.g., the *waw*-relative, a
 2215 numbered sequence of days, time references such as "evening" and "morning," etc.), are normally taken
 2216 at face value rather than viewed as literary devices. Many critics of the framework view doubt that it is
 2217 possible to interpret the text historically while taking such chronological indicators figuratively.
 2218

2219 Some of those who have written in defense of the framework interpretation have been difficult to
 2220 understand, thus giving the impression that the view itself is difficult to understand. And even when the
 2221 view is lucidly expounded, the fact that it is more involved than other views has caused some to
 2222 question whether it is consistent with the perspicuity of Scripture. On the other hand, our Confession
 2223 acknowledges that "all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear to all" (WCF
 2224 1.7).

¹⁸ Kline, "Space and Time" 14.

¹⁹ John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 30.

F. THE ANALOGICAL VIEW

Advocates of the Analogical view need to understand that some presbyters may express concern over the language of “analogical.” Some presbyters may think that “analogical” means “allegorical,” or “not historical.” Therefore it is essential for advocates of the Analogical Day view need to be clear regarding the historical character of the creation days.

DEFINITION OF THE ANALOGICAL VIEW

With respect to the length of the creation days, the Analogical Day view claims that Scripture does not give us enough information to determine how long the days were.

With respect to the nature of the creation days, the Analogical Day view claims that the creation days were historical, but were extraordinary in character. Just as man’s work is patterned off of God’s work (the potter molds clay like God molded Adam’s body), so also man’s week is patterned off of God’s week. In neither case does the analogical relationship undermine the historicity of the report.

With respect to the literary character of Genesis 1, the Analogical Day view claims that the literary structure of Genesis 1 communicates the historical events of the creation week in a stylized fashion (in a manner similar to the way in which the book of Judges reduces the history of the judges to a formula in Judges 2, and then presents the entire history of that period in terms of that formula). After each day of God’s work, there is an evening and morning which sets the pattern for our period of rest and recuperation from our workdays.

With respect to the sequence of the creation days, the Analogical Day view claims that they are broadly sequential.

The PCA report provides a useful definition of the Analogical Day view:

1. The “days” are God’s work-days, which are analogous, and not necessarily identical, to our work days, structured for the purpose of setting a pattern for our own rhythm of rest and work.
2. The six “days” represent periods of God’s historical supernatural activity in preparing and populating the earth as a place for humans to live, love, work, and worship.
3. These days are “broadly consecutive”: that is, they are taken as successive periods of unspecified length, but one allows for the possibility that parts of the days may overlap, or that there might be logical rather than chronological criteria for grouping some events in a particular “day.”
4. Genesis 1:1-2 are background, representing an unknown length of time prior to the beginning of the first “day”: verse 1 is the *creatio ex nihilo* event, while verse 2 describes the conditions of the earth as the first day commenced.
5. Length of time, either for the creation week, or before it or since it, is irrelevant to the communicative purpose of the account.¹

The Analogical view emphasizes the role of the creation week as the model for man’s weekly cycle: “Six days shalt thou labor, but on the seventh you shall rest.” Genesis 1-2 presents the divine archetype of God’s work and rest in order to establish the pattern that man must follow. While the Analogical view may sound novel to some, it is rooted in the apostolic and patristic principles of biblical interpretation that used the principle of analogy widely, and attempts to apply the insights of Cornelius Van Til regarding the nature of analogy to the present debate.

The PCA report likewise offers a helpful understanding of the history of the Analogical Day view:

In the modern period, this view arose from perceived problems in the Day-Age view, though it employs what were felt to be valuable observations by the proponents of that view. William G.T. Shedd’s *Dogmatic Theology* (1888), i:474-477, drew on these insights, as well as statements from Augustine and Anselm, to the effect that the days of Genesis 1 are “God-divided days,” with the result that “the seven days of the human

¹ PCA, “Report of the Creation Study Committee” 169.

week are copies of the seven days of the Divine week.” Franz Delitzsch’s *New Commentary on Genesis* appeared in English translation in 1899 (German original, 1887), and argued the same position.

The prominent Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck published the first edition of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* in 1895-1901, and the second edition in 1906-1911. The section on creation has just appeared in English translation (Baker, 1999). There he advocates a version of the Analogical Days interpretation:

It is probable, in the first place, that the creation of heaven and earth in Genesis 1:1 preceded the work of the six days in verses 3ff. by a shorter or longer period. . . So, although. . . the days of Genesis 1 are to be considered days and not to be identified with the periods of geology, they nevertheless-like the work of creation as a whole-have an extraordinary character. . . The first three days, however much they may resemble our days, also differ significantly from them and hence were extraordinary cosmic days. . . It is not impossible that the second triduum still shared in this extraordinary character as well. . . It is very difficult to find room on the sixth day for everything Genesis 1-2 has occur in it if that day was in all respects like our days. . . Much more took place on each day of creation than the sober words of Genesis would lead us to suspect. For all these reasons, “day” in the first chapter of the Bible denotes the time in which God was at work creating. . . The creation days are the workdays of God.²

Bavinck goes on to say regarding the creation week: “for the whole world it remains a symbol of the eons of this dispensation that will some day culminate in eternal rest, the cosmic Sabbath (Heb. 4).”³

More recently, C. John Collins, W. Robert Godfrey, and others have developed this position in more detail, especially focusing on the literary structure of Genesis 1 as further evidence for the analogical character of the creation week.

Bibliography

Older works that set forth the basic principles of the Analogical view include:

William G.T. Shedd’s *Dogmatic Theology* (1888), I:474-477.

Franz Delitzsch’s *New Commentary on Genesis* (1899/1887)

Herman Bavinck *In the Beginning* (Baker, 1999/1906) 120-126.

More recent works that have given fuller exposition to various aspects of the Analogical view include:

C. John Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003).

W. Robert Godfrey, *God’s Pattern for Creation: A Covenantal Reading of Genesis 1* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003).

Rowland Ward, *Foundations in Genesis* (New Melbourne Press, 1998) 36-49.

Peter J. Wallace, “Essays on Creation,” at <http://www.nd.edu/~pwallace/essays.htm>

Many of the earlier works are perhaps more congenial to the Days of Unspecified Length view, but they also begin to suggest that the nature of the creation days is analogous to our days rather than identical to them. Likewise Ward and Godfrey have some sympathy with the Framework view. This demonstrates that the Analogical view is simply building off of the insights of the past.

The most thorough presentation of the Analogical view has come from C. John Collins. One aspect to Collins’ presentation that is not necessary to the Analogical position is his claim that the origination of all created things is found in Genesis 1:1, and that the six days of creation refer to the forming and shaping of the “world-stuff” into a habitation for man.⁴ In this respect Collins is simply echoing the traditional Reformed distinction between immediate and mediate creation. George Walker, one of the Westminster Divines, argued that Genesis 1:1 speaks of the absolute, immediate creation, while the six days of creation speaks of the secondary, mediate creation out of the undifferentiated mass of fire, air, water, and earth. Therefore Walker argued that the creation of light on the first day consisted of

² PCA, “Report of the Creation Study Committee” 169-70.

³ Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, 126.

⁴ Collins, *Science and Faith*, 90.

separating out the fire from the undifferentiated world-stuff.⁵ While this may sound somewhat odd to modern ears, Collins and Walker's position is exegetically defensible. The text does not specify whether God's creative acts in Genesis 1:3-31 are immediate or mediate creation. Obviously, if Genesis 1:1 is simply a title, or a description of the events of the six days, then one may argue that at least certain acts in Genesis 1:3-31 are immediate creation. But if Genesis 1:1 is the original creation *ex nihilo*, then when God said, "Let there be light," he may have simply taken a large quantity of hydrogen atoms and started a nuclear reaction. Likewise, when he said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures," he may well have brought together the various atoms required for animal existence. There is no need to see any "ontological origination" of matter after Genesis 1:1. Nonetheless, this particular exegetical decision is not necessary to the Analogical view—nor is it unique to the Analogical view, since it was first set forth by proponents of the Days of Ordinary Length view.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION

The exegetical support from the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1-2:3 (and of passages that reflect on it) on which this interpretation depends includes:

1. The refrain of the six days ("and there was evening, and there was morning, the nth day"), does not refer to the events of a whole day, but to the specific hours of rest in between the days (cf. Numbers 9:15-16), which is the daily rest for the worker (Psalm 104:22-23; cf. Genesis 30:16; Exodus 18:13). Throughout the Scriptures, when the order is evening and morning, it does not refer to the events of an entire day, but solely to the period roughly between sunset and sunrise (for Scripture passages that use the order of evening and morning see Exodus 16:8-13; Exodus 27:21; Numbers 9:15, 21; Deuteronomy 16:4; Esther 2:14; Psalm 30:5; Isaiah 17:14; Ezekiel 33:22; Zephaniah 3:3). These passages refer to the events of the nighttime hours. When the Psalmist wishes to speak of the whole day, he does not say simply "evening and morning," but "evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17). The one exception may come in Daniel 8:14, 26, an apocalyptic narrative. At this point the Analogical view agrees with E. J. Young that the text does not specify the length of the days.

2. The sixth day, as amplified by Genesis 2:5-25, contains both language and events that suggest a period of time longer than one calendar day. C. John Collins and others have pointed out that Genesis 2:5, 9 uses the language of "sprouting" or "springing up," an activity that in its ordinary Hebrew context takes longer than 24 hours. The Hebrew word for "sprout" (*tsamach*) is used 33 times in the Old Testament to refer to the ordinary growth of plants, beards, and people (e.g., the Branch in Zechariah 6:12). If the reader takes the sixth day to be a 24-hour period, then he cannot take the "sprouting" to be a literal, historical event, but must take it to be a figurative reference to a miraculous event. Many advocates of the Days of Ordinary Length view may wish to do so. But it must be remembered that Genesis 1-2 does not present the sprouting of plants on day six as a special creative event. The formation of plants is one of God's creative activities on day three. Advocates of other views must argue for some sort of dischronologization in order to add the special creation of certain plants on day six. On the other hand, if the sprouting is to be taken as a historical event, then the days of Genesis 1-2 cannot consist solely of one period of darkness and one period of light, since the historical activity of sprouting plants requires the regular alternation of darkness and light.⁶ It is impossible to take both the days of creation and the sprouting of plants on the sixth day as a straightforward, literal description of events. One (or both) must be taken figuratively. Likewise, the establishment of the covenant, the formation and naming of the animals, the "deep sleep" of Adam, and the creation of the woman indicate a period of time longer than an ordinary day.

3. The seventh day does not end with the same refrain as the first six. This absence suggests that the seventh day did not end. John 5:17 and Hebrews 4:3-11 seem to take this for granted. As Hebrews 4:3-5 declares, God's sabbath rest has continued from the foundation of the world. The people of God are called to enter that rest. The reason why Genesis 2 does not say that there was an evening and a morning, the seventh day, is because God's seventh day did not end. Indeed, by positing a probationary period after which man was to enter God's rest, Reformed theology has understood that this is implicit in the very covenant that God makes with Adam. Entrance into God's rest is equivalent to eternal life. The creation week of Genesis 1 is to be understood as the archetypal week, to which all earthly weeks

⁵ George Walker, *The History of Creation* (London, 1641) 96, 109.

⁶ Collins, *Science and Faith*, 87-9.

2393 are to point. This has an eschatological aspect as well, since humanity enters God's Sabbath-rest on the
 2394 first/eighth day of the week. The importance of the first/eighth day is seen in the New Testament in
 2395 Christ's resurrection, and then in various ways through Pentecost, the Lord's Day, and the Day of the
 2396 Lord, but the Old Testament also contains numerous shadows of this.⁷
 2397
 2398 4. "When the Pentateuch reflects on this account to enjoin Sabbath observance, it draws on the analogy
 2399 (and not identity) between our work and rest and God's (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17)."⁸ The Analogical Day
 2400 view points out that God regularly uses analogies to communicate the relationship between the
 2401 heavenly and the earthly. Such analogies include: 1. Man is created in the image of God, and
 2402 particularly, the image of the Son (Genesis 1:26; Colossians 1:15); 2. Man's work in ordering and
 2403 ruling the creation is a picture of God's own rule (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8; Romans 8:19-21); 3. The
 2404 earthly tabernacle is a picture of the heavenly temple (Exodus 25:9; 2 Chronicles 5-7; Hebrews 8:5); 4.
 2405 The earthly sacrifices are pictures of the heavenly sacrifice, namely, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who
 2406 takes away the sin of the world (Leviticus 1-7; John 1:29; Revelation 5); 5. David's throne is a picture
 2407 of the heavenly throne, where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father (Psalm 45:6; Psalm 89:36; Acts
 2408 2:30; Revelation 5); and 6. Our weekly Sabbath is a picture of God's seventh-day rest and Christ's
 2409 entrance into that rest on the first day of the new creation week (Exodus 20:8-11; Luke 23:55-24:1;
 2410 John 20:1, 19, 26; Hebrews 4).
 2411
 2412 In none of these cases is the earthly shadow to be understood as identical to the heavenly archetype
 2413 (pattern). No one would imagine that man is identical to God, or that the earthly tabernacle is identical
 2414 to the heavenly temple. Instead, the earthly is analogous to the heavenly. The earthly is patterned after
 2415 the heavenly in order that man may truly live before God. As Solomon put it: "Behold, heaven and the
 2416 heaven of heavens cannot contain you. How much less this temple which I have built!" (2 Chronicles
 2417 6:18). And yet, Solomon also says "I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to
 2418 dwell in forever" (2 Chronicles 6:2). Solomon understood that his temple was truly a place for God to
 2419 dwell, but he did not imagine that somehow God could be contained by his earthly dwelling. Rather,
 2420 Solomon recognized that the earthly temple could only be a faint picture of the heavenly temple.
 2421
 2422 Likewise, our earthly Sabbath was designed as a picture of God's heavenly Sabbath. In Exodus 20,
 2423 shortly before giving Moses the heavenly pattern for the earthly tabernacle, God commands his people
 2424 to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work....For in
 2425 six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the
 2426 seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8, 9, 11). Here
 2427 man's work is compared to God's work, and man's rest is compared to God's rest. Neither is intended
 2428 to be understood as identical. Rather, an analogy is intended. Man's six days of labor are to imitate
 2429 God's six days of labor, and man's seventh-day rest is to imitate God's seventh-day rest. If this were
 2430 intended literally, then man should work for six days, and then rest for the remainder of his life! The
 2431 pattern is not one of identity, but analogy.
 2432
 2433 The question is what is God's intention in giving us this pattern? Again we need to see this in terms of
 2434 overall biblical teaching: What is the purpose of the temple? The heavenly temple is where God's glory
 2435 dwells. It is also where the heavenly sacrifice is brought. All that occurs in the earthly temple should
 2436 reflect the heavenly archetype. What is the purpose of the throne? It is where God reigns over all. It is
 2437 where God (and now the Lamb) exercises dominion. All that occurs on the earthly throne should reflect
 2438 the archetype. What are the purpose of days? The six archetypal days are where God's creative work is
 2439 accomplished. All that occurs on the earthly six days should reflect the archetype. Just as the creation
 2440 days consisted of a full measure of God's work, even so, earthly days should consist of a full measure of
 2441 human work. And just as the archetypal seventh day consists of God's rest, even so, we ought to rest on
 2442 our seventh days, which are now the first day of the week because Christ, the Second Adam, has truly

⁷ Circumcision and all of the Old Testament feasts were bound up with the first/eighth day—see Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 23:7, 11, 16, 24, 35-36, Leviticus 25:8-12. Likewise, the priests could only enter their priestly service on the eighth day of their consecration—see Leviticus 7-8—and the eighth day was central to the purification rites of the cleanliness laws. Israel's worship was predominantly an eighth day phenomenon. All of Old Testament history was testifying to what Hebrews 4:8 says: there had to be "another day."

⁸ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 171.

entered God's seventh-day rest. Our rest is now not merely an anticipation of rest, but a participation in that rest.

In all of these analogies, heaven is the center. The throne of God is the center of reality. All of creation participates in that reality through types and images. But we no longer live in the shadows. In Christ, the reality has broken into the types and shadows. Paul reminds us that matters of food and drink, feasts, new moons and sabbaths are but shadows cast backwards in history by Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). God created all things good so that they would point us to him. But earthly things can never be more than types and shadows. This is why the apostles taught us that our citizenship is in heaven; that our life is hidden with Christ, that we are seated in Christ at the right hand of God. This is why we are called into the throne room of God in worship. This is why the Spirit must raise us up to heaven to partake of Christ's body and blood. Since the fall, the creation could only exist in shadows until it was brought into the full light of God's glorious presence.

With respect to the days of creation, Hebrews teaches us this about the seventh day, when it affirms that we must still enter God's rest. The seventh day will not end until our Lord returns to bring us into that rest. Then will come the days of our God and of the Lamb when there will be no sun, for the Lamb will be our light. The seventh day will finally end in the brilliance of eternal glory as the throne of God becomes in our experience what it already is in truth--the center of reality! Therefore, with respect to the nature of the creation days, the Analogical view insists that they are not identical to our days, but are truly analogous, and form the true pattern for our work and rest, even as God's character forms the true pattern for our character, even though we would by no means posit an identity between him and us. In this respect the Analogical view has strong parallels with the Framework view, although disagreeing with the dischronologization that characterizes the Framework view.

5. "The use of the Hebrew narrative tense and the march of the numbered days in Genesis 1, along with the accusative of duration in Exodus 20:11 ("over the course of six days") all favor the conclusion that the creative events were accomplished over some stretch of time (i.e. not instantaneously), and that the days are (at least broadly) sequential."⁹

As suggested earlier, the Analogical Day view claims that the literary structure of Genesis 1 provides a stylized narrative similar to the one found in Judges 2:11-23. Likewise, Luke structures his gospel around a threefold geographical pattern: Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4-9), the road to Jerusalem (9-19) and his ministry in Jerusalem (19-24), while John has Jesus constantly going back and forth to Jerusalem. If we only had one gospel we might not notice the importance of the literary structure. But the literary structure of the gospels does not eliminate the historical character of Jesus life and ministry any more than the literary structure of Genesis 1 eliminates the historical character of the creative acts of God. The days of Genesis 1 happened in space and time. They refer to the six periods of God's creative work. The Analogical view rejects the idea of instantaneous creation, and affirms with Bavinck that God "resumed and renewed" his labor six times.¹⁰

In other words, the six days of creation happened in space and time. That is not the same as saying that each of God's workdays consisted of one period of darkness and one period of light. The Analogical Day view suggests that since the language of "evening and morning" refers simply to the interlude between two periods of God's creative activity, there is nothing in the text that requires us to believe that these days were identical in structure to our own.

The phrase "broadly sequential" has prompted some consternation, causing some critics to think that the Analogical view denies the historicity of the creation account. But the actual extent of the "dischronologization" in the Analogical view only goes so far as to suggest that while God began to create plants on the third day and birds and sea creatures on the fifth day, it is possible that he may have created other plants, birds, or sea creatures later.

VAN TIL AND THE USE OF ANALOGY

Some people have expressed concern that this sort of analogical or "heavenly" language sounds too much like a Kantian distinction between phenomenal and noumenal, or a Platonic distinction between

⁹ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 171.

¹⁰ Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, 126.

the ideal and the real. But the distinction between heaven and earth is of a different character than these. Heaven is a historical location. The Analogical view is operating from a Van Tilian emphasis on the Creator/creature distinction. Plato thought that the forms existed, but had no contact with our existence. Kant's noumenal realm was only accessible to thought. Both of these views attempt to measure the heavenly by the earthly. They started from the creature and attempted to define the Creator accordingly. Cornelius Van Til takes the exact opposite approach. For Van Til, God's knowledge constitutes reality. Therefore the heavenly is the basis for the earthly. Long before M.G. Kline spoke of a "two-register cosmology" Van Til had articulated the same basic idea:

Christians believe in two levels of existence, the level of God's existence as self-contained and the level of man's existence as derived from the level of God's existence. For this reason, Christians must also believe in two levels of knowledge, the level of God's knowledge which is absolutely comprehensive and self-contained, and the level of man's knowledge which is not comprehensive but is derivative and re-interpretative. Hence we say that as Christians we believe that man's knowledge is analogical of God's knowledge.¹¹

Likewise, Van Til insists that "Man should think God's thoughts after Him. That is to say, his thought is to be reinterpreted of God's original thought. As a being made in the image of God, man is like God but he is also unlike God. His being is therefore *analogical* being and his thinking is properly conceived, *analogical* thinking."¹²

The Analogical view attempts to apply Van Til to the present debate over the creation days. There are some who seem to think that the relation between the creation week and our week must either be univocal (literal) or equivocal (mythological), but that approach seems to fall into Gordon Clark's erroneous critique of Van Til. We would suggest that the creation days are neither univocal nor equivocal, but analogical. Or more precisely, it is *our days* that are analogical to the creation days. Our six days are designed to reflect God's six days.

But not only is analogy an important concept for understanding man's being and knowledge, it is also important for understanding Scripture. Van Til, responding to the irrationalism of Barth and the rationalism of Clark, argued that "perspicuity or clarity is not opposed to the 'incomprehensibility' of God. The system of Scripture is an analogical system. The relation between God and man is, in the nature of the case, not exhaustively expressible in human language."¹³ If the entire system of Scripture is an analogical system, then we should expect to see the sorts of analogies discussed above. Regardless of what one determines regarding the length of the creation days, their nature must be seen as analogical rather than univocal with our days (and the text of Genesis 1 insists that they cannot be univocal, because at least the first three days have no sun).

Contrary to some critics, the Analogical view does not attempt to apply Van Til selectively. The Analogical view interprets the entire Scripture consistently in this respect. Just as we are created in the image of God—and therefore our being is analogical to God's being—so also our knowledge is analogical to God's knowledge. Every aspect of our relation to God must be seen in analogical terms.

SIMILARITIES TO AND DIFFERENCES FROM THE OTHER POSITIONS

1. Together with the other views presented in this report, the Analogical view affirms the historical character of Genesis 1-3, "the rejection of source-critical theories of these chapters as originally disparate, and ultimately incompatible; and adherence to the authority of the New Testament as interpreter of these chapters."¹⁴

¹¹ Van Til, Cornelius, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1949) in *The Works of Cornelius Van Til* (New York: Labels Army Co., 1997).

¹² Van Til, Cornelius, *The Works of Cornelius Van Til* (New York: Labels Army Co. 1997).

¹³ Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1969) 68.

¹⁴ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 172.

- 2549 2. The Days of Ordinary Length, Days of Unspecified Length, Day-Age, and Analogical Day
 2550 views “all see the days as sequential, while the Framework view sees sequentiality as optional
 2551 at best.”¹⁵
 2552
- 2553 3. The Analogical Day view has affinities with both the Day-Age view and the Days of
 2554 Unspecified Length view in seeing the days as potentially longer or shorter periods; but unlike
 2555 those views, it is not essential to the position that *yom* in Genesis 1 must be taken as “a period
 2556 of undefined length.” One may be convinced that *yom* refers to an ordinary day, and yet see the
 2557 analogical relationship between the creation week and our week.
 2558
- 2559 4. The Day-Age, Analogical Day, Days of Unspecified Length and Framework interpretations do
 2560 not require a young earth position, and permit a variety of views regarding the age of the earth.
 2561
- 2562 5. The most substantive difference between the Analogical Day view and the Days of Unspecified
 2563 Length view is that advocates of the latter insist that there can be no overlap between the
 2564 events of the creation days, while some advocates of the Analogical Day view are willing to
 2565 consider the possibility that there may be some overlap.
 2566
- 2567 6. The Days of Unspecified Length view also posits a one-way analogical relationship between
 2568 God’s workdays and our days, denying that God utilized our familiarity with ordinary days to
 2569 structure the creation narrative. The Analogical Day view claims that analogy works in a two-
 2570 way manner. God uses the created thing to teach us about the heavenly original. For instance, a
 2571 human right hand is a symbol of strength in the Scriptures. God also speaks of his right hand
 2572 being strong to save (Exodus 15:6). In one sense, God is taking something that is familiar to us
 2573 and using it to reveal something about himself. It is in this sense that theologians sometimes
 2574 speak of “anthropomorphism.” But if we look more closely at the analogy between God’s right
 2575 hand and ours, we must recognize that while we learn something of God’s power by that
 2576 anthropomorphism, we only truly understand the relationship if we see that our right hand is
 2577 patterned after God’s right hand. We are “theomorphs”—made in the image of God. God’s
 2578 right hand is the original. Our right hands are images of his right hand. He speaks of his “right
 2579 hand” in Scripture in a manner that reminds us of our right hands. But in the very act of
 2580 revealing his “right hand” to us, he teaches us that our right hands are patterned after his. God
 2581 speaks to us in terms that are familiar to us, using the things that he has created to reveal
 2582 various aspects of his character. In the same way, God has revealed the creation days to us in
 2583 language that reminds us of our days. But in that very revelation he shows us that our days are
 2584 patterned after his. And yes, this is circular reasoning. But Van Til has taught us that circular
 2585 reasoning is necessary and good if we include the self-revelation of the triune God in our basic
 2586 presuppositions.¹⁶ There is another sense, however, in which this is not circular reasoning. As
 2587 Van Til put it, “we are not reasoning about and seeking to explain facts by assuming the
 2588 existence and meaning of certain other facts on the same level of being with the facts we are
 2589 investigating, and then explaining these facts in turn by the facts with which we began. We are
 2590 presupposing *God*, not merely another fact of the universe.”¹⁷ While God uses our familiarity
 2591 with ordinary days to structure his revelation of his divine workdays, he teaches us thereby that
 2592 his days are the original—the archetype—and our days are derivative—the ectype.

¹⁵ PCA, “Report of the Creation Study Committee” 172.

¹⁶ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1955) 118; *Apologetics* 62.

¹⁷ Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1977) 201.

2593 **II. THE DAYS OF CREATION AND CONFSSIONAL SUBSCRIPTION**

2594 **A. THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY**

2595 In ecclesiastical law, as in all constitutional law, judicatories that interpret the constitution should pay
 2596 the most careful attention to the words of the constitution itself. The words drafted and adopted by the
 2597 framers serve as the form of unity and bind the church together in its doctrine. The interpretation that
 2598 the church as a whole has of the constitution has come to be referred to by the technical term *animus*
 2599 *imponentis* (which term is more fully defined below). The *animus* of the church, however, is shaped not
 2600 only by the words of the constitution itself but also by the church studying and giving heed to what the
 2601 original intent of the those who framed the confession or its amendments was (among other things).
 2602 Original intent, like *animus imponentis*, is also a technical term and refers to what the framers of a
 2603 document, whether it is a civil or ecclesiastical constitution, had in mind when they wrote and adopted
 2604 the constitution. Relevant to this task of ascertaining original intent, then, is a survey of the writings,
 2605 public and private, of the framers, as well as any record of the debate that occurred in the process of
 2606 drafting and adopting the constitution.

2607
 2608 Extensive work has been in done in recent years as to the original intent of the framers of the
 2609 Westminster Standards when they wrote WCF 4.1: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for
 2610 the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create,
 2611 or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six
 2612 days; and all very good." The question that has been particularly raised over and again is what did the
 2613 Westminster Assembly mean by the phrase "in the space of six days?" From the work of David Hall
 2614 and others, it is apparent that all of the known references from the Westminster Divines on the nature
 2615 and length of the creation days are consistent with the view that maintains that the days were twenty-
 2616 four hours in length. There are certain exceptions within the timeframe of the Assembly, however. Prior
 2617 to the Assembly, William Perkins made it clear that the first three days could not be solar days. While
 2618 opposing the instantaneous view of Augustine¹ he does not speculate as to their length, but declares that
 2619 the days are "distinct spaces of times."² At least one member of the Assembly, the leading Hebraist
 2620 John Lightfoot, argued that the first day was thirty-six hours and that the seventh day was everlasting.³

2621
 2622 Even if we assume, though, that the vast majority of divines held to a twenty-four-hour day view (and
 2623 we do not have explicit data in this regard for most of the divines), does it follow that it was the original
 2624 intent of the divines to prescribe twenty-four hours and to proscribe any other view? To assume such,
 2625 we believe, is to mistake the nature of constitutionalism more broadly and of the Westminster Assembly
 2626 more narrowly. The nature of confession-making is such that on any number of points a significant
 2627 majority may believe something together and yet choose not to make that common belief an explicit
 2628 point of doctrine in the confession, prescribing the majority view and proscribing all others. It is not
 2629 sufficient in seeking to ascertain the original intent of the framers of a constitutional document simply
 2630 to survey their writings and discover how most of them viewed a particular subject. Rather, it is
 2631 necessary that one demonstrate that not only did the framers have this or that particular view but that
 2632 they sought to impose this view exclusively on the body politic or ecclesiastical. There is no known
 2633 evidence that the framers of the Westminster Standards intended to prescribe that the duration of the
 2634 creation days must be confessed to be days of twenty-four hours in length.

2635
 2636 In ascertaining original intent in this sense then we must always pay the most careful attention to the
 2637 words that the divines themselves chose to employ. It is not safe to assume that even if most divines
 2638 held to a view that the six days of creation were each twenty-four hours that they intended to enshrine

¹ As did John Calvin, who employed the phrase "the space of six days" (*sex dierum spatium*) specifically to counter Augustine's instantaneous creation view, which phrase Archbishop Ussher employed in the Irish Articles of 1615. The usage in the Irish Articles of "in the space of six days" was the first confessional usage and had significant influence on Westminster's use of the same phrase.

² Quoted in Letham's "In the Space ...," *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999) 171.

³ A Few, and New Observations, Upon the Book of Genesis in The Works of ...John Lightfoot, v.1 (London, 1684) 691-93.

2639 this view into the constitution. It may be assumed that the twenty-four hour day view was so common
2640 that it was deemed unnecessary for the divines to specify such. Or it may be assumed that the divines
2641 did not think explicitly in the category of days “consisting of 24 hours.” The last phrase, however, is a
2642 phrase that was moved but not adopted by the Assembly in regards to the question of the Sabbath. The
2643 Assembly Minutes indicate that in the debate on the doctrine of the Sabbath it was decided to “waive”
2644 the proposal that the words “consisting of 24 hours” be part of the description of the Sabbath day.⁴ This
2645 clearly indicates that the divines had such language at their disposal. They chose not to employ the
2646 phrase “consisting of 24 hours” in describing the Sabbath, perhaps because Lightfoot believed the
2647 Sabbath to be eternal. And they did not employ such language when they spoke of creation as being
2648 accomplished “in the space of six days.” That the divines did not say “in the space of six days
2649 consisting of twenty-four hours” should be lost on no one. The Westminster divines had full ability to
2650 prescribe twenty-four hour days but did not explicitly do so. One is then hard pressed to argue that the
2651 original intent of the divines was to do something that by the words of the Standards themselves they
2652 did not clearly do.

⁴ Mitchell and Struthers, *Minutes*, 216.

2653 B. THE PLACE OF THE *ANIMUS IMponentis* IN CONFESSONAL SUBSCRIPTION

2654 The Latin phrase *animus imponentis* is employed in constitutional law. According to *Black's Law*
 2655 *Dictionary*,¹ "*animus*" (Latin for "soul" or "mind"²) when used at law, particularly constitutional law,
 2656 often indicates "intention," and is best translated as such. Inasmuch as "*imponentis*" means "the
 2657 imposers,"³ or, in this case, "the imposing body," the *animus imponentis* would refer to the intention of
 2658 the imposing body. We employ the term *animus imponentis* in ecclesiastical law then as a way of
 2659 highlighting that in church law, as in civil law, attention must be paid not only to the actual words of the
 2660 constitution itself but also to the intention of the body that would interpret that constitution.

2661
 2662 The concept of *animus imponentis* finds further significance in that the church is not only the
 2663 authoritative interpreter of its constitution but that it imposes on its members the oaths and vows that
 2664 they take to maintain and defend that constitution. *Animus imponentis* means, in this respect, that when
 2665 an officer in the church subscribes to the constitution of the church, he does so with the explicit
 2666 understanding that the valid intention as to its meaning is that of the church as a whole and not merely
 2667 his own private opinion.

2668
 2669 So how is the intention of the church to be gathered? Most obviously, the meaning of the constitution
 2670 resides in the words themselves. The intention of the church, then, is to be gathered by a careful reading
 2671 of precisely what she has stated in her Standards. The standards of the church are already themselves an
 2672 interpretation of the Scriptures, a "saying together" what the Bible itself teaches in the various loci of
 2673 the theological encyclopedia. To be sure the Standards themselves must be interpreted but not in the
 2674 same way that the Scriptures must be interpreted. The Scriptures, for instance, do not employ technical
 2675 theological language in the same way that the Standards do. This is because the constitution of the
 2676 church, containing, as it does, the secondary (in the Confession and Catechisms) and tertiary (in the
 2677 Book of Church Order) standards, are the church's agreed-upon interpretation of the Scriptures. They
 2678 must clearly set forth what the church believes.

2679
 2680 The Standards are by their very nature a theological formulation, laid out in a logical, orderly fashion
 2681 amenable to quick reference, summarizing the Bible's major teachings. This is to say that, presumably,
 2682 wherever the Standards address an issue they do so with maximal clarity. While there may be things in
 2683 Paul, as well as other places in Scripture, that are "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16), it is assumed that
 2684 the Standards do not, in the main, contain such obscurities. It is particularly the province, if not to say
 2685 the burden, of the Standards to teach doctrine with clarity and precision, since they serve as the church's
 2686 interpretation of the Word of God on certain key issues.

2687
 2688 We must not imagine, though, that we only interpret the Scriptures and not the Standards. While it is
 2689 true that the Standards ought always to serve to clarify what we confess together the Bible teaches, we
 2690 still have to interpret the Standards. That this interpretation should not be purely private but take into
 2691 account how the church as a whole reads its standard is the concern of *animus imponentis*. That having
 2692 been said, it is important as well to assert that the church ought to interpret her Standards consonant
 2693 with the meaning intended at its adoption (or the adoption/modification of any part of it), as best as that
 2694 can be ascertained. It is inimical to constitutional government for the church to interpret her constitution
 2695 in any way that is clearly at variance with its own words and the original intention of the
 2696 framers/adopters. To disregard the Standards' clear statement about a particular doctrine and to believe
 2697 otherwise in spite of what is confessed is the mark of a declining, if not to say, apostatizing church.

2698
 2699 When the church comes to believe that the Scriptures teach something other than what she has
 2700 confessed the Scriptures to teach, integrity demands she amend her constitution in the manner that the
 2701 constitution itself prescribes for its own amendment. For the church to refuse to amend her constitution
 2702 to reflect her current understanding but instead to read it clearly at variance with its plain meaning is to
 2703 render the concept of the church as a confessing church meaningless. All this is to say that the concept
 2704 of *animus imponentis* may not be employed so as to make a wax nose of the Standards and to pit the

¹ *Black's Law Dictionary*, Sixth edition (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, 1990) 87.

² *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1997) 134.

³ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 849.

church's interpretation of the Standards against the plain words of the Standards itself, particularly inasmuch as the Standards generally are thought to contain but few obscurities. Rather, *animus imponentis*, rightly understood and employed, means simply that the church as a whole in its integrity interprets its own constitution and that such interpretation, and not those of private individuals or lesser judicatories, is decisive.

The concept, then, of *animus imponentis*, is significant because it insures confessional integrity. It means that the church can read and understand its own confession and it is that shared corporate meaning that binds the church together. Thus when one subscribes to the Standards, or takes his ordination vows to uphold the Constitution of the OPC, he does so explicitly affirming the constitution as understood by the church as a whole. It is not one's own interpretation or even that of a particular presbytery that is to prevail but the *animus imponentis*, the intention of the church as a whole, which church as a whole imposes the oaths and vows through its particular representatives. So the *animus imponentis* means that one is to understand the Standards in the sense of the words as commonly understood in the church.

The Standards are not then to be understood in some wooden literal fashion that a punctilious reading by a particular candidate or judicatory might yield. Similarly, the Standards are not to be given an overly elastic loose reading that a particular candidate or presbytery might hold. In the former instance, a novitiate, for instance, might not understand the texture that a particular passage in the Standards has assumed as the church has read her Standards and might read them in an idiosyncratic, and rather wooden, fashion. In the latter instance, a candidate might believe that he can subscribe to the Standards taking the words thereof to mean whatever he chooses to mean by them in his own private counsels. The concept of *animus imponentis* would stand over against both approaches and would indicate that the Standards are to be subscribed to in the manner in which the church understands them, as best as that can be grasped.

Another way of putting it is that the Standards are to be subscribed *ex animo*⁴ and not with equivocation or mental reservation.⁵ To do otherwise, as Hodge rightly observes in his discussion of *animus imponentis*, "shocks the common sense and the common honesty of men."⁶ One might well argue, then, that inasmuch as *animus imponentis* serves as a check for making the Standards mean whatever the individual candidate or judicatory wishes to make it mean, the concept of *animus imponentis* is necessary to preserve the purity, peace and unity of the church. Without such a concept, every man understanding and subscribing to the Standards in an individualistic fashion would result in ecclesiastical anarchy. Keeping in mind the *animus imponentis* serves to check such subjectivism and to preserve the purity, peace, and unity of the church.

The question, of course, that now confronts this committee is, "What is the *animus imponentis* of the OPC on the question of the various views on creation, particularly with reference to the length of the

⁴ "From the soul, or heart." Ecclesiastical oaths have sometimes been explicitly administered with the requirement of an *ex animo* affirmation for the very purpose of making it clear that the oath is to be taken in full sincerity and with integrity.

⁵ WCF 22.4: "An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation." The concept of *animus imponentis* is adduced in the support and defense of this principle.

⁶ Hodge Charles, *The Church and its Polity* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1879) 318: "It is no less plain that the candidate has no right to put his own sense upon the words propounded to him. He has no right to select from all possible meanings which the words may bear, that particular sense which suits his purpose, or which, he thinks, will save his conscience. It is well known that this course has been openly advocated, not only by the Jesuits, but by men of this generation, in this country and in Europe. The 'chemistry of thought,' it is said, can make all creed alike. Men have boasted that they could sign any creed....Professor Newman, just before his open apostasy, published a tract in which he defended his right to be in the English Church while holding the doctrines of the Church of Rome. He claimed for himself and others the privilege of signing the Thirty-nine articles in a 'non-natural sense;' that is, in the sense which he chose to put upon the words." Hodge's entire argument here is that the notion of *animus imponentis* safeguards the integrity of the Standards and does not allow one to put whatever construction he may choose upon its words.

creation days?” In ascertaining the *animus imponentis* on this, or on any issue (for that matter), one should look first to the words of the Standards themselves and then to the intentions of the drafters/framers (as is done in an earlier section of this report). The latter can be gathered not only through notes on the debates at the time of adoption of the Standards but sometimes as well through sermons, letters, or other writings of the framers/adopters.⁷

While it is widely agreed that most of the Westminster Divines apparently held to a view that the creation days were days of ordinary length, it is not uniformly agreed that this is what they intended to express by their adoption of the phrase “in the space of six days.” Even if a majority of the Divines held that the days of creation, as to duration, were days of ordinary length, it does not follow that the Divines necessarily intended to enshrine such a conviction in the Standards. This presupposes that the specific issue of the length of the creation days was of sufficient significance to them to warrant confessional inclusion. It has yet to be shown that the Divines intended positively to address the specific issue of the length of the creation days in the formulary that they employed, particularly when they could have expressed themselves more specifically if they had wished without question to rule out the possibility of anything other than days of ordinary length. One might even argue that when a majority of framers held to a view but do not express it in the most explicit of terms in the constitution itself, though they do in their private writings, that they are thus not binding all to their own approach.⁸ In other words, one might well argue that though the Divines feel strongly about a particular issue (forcefully expressing themselves in their own writings), they may yet choose not to express themselves as strongly confessionally about the same issue: all of this goes to the makeup of the *animus imponentis*.

As has been noted above, as important as the 1640’s drafting of the Standards at Westminster is, even more important for our purposes is the adoption of the Standards by the OPC in 1936.⁹ Citing 1936 reminds us that when we speak of even original intent and certainly of *animus imponentis* that what happened at the Second General Assembly of our newly-formed church in November of that year continues to be of relevance to us today in addressing anything in our constitution. Thus we must inquire as to whether the OPC in adopting the modified Westminster Standards did so in a way that sheds any light on the question that now concerns us of creation and especially the length of the creation days. Unsurprisingly, there is no record of any Assembly debate regarding the phrase “in the space of six days.” Nor are there any known discussions of the phrase or related questions in, say, *The Presbyterian Guardian*, which was the publication where any such discussions would most likely have occurred. Absent then any official record of debate or any public corporate discussion at all, we may seek to ascertain the mind of the Assembly in those days by a survey of the any writing relevant to the subject on the part of those who were involved in founding the OPC. It should here be noted that even as we have found no evidence that the original intent of the framers at Westminster was to prescribe a particular length of creation day, we have found no intent on the part of the adopters of the Standards in 1936 to impose a particular view of the length of the days on those who would subscribe the Standards as officers in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

What we do find in the early years of the OPC is an apparent allowance of flexibility with respect to the specific question of the length of creation days. As noted in the earlier section on “Background to the Current Discussion,” though many Presbyterians (like Ashbel Green, R.L. Dabney, John L. Girardeau, etc.) retained the conviction that the days of creation were days of essentially ordinary length, more than a few leading Presbyterians came to embrace some other view, generally some form of Gap Theory or Day-Age view. Among such, on this side of the Atlantic, were Charles and A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, and W.G.T. Shedd. Thus at the time of the formation of the OPC in 1936 there had already come to be a kind of recognized and permitted elasticity in interpreting the phrase “in the space of six days” even among quite conservative Old School Presbyterians. We have no evidence that among the first generation of the OPC that the specific question of the length of the days was ever considered a test of orthodoxy and that among the views then current among Old Schoolers that any were clearly impermissible.

⁷ David Hall has done a significant amount of work in this area, as mentioned earlier in this report.

⁸ See some reflections on this question in J.V. Fesko’s article, “The Days of Creation and Confession Subscription in the OPC” in *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001), particularly at 236-43.

⁹ All that was present in 1936 goes into the shaping of the *animus imponentis* on the issue of creation views and particularly the varying views then present on the question of the length of the creation days.

J. Gresham Machen, for instance, articulated what is popularly understood as the day-age view, writing: “The Book of Genesis seems to divide the work of creation into six successive steps or stages. It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in the first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty-four hours each. We may think of them rather as very long periods of time.”¹⁰ As is far more fully argued elsewhere in this report, E.J. Young, while not embracing the day-age view that seemed to be more common among that first generation than now, did not believe that the Bible provided sufficient evidence to ascertain the specific length of the creation days, writing: “The length of the days is not stated. What is important is that each of the days is a period of time which may be legitimately denominated *yom*.”¹¹ Furthermore, in a personal letter to creationist John Whitcomb, Young manifested significant reserve about what the first chapters of Genesis taught in terms of the details of science.¹² Neither John Murray nor Cornelius Van Til specifically addressed the question of the length of the days and there are some who infer from things in their writings that Murray and Van Til held to the view of days of ordinary length.¹³ What is clear is that Murray held to an eternal Sabbath and that what he regarded as the necessary essentials of the creation account he set forth in *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin*: the historicity of Adam, the solidarity of the human race with Adam, the historicity of the fall of Adam, and the imputation of his sin to his posterity. And no doctrine was more foundational to the presuppositional apologetics of Van Til than the doctrine of creation. Creation explained God’s revelation to man and man’s covenantal standing before God. In his engagement with opponents as diverse as Gordon Clark and Karl Barth, Van Til invariably began with their flawed doctrine of creation, and their failure to own up to the Creator-creature distinction, all without reference to the length of the days of creation.

Absent any record of the intent of those adopting the Standards in 1936, it is helpful to survey, as we have just done, some of the men who have been key in shaping the understanding of the OPC with respect to creation and the length of the creation days and thus who have helped shape the *animus* of the OPC in this regard. There have been corporate developments, of course, subsequent to 1936 that have also contributed to the formation of the *animus imponentis*. It is helpful to enumerate the kinds of instruments that might shape the *animus imponentis* on any given issue and survey the record since 1936 to see whether or not such has played a role in the OPC: A Testimony (such as the Covenants have and is supplemental to/explanatory of the Confession);¹⁴ General Assembly deliverances; the reports and recommendations of study committees; the work of any denominational agencies that might impinge on the question at hand; and, finally, any relevant judicial decisions. There have been no Testimonies about the matters under consideration, as is not been part of our history to treat issues in such fashion. Nor has the OPC, up until this point, had a study committee to address these issues. Undoubtedly, the work of this committee is an important part in helping the church to come to clarity as to its mind with respect to creation views and the length of the creation days.

¹⁰ J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965) 115.

¹¹ E. J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1964) 104.

¹² E.J. Young to John Whitcomb in Young’s Papers, Archives of Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). Young opines as follows—on the flood: “I rather doubt whether the Bible intends us to understand that the flood left permanent changes in the climate and topography of the earth;” on the date of the flood: “I do not think it possible for us today to give a date, or even an approximate date, for the biblical flood;” on the age of man: “I do not think that we can date the age of man;” on the days of Genesis: Young believed that days of twenty-four hours each were possible, though the first three could not be solar days and he did not think that the Bible “permits us in dogmatic fashion” to insist upon a specific length of the individual days; and on death before the Fall: “I think it is possible that animals died, using that word in the popular sense, even before the introduction of sin into the world,” but “we cannot speak positively about that.”

¹³ Morton Smith, in his “History of the Creation Doctrine in American Presbyterian Churches” concludes that “both Murray and Van Til seem to have held to the 24-hour creation days.” No specific evidence to support this is adduced, however, and it is certainly the case that neither of these men ever required such as a test for orthodoxy.

¹⁴ Joseph H. Hall, “Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod,” in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, eds. Joseph H. Hall and Mark Noll (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999) 210.

There was one General Assembly deliverance relevant to the creation question. In 1980, the Presbytery of Philadelphia adopted an overture to the 47th General Assembly:

Whereas, the teaching known as macroevolution, which includes the idea that the human race evolved over a long period of time from lower forms of life, is taught in various institutions of learning, and,
Whereas, this teaching is in opposition to the Bible teaching that Adam and Eve were created by direct acts of God at particular times;
We petition the 47th General Assembly to take such steps as will make possible the issuing of a statement setting forth the true doctrine of the origin of man and condemning the teaching of macroevolution, even when set forth as theistic.¹⁵

The General Assembly responded:

That since the Westminster Confession of Faith, IV, clearly states that God created all things out of nothing and that Adam and Eve were created by direct acts of God at particular times, and thereby condemns the teaching that man developed from lower forms of life, no further statement is necessary in the context of this overture.¹⁶

There is additionally at least one instance of the work of a denominational agency, the Committee on Christian Education, that reflects on the question at hand and sheds some light on the *animus imponentis* of the OPC on the matter. There is also one judicial decision, adjudicated on appeal by the General Assembly of 1996, that reflects on some aspects of the creation views question. Both of these warrant examination in some detail since they do shed light on the denomination's mind about some aspect of the creation question.¹⁷

At the meeting of the Committee on Christian Education on 29 June 1954, the Committee engaged in "informal discussion" of a "tract on evolution," the author of which (Dr. Edwin Y. Monsma) sought publication of the work by the Committee. The only action taken at that meeting was that "it was agreed to have the tract circulated among the members of the Committee who have not read it." At the meeting of the Committee on 26 October 1954, the following action was taken: "It was moved and carried that Dr. Monsma be informed that the Committee after prolonged study and discussion of his tract on evolution has reluctantly concluded that it would not be desirable for the Committee on Christian Education to publish it because of the dogmatic position taken on the controversial issue of the length of creation days." As a kind of consolation the Committee did agree to print in "multilith form an edition of up to 300 copies for his use." So the Committee would print some copies but not under the Committee's imprint, due to the work's "dogmatic position taken on the controversial length of the creation days." Dr. Monsma's reply to this, recorded in the 10 December 1954 Minutes of the Executive Committee of the CCE, was gracious, expressing "understanding of the decision of the Committee on Christian Education not to publish his tract on evolution...[and] express[ing] gratitude for the Committee's offer to print multilith copies...."¹⁸

Dr. Monsma's tract, *If Not Evolution, What Then* does indeed argue, particularly on pp. 30-38, that the days of creation were "ordinary days of twenty-four hours." In this sense, then, he is dogmatic, even as the Committee indicated. However, the way that he sets forth his view is quite irenic. He is not dogmatic, for example, about the age of the earth (about which he seems to think the Scriptures silent). And he summarizes his position on the length of creation days in this way: "Without categorically dismissing all other views [that would hold to something other than creation days being days of ordinary length], it does seem that this one [i.e., the day of ordinary length view] is most easily

¹⁵ Minutes of the 47th GA of the OPC, 11-12.

¹⁶ Minutes of the 47th GA of the OPC, 203-04.

¹⁷ Relevant to this question, though not an action of the GA or one of its agencies, is the Resolution on Creation adopted by the Presbytery of Southern California in 1968, cited in the Preface of this report.

¹⁸ Minutes of the Committee on Christian Education, OPC Archives, Westminster Theological Seminary.

harmonized with the Scriptures and with the whole of special revelation.”¹⁹ This is a rather understated way of addressing the issue and affirming one’s position. Nevertheless, even though Monsma’s position on the length of the creation days is rather modestly stated, the Christian Education Committee still declined to publish it on that basis. That may well reveal something of the *animus imponentis* on this question. Certainly it seems to indicate that almost twenty years after the formation of the OPC, the denomination remained unwilling to publish anything under its auspices that set forth the length of the creation days as being of ordinary duration.

The judicial case that has relevance for our seeking to determine the *animus imponentis* with respect to creation views is the case brought on appeal to the General Assembly in 1996 by Terry M. Gray. Dr. Gray had been found guilty by his session of “stating that Adam had primate ancestors.”²⁰ The Presbytery of the Midwest did not sustain Dr. Gray’s appeal to it and he accordingly appealed to the General Assembly. The General Assembly in turn did not sustain his appeal and thus the verdict and censure (indefinite suspension from office) proposed by the trial judicatory were affirmed. This case suggests something about the *animus imponentis* in re: the subject of creation. The decision of the GA not to sustain Dr. Gray’s appeal indicates that the mind or intention of the church was to rule out animal ancestry for Adam’s body and to affirm that man was a direct creation from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). There was a protest lodged against this decision of the General Assembly but on the whole the mind of the church seemed clearly to proscribe the evolution of man.

While the Gray case did not address the question of the length of the creation days, the age of the earth, or even the question of the evolution of animals in general, it did reflect the church’s view on what it is willing to tolerate or permit in the broader area of creation views. The church, whatever its *animus* may have been in the past, rather decidedly made it clear that it was not willing to countenance animal ancestry for Adam’s body. Putting together then the decision of the Committee on Christian Education not to publish Monsma’s work with the 1980 General Assembly deliverance and the 1996 decision of the General Assembly in the Gray case, the church has both declined to be dogmatic about the length of the creation days and has at the same time been dogmatic in rejecting the evolution of man.

Respecting the current *animus imponentis* on the matter of creation views (particularly the length of creation days), there does seem to have been some shift in the *animus* of the church from an earlier more tolerant to a recently more restrictive position. The kind of evolutionary views, for instance, of a Warfield tend no longer to be tolerated, reflected in the decision in the Gray case. Even the apparently rather widespread earlier agreement not to be dogmatic about the length of creation days, reflected in the decision of the Committee on Christian Education not to publish the Monsma tract, seems no longer to prevail with the same force. One might speculate about the reasons for the heightened concern on the part of many to regard as aberrant any view other than that of creation days of ordinary length. It does seem to be the case that, whatever might have prevailed in the past, there are those in the OPC who believe that any view other than that of days of ordinary length should be precluded or at least regarded as in error. That position appears to be of more recent origin. There also remain those committed to permitting flexibility on the question of creation views and the length of the creation days. Your committee would encourage the church to continue to permit flexibility while continuing to discuss all the issues addressed in this report.

¹⁹ Monsma, 38

²⁰ Minutes of the 63rd GA of the OPC, 296.

2925 **III. CREATION, CREDENTIALING AND CORPORATE CULTURE: THIS PRESENT QUESTION AND**
 2926 **THE LICENSING AND ORDAINING OF CANDIDATES**

2927 With respect to the process of the licensing and ordaining of candidates, there is no current
 2928 constitutional mechanism for taking exception to the Standards or for expressing scruples. When a
 2929 candidate has a scruple or wishes to take exception to the Standards, he must at present disclose what
 2930 those might be to the examining judicatory. That is to say that it is the duty of a candidate to reveal any
 2931 known constitutional divergences on his part from the clear words of the Standards or the *animus*
 2932 *imponentis* as a whole. But there is no constitutional process that then begins whereby the judicatory
 2933 formally records the candidates exceptions or scruples and furthermore prohibits the candidate, on the
 2934 eventuality of licensure and/or ordination, from teaching his views that are an exception to the
 2935 Standards.
 2936

2937 While there is nothing in the Church Order that would prohibit a judicatory from recording in its
 2938 minutes a voluntary scruple expressed or exception taken by a candidate, there is no established
 2939 procedure for communicating this to other judicatories to which he might transfer. Nor is there any way,
 2940 short of bringing a judicial charge, for a Presbytery to declare a view that a candidate holds to be in
 2941 violation of the Standards when the candidate himself does not regard his view to be in violation of the
 2942 Standards. No one, in other words, may be required to “take an exception” to some point in the
 2943 Standards insofar as the very notion of “taking exception” entails a voluntary action on the part of the
 2944 candidate. What the judicatory can, and must, do is to examine the candidate carefully so as to
 2945 determine conformity to the Standards, noting any divergences and weighing those to determine their
 2946 relative significance to the task at hand, which is, “should we license or ordain this candidate?”
 2947

2948 As our system currently operates, then, a judicatory, having heard any differences that a candidate
 2949 might have with the Standards, decides, in the face of such differences, whether or not to proceed to
 2950 licensure/ordination. It must be understood that if the candidate is licensed or ordained he enjoys all the
 2951 rights and privileges of every other member of the body. We, as confessing Presbyterians, do not regard
 2952 any members among us as “second class,” on account of any scruples they might have expressed or
 2953 exceptions they might have taken. There is no official mechanism outside of judicial process for a
 2954 judicatory to license or ordain a candidate and, at the same time, prohibit him from teaching any
 2955 particular doctrine. To be sure, a candidate should, out of integrity, refrain from teaching contrary to the
 2956 Standards since to do so is inherently inimical to the concept of a confessional church. Likewise,
 2957 judicatories ought always to exercise due caution and good discretion in licensing and ordaining
 2958 candidates who take exceptions. It will be difficult for our church to maintain her confessional stance if
 2959 we admit candidates whose non-confessional views undermine the very foundation which supports our
 2960 ability to say the same thing together.
 2961

2962 To acknowledge that the Presbytery must carefully examine the candidate and make its determination
 2963 of whether to license/ordain is not to address the question, which needs to be addressed, of the part
 2964 played in this by individual presbyters. Presbytery, obviously, is made up of its members, all the
 2965 ministers and commissioners of the regional church. How ought these officers to assess confessional
 2966 divergences? That elders with the right to vote in presbytery are styled “commissioners” and that both
 2967 elders and ministers in the General Assembly are thus styled lends insight to this question.
 2968 Commissioners, in the Presbyterian system, unlike delegates in the continental Reformed churches, do
 2969 not act as delegates of the body that sent them. To be a commissioner, then, means not voting as you
 2970 believe that the body which sent you would have you vote but voting as you believe that you should
 2971 before God. Commissioners then must, *coram Deo*, faithfully discharge their consciences in the face of
 2972 all discussion and debate.
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2974 The commissioner’s vote, in other words, is his alone and he must answer to God for how he casts it.
 2975 Recognizing this, what advice might this committee give that would touch upon this question? That it
 2976 is to say, how should a commissioner vote in the face of a candidate taking exceptions to and expressing
 2977 scruples about the Standards? First of all, a commissioner should vote as he in good conscience
 2978 believes that he must before God. The oaths and vows that the commissioner has taken are an important
 2979 part of what must inform his conscience, especially his vows of subscription to the Standards, his
 2980 approving of the Church Order and his vow to submit to his brethren in the Lord. Secondly, then, the
 2981 commissioner should vote *coram Deo* with an eye to the words contained in the Standards themselves
 2982 as well as his understanding of the *animus imponentis*. This reminds us that conscience is not merely an
 2983 individual matter. Even as the individual conscience is to be informed and formed by the Scripture, so
 2984 there is a corporate conscience that is to be informed and formed by the Scripture. To put it another
 2985 way: We as Presbyterians rightly eschew idiosyncratic and highly personalized interpretation of the

Scriptures. The heart of confessionalism is that the church as a corporate entity reads the Bible together. Similarly, there is a greater concern than simply that of one's own private conscience formed by Scripture and it is that of the corporate conscience also formed by Scripture, as read together by the church. The function of the *animus imponentis* reminds us that the church also has a corporate conscience which guides the exercise of individual conscience.

If a candidate ought not to subscribe to the Standards in a way other than *ex animo* and should not feel free to interpret the Standards individualistically without regard for the *animus imponentis*, then, arguably, neither should a commissioner vote for or against a candidate without regards to the Standards and the *animus imponentis*. While it is true that a commissioner's vote is inviolate and he must give account of it ultimately to God, he should not vote for a man whose confessional divergence he believes to be detrimental to the purity, peace and unity of the church. On the other hand, a commissioner should also be mindful of what the church as a whole regards as deleterious to its purity, peace and unity. Thus a commissioner should be very slow to vote against a candidate solely on grounds which the rest of the church finds perfectly acceptable. At least if and when a commissioner does so he ought to be fully cognizant that his position is at variance with the *animus imponentis*.

For individual presbyters to oppose candidates whom they might regard as confessionally unacceptable when the rest of the church does not so regard them potentially is vexing for the church. Especially troubling is the practice of voting against a candidate who holds views which are already widely held in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Presbyters who wish to change the constitution ought to seek some orderly process, apart from simply voting "no" on candidates, to press their concerns upon the church, up to but not limited to proposing constitutional amendments. All that having been said, no one may ever instruct a commissioner how to vote in the case of candidates seeking licensure/ordination. Nor should anyone presume to know the basis for such a personal decision (why any given commissioner voted as he did) short of a clear, express declaration on the part of the commissioner.

In the current environment, it is sometimes the case that a candidate may simply get caught in the cross-fire of serious theological divergences between presbyters. Insofar as theological examinations have become the chief means of expressing theological differences in the church, it is sadly the case that much of the brunt of such differences may well fall upon the heads of candidates being examined. This is largely due to the fact that theology exams are the only part of many presbytery meetings where theology is discussed in any direct way. Perhaps presbyteries should consciously seek for other ways to address significant theological questions than simply by airing them during theology exams on the floor of presbytery meetings.

It is worth remembering that this was not always so: presbyteries have adopted mechanisms other than candidate examinations to deal with doctrinal disputes. Scottish presbyteries generally met every month and opened with a sermon, followed by a theological lecture. Through this process, every minister would have the opportunity to preach before the presbytery in turn. Likewise, in Geneva the town pastors conducted regular theological discussions. While our presbyteries are often more far-flung, it would not be impossible to imitate these examples. One of our presbyteries, e.g., has established a mandatory annual study meeting in addition to its regular business meetings. Another presbytery has four optional fellowship meetings where issues of interest are discussed. In such a forum, theological issues can be freely discussed without the pressure of a vote. Given the disparity of our theological backgrounds and training in the OPC, such discussions might aid significantly in retaining "confidence in the brethren" as we deal not only with the doctrine of creation but other doctrines as well.

Even if a presbytery does not provide such opportunities for discussion, presbyters who wish to change the *animus* (mind) of the church on any issue should probably focus first on teaching. Such teaching might occur not only in the local church but through publications and other means be communicated to the broader church. Both E. J. Young and M.G. Kline, e.g., sought to shape the *animus* of the church on the creation issue by writing, teaching, and speaking. One is always accountable, of course, for what one teaches and other presbyters are free to question anyone, up to and including charges if the issue is of such seriousness that the presbyter is convinced that it strikes at the system of doctrine. On the other hand, if the Confession is insufficiently clear on a point that a presbyter believes should be clear, then he may wish to bring an overture for constitutional amendment to his presbytery.

Furthermore, we would urge that presbyteries, both directly and through their committees on candidates and credentials, become more active in the process of theological education. To that end, we would encourage presbyteries to work more closely, and to encourage candidates to work more closely, with the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC (under the oversight of the Committee on Christian

3050 Education). We believe that MTIOPC can serve to foster unity in our denomination in which candidates
3051 have increasingly diverse seminary backgrounds, helping to nurture candidates in the corporate culture
3052 of the OPC. We would also urge that presbyteries hold seminaries more directly accountable for the
3053 training of its candidates by reminding the seminaries that would serve the OPC that they should always
3054 give heed to the "Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation" that the OPC has adapted and
3055 placed in its *Book of Church Order* (189-197).
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3057 We would hope by the above suggested procedures to assist our judicatories in dealing with the
3058 questions that concern this Committee and thereby promote the purity, peace and unity of the church.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee makes the following recommendations in order to promote the purity, peace and unity of the church.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the General Assembly recommend that presbyteries should expect a ministerial candidate to articulate his view on the days of creation with a proper recognition of the hermeneutical, exegetical, and confessional considerations involved. The following kinds of questions should be used by presbyteries when examining a candidate, whatever his view of the days of creation, in order to show that his doctrine of creation is consistent with the Standard's system of doctrine:

A. Does the candidate's view uphold the following and can he explain what they mean:

1. creation *ex nihilo*
2. the federal headship of Adam
3. the covenant of works
4. the doctrine of the Sabbath
5. the sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture
6. the historicity of the creation account

B. Does the candidate understand the priority of Scripture in the relationship between special and general revelation?**C. Does the candidate understand the hermeneutical principles that are expressed in Scripture and in the Standards?****D. Is the candidate able to address the issue of evolution both exegetically and theologically?****E. Can the candidate articulate the covenantal structure of the plan of redemption as found in Genesis 1-3?****RECOMMENDATION 2:**

That the General Assembly urge members of the presbyteries and sessions to uphold the peace of the church by addressing divisive theological issues within the church primarily through educational, administrative, judicial, or other constitutional means, and not merely by voting for or against candidates for office.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the General Assembly encourage the Committee on Christian Education and the Ministerial Training Institute of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to seek ways of working more closely with the candidates and credentials committees of presbyteries in order to bring ministerial candidates to a fuller understanding of the confessional standards and of the corporate culture of the church.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the General Assembly distribute this report as follows:

- A. To the presbyteries, particularly to their candidates and credentials committees, commending the report to them for study.
- B. To all the sessions of the OPC and others who wish to study it.

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APPENDICES

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1. ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CONTEXT

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(Bryan D. Estelle)

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INTRODUCTION

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Anthony York recently said of the great Swedish biblical scholar and Semitist, Ivan Engnell, who had spent some 25 years meticulously studying the first couple of chapters of Genesis, "Surely...to spend a quarter of a century studying a passage of three short chapters in the Bible is academic eccentricity enthroned. However, now that I have myself surveyed a minute portion of the secondary literature . . . my judgment of Engnell's dedication has become considerably more charitable."¹ As a committee and as a church, we may resound with a sympathetic echo when we begin to delve into this profound and much discussed section of Scripture. It goes without saying of course, that the doctrine of creation has always been considered of fundamental importance in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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The biblical account of creation, which occurs in Genesis 1-3, did not just fall out of the sky without being influenced by its cultural environment. Furthermore, "Any serious study of Genesis 1-2 must include careful and critical use of other ancient Near Eastern cosmologies."² Determining the influence of that environment, however, is a complex and difficult matter as will be discussed below. This endeavor will be further complicated by the role of our presuppositions. As one Jewish scholar from Tel Aviv has stated, "Our very observations, and not only our interpretations, are necessarily shaped by whatever presuppositions, hypotheses, and bodies of knowledge we possess. Our theories guide our selection of evidence, and even our construction of evidence."³ Of course, this aspect comes as no surprise to a church schooled in Van Til's insights.

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In short, a key question for our Report following this brief survey is this: "How should we understand the relationship between the pagan myths of the ancient Near East and the Bible?"⁴ Is there any kind of connection between Genesis 1-11 and the ancient Near Eastern mythologies? Or, more narrowly, is there any connection between Genesis 1-2 and the ancient Near Eastern mythologies? What was the nature of the connection if indeed we assume that some kind of historical connection existed? In the beginning of this section of the Report, we note the many dangers and complex problems associated with a contextual method. The snares are numerous.

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Our assessment is expressed well in the general evaluation of the problem made by Kenneth Mathews. His conclusion is that, "there is a legitimate place for considering the witness of ancient Near Eastern recoveries. It is not found so much in the counting or discounting of parallels but in the general ideological climate in which the biblical materials are found."⁵ In other words, just as Homer's epics are known to Americans (whether they've read them or not), so the concepts of the ancient Near Eastern epics would have been familiar to the Hebrews. Trying to ascertain what the influences were is an enigma that still plagues competent scholars of the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near Eastern sources. This fact warrants humility and caution. If those most competent in the field are extremely cautious in stating opinions to the questions stated above, how much more should we as a church exercise caution,

¹ York, Anthony, "The Maturation Theme in the Adam and Eve Story," in *Go To the Land I Will Show You: Studies in Honor of Dwight W. Young* (ed. Joseph E. Coleman and Victor H. Matthews; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 393.

² Hoffmeier, James K., "Some Thoughts on Genesis 1 & 2 and Egyptian Cosmology," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 15 (1983) 39.

³ Greenstein, Edward L., "Theory and Argument in Biblical Criticism," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986) 78.

⁴ Currid, John D., *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997) 27.

⁵ Mathews, Kenneth A., *Genesis 1-11* (New American Commentary; Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996) 87.

respect and humility in our claims to these difficult matters. Nevertheless, in what follows, we attempt to say what will be helpful (within the limits of our competencies) to the church, both with regards to her immediate needs and with respect to what will be helpful as a resource for further study in the future.

The geographical area which we are describing begins in the southeast at the Persian Gulf, stretching northwards through the Mesopotamian valley (between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) northwards along the Fertile Crescent, embracing eastern Syria and Turkey (Anatolia) and moving down into the Levant (which includes the modern states of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria west of the Euphrates), and finally into and including Egypt itself. That cultural environment consisted of the languages, literatures and peoples of the ancient Near East: an area that was vast and diversified geographically, politically and culturally. The biblical writer communicated his creation account, a magisterial and masterful account we may add, informed and influenced by, and at times marshalling polemics against, his literary and cultural surroundings. When we talk about Sumerian and Akkadian below, we are talking about languages and literatures that had their origins in modern day Iraq and Iran (although Akkadian became the trade language of that part of the world for many years). When we talk about Ugaritic, we are talking about the very important finds made in 1929 in a coastal city that is in modern Syria.

TERMINOLOGICAL ISSUES

Before we begin our discussion, it is important to discuss what we mean by cosmology. Usually, cosmology means "a graphic account of the structure of the physical universe."⁶ This seems to be the way we use the term as moderns in astrophysics. Cosmogony, on the other hand, in keeping with etymological consistency (Greek *kosmos* = "word, ornament, universe" and *genesis* = "origin, generation"), is usually used to describe how the universe came to be. As Long has defined cosmogony, it "has to do with myths, stories, or theories regarding the birth or the creation of the universe as an order or the description of the original order of the universe."⁷

In this Report, we will lean towards using the term cosmology most frequently; nevertheless, not in such a manner that is limited to its mere modern connotations. In the ancient world, cosmology had a wider meaning than its modern English connotations. Cosmology in ancient culture carried not merely notions about the structure and origin of the universe, but also had to do with its very governing principles. This is why creation was such a fundamental concern for the ancients, for "to know the origin of something is somehow to know its essence."⁸ The same kind of fundamental concern with origins is evident in the biblical writers as well, not only in the Genesis account, but throughout the whole canon of Holy Scripture. For example, the importance of the doctrine of creation is beyond dispute in book of Daniel. Allusions abound throughout the whole book.⁹ In Isaiah 40-55 also, it has been demonstrated that this masterful section of consolation is saturated with the language and concepts of creation.¹⁰ The examples, of course, could be multiplied (see, for example, *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, in the bibliography). Since, as Bavinck asserts about the creation account, mankind is placed in right to his creator and to the world in this creation account, he states, "For that

⁶ Brichto, Herbert Chanan, *The Names of God: Poetic Readings in Biblical Beginnings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 50.

⁷ Long quoted by Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 26; The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1992) 2.

⁸ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, vii.

⁹ J.B. Doukhan, "Allusions À La Création Dans Le Livre De Daniel: Dépistage et Significations," in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. A.S. Van der Woude; Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Carrol Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Analecta biblica 43; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970).

3187 reason also creation is the fundamental dogma: throughout Scripture it is in the foreground and is the
 3188 foundation stone on which the Old and New Covenants rest."¹¹

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3190 THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

3191 Discussing the relationship of the Old Testament to her ancient Near Eastern neighbors involves risk
 3192 and is very complex, especially considering the antiquity of the data in question. In fact, to pose the
 3193 question, "How does one determine whether or not there is an historical (i.e., genetic) connection
 3194 between a certain biblical passage or phenomenon and its ancient Near Eastern parallel?"¹² (Malul,
 3195 preface) entails a person in a huge labyrinth of difficult and complex problems. Consider just a couple
 3196 of examples of abuses in the past.

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3198 With the dawn of numerous discoveries from the Mesopotamia in the 19th century there was much
 3199 interest in comparative studies, especially between Assyriology and the Old Testament. This was really
 3200 inaugurated in many respects by Friedrich Delitzsch and H. Gunkel's work in the late 19th century.
 3201 Delitzsch wanted to argue for the great indebtedness of the Old Testament to the ancient Near Eastern
 3202 cultures surrounding the Hebrews.¹³ This assertion met a firestorm response from the fundamentalistic
 3203 side (Malul's term) of scholarship which was arguing for the independence of the Old Testament. This
 3204 enthusiasm for comparative analysis between Assyriologists and biblical studies soon cooled. As the
 3205 discipline of Assyriology began to grow into a more independent discipline of its own, greater care and
 3206 precision was exercised in comparative studies between the Bible and its ancient Near Eastern
 3207 environment.¹⁴ The field of study known as Assyriology came into its own, and it began to define itself
 3208 more and more as a discipline apart from the sacred text of Scripture.

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3210 Then, with the dawn of Ugaritic discoveries and studies in 1929, the burgeoning amount of data coming
 3211 from Egyptian studies, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there was a virtual explosion of new
 3212 studies during the last century drawing allegedly illuminating insights from comparisons made between
 3213 Israel and her neighbors.

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3215 To this day, however, there are disagreements among qualified experts with respect to the comparative
 3216 method, that is, a method that assumes some kind of historical connection between the Old Testament
 3217 Scriptures and the ancient Near Eastern cultures. The dangers run in two directions. On the one hand,
 3218 some Old Testament scholars have so emphasized the distinctiveness and independency of the Old
 3219 Testament that a virtual denial of any cultural influence whatsoever is assumed or even argued outright.
 3220 This tendency of Fundamentalism (as Malul calls it) has skewed the true picture. At other times, the
 3221 goal of the comparative method among Old Testament studies has had merely an apologetic purpose.
 3222 This has led many to miss the picture as well. Finally, one can become so facile in making assertions of
 3223 historical connection between the Old Testament and parallel phenomena in the surrounding cultures
 3224 that other possible explanations are altogether ignored or missed. Moreover, the usual point of
 3225 contention among responding critics involved in reviewing such work is whether one has
 3226 overemphasized the similarities while effectively minimizing the differences, or vice-versa (see Malul).
 3227 Most Old Testament scholars today would concede some kind of historical connection and influence
 3228 between the cultures of the ancient Near East and Israel's faith as recorded in the Scriptures of the Old
 3229 Testament.¹⁵

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¹¹ Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, 59.

¹² Meir Malul, *The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies* (Alater Orient und Altes Testament 227; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verl., 1990).

¹³ Malul, *Comparative Method*, 38.

¹⁴ Richard S. Hess, "One Hundred and Fifty Years of Comparative Studies on Genesis 1-11," in *I Studied Inscriptions From Before The Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David Tsumura; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 1-11.

¹⁵ For more detail on the difficulties associated with the comparative method see the author's forthcoming article, "Proverbs and Ahiqar Revisited," *Biblical Historian* (August, 2004).

Since we are dealing with the early chapters of Genesis, the real question before the church in this Report is whether there exists some kind of connection between the creation account and the ancient Near Eastern cosmologies or other ideas as represented in the ancient Near Eastern cosmologies.

The following part of the Report will survey some of the cosmologies of Israel's neighbors and then will follow with an attempt to formulate some ideas about what we may say with regards to the biblical creation account in its ancient Near Eastern context. We will briefly describe the major texts and ideas from four of Israel's neighbors: Sumer (the antecedent to Babylon), Babylon, Egypt, and Canaan. Following that, the Report will make some comments situating Israel's cosmology within this cultural context.

MESOPTOMIAN: SUMER

Many texts have been discovered from ancient Mesopotamia, some dating all the way back into the third millennium B.C. This Report will only give a brief summary and cover major texts and traditions. In Sumer, the "origin is the defining moment; that is why people took cosmogonies so seriously."¹⁶ There are two main traditions according to Jan Van Dijk (the Sumerologist who has done the most work in this area):

A. Nippur Tradition

An early text, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Underworld*, describes how the Creation takes place in the cosmic marriage between Heaven (An) and Earth (Ki). Earth blooms when the soil is loosened by the hoe. The Marriage took place at the bonding of Heaven and Earth in the temple of Nippur. The most important text from this tradition, especially as it relates to the creation of humans is *Praise of the Pickaxe* which is 108 lines long.¹⁷ In its first 34 lines, the text describes a cosmogony and then goes on to describe the creation of mankind, the "black-headed people." Throughout the text, the "pickaxe" plays a mysterious instrumental role.

B. Eridu Tradition

There are five major extant texts having to do with cosmogony in the Eridu tradition.¹⁸ Kenneth Kitchen dates the *Sumerian Flood Tale*, or the Eridu Genesis, to about 1600.¹⁹ The Water God (Enki) creates here by bringing up water from underground. It was conceived of as a sexual act, the fertilizing water being that of Enki (the bull). The idea of creation of mankind by Enki out of clay is common in this tradition. Human beings are created "as surrogate laborers for the unwilling gods."²⁰ in this tradition, a significant difference from the biblical tradition.

In keeping with the significance of what was said above about cosmogonies reflecting the principles which govern the universe, in the Sumerian traditions, the god's "assigning each person or thing a 'destiny'" is very important.²¹ Even "destiny" or "fate" is insufficient for there is no exact English equivalent to express the concept.²²

¹⁶ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 53.

¹⁷ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 30.

¹⁸ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 32.

¹⁹ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 423.

²⁰ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 42.

²¹ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 53.

²² Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 53.

3271 MESOPOTAMIAN: AKKADIAN

3272 Although the exact relationship between the Akkadian tradition and its Sumerian antecedents is still a
 3273 matter of scholarly discussion, it is established that the Akkadians "took over from the Sumerians the
 3274 major principal religious and legal concepts."²³ In the Akkadian tradition, the cosmologies range from
 3275 the second to first millinea. There are 15 or so examples of short creation episodes that are purely
 3276 functional (e.g. to cure a toothache). It is interesting that the creator gods in the minor cosmologies are
 3277 distinct from that which is created. In other words, creation does not evolve nor is there spontaneous
 3278 creation (a repeated theme that continues to surface in the ancient Near Eastern texts). As is well
 3279 known, there are much longer texts, e.g., *Atrahasis* and *Enuma Elish*, whose purposes transcend the
 3280 merely functional.²⁴

3281 Oftentimes, the *Enuma Elish* is called the standard Mesopotamian creation text (see Heidel's popular
 3282 rendition, *The Babylonian Genesis*). A generation of older scholars asserted and continues to assert
 3283 some kind of direct link between the *Enuma Elish* and Genesis 1-2.²⁵ Today, however, Assyriologists
 3284 reject the idea of any direct link between the two. As Kitchen notes in his recently released book, a
 3285 magisterial tour de force, the only thing that *might suggest* [emphasis ours] a connection is the creation
 3286 of light before the luminaries.²⁶ There are just too many differences in the details to suggest a *direct*
 3287 dependence.

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 3289 It is in *Atrahasis* that we find the standard account of man's creation from the Babylonian sources.²⁷ In
 3290 addition to these significant texts, there is also the longest literary composition in cuneiform Akkadian,
 3291 the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Gilgamesh, one of the most ancient of written stories, describes the quest of a
 3292 king and his desire to understand the cosmos. He is a world traveler trying to understand the meaning
 3293 of death, and who searches for immortality and the significance of the universe.

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 3295 *Atrahasis* (Old Babylonian version 17th century) is 1245 lines and *Enuma Elish* (probably 12th century)
 3296 is approximately 1100 lines. The *Atrahasis* myth (see the Dalley volume published by Oxford or the
 3297 Lambert/Millard volume recently republished by Eisenbrauns for English translations) begins with only
 3298 the gods, greater and lesser, existing before the creation of the world. After the creation of mankind
 3299 from the clay (this time mixed with blood), the race of human beings multiplied greatly through the
 3300 next 600 years and humans began to make such a din of noise on the earth that it disturbed the sleep of
 3301 the gods. Millard notes that "Man's earthy constituency is emphasized by both Babylonian and Hebrew
 3302 narratives."²⁸ The gods decided, therefore, to punish the human race by sending plagues, each stopped
 3303 by the intervention of one of the gods, but finally culminating in a flood being sent. Only *Atrahasis* and
 3304 his family survived, after building a boat to escape the judgment deluge sent by the gods. Now the gods
 3305 realized that they had deprived themselves of their servile labor so they create human beings once
 3306 again, this time with safeguards in place (i.e., mortality) to provide limitations to the expansion of the
 3307 human race.

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 3309 Now it is crucial to state at the outset the difficulty of pinning down what was the reigning idea of
 3310 creation in the Mesopotamian conceptions of creation. W.G. Lambert warns that the conceptions
 3311 probably changed over a period of 1,000 years while Akkadian was the *lingua franca* (i.e., the trade
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²³ Benno Landsberger, *The Conceptual Autonomy of the Babylonian World* (Sources and Monographs on the ancient Near East, vol. 1, fascicle 4; Malibu, California: Udena Publications, 1976) 13.

²⁴ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 54-98.

²⁵ Kitchen, *Reliability*, 424.

²⁶ Kitchen, *Reliability*, 424-5.

²⁷ W.G. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," in *I Studied Inscriptions From Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David Tsumura; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 107.

²⁸ A.R. Millard, "A New Babylonian 'Genesis' Story," *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967): 3-18, especially 10.

language) in the ancient Near East. However, many scholars have noted the similarities and distinctions between both the Akkadian works and the biblical accounts.

So what may be said to summarize the Mesopotamian tradition? To the Mesopotamians everything in the universe had "will and character all its own."²⁹ All of these individual things live in harmony in the universe on analogy with a human state. This cosmic society was run by those things which had the greatest power in the universe.³⁰ The Mesopotamian believed that the greatest natural powers in the universe directed this cosmic democracy. Four Gods were most powerful: Anu, god of the sky; Enlil, lord of the storms; Ninhursaga, mother of earth; Ea, the water god. This primitive democracy was established by the cosmic struggle which took place at the beginning of creation. Ultimately, Marduk slew Tiamat and used her remains to create the universe. Theomachy (i.e., a battle with or among the gods) is significant in this tradition.

The creation of mankind in the Babylonian texts (e.g. *Atrahasis*) stand in the same stream as the Sumerian cosmologies before them: mankind is created to alleviate the onerous labors of the gods by working for them and supplying them with food and drink.³¹ A number of influential Assyriologists have denied any connection as existing between Genesis and the Mesopotamian literatures while others continue to assert a connection. We will explore what can be said about the connection, if any, below.

EGYPT

Until recently, Egyptian cosmology has not been brought forth as offering much help in illuminating the scriptural account.³² More attention is usually given to the Ugaritic or Babylonian sources for possible comparisons. The reasons for this may be due to the customary training of most biblical scholars.³³ Although there are exceptions, most biblical scholars are more likely to have read in the primary sources of Canaan and the cuneiform literature than in Egyptian. This marginalization of the Egyptian sources may also have to do with the diversity of views represented in the Egyptian literature, in other words, it is "difficult to study Egyptian cosmology and impossible to say that any view was 'the Egyptian's dogma.'"³⁴ This last statement cannot be emphasized enough: there are several patterns noticeable in the extant material from Egypt. Dr. Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, of the Ruhr-Universitaet Bochum, has noted three patterns. One pattern has creation emerging from primordial water. Another pattern describes the world developing out of cosmogonic egg and yet a third (not necessarily the latest) has the world emerging from Ptah, the god of technique, the Creator "from whom all things issued" and "whose power is greater than that of the other gods."³⁵ Although Dr. Coppes (a student of E.J. Young and a member of this committee) has noted that there are only limited correspondences and very general parallels between the Egyptian material; nevertheless, Dr. Coppes rightly notes (as Dr. Hasenfratz has also) that there are some reminders in this pattern of Egyptian creation of the biblical report in Genesis 1-2, especially that creation stems from one great god, Ptah.

John Currid, a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, is an exception to what was just previously stated, i.e., he is more optimistic about the explanatory power of Egyptian creation texts for illuminating the biblical creation story. He laments the neglect of Egyptian sources in the study of the

²⁹ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 37.

³⁰ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 37.

³¹ Lambert and Millard, *Atrah-hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999) 15.

³² James K. Hoffmeier, "Some Thoughts on Genesis 1 & 2 and Egyptian Cosmology," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 15 (1983) 39-49, especially 49.

³³ Hoffmeier, "Some Thoughts" 41.

³⁴ Hoffmeier, "Some Thoughts" 41.

³⁵ Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, "Patterns of Creation in Ancient Egypt," in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 319; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 175.

3354 early chapters of Genesis.³⁶ He states, "making comparisons between Egyptian cosmogonies and the
 3355 Bible can be difficult and, indeed, dangerous. But, be that as it may, we are yet convinced of a parallel
 3356 relationship between the creation accounts in Egypt and the Bible."³⁷
 3357

3358 In Egyptian cosmology, Currid states that there are there are four principle elements: first, there is the
 3359 earth, the flat part of a dish, the Nile river with raised rims representing the mountains of countries;
 3360 second, below the earth was the second main element, the primeval waters; third, the sky; the fourth and
 3361 final element is the universe's outer limits, bounded above and below by plates which limit the size of
 3362 the cosmos. In this cosmology, each element of the universe was the embodiment of a particular god.³⁸
 3363 Air God *shu*, upheld the plate so that it didn't come down. Deity *Nut* personified the upper plate. The
 3364 sun was perhaps most important, represented by the god *Re*. For the Egyptians, therefore, cosmogony
 3365 was "theogonic, primarily concerned with the creation of the gods as personifications of the elements of
 3366 nature."³⁹
 3367

3368 For the Egyptians, life began out of the primordial waters (preexistent). *Re* (sun-god) entered life
 3369 through self existence. Egyptian texts say he "became, by himself." His creative functions were to
 3370 bring order (*ma'at*) out of chaos, and to call the other gods into existence, each one representing a
 3371 different element of nature. Three different accounts exist as to how he did this: one, squatting on a hill
 3372 and naming the gods following after meditations on his own body; secondly, violently expelling the
 3373 other gods from his own body; thirdly, by masturbation.⁴⁰ It is interesting and perhaps significant that
 3374 in the Memphite cosmogony, there is no theomachy (battle among rival deities) which is similar to the
 3375 biblical tradition as opposed to the other ancient Near Eastern cosmologies.⁴¹
 3376

3377 CANAANITE: UGARIT

3378 The Canaanite material comprises the significant finds at Ugarit following 1929, the Phoenician and
 3379 Punic Inscriptions and the cosmogonies of Philo of Byblos.⁴² We will only deal with some of the
 3380 Ugaritic material (specifically, the Baal Cycle) in this Report since a detailed survey of other traditions
 3381 is beyond the scope of this Report. The possibility of the importance of the material from Ugarit and
 3382 Syria (especially the Ugaritic pantheon) generally has recently been restated by Lambert,⁴³ therefore,
 3383 treatment of the West Semitic materials warrants attention. Moreover, some recent Reformed writers
 3384 have considered the Israelite's potential struggle against Baalism as an essential component to the
 3385 understanding of Genesis 1 and 2.⁴⁴
 3386

3387 The pantheon of gods in West semitic is as follows: El, with Astarte and Baal, jointly exercising the
 3388 power over the universe under El. Of all the Canaanite myths, the Baal epic seems possibly to provide
 3389 the most material for our interests. As in the collections of myths in the other ancient Near Eastern
 3390 cultures, this is but one story among many. In the most recent arrangement of the extant tablets, six
 3391 tablets in the Baal cycle present a vivid story of conflict and kingship, love and death. In the first two
 3392 tablets the battle of the storm god Baal with his enemy Yamm, whose name means sea, is presented.
 3393 The next two tablets recount how Baal's palace, the mark of kingship, was built. The last two tablets
 3394 describe Baal's struggle against Mot, death. Significantly, theomachy is an influential part of this epic.

³⁶ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 25-7.

³⁷ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 55.

³⁸ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 35.

³⁹ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 72.

⁴⁰ Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 106-7 and Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 54-64.

⁴¹ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 63.

⁴² Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 117-33.

⁴³ Lambert, "A New Look" 110.

⁴⁴ Futato, "Because It Had Rained" 1-21.

An interpretation of the Baal cycle which focuses on the aspects of theomachy (a battle among the gods) in the Baal Cycle is known as the cosmogonic interpretation of the epic, but it is only one among several (see discussion below). Although such a view has been set forth by major scholars (e.g., Mowinckel, Cassuto, Fisher, Clifford and Cross), there is debate among Semitic scholars today about whether the Baal cycle is truly a cosmogonic epic.⁴⁵ Thus, what Kenneth Matthews says, "There is no consensus that the Baal-Yam cycle is a creation myth at all" is basically true. Nevertheless, there are definitely some cosmogonic elements in the epic. Terminological distinctions (i.e., ancient versus modern notions of cosmology and cosmogony) have muddled the discussions. Furthermore, comparing the Baal cycle with other ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies (e.g., the Enuma Elish) has caused further obfuscation.

To date there is no agreed upon interpretation of the Baal cycle. The four major interpretations presently under discussion are: the ritual and seasonal interpretations, cosmogonic interpretations, the historical-political interpretations and the limited exaltation of Baal view.⁴⁶

The first view highlights the seasonal, ritual and mythological elements found in the text. In ritual and seasonal theories, Baal is represented as the storm god, often the god of thunderstorms. In this view, promoted early on by the influential scholars named Gaster and deMoor, seasonal rituals and their accompanying myths reflect the drama of the climate. The successful agricultural cycles of fertility and the crops are presented in ideal terms in mythology texts. This interpretation dominated discussions of the Baal cycle during the 1930's through the 1960's.

In the cosmogonic interpretations of the cycle, the main parties in the Baal cycle are emphasized as is the theomachy that is represented in the text. On the one side stands Baal, the source of life in the cosmos, on the other side stand Yamm (the sea) and Mot (death). These latter forces are the sources of destruction and death in the universe. This view understands the Baal cycle in terms of conflict with and among the major figures, Baal, Yamm and Mot. It was promoted by major senior scholars including Mowinckel, Cassuto, Fisher, Cross and Clifford. Despite the differences of opinion in the academy with regards to whether the Baal cycle is or is not a cosmogonic text, the "cosmogonic approach makes a number of significant contributions."⁴⁷ For example, the language of creation having to do with architectural building of a palace may have implicit allusions to creation.⁴⁸

In the historical and political interpretations of the Baal cycle, the mythology represented in the text is interpreted as being inspired by real historical exigencies, e.g., a dominating power or the threat of a hostile invasion.

The limited exaltation of Baal view attempts to incorporate all the various elements: that is, meteorological, ritual information, and cosmogonic battles between the characters. All of these ideas are integrated under the leitmotif of Baal's kingship.

CONCLUSIONS

A. Similarities and differences

Although no "ancient Near Eastern counterpart matched the biblical account concept for concept,"⁴⁹ it is striking to enumerate some of the similarities and differences. Lambert (and others) has long recognized some significant parallels between the Mesopotamian and Hebrew accounts of creation.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Mark Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, Vol. I: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2. (Vetus Testamentum Supplements LV; Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1994) 80-7.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 1-114.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 86-7.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 86.

⁴⁹ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 73.

⁵⁰ Lambert, "A New Look" 107.

For example, there seems to be a very similar general outline of events in Genesis 1-11 to the Mesopotamian materials. The overall scheme in Genesis 1-11 is similar to the Babylonian histories: Creation-Rebellion-Flood.⁵¹ With regards to the creation account, however, Lambert is extremely cautious about positing any kind of dependence upon the Babylonian materials. The fact that the cosmos is cleft into parts in the ancient cosmologies has parallels in almost every tradition.⁵² It is true that the act of creation in the biblical account and the mythologies is described in terms of separation (e.g. Genesis 1:14) and this has been duly noted by others.⁵³ Nevertheless, the differences seem greater than the similarities. Even in this act of separation, it is possible that the biblical author was not working under the aegis of pagan cosmologies as much as trying to "overcome it."⁵⁴

At least one Egyptian account, like the Hebrew cosmology, has been identified as showing similarity because of the role of the creative word (the so-called *logos* doctrine) in its cosmology.⁵⁵ However, N.M. Sarna considers the comparison as merely superficial.⁵⁶ Again, there seems to be more distance than similarity at this point. For in Genesis 1, there is a complete absence of any notion of magic utterance.⁵⁷

When it comes to the Flood, Wenham lists three categories of assent to some kind of literary dependence: the minimalists who argue for strong differences with the Mesopotamian materials; the maximalists, who argue that the Genesis editor was familiar with some Mesopotamian traditions; and finally, those who fall somewhere in between.⁵⁸ Moran, for example, the great Harvard Semitist, was convinced that Genesis 9:1ff. was direct polemic or rejection of the *Atrahasis Epic*. Nevertheless, with regards to the Flood, some scholars (Lambert and Millard) see the differences between *Atrahasis* and the Genesis account as too great for any direct connection; however, they do see some kind of possible dependence but concede that the problem is very complex. Was there possibly then a common literary heritage? Jacobsen, P.D. Miller, and K.A. Kitchen think possibly so. Professor Kitchen, for example, presents a very helpful table (reproduced below) in his recently released book showing similarities in the so-called, "primeval protohistories" of Mesopotamia. Kitchen comments about the similarities, "The overall correlation of the primeval protohistory in all four sources should be clear almost without further comment."⁵⁹

Sumerian King List	Atrahasis	Eridu Genesis	Genesis 1-11
1. Creation assumed; kingship came down from heaven	1. Creation assumed; gods create humans to do their work	1. Creation; cities are instituted	1. Creation (1-2)
2. Series of eight , kings in five cities	2. Noisy humans alienate deities	2. [Alienation]	2. Alienation (3) genealogies (4-5)

⁵¹ Millard, "A New Babylonian" 6ff.

⁵² Lambert, "A New Look" 103.

⁵³ Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972) 1-20, especially 8.

⁵⁴ Hasel quoting Westermann, "The Significance" 9.

⁵⁵ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 60ff.

⁵⁶ Quoted by Hasel, "The Significance" 11.

⁵⁷ Hasel, "The Significance" 12.

⁵⁸ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 1; Waco, Texas: Word Book, 1987) 163.

⁵⁹ Kitchen, *Reliability*, 424.

3. The flood	3. The flood; ark	3. The flood; ark	3. Flood; ark (6-9)
4. Kingship again; dynasties follow to	4. New start	4. New start	4. New start; then genealogies, down to
5. "Modern times"	(5. Modern times, implied)	(5. Modern times, implied)	5. "Modern times"

("Modern times" = about the beginning of second millennium)

The only "further comment" that Professor Kitchen offers is that the "non-'dynastic' nature of Atrahasis and Eridu accounts for their unconcern with dynasties or genealogies;"⁶⁰ indeed, there are striking parallels here although we ourselves will venture "further comment" below as to an evaluation of the similarities.

Did the Babylonians borrow from the Hebrews or is the Hebrew material dependent upon the Babylonian? Or, have both descended from a common original.⁶¹ Even though the overall scheme may be similar, as Millard says, "most of the detail is different; on a few points only there is agreement."⁶²

Such groupings on a continuum along a spectrum, ranging from minimalist to maximalist may be helpful for the Creation account as well. And if Moses' intentions were polemical, then one necessarily asks, against which winds was he leaning? This is the kind of question that it is fruitful to explore.⁶³ Some, for example, have seen such a clear demarcation between the mythology of the ancient Near Eastern texts and the biblical text that they can assert robustly that Genesis broke "the correspondence pattern mythology."⁶⁴ As Hamilton states further, "Nature is not deified; God is not naturalized."⁶⁵ In this line of thinking, some authors have noted that the Genesis account by its description of the creation of the luminaries seems to be polemicizing against the astrologically minded Babylonians.⁶⁶

In the past, there has been great energy devoted to noting that in Mesopotamian cosmogonies, the idea that human beings were created to do the work of the gods is prominent. Although it has been somewhat customary to say that this is a distinct difference in the Hebrew mindset, recently, this has been challenged by Greenstein in his work entitled, "God's Golem: The Creation of the Human in Genesis."⁶⁷ Whether Greenstein has successfully made his case remains to be seen. This particular emphasis, i.e., man as surrogate worker for the gods, is said to be absent from the Egyptian mindset.⁶⁸ With respect to differences in anthropology, there is, in the biblical creation story, no attempt to quell

⁶⁰ Kitchen, *Reliability*, 424.

⁶¹ David Tsumura, "Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood," in *I Studied Inscriptions From Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (ed. Richard Hess and David Tsumura; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 52.

⁶² Millard, "A New Babylonian" 125.

⁶³ Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990) 56-8.

⁶⁴ Barr quoted by Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 59.

⁶⁵ Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 59.

⁶⁶ Hasel, "The Significance" 13-15.

⁶⁷ Edward L. Greenstein, "God's Golem: The Creation of the Human in Genesis 2" Pages 219-39 in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Edited by Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 319; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002)

⁶⁸ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 72.

the din of man's noise as we see in *Atrahasis*. Furthermore, it is striking that the Genesis account stands in glaring contrast to the Sumerian and Babylonian counterparts with respect to whether God needed any assistance in his sovereign fiat creation. As Castellino notes, "The spiritual and monotheistic conception of God (the anthropomorphism should not deceive us) could not permit the notion that God had need of material help from humanity."⁶⁹ In the biblical narrative, man is portrayed as the priestly guardian vassal king, who watches over the sanctuary of Eden entrusted to him by God.

In the ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, the universe is seen to be fairly complete without humans. On the other hand, the biblical view is essentially anthropocentric in the sense that man is the undoubtedly portrayed as the climax of the creation week. There is no female deity in the biblical creation account which is almost unique among the ancient Near Eastern cosmologies.⁷⁰ Another striking difference is that the Hebrew account portrays God as beyond nature whereas many of the cosmologies of her neighbors portray the universe as a cosmic society or machine as was mentioned above.

But as was mentioned above the similarities between Genesis 1-11 and the ancient Near Eastern parallels are striking as well. So what are we to make of the similarities and distinctions? Two points here should guide us: the reasons for the similarities and distinctions and secondly, the Bible's use (if any) of the imagery.

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B. Interpreting the similarities and differences

First, let us address the issue of similarities and distinctions. How do we explain them? As history progressed, mankind would remember the basic outline of what really happened. It would inform his traditions but he would warp the essential outline precisely the way we find it in the epics, e.g., *Atrahasis*. This presuppositional point was made years ago by Cornelius Van Til.

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Finally, the matter of tradition must be considered. The tradition of the creation story and of man's residence in paradise was, no doubt, handed down in the generation of Cain as well as the generation of Seth. Moreover, the revelation of God's redemptive purpose came to Cain just as well as to Abel. With respect to the generations immediately following Cain, when Adam and Eve were still alive to tell the story to their grandchildren, even if Cain should studiously avoid telling it to them, we may hold that they "knew" the truth intellectually as fully as did the children of God. All this was carried forth to the nations. At the time of the flood the whole human race was once more brought into immediate contact with God's redemptive revelation. The tradition of the flood, no less than the tradition of creation, no doubt lived on and on. This tradition was distorted, however, as time passed by. The creation myths and flood myths that have been discovered among the nations prove that the original story was greatly distorted. The result has been that those who came many generations after the time of Noah, and who lived far away from the pale of redemptive revelation as it appeared to Israel, did not have as clear a tradition as the earlier generations had had. This brought further complexity into the situation for them.⁷¹

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In other words, Gen 1-11 is the inspired deposit of the information and the epics are the perversion of the inspired oracle. M.G. Kline, working within this very trajectory and building on the work of Van Til makes this very point, "The pagan cosmogonic myth, [is] a garbled, apostate version, a perversion, of pristine traditions of primordial historical realities."⁷²

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⁶⁹ G. Castellino, "The Orgins of Civilization according to Biblical and Cuneiform Texts" in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 91.

⁷⁰ Tsumura, "Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories" 32.

⁷¹ Van Til, *Systematic*, 77-8.

⁷² M.G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000) 28.

Second, as to the Bible's use of well-known mythological motifs and imagery. It may be true that there is some overlap and even use of the intellectual stock in the ancient Near East. However, it seems to the committee, that far from merely parroting or borrowing the imagery, the Bible rather has a propensity here as elsewhere to transform and even undermine the idolatrous notions of its neighbors while even using their very imagery.

The view of the Bible is radically different on several counts and as Lambert has taught us, "the differences must not be overlooked."⁷³ Indeed, Lambert would assert that "the differences are indeed so great that direct borrowing of a literary form of Mesopotamian traditions is out of the question."⁷⁴ Some scholars have wanted to affirm some kind of battle behind the cleaving of the waters because of later reflections in Scripture alluding to creation (e.g. incorporating Leviathan for example); however, Lambert affirms that no sure proof can be offered that there is a battle implicit behind the cleaving of the waters.⁷⁵

In the Genesis account of creation, there is no polytheism. There is no theogony. There is no theomachy. Indeed, the portrayal of God and his deeds is fundamentally and categorically different. There is a different anthropology. There is a different theology.

Creation as described in the Genesis prologue is strictly a constructive process, without any undercurrent of conflict. Elohim, the Creator, is portrayed not as a mighty warrior but as an omnipotent artisan, not as a cunning conqueror but as an omniscient architect. There is no sense of the tumult of war in the account; everything proceeds in orderly and stately fashion according to architectonic plan. . . God has no adversary in his original creating. He does not build with trowel in one hand and sword in the other. There is no need for the sword. More than that, there is no need for the trowel. This builder does not use tools. He does not really work with his hands. The word of his will is his all-effective instrument.⁷⁶

Therefore, in conclusion, it seems to this committee that the church would best serve its people situating the biblical creation story in its cultural setting and then demonstrate how it transforms and even undermines the ancient world view in order to set forth a robust view of God as Sovereign King and Lord of all that was called into existence.

C. The Historicity of the account

The Committee as a whole affirms *ex animo* the historicity of the account of Creation. This is necessary to state clearly over and against recent attempts to portray the Genesis account as mere mythological conceptual revision.

For example, in the book *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, John Stek presents the following view with regards to the genre of the Genesis account:

By perspective we mean the angle from which the narrator views the events recounted, the location in time and place he assumes relative to the events of his "story" . . . Recognition that Genesis 1:1-2:3 presents a *storied* [emphasis mine] rather than a historiographical account of creation reinforces the conviction of many interpreters that the topical selection and arrangement, as well as the sabbatical distribution of the acts of creation, are governed by the demands and logic of the purpose of the presentation in the historical context of the author and the literary context of Genesis. . . In short, its literary type [Gen 1] as far as present knowledge goes, is without strict parallel; it is *sui generis*. [here he footnotes Altar] As an account of creation it supplies for the Pentateuch what for the religions of Israel's neighbors were supplied by their mythic theogonies and cosmogonies. . . To read Gen 1:1-2:3 as

⁷³ Lambert, "A New Look" 108; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 425.

⁷⁴ Lambert, "A New Look" 108.

⁷⁵ Lambert, "A New Look" 105.

⁷⁶ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 27-9.

a piece of divinely revealed "historiography" disclosed to humanity's first pair and transmitted by tradition to the author of Genesis will no longer do. To do so is to suppose an unbroken transmission of tradition that can no longer be assumed. It is also to ignore this account's many affinities with third to first millennium Near Eastern notions about the structure of the cosmos, its massive polemical thrust against the mythic theologies of the day . . . While Genesis 2:4ff. presents an account of God's ways with humankind in the arena of human history, the grand overture that precedes it presents not historical or scientific data but the fundamental theological (and related anthropological and cosmological) context of that drama. It is the story behind *the* biblical story. And more than that, it is the story behind all cosmic, terrestrial, and human history. Only when we hear it so do we catch its theme.⁷⁷

Although this quote is revealing enough, the footnote where he approvingly quotes Alter is even more telling. Robert Alter's statement concerning biblical narrative in general at this point (following Schneidau, *Sacred Discontent*), is to emphasize that none of these texts of Hebrew narrative are really *historical*, rather they are in Alter's view *historicized prose fiction*.⁷⁸

Such a view does not nearly approximate a radical critique of the ancient Near Eastern cosmologies. More seriously, however, is the doubt cast on the trustworthiness of these early chapters of Genesis. As Kenneth Mathews says:

. . .if we interpret early Genesis as theological parable or story, we have a theology of creation that is grounded neither in history nor the cosmos. It is unlikely that the community of Moses, which understood its God as the Lord of history, would have tolerated such a cosmology. The *toledot* structure of Genesis requires us to read chap. 1 as relating real events that are presupposed by later Israel. If Genesis 1-3 is theological story without corresponding to reality, the creation account conveys no information about creation except that it owes its existence to God. This undermines the very purpose of the preamble, which establishes a real linkage between creation and covenant history, for the latter is rooted in history. . . Also if taken as theological story alone, the interpreter is at odds with the historical intentionality of Genesis . . . Interpreting "Adam" as a symbolic figure alone flies in the face of the chronologies (chapt. 5 & 11) that link Adam as a person to Israel's father, Abraham."⁷⁹

CONCLUDING ISSUES:

3639 The Use of Day in the Semitic Languages

3640 Can the references to *yom* in other ancient Near Eastern literature shed any light on its use in Genesis
3641 1:1-2:4? This is a crucial question for our task since it is a structuring device in the early chapters of
3642 Genesis. Additionally, it is a crucial question since many are claiming that the obvious meaning of
3643 "day" is clear.

3644 From the start, the committee believes it is methodologically imperative for us in our understanding of
3645 this word in the Bible and in ancient Near Eastern literature to elevate the role of the context of lexical
3646 usage. Mere word study approaches alone will not see us through the disagreements which plague the
3647 church presently on this issue. Contextuality is the "prime rule for hermeneutics."⁸⁰ To set forth our
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⁷⁷ John Stek, "What Says the Scripture?" in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990) 240-42.

⁷⁸ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Basic Books, 1981) 24ff.

⁷⁹ Matthews, *Genesis*, 110-11.

⁸⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998) 112.

point in a brief way, listen to what one Hebraist states, "Context is of major importance in the understanding of clauses and their components since a word or structure can only be fully understood in its relationship to any larger unit of text of which it forms a part. The function of a certain form should be determined in relation to a particular clause and also to a particular discourse type."⁸¹

Although today there are many different languages classified as Semitic,⁸² the traditional classification for Semitic languages (considered inadequate by some) distinguished five principal languages: Akkadian, Canaanite (Hebrew here), Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Arabic. All five of these Semitic languages have similar words for "day" for which we have a high degree of certainty.⁸³ In short, a comparison between how day is used in Genesis 1:1-2:4 and its ancient Near Eastern counterparts has not demonstrated any substantive help with regards to the length and the nature of the days of creation as found in the biblical account. As this report states elsewhere, the difficulties surrounding the attempt to find some resolution regarding the length of the days of creation will not be resolved by mere lexical studies alone.

Heptadic Structure of Genesis 1 and the Six Plus One Pattern

The heptadic (sevenfold) structure of Genesis one is perhaps the most significant formal feature distinguishing it from its ancient Near Eastern counterparts.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, it is also important to say that, "the absence of the idea of creation in seven days elsewhere in the ancient Near East must not be taken to mean that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is radically discontinuous with its cultural background."⁸⁵ The heptadic structure of the text extends to levels well beyond the mere use of numbers as was pointed out by the conservative Jewish scholar Umberto Cassuto many years ago.⁸⁶ Multiples of seven, artistically arranged, can be observed throughout the text revealing its sophistication and beauty. For example, the first verse has seven words, the phrase "it was good" (*ki tob*) occurs seven times, the second verse has fourteen words (twice seven), and the word for "living thing" (*hayya*) occurs seven times.⁸⁷ This list could be extended if space allowed.

The importance of the number seven (as a symbol of completeness) is a concept with an ancient pedigree coming out of the extant texts of the ancient Near East. This has been known for years. Especially germane to this topic are the many recent studies dealing with the "graded numerical sequence." This pattern, commonly known as X,X + 1 (and X,X – 1 less frequently) has received serious investigation and sustained study in recent years.⁸⁸ A well-known example of this "graded" numerical saying from the Bible is Proverbs 30:18-19:

⁸¹ Ahouva Shulman, "The Particle *na'* in Biblical Hebrew Prose," *Hebrew Studies* XL (1999) 59.

⁸² Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 3.

⁸³ Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages: Text, Specimens and Grammatical Sketches* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983).

⁸⁴ Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988) 66.

⁸⁵ Levenson, *Creation*, 68.

⁸⁶ See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, Genesis 1-6:8* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press at the Hebrew University, 1961) 12-15.

⁸⁷ See Levenson, *Creation*, 67 and Cassuto, *Genesis*, 12-15 for more examples.

⁸⁸ For bibliographies touching on the repeated investigation of this phenomena, see Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the book of Amos* (Hermenia Series; Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1991) 27-30 and Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 24E; Garden City: Doubleday, 2000) 478-79. For a recent discussion of the use of numerical sequence in the book and Proverbs and a survey of recent investigations into the issue, see R.N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995) 93-95.

3681 There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
 3682 Four which I do not understand:
 3683 The way of an eagle in the sky,
 3684 The way of a serpent on a rock,
 3685 The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
 3686 And the way of a man with a maid. (NASB)
 3687

3688 In his 1962 study, Roth concluded that these formulas (X,X + 1) occur as a formula at least thirty eight
 3689 times in various forms in the Old Testament and the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus. Then in 1965,
 3690 his more in depth study noted that these formulas occur in both wisdom literature and narrative
 3691 literature in the Old Testament. Especially significant is his conclusion that the formulas are sometimes
 3692 used to express an indefinite number and sometimes they are used to express a definite number.
 3693 Sometimes the use of the graded numerical sequence is *sui generis*, in other words, its use is unique
 3694 stylistically and structurally, as it is, for example, in the book of Amos.⁸⁹
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3696 The graded numerical sequence is a pattern that is not merely restricted to the Semitic languages and
 3697 literatures; rather, it is present in Sumerian texts (non-Semitic), in Hittite texts (Indo European, ancient
 3698 Anatolia),⁹⁰ and in Greek literature.⁹¹ This phenomenon (graded numerical sequence) continued as least
 3699 six centuries after Christ as evidenced from an incantation bowl inscribed with Aramaic.⁹²
 3700

3701 Some have asserted that the general usage of numerical sequence throughout the ancient Near East
 3702 implies that any view of the creation days in Genesis that denies strict chronological succession is
 3703 “ignoring the obvious” (i.e., pattern of evidence) or that it leaves a very difficult problem for those who
 3704 predicate anything else than a strict chronological sequence of the days of creation in the Genesis
 3705 account (e.g., Framework view and possibly others).
 3706

3707 Such an approach seems to commend itself because of its surface simplicity; on the contrary, however,
 3708 the difficulties with the preceding assertions become apparent when a closer and fuller examination is
 3709 made of the evidence from the primary sources of the ancient Near Eastern material and the biblical text
 3710 of Genesis 1:1-2:3. Furthermore, when one takes into account the current state of studies on numerical
 3711 sequencing in the Bible and in the languages and literature of the ancient Near East the aforementioned
 3712 argument (i.e., ANE materials presenting insuperable problems for non-sequential views of the days of
 3713 Genesis 1) is seen to be specious. Space limitations prevent us from making an extended presentation of
 3714 all the possible counter arguments; however, in the material below we will briefly demonstrate the
 3715 reasons why the foregoing argument is invalid.
 3716

3717 Firstly, in the Egyptian material, there is no concept of breaking down the creation event into days
 3718 culminating in the Sabbath as there is in the Hebrew cosmogony.⁹³ This seems to be additional evidence
 3719 that the conclusions of Dr. Coppes and Dr. Hasenfratz (regarding the limitations of the Egyptian
 3720 material for illuminating the biblical text) are correct.
 3721

3722 When the use of numbers, however, is examined in other areas of the ancient Near East (e.g. in the
 3723 Akkadian material from Mesopotamia and in the Ugaritic texts from Northwest Semitic) there are texts
 3724 recording either a numerical sequence or a heptadic pattern and sometimes a graded numerical sequence
 3725 that do have bearing on the discussion. As Ross noted in his 1962 study, “There are numerous passages
 3726 in ancient Near Eastern Literature which show that the numerical sequence X/X + 1 was a fairly well
 3727 known poetic device, employed in the two halves of verses exhibiting parallelism.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Shalom Paul, *Amos*, 27.

⁹⁰ Menahem Haran, “The Graded Numerical Sequence and the Phenomenon of Automatism in Biblical Poetry,” *Studia in Veteris Testamenti* 22 (1972) 238-267 but especially 242.

⁹¹ See W.M.W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum XIII; Leiden, Brill, 1965).

⁹² See W.M.W. Roth, “The Numerical Sequence x/x + 1 in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962) 300-311, especially, 307.

⁹³ Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 73.

⁹⁴ Ross, “Numerical Sequence” 304.

In the Akkadian texts (East Semitic), this number parallelism is primarily, although not exclusively, found in incantations.⁹⁵ For example, texts on fortune telling are built on a pattern of seven.⁹⁶ Texts with the burning of seven objects and a goddess laying on a sick person use the pattern of seven as well. Here, interestingly, the seven accounts all differ from one another but they have the same ending, saying “the goddess come out, I see light.”⁹⁷ Striking is the fact that the seventh has an added festive introduction which marks the importance of the seventh day and emphasizes it! A similar pattern is observed in a well-known passage from Gilgamesh (as was noted by Young). In tablet XI: 141-146, we encounter the following:

“One day, a second day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast and did not let
it rise.
A third day, a fourth day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast and did not let
it rise.
A fifth day, a sixth (day) Mount Nisir held the ship fast and did not let
It rise.
When the seventh day arrived, I sent forth and set a dove free . . .”
(Translation by Loewenstamm)⁹⁸

The pattern (as rightly noted by Loewenstamm) begins with an action about to take place, then repetition of a pair of days with the refrain repeated three times. It is a clear example of graded numerical sequence (X,X +1). Therefore, this pairing of numbers is common and expected in the ancient Near Eastern world and the Bible’s own world (which ours is not!), especially in poetry. Sometimes it may have even been automatic, and as Haran says, “It has been correctly remarked that such an employment of numbers is foreign to our modern Western taste, but it fits ancient oriental poetry.”⁹⁹ It was this pattern as it was known in East Semitic (Akkadian) that influenced Northwest Semitic practice (Canaanite).

In other words, the pattern was picked up by the Ugaritic scribes (Northwest Semitic along the coast of modern Syria) and used in the Epic literature and other types of literature as well. Consider, for example, a passage from Aqhat (also quoted in part by Young):

Now Daniel, man of Rapiu,
The hero, man of the Harnemite,
Slaughters an ox for the Katharat,
Dines the Katharat,
And wines the moon’s radiant daughters.

One day, and a second,
He dines the Katharat,
And wines the moon’s radiant
daughters.
A third, a fourth day,
He dines the Katharat,
And wines the moon’s radiant
daughters.
A fifth, a sixth day,

⁹⁵ Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 479.

⁹⁶ Samuel Loewenstamm, *The Tradition of the Exodus in its Development* (Jerusalem, The Hebrew University at the Magnes Press, 1965) 32-3 [in Hebrew] The author gratefully acknowledges the help of his student David Zadok here.

⁹⁷ Loewenstamm, *Tradition of the Exodus* 33.

⁹⁸ Loewenstamm, “The Seven-Day-Unit in Ugaritic Epic Literature,” in *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament, Verlag Butzon & Berker Kevelaer, 1980) 192-93.

⁹⁹ Haran, “Graded Numerical Sequence” 240.

3775 He dines the Katharat,
 3776 And wines the moon's radiant
 3777 daughters.
 3778 Then on the seventh day,
 3779 The Katharat leave his house,
 3780 The moon's radiant daughters.¹⁰⁰ (*Aqhat* II ii, lines 27-40)

3781
 3782 Although those at Ugarit were influenced by the Akkadian pattern (X, X + 1), the numerical pattern
 3783 evidenced in the earlier Akkadian texts (often used in the scribal schools at Ugarit) went through a
 3784 process of breakdown in the Ugaritic literature with the Keret epic evidencing the "last stage of the
 3785 evolvment of the numeric scheme in Ugaritic literature."¹⁰¹

3786
 3787 In the Keret Epic, we encounter a number of texts where Il (the god) commands Keret to perform deeds
 3788 for the duration of six days and then culminate in the desired event which takes place on the seventh
 3789 day.¹⁰²

3790
 3791 - - - - halt, a day and a second,
 3792 A third day, and a fourth,
 3793 A fifth day, and a sixth.
 3794
 3795 Fire none of your arrows into the
 3796 city,
 3797 None of your hand-flung stones.
 3798
 3799 Then, at sunrise, on the seventh,
 3800 King Pabuli will sleep no more.
 3801 (Keret I iii, lines 10-15)¹⁰³

3802
 3803 Il's order, as Loewenstamm points out, was preceded by a similar command earlier in the same column:

3804
 3805 Like a locust swarm, the'll inhabit the
 3806 steppe;
 3807 Like crickets, the desert's edge.
 3808
 3809 March a day, and then a second;
 3810 A third day, and a fourth;
 3811 A fifth day, and a sixth.
 3812
 3813 Then, at sunrise, on the seventh:
 3814 When you arrive at Udum the great,
 3815 Arrive at Udum majestic. (Keret I iii, lines 1-4)¹⁰⁴

3816
 3817 Later, the execution of this command is represented but a rather surprising thing happens: "the passage
 3818 which describes the execution of the command expands the framework of the action which had been
 3819 delineated in the command itself – a modification which constitutes a revolutionary innovation in the
 3820 history of Ugaritic literature."¹⁰⁵ They read:

¹⁰⁰ Translation by Simon Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World Series; Society of Biblical Literature, 1997) 56-7.

¹⁰¹ Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 200.

¹⁰² Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 200.

¹⁰³ The following translations from *Kirta* are done by Edward L. Greenstein, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World Series; Society of Biblical Literature, 1997) 16.

¹⁰⁴ Greenstein, *Kirta*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 203-04.

3821 Like a locust swarm, they inhabit the
 3822 Steppe;
 3823 Like crickets, the desert's edge.
 3824 They march a day, and a second.
 3825 Then at sunrise on the third,
 3826 He arrives at the shrine of Asherah of
 3827 Tyre,
 3828 At the shrine of the Goddess of
 3829 Sidon.
 3830 He there makes a vo[w, Ki]rta the
 3831 Noble:
 3832 "As Asherah of Tyrians lives,
 3833 The Goddess of the Sidonians,
 3834 If I take Huraya into my palace,
 3835 And have the girl enter my court,
 3836 Her two parts I'll make silver,
 3837 Her third part I'll make gold!"
 3838
 3839 He marches a day, and a second,
 3840 A third day, and a fourth.
 3841 Then sunrise on the fourth,
 3842 He arrives at Udum the great,
 3843 (Keret I iv, 29-48)¹⁰⁶
 3844
 3845

3846 Since the text says that the second part of the action lasted for a duration of four days, as Loewenstamm
 3847 says, "we would therefore expect to read that the new event occurred on the fifth day – the same day on
 3848 which the previous action had terminated."¹⁰⁷ But if it were changed, then Keret would have reached
 3849 Udm on the eighth day, not the seventh! How are we to explain this development?
 3850

3851 Loewenstamm explains:
 3852 The author has here attempted to describe a new but secondary occurrence that took place on the
 3853 third day in addition to the new and major event that occurred on the seventh day. . . [he could
 3854 have written otherwise] . . . The fact that the author did not formulate the second part in this
 3855 manner is however quite understandable. For as we have observed earlier, Ugaritic literary
 3856 tradition required that the days in which the action takes place be enumerated in groups of two,
 3857 whereas the formulation dictated by our own logic must, perforce, isolate the third day in which
 3858 the action continued to take place and leave it without a chronological partner! The author,
 3859 then, did not entirely succeed in resolving the new problem and enmeshed himself in difficulties
 3860 that generally confront all innovators. This does not mean that the author's innovation was a
 3861 *creation ex nihilo*. Actually it appears to have been confined to the attempt to superimpose a
 3862 three-day scheme on the original seven-day scheme.¹⁰⁸
 3863

3864 There is, consequently, in the Keret text a modification in the numeric scheme that constitutes "a
 3865 revolutionary innovation in the history of Ugaritic literature,"¹⁰⁹ i.e., in the numeric scheme of the strict
 3866 pattern of a day and a second, a third day and a fourth, culminating in the seventh. This pertinent
 3867 passage was noted by Young but it was not treated fully. This passage (from the Keret Epic) when
 3868 quoted in its full context actually represents the last stage of "the evolvement of the numerical scheme
 3869 in Ugaritic literature."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Greenstein, *Kirta*, 19-20.

¹⁰⁷ Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 203. Indeed, Loewenstamm notes that at least one translator was troubled enough by this observation to actually propose amending the text to "five" instead of "four."

¹⁰⁸ Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 203-04.

¹⁰⁹ Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 201-02.

¹¹⁰ Loewenstamm, "The Seven-Day-Unit" 200.

3870
 3871 As a competent authority on these matters, Loewenstamm thinks that the “numerical schemes . . . have
 3872 also left mark on biblical literature.”¹¹¹ Nevertheless, his opinion is that there are fundamental
 3873 differences between the biblical creation account numerical pattern and the Akkadian-Ugaritic pattern.
 3874 For example, he states, “The cosmogonic account in Genesis 1 is generally cited as a classical example
 3875 of the seven-day scheme. But this scheme [i.e., the biblical one] differs fundamentally from the
 3876 Akkadian-Ugaritic scheme discussed here in that a new event takes place on each of the six days of
 3877 creation and each day contains a narrative of its own.”¹¹²
 3878
 3879 We return now to the immediate question before our committee: can the ancient Near Eastern material –
 3880 specifically the scheme of six plus one – help us determine whether Genesis 1 provides a chronological
 3881 sequence? In short, the answer is emphatically no.
 3882
 3883 The above evidence, albeit only partial, has demonstrated that the material from the extant ancient Near
 3884 Eastern texts can not be used to prove that one interpretation of the sequence of the days in Genesis one
 3885 is right while other interpretations are wrong. Nor can the sequential use of the six and one pattern from
 3886 the texts of the ancient Near East (at least all that have been dug up thus far!) even be said to place the
 3887 burden of proof on those who would affirm or deny the rigidity of the sequential use of the days in the
 3888 biblical text of Genesis one. This is so for several reasons.
 3889
 3890 Firstly, the issue of sorting out the material from the ancient Near East is complex – much more so than
 3891 some have made it appear. Some of the texts quoted by Young and others, for example, from the
 3892 ancient Near Eastern materials in attempts to prove a necessary sequence are fundamentally different
 3893 than we have in Genesis one: they follow a graded numerical sequence (i.e., X, X + 1) and do not
 3894 represent a new event taking place on each of the six days with a narrative describing each new event
 3895 (as we have in Genesis 1:1-2:3). In other words, even when the Seven-Day-Unit is used, the standard
 3896 formula was often different from the biblical creation account. In the Akkadian-Ugaritic pattern, days
 3897 were most often expressed in pairs (e.g. ‘one day and a second, a third and a fourth, etc...’) unlike the
 3898 biblical pattern in the creation story. Moreover, at Ugarit, the evidence testifies to the breakdown of the
 3899 sequential pattern and actually reveals at the latest stage a scheme (in a text actually cited by Young)
 3900 which, when the full context is taken into consideration demonstrates a “revolutionary innovation” in
 3901 expected numeric schemes! There are further recent studies that have dealt with the issue of the
 3902 numerical sequence in the Bible and other Semitic literatures that have taken into consideration whether
 3903 parallel numbers exist in numbers that are not sequential, but this discussion would take us too far away
 3904 from the immediate points under discussion.¹¹³ In short, Young’s treatment is an oversimplification.
 3905
 3906 Secondly, some of the texts quoted in an attempt to prove “a scheme of six successive days or items
 3907 followed by a climactic seventh”¹¹⁴ have nothing to do with creation. Indeed, even if such a simple
 3908 pattern could be demonstrated in the ancient Near Eastern material, the meaning of the pattern of days
 3909 in the early chapters of Genesis must be decided by the literary standards of the context of those
 3910 inspired chapters of holy Scripture, and not by any alleged established pattern in extra-biblical material.
 3911 In short, those who have argued for a scheme of six plus one in the ancient Near East (and that pattern
 3912 allegedly being important for sequence in Gen. 1) have given short shrift to the actual matter of how
 3913 numbers were used in the ancient literature. Returning to the original goal of this section of one of the
 3914 appendices, we may sum up our findings about locating the early chapters of Genesis in its cultural
 3915 context.
 3916
 3917 In conclusion, although it has been a necessary endeavor to explore the context of Genesis 1-2 in its
 3918 historical setting, our conclusions remain as they were stated in the introduction: just as Homer’s epics
 3919 are known to Americans (whether they’ve read them or not), so the concepts of the ancient Near

¹¹¹ Loewenstamm, “The Seven-Day-Unit” 204.

¹¹² Loewenstamm, “The Seven-Day-Unit” 205.

¹¹³ Yitzchak Avishur, “The Numerical Sequence in the Bible and other Semitic Literature in the Near East,” in *Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981) 1-9 [in Hebrew] The author gratefully acknowledges the help of his student David Zadok here.

¹¹⁴ Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 81.

3920 Eastern texts could have been familiar to the Hebrews. Having stated that, the questions of cultural
3921 influence upon the biblical text of creation remain difficult, complex and occasionally illuminating.
3922

3923 **2. THE RELEVANCE OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WRITINGS TO THE STUDY OF**
 3924 **THE BIBLICAL CREATION DAYS**

3925 (Leonard J. Coppes)

3926
 3927 The ancient Near Eastern documents do speak about the creation of the universe. They present both a
 3928 cosmology (a view of the structure of the universe) and a cosmogony (a view of the origin of the
 3929 universe) in the same way the Bible does, viz., both of these aspects are presented simultaneously and
 3930 intertwined. One needs to be careful in working through these writings to keep in mind always that the
 3931 Bible gives us the original and the other material the pagan reframing, dim memories, and through the
 3932 eyes of polytheism. So, although there appear to be clear reflections of the Bible, such things are merely
 3933 reflections, usually considerably garbled.

3934
 3935 EGYPTIAN TREATMENTS OF CREATION

3936 From what has been found of the Egyptian treatments of creation it is quite clear that the biblical
 3937 account finds, for the most part, only very general parallels in this quarter.

3938
 3939 Long before Abraham appeared on the scene what has been called "The Memphite Theology of
 3940 Creation" was composed.¹ The purpose of this composition was to explain why Memphis should be the
 3941 ruling city of Egypt. The god of that city, Ptah, is set forth as the one who gave life to all the gods, made
 3942 everything in the entire creation, and surpassed all the other gods in strength. Thus, it is argued that
 3943 because the god of that particular city is the highest god, the city where that god is worshiped and that is
 3944 under his protection and blessing, is, consequently, the highest and most important city. The relevant
 3945 part of the text is:

3946 "Ptah who is upon the Great Throne ... ; Ptah-Nun [Nun is the abysmal waters, ANET²] the father
 3947 who (begot) Atum ['the creator-god ... Totality']; Ptah-Naunet [Naunet is the consort of Ptah], the
 3948 mother who bore Atum; Ptah the Great, that is the heart and tongue of the Ennead [the first nine
 3949 gods ... Atum, the creator; Shu, god of air, and Teffiu, goddess of moisture; Geb, god of earth, and
 3950 Nut, goddess of the sky; the god Osiris and the goddess Isis; the god Seth and the goddess
 3951 Nephthys" ANET] ...

3952
 3953
 3954 "There came into being as the tongue something in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is
 3955 Ptah, who transmitted life to all gods, as well as to the ka's³, through this heart, by which Horns
 3956 became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah..

3957 "Thus all the gods were formed and his Ennead⁴ was completed. Indeed, all the divine order really
 3958 came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded... Thus were made all
 3959 work and all crafts, the action of the arms, the movement of the legs, and the activity of every
 3960 members, in conformance with this command that the heart thought, that came forth through the
 3961 tongue, and gives value to everything.

3962 "Thus it happened that it was said of Ptah: "He who made all and brought the gods into being"
 3963 "Thus it was discovered and understood that his strength is greater than that of the other gods. And
 3964 so Ptah was satisfied, after he had made everything, as well as all the divine order. He had formed
 3965 the gods, he had made cities, ... he had put the gods in their shrines, he had established their
 3966 offerings....

¹ This "Theology" is thought to have originated as early as 2700 B.C., cf., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (hence, ANET) 4.

² Explanatory notes are inserted in parentheses. These notes are not part of the ancient writings.

³ Ka represents something akin to what we understand by "soul" or "the vital force of a personality;" ANET, 3, nt. 4.

⁴ Ennead denotes the nine leading gods of the Egyptian pantheon.

“So the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay, or anything ... in which they had taken form.”⁵

It is rather interesting that as far removed from the biblical report as this "Theology" is, it still teaches that one great god, Ptah, made everything except the primal abyss (in the Bible the primal abyss is termed the deep, Heb. t'hom), was satisfied with his work, and that everything was made according to the thought and by the command of the tongue of that god. In this and other Egyptian documents, the naming of a god (often the "essence" of some part of the universe) was an act of creating both the deity and the sphere of his habitation. In the "Theology" nothing is said about how mankind came into being. Thus, although there is a reflection of the biblical creation account, it is very general in nature. Still, it is interesting that there is any similarity at all between the Bible and the ancient "Theology" which is thought to have originated a long time before the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Many scholars have noted that the creating word of the Egyptians god was probably understood as a magical incantation. The Bible, of course, does not see God's creating word as magic.

Another brief reference to the origin of things is seen in writings originating just before or just about the time of Abraham.⁶ By that time the Egyptians saw themselves (i.e., at least the noble and prominent) as able to join the gods and share in their immortality. Upon death, if the appropriate steps were taken, this great ascendancy could take place. The tomb walls of this period display the incantations necessary to facilitate the occupant's exaltation into godhood. From the same period "The Book of the Dead" says,

“... I am Atum who was alone in Nun⁷ ... I am the great God who came into being by himself.' Who is he? (He is) water; he is Nun, the father of the gods.⁸ Re, who created the names of the parts of his body. That is how those gods who follow him came into being.”

Here we see a continuation of some thoughts appearing in the "Theology," viz., there was only one great god in the beginning, there was a primal watery abyss (Nun), and the parts of the universe (the gods) came into being by a god's word. *However, in this writing it seems that the Egyptians thought there was already something in existence when Atum-Re separated the heavens from the earth and created the essence of all that is.*

In the period of the judges a somewhat different view of the creation existed. The Hymn to Amon-Re⁹ says:

“Hail to you Amon-Re ... eldest of heaven, firstborn of earth, Lord of what is, enduring in all things ... The Lord of truth and father of the gods. Who made mankind and created the beasts, Lord of what is, who created the fruit tree, made herbage, and gave life to cattle. The (god) whom Ptah made, the goodly beloved youth to whom the gods give praise, who made what is below and what is above... The chief one, who made the entire earth ... Jubilation to you who made the gods, raised the heavens and laid down the ground!”

This document also explains the present order of things as the work of one god. In this case, this one god has an elder or father who made him, viz., Ptah. Generally speaking, what was formerly ascribed to Ptah is now prescribed to Amon-Re. According to this cosmogony, the one god Amon-Re created all things (except Ptah) including mankind.

Alfred Hoerth remarks,

⁵ ANET, 5.

⁶ This writing appears as early as 2000 B.C., ANET, 4.

⁷ Nun is the primal waters from which life arose, ANET, 4.

⁸ Another version reads Re, ANET.

⁹ ANET, 365.

When the Egyptians did refer to creation it was usually to argue some point other than creation itself. They would use the creation motif to build the reputation or explain the importance of specific gods. In the Bible, creation is not the most important event, but is recorded to supply, for our knowledge, a beginning to the activity of God and to satisfy the natural curiosity over first things. Compared to the Egyptian treatments of creation, the Genesis account is full and overflowing with detail.¹⁰

Thus, although there are noteworthy parallels between the Bible and the Egyptian ideas of creation, there are also glaring differences. *The Egyptian idea of how this all came to be usually started with one god (the first god is variously identified) who was alone in the primal waters or who was the primal waters (the abyss) and who created all the other gods, if not all things, by speaking them into existence. He was satisfied with his work.* The biblical account teaches us there was but one God in the beginning but all things came from him and there are no other gods. Early in the biblical account we read of the primal waters (Hebrew, *tehom*). Creation was accomplished by the word of God and we are told he was satisfied with all he did. Man is set forth as the crown of the creation and he receives a two-fold mandate, viz., to rule over the earth and to worship the Creator. The Bible, unlike its ancient counterparts, sets forth a clear creator-creature distinction in ethics and ontology (the nature of their being), a clearer declaration of the worth of all human beings, and a clearer and more exalted statement of their purpose and privileges.

The biblical account is not given simply to satisfy man's natural curiosity, although it does speak to that curiosity. However, this is certainly not its primary purpose as is clear from the many things it omits and the general way it speaks. Most significantly, the account is given as a covenantal necessity. Here man learns his total responsibility and obligation to care for the creation and to serve the living God. This is the needed and assumed backdrop for all that follows in the Bible.

MESOPOTAMIAN TREATMENTS OF CREATION

In contrast to the limited correspondences seen in the Egyptian "creation stories," the parallels between the Bible and the creation ideas recorded in early Mesopotamian writings are much more striking. The Babylonian creation story is perhaps the most amazing creation account, other than the Bible, from the Ancient Near East. It is recorded on seven tablets.

What follows is a summary of this ancient myth as it unfolds tablet by tablet:

Tablet 1:

"The entire creation started with two gods, a male god called Apsu (the lord of the sweet waters) and a female goddess called Tiamat (the goddess of the salt waters)- the waters of these two gods mingled as a single body. The lesser gods were created by an unexplained means - they were formed within the two primal gods. The older gods, the parents, retired to the top of a mountain to rest peacefully, but the lesser gods became riotous and disturbed the tranquility of Apsu and Tiamat. Apsu went down to quiet the "the kids" and was killed by Ea (the lord of the heavens). Tiamat determined to take vengeance on the lesser gods. She created Kingu and other monsters to help her. In the middle of this tablet the birth of Marduk (the god of Babylon) is recorded and he is described at length as the most magnificent of gods."

Tablet 2:

"Various gods faced with this horrible adversary (Tiamat and her army) find themselves, because of their fear, unable to go up against her. Marduk decides to volunteer to fight Tiamat and her horde."

Tablet 3:

"This tablet describes how additional gods are afraid to face Tiamat."

¹⁰ Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 185.

4068

Tablet 4:

4069 “Marduk is enthroned as the king of the gods. The various gods confer on him their magical mighty
 4070 powers and weapons. The battle with Tiamat and her horde ensues. First comes Tiamat's personal
 4071 challenge to Marduk and she faces him alone. She opens her huge mouth to swallow him alive. But he
 4072 sends against her the Evil Wind that holds her mouth open. He shoots into her heart a magical arrow
 4073 and she is slain. Then Marduk captures her army and places them in prison. Next, he splits Tiamat in
 4074 two and makes the earth and heavens from her halved corpse. Marduk then begins to assign places in
 4075 her corpse for the various gods.”

4076

4077

Tablet 5:

4078 “Marduk continues to assign places in the body of Tiamat for the gods. He causes the moon (the moon
 4079 god) to shine and to regulate the days and months. (The rest of this tablet was lost.)”

4080

4081

Tablet 6:

4082 “Marduk announces his plan to create mankind. “Blood I will mass and cause bones to be, I will
 4083 establish a savage, “man’ shall be his name... He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they
 4084 might be at ease.”¹¹ The gods are assembled and they find Kingu (Tiamat’s chief warrior) responsible
 4085 for the war and punish him by death saying, “It was Kingu who contrived the uprising, and made
 4086 Tiamat rebel, and joined battle.” Then man is made from Kingu’s blood and he is assigned the service
 4087 of the gods - he is made their servant. The gods in thanksgiving to Marduk build Babylon to be his
 4088 shrine. Then follows the installation of Marduk in Babylon. All the gods praise him at great length. The
 4089 gods confer upon him the greatest of powers by reciting his fifty names.”

4090

4091

Tablet 7:

4092 “The great installation that begins in tablet 6, fills all of tablet 7.”¹²

4093

4094 Having briefly summarized the salient points of the Babylonian creation story (in the Babylonian
 4095 language it is called the *Enuma Elish*) we are prepared to compare and contrast this story with the
 4096 biblical account. *In the Bible there are 7 days in the creation account while in the Babylonian story*
 4097 *there are 7 tablets upon which the story was recorded.* Not too much should be made of this, but it is
 4098 interesting. Perhaps the fact that there are 7 tablets reflects a memory of the seven days of creation.
 4099 Maybe the correspondence is simply providential. *The Babylonian story opens with two gods Apsu (the*
 4100 *god of the sweet waters) and Tiamat (the goddess of the bitter, or salt, waters) who created all the other*
 4101 *gods.* It is of interest that the biblical account clearly rests upon the teaching that there is but one true
 4102 God existing eternally in three persons. Could it be that the two intermixed gods are a dim memory of
 4103 two persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Holy Spirit, suggested by the biblical account? Some
 4104 have made much of the similarity between the two words Tiamat and Hebrew *tehom* (deep). Others
 4105 have pointed out that the similarity is superficial and should be rejected insofar as the two words have
 4106 distinctly different primary spellings.¹³ *The Babylonians were taught that the salt water and sweet*
 4107 *waters originally were one watery mass. Interestingly, they identified two gods, the god of the sweet*
 4108 *waters and the goddess of the salt (bitter) waters. This is somewhat parallel to the Bible's report that*
 4109 *the tehom/deep was the primal waters and that these waters were later separated into the sweet waters*
 4110 *(lakes and rivers) and the salt waters (oceans and seas), cf., Genesis 1 and 2 (note the confusion in the*
 4111 *Babylonian record where the sweet water god was slain and the heavens and earth were made entirely*
 4112 *of the salt bitter waters).*¹⁴

¹¹ ANET, 68.

¹² This summary was comprised on the basis of ANET, 60-72.

¹³ K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Chicago: IVP, 1966) 89f, correctly argues that there is no linguistic affinity between Babylonian *Tiamat* and Hebrew *tehom* and that the Hebrew word is a common northwest Semitic root appearing in both Hebrew and Ugaritic.

¹⁴ This is a confusion because the created earth still contains sweet waters and because the sweet water god continued to be worshipped, i.e., he continue to live!

4113
 4114 The rest of the Babylonian creation story offers several additional parallels to the biblical report. *After*
 4115 *Tiamat was slain Marduk halved her to form the heavens above and the earth beneath. So, somewhat*
 4116 *similar to the biblical account, this creation was formed from the halving and separation of a watery*
 4117 *mass. The persons created (the gods and mankind) were created to serve the creators. A very interesting*
 4118 *parallel (not apparent in the material cited above) is that according to the Babylonians, light existed*
 4119 *before the creation of the light sources (the moon and the sun).¹⁵ Although the myth is generally*
 4120 *garbled, this is a remarkable confirmation of the Bible's report that there was light before the light-*
 4121 *bearers were created. Ultimately, man was created by a special act of the god Marduk (the god of*
 4122 *Babylon) and his purpose was to serve and worship the gods.*

4123
 4124 The biblical creation differs dramatically from what the Babylonians believed. According the
 4125 Babylonian story, one God creates all things by the calling them forth (similar to the Egyptian
 4126 memory). The Babylonian story is vigorously polytheistic with gods who are very human in their
 4127 emotions and actions. This stands in contrast to the Bible where the one God is holy, just and righteous.
 4128 The Babylonians saw the first stage of the creation to be the creation of the various lesser gods. This is
 4129 in stark contrast to the biblical report. Unlike the Babylonians and like the Egyptians, the Hebrews
 4130 heard that God was pleased with what He had created. Unlike the biblical account the Babylonian
 4131 account spends very little space on creating and populating the earth and much space on the struggle
 4132 among the gods, the exaltation of Marduk and the building of Babylon.

4133
 4134 The Babylonian creation story (the *Enuma Elish*) relates that the heavens and earth were made out of
 4135 the body of Tiamat (the primal salt watery mass - see the above note and its footnote) and that the gods
 4136 (the various forces and entities seen in the creation) were created by the two first gods and later were
 4137 placed in the bifurcated body of Tiamat at the discretion of Marduk. This story tells us that the entire
 4138 universe is composed of divine elements. It destroys the distinction between the creator (the one to be
 4139 worshipped) and the creature (that which was created, and, especially, those responsible to worship).
 4140 The Bible teaches us that the Lord God created the sun and moon to regulate the times and seasons (a
 4141 strikingly modern view of how the times and seasons are regulated¹⁶) while the Babylonians were
 4142 taught that the moon was created to regulate the days and the months. Subsequently and differing from
 4143 the Bible, the myth states that the stars were created first, V. 1-4 and the moon and sun subsequently,
 4144 V:12ff. The Bible teaches that from the outset the Lord God purposed to create the heavens and the
 4145 earth as the habitation of man whereas in the myth the creation of the heavens and the earth was not the
 4146 intention of the original creators at all, but resulted rather as an afterthought by a secondary god,
 4147 Marduk.

4148
 4149 The biblical report makes the creation of man the focus and crown of God's creative work and teaches
 4150 that man was ontologically distinguished from God (man does not participate in the divine essence). In
 4151 Babylon they heard that man had been created from the blood of a lesser but divine being (Kingu) and
 4152 had been enslaved by the gods so as to provide them the food and drink they needed while they rested
 4153 in the heavens - man is not the crown of creation, the gods are. Those who heard the biblical account

¹⁵ E. J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Phillipsburg, P&R, 1964) 87, points out that in I:37, 38, I:68 the *Enuma Elish* says there was light before it says the sun and moon were created, V:1-4, V:12ff.

Young, *Studies* says, "And it is well to note that *Enuma Elish* has the same order. Here also light comes before the sun. Not until the fifth tablet do we meet with a statement of the making of the heavenly bodies. In this respect therefore, namely, relating the production of the heavenly bodies after the existence of light, the *Enuma Elish* is in agreement with Genesis. When Apsu wishes to revolt, light is already present, for he says: "Their way has become grievous to me. By day I cannot rest, by night I cannot sleep" (1:37, 38). Heidel also points out that there was a radiance or dazzling aureole about Apsu (1:68), "He carried off his splendor and put it on himself". And Marduk himself was a solar deity, "Son of the sun-god, the sun god of the gods" (1:102). In *Enuma Elish* light is really an attribute of the gods; in Genesis it is the creation of God. That such an order should be present in *Enuma Elish* is what might be expected, for this document represents a degenerated form of the Biblical creation account.

¹⁶ Today we all know that the times and seasons are regulated by the sun, however, in ancient times it was generally held that the moon performed this task. Hence, the biblical report shows a remarkable understanding of what man has held down through history, as well as how the whole of terrestrial time and seasons is truly regulated.

heard that man was to serve God by enriching his own environment, working for many of his own needs, and filling the earth with offspring - he is the crown of the creation. The biblical account ends with God's blessing upon man in the form of a consecrated Sabbath rest on one day out of seven. Man was to imitate God in His divine rest - there is no rest for man envisioned in the Babylonian account. In the Babylonian story man is sentenced to an unending work and service to the gods. In the Bible man is to enjoy the creation and the work of his labors. He is to worship and serve the Lord but not as a slave with no God-given privileges and rights. In Babylon the gods were to enjoy the creation and the work of man's labors and man has no creation-rights.¹⁷ How different the biblical report is from the degraded¹⁸ Babylonian myth.

The Babylonian account is the closest story to the biblical account of creation yet found. We can learn much from it to encourage us in believing what the Bible reports. It teaches us the antiquity and superiority of the biblical record. The Babylonian account bears the marks of degeneration and alteration while the Bible shows the marks of origination and simplicity. The Babylonian story with its co-mingling of the two originating deities, provides us some ground, perhaps, for seeing the three persons of the Trinity in Genesis 1.¹⁹ Perhaps, as suggested above, it also provides us a dim reflection of the seven days of creation. The Babylonian account teaches us that the ancients reported the creation (and so do the Egyptian stories) in a form of a sequential story. This is of some importance in our day when many Christians are inclined to see something other than straightforward reporting in the biblical account and think that the sequential order in Genesis is to be virtually disregarded,²⁰ or, at least, to be viewed as the secondary structure in the account. The order of the creation of the heavens and earth from the body of Tiamat is somewhat parallel to the order of the creation in Genesis, although it certainly lacks the integrity (it presents an internally contradictory account), crispness, and detail of the biblical account. What a joy that God grants us the enjoyment of the work of our hands and a participation in His divine rest - in contrast to the purpose of man as taught by the Babylonian story.²¹

THE TWO-ACCOUNT THEORY OF BIBLICAL CREATION

In addition to helping us with the basic historicity of the creation account, ancient oriental discoveries also help us with the perceived problem of the two accounts of creations. It is thought by many (including some reformed and evangelical scholars)²² that Genesis 1-2:3 presents a different account of

¹⁷ Kitchen *Ancient*, 88-89; A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (1951) 10-11.

¹⁸ Kitchen, *Ancient*, remarks, "The common assumption that the Hebrew account is simply a purged and simplified version of the Babylonian legend (applied also to the Flood stories) is fallacious on methodological grounds. In the Ancient Near East, the rule is that simple accounts or traditions may give rise (by accretion and embellishment) to elaborate legends, but not vice versa. In the Ancient Orient, legends were not simplified or turned into pseudo-history (historicized) as has been assumed for early Genesis" 89.

¹⁹ Although contested by many, it seems to this writer that the Bible does speak of a plurality in the godhead in the creation account. Not only does the Creator speak referring to Himself with the plural pronoun (cf., Genesis 1:26), not only is the third person of the Trinity evidenced by the mention of the Holy spirit (Genesis 1:2, cf.; Isaiah 40:12-14), but the New Testament clearly attests the presence and creating work of the second person of the Trinity (John 1: 1-3; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:10). It is important to note that the plural used in the Hebrew name of the Lord God is sometimes thought to be a plural of majesty. Significant to this argument is that the Bible speaks of the one god Baal in the plural, and of the one goddess Asherah in the plural (Asheroth).

²⁰ Kline and the framework theorists; the analogical school of thought - 7 days intended to be understood as normal days in normal sequence but also not as reflecting what God did in certain historical time periods.

²¹ For a more thorough presentation and critique see Heidel

²² Among the reformed scholars that maintain the two creations theory is the much to be respected Dr. Bruce Waltke, "The First Seven Days" in *Christianity Today*, 12 Aug. 1988 45; *Commentary on Genesis*.

4184 creation than does the rest of Genesis 2. They argue that there is a different style (vocabulary and
4185 grammar), a different theology, and a different order of creation in the two "different" accounts.

4186
4187 Kitchen states, "the strictly *complementary* nature of the 'two' accounts is plain enough."²³ He points
4188 out that Genesis 1 presents the creation of man as the last in a series (the crowning achievement of
4189 divine creating) and without many details. In comparison, Genesis 2 makes man the center of interest
4190 and, accordingly, gives more specifics about him. Kitchen opines,

4191
4192 There is no incompatible duplication here at all. Failure to recognize the
4193 complementary nature of the subject-distinction between a skeleton outline of all
4194 creation on the one hand, and the concentration in detail on man and his immediate
4195 environment on the other, borders on obscurantism.²⁴
4196

4197 There is much evidence from both Egypt and Mesopotamia supporting Kitchen's statement. He remarks
4198 that such evidence is "commonplace."
4199

4200 Precisely this relationship of a general summary-outline plus a more detailed account
4201 of one (or more) major aspect(s) - with differing styles for the two accounts - is
4202 commonplace enough in Ancient Oriental texts.
4203

4204 He specifically presents, from Egypt, Amun's address to King Tuthmoses III on the Karnak Poetical
4205 stele, and the Bebel stele (the stele sets forth, first, a sketch of the royal authority and then it details the
4206 specific royal victories in Palestine). He demonstrates this same stylistic phenomenon from a writing
4207 found in Urartu in Mesopotamia that, first, generally presents the triumphs of the god Haldi and then
4208 gives the more detailed description of the same victories through his servant the king. Kitchen writes,

4209
4210 What is absurd when applied to monumental Near Eastern texts that had no prehistory
4211 of hands and redactors should not be imposed on Genesis I and 2, as is done by an
4212 uncritical perpetuation of a nineteenth-century systematization of speculations by
4213 eighteenth-century dilettantes lacking, as they did, all knowledge of the forms and
4214 usages of Ancient Oriental literature.²⁵
4215

4216 Since Kitchen's day the subjective theories and speculative opinions of the higher critical biblical
4217 scholars of his day have been applied to the ancient oriental writings but Kitchen's judgment on such a
4218 procedure still stands.²⁶
4219

4220 Not only do ancient texts present us with the same general style as Genesis I and 2 with its general
4221 summary in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the more detailed account of one major element (the creation and
4222 treatment of mankind) in the rest of Genesis 2, but even the particular stylistic phenomena find
4223 parallels. Many oriental texts present us with two or more names of the same god or goddess. Since
4224 these texts were all written down as a single unit, this phenomenon does not argue for multiple textual
4225 traditions put together over a long period of time. On the contrary, they demonstrate how such a god or
4226 goddess was simultaneously known by various names. The Berlin stele of Ikhemofret refers to the god
4227 Osiris by that name and also as Wennofer, Khent-amentiu, "Lord of Abydos (Neb-Abdju), and *nuter*
4228 (god). This phenomenon is also common in Mesopotamian writings. The early Assyrian laws refer to
4229 the God Enlil by that name and by the name Nunamnir. From the 1700's we have the Hammurapi law
4230 code referring to the following deities, the goddess Nanna/Ishtar/Telitim and the goddess Nintu/Mama.
4231 The list of such double or multiple names of gods and goddesses is very long and the phenomenon
4232 occurs throughout the history of ancient Near Eastern literature.²⁷

²³ Kitchen, *Ancient*, 116.

²⁴ Kitchen, *Ancient*, 117.

²⁵ Kitchen, *Ancient*.

²⁶ Kitchen refers the reader to U. Cassuto's book *The Documentary Hypothesis* (1961, p. 54) and E.J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1964, p. 51) to support further his conclusion. Also, he demonstrates that it is absurd to argue for a long historical literary or oral development leading up to what is recorded in these oriental texts, cf, the end of chapter 1.

²⁷ Kitchen, *Ancient*, 121 ff.

So, in the Bible the name God (Heb., Elohim) occurs frequently in Genesis 1:1-2:3 (22 times) but the name rendered "Lord" (i.e., Jahweh, Heb. Jahweh) does not occur at all. The latter name does appear 11 times in Genesis 2:4-22. Some have concluded from this that this difference in the use of divine names reflects two different documents, i.e., two different accounts of creation. However, merely the use of different names does not establish the existence of different documents or accounts - especially when there is a contrasting usage between the "outline" and the "more detailed account" sections. Moreover, these two names are more than synonyms. Hence, sometimes one name is used in a given context to emphasize the unique thing it communicates. The Hebrew name rendered "God" is used to emphasize God's universal rule and the greatness of his nature and being. The name rendered "Lord" emphasizes God's peculiar relationship to his people. It is, consequently, uniquely the covenantal name of God. So, it is appropriate in Genesis 1 to use "God" insofar as this is the general account of the creation of all things. On the other hand, although that same name is used in Genesis 2:4-22 some 12 times, the author also used "Lord" 11 times and each use combines the two words in referring to the Creator and Ruler. It is altogether appropriate that this be the case inasmuch as the emphasis in Genesis 2:4-22 is an addition by way of specific focus on mankind in his covenantal context. The whole unit is a part of the previous material, in a sense, but unique in its focus on and expansion of God's relationship (his covenantal relationship) with mankind.

Thus the texts discovered in the course of archaeological work argue for the integrity of the entire pericope, Genesis 1:1 through 2:25. We have only focused on the use of the divine names, but further lexical argumentation demonstrating the ubiquity of the ancient literary usage of two or more synonymous words in the same or parallel pericopes could also be given. Therefore the argument that there are different texts or two original accounts because there are different words for the same thing (e.g., place names, common nouns, verbs personal pronouns, etc.) used in two verses or chapters, is discredited by the ancient records.²⁸

Similarly, skeptics have argued that there are two or more accounts in the Bible when chapters or shorter sections, evidence major variations in style. Yet examples of this phenomenon occur frequently in ancient oriental writings. Kitchen points to the biographical inscription of the Egyptian official Uni (c. 2400 B.C.) that contains several major literary styles: flowing narrative, summary statements, a victory hymn, and two different recurring refrains. He concludes,

"Yet there can in fact be no question at all of disparate sources here, in what is a monumental inscription composed and engraved as a unitary whole at the volition of the man whom it commemorates."²⁹

Kitchen offers additional evidence from Mesopotamia. His point is firmly established:

"Again, these are immediate and unitary texts without prehistories and rival proto-authors; and their style lasted through at least four reigns of nearly a century (ninth to eighth centuries B.C.)."³⁰

Surely, those of us who believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, are encouraged by the abundance of material from the ancient records that evidence such similarities to the Bible in stylistic, linguistic, and literary practices.

THE CREATION ORDER

These ancient myths help considerably in understanding the Bible's days of the creation. The Ancient Near Eastern materials offer a parallel in the order of things created, the sequential nature of the creation, and the factual nature of the six plus one day pattern of creation.

It has already been suggested that the seven tablets on which the Babylonian myth was recorded probably tell us nothing about the factuality of the creation events of the seven days of creation. At best the seven tablets are but a dim reflection of the seven days of creation, but it is more likely that the

²⁸ Kitchen, *Ancient*, 124ff.

²⁹ Kitchen, *Ancient*, 125.

³⁰ Kitchen, *Ancient*, 126.

number of tablets is incidental with reference to the seven days. On the other hand, the Babylonian and Egyptian myths report the creation as a sequential story.

The order of events in the Babylonian creation myth and in the Bible are somewhat parallel. In both the primal waters come first, there was light before the light bearers, a watery mass was halved to form the created heavens and earth, the seas were created, the heavens above were populated with the sun, moon and stars, the sun and moon were appointed to “rule” time and night and day, and man was created. This is most remarkable. It argues that the true account as recorded in the Bible was preserved, with some garbling, in the minds of the ancient cultures.

Babylon	Bible
1. Watery mass – Tiamat and Apsu	1. Watery mass – primal waters Gen. 2:3
2. Light already existed for the gods	2. Light created – brought forth
3. Tiamat split Waters above sealed in place.	3. Watery mass split. Waters above set
4. Heavens surveyed for habitations of the gods.	4. The firmament of the heavens was created
5. Apsu (deep) measured and habitation set. Nudimmud?	5. Watery mass below. Seas/oceans set
6. Skies habitated (by stars & Zodaic put in place)	6. Skies habitated (by sun, moon and stars)
7. Moon shines & regulates days and months	7. Sun and moon regulating set
8. Mankind created	8. Mankind created.

The order of the Babylonian creation story charted above begins with the existence of the primordial waters. The Enuma Elish in tablet 1 says of the first two gods Apsu and Tiamat, “Their waters commingling as a single body.” In addition, the second item is the “report” that light existed (tablet 1, lines 37-38, 68, 102) before the light producing bodies existed (the creation of the moon and sun is recorded in tablet V, lines 1-12ff, - see the light first footnote). All the other items in the chart appear in tablets, IV, V and VI as follows³¹:

Tablet IV:

3 “Then the lord paused to view her dead body,
That he might divide the monster and do artful works.
He split her like a shellfish into two parts:
Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky,
pulled down the bar and posted guards.
He bade them to allow not her waters to escape.
4/5 He crossed the heavens and surveyed the regions. He squared Apsu’s quarter, the abode of Nudimmud (“one of the names of Ea, the earth- and water-god”),³²
As the lord measured the dimensions of Apsu. ...
Anu, Enlil, and Ea he made occupy their places.”

Tablet V

6 “He constructed stations for the great gods,
Fixing their astral likenesses as the Images.
He determined the year by designating the zones:
He set up three constellations for each of the twelve months.
After defining the days of the year [by means] of
(heavenly) figures,
...
7 The Moon he caused to shine, *the night (to him) entrusting*.
He appointed him a creature of the night *to signify the days*:
“*Monthly*, without cease, form designs with a crown.

³¹ ANET, 67ff.

³² ANET, 61, n. 7.

4329 At the month's very start, rising over the land,
 4330 Thou shalt have luminous horns to signify *six days*,
 4331 On the seventh day reaching a [half]-crown.
 4332 At full moon stand in opposition in mid-month.
 4333 ...
 4334 And [on the thirtieth *thou shalt again stand in opposition to the sun.*"]
 4335
 4336

Tablet VI

4337 8 "Verily, savage-man *I will create.*"
 4338 The point being made is not that there is an exact parallel to the biblical creation account in Babylonian
 4339 literature but that there is an approximate parallel provided one leaves out certain things in each
 4340 "account" and overlooks that the skies were inhabited first by the stars (zodiac) in the Babylonian story.
 4341 What is given above also demonstrates that this Babylonian creation story is told as a sequential story.
 4342 There is no framework here even though the light does exist before the light-bearers and the ordering of
 4343 the earth's times occurs after the "creation" of items one through 5 in the chart.
 4344
 4345 SIX PLUS ONE PATTERN

4346 Dr. Young, in his *Studies in Genesis*, aptly provides several Mesopotamian and Canaite citations that
 4347 use the six plus one pattern. The phrase is applied to days and other things. He does not present all of
 4348 the possible examples of the use of this pattern in these bodies of literature, but he provides sufficient
 4349 examples to demonstrate that the people of the ancient Near East were very familiar with the pattern.
 4350 He also shows that this pattern argues that since the pattern was used of literal days and literal things in
 4351 the order six plus one, it argues for understanding the six and one pattern in the Genesis account as
 4352 sequential days. In other words, the sequential use of the six and one pattern in extra-biblical writings
 4353 makes a difficult problem for those who would deny the sequential use in the Bible.
 4354

4355 The sequential use of the pattern occurs In Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic where the great flood is
 4356 described in lines 127-130 that read,
 4357

4358 "Six days and [six] nights
 4359 Blows the flood wind, as the south-storm sweeps the land.
 4360 When the seventh day arrived, The flood(-carrying) south-storm subsided in the battle,
 4361 Which it had fought like an army."³³
 4362

4363 Thus the downpour storm the flood is described as days as a torrent for six days that are followed by a
 4364 seventh. Young remarks,
 4365

4366 The meaning of course is that for a space of six days the winds blew and the rain fell.
 4367 Certainly there would be no warrant for interpreting the phrase "six days" otherwise.
 4368 Yet, inasmuch as it is used in precisely the same manner, if in the Gilgamesh epic the
 4369 phrase "six days" means six consecutive days, why does it not have the same meaning
 4370 in Exodus 20?
 4371

4372 Again, in Tablet XI, lines 140-145 where it is said that after the flood subsided, the ship (ark) came to
 4373 rest on the top of Mount Nisir and was held fast there for six days. On the seventh day, Utnapishtim set
 4374 a dove free.
 4375

4376 "Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion.
 4377 One day, a second day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion.
 4378 A third day, a fourth day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion.
 4379 When the seventh day arrived,
 4380 Sent forth and set free a dove."³⁴
 4381

4382 Again, it is quite obvious that these are seven consecutive days presented in the six plus one pattern.
 4383 Again, the seventh day is climatic in that it cradles a climatic act.

³³ ANET, 94.

³⁴ ANET, 94.

4384
 4385 The third example of our sequential pattern also appears in the Gilgamesh Epic. Here, it is used in the
 4386 description of the loaves which the wife of n Utnapishtim bakes for Gilgamesh. As the story unfolds,
 4387 Gilgamesh is seen in the course of his search for eternal life. His journey takes him to the eternal one,
 4388 Utnapishtim (the Babylonian Noah).
 4389
 4390 While he talks to Utnapishtim and his wife, Gilgamesh falls asleep. Utnapishtim thinks it wise to keep a
 4391 believable record of the length of Gilgamesh's sleep. To that end he instructs his wife to bake a "wafer"
 4392 for Gilgamesh each day he is asleep and place it by his head. So, when he awakes there will be a careful
 4393 and believable record of the days he slept. The story says Gilgamesh slept for six days and awoke on
 4394 the seventh, as follows.
 4395
 4396 Tablet XI
 4397
 4398 209-
 4399 "Sleep fans him [Gilgamesh] like the whirlwind.
 4400 Utnapishtim says to her, to his spouse:
 4401 'Behold this hero who seeks life!
 4402 Sleep fans him like a mist."
 4403 Touch him that the man may awake,
 4404 ...
 4405 Utnapishtim says to her, to his spouse:
 4406 "Since to deceive is human, he will seek 1 deceive thee.
 4407 Up, bake for him wafers, put (them) at his head,
 4408 And mark on the wall the days he sleeps."
 4409 She baked for him wafers, put (them) at his head,
 4410 And marked on the wall the days he slept.
 4411 His first wafer is dried out,
 4412 The second is gone bad, the third is soggy;
 4413 The crust²²¹ of the fourth has turned white;
 4414 He fifth has a moldy cast,
 4415 The sixth (still) is fresh-colored;
 4416 The seventh just as he touched him the man awoke.³⁵
 4417 ..."
 4418 The entire proof is repeated as a report to Gilgamesh,
 4419 "[Go], Gilgamesh, count thy wafers,
 4420 [That the days thou hast slept] may become known to thee:
 4421 Thy [first] wafer is dried out,
 4422 [The second is gone] bad, the third is soggy;
 4423 The crust of the fourth has turned white;
 4424 [The fifth] has a moldy cast,
 4425 The sixth (still) is fresh-colored.
 4426 [The seventh] -- at this instant thou hast awakened."³⁶
 4427
 4428 Like the previous examples it is quite clear that these are six sequential days followed by a seventh.
 4429 Here, too, the seventh day is climactic.
 4430
 4431 There is another example of the six plus one sequential pattern in the Babylonian Creation Account
 4432 (*Enuma Elish*, lines 16, 17). There in the fifth tablet (lines 16, 17), Marduk the chief god of Babylon
 4433 sets the zodiac in the skies, creates the moon and orders it as follows:
 4434
 4435 "Thou shalt have luminous horns to signify six days,
 4436 On the seventh day reaching a [half]-crown."
 4437
 4438 Young comments, "Here the shining forth is to occupy the space of six days, and the seventh day which
 4439 follows is climactic." Here, too, only by ignoring the obvious can one escape the conclusion that this

³⁵ ANET, 95, lines 209-19.

³⁶ ANET, 96, lines 223-28.

text presents a six plus one sequential pattern. This usage is particularly interesting because the *Enuma Elish* is speaking about how the universe was ordered by Marduk.

This pattern appears to have been widespread among ancient Near Eastern cultures. It appears not only in the various kinds of Mesopotamian literatures but in the literature of Ugarit as well.

“Like grasshoppers on the borders of the desert.”.

March a day and a second;

A third, a fourth day;

Fifth, a six day –

Lo! At the sun¹⁴ on the seventh:

Thou arrivest at Udum the Great,

Even at Udum the Grand.

Now do thou attack the villages, rase the towns.” K.A. iii.2-4

(Keret I iii, lines 10-15).

(Aqhat 11 ii, lines 32-39).

(Baal II vi, lines 24-32).

Notice that the various examples although presenting the 6 + 1 pattern do not present it in the same form. The various forms displayed here mitigate against a conclusion that the Ancient Near East developed and employed a fixed form. This data shows that various specific forms were used and that there was a general literary pattern in use. The biblical creation account reflects the use of one of those forms. It would be an unwarranted conclusion to say the biblical account uses this form without being aware that the usage throughout the ancient Near East uses all the forms in speaking about contiguous sequentiality.

3. HERMENEUTICS: GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

(C. Lee Irons)

Reformed theology has historically held that God has revealed himself to man in two ways: through general (or natural) revelation, and through special revelation. These two modes of revelation are sometimes referred to as "the book of nature" and "the book of Scripture." The Belgic Confession, for example, uses this figure:

We know [God] by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his eternal power and Godhead ... Secondly, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word.¹

General revelation is usually defined as God's self-revelation in creation, providence, and the constitution of man (i.e., "the light of nature"). When the Psalmist "considers Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained," he is aware of the majesty both of God and of man, God's vice-regent over creation (Psalm 8). "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). The purpose of general revelation is to make known the existence of God, his distinct identity as Creator, and in general "his eternal power and divine nature" (Romans. 1:20). However, since it is not sufficient to give the knowledge necessary for salvation, it serves to leave men "without excuse," as the opening paragraph of our Confession of Faith states:

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation.²

Distinct from general revelation is special revelation. The paramount instance of special revelation is the deposit of divine truth recorded in the Holy Scriptures, but special revelation is a broader category than Scripture and also includes the various modes in which God revealed himself to his people prior to the completion of the canon (e.g., Urim and Thumim, visions, theophanies, miracles, prophecy and tongues, etc.). The primary purpose of special revelation, in contrast with general revelation, is to "make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy. 3:15). However, this primary purpose is by no means exclusive, since Scripture also contains authoritative disclosures concerning historical and physical reality that overlap to some degree with the content of general revelation.

Bavinck reminds us that the Bible does not attempt to give us lessons in geology or any other science, since it is "the book of religion." Yet even as the book of religion, the Bible remains authoritative when its pronouncements come into contact with science:

Everyone agrees, after all, that Scripture does not speak the language of science but that of daily experience; that also in telling the story of creation ... it is not attempting to give a lesson in geology or any other science but, also in the story of the genesis of all creatures, remains the book of religion, revelation, and the knowledge of God. "We do not read in the Gospel that the Lord said: 'I will send to you a Paraclete who will teach you about the course of the sun and the moon!' For he wanted to make Christians, not mathematicians [citing Augustine]. "Scripture intentionally does not treat the things we know in philosophy" [citing Alsted]. But when Scripture, from its own perspective precisely as the book of religion, comes in contact with other sciences and also sheds light on them, it does not all at once cease to be the Word of God but remains that Word.³

¹ Belgic Confession, Article 2.

² WCF, 1.1.

³ Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, 120 citing Augustine and Alsted.

It is this overlap, and the hermeneutical questions that arise from it, which has given rise to the current discussion in the OPC concerning the days of creation, and so the Committee has deemed it important to comment on the proper relationship between general and special revelation. But it is just at this point that an important distinction must be made, and that is the distinction between revelation and the interpretation of revelation. The interpretation of general revelation is "science" in the broadest definition of the word (i.e., knowledge). "Natural science" is merely one aspect of the study of general revelation, and it includes not only the body of knowledge that has accumulated over the centuries concerning the natural world, but the various theories, models, and hypotheses that are currently regarded by the scientific community as having some degree of empirical confirmation or support. No scientific model, as a theory explaining some facet of the natural world, is certain since any given model may be replaced by a more adequate one in the future. Thus, natural science is not a fixed body of facts, but a collection of scientific models (of varying degrees of certainty) currently held by the community of interpretation known as the scientific community.

Just as we have distinguished between general revelation and its fallible human interpretation, so we must distinguish between special revelation and its fallible human interpretation. The latter we variously refer to as exegesis or biblical interpretation. Just as the data of general revelation can be explained tentatively by various conflicting models, so the data of Scripture can be explained differently by different communities of interpretation. The Calvinist and the Arminian, the dispensationalist and the covenant theologian, each have their models or systems of interpretation, and each attempts to provide a plausible counter-exegesis of the passages appealed to by the other party.

Furthermore, due to the noetic effects of sin, all human interpretation of revelation is fallible and subject to constant re-evaluation and correction. As Calvinists we believe that the fall not only affected man's heart and will, but his mind as well. The Confession teaches that mankind is "wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body" (WCF 6.2), and that original sin includes "the corruption of [man's] whole nature" (WSC 18). The doctrine of total depravity means that all of man's faculties, including his mind, are corrupted by sin, and that apart from the regenerating and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, man's rational faculty is not capable of properly interpreting, receiving, and assenting to the truths of divine revelation. This does not mean that man's reason is utterly vitiated and incapable of functioning, but that it functions with an idolatrous bias. Van Til used the analogy of the buzz-saw to explain this:

The intellect of fallen man may, as such, be keen enough ... It may be compared to a buzz-saw that is sharp and shining, ready to cut the boards that come to it. Let us say that a carpenter wishes to cut fifty boards for the purpose of laying the floor of a house. He has marked his boards. He has set his saw. He begins at one end of the mark on the board. But he does not know that his seven-year old son has tampered with the saw and changed its set. The result is that every board he saws is cut slantwise and thus unusable because too short except at the point where the saw first made its contact with the wood. As long as the set of the saw is not changed the result will always be the same ... The saw is in itself but a tool. Whether it will move at all and whether it will cut in the right direction depend upon the man operating it. So also reason, or intellect, is always the instrument of a person. And the person employing it is always either a believer or an unbeliever. If he is a believer, his reason has already been changed in its set, as Hodge has told us, by regeneration. It cannot then be the judge; it is now a part of the regenerated person, gladly subject to the authority of God.⁴

Even the believer still experiences the "drag" of the fall upon his interpretive endeavors, and is not completely free from the noetic effects of sin, even though the buzz-saw has been realigned, in principle, to the right setting.

On the other hand, the Reformed doctrine of common grace is another consideration that must not be neglected, lest the emphasis on the noetic effects of sin lead to a total rejection of science. It is true that the scientific community is dominated by those who are unregenerate, and many scientists who are regenerate hold to erroneous theological positions. It is also true that some of the theories currently held by the scientific community are more influenced by a priori metaphysical commitments (e.g., a naturalistic worldview) than is commonly acknowledged. These are all due to the noetic effects of sin. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the church must reject the benefits of God's common grace as

⁴ Quoted in Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998) 154-55.

found among unbelievers. For this reason, Calvin exhorted the church not to reject science and learning, even though it is often produced by unbelievers. Commenting on Genesis 4:20-22, where the family of Cain is described as excelling in the arts and technology, Calvin writes:

Moses now relates that, with the evils which proceeded from the family of Cain, some good had been blended. For the invention of the arts, and of other things which serve to the common use and convenience of life, is a gift of God by no means to be despised, and a faculty worthy of commendation. It is truly wonderful, that this race, which had most deeply fallen from integrity, should have excelled the rest of the posterity of Adam in rare endowments ... Let us then know, that the sons of Cain, though deprived of the Spirit of regeneration, were yet endued with gifts of no despicable kind; just as the experience of all ages teaches us how widely the rays of divine light have shone on unbelieving nations, for the benefit of the present life; and we see, at the present time, that the excellent gifts of the Spirit are diffused through the whole human race. Moreover, the liberal arts and sciences have descended to us from the heathen. We are, indeed, compelled to acknowledge that we have received astronomy, and the other parts of philosophy, medicine, and the order of civil government, from them.⁵

In his *Institutes*, Calvin distinguishes between the human understanding of "earthly things" and "heavenly things." Heavenly things pertain to the true knowledge of God and the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But earthly things are those which "relate not to God and his kingdom ... but have some connection with the present life".⁶ Having made this distinction, Calvin goes on to argue that the unregenerate are able to apprehend much that is true and valid with regard to earthly things, since "no man is devoid of the light of reason."

Therefore, in reading profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver. How, then, can we deny that truth must have beamed on those ancient lawgivers who arranged civil order and discipline with so much equity? Shall we say that the philosophers, in their exquisite researches and skillful description of nature, were blind? Shall we deny the possession of intellect to those who drew up rules for discourse, and taught us to speak in accordance with reason? Shall we say that those who, by the cultivation of the medical art, expended their industry in our behalf were only raving? What shall we say of the mathematical sciences? Shall we deem them to be the dreams of madmen? Nay, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without the highest admiration; an admiration which their excellence will not allow us to withhold. But shall we deem anything to be noble and praiseworthy, without tracing it to the hand of God? Far from us be such ingratitude; an ingratitude not chargeable even on heathen poets, who acknowledged that philosophy and laws, and all useful arts were the inventions of the gods. Therefore, since it is manifest that men whom the Scriptures term carnal, are so acute and clear-sighted in the investigation of inferior things, their example should teach us how many gifts the Lord has left in possession of human nature, notwithstanding of its having been despoiled of the true good ... But if the Lord has been pleased to assist us by the work and ministry of the ungodly in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other similar sciences, let us avail ourselves of it, lest, by neglecting the gifts of God spontaneously offered to us, we be justly punished for our sloth.⁷

⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 217f.

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* II.ii.13.

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* II.ii.15-16.

Calvin's distinction between earthly and heavenly things is of course not one that can be maintained with absolute clarity in every case, especially in view of the obvious theological and metaphysical implications of some aspects of modern science. Furthermore, Calvin predated Van Til and therefore may not have appreciated the degree to which a person's worldview influences the interpretation of even the simplest facts. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the point that Calvin is making: on the whole, mankind's intellectual achievements (including science) are good gifts of God's common grace, even when such learning comes from unbelievers and needs to be critically filtered by the believing community.

Another way of formulating Calvin's distinction between the two types of knowledge (of earthly and heavenly things) is by appealing to the concept of "levels of explanation." This concept is explained and defended by Paul Helm, a Christian philosopher working within the Reformed tradition. To illustrate the concept, he asks the reader to imagine that we are observing someone in the act of writing with a pen. This act could be described at increasing levels of explanation:

Jones is writing with his pen.
 Jones is signing his name.
 Jones is signing a cheque.
 Jones is making a donation to Oxfam.

Each higher level of explanation introduces some new concept for understanding the action involved (e.g., name, cheque, donation), while each builds upon the lower levels. Helm writes: "While each of the higher-level descriptions introduces new conceptual considerations, if it is to be regarded as a re-description it presupposes the truth of the lower-level description."⁸

Helm then goes on to point out that in the recent history of Christianity, there has been what many perceive to be a "turf war" between theology and some of the natural sciences, especially geology and biology.

Increasingly it has come to be thought that the standard theological answers to questions about the origin of the universe or the nature of man have been discredited in the face of scientific theories offering rational explanations, and that therefore theology and religion have to do with an ever-narrowing circle of the inexplicable, mysticism and irrationality.⁹

There have been two main responses to this situation. Liberal Christians have taken the route of redefining the boundaries of theology to an increasingly restricted domain. Rudolf Bultmann, for example, maintains that the essence of religion consists in the fact that it has nothing to do with truth but only with values, feelings, or attitudes. But the second response – which Helm advocates – is

to see the truths of special revelation as *complementing* secular knowledge both in the sense that it provides knowledge undisclosed in the various sciences and in the sense that it provides a higher-level description of scientific truth ... The idea that Christian theology, and the special revelation on which it depends, is in retreat, is based upon a simple but vital misconception, that special revelation is at all points competing with science, and that it has to do with explaining and predicting events about the universe in a quasi-scientific manner. Religion is not concerned with a residuum of the inexplicable but with the whole of life, and with seeing that life, the life with which the special sciences properly deal, as a gift from God and as needing redemption through Christ ... Thus special revelation interprets general revelation. For though special revelation and empirically-discovered truths complement each other, and overlap, and though theories about each may compete, yet the special revelation is more *basic*. It provides the higher-level descriptions of *all* human activity, including human fact-finding activity. Perhaps this is part of what John Calvin meant when he likened the Scriptures to a pair of glasses.¹⁰

⁸ Paul Helm, *The Divine Revelation: The Basic Issues* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982) 111.

⁹ Helm, *Divine Revelation*, 115.

¹⁰ Helm, *Divine Revelation*, 115-17 [Emphasis his].

- 4685 In light of these considerations, it is important to develop a hermeneutic that is consistent with the
 4686 Reformed understanding of common grace, the noetic effects of sin, general revelation, and the
 4687 authority of Scripture. The following principles will not automatically resolve the apparent conflict
 4688 between science and biblical interpretation with regard to the days of creation, but they ought to be
 4689 helpful guidelines in that hermeneutical process:
- 4690 1. The book of nature and the book of Scripture must always be in harmony, since God is the author
 4691 of both. The self-consistency and truth-telling nature of God require this as a presuppositional
 4692 starting point to which we are committed in faith, regardless of the difficulties that may arise for us
 4693 as fallible human interpreters of God's manifold revelation.
 4694
 - 4695 2. The *content* of revelation and the *interpretation* of revelation must be distinguished: science is the
 4696 human interpretation of God's revelation in nature; exegesis or biblical interpretation, the human
 4697 interpretation of God's revelation in Scripture. Any apparent conflict or contradiction between
 4698 natural revelation and Scripture is the result of a misinterpretation of either natural revelation or of
 4699 Scripture.
 4700
 - 4701 3. Neither the scientific nor the exegetical enterprise may overlook the noetic effects of sin which
 4702 distort man's perception and darken his understanding. Since both science and exegesis are human
 4703 enterprises, they are subject to the distorting influence of sin, which is the major cause of all
 4704 apparent conflicts between science and biblical interpretation.
 4705
 - 4706 4. Another cause of apparent conflict is due to the difference between general and special revelation
 4707 as modes of revelation. Special revelation is in the form of verbal propositions from God addressed
 4708 through his inspired prophets and apostles to the covenant community, whereas general revelation
 4709 is non-verbal and is therefore more easily misinterpreted and distorted by the sinful mind.
 4710
 - 4711 5. Therefore, due to the difference in the two types of revelation, and due to the noetic effects of sin,
 4712 the revelation of God in Scripture has presuppositional priority over the revelation of God in
 4713 nature. Both the scientific and exegetical enterprises of men must always be open to correction by
 4714 Scripture, which is our ultimate authority. The "supreme judge" by which all human ideas (both
 4715 scientific and exegetical) are to be tested is "the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture" (WCF 1.10).
 4716 "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater" (1 John 5:9). "Let God be
 4717 found true, though every man be found a liar" (Romans 3:4).
 4718
 - 4719 6. The authority of special revelation must not be restricted to the religious or moral realm. In
 4720 addition to the general teaching of Scripture concerning the doctrines of creation and providence –
 4721 doctrines which are the foundation for the scientific enterprise, Scripture often touches even more
 4722 specifically upon the physical world with authoritative pronouncements that impinge directly upon
 4723 science.
 4724
 - 4725 7. Because Scripture has presuppositional priority over general revelation, it is improper to regard the
 4726 interpretation of general revelation (or science) as a normative authority in the exegetical task. The
 4727 only legitimate role of the interpretation of general revelation (or science) in the exegesis of
 4728 Scripture is to alert us to the possibility that our exegesis may need to be reexamined. Henri
 4729 Blocher underscores this point in his analysis of the role of science in the exegetical task:
 4730 In the case of the opening chapters of Genesis, it is not plausible that the human author
 4731 knew what we are taught by astronomers, geologists and other scientists. Therefore we
 4732 must curb the desire to make the scientific view play a part in the actual interpretation;
 4733 the interpretation must cling solely to the text and its context. The inescapable
 4734 comparison with the sciences of cosmic, biological and human origins will not come
 4735 until after; this will no doubt have repercussions on the work of interpretation which is
 4736 never completed, but they will be of a merely external nature ... We conclude that the
 4737 place of the sciences in the reading of the Bible is this: they have neither authority, nor
 4738 even a substantial ministerial role within the actual interpretation; they act as warnings
 4739 and confirmations at a later stage.¹¹
 4740
 4741

¹¹ Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1984) 26-27.

Interpretations which achieve harmony with natural revelation or science, but are not based on valid exegetical grounds internal to the text and which do not conform to the analogy of Scripture, may not rightly be adopted by those committed to God's authoritative self-revelation in Scripture. The Confession states that "the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself" (WCF 1.9). The Confession does not deny the validity of other sources of information or secondary authorities. But "when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture ... it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly" (WCF 1.9). It is significant that the Confession does not exhort us to seek out other sources of knowledge as authoritative for the final determination of the meaning of Scripture. Scripture is self-interpreting. This principle, also known as the analogy of Scripture, is "the infallible rule of interpretation" and must therefore have ultimate priority.

8. Because of the Reformed doctrine of common grace, the believing community must not reject science. Rather, the general stance of the church toward the scientific achievements of modern man ought to be one of gratefulness to God for bestowing such gifts upon fallen mankind and for retaining the light of reason even in those who are far from God. Common grace ought to lead us to expect that in the realm of earthly things, the intellectual achievements of unbelievers may be beneficial to us and contain much that is true at the lower levels of explanation.

Because of the Reformed doctrine of the noetic effects of sin, the believing community must not be naively accepting of all scientific theories and findings but must critically test them in light of the Word of God. Scientific theories which are restricted to the lower levels of explanation will likely be acceptable without much modification. But those scientific theories which seek pretentiously for higher levels of explanation and thus result in substantial conflict with special revelation, will require a greater degree of critical engagement. In some cases, such theories will be acceptable only after certain modifications have been made. In other cases, the only proper response from the church will be one of apologetic confrontation. "Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

4774 **4. PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION - HERMENEUTICS**

4775 (Leonard J. Coppes)

4776
4777 It is helpful to set forth one's principles of interpretation whenever dealing with a passage of Scripture.
4778 What is presented below is more than a list of principles but less than a complete discussion of each
4779 principle introduced. It is hoped that enough is presented to elucidate and sufficiently defend the
4780 principles stated.

4781
4782 I. THE FOUNDATIONAL HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLE

4783 *The Bible is the inspired Word of God* (2 Timothy 3:16). It is the Word of God. Its words are God's
4784 words. It was written by men from their individual perspectives and historical contexts. Yet in, with
4785 and under their writing is the divine authorship they wrote as they were moved and carried aloft by the
4786 Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). As such, whatever the Bible says is divine truth. Moreover, God has
4787 attended to its accuracy in transmission. So, Jesus and others cited what was handed down and used it
4788 with reference to its details (e.g., Matthew 22:32; Galatians. 3:16). Such uses of the Old Testament rest
4789 on the assumption that the details of grammar and lexicography in the days of their usage have been
4790 faithfully delivered to the speakers and hearers.¹ Although minor transcriptional errors have crept into
4791 the text, what we have before us is virtually the original words. The degree of faithfulness has been
4792 likened to the relationship between the platinum foot and yard measuring sticks (the original) in
4793 Washington DC, and the foot and yard measuring sticks we use in our daily needs (the copies). This
4794 illustration has some difficulties but does help us to understand what we mean by the trustworthiness of
4795 the Bible as we have it.

4796
4797 II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

4798 1. It has long been accepted that *the Scripture is not a textbook on science*. As such we do not
4799 look to it for authoritative statements or treatments of mathematical and scientific matters (such as
4800 calculations for a flight to Mars), etc. It does, however, speak indirectly to matters of modern science.
4801 When it speaks it speaks in terms of daily experience. Some call such speaking anthropomorphic – it
4802 presents matters of creation from the perspective of how an ordinary man would see them. The
4803 Scripture is also geocentric and covenantal (some say redemptive) in perspective and presentation. It is
4804 preeminently a book of religion. As Bavinck remarks,

4805
4806 2. *When it comes into contact with the other sciences, Scripture sheds light on them and is an*
4807 *authority to which they must conform.* As E.J. Young says,

4808
4809 Inasmuch as the Bible is the Word of God, whenever it speaks on any subject, whatever that
4810 subject may be, it is accurate in what it says. The Bible may not have been given to teach science
4811 as such, but it does teach about the origin of all things, a question upon which many scientists
4812 apparently have little to say."²

4813
4814 Since Young's day it seems that more and more scientists are speaking out on the origin of things.
4815

¹ This conclusion is also supported by the Old Testament text itself where we see grammar which formerly was thought by some to be in error and now is seen to be a faithful representation of a more ancient Hebrew grammar. Specifically, one may point to the results of the discovery and study of Ugaritic (from about 1200 B.C.). Through this study we now understand the use in Hebrew of the infinitive absolute to represent the finite verbal forms, the use of heretofore unrecognized and ancient verbal roots (MHS), the otiose use of original case endings, the parallel and synonymous use of imperfect-perfect forms in poetry, etc.

² Young, *Studies*, 43. Since Young penned his words, many scientists have spoken vocally about the origin of things.

The principle of the dominion of Scripture over the other sciences also denies any movement toward or capitulation to evolution, i. e, what has been called macro-evolution. This includes humanistic evolution which affirms that all that exists has come to be through natural processes functioning by chanceal though this view also affirms that things regularly function according to laws. It has rightly been said that such a position posits a creation that may be likened to a ship within which things operate by law, but a ship that floats on a sea of chance. The principle enunciated above equally eliminates deistic evolution which presents a creation begun by God but which operates primarily by the laws contained within the creation itself except perhaps for occasional intrusions of divine will. Such a view rejects the monergistic presentation of the Genesis creation as well as the order of the creation it sets forth. Theistic evolution posits a more direct and immediate involvement by God. It sees God as the power and controller of the creation process and evolution as the description of the process itself. This view is rejected because, even in a concurristic form, it violates the processes described in Genesis. (Often) it denies the creation of the sun after the light itself. It denies the creation of the kinds (not species) so that the plants and animals appeared in multiformation from the offset and each developed after its own kind and along its own line(s). The principle of the dominion of Scripture does not deny the possibility of progression and development of the various kinds once they were created (this has sometimes been called microevolution). Indeed, it affirms, for example, that all forms of human beings descended from Adam and Eve. Seen in this light, our principle, faithfully representing the teaching of Scripture, denies all macroevolution although it allows what might be called microevolution in which small changes might be seen in the species of creation without fundamental changes, and perhaps even allows the development of new “kinds.”

The authority of Scripture over man’s work in the various fields of science also leads us not to rest our exegesis even on the work of believing scientists. As history has taught us, even sincere believers make mistakes.

3. *Although caution is advised in using the results of the various sciences, it should be acknowledged that they have often helped gain another and better interpretation of various passages of Scripture.* From the field of the physical sciences, for example, note the work of Copernicus³ and how it has helped understand that the solar system is heliocentric, etc., and that the Bible’s geocentrism is to be understood as anthropocentric rather than dogmatic in nature. Exegetes are especially indebted to Assyriology, Egyptology, and Hittitology for help in understanding the writing habits, lexicography, grammar, cultures, and customs of Bible times.⁴ Hence, one should use the results of the various sciences but with caution—especially when they challenge the history of interpretation or the analogy of Scripture (cf., III.3, below).⁵

³ Bavinck wisely points his readers to the fiasco surrounding the work of Copernicus. Theologians used Joshua 10:12 to argue against Copernicus that the sun goes around the earth (the universe is geocentric).

⁴ The list of works detailing this “help” is extensive but we point especially to Archer, Gleason L., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1964); Harrison, R.K., *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1969); Hoerth, Alfred J., *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1998); Kitchen, K.A., *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (InterVarsity Press, Chicago, 1966); Kline, M.G., *Treaty of the Great King* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1963); Packer, J.L., Tenney, M.C., White, William, *The Bible Almanac* (Nelson, Nashville, 1980); Pfeiffer, C. F., ed., *The Biblical World* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1966); Unger, Merrill, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1954); Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1979).

⁵ We note regarding the fluctuating “results of science” that, generally speaking, there has been and continues to be an ongoing development and shifting of the conclusions “established” by science. Scientific study rests upon human intelligence, observation, and experimentation rather than upon divine revelation. As such, the conclusions of such work ought not to be exalted to the level of a fixed authority or of a divine revelation. Hence, we should be cautious when adjusting our interpretation of Scripture to meet the results of science. This is especially true today when some Christians who are

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III. THEOLOGICAL HISTORY AND GENESIS ONE

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1. *One should proceed exegetically and not dogmatically in determining the length of the days and other matters of creation.* According to Hermann Bavinck (whose work appeared in 1928), *not a single historical confession has made a fixed pronouncement about the 6 day continuum.*⁶ Bavinck urges believers to allow freedom on the matter of the length of the days of Genesis. This freedom has been generally extended in the church up to this time.⁷

scientists are challenging what are publicized as the sure results of science (especially in the area of the origins of things) while other believers are accepting some of the very results so artfully challenged.

⁶ Bavinck, *Beginning*, “It is nevertheless remarkable that not a single confession made a fixed pronouncement about the six-day continuum and that in theology as well a variety of interpretations were allowed to exist side by side.”

The work of David Hall (cf., Joseph A Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall, *Did God Create in Six Days?*, (Southern Presbyterian Press, Taylors, SC, 1999) 42) may cause one to question Bavinck’s conclusion that none of the historical confessions “made a fixed pronouncement about the six-day continuum.” But Hall’s citation from John Lightfoot does not represent all Lightfoot said about this matter. Lightfoot wrote that “The earth lay covered with waters, and had not received as yet its perfection, beauty and deckage: and that vast vacuity that was between the convex of those waters, and the concave of the clouds, was filled as it were with a gross and great darkness, and the Spirit of *God* moved the Heavens from the first moment of their Creation in a circular motion, above and about the earth and waters, for the cherishing and preservation of them in their new begun being, v.3. Twelve hours did the Heavens thus move in darkness, and then *God* commanded and there appeared light to this upper *Horizon*, namely to that where *Eden* should be planted [for, for that place especially is the story calculated] and there did it shine other twelve hours, declining by degrees with the motion of Heavens to the other *Hemisphere*, where it enlightened other twelve hours also, and so the first natural day to that part of the world was six and thirty hours long.” John Lightfoot, *The Works of the Reverend And Learned John Lightfoot D.D.*, Vol. 1, London, MDCLXXXIV (1684), “A Few, and New Observations, Upon the Book of Genesis”, p. 691. The citation here presented is found in Lightfoot’s commentary on Genesis. Hence, there seems to be a question as to what Lightfoot’s position was. We point out that, apparently, he did not see a contradiction between saying the days were 24 hours long, as Hall demonstrates, and that the first day was 36 hours long, as the above citation demonstrates. Could it be Lightfoot, the recognized Hebrew scholar at the Assembly, held to the position stated in his commentary at the time of the Assembly? If so, then the Assembly allowed him to sign the standards and thus allowed for a broader interpretation of “in the space of six days” than an ordinary or even a short-day view. Also, Bavinck’s statement may be understood as a theological statement rather than an historical statement. Perhaps what he means is that the language of the Westminster standards allows for a view of the length of the days other than a short-day or ordinary day view.

⁷ Bavinck’s observations on the historic Creeds argue that since none of the historical and continental confessions made a “fixed pronouncement” on the length of the days of Genesis, and since the Westminster Assembly built on the work of the continental theologians, we should not see their work as a major departure from the history of interpretation. Especially, since John Lightfoot (the recognized expert in Hebrew at the Westminster Assembly and a signatory of the Westminster standards) did not hold to the equal length of the seven days. I.e., he exercised the freedom historically practiced in the church.

IV. THE BIBLICAL TEXT OF GENESIS ONE

1. The Interpretation Of Scripture Should Uphold The Principle Of The Sufficiency Of Scripture.

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. (1) Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word; (2) and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed" (WCF 1.6).

With the Confession two things are fundamentally affirmed. First, that the Bible sets forth everything necessary for Christian faith and life and nothing is to be added to what it says. If an interpretation requires extra-Biblical material as the grounds of the exegesis so that apart from that extra-Biblical material the exegete is unable to understand what the Bible is saying, then this violates the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture because it assumes that the Bible in itself is not sufficient to provide a proper understanding of what God has revealed.

Properly understanding the Bible's teaching on the creation, its nature and order, fall in the category of things necessary to grasp properly God's glory, and man's faith and life. Thus, it ought not be taught or maintained that what is recorded in the creation account is anything less than straightforward historical reporting (cf., section 3 below), and that, like so much of Biblical history, it is presented as historical events in historical sequence while simultaneously conveying theological truth. We note that there is sometimes dechronolization in historical narrative (e.g., Genesis 2). Second, with the Confession it should be affirmed that there are some matters concerning worship and government that might be learned from the "light of nature" or natural revelation. One should note that the areas in which one might use what might be gleaned from the light of nature is specifically and much limited.

2. The interpretation of Scripture should uphold the principle of the perspicuity of Scripture,

"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them" (WCF 1.7).

Thus any proposed interpretation must not violate what the text clearly affirms, i.e., what is available through the appropriate use of ordinary means (cf., paragraphs 5 and 7 below). This means the proper use of grammatical, lexicographical, historical, etc., means. Among other things, this entails that in the use of hermeneutical principles, employing extra-Biblical sources might produce a deepening and enriching of the plain meaning, but not a setting aside of that overall understanding. For example, our understanding of Genesis 1 must hold that this passage records the absolute beginning of all things which conclusion is clearly and plainly set forth by the text of Genesis 1:1 itself and confirmed by Exodus 20:11; John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 11:3. These texts demonstrate that God declares to us that the plain meaning of the text is, indeed, the true meaning. This plain meaning is enhanced and supported by, for example, the Babylonian creation story in the *Inuma Elish* that tells the reader that light existed before the creation of the sun and moon.⁸

3. The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself.

When Scripture speaks about the origin of things it does not present myth, saga, or poetry but history from its (the Scripture's) unique perspective and in its unique style it is a literal historical presentation which concurrently conveys theological truth.

The Hebrew of Genesis 1 displays the distinct characteristics of prose narrative (as does the rest of the narrative in Genesis) while lacking the unique characteristics of poetry. We note that Genesis 1:3-31 regularly employs the imperfect form of the verb with a prefixed waw consecutive. To this we add the comments of E. J. Young,

⁸ Cf., the section on entitled "."

Genesis 1 is a document *sui generis*⁹ [a thing unique to itself]; its like or equal is not to be found anywhere in the literature of antiquity. ... [It is] written in exalted, semi-poetical language; nevertheless, it is not poetry. For one thing the characteristics of Hebrew poetry are lacking, and in particular there is an absence of parallelism. It is true that there is a division into paragraphs, but to label these strophes does not render the account poetic. The Bible does contain poetic statements of creation, namely Job 38:8-11 and Psalm 104:5-9. [N. H.] Ridderbos [an advocate of the framework hypothesis] aptly points out that if one will read Genesis 1:6-8, Job 38:8-11 and Psalm 104:5-9 in succession he will feel the difference between the Genesis account and the poetic accounts. The latter two passages are poetic for they contain parallelism, and it is this feature which is lacking in the first chapter of the Bible.

“Genesis one is the prelude to a severely historical book, a book so strongly historical that it may be labeled genealogical. Indeed, the first chapter stands in an intimate relationship with what follows. By its usage of the phrase *hashshamayim w^eha’arets* [the heavens and the earth], Genesis 2:4a connects the prelude (Genesis 1:1-2:3) with the genealogical section of the book. It is an intimate relationship. For chapters two and three clearly presuppose the contents of chapter one. ... “The chapter is thus seen to constitute an integral part of the entire book and is to be regarded as sober history. By this we mean that it recounts what actually transpired. It is reliable and trustworthy, for it is the special revelation of God.”¹⁰

4. We should be careful not to separate the fact(s) of the creation from the form of the presentation.

To make this separation is to remove the foundation for the Sabbath ordinance. As Bavinck said,

Granted: revelation can exploit all kinds and genres of literature, even the fable; but whether a given section of Holy Scripture contains a poetic description, a parable, or a fable, is not for us to determine arbitrarily but must be clear from the text itself. The first chapter of Genesis, however, hardly contains any ground for the opinion that we are dealing here with a vision or myth. It clearly bears a historical character and forms the introduction to a book, which presents itself from beginning to end as history. Nor is it possible to separate the facts [the religious content] from the manner in which they are expressed. For if with Lagrange, for example, the creation itself is regarded as a fact but the days of creation as form and mode of expression, then the entire order in which the creation came into being collapses and we have removed the foundation for the institution of the week and the Sabbath which, according to Exodus 20:11, is most decidedly grounded in the six-day period of creation and the subsequent Sabbath of God.¹¹

⁹ To Young’s comments we add those of Dr. Richard Longacre of the Wycliff Bible Translators. He made these comments on the unique stylistic character of Genesis one in his response to the PCA, “Report of the Creation Study Committee” 168.

“Nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible do we find an actor repeatedly referred to by a noun phrase which is not reduced to anaphora carried by the third person form of the verb. “And God did/said” occurs no less than thirty one times in chapter 1; we would not, e.g., tell the story with multiple mention of his name: “And Abraham did A. Then Abraham did B. Then Abraham did C. Then Abraham did D.” etc. The sonority and dignity thus attained by repeating the name of the Divine Actor have no parallel in any other Biblical Hebrew. Furthermore, the verb “be” *hayah* used in its special narrative form *wayehi* (“and there was”) occurs with unusual force, while in most places the verb “be” has a lower status in narrating. Early in creative process God says, “Let there be light... let there be a firmament... and let there be lights.” The fiat is exactly parallel in force to other commands such as “Let the waters be gathered together” and “let dry land appear.” Each divine proposal is answered by the corresponding feature springing into being *wayehi* or *wayehi ken* - “And it was (so).” Whether we want to call such diction and discourse structure a poem or not is somewhat arbitrary; it is certainly unusually elevated style and probably *sui generis*.

¹⁰ Young, *Studies*, 82-83.

¹¹ Bavinck, *Beginning*, 124. We also refer the reader to the extended exegetical study of Genesis 1 by Young, in which he details the arguments supporting this conclusion.

5. The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself.

What do other Biblical passages teach us about the creation account and the length of the days? It is especially important to the Christian that the rest of the Bible presents the entirety of Genesis 1-3 as historical. This implies necessarily that the days and their content being part of that creation account are days occurring within the flow of history and in historical sequence.

The Old Testament accepts and presents Genesis 1:1-2:4 as straightforward historical reporting. Many passages could be presented to support this assertion (e.g., cf., Psalm. 33:6, 8-9, 96:5, 148:1-6; Isaiah 37:16; Jeremiah 10:11-12, etc.), but Exodus 20:8ff. should certainly be seen as one of the clearest, if not the clearest, Old Testament passages teaching the historicity of the six in one pattern of the days as well as the historicity of the events and sequence of the days recorded in Genesis. As Young says,

The reality of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance is grounded upon the reality of the six days' work. If the seventh day does not correspond to reality, the basis for observance of the Sabbath is removed. Note the connection in Exodus 20:8ff., 'Remember the day of the Sabbath to keep it holy,' 'and He rested on the seventh day.'¹²

Young concludes his discussion of this matter by favorably affirming the following conclusions first advanced by G. Ch. Aalders:

- (1) In the text of Genesis itself, he affirmed, there is not a single allusion to suggest days are to be regarded as a form or mere manner of representation and hence of no significance for the essential knowledge of the divine creative activity.
- (2) In Exodus 20:11 the activity of God is presented to man as a pattern, and this fact presupposes that there was a reality in the activity of God which man is to follow.¹³

The report of the PCA Creation Study Committee argues that the New Testament teaches Genesis 1-3 is real history (of course, history that sets forth theology as well as facts). They detail this argument demonstrating this from the teachings of Jesus, Paul, Hebrew, Peter and James.¹⁴ In addition to what they indicate such verses as John 1:1, 3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17 and Revelation 4:11 might be added. They conclude their discussion as follows:

There is no doubt then, that the New Testament treats Genesis 1-3 as real history. This is hermeneutically decisive for the church, because we acknowledge the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture. But there is more than the historicity of Genesis 1-3 at stake in the New Testament's interpretation of these texts. The very structure of the covenant plan of redemption is found in Genesis 1-3. Bound up with the Biblical revelation in the first chapters of Genesis are the New Testament's teaching on the work of Christ as the eschatological Adam, and its implications for soteriology and the consummation, as well as ethical requirements for the institution of marriage and church order. History is not only born here but sovereignly determined by the prophetic Word of God.

In Genesis 1-3 Moses wrote a faithful, pristine version of the actual facts of history. Genesis 1-11 can not be historically rejected without destroying Christianity. These events and persons must be affirmed, whatever other differences we may entertain in the details of the exegesis of the "days" of Genesis 1.¹⁵

¹² Young, *Studies*, 46, n. 11.

¹³ Young, *Studies*, 47.

¹⁴ The following Scriptures are listed for the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 19:4-5; Mark 2:27; John 8:44), of Paul (Romans 4:6, 5:12-20, 8:20-22, 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 15:45-47; 2 Corinthians 6:16, 11:3, 9; Ephesians 4:22-24, 5:31; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Timothy 2:13-14), of Hebrews (3:7-4:13, 11:3), of James (1:13-17, 3:9) and of Peter (2 Pet. 3:5).

¹⁵ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 203 f.

5003 The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. *Our interpretation should flow from the original*
 5004 *Hebrew*. In this regard we should pay careful heed to the grammar, lexicography, and context of each
 5005 element of the passage. It is wise to use the various English translations but one must be careful not to
 5006 ignore the original language

5007
 5008 6. The history of interpretation is a very valuable aid in the process of producing an understanding of
 5009 Scripture.

5010 Thus, one should refer to the various Confessions, commentaries, as well as other works by
 5011 acknowledged and reliable scholars (e.g., John Lightfoot, B.B. Warfield, H. Bavinck, and E. J. Young).
 5012 As Young says, the work of the Hebrew scholars known as the Massoretes is also useful, although it is
 5013 acknowledged that they “were not infallible; but it [their interpretation displayed through the insertion
 5014 of accent marks] has its place.”¹⁶ Similarly, ancient versions also often play a significant role in helping
 5015 one to understand a passage, but, they too, are not to be a substitute for the Hebrew text of the Bible
 5016 itself.

5017
 5018 7. Word Studies should be undertaken in the light of the accepted procedures in Hebrew lexicography.

5019 Since no later than the early decades of the nineteenth century it has been established practice to see
 5020 Hebrew as a language that employs word roots having a general meaning.¹⁷ Specific meaning
 5021 applications are evidenced in the vowel patterns and nuanced by the context in which the resulting word
 5022 is used. Hence, one should move from the general meaning of a root to its specific connotation in given
 5023 usages and then to its specific use in a given instance.

5024
 5025 In summary, the above principles are set forth to suggest a proper set of interpretive principles in
 5026 seeking to understand the Biblical creation record. The foundational principle is that the Bible is the
 5027 inspired and inerrant Word of God. Especially in one’s interpretation of the creation record, he should
 5028 remember that Scripture is not a textbook on science. When it speaks in the sphere of scientific things,
 5029 it speaks phenomenologically (the way things appear to man) and in layman’s terms. On the other
 5030 hand, when does come into contact with the other sciences, Scripture sheds light on them and,
 5031 understood as a nonscientific textbook, is still an authority to which they must conform. Although
 5032 caution is advised in using the results of the various sciences, it should be acknowledged that they have
 5033 often helped gain another and better interpretation of various passages of Scripture and to elucidate and
 5034 confirm an already existing understanding. Fundamentally and normally, however, one should proceed
 5035 exegetically and not dogmatically, on the grounds of what Scripture itself says and not on the grounds
 5036 of things brought to Scripture, in determining the length of the days and other matters of creation.
 5037 Speaking to the realm of dogmatics, at least one of the leading theologians in the reformed world, Dr.
 5038 Hermann Bavinck, commented that not a single historical confession has made a fixed pronouncement
 5039 about the 6 day continuum (compare the comments in the introduction to this work). In pursuing the
 5040 exegesis of Scripture one should uphold the principles of the sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture.
 5041 The Biblical account is a literal historical presentation that concurrently conveys theological truth. In
 5042 dealing with the creation record one should be careful not to separate the fact(s) of the creation from the
 5043 form of the presentation. It is also very important in developing an exegesis to use what other Biblical
 5044 passages teach us about the creation account and the length of the days. This implies necessarily that
 5045 the days and their content being part of that creation account are days occurring within the flow of
 5046 history and in historical sequence. Our interpretation should flow from the original Hebrew. Also, the
 5047 history of interpretation is a very valuable aid in the process of producing an understanding of this
 5048 portion of Scripture. Finally, word studies, a most important aspect of understanding the days of
 5049 Genesis, should be undertaken in the light of the accepted procedures in Hebrew lexicography.

¹⁶ Young, *Studies*, 5.

¹⁷ Gesenius used such an approach to lexicography in his work *Hebräisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1810-1812).

5. THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

(Peter J. Wallace)

Some historical context may be useful for helping us understand what is happening in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (and throughout the evangelical churches) today. It is perhaps to be expected that much of the historical discussion has focused exclusively on the debate regarding the nature and length of the days of creation, which has led some to claim that the issue is of relatively recent origin (since around 1800). But this approach neglects the fact that the debate surrounding the nature and length of the days of creation participates in a much larger context: the discussion of the relationship between general and special revelation—or perhaps more accurately, the relationship between our understanding of creation and our understanding of Scripture. The very historical texts cited for their relevance to the discussion of the nature and length of the creation days frequently reveal far more about these larger issues than they do about what the fathers, schoolmen, or reformers thought about the days of creation.

CONSERVATISM AND CONCORDISM

Throughout the history of the church, two general principles have remained fairly constant: 1) conservatism: the church has tended to be very wary with respect to the science of the day; and 2) concordism: the church has tended to read Moses in terms of the current scientific paradigm—conservatively embraced. A few examples may be useful.¹

1. Four Elements?

Patristic and medieval commentators frequently interact with the science of the day, objecting to such philosophical views as the eternity of matter and the notion that the visible heavens are so perfect that there could only be one heaven.² But while rejecting these doctrines on exegetical grounds, they affirm the traditional Greek description of the universe consisting of four elements: earth, water, air, and fire.³ John of Damascus speaks of the four elements as follows:

¹ In addition to the primary sources listed below, there are several useful historical studies that look at various aspects the doctrine of creation in the history of the church. The two most useful works are Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 Through the Ages* (London: Thomas More Press, 1992). See also John Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Christopher B. Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Christopher B. Kaiser, *Creational Theology and the History of Physical Science* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). The closest thing to a full study of the history of the doctrine of creation that we could find is Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Edinburgh University Press, 1998), who focuses on the relative lack of a Trinitarian understanding of creation throughout much of the medieval and modern periods.

² Basil, *Hexaemeron* 3.3 NPNF Series 2, vol 7. Basil asks: “Are there two heavens? The philosophers, who discuss heaven, would rather lose their tongues than grant this. There is only one heaven, they pretend; and it is of a nature neither to admit of a second, nor of a third, nor of several others. The essence of the celestial body quite complete constitutes its vast unity. Because, they say, every body which has a circular motion is one and finite. And if this body is used in the construction of the first heaven, there will be nothing left for the creation of a second or a third. Here we see what those imagine who put under the Creator's hand uncreated matter; a lie that follows from the first fable....When grave demonstrations shall have upset their foolish system, when the laws of geometry shall have established that, according to the nature of heaven, it is impossible that there should be two, we shall only laugh the more at this elaborate scientific trifling....As for myself, far from not believing in a second, I seek for the third whereon the blessed Paul was found worthy to gaze. And does not the Psalmist in saying “heaven of heavens” give us an idea of their plurality?”

³ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 3.5. “The essence of fire is necessary for the world, not only in the economy of earthly produce, but for the completion of the universe; for it would be imperfect if the most powerful

5076 Our God Himself, Whom we glorify as Three in One, created the heaven and the earth
 5077 and all that they contain, and brought all things out of nothing into being: some He
 5078 made out of no pre-existing basis of matter, such as heaven, earth, air, fire, water: and
 5079 the rest out of these elements that He had created, such as living creatures, plants,
 5080 seeds. For these are made up of earth, and water, and air, and fire, at the bidding of the
 5081 Creator.⁴

5082
 5083 This understanding was nearly universal among Christian commentators from the early church through
 5084 the reformation,⁵ and remained the dominant paradigm throughout the seventeenth century among
 5085 Reformed theologians. George Walker, one of the Westminster Divines, followed the patristic and
 5086 medieval tradition by distinguishing between God's act of absolute/immediate creation in Genesis 1:1,
 5087 and God's acts of secondary/mediate creation in the six days. He further distinguished between the first
 5088 three days which narrate the creation of the four elements: fire (light), air (firmament), water (seas), and
 5089 earth (land); and the second three days which narrate the creation of things out of those elements
 5090 (noting that man's body is formed through mediate creation, while his soul is through immediate
 5091 creation).⁶ Only with the rise of Descartes' corpuscular theory did an alternative theory rival the four-
 5092 element theory of the Greeks, and by the early eighteenth century the Reformed tradition no longer
 5093 claimed that God had created the four elements on the first three days of creation.⁷

5094
 5095 The lesson of this example is how easy it is to read a certain scientific viewpoint into the Mosaic
 5096 narrative. It is very easy to suggest that the first three days of creation refer to the creation of earth,
 5097 water, air, and fire—and that therefore these must be the four elements of Greek philosophy. If the Bible
 5098 seemed to support the science of the day, the church proclaimed that the Bible taught that science.
 5099 Genesis 1 does not actually teach the four elements, but to those who were familiar with the four-
 5100 element theory, it certainly appeared to do so. Therefore the Christian church taught Greek physics from
 5101 the Bible for nearly 1700 years, and only stopped doing so when Descartes (and especially Newton)
 5102 demonstrated that the physical world was more complex.

5103
 5104

2. Round or Flat?

5105 There is a common myth that says that the church rejected Greek science and insisted that the world
 5106 was flat.⁸ It is true that some theologians taught this, but the actual discussion was more complex. It

and the most vital of its elements were lacking. Now fire and water are hostile to and destructive of each other. Fire, if it is the stronger, destroys water, and water, if in greater abundance, destroys fire. As, therefore, it was necessary to avoid an open struggle between these elements, so as not to bring about the dissolution of the universe by the total disappearance of one or the other, the sovereign Disposer created such a quantity of water that in spite of constant diminution from the effects of fire, it could last until the time fixed for the destruction of the world."

⁴ John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 2.5 NPNF Series 2 Vol 9. See also Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis* 1:14.1; 15.1 (in Andrew Louth, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2001] 8-9); Robert Grosseteste *On the Six Days of Creation: A Translation of the Hexaemeron* by C. F. J. Martin. (Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1996) 102-3.

⁵ Calvin speaks of the four elements in his *Commentary on Genesis*, 1.15.

⁶ George Walker, *The History of Creation* (London, 1641) 1-7.

⁷ The Cartesian method was defended at Leiden in 1670s, "and was generally supported by theological followers of John Cocceius (1603-69), who sought a purely scriptural basis of theology that complemented Descartes's procedure of separating natural philosophy from theology. In Calvinist Geneva, Francis Turretin (1623-87) took a positive interest in Descartes's natural philosophy and only objected to the application of his methodological doubt to theological issues." Christopher B. Kaiser, *Creationist Theology and the History of Physical Science: the Creationist Tradition from Basil to Bohr* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 220.

⁸ The myth is promoted in many textbooks, such as Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Fabric of the Heavens* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1961) 154.

does appear that the earliest fathers taught that the world was flat. Theodore of Antioch, who provided the first commentary on Genesis 1 around 180, declared that "by "earth" he means the ground and foundation, as by "the deep" he means the multitude of waters; and "darkness" he speaks of, on account of the heaven which God made covering the waters and the earth like a lid."⁹ This account follows the traditional Jewish understanding of the earth as a flat disc, established on the waters, with a solid dome, or tent, over it.¹⁰ This understanding seems to have prevailed in those areas of the early church that were least influenced by Greek thought. Therefore many Syrian commentators insisted that the earth was flat—such as Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ephrem the Syrian.¹¹ In the West, Cosmas Indicopleustes (early sixth century) argued for an oblong earth (east-west) surrounded by an ocean with Paradise beyond the ocean. Rejecting the geocentric spherical universe as a "fictitious hypotheses of the Greeks," Cosmas argued for the traditional understanding against the modern science of his day.¹² But from the fourth century a different strand of thought had developed, claiming that Greek science had demonstrated that the traditional view was not possible. By the end of the fourth century Basil of Caesarea had agreed with the Greeks that at least the heavens were spherical, and argues in such a way that it appears that a spherical earth would not be a problem for him.¹³ John of Damascus reported in the eighth century that the church had not yet agreed upon a single understanding of this matter. Some believed that the heavens were spherical and that the earth was a sphere at the center of the universe (following the concentric spheres of the Greeks), while others argued that the heavens were hemispherical, and sat as a dome over the earth. But it is interesting to note that John gives only philosophical reasons for a spherical heaven, while he provides exegetical reasons for a hemispherical heaven.¹⁴

During the middle ages, the church became convinced of the Ptolemaic model, and virtually every medieval commentator assumes the spherical nature of the heavens and the earth. In expounding the work of the six days of creation, Robert Grosseteste (d. 1235) explains the Mosaic text in terms of Ptolemaic science.¹⁵

It remains the case, however, that the Christian church had been originally reluctant to adopt the idea of a spherical earth, largely due to their reading of Scripture. Nothing in the Scriptures predisposed them to the spherical doctrine, and much of biblical teaching seems to assume a flat earth. Once again, the church was wary of importing contemporary science into their interpretation of Scripture—but once that science was accepted, it became incorporated into their exegesis so that Robert Grosseteste can write as though Scripture teaches the Greek spherical model.

3. Is the *Raqi'a* Solid?

While the Bible does not speak directly to the question of whether the earth is flat or spherical, there is much more material that deals with the nature of the *raqi'a* (generally translated firmament or expanse). All patristic and medieval commentators agree that whether spherical or hemispherical, there is a dome-like or tent-like structure in the heavens that keeps the waters above from flooding the earth.

⁹ Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus*, 2.13 (ANF vol 2)

¹⁰ See Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 through the Ages* (London: Thomas More Press, 1992) chapters 1 and 2. Whether or not Scripture actually portrays the world in this way, the rabbis were convinced that it did—and no one questioned that interpretation until the rise of Greek science.

¹¹ Jaki, *Genesis*, 82-3.

¹² Jaki, *Genesis*, 100.

¹³ Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 3.4.

¹⁴ John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 2.6.

¹⁵ Robert Grosseteste (bishop of Lincoln, c. 1230-1235), *Robert Grosseteste: On the Six Days of Creation: A Translation of the Hexaemeron* by C. F. J. Martin. Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1996—especially books III-V.

Theodore of Antioch (ca. 180) taught: "The heaven, therefore, being like a dome-shaped covering, comprehended matter which was like a clod. And so another prophet, Isaiah by name, spoke in these words: "It is God who made the heavens as a vault, and stretched them as a tent to dwell in.""¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea (ca. 375) goes further and describes the firmament as a "strong body." While refusing to define its physical structures, he points out that Scripture speaks of it as holding back the waters above it, so whatever its physical composition, it must be strong.¹⁷ With this basic premise, the entire patristic and medieval tradition is agreed. Some, with Augustine, could at times emphasize an allegorical meaning for the waters above the heavens,¹⁸ but even Augustine affirmed the literal existence of a solid firmament, holding back literal waters.¹⁹ John of Damascus nicely summarizes the various opinions regarding the nature of the *raqi'a*:

And its nature, according to the divine Basilus, who is versed in the mysteries of divine Scripture, is delicate as smoke. Others, however, hold that it is watery in nature, since it is set in the midst of the waters: others say it is composed of the four elements: and lastly, others speak of it as a fifth body, distinct from the four elements.²⁰

Since Scripture didn't explain its physical composition, there was considerable difference as to the nature of the *raqi'a*, but since Scripture affirmed its existence, the existence of a "strong body" in the heavens that held back the waters above was unquestioned until the reformation.

It was only in the sixteenth century that anyone challenged the traditional interpretation of the *raqi'a*. John Calvin was one of the first exegetes to suggest that the *raqi'a* was simply the air (what we now call the atmosphere). The entire Christian tradition had previously affirmed that the *raqi'a* was a firm boundary between the air and the waters above. Calvin was also one of the first to reject the traditional translation of *raqi'a* as *firmamentum*, claiming that since the *raqi'a* was simply the air above us, it should be translated "expanse" rather than "firmament." Calvin also rejected the entire Christian tradition by arguing that the water above the firmament was simply the clouds. Calvin's argument is instructive:

I know not why the Greeks have chosen to render the word οὐρανός, which the Latins have imitated in the term *firmamentum*; for literally it means expanse....Moses describes the special use of this expanse, 'to divide the waters from the waters,' from which words arises a great difficulty. For it appears opposed to common sense, and quite incredible, that there should be waters above the heaven. Hence some resort to allegory, and philosophize concerning angels; but quite beside the purpose. For, to my mind, this is a certain principle, that nothing is here treated of but the visible form of the world. He who would learn astronomy and other recondite arts, let him go elsewhere....[T]he waters here meant are such as the rude and unlearned may perceive....We see that the clouds suspended in the air, which threaten to fall upon our heads, yet leave us space to breathe....Since, therefore, God has created the clouds, and assigned them a region above us, it ought not to be forgotten that they are restrained by the power of God, lest, gushing forth with sudden violence, they should swallow us up: and especially since no other barrier is opposed to them than the liquid and yielding air, which would easily give way unless this word prevailed, 'Let there be an expanse between the waters.'²¹

¹⁶Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus*, 2.13.

¹⁷Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 3.4.

¹⁸Augustine, *Confessions*, 15.18.

¹⁹Augustine, *Confessions*, 15.16. Grosseteste also cites Augustine as saying: "'However it may be that those waters are there, and of whatever kind they may be, let us not have the slightest doubt that they are there. The authority of this text of Scripture is greater than that of all the power of human ingenuity.'" III.3.7—from the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, 2.5.

²⁰John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 2.6.

²¹*Commentary on Genesis* 1:6. It should be noted that in this interpretation of the *raqi'a* Calvin fails to deal effectively with Psalm 148:4, 8. In his *Commentary on the Psalms* 148:4, Calvin says: "He calls rains, *the waters above the heavens*. There is no foundation for the conjecture which some have made, that there are waters deposited above the four elements; and when the Psalmist speaks of these waters as

Calvin here insists that Scripture does not teach astronomy—and so therefore he is forced to take what astronomy teaches as a distinct discipline and demonstrate how Scripture is consistent with it. Since the astronomy of his day had begun to challenge the traditional interpretation of the *raqi'a* (as comets were seen passing through the supposedly “solid” spheres of the heavens) Calvin attempts to give an interpretation of the *raqi'a* that will be immune to scientific challenges.²² Calvin did not embrace the Copernican revolution (no Reformed theologian of note adopted the new perspective until the end of the seventeenth century), but his exegesis reflects the beginnings of the shift from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican understanding of astronomy.

During the seventeenth century, the question of the *raqi'a* continued to trouble the Reformed tradition. We have so far only found two of the Westminster Divines who commented upon the question, but both affirm something like Calvin’s view. George Walker claimed that most recent divines taught that the firmament is that airy region that “reacheth from this globe of the Earth and the Sea, to the starry heavens, even to the sphere of the Moon,” and that “this firmament is the place where waters are engendered in the clouds and which from thence descend and water the earth.”²³ John White concurs, suggesting that the meaning of *raqi'a* is only the spreading out, not the firmness, of the heavens. He claims that the term firmament sometimes means the whole aerial heavens up to the sphere of the stars, and sometimes means just the lower regions between the earth and the clouds.²⁴

The various advocates of this view offer no exegetical grounds for their claim that sometimes the firmament means the whole aerial heavens, and sometimes only the lower portion, but this is the only way to account for the firmament as the scientific worldview was in the middle of its shift from Ptolemy to Copernicus. Once again the Christian tradition is demonstrating both its basic conservatism, as well as its basic concordism. While maintaining a wary distance from the cutting edge of modern science, once a particular scientific perspective was embraced, the church usually attempted to demonstrate that Moses taught that particular scientific perspective.

4. Does the Earth Move?

While it was relatively painless to reinterpret the *raqi'a* in such a way as to allow astronomers the freedom to reject the solid dome theory, it was much more difficult for the Reformed to alter traditional interpretations of the stability of the earth. Prior to the sixteenth century, this was so obvious (both exegetically and scientifically) that few even bothered to defend it.²⁵ Calvin spoke of how “the heavens

being above, he clearly points at the descent of the rain. It is adhering too strictly to the letter of the words employed, to conceive as if there were some sea up in the heavens, where the waters were permanently deposited; for we know that Moses and the Prophets ordinarily speak in a popular style, suited to the lowest apprehension.” But if Psalm 148 calls rain “the waters above the heavens” in verse 4 (when dealing with praise from the heavenly realm) then why does verse 8 call upon “fire and hail, snow and mist” to praise God from the earthly realm? Calvin seems to be using his own scientific paradigm to interpret Genesis and Psalm 148, and fails to understand the scientific paradigm of Moses and the ancient Hebrews.

²²Calvin’s 1847 century translator, the Rev. John King, adds a footnote: “Doubtless Calvin is correct in supposing the true meaning of the Hebrew word to be *expanse*; but the translators of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and our own version, were not without reasons for the manner in which they rendered the word. The root, *rq'*, signifies, according to Gesenius, Lee, Cocceius, &c., to stamp with the foot, to beat or hammer out any malleable substance; and the derivative, *raqi'a*, is the outspreading of the heavens, which, ‘according to ordinary observation, rests like the half of a hollow sphere over the earth.’ To the Hebrews, as Gesenius observes, it presented a crystal or sapphire-like appearance. Hence it was thought to be something *firm* as well as *expanded*—a roof of crystal or of sapphire.” (p79)

²³George Walker, *The History of Creation* (London, 1641) 119.

²⁴John White, *A Commentary upon the First Three Chapters of Genesis* (London, 1656) 40. Turretin concurs wholeheartedly with this approach—see *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 5.6.8-11.

²⁵Among the few we have found who mention the stability of the earth in passing (as an obvious truth) are John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 2.6. Robert Grosseteste, *On*

5223 revolve daily, and, immense as is their fabric, and inconceivable the rapidity of their revolutions, we
 5224 experience no concussion—no disturbance in the harmony of their motion....How could earth hang
 5225 suspended in the air were it not upheld by God's hand? By what means could it maintain itself
 5226 unmoved, did not its Divine Maker fix and establish it?"²⁶
 5227
 5228 Geocentrism remained the dominant position in the Reformed tradition throughout the seventeenth
 5229 century. John White insisted upon the stability of the earth in 1656,²⁷ and Francis Turretin taught the
 5230 rotation of the sphere of the heavens around the earth as late as the 1670s.²⁸ It was only after
 5231 Newtonian physics made the Ptolemaic position look absurd that the Reformed tradition passed
 5232 wholesale into the heliocentric model. And given the fact that there is no passage of Scripture that refers
 5233 to the earth moving around the sun, there were plainly no exegetical arguments in favor of the
 5234 heliocentric model.
 5235
 5236

5. Where Does the Moon Get Its Light?

5237 Calvin claimed that the light of day one had been in "lucid bodies" which then coalesced into the sun.
 5238 While admitting that the moon borrows light from the sun, Calvin insisted that "the moon is a dispenser
 5239 of light to us. That it is, as the astronomers assert, an *opaque* body, I allow to be true, while I deny it to
 5240 be a *dark* body. For, first, since it is placed above the element of fire, it must of necessity be a fiery
 5241 body. Hence it follows, that it is also luminous; but seeing that it has not light sufficient to penetrate to
 5242 us, it borrows what is wanting from the sun. He calls it a 'lesser light' by comparison; because the
 5243 portion of light which it emits to us is small compared with the infinite splendour of the sun."²⁹
 5244 Because the text declares that the moon is a light (and because of his assumption of the Greek doctrine
 5245 of the four elements), Calvin insists that even though we cannot see it from earth, the moon *must* give
 5246 off light of its own. Here we see both the conservatism and the concordism of the Christian tradition at
 5247 work. Had he been a pure conservative, he would have rejected astronomy outright and insisted that the
 5248 moon gives off its own light. But Calvin recognized the value of astronomy, and insisted on
 5249 harmonizing the two:
 5250 For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known: it cannot be
 5251 denied that this art unfolds the admirable wisdom of God...Moses, therefore, rather
 5252 adapts his discourse to common usage. For since the Lord stretches forth, as it were,
 5253 his hand to us in causing us to enjoy the brightness of the sun and moon, how great
 5254 would be our ingratitude were we to close our eyes against our own experience?...Let
 5255 the astronomers possess their more exalted knowledge; but in the meantime, they who
 5256 perceive by the moon the splendour of the night, are convicted by its use of perverse
 5257 ingratitude unless they acknowledge the beneficence of God.³⁰
 5258
 5259

LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH

5260 For centuries biblical interpreters assumed that the Scripture spoke of a flat, unmoveable earth with a
 5261 solid dome/tent over it, along with a moon that gives off light of its own. No one ever questioned these
 5262 interpretations until new scientific views clashed with traditional biblical interpretations. As the case of
 5263 the four elements indicates, sometimes the church has made the wrong decision, aligning her
 5264 interpretation of Scripture with a false scientific theory.
 5265
 5266 What lessons should the church learn from this? First, both conservatism and concordism toward
 5267 science are deeply ingrained in the Christian tradition. Neither should be eliminated. But the tendency
 5268 to make Moses teach the received science of the day (whether Ptolemaic or Newtonian, whether
 5269 evolution science or creation science) is dangerous. As Stanley L. Jaki has suggested, the "greatest

the Six Days of Creation: A Translation of the Hexaemeron, 1.16.3.

²⁶Commentary on the Psalms 93:1; see also Commentary on Joshua 10:12, and Psalm 148:3.

²⁷John White, *A Commentary upon the First Three Chapters of Genesis* (London, 1656) 42.

²⁸Turretin, *Institutes*, V.vi.8.

²⁹Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1.15.

³⁰Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1.16.

peril” of our interpretation of Genesis 1 is “the ever recurring temptation to make that magnificent chapter appear concordant with the science of the day in order to assure it cultural respectability.”³¹ Rather than harmonize at the level of exegesis, we ought to refrain from bringing the scientific questions into the equation until after we have ascertained what the text says. We may debate whether Moses presents the *raqi’a* as a solid dome or simply as an expanse—or we may find that there is simply not enough information to be certain. But it is only after we have determined what Moses said that we should worry about the question of harmonization. We may decide that Moses speaks of the *raqi’a* in the same way the Scripture speaks of the sun rising or standing still (Joshua 10:12). It may be simply the language of ordinary observation. Or there may be a theological point to the *raqi’a*. Perhaps God wishes to communicate something to us about how the creation is a reflection of the heavenly temple—the earth is created as a tabernacle where God dwells with his people (see Isaiah 40:22; Psalm 78:69 and Psalm 150:1). In other words, harmonization should not happen at the point of exegetical theology, but at the point of systematic theology.

Second, in all of the historical debates regarding the relationship of science and theology, science has taken the lead in provoking theologians to reconsider their exegesis. The quest for harmonization with science has led theologians and pastors to reject the theories of a lucid moon and a solid *raqi’a*, and adopt theories of the four elements, a spherical earth, heliocentrism, and Day-Age and Gap theories of the creation days. In none of these cases did the transformation begin with exegetical work. Exegetical arguments have invariably followed from philosophical and scientific arguments that caused the church to reconsider her traditional exegesis.

Third, differences of opinion based upon shifting scientific paradigms have never been made a test of orthodoxy. Even though John of Damascus cites Scripture to show that the heavens are hemispherical (the flat earth position) and only cites philosophical reasons to show that the heavens are spherical (the round earth position), he claims that both views are within “the orthodox faith.”³² In the seventeenth century, the Reformed theological faculty of Leiden, following Gisbertus Voetius, declared the Copernican model of the universe to be contrary to Scripture,³³ but the Reformed churches wisely refused to follow their example.

The solution may be to refuse to allow modern scientific theories (whether astronomical, geological, or biological) any place in our exegetical work. Harmonization at the level of exegesis is potentially fatal to a true understanding of the biblical text. If we find that the Scripture portrays the sun as going around the earth, we should not seek to repress this, but acknowledge that this was the model of the biblical authors—which accurately expresses not only the ordinary observation of humanity, but the biblical teaching that the earth is the center of God’s purposes in the universe. Likewise, if we determine that the *raqi’a* is portrayed in Scripture as a solid dome or tent, then we should acknowledge that this was the common observation of ancient thinkers, and that it expresses the biblical teaching that the world was formed as a tabernacle where God is worshiped. In the same way, if we discover that the days of creation are portrayed as ordinary days, we should acknowledge that this expresses the biblical teaching that God’s pattern of six days of work and one day of rest forms the pattern for our labors. We should not seek to harmonize our *exegesis* with modern science. If we seek to harmonize exegesis with science, and make Moses teach our present scientific theories, then we put our grandchildren in the awkward position of having to alter our exegesis in order to fit the science of the twenty-second century. The place for harmonization is at the level of systematic theology. We may seek to demonstrate that Scripture is consistent with various scientific views, but we should not seek to make Scripture teach one particular scientific theory.

³¹ Jaki, *Genesis*, 31.

³² John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 2.6.

³³ Dillenberger, John, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988/1960) 101. Dillenberger points out that virtually all of the Lutheran and Reformed universities in Germany prohibited the teaching of the Cartesian system during the seventeenth century. By the end of the century, however, things were changing. Leiden became one of the leading centers of Cartesian philosophy by the 1670’s following the lead of Johannes Cocceius. See Christopher B. Kaiser, *Creational Theology and the History of Physical Science: the Creationist Tradition from Basil to Bohr* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 220.

5317

6. CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

5318 a) OF C. JOHN COLLINS AND THE ANALOGICAL VIEW

5319 (Leonard J. Coppes)

5320 Dr. C. John Collins is a proponent of what he terms the analogical view of the days of creation. What
5321 follows is primarily a presentation and evaluation of that view as he represents it.

5322

5323 There are two key items that help in understanding this view. The first is that Dr. Collins argues that
5324 the days of Genesis are to be understood like we understand the divine molding of Adam's body. The
5325 second item is to understand how he harmonizes his following two statements.

5326

5327 The days are God's work days, which need not be identical to ours: they are instead
5328 analogous. Part of our expression of his image is in our copying of his pattern for a
5329 work week.¹

5330

5331 That is to say, whatever length those six days are, and whatever the degree of overlap
5332 and topical arrangement, still they are "broadly sequential," and extend over some span
5333 of elapsed time.²

5334

5335 But before dealing with these two key items it would help to note that everyone agrees there are various
5336 analogies (figures of speech involving a comparison) in the Bible. Indeed, analogy is a rather broad
5337 word entailing many different kinds of comparisons, e.g., simile, metaphor, anthropomorphism, etc. In
5338 an effort to help focus thinking onto the "analogical view" of the days of creation the following
5339 additional definitional information is offered, viz., generally speaking, there are at least three relevant
5340 uses of "analogical."

5341

5342 1. Analogical: Van Til. Man's thought is analogical (compared) to God's (man is also
5343 epistemologically and ontologically analogical to God). Here God is not analogical to man, but
5344 man is analogical to God. In a sense, God is the original pattern, man is the imitator. So, the
5345 movement in the analogy is from God to man. With Van Til all of man's thought is analogical to
5346 God's thought. Hence, if language is called analogical, all of language is analogical because,
5347 foundationally speaking, all of man's thought is analogical to divine thought. So, if the language of
5348 the days of creation is called analogical in this sense, all the language of the Bible must be
5349 analogical and there is no difference between the history of the creation account and the history of
5350 Genesis or 1 Samuel.

5351

5352 2. Analogical: Collins. God's actions (his working, his work days) are presented in terms
5353 analogical (compared) to man's actions. In a sense, man is the original pattern and God is the
5354 imitator. The movement in the analogy is from man to God. This sense of analogical is seen in the
5355 description of God's molding Adam's body (Genesis 2:4), and in God's rest-refreshment on the 7th
5356 day (Exodus 31:17).

5357

5358 3. Analogical: Collins. Also, man's work week is sometimes said to be analogical
5359 (compared) to God's as presented in the creation days. The movement here is from God (the
5360 original pattern) to man (the copier). This usage is seen in the fourth commandment and the
5361 creation Sabbath (Hebrews 4), etc.

5362

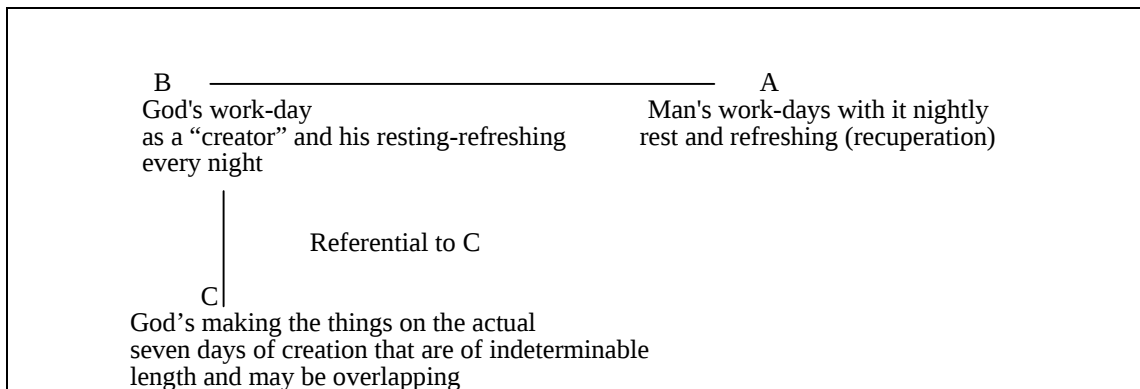
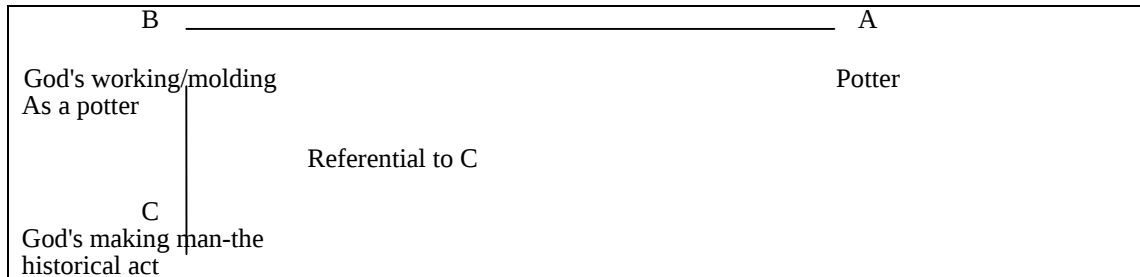
5363 Dr. Collins employs meaning 2 primarily but also suggests meaning 3 – in later work he calls this usage
5364 analogical. It seems that Dr. Collins presents God's days/week of Genesis (B) as analogical to reality
5365 (A), i.e., man's days/week. Again, he says that God's daily and Sabbatical rest (B) are analogical to
5366 man's rest (A).³

¹ Collins in Joseph A., Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall, *Did God Create in Six Days?* (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999) 139.

² Collins, *Create*, 142.

³ Collins, *Create*, 139.

Dr. Collins' use of "analogical" as definitional of the days of creation may be illustrated as below. The first chart offers a diagram of his conception (and the generally accepted conception) of Genesis 2:7, "God formed (Heb., molded as a potter molds clay) man out of the dust of the ground." The second chart seeks to diagram Dr. Collins' conception of an "analogical day."



It is important to understand that points B and C in the upper chart are not distinct in the account of the creation of Adam. They appear, as it were, in the same words. B is what is actually written, viz., God molded Adam's body, while C underlies what is actually written. Hence, it is correct to say that the record is analogical, to say it is literal, and to say it is historical. But to speak about the record with more clarity requires one somehow to separate between the analogy proper, or that part of the record that expresses the analogy, and the part of the record that is not, strictly speaking, analogical. To that end the chart diagrams B and C as two separate elements. Thus B is the analogy proper, viz., the word "molding," and C is the de-analogized referent, viz., God's "making" Adam's body. This example is easier to conceptualize than the example in the lower chart. In the first chart the molding is a restricted part or, more accurately, an aspect of a restricted part of the report. On the other hand, when Collins calls the days of creation analogical, part B entails a much larger portion of the report.

Collins' position on the days of creation is diagramed in the second chart. This diagram helps clarify what appears to be a tension between two statements about the nature of the creation days. The tension is seen in the following two sentences:

The days are God's work days, which need not be identical to ours: they are instead analogous. Part of our expression of his image is in our copying of his pattern for a work week.⁴

That is to say, whatever length those six days are, and whatever the degree of overlap and topical arrangement, still they are "broadly sequential," and extend over some span of elapsed time.⁵

⁴ Collins, *Create*, 139.

⁵ Collins, *Create*, 142.

Put together these statements say we are to pattern our work week after God's work week, and this means our days may have a certain degree of overlap and are to be only broadly sequential. This is an obviously impossible situation. Hence, the two statements are not talking about the same thing, but two different but related things. The first talks about analogical days (B) and the second talks about the referent (C). The first must be talking about six contiguous, non-overlapping days with a daytime of working and a nighttime of resting. These are the days of the analogy (B) and not the days of the referent (C). The second is talking about six days (periods of time) which may have a degree of overlap and are "broadly sequential."

It seems that he includes as analogy the night-time (the evening and morning), the entire day per se, the description of the method of God's working (he worked on something as a man works on something), and perhaps elements of what was produced. Thus, there is a lot of overlap between B and C. This means he can speak of B and C almost interchangeably and he does so without telling the reader which aspect, B or C, he is speaking about. This makes it very difficult to follow his presentation.

In addition to the definitional and conceptual difficulties of this analogical view there is a difficulty in trying to narrow down the issues involved. The following is an analysis those issues:

1. The question is not whether there is some biblical history *presented in a non-sequential form or that is thematically arranged* (e.g., Matthew) and that is intended to teach theology as well as actually present historical facts/events.
2. The question is not whether there are passages where *God's activity is compared to man's* with the full understanding that God did not do things this way (e.g., the molding of man, the rest-renewal of strength on the Sabbath day).
3. The question is not whether *man's activities are to be patterned after God's* (man's work week), i.e., whether God's week is archetypal or not.
4. The question is whether the days of Genesis are *analogical days similar in nature* to God's analogical rest-refreshing (Exodus 31:17) and his molding Adam's body (A in the chart above), i.e., are the days (not the activities reported in them) truly historical days (C) or days figuratively depicting God's work-day (B) by presenting God who had worked and then rested-recuperated (got tired and then was refreshed-recuperated). Note: it is inconsistent with Genesis 2:1-2; Exodus 20:11 and Hebrews 4 to use the Sabbath resting of God (Exodus 31:17) as an explanation of what the nights of Genesis intend to describe (i.e., both the "creation" resting and days are analogical). Collins' presentation of the distinction between B and C above is very unclear as is the criterion (or criteria) used to determine the difference(s) between the two. Hence, the position as presented is confusing. Are these days *reports* of the how and what God did (C), or do they "*represent* (B) periods of God's" activity? Collins seems to want it both ways, and he does not offer a clear explanation of just how the two elements work together. We suggest that charts above provide that clearer explanation. Also, the analysis that follows below demonstrates that the days are not analogical.
5. It is a question whether Collins makes his case supporting *the comparison of the kind of rest man gets nightly and weekly and the biblical report of the kind of rest God entered on the seventh day*. Just because Exodus 31:17 depicts God as experiencing rest-refreshing-recuperation on the creational Sabbath it does not follow that this is an explanation of God's sabbatical rest. Hebrews 4 argues that the Genesis account intends itself to be understood as reporting God's rest in terms of his utter cessation from creating activity just as it is described in Genesis 2. In John 5 Jesus argues that God's rest continues until his day. Together, the two passages demonstrate that God's sabbatical rest is once-for-all cessation from the initial creational activity but not from the on-going exercise of providential maintenance of the creation. These two passages are the *cruxi interpreti* for Genesis 2. Also, if Exodus 31:17 is meant to be understood as interpretative rather than as "applicative," then how did the OT saints understand that they were to imitate God and enter into His eternal rest – as Hebrews 4 argues they did?
6. It is a question whether Collins *establishes his case in identifying the nighttimes of the creation days with normal nighttimes, or with nighttimes at all*. Just because there were nighttimes it does not follow that God is depicted as needing rest every day of the creation. Collins needs more evidence for his conclusion than his assertion that it is true. Moreover, the exegetical material available (e.g., evening and morning, day and night, etc.) argues that there were no nighttimes at all.

7. The question is whether the “days” are historical days (C) or simply figurative or analogical days (B) referring to historical days. Is it *appropriate to separate the form and the content* in defining the word “day” even to the extent this view does? This question is especially relevant in view of Exodus 20:11 where no such separation appears.⁶ On the contrary, as argued in this book, throughout the Bible the days of Genesis are not seen as analogical but as straightforward historical days.
8. The question is whether *the comparison between God’s week and man’s week in the fourth commandment* is a comparison between two historical things or between a historical thing (man’s week) and an analogical-literary non-historical thing (God’s analogical days and week).
9. Is it correct to say *there might be logical rather than chronological-historical criteria for grouping events into a particular “day?”* What are the logical criteria in view here? What logic underlies the grouping of one event on the first day, two events on the second day (God made the firmament and divided the waters), three events on the third day (God gathered the waters, made the dry land appear, and made the earth bring forth plants), etc. Now while some of these events may seem to be logically interdependent (the firmament and the separation of the waters above and below) they are not necessarily so. If God could separate logically between light and the light-bearers, why could He not separate logically between the creation of the dry land and the making of the plants or between the making of the firmament and the placing of the waters above and below it (could not the waters be separated without a firmament, i.e., they could be separated by land)? Logically, the earth is the plant-producer just as the lights are the light-producers. The only reasonable criterion for placing the various “events” in their respective days is historical not logical – this seems to be especially evident in the case of the creation of the light. Also, the Babylonian creation story presents the same order of “creative” events as Genesis 1 does. Does not this support the position that this is an historical grouping, or, at least, a literary grouping rather than a logical grouping? Surely, this argues that Collins’ method of interpreting the events of Genesis 1 is erroneous.
10. The question is also whether all the activities in “God’s work days” are only reformative and organizational, and whether there is *ontological origination* on some of those days (e.g., “God said let there be light, and there was light,” and “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”). Mr. Collins denies ontological origin in Genesis 1:3. But this seems to be contrary to the text which reads “let there be light” and not “let the light appear” (or something else). How can this mean anything other than there was no light (there was only darkness), God commanded that there be light, and there was light? Surely, this clearly is a matter of ontological origination. God called into being that which did not previously exist. The same argument can be made for the origin of the plants and animals. They did not exist, God commanded their existence, and then they did exist. Thus, a new kind of being originated. This appears to be the underlying proposition of 1 Corinthians 15:39-40. For Collins, “The days of the Genesis account are not a cosmogony, an account of the origin of the universe. This is the subject of verse 1 only. The rest of the account tells us how the earth was formed and made and shaped for human habitation.”⁸
11. The question is whether the *activities reported on the six days were literally accomplished as recorded* (even if one assumes Collins’ explanation of the rest-refreshing at the end of each day), i.e., was light made (using Collins’ language) apart from the light-bearers, and was it made on a separate day? Is the difference between the light of day one and the lights of day four actual or logical? Light on the first day is presented as existing without the present day light producers and without an earth formed distinctly from the rest of the created material (the waters and the deep). The lights of the fourth day were those agents that produced light for this earth. It is not just that light existed on the first day, but the biblical presentation speaks of light in a certain context. So, on the first day God is said to work on light in one context and without a stipulated function beyond shining in the darkness and making it daytime and on the fourth day he is said to work on

⁶ Bavinck, *In The Beginning*, 124.

⁷ Young, *Studies*, 43-76.

⁸ Collins, *Create*, 139. On the other hand, even though Mr. Collins explicitly limits cosmogony (the origin of things) to Genesis 1:1, in a personal note to this author, he affirms ontological origination in Genesis 1:27.

lights in a completely different context and with a completely different function. Therefore, it is not simply a question of light and lights, but it is a question of the unfolding progression of the created universe. *Is the entire presentation of the progress and unfolding* of the universe analogical? Does this mean then that it is also historical? But if it is historical then what kind of analogy is this progression? What is it analogous to? We maintain that the asking of the question implies an answer. This presentation as a whole is analogous to nothing. It is straightforward history. The Babylonian creation “story” is myth but it presents the same progression of events—although it is garbled history. The Bible is ungarbled, nonmythological and non-analogical history. Where the Babylonian “story” virtually lists the events recorded in the Bible, the Bible not only lists but also gives the true and correct order, grouping, and context. Thus we argue that one cannot separate the order of the days and the order of the activities recorded on them without violating the Scripture itself and ignoring the Babylonian parallel vis-à-vis the order of the events.

12. The question is whether the *activities assigned to the respective days occurred as separate events on the days assigned* or is it possible that some days “*overlap*” with other days. Collins grants that the days are presented as, and intended to be understood as separate, contiguous and consecutive days—a record of what actually happened in space and time. To this end he states that the evening and morning of the coda refrains mark out ordinary nighttimes. So, although the days are narrated consecutively and contiguously (B) this does not say whether the days are distinct or overlapped and whether the events assigned to them occurred within them (C). He separates the form of the presentation from the content of the presentation. Why would one conclude that the days might not be contiguous and separate? Is it not that one is not satisfied that the events reported happened on separate “days?” Again, what kind of logical arrangement can one devise to explain the grouping of the days and the separation of the creative events? Collins suggests nothing specific. But it does seem rather compelling that the only logical explanation of the separation of the days and the grouping of the events, is that this is the way it actually happened. This is history not literary art or theological-logical grouping (as in the case of Matthew’s grouping of some the matters of Jesus’ life).
13. The question is whether or not the days of Genesis tell *us how life and the diversity of life originated on this planet*. According to Collins, what the Bible appears to clearly state about the origin of life and the diversity of life on this planet, is not what the Bible intends to say. This is unacceptable. It makes the historical presentation of Genesis 1, in part as a whole, no more than a literary or theological presentation. Two especially clear arguments against Collins’ interpretation are the creation of light on day one and the plants on day three. If the proposition that there is no ontological origination on the six days is shown to be false, and it is, then there is no reason to doubt that the statements about the origin of life and the diversity of life on this planet might also be statements about ontological origin.

The analysis offered above may be compared to the following series of citations from Collins’ article in *Did God Create in Six Days?*⁹ so the reader may see the context of Collins’ statements. Various explanatory comments and summary statements are inserted without quotes. Also, selected remarks from the report of the PCA committee on the days of creation are attached toward the end.

THE DAYS ARE INTENDED TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS ORDINARY DAYS

To begin with, we ask, ‘what is the significance of the terms of the refrain, evening followed by morning, in the ancient Hebrew culture?’ The answer is simple: they are the end-points of the ‘night-time’ ...And the importance of that to the Hebrew was that the night-time was the worker’s daily rest.¹⁰

⁹ Collins, *Create*, 131-51.

¹⁰ Collins, *Create*, 137.

5580 THE DAYS ARE ANALOGICAL, NOT LITERALISTIC DAYS¹¹

5581 Collins, calls his view “analogical.” He says that much of what is recorded in the creation account is
 5582 “analogical.” He explains how God intends the reader to take the language not literalistically but
 5583 analogically (literally).¹²
 5584

5585 Thus, God’s rest on His Sabbath day means He ceased (Exodus 20:11), rested (32:17), and got
 5586 refreshed (31:17). Man works six day then ceases, rests, and is refreshed (Exodus 23:12). “... *these*
 5587 *terms indicate getting physical rest because people and animals get tired (remember, these are*
 5588 *agrarians!). But when applied to God these terms are not to be taken “literalistically” as if God got*
 5589 *tired and needed rest... it is of course analogical (cf., Isaiah 40:28-31; God cannot get tired).”¹³*

5590 Once it has become clear to the reader that God’s Sabbath is not an “ordinary” day,
 5591 and that God’s rest is not the same but analogous to ours, he will go back and read the
 5592 passage looking for other instances of analogy. Then he will see what the significance
 5593 of the refrain [it was morning and it was evening...] is: it too is part of an
 5594 anthropomorphic presentation of God; he is likened to the ordinary worker, going
 5595 through his rhythm of work and rest, looking forward to his Sabbath. The days are
 5596 God’s work days, which need not be identical to ours¹⁴; they are instead analogous.¹⁵
 5597 Part of our expression of his image is in our copying of his pattern for a work week.¹⁶
 5598 The reader will then put the notices about God “seeing” that something was good (e.g.
 5599 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) in this category (as if God were limited, but we know he is
 5600 not), he will also not be surprised by similar phenomena in 2:7 (God “formed” like a
 5601 potter does), 22 (God “built” the woman).¹⁷
 5602

5603 THE DAYS ARE NOT A COSMOGONY

5604 The days of the Genesis account are not a cosmogony, an account of the origin of the universe. This is
 5605 the subject of verse 1 only. The rest of the account tells us “how the earth was formed and made and
 5606 shaped for human habitation.”

5607 Now we can proceed to a greater level of integration. We begin by asking, what is the
 5608 communicative purpose of Genesis 1:1-2:3? Factors we have already noticed that will
 5609 help us to answer this question *include the fact that cosmogony as such is not its*
 5610 *purpose, since the origin of the whole show (the cosmogony, the ontological origin of*
 5611 *things) gets dispensed with in one verse, which is background at that (v. 1). We also*
 5612 *note that, as far as the grammar is concerned, the “first day” of the account need not be*
 5613 *the first day of the universe. That is, the Israelites, who knew well that the universe is*

¹¹ Analogical is understood as being literally what the Bible teaches, just as a parable is literally what the Bible teaches.

¹² Collins, *Create*, 138-39.

¹³ Collins, *Create*, 138.

¹⁴ PCA, n. 114, p. 169, “By “identical” is meant 24 hours long, following in direct contiguous sequence. By “analogous” is meant that they have a point of similarity, with a basis in our experience, by which we can understand something about God and his historical activity.”

¹⁵ This sentence appears to be a little misleading. It certainly does confuse the reader. Collins appears to be arguing that God’s work days are to be understood like he explains God’s resting. Just as God does not rest so as to get refreshed, God did not put in a length of time in working as we work. Rather this is an anthropomorphic or analogical description of God’s activity in bringing formlessness and void into a state of organization and inhabitation.

¹⁶ Whereas God has just been compared to man (He is pictured as resting every evening and on the Sabbath), now man is being compared to God (man needs to copy God’s “analogical” week).

¹⁷ Collins, *Create*, 138.

5614 enormous (cf. Psalm 147:4-5; Isaiah 40:25-26), would also have recognized that the
 5615 universe as a whole is not the focus of this passage. This comes out clearly as well
 5616 when we recall our observations about the narrowing to “sky” and “earth” (“this
 5617 terrestrial ball”), and about the peak as the focus of interest at 1:27.¹⁸

5618
 5619 THE ACCOUNT IS INTENDED TO BE TAKEN AS HISTORICAL

5620 The account is “historical.”

5621 ...we mean what the word means in ordinary language, namely ‘a record of something
 5622 that *the author wants us to suppose actually happened in the space-time world that we*
 5623 *experience,*’ then we need have no hesitation in calling this narrative ‘historical.’ ...
 5624 “At the same time we should acknowledge that in saying the account is “historical” we
 5625 *have not settled every question we might ask about whether, for example, things are*
 5626 *narrated in the order in which they occurred,* or whether we have here a “complete”
 5627 description, or whether we must apply a “literalistic” hermeneutic to the account. If
 5628 such matters were not within the author’s intent, we would not be co-operating with
 5629 him in pressing his words for such purposes.¹⁹

5630
 5631 This is not ordinary Hebrew language ... “exalted prose.” The language here is
 5632 stylized, very broad-stroke, and majestic in its simplicity (neither sun nor moon get
 5633 their ordinary names, nor are any animal species named properly either; and we find
 5634 unusual words such as “extended surface” and the unusual likening of the heavenly
 5635 luminaries to lamps); it is also rigidly patterned. *The anthropomorphic description of*
 5636 *God’s activity also contributes to these effects.*

5637
 5638 *These features do not mean that we have non-referential language,* or that the events
 5639 are in some way “supra-historical”; but they do urge caution in how we would
 5640 correlate the statements here with how we would describe things (especially since we
 5641 tend to describe things for other communicative purposes than the one here).²⁰

5642
 5643 THE DAYS ARE ALSO ANALOGICAL DAYS

5644 The days are analogical days (figurative nonliteral days) that refer to the sequential periods of God’s
 5645 working activities.²¹

5646 Several questions remain. The first is, what do we make of Exodus -- which many take
 5647 as implying that the creation week was not only the first “week” of the creation, but in
 5648 fact that it was of identical length to the week we are familiar with?

5649
 5650 Exodus 20:11 is the most explicit reflection on the matters under consideration here....
 5651 [Collins offers the following paraphrase to demonstrate his interpretation.]
 5652 (8) Remember the day of the Sabbath, by keeping it holy.
 5653 (9) *In the space of six days* you are to cultivate and *work* all your labor,

¹⁸ Collins, *Create*, 139-40.

¹⁹ A very good example of this idea is the way the Bible reports the way God formed man from the dust of the ground and how we in understanding this report, ordinarily “sort out” the historical from the figurative.

²⁰ Collins, *Create*, 141.

²¹ Because the days are analogical-figurative in nature (cf., B in the chart above) it is not important (with reference to C above), nor communicated in the account, exactly what occurred on the various days (there may be overlapping of the work-events reported) or how long the days were and whether they were literally consecutive (they may have overlapped). Because they are analogical (B), on the other hand, they do refer to what God did (C). Hence, the work-events (C) truly occurred, they occurred roughly in the days to which they are assigned and in the order presented (although there may be some logical, rather than chronological, ordering or selection principle at work).

(10) and the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. You shall not work any labor: you and your son and your daughter, your man-servant and your maid-servant and your livestock, and your resident alien who is in your (town's) gates.
 (11) For in the space of six days the Lord *worked on the sky and the land*, the sea and all that is in them; and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the day of the Sabbath and made it holy.

We must make several notes on the italicized words: (1) The traditional "in six days" (vv. 9, 11) is an adverbial accusative of extent of time, "course of six days" or "in the space of six days." (2) *It is misleading to render the verb 'sh in v. 11 as "made," as our versions commonly do (and thus imply ontological origination)*: instead, this verb in v. 11 looks back to the same verb in v. 9, "in the space of six days you are to cultivate and *work* all your labor." Hence I have rendered it "worked on" in v. 11, because the commandment has as its rationale the idea that our work follows the divine pattern (and thus this has nothing to do with ontological origination). (3) To render hshshmy and h'rts as "heaven" and "earth" is also misleading, since these words are narrowed to "sky" and "land" in the Genesis 1 account itself (as noted above). (4) *This text in no way sets up any identity between the length of our work-week and the length of God's; instead, the whole operates on the principle of analogy: our work and rest are analogous to God's, as observed already.*

This in its turn helps to confirm what most see in the Genesis 1 account, namely the existence of sequence and of extent of time. *That is to say, whatever length those six days are, and whatever the degree of overlap and topical arrangement, still they are "broadly sequential," and extend over some span of elapsed time.* The sequentiality comes from the combined effect of the use of the wayyiqtol tense for the main narrative events, and from the march of the numbered days. This means that we should be content with the view *that the activity of the first and fourth day do not involve ontological origination of the principle of light and of the light-bearers respectively, and hence we need not find them as being somehow out of sequence (as the framework view argues).*

Another question which needs answering comes from the fact that the passage invites us to read it as "historical" (see above), and at the same time the level of description lends itself to a moderate-to-low level of concordance with what we today call "science." What, then, is the kind of concordance we may expect? *If we want to put it bluntly, what is a truth-claim the text makes that we could "test"? In my view it will come primarily in the kinds of divine action involved: God is active in Genesis 1:1-2:3, both in his upholding of the things that he made along with their properties ("ordinary providence" and "second causes"), and in producing special supernatural effects as well. This comes out in two ways especially: in the presence of the Spirit of God in 1:2 (a supernatural agent) and in the places where God expresses a wish which is then fulfilled (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). In my judgment this indicates that we should expect there to be detectable gaps in the created economy, because of the existence of what we may call "intelligent design." For example, the capacities people have by virtue of the image of God are not properly explicable as the "natural" (or even "ordinary providential") outgrowth of any capacities in the lower animals: they are instead the result of the supernatural formation of man (Genesis 1:26-27). Other gaps are: the origin of the universe; the origin of life; and probably the origin of the diversity of life on this planet. It is these supernatural events which God worked in space and time, which have left their mark on the creation, and invite everyone to receive their testimony to the Maker.²²*

²² Using the chart at the beginning to understand analogical days, leads to the conclusion that these days (B) are only referential, i.e., they do not tell us about the ontological origin of things and even in what they report as being worked on they leave gaps in the report. How then do we know about the things that exist? We know about such things not from the creation record but from reasoning on the basis of the assumption of intelligent design. How do we know about the origin of life? Not from the record itself but from reasoning on the basis of the principle of the intelligent design of the universe as we know it. Similarly, the record probably tells us nothing about the origin of the universe (this is addressed in Genesis 1:1), and nothing directly about the ordering in of the diversity of life on this planet.

5706
5707 I summarize my results: exegesis favors the conclusions that (1) Genesis 1:1-2 are
5708 background, representing an unspecified length of time prior to the beginning of the
5709 first "day"; (2) the six "days" represent periods of God's special ("supernatural")
5710 activity in preparing and populating the earth as a place for humans to live, love, work,
5711 and worship; (3) the "days" are God's work-days, which are analogous, and not
5712 necessarily identical, to our work days, structured for the purpose of setting a pattern
5713 for our own rhythm of rest and work; (4) length of time, either for the creation week,
5714 or before it or since it, is irrelevant to the communicative purpose of the account. (Fnt.
5715 30, *By this interpretation we are also indifferent to the possibility that, for example,*
5716 *some days overlap with other days; or that there might be logical rather than*
5717 *chronological criteria for grouping events into a particular "day."*) This position is
5718 compatible with old earth creationism, but does not require it. It is definitely not
5719 compatible with naturalistic theories of origins (or theistic evolutionary ones for that
5720 matter) because of its stance on God's action.²³
5721

5722 PCA Report²⁴ lists the six conclusions descriptive of the analogical view of the days of creation (1-4 are
5723 the conclusions of Collins in *Did God Create in Six Days?* ; number 5 is what Collins says on p. 142 of
5724 the article cited above, & 6 is virtually what he says on p. 137).

5725 3. The refrain of the six days ("and there was evening, and there was morning, the nth
5726 day"), when seen from within the culture of Moses, marks the end-points of the night-
5727 time (cf. Numbers 9:15-16), which is the daily rest for the worker (Psalm 104:22-23;
5728 cf. Genesis 30:16; Exodus 18:13) and looks forward to the weekly Sabbath rest.

5729
5730 5. The use of the Hebrew narrative tense and the march of the numbered days in
5731 Genesis 1, along with the accusative of duration in Exodus 20:11 ("over the course of
5732 six days") all favor the conclusion that the creative events were accomplished over
5733 some stretch of time (i.e. not instantaneously), and that the days are (at least broadly)
5734 sequential.

5735
5736 6. The indivisibility of Genesis 2:4, as well as its content, points to the traditional
5737 conclusion that Genesis 2:5-25 are an amplification only of the sixth "day" of the
5738 creation week, the order of the "creating" (perhaps the grouping of events into a
5739 particular "day" demonstrates the logical rather than the chronological organization,
5740

5741 Summary explanation of what Collins says above :

5742 From one perspective, the communicative intent (what the author intends for us to understand) is to tell
5743 us the history of the matters being treated (C in the chart above). Collins says, that by history "we mean
5744 what the word means in ordinary language, namely (C) 'a record of something that the author wants us
5745 to suppose actually happened in the space-time world that we experience,' then we need have no
5746 hesitation in calling this narrative 'historical.'"

5747
5748 From another perspective the communicative intent focuses primarily on the kind of work God did and
5749 the fact that He did it (also C), viz., He worked on pre-existing stuff to make it into what He intended.
5750 The account of the six days does not tell us about ontological origins (this is recorded in Genesis 1) but
5751 about the remolding working of God as he worked on the stuff which was *toho wabohu* (formless and
5752 void), Genesis 1:2.

5753
5754 The six-day "creation account" is history reported analogically (B), i.e., in the format and presentation
5755 of a figure(s) of speech, e.g., when God created man he "formed" (like a potter works on clay) him out
5756 of the dirt—the description of God doing what a potter does is an analogy (God's working is compared
5757 to a man's working). In this analogy the historical work of God is not set aside (C), but it is reported in
5758 the form (at least in part) of an analogy (B). This report is clearly referential in the sense that it refers to
5759 something God actually did in space and time (C).

²³ Collins, *Create*, 141-44. Collins affirms that Genesis 1 does not settle the matter of the order of the things narrated, or the "completedness" of the description, or whether one should apply a literalistic hermeneutic. It does not tell us about the origin of the things described on the six days – all is analogical and not to be understood as straightforward historical reporting.

²⁴ PCA, "Report of the Creation Study Committee" 171.

5760 Analogical means that much in the account is to be understood as a figure(s) of speech—some parts of
5761 it are anthropomorphic (B). For example, God’s rest on his work-days (the six days of creation) was not
5762 literally a rest because this would imply that He got tired and we know God cannot get tired and needs
5763 no such rest. Hence, since the days are analogical (B), they are not to be taken as straightforward
5764 historical reporting; the days tell us nothing about the length of time it took God to accomplish His
5765 various tasks (C). Moreover, some considerations (an analogy points to something real) tell us that the
5766 acts or works of God were accomplished within time and space and were (at least broadly) sequential
5767 (an analogy does not tell us specifically what happened) (C). Other elements that tell us about the
5768 history (C) are “the use of the Hebrew narrative tense and the march of the numbered days in Genesis 1,
5769 along with the accusative of duration in Exodus 20:11” (point 5 above of the PCA report). “Days” refer
5770 to periods of time but unspecified in length (C)—it is not the communicative intent of the author to
5771 address the question of “length.” Nor do the works recorded in the “days” (B) tell us (C) the origin of
5772 the capacities people have, the origin of the universe (this is said in Genesis 1:1), the origin of life,
5773 probably the origin of the diversity of life on this planet, and about the ontological origin of the “things”
5774 produced by God’s working on the original stuff.

5775 b) OF THE ANALOGICAL VIEW OF THE DAYS OF CREATION.

5776 (Leonard J. Coppes)
5777 HERMENEUTICALLY:

5778 A. Is discourse analysis a proper hermeneutical tool consistent with how the Bible understands
5779 itself and, in particular, how it understands Genesis 1-2? Where is a case of the Bible
5780 understanding the creation account analogically (other than Exodus 20—this passage, moreover, is
5781 clearly does not understand the creation days analogically)? Analogically here refers to Collins’
5782 work, cf., the appendix on the work of Dr. C. John Collins.

5783
5784 B. In its use of Exodus 20 to define “analogical” it teaches that (a) God’s creation days are
5785 patterned after man’s and (b) man’s days are patterned after God’s. This is circular and, therefore,
5786 false reasoning—how can man’s week be patterned after God’s week, if God’s week is a figurative
5787 and not a literal week? This interpretation makes Exodus 20 teach that we are to work six days
5788 and rest a seventh even though God did not really do this, i.e., he did not create the world in six
5789 days and rest a seventh. Hermeneutically, each passage is used as the *crux interpretum* of the other,
5790 cf., appendix just referenced.

5791
5792 C. It wrongly separates the form and content of the creation account – although not thoroughly
5793 (but neither does the framework view make a thorough distinction). Thus it teaches that what God
5794 says in the creation account (the form) is not what he is teaching (the content) – the true teaching
5795 about the creation lies behind what is actually written. In the creation account God is not teaching
5796 that there were seven distinctly contiguous days of creation, nor that the events recorded as
5797 occurring on a particular day(s) actually occurred on that day. Nor is God teaching us anything
5798 about the ontological origin of anything in the six days (except the origin of man’s soul) even
5799 though the text states, e.g., that there was only darkness and God said let there be light, and there
5800 was light, etc.

5801
5802
5803 D. It argues that the days of Genesis (i.e., the form in which the days are presented) are analogical
5804 days whereby man’s days and week (man’s ordinary days and week) are the pattern for God’s days
5805 (the actual days of creation referred to by the form of the presentation) and that God’s days (the
5806 form of presentation) are the pattern for man’s week and days (our ordinary week and days). This is
5807 very confusing and illogical (circular reasoning). As in the case of the exegesis of Exodus 20, such
5808 reasoning makes God’s analogical days and week patterned after man’s non-analogical days and
5809 week and man’s non-analogical days and week patterned after God’s analogical days. Man’s days
5810 are the prototype and the application for God’s days and God’s days are the prototype and the
5811 application for man’s days.

5812
5813 E. Understanding the creation days as analogical days runs contrary to Genesis 2:2-3 as it is
5814 explained by Hebrews 4:3, 10. These are the *crucis interpretum* and not Exodus 31:17.

5815
5816 THEOLOGICALLY:

5817 A. This view denies ontological origination on and in the 6 days (with the exception of the origin
5818 of man’s soul). This is contrary to Genesis 1:3, 11f. etc.

5819
5820 B. It violates the perspicuity of Scripture by proposing two differing and superimposed structures
5821 in the seven days of creation. The two structures are the analogical presentation of the creation days
5822 (a literary creation) and the archetypal presentation of God’s week as a pattern for man’s week (a
5823 heavenly reality).

5824
5825 C. It violates the perspicuity of Scripture by the use of discourse analysis, an approach not
5826 generally seen heretofore. More importantly, the use of this hermeneutical approach introduces
5827 novel exegeses of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20.

5828
5829 D. It violates the sufficiency of Scripture by not allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, e.g., it
5830 does not allow Hebrews 4 to govern the understanding of the seventh day of creation.

5831

5832 EXEGETICALLY:

- 5833 A. It denies that the text tells us how life and the diversity of life came to be on this planet. Is the
5834 text still history when it claims to report these very matters?
5835
- 5836 B. It affirms that there is a logical criteria for grouping the events, but this affirmation does not
5837 hold up under examination. Indeed, the best criterion is historical reality.
5838
- 5839 C. It denies all ontological origination on the creation days. How is this exegetically consistent
5840 with what the text says when its adherents hold that the creation record is historical?
5841
- 5842 D. It affirms an overlapping of the creation days and that the creation report is still a historically
5843 accurate report?
5844
- 5845 E. It denies the events reported on certain days happened on those days. How is this exegetically
5846 consistent with its affirmation that the creation record still is properly history or historically
5847 accurate?
5848
- 5849 F. It falsely compares man's nightly rest and God's nightly rest on each of the six days and on the
5850 seventh day.
5851
- 5852 G. It falsely compares the nighttimes of the creation days with man's ordinary nighttimes.

5853
5854 c) OF THE FRAMEWORK VIEW

5855 (Leonard J. Coppes)
5856 HERMENEUTICALLY:

5857 A. It employs a hermeneutic (not unlike form criticism) which finds patterns in the text and that yields
5858 an interpretative approach that ends up ignoring what the text actually says. For example:

- 5859 1. Day four – the lights are said to give light on the earth and to rule over times and seasons
5860 (17-18). One must ignore or devalue this explicit ruler-ruled order to affirm that the text
5861 teaches us the lights (day four) are rulers over the light (day one).
- 5862 2. Day five – the birds were commanded to “fly above the earth,” and to multiply “on the
5863 earth” (22). The realm of the birds is the sky and the earth. One must ignore or devalue this in
5864 order to affirm that the text teaches us the birds (day five) are rulers over the sky (day two)
5865 when the text says nothing about this rulership.
- 5866 3. Day six – the land creatures, textually speaking, are not rulers but rulees, with man being
5867 their ruler as well as the ruler over the earth (26, 28). The only textually explicit ruler is
5868 mankind. One must ignore or devalue this in order to affirm that the text teaches us the land
5869 animals (day six) are rulers over the land or earth (day three) when the text says nothing about
5870 this rulership, but explicitly teaches that man is the ruler over the earth (dry land 28).
- 5871 4. The king-kingdom or ruler-ruled (lord-vassal) duo does not apply to the respective units
5872 unless rule, king (lord) and kingdom (vassal) concepts are redefined in each unit (days 1-4, 2-
5873 5, and 3-6). This means that neither king-kingdom nor lord-vassal really identifies whatever
5874 relationship there might be between the respective units.

5875
5876 B. It affirms the historicity of the creation account while redefining historicity, giving it a meaning
5877 different from the commonly accepted definition.

- 5878 1. It affirms that the text intends to state that the six days are *normal* solar days (normal
5879 providence pertains), but what it actually means is that they were *figurative* solar days. The
5880 days are not historical days.
- 5881 2. It affirms that the picture is that God completed his creative work in a week of days but
5882 this is not to be taken as an actual week. Indeed, the logic of this view argues that day one is a
5883 purely literary phenomenon. Exodus 20:11 presents the creation days not as a framework but
5884 as literal days. In contrast, advocates of the framework call the creation “week” a “lower
5885 register metaphor for God’s upper register creation-time,”¹ and hold “that the sequence of the
5886 ‘days’ is ordered not chronologically but thematically.” Moreover, this view holds that, “The
5887 creation ‘week’ is to be understood figuratively, not literally – that is the conclusion demanded
5888 by the biblical evidence.”²
- 5889 3. It affirms that the “snapshots” (each day-frame) of divine creative fiat-fulfillments refer to
5890 historical events which actually occurred but said events are not in their original order nor do
5891 they represent separately occurring creative fiat-fulfillments (events). Indeed, the logic of this
5892 view argues that the creation of light was not a separate creative event at all. So, although the
5893 things reported as created are affirmed as truly and divinely created the report as to the
5894 distinctiveness, sequence and pattern of that creating is not historically accurate.
- 5895 4. It claims to see the account as only dischronologized (not in chronological order) while its
5896 language and reasoning present important and substantial elements of the account as
5897 dehistoricized (non-historical). Advocates of this view state, (a) “...we insist that the *total*
5898 *picture* of the divine workweek with its days and evening-morning refrain be taken
5899 figuratively.”³ (b) “...the creation “week” is a lower register metaphor for God’s upper register
5900 creation-time and that the sequence of the “days” is ordered not chronologically but
5901 thematically.” (c) “The creation “week” is to be understood figuratively, not literally – that is
5902 the conclusion demanded by the biblical evidence.” Thus, (d) there was neither a separate
5903 creation of light nor were there six days at all. As one of the advocates says, the framework

¹ M.G. Kline, *Space and Time*, 14.

² David G. Hagopian, *The Genesis Debate* (Cruxpress: Mission Viejo, CA, 2001), “The Framework View,” Lee Irons with M. G. Kline 184.

³ Hagopian, *Genesis Debate*.

5904 view is distinguished from all other views in that it sees the relationship between days 1 and 4
 5905 more precisely as one of temporal recapitulation, so that day 4 recapitulates day 1, in other
 5906 words, day 1 is not a day distinct from day 4.
 5907

5908 C. It violates the perspicuity of Scripture in that its suggested literary structure(s) does not arise from
 5909 the text but is used to drive the exegesis. As a result, its definitions of “lord-vassal” or “ruler-ruled,”
 5910 etc., are imprecise and inconsistent.
 5911

5912 D. It violates the sufficiency of Scripture in that it does not allow what the Scripture itself teaches to
 5913 stand but employs an extra-scriptural structure.
 5914

5915 EXEGETICALLY:

5916 It prosecutes an exegesis driven by a literary assumption rather than arising from the text itself.

5917 A. Its exegesis of Genesis 2:5 does not allow the text to stand as it is presented in the Bible, viz., as the
 5918 introduction to the balance of chapter two and as focusing on the Garden of Eden and the placing of
 5919 man there rather than speaking about conditions on day three of chapter one.
 5920

5921 B. Its exegesis of day one wrongly affirms that assuming the operation of ordinary providence argues
 5922 that there can be no light without the lights of day four when contemporary natural science offers
 5923 several (ordinary providence) phenomena whereby light is produced without suns, moons, and stars.
 5924

5925 C. It defends a framework structure by ignoring or devaluing the textual phenomena arguing against it.
 5926

5927 THEOLOGICALLY

5928 A. It redefines “historical” and, in so doing, denies the historicity of the account. It offers a definition
 5929 of historical (cf., I.B above) that is unparalleled in biblical narrative.
 5930

5931 B. It argues that in the creation account there are two levels or spheres of “history”—“The six
 5932 evening-morning days then do not mark the passage of time in the lower register sphere. They are not
 5933 identifiable in terms of solar days, but relate to the history of creation at the upper register. The creation
 5934 “week” is to be understood figuratively, not literally—that is the conclusion demanded by the biblical
 5935 evidence.”⁴ What is this “upper register?” Does this propose a new ontological reality? How can the
 5936 creation be accomplished in the lower register (assuming they are saying the six days are the record of
 5937 an actual historical creation) when it is also said to have been accomplished in the upper register?

⁴ Kline, *Space and Time*, 10.

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