

The Days of Creation

The Report of the Special Committee
To Articulate the Doctrine of Creation

Reformed Church in the
United States

Committee Members

Rev Frank Walker, Chairman
Rev. Wesley Brice
Elder Warren Embree
Rev. Jay Fluck
Elder Wayne C. Johnson

Adopted by the 253rd Synod of the RCUS

May 17-20, 1999

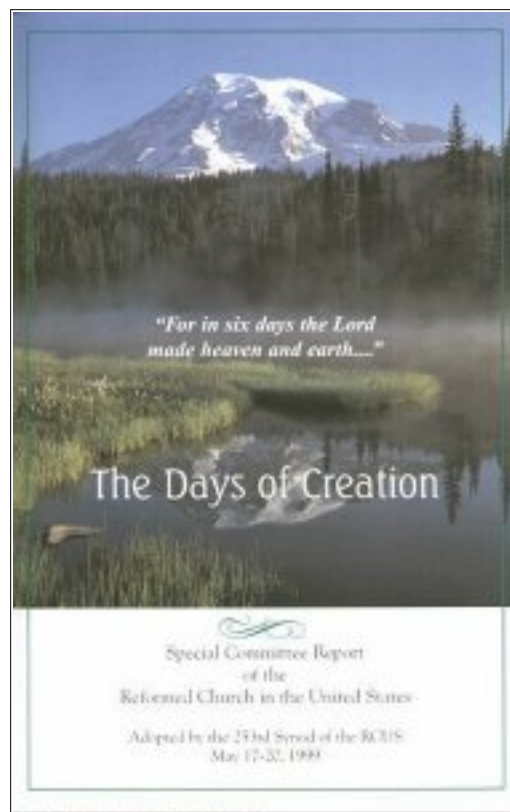


Table of Contents

Introduction

The Importance of the Doctrine for Sound Theology

The Doctrine of Creation in the History of the Church

Church Fathers in the Early New Testament Period
The Reformers
A Change of Thought
The Situation Today

The Hermeneutics of Genesis One

Hermeneutics
The Pretense of Objectivity
Examples of Objectivity
A Moral Duty

Unbiblical Theories of Creation

Six Day Creation - The Predominant View
Day-Age Theory
Punctuated Day Theory
Gap Theory
Framework Theory
The Teaching of Scripture

Conclusion

Introduction

The 252nd Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States erected a special committee "to articulate the RCUS's position on God's creation in six normal chronological days of light and darkness as adopted by the 75th annual session of the Eureka Classis and confirmed by the 76th annual session of the Eureka Classis, together with a recommendation as to where in the governing documents of the RCUS this position may best be placed for use" (1998 Abstract, p.53).

Our responsibility, therefore, is not to formulate a new statement on six-day creation, but to defend the one we already have, namely, "that God created the heavens and the earth in six normal days which were chronological periods of light and darkness as recorded in the book of Genesis" (1985 Abstract, p.105). Your committee was also asked to find an appropriate place in our standards for our position statement in order to minimize questions about its authority.

Writing our report was relatively simple. We wanted our report to be a positive expression of our doctrine. Though it was necessary at times to evaluate and criticize alternate views, our goal was to do so only to the degree necessary to clarify and defend our own position. Your committee was in full agreement with the position of the RCUS regarding this doctrine. The only ambiguity noted in our 1985 statement concerns the word normal. It has sometimes been alleged that the days of creation were anything but "normal" since the events of those days were so unique. Doubtless, this argument amounts to little more than a red herring, but in forming a doctrinal statement we should be as clear as possible. Your committee understands "six normal days" as "six days of normal duration" or "six sidereal days."

Each member of the committee was assigned part of the report. Our topics include the importance of the orthodox doctrine of creation for sound theology, the history of the doctrine in the church, hermeneutics, the meaning of the word day in Genesis 1 and in the fourth commandment, and heretical views of creation.

Finding a suitable place for our position in the governing standards has been more challenging. Part of our difficulty arises from the fact that Synod has not yet adopted the report of the Special Committee on the Authority of Position Papers. Until this is done we do not even know whether there is a need to amend our standards to include our position on creation. Even so, your committee believes that the best approach would be to recommend that the position taken by the RCUS in 1985 is the correct interpretation of our creeds (specifically Questions 92 and 103 of the Heidelberg catechism), and that our report be adopted as an exposition of the creeds. In this way our report would be useful as evidence in any judicial proceeding that may involve this issue.

Our thinking on this is as follows. To begin with, we do not believe that a doctrinal position on an matter of this importance should be placed in the Constitution. Our doctrinal and governmental standards should remain distinct. On the other hand, we hesitate to suggest that our confessions be tampered with - either by amending one of the Three Forms or by adopting the 1985 statement as an additional confession dealing only with the doctrine of creation. However, if a stronger affirmation of six-day creation is necessary, this may be the only way to go. Altering Article 12 of the Belgic Confession would probably serve that purpose best. The amended article would read, "We believe that the Father by the Word, that is, by His Son, has created of nothing the heaven, the earth, and all creatures, *in the space of six days of normal duration (which were chronological periods of light and darkness as recorded in Genesis 1)*, when it seemed good unto Him...." Your committee had considered the possibility of annotating the creeds in some way, but this has the disadvantage of complicating our standards by adding a tertiary layer. The same problem would occur if Synod decides to give its positional statements a quasi-confessional status. The reasons for doing so may be laudable, but the

results, to say the least, would be confusing.

We hereby submit our report with the hope that Synod will find it acceptable. May our sovereign God use it to the advancement of his kingdom and glory! Amen.

The Importance of the Doctrine for Sound Theology

Wayne C. Johnson

Why does the Reformed Church in the United States feel it necessary to articulate a doctrine of creation that may well impose a shadow of separation between us and many beloved brethren? Are we, as some have suggested, clinging to and/or creating distinctives merely to justify our separate ecclesiastical existence?

That's a fair question and, in a spirit of true biblical ecumenicity, it deserves an answer. Let us consider the situation.

Our ministers in the RCUS are, for the most part, underpaid. Many of our congregations are located on the Northern Plains, where population has been dwindling for decades. Men serving in many of those pulpits had best know how to repair an engine, replace old wiring and plant a garden. We have no seminary. We struggle to provide for retired ministers and widows. In short, things might be a lot easier were we to simply fold the tent and merge with a larger body.

The unique history of the RCUS has also created an outlook on the world that is arguably myopic, but also wonderfully immune to the vagaries of the modern evangelical version of political correctness. At the dawn of this century, there were large and prosperous seminaries, universities, colleges, orphanages and hospitals that bore our denomination's name. Churches dotted the land. RCUS publications flourished. The ministry was respected and well-paid, but sadly, like Micah the priest, most chose the comforts of this world over service in what remained of the once mighty RCUS. She became a church without ministers, and in many eyes a church without a future, held together through the perseverance of her people and their elders, many the sons of Russian-German immigrants who had known little else than poverty and hard times in unforgiving climates.

Yet, it pleased God to preserve this tiny communion. Union for the sake of union would hold little attraction for these brethren, who had already paid the price. There were few lofty aspirations among the sons of the RCUS, but fewer liberals, still. She was a parochial and isolated body, ignoring and largely ignored by the broader Reformed community. In time, as language and cultural barriers fell between the RCUS and her sister Reformed and Presbyterian denominations, warm and affectionate relations would flourish. Still, there would remain an historically conditioned, and largely justified, suspicion of things "new."

"Don't you people get cable? You sound like 'fundamentalists?'" The answer, of course, is that when it comes to the doctrine of Scripture, we are fundamentalists, and more ... much more. For Reformed believers, Christ is not only the mediator of redemption, but also the mediator of creation. He is truly Lord and Savior. "All things were created by him, and for him." There is a purpose and plan to our Creator God's handiwork that encompasses far more than the fundamentalists' singular focus on individual soteriology.

Nor is our God, "who of nothing made heaven and earth and all that in them is, who likewise upholds and governs the same by his eternal counsel and providence" (Heid. 26), the contingent God of neo-evangelicalism. Rather, He is the great "I AM" whose "creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move" (Heid. 28). He is a God who "redeems me from all the power of the devil, and so preserves me that, without the will of my Father in Heaven, not a hair can fall from my head, yea, that all things must work together for my salvation" (Heid. 1).

What the Bible has to say about the creation, therefore, is vitally important to how Christians are called to live their lives. Christ is Lord of all the earth, and He has

purposed to deal with us in this world according to His good pleasure. In other words, we affirm not only the sovereignty of God over salvation, but over all things, all events and all meaning. We affirm the transcendence and immanence of God, resisting the nascent existentialism of modern evangelicalism that presumes a God indifferent to history (as well as the truncated gospel of the fundamentalists).

Where theology is replaced by psychology, when God created the world, how God created the world, or even if God created the world, are no longer important. Relationships are important. Feelings are important. Like poor relations unexpectedly showing up at the family reunion, adherents of six-day creation are greeted with tight smiles and embarrassed looks from brethren who can probably still recall when they "used to believe that, too." In fact, most still do, but simply don't see why such an obvious stumbling block ought to be hurled at the feet of prospective converts who are bound to associate such views with narrow-minded backwood preachers.

To the modern church, six-day creation is an unnecessary impediment to both evangelism and respectability. It also embraces many faithful, but uneducated Christians in a catholicity that is not entirely welcomed by many scholars. While we are passionately dedicated to the proposition of an educated ministry, we reject outright the notion that scholarship must necessarily beget an effete ministry for whom affirming the inspiration, authority and infallibility of the Bible is a mark of theological autism. We also reject the notion that any true doctrine may be discredited simply because uneducated people believe it. Our goal must be to embrace the truth, regardless of the company which the truth may keep.

"But why fight about such things?" ask our fraternal brethren. The simple fact is that we don't fight. We agree. Rather than bringing dissension and discord, we in the RCUS have been blessed by God with a wonderful harmony of spirit and doctrine regarding the doctrine of Scripture and the doctrine of creation which that doctrine of Scripture demands.

We see in the broader evangelical church in general, and in her seminaries in particular, a dangerously low view of the Word of God. "Thus sayeth the Lord," all too often sounds like "Hath God said?" We plead with our Reformed brethren, and the broader evangelical church, as well, to hear what we are saying. Our insistence upon the doctrine of six-day creation is a direct, and necessary, extension of our doctrine of Scripture.

Our membership not only believe their Bibles, they demand that their ministers believe them, too, without reservation. And by God's grace they do. We recognize the obligation to defend our position among our fraternal brethren, and we will. But we defend it as we defend the faith and the Bible itself. God's Word is clear. To defend six-day creation is to defend the proposition that the Bible means what it says, and that its meaning is clear.

If our Bibles mean whatever we want them to mean in Genesis 1, then why not at every other juncture where God's Word offends the sensibilities of man's reason? Ninety-five Theses, Calvin's Institutes, the Reformed Creeds and the blood of the martyrs aside, if there is a single cornerstone upon which the Reformation rests, it is that the Bible is the Word of the Living God. Infallible. Inspired. A light unto our path, and a lamp unto our feet.

As Reformed believers, we know that it has been the Holy Spirit Himself who has preserved His Word. We have it. It need not be authenticated by church councils or learned doctors. Nor do we need the permission of academics to believe what the Bible clearly says. The Spirit of God knows His own Word, and continues to testify to its veracity in the hearts of the believing church.

Our critics will complain that we say too much, assume too much and demand too much. We leave no room for differing opinions among faithful men. We can only answer that the stated position of our church represents the deeply held conviction of our people. It is, by God's grace, what we believe. It is what we would have our children taught. Most importantly, it is what the plainest reading of a decidedly

unambiguous text teaches.

In answering our critics, have we not also earned the right to ask questions of our own? What purpose is served, may we ask, in seeking to allegorize the Biblical account of creation? What motive is fed? What secret lust whetted? We can only reply that no good fruit has come of this "symbolical" tree. Is six-day creation a stumbling block to would-be believers? If so, let them also stumble at the offense of the cross. Let them scoff at swimming axe heads, manna from heaven and, most unbelievable of all, the resurrection of the dead. It is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit that will convince the gainsayers, not the reluctant witness of a timid church.

We seek not division, but rather unity in the truth. We would count it a blessing if our fraternal brethren joined us in our affirmation, but that is not our first purpose. Our purpose is to maintain the unity with which we have been blessed, and to insure, insofar as God ordains, that this unity of doctrine continue to be shed abroad in our churches, from generation unto generation.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12).

The Doctrine of Creation in the History of the Church

Wesley Brice

Certain questions need to be carefully considered in this paper. First, we need to ask, will a study of the history of the doctrine of creation produce church fathers who taught or supported a six-day creation or will it reveal that the church fathers held to a long day-age theory? Secondly, will this study of the history exhibit for us men who held to an old-age earth and universe or church fathers who held to a recent, under 10,000 years, creation.

This has become a vital issue in the church today. Many who are attempting to interpret Genesis 1-11 in the light of recent scientific theories regarding the beginning of creation have made this inquiry necessary because they need and boldly assert that the church fathers did teach a long day-age theory and an old-age earth. However, the issue of creation for the church fathers was more between the church and the pagan philosophers and so called sciences of the world rather than a controversy in the church itself. Therefore since there was no great conflict regarding creation in the church itself you will not find any council dealing with the subject as a central issue. But as they write their different apologies of the faith, and instruction to the church you will find the subject discussed.

Church Fathers in the Early New Testament Period

For the purpose of this paper, we will consider only the views of men who wrote after the completion of the New Testament canon. I will provide quotes to show that many of the early church fathers not only held to six twenty-four hour days of creation but also believed the world was quite recent in its creation, much less than ten thousand years old.

Irenaeus seemed to support the day-age theory when he wrote, "Thus, then, in the day they did eat, in the same did they die.... For it is said, 'There was made in the evening, and there was made in the morning one day.' Now in this same day that they did eat, in that also did they die.... On one and the same day on which they ate they also died (for it is one day of creation)...." And again. "He [Adam] did not overstep the thousand years, but died within their limit .. for since 'a day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' he did not overstep the thousand years. but died within them." But in the same passage he also wrote, "For in six days as the world was

made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all his works.' This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of the things to come. For that day of the Lord is a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year" (Irenaeus, c 115-202, *Against Heresies* 5.28.3).

In the latter passage, it should be noted that Irenaeus does not speak of six "ages" of creation, but only of six "days" of creation. and then six "ages" of history to come. Thus, he is a witness for six normal days, not long periods of time in creation, and also a witness for a recent creation of less than six thousand years.

Likewise, Hippolytus (c 170-236) wrote, "For in six days the world was made, and [the Creator] rested on the seventh" (*Against Heresies* 4:48). In a more detailed discussion of the age of the earth in which he taught that the world was less than six thousand years old he wrote, "For as the times are noted from the foundation of the world, and reckoned from Adam, they set clearly before us the matter with which our inquiry deals. For the first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem, under Augustus. in the year 5500; and He suffered in the thirty-third year. And 6,000 years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day 'on which God rested from all His works.' For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they 'shall reign with Christ,' when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for 'a day with the Lord is as a thousand years.' Since, then, in six days God made all things. it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled. And they are not yet fulfilled, as John says: 'five are fallen; one is,' that is, the sixth; 'the other is not yet come'" (On Daniel 2:4).

From this we see once again that Hippolytus taught that the world was created in six days, and that the world would continue six thousand years from the "foundation of the world."

Clement of Alexandria (c 150-220) also did not teach a great age of the earth but reckoned time from creation to his lifetime to be only 5,784 years: "From Augustus to Commodus are two hundred and twenty-two years.' and from Adam to the death of Commodus five thousand seven hundred and eighty-four years, two months, twelve days" (*Miscellanies* 1:21). Concerning the fourth commandment, he simply states that "the creation of the world was concluded in six days" (*Miscellanies* 6:16). In light of the fact that Clement considered time from Adam to his day as only 5,784 years it is hard even to pretend that he thought of the six days of creation as billions of years.

Origen wrote, "After these statements, Celsus, from a secret desire to cast discredit upon the Mosaic account of the creation, which teaches that the world is not yet ten thousand years old, but very much under that,... And yet, against his will, Celsus is entangled into testifying that the world is comparatively modern, and not yet ten thousand years old" (*Celsus* 1:20). Note that Origen emphasizes that Celsus was in error and motivated by a "secret desire to cast discredit upon the Mosaic account of creation." According to Origen what is the Mosaic account? He plainly states the Mosaic account of creation "teaches that the world is not yet ten thousand years old, but very much under that."

The fourth century father Basil taught as Biblical doctrine a literal twenty-four hour day in Genesis chapter one: "Thus were created the evening and the morning. Scripture means the space of a day and a night, and afterwards no more says day and night, but calls them both under the name of the more important: a custom which you will find throughout Scripture. Everywhere the measure of time is counted by days, without mention of nights.... 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" (Homily II).

Theophilus of Antioch (c 180) does not elaborate on the meaning of day, but after he quotes chapter one of Genesis he simply makes this comment: "Of this six days' work no man can give a worthy explanation and description of all its parts, not though he had ten thousand tongues and ten thousand mouths" (Autolyucus 2:12).

Ambrose of Milan (339-397) provides us with one of the fullest discussions of the length of the creation days. He maintains the following view of the creation of day and night: "God created day and night at the same time. Since that time, day and night continue their daily succession and renewal" (Hexameron, p.72). In particular he taught that the very meaning of day and night rests on God's Word. He wrote, "The beginning of the day rests on God's word: 'Be light made, and light was made.' The end of day is the evening. Now, the succeeding day follows after the termination of night. The thought of God is dear. First He called light 'day' and next He called darkness 'night.' In notable fashion has Scripture spoken of a 'day,' not the 'first day.' Because a second, then a third day, and finally the remaining days were to follow, a 'first day' could have been mentioned, following in this way the natural order. But Scripture established a law that twenty-four hours, including both day and night, should be given the name of day only, as if one were to say the length of one day is twenty-four hours in extent" (Hexameron, pp. 42-43).

Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 387) simply states in his catechism instruction that "In six days God made the world: but the world was for man (Catechetical lectures 12:5).

Augustine is probably the church father most often quoted by the day-age theorists as an early church father that held to their day-age interpretation of Genesis 1. There is no question that Augustine did not hold to a literal, normal six-day position, but did he hold to an extended period of time for creation as is often alleged?

First he asserted that God did not need six days to create but that he had the power to create all things in a moment of time, and certainly did not need to rest from His labors: "Now, on the subject of this rest Scripture is significant, and refrains not to speak, when it tells us how at the beginning of the world, and at the time when God made heaven and earth and all things which are in them, He worked during six days, and rested on the seventh day. For it was in the power of the Almighty to make all things even in one moment of time" (On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed, 17:28). Augustine could not imagine why God needed six days when He could have made all things in a moment of time.

The key to understanding this problem, as Augustine saw it, lay in the fact that six is a perfect number. He suggested what he thought to be a logical framework for the six days, based on fractions of numbers that make up the number 6 (1, 2 and 3). He wrote, "These works are recorded to have been completed in six days (the same day being six times repeated), because six is a perfect number, - not because God required a protracted time, as if He could not at once create all things, which then should mark the course of time by the movements proper to them, but because the perfection of the works was signified by the number six. For the number six is the first which is made up of its own parts, i.e., of its sixth, third, and half, which are respectively one, two, and three, and which make a total of six. In this way of looking at a number, those are said to be its parts which exactly divide it, as a half, a third, a fourth, or a fraction with any denominator,... So much I have thought fit to state for the sake of illustrating the perfection of the number six, which is, as I said, the first which is exactly made up of its own parts added together; and in this number of days God finished His work. And, therefore, we must not despise the science of numbers, which, in many passages of holy Scripture, is found to be of eminent service to the careful interpreter" (City of God 11:30).

Again, regarding the age of the earth he wrote, "As to those who are always

asking why man was not created during these countless ages of the infinitely extended past, and came into being so lately that, according to Scripture, less than 6000 years have elapsed since He began to be, just as I replied regarding the origin of the world to those who will not believe that it is not eternal, but had a beginning" (City of God 12:12).

The Reformers

In the history of the doctrine of creation certainly Calvin's views are indispensable to the understanding of the church's position on creation at the time of the reformation. Since he is without question one of the outstanding theologians of that time.

Interestingly he deals with creation by asking a question that confronts the church today, "Should the church be influenced by the unbelieving scientific world in its interpretation of holy scripture?" Calvin wrote in his commentary on Genesis 1:1, "When God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth, the earth was empty and waste. He moreover teaches by the word 'created,' that what before did not exist was now made; for he has not used the term *rxu*, (*yatsar*,) which signifies to frame or form but *arb*, (*bara*,) which signifies to create. Therefore his meaning is, that the world was made out of nothing. Hence the folly of those is refuted who imagine that unformed matter existed from eternity; and who gather nothing else from the narration of Moses than that the world was furnished with new ornaments, and received a form of which it was before destitute. This indeed was formerly a common fable among heathens, who had received only an obscure report of the creation, and who, according to custom, adulterated the truth of God with strange figments; but for Christian men to labor (as Steuchus does) in maintaining this gross error is absurd and intolerable. Let this, then be maintained in the first place, that the world is not eternal but was created by God."

As to the order of the days of creation, he accepted the sequence given in Genesis. He also rejected the argument that God created all things in a moment of time, but expressly stated that God took "the space of six days" (Commentary on Gen. 1:5). Moreover, he understood the days as six successive days: "For the correction of this fault, God applied the most suitable remedy when he distributed the creation of the world into successive portions, that he might fix our attention, and compel us, as if he had laid his hand upon us, to pause and to reflect" (Commentary on Gen. 1:5). He also makes it clear that the days of creation were "natural days": "To divide the day from the night. He means the artificial day, which begins at the rising of the sun and ends at its setting. For the natural day (which he mentions above) includes in itself the night. Hence infer, that the interchange of days and nights shall be continual: because the word of God, who determined that the days should be distinct from the nights, directs the course of the sun to this end" (Commentary on Gen. 1:14). Finally when he considers the sanctifying of the seventh day he notes that with God one moment is as a thousand years. Thus he concludes that God took six days for our benefit not his.

In giving us the common view of the church at the time of the Reformation, the Dutch Annotations upon the Whole Bible ordered by the Synod of Dort on Genesis 1:5 reads as follows: "The meaning of these words [day/night] is that night and day had made up one natural day together, which with the Hebrews began with the evening and ended with the approach of the next evening, comprehending twenty four hours."

The Westminster divines appear to have embraced the common view. They wrote, It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good" (WCF 4:1).

Some have argued that the divines understood the phrase "space of" as extended

periods of time. Gratefully, by the providence of God some of them left for us their understanding of the word "day" in Genesis.

David W. Hall, who has done extensive research on the subject, wrote as follows: "The Westminster Divines and the long stretch of church history prior to the 19th century DID have a view on the length of creation days. This historical fact is often obscured by either biased presuppositions or a research vacuum. Despite the prevalent claim from some quarters (actually relatively recent, primarily since the 1800s) that the confessional words "in the space of six days" really could mean up to 16 billion years, when primary writings by the divines are consulted, it becomes very difficult to maintain that the divines were more chic than heretofore imagined." And again, "Contrary to the theological mythology of the past 150 years, the leading Westminster Divines did leave explicit testimony, in writing, repeatedly, and uniformly on this subject. A review of their own writings only permits embarrassment for those who assert that they expressed no view on this subject."

Here are the words of the Westminster divines themselves:

John White: "Here, where it [day, yam] is distinguished from the Night, it is taken for a Civil day, that is, that part of twenty-four hours which is Light; but in the latter end of the verse, it signifies a Natural day, consisting of twenty-four hours, and includes the night too" (Commentary on Gen. 1-3)

John Ley: "This first day consisting of twenty four hours...." and "... the Sabbath (being as large a day as any of the rest, and so containing twenty four hours is measured from even to even" (Annotations).

John Lightfoot: "Twelve hours was there universal darkness through all the world; and then was light created in the upper horizon, and there it enlightened twelve hours more" (Works 2:71). Again, "And in four and twenty hours the command is accomplished (Works 2:10-11; cf. 2:334). And finally, "But let us consider of the second thing, as it tends to the end of this command, the setting forth the reason of the institution of the sabbath; that he created all things 'in six days.' And what needed he take six days, that could have done all in a moment? He had as little need to take time for his work, as he had of the world, he being Lord of all. What reason can we give? But that he, by his own proceeding and acting would set the clock of time, and measure out days, and a week, by which all time is measured, - by his own standard, evening and morning, to make a natural day, i.e., day and night; and seven natural days to make a week; six days of labour, the seventh for rest.... So that look at the first day of the creation, God made heaven and earth in a moment. The heaven, as soon as created, moved, and the wheel of time began to go; and thus, for twelve hours, there was universal darkness. This is called the 'evening,' meaning night. Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and light arose in the east, and, in twelve hours more, was carried over the hemisphere; and this is called, 'morning,' or 'day.' And the evening and morning made the first natural day; twelve hours, darkness, - and twelve, light" (Sermon on Exodus 20:11).

Again quoting David W. Hall, "Several other Westminster Divines lent their hand to the 1645 Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testament (London, 1645). Among the divines appointed to draft these 'study notes' were John Ley, William Gouge, and Daniel Featly, who were also appointed to the Westminster Assembly. Assemblyman John Ley composed the Annotations on the Pentateuch, and expressed the Westminster view that 'the word Day is taken for the natural day consisting of twenty four hours, which is measured most usually from the Sun-rising to the Sun-rising; or from the Sun-setting to the Sun-setting.' Ley noted that such sense was also used in Exodus 12:29, Numbers 3:13 and 8:17. Referring to other literal twenty-four hour periods, the view of the divines could hardly be invisible."

It should also be noted that James Ussher (who was appointed to the Westminster assembly but never participated because of his sympathies for the crown, but whose Irish Articles nonetheless greatly influenced the assembly) held that the first day of creation took place October 23, 4004 BC.

To sum up the quotes of the above Westminster Divines it can be safely argued that when they used the words "in the space of six days" in the confession they meant six literal days and not six extended periods of time. Such terminology would have been foreign to their thinking.

A Change of Thought

In the mid 1800s the influence of Darwin and Huxley took its toll upon otherwise sound reformed theologians. While the change of thinking may have begun in the science departments of the colleges and universities, it soon affected the religious thinkers of the day.

Charles Hodge, for example, was influenced by the evolutionary and long-age scientific theories of the mid-nineteenth century. In his *Systematic Theology*, he accepted the theories of the geologists of his day. Here he sadly suggests the need to interpret the Bible in such a manner as to bring it in line with the atheistic thinking of the Darwinian theorists of his day (*Systematic Theology* 1:1:10).

Accepting the "facts" of geological theory, Hodge was concerned with the conflict this created with the Mosaic record. What is the church to believe -- Moses or geologists? The issue of faith is now brought into the picture. To answer this, he proposed "two methods of reconciling the Mosaic account with those facts have been adopted." One can take the first verse of Genesis 1 to refer to the original creation of the matter of the universe in the indefinite past, and what follows to refer to a reorganization of the earth to fit it for the habitation of man. Or one can interpret the word day as used throughout the chapter as geological periods of indefinite duration.

Please note what has taken place here. Hodge has encouraged the church to "reconcile" the Mosaic account with the facts the geologists have adopted. In other words, where the Bible and science are in conflict he wants the church to interpret scripture not by scripture, but by the prevailing scientific theory of the day. This is a serious and ultimately fatal step for the church of Jesus Christ.

Hodge came to the conclusion that the word day can be understood to be a period of indefinite duration. No longer did he hold the days of creation to be normal twenty-four hour periods as the church had held until then. He concludes by proclaiming that the recent readings of science have the blessing of a "divine pronouncement" upon them. Now he says there is an "agreement" between science and the Bible. There is so much that the most recent readings of science have for the first time explained, that the idea of man as the author becomes utterly incomprehensible. By proving the record true, science "pronounces it divine; for who could have correctly narrated the secrets of eternity but God himself?"

The Situation Today

The church's present-day rejection of the natural interpretation of the days of Genesis 1s relatively new, stemming from the so-called scientific discoveries of the mid-1800s. But the assertion is without foundation in the history of the church until then.

The theories of science in regard to geology, evolution, etc., have changed drastically since Darwin's day. They will change again as the weeks, months, years, decades continue to pass by, but the Word of God is settled in the heavens.

There is no need to try to fit the Bible into science falsely so called. Let God's Word interpret itself for us; indeed, let the Bible interpret science as well. Only if we follow the Scriptures will we remain in the mainstream of the history of the church. And more importantly we will remain faithful to the sacred text that was produced by the very breath of God. "Forever, O LORD, your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants" (Ps.

The Hermeneutics of Genesis One

Warren Embree

Over the past fifty years a number of diverse papers and articles have been written concerning the doctrine of creation and the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis. One clear line of division among these writings is whether the days of Genesis are to be understood as literal or figurative. Another line - after careful study has shown to some that the language demands the days be understood as literal - declares the creation passage to be a literary fiction rather than a literal account of an historic set of events. While a good deal of this debate occurs outside the bounds of conservative Reformed and Presbyterian scholarship circles, one is surprised to find when studying Reformed or Presbyterian scholars a marked rejection of or doubt concerning the literal interpretation of either the days in Genesis 1 or the creation account itself. Meredith G. Kline, most familiar to those in the Reformed Church in the United States, concludes "that as far as the time frame is concerned, with respect to both the duration and sequence of events, the scientist is left free of biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins." On the other hand, a significant work of exegesis refuting the allegorical or metaphorical interpretation of either the days or the week of Genesis 1 has been given by the late Gerhard F. Hasel, former John Nevins Andrews Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Andrews University, teaching at a Seventh-Day Adventist school.

As will be taken up in another place, our understanding of the creation of the world affects the whole body of our faith. Despite the desire of some to give the scientific community all time and space for their theories, the fact remains that the question as to whether the account is to be understood as literal or figurative is a significant matter for the orthodoxy of that faith. After all, it is 'through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear' (Heb. 11:3). Those who argue that the only issue of importance is whether God created *ex nihilo* neglect the fact that the Greek term used in this passage of Hebrews refers to more than the origin of the stuff; it teaches that the creation of the universe was in an orderly fashion. This creation is not only a demonstration of God's power to bring into being -- it expresses the architectural and constructive genius of our Creator as well. The prophets and apostles teach us that our knowledge of God encompasses not only the "what" of His activities, but the "how" also. To ignore the latter at the expense of the former is to ignore the revelation of Truth God has given for our "instruction."

Nor is a proper understanding of Genesis 1 intellectually frivolous. There is more to the question than whether Genesis 1 should be understood as literal or figurative. At stake is the veracity of the biblical authors -- Moses in the case of Genesis -- and the authority given to them to teach what is the truth concerning God and our responsibilities to Him. At the heart of the issue is the inherent authority of Scripture and the authority of the Scriptural authors over all human activity, the scientific community included. Even were it possible to demonstrate that the intention of Moses in giving us the creation account in Genesis 1 was to provide a word picture of some incomprehensible activity of God, we give up too much to declare that the scientific community -- much less any human community -- is "free of biblical constraints" in matters relating to an interpretation and understanding of the universe in which we live. Our principles of understanding are to be derived from, not introduced into the words of the apostles and prophets. These were the men sent by God, inspired by His Spirit, endowed with the Spirit of Christ, whose perception and understanding of God and the universe is our true guide in matters of the mind as well as all matters that pertain to being.

Hermeneutics

How, then, are we to approach a study of these words? The term "hermeneutics" has undergone considerable permutations in the past century or so. Once considered an objective set of rules and methods for ascertaining the meaning of a text, it is now used to describe the subjective set of presuppositions whereby the interpreter can have an intellectual or spiritual "meeting" with something that may or may not have to do with the text or the author of that text. In the world of Biblical hermeneutics Karl Barth pursued the notion of an existential encounter Rudolf Bultmann desired a hermeneutic that de-mythologized the Biblical teachings. Martin Heidegger sought hermeneutics as a way to authenticate our being. Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur desired to destroy even the "pretense" of objectivity in interpretation Wilhelm Dilthey Ernst Fuchs, and a host of others all reject the notion of objective hermeneutics as *passé*. Even those who resisted relegating hermeneutics to being a philosophical descendant of phenomenology or existentialism did not return hermeneutics to an objective set of rules and methods. Most turned to developing an overriding thematic presupposition that defined and dictated the direction interpretation should take. Oscar Cullmann, for example, proposed "salvation-history" and Jurgen Moltmann the "theology of hope."

Each of these "new" approaches to hermeneutics nevertheless has a single, unifying principle, regardless of the diversity of definitions or philosophical origins. Each assumes that there is a pre-existing set of presuppositions or "pre-understandings" which demand a subjective approach to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics so defined is but old allegory writ in modern terms. The significance of this should not be lost on us. Thomas Aquinas before them -- who at least held that the grammatical approach was useful for understanding the "human" author's intent -- reserved the allegorical method as a means to understand the "divine" Author's intent. These "new" hermeneutics, however, deny that the Scriptures speak clearly and plainly to the human intellect at all. They deny that anything like an objective hermeneutic is possible.

We must reject such notions of hermeneutics. We must hold that exegesis is the critical or rigorous interpretation of a Biblical passage and hermeneutics are the "principles, laws, and methods" of that interpretation. The goal of this hermeneutic is to arrive at the intention of (he author and, as we understand what the prophets and apostles of (he Living God have said, our understanding increases so that we can further understand the world in which we live.

To speak of an "hermeneutic of the doctrine of creation" is therefore to speak of the set of principles, laws, and methods of literary interpretation, which apply to all those passages in Scripture that pertain to that doctrine. The goal of this hermeneutic is to reach an intelligent understanding of the passages and, as should be the view of those who hold the Scriptures as the infallible and inerrant Word of God, that understanding should be an accurate reconstruction of the original intent of the author. To this end the principles, laws, and methods of a hermeneutic must involve ascertaining what the author of a particular passage originally said (textual criticism), what was meant by the terms and syntax of that passage (hermeneutics proper), and how this understanding has significance and relevance in our own time (application).

The Pretense of Objectivity

One of the hallmarks of the Renaissance and Reformation era was an insistence on returning to the "plain sense" of a Biblical passage. This insistence represented a rejection of the allegorical method as it related to the interpretation of Scripture and placed the emphasis back to the grammatical and historical meaning as the foundation of Biblical interpretation. The reformers, of course, were dealing with centuries of exegetical tradition and, despite the fact that Augustine had laid out a

clear definition of the hermeneutic enterprise for Biblical teachers in his writings, these teachers of non-objective hermeneutics left the clear sense of Scripture for flights of intellectual fancy. The Renaissance and Reformation interpreters rejected such a subjective approach to hermeneutics. Whether one wants to credit certain individuals or simply a general movement away from the excesses of allegorical interpretation, the clear desire was to free interpretation from the multiplicity of senses and concentrate on the meaning intended by the author within the context of his historical audience and his linguistic usage. The fundamental principle was that a passage of Scripture has a single, simple sense arrived at grammatically and historically BEFORE outside principles influence one's understanding of that meaning. This exclusion of outside intellectual influences is one of the defining features of the Reformation hermeneutic, and it is a feature whose goal and objective is to let the Biblical authors speak for themselves. It accepts the principle that the Scriptures hold the highest intellectual, philosophical, theological, and literary authority and that the authors of Scripture speak not for themselves but for God. In a word, the Reformed hermeneutic accepts that the intent of the Biblical author is the intent of the Spirit of God. More importantly, any "pre-understandings" of the interpreter are formed not by that Spirit but by a reprobate mind intent on suppressing the truth of God.

Furthermore, lest we be concerned that we are merely following "one" possible hermeneutic among many, the justification for this principle of authorial intent as the meaning of Scripture and historical-grammatical analysis as the proper method is found within the Scriptures themselves. The Apostle Paul teaches that the moral responsibility of the speaker is to convey something of value to the hearer. If it is otherwise, Paul asks, "what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" (I Cor. 14:6). Paul further teaches that any language is capable of transferring this meaning when he states that all languages are "articulate" (1 Cor. 14:10). Therefore the intent of the author is what constitutes the proper value of the use of the language, and an understanding and careful analysis of the language enables us to ascertain that meaning. The words of Christ confirm this moral responsibility and intellectual signification when He states that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment" (Matt. 12:36). The words of the speaker -- and by analogy the writer -- are the moral responsibility of that speaker and therefore, according to Scripture, the intended meaning of the speaker is what shall be accounted as the meaning in the final judgment. Conversely, as the Heidelberg Catechism says that we are to "wrest no man's words" (Held. 112). This is especially applicable to the Scripture for, as the Apostle Peter states "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). In this letter Peter specifically states that ascertaining the intended meaning of the author may be "hard," but he does not therefore free the interpreter from "Biblical constraints." On the contrary, he indicates that it is the duty of a Biblical exegete to do just that -- understand what the author intended.

The purpose of our Biblical hermeneutic, then, is to use grammatical and linguistic principles and methods that yield for us the intended meaning of the authors of Scripture. Anything else, while intellectually satisfying, is immoral and contrary to the express command of the Scriptures themselves.

Examples of Objectivity

The plain sense of the first chapter of Genesis is that God created the heavens and the earth in six days of normal duration and rested on the seventh day. As Hasel points out in his article, all the major lexicons of the Hebrew language demonstrate that the term "day" of Genesis 1:5 and elsewhere "is meant to communicate a 24-hour day, respectively, a solar day." In order to reject the simple sense of the meaning of this term, one must reject the clear and unambiguous research and

findings of the best of the Hebrew scholars. Grammatically and linguistically, the term "yom" in Genesis lacks any signal for us to understand it as a figure of speech. When the Scripture uses the term figuratively, there are always linguistic signals, such as those akin to the English "as" or "like." So Psalm 90:4 teaches "a thousand years are LIKE yesterday." Or in the New Testament, when Peter makes his point, he uses the Greek particle for a figure "with the Lord, one day is AS a thousand years" (1 Pet. 3:8). The term "yom" does have figurative meaning in many passages of the Old Testament, but each time the term is used as a figure it has syntactic and linguistic signals to let us know. As Hasel points out again, "the extended, non-literal meanings of the term 'yom' are always found in connection with prepositions, prepositional phrases with a verb, compound constructions, formulas, technical expressions, genitive combinations, construct phrases, and the like." Historically, it is clear from even a casual glance that the term is understood as a normal day of normal duration. Even Josephus -himself given to allegory in order to make the Hebrew religion palatable to the Greeks -- affirms in the Antiquities that the days of creation were normal days. If we accept the grammatical and historical meaning, then we must conclude that Moses intended us to understand the term "yom" in this way. The term day is not intended to refer to anything else. If we wish it to do so, we must force some interpretation upon it for philosophical or theological reasons -- there are no linguistic, semantic, or syntactic reasons.

Is the whole first chapter of Genesis a literary figure then? Since the term refers to normal days, is it a normal week and did God create the world "habitable" during the course of this normal week? There are those who argue otherwise, that the week is an analogy of some sort, that the account is not historic but a fiction used to describe what really happened. While we must not simply discount the possibility out of hand -- literary fictions (parables) were the primary means of teaching used by Christ -we must still ask whether Moses intended this account as a literary fiction. Did Moses give to us the account of creation as a literal account of the historic events or rather, when properly interpreted, does it actually correspond to some other system of relations hidden beneath the literal text which details must be extracted for us by the experts?

Again, there is no grammatical, linguistic, literary, or historical reason to think so. When David personifies the sun, it "is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber" and "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (Ps. 19:5). The grammatical term "as" signifies for us that this is a figure. Genesis 1 is not in the form of a psalm nor is it called a song. Indeed, when Moses records a song he tells us (Exod. 15; Num. 21; Deut. 31). Nor is Genesis 1 a parable; it is not a poem; not a liturgy; not a story; not a simile. In fact, as Hasel points out in "the literary structures, the language patterns, the syntax, the linguistic phenomena, the terminology, the sequential presentation of events in the creation account, Genesis 1 is not different from the rest of the book of Genesis or the Pentateuch for that matter."

In a word, Genesis 1 is prose. There is no system of relations hidden beneath the literal text. The light, the darkness, the day, the night, the water, the land, the sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, the animals, and man are just that: light, darkness, day, night, water, land, sun, moon, stars, plants, animals, and Adam. One can just see Moses' look of bemusement had Aaron told him he really understood the message of Genesis 1: there were time periods of indeterminate length and it teaches a "two-register cosmos" which is "thus the scene of the biblical drama, which features constant interaction between the upper and lower registers," between the visible and invisible universe. Such interpretations come from the outside in, not the other way around.

What of Kline's article "Because It Had Not Rained"? He has been defended as an exegete, whose understanding of Genesis 2 forces the conclusion that Genesis 1 cannot be a factual and historic account. There is, however, no grammatical warrant for such arguments. As will be pointed out in another place, Kline misuses several grammatical principles in defense of this position. There are likewise gratuitous

rejections of Moses' narrative style, language, and form. In this attempt by Kline, and others like it, there is a clear rejection of the grammatical-historical approach to understanding a text and, for whatever reasons, a deliberate attempt to introduce another system of relations. Not surprisingly, these new insights" lay open for us the "real" meaning of the texts.

A Moral Duty

We have a moral duty to ascertain what a Biblical author has said and what he intended to mean. This duty must be logically and intellectually prior to any "pre-understanding" we might bring to the text. Difficult? Peter says it is. Therefore we should not be simplistic. Time and space do not permit introducing or refuting the other "new" ways of looking at language, literature, and interpretation. None of them, however, give any warrant to reject the diligent grammatical and historical study of a passage of Scripture and striving to understand what the Biblical authors intended.

By way of warning, we should all note that in his commentary on the first chapter of Genesis, John Calvin mentions Moses over fifty times. In his last article on Genesis, Kline mentions Moses but once.

Unbiblical Theories of Creation

Frank Walker

Throughout the history of the church, the doctrine of creation has been a source of constant discussion. Some have argued that creation took place in time, while others held that it came about with time. A few of the Scholastics opted for a third position, viz., continuous creation. The puritan Jonathan Edwards held a similar view which he based on God's omniscience. In an earlier period of church history, the discussion focused more on the relationship between creation and the will of God, in particular whether creation was a free or necessary act of the divine will.

However, none of this speaks directly to the point of this paper. Our subject is the length of creation days, and our purpose is to defend the position that the days of creation, as recorded in the book of Genesis and interpreted in the fourth commandment, were of normal length, i.e., approximately twenty-four hours.

A Six Day Creation - The Predominant View

Though creation has been widely discussed, the length of the six days of creation, as held throughout the ages of church history, was generally agreed: they were ordinary or sidereal days. There were few exceptions to this: Clement, Origen and Augustine being the main ones. Clement and Origen, of course, followed an allegorical method of interpretation and denied the historicity of much of the Bible. Augustine's statements, on the other hand, are unclear but it seems that he believed that God actually created the world all at once (i.e., in an instant of time, the six days being repetitions of the one day of creation) but related the story of a six-day creation to us to accommodate our limited understanding. To be sure, there is much in the Bible that is difficult (if not impossible) for our finite minds to grasp, but in this case one must wonder how a six-day account would be any easier to comprehend than an instantaneous creation. In any case, the non-literal views of the days of creation were uncommon and not highly regarded.

The same holds true for the Reformers. Luther wrote that God "employs the terms 'day' and 'evening' without allegory.... that the world, with all its creatures, was created within six days, as the words read. If we do not comprehend the reason for this, let us remain pupils and leave the job of teacher to the Holy Spirit." Calvin agreed, "With the same view Moses relates that the work of creation was accomplished not in one moment, but in six days. By this statement we are drawn

away from fiction to the one God who thus divided his work into six days, that we may have no reluctance to devote our whole lives to the contemplation of it." The Westminster divines considered the doctrine of such importance that, in the Confession and both catechisms, they incorporated the statement that God created all things "in the space of six days" (a phrase borrowed from Calvin who held strictly to a six-day creation). A.A. Hodge tries to escape the force of this by arguing that the divines merely quoted Scripture without taking a position one way or another. But this answer is intellectually unsatisfying and dishonest. The phrase in question appears nowhere in Scripture; to the contrary, it seems that the divines added the words "in the space of" specifically to make their intent perfectly clear. Extant writings of the divines yield several affirmations of six-day creation but nothing to the contrary.

Six-day creation was also generally maintained in the Post-Reformation literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus, during the time the great creeds of the church were written, the prevailing opinion was that God created the world in six ordinary days.

Today the picture is quite different. The modern church is filled with alternatives. Sadly, it seems that whenever an alternate view of creation is held by a majority, the six-day view of creation, which was the predominant view of the church well into the eighteenth century, is no longer tolerated. Why is this? How have these other views come into the church?

Berkhof addressed this concern: the problem is that Scripture and science are in conflict. He wrote,

In the eighteenth century, however, under the dominating influence of Pantheism and Materialism, science launched an attack on the Church's doctrine of creation. It substituted the idea of evolution or development for that of absolute origination by divine fiat. The world was often represented as a necessary manifestation of the Absolute. Its origin was pushed back thousands and even millions of years into an unknown past. And soon theologians were engaged in various attempts to harmonize the doctrine of creation with the teachings of science and philosophy. Some suggested that the first chapters of Genesis should be interpreted allegorically or mythically; others, that a long period elapsed between the primary creation of Gen. 1:1,2 and the secondary creation of the following verses; and still others, that the days of creation were in fact long periods of time.

Since Berkhof wrote his Systematic Theology yet another view has come into prominence within the Reformed community, viz., the literary Framework Theory. Yet, it seems that the operating principle behind the Framework Hypothesis is the same. Meredith G. Kline, who is perhaps the leading proponent of this theory within the Reformed world at the present, wrote this in the last footnote of his paper, Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony: "In this article I have advocated an interpretation of biblical cosmogony according to which Scripture is open to the current scientific view of a very old universe and, in that respect, does not discountenance the theory of the evolutionary origin of man." Though Kline himself believes that there are good Biblical reasons for the direct creation of Adam, he wants the scientist to be "left free of biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins." Kline is concerned that the traditional view pits Scripture against science and ultimately against itself.

Though we believe the above to be a correct assessment of the situation, it is insufficient to discredit a theory solely because of its suspicious origin. Therefore, we must carefully examine the alternate approaches to the days of Genesis 1 in the light of Scripture.

Day-Age Theory

The first view that we will consider is the Day-Age or Geological Age Theory. Basically, this view says that the "days" of creation were actually long periods of time. Many believe that these "days" correspond roughly to the geological ages proposed by modern geology. The main argument in support of this theory is that the Hebrew word *yom* (יָוֶם) does not always signify a period of twenty-four hours. The claim is made that it can be used, as in Genesis 2:4, in reference to the entire creation week; and even in the first chapter of Genesis it sometimes denotes only that part of a day which we generally call "daylight" (vv. 5, 16, 18). Further, it is said that in several instances in the Old Testament *yom* refers to an indefinite period of time (Job 20:28; Ps. 20:1; Eccles. 7:14). However, Genesis 1 does not allow the days of creation to be anything other than normal days. Each of the creation days concludes with the phrase, 'And the evening and the morning were the ____ day.' The most natural meaning of this is that the days of creation consisted of periods of light and darkness that alternated in cycles of approximately twenty-four hours. This is further supported by the use of the ordinals ("first," "second," "third," etc.). Elsewhere in Scripture, whenever both criteria are used, literal days are always in view. The fourth commandment also refutes the Day-Age Theory, for it requires man to follow the pattern established by God in creation. What could it possibly mean for man to work six days and rest one if the days of creation were geological ages comprising millions of years? Furthermore, the verses used to support the idea that *yom* can refer to extended periods of time either use the plural ("days") or can be legitimately interpreted as one single twenty-four hour period.

The problem, as we have already noted, is that the Day-Age Theory begins by assuming the general accuracy of modern geology. Geologists have "shown" that the earth is the result of lengthy, natural processes; therefore, passages of Scripture that suggest or teach otherwise must be reinterpreted. However, this reverses the relationship between natural revelation and special revelation. While it is true that special revelation is often misinterpreted, it does not follow that natural revelation can or must become our guide. Natural revelation is inherently inadequate for this task, lacking the clarity, precision and completeness of special revelation. Indeed, natural revelation can be understood correctly only when its interpretation is guided by the Word of God. To reverse these roles is dangerous and endemic to the faith. Why? Because it implies (implicitly, if not explicitly) that we cannot trust Scripture to give us true and accurate information from God. Once a man is shown to have perjured himself in court, his entire testimony automatically becomes suspect. Whether the point in question concerns salvation or something else is beside the point.

Yet, even if the days of creation were intended as geological ages, Genesis would still conflict with modern science. Contrary to geology, Genesis teaches that God created birds before reptiles, plants before the sun, and fruit trees before sea creatures.

Punctuated Day Theory

Another alternative is the Punctuated Day Theory. Actually, this view holds that the days of creation were ordinary days, but it differs from the traditional view in that it allows long intervening periods between the six days. Thus, the actual creation week went something like this: Day One, then a few million years; Day Two, another few million years; Day Three, followed by still another few million years, etc. According to this view, the "days" highlight the creative activity of God. The New American Standard Bible allows for the Punctuated Day Theory, as we see in the way it translates the closing description of each day: "And there was evening and there was morning, one day.... And there was evening and there was morning, a second day," etc.

This view has the advantage of maintaining the literalness of the days, but it cannot escape the problem of relying too heavily on modern science. There is no Biblical warrant for inserting eons of time between the days of creation. Further, this view cannot accommodate the kind of evolutionary development that modern paleontology envisions, for it has each species of plant and animal life arising within twenty-four-hour periods. All land animals and man, for example, appear on the sixth day.

Gap Theory

Next comes the Gap Theory, which holds that there was a long interval of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3-31. During this time, Delitzsch says, God judged Satan and this resulted in the massive waste and darkness mentioned in Genesis 1:2. However, this requires changing the verb *was* to *became* in verse 2. Dispensationalists tend to favor this interpretation.

The problems with the Gap Theory are fatal. For one thing, *was* is certainly the correct rendering of the Hebrew verb in verse 2. Yet, without a change in this verse there is no other Scriptural warrant to justify a gap in the early verses of Genesis 1, for the usual passages that are cited (viz., Job 9:4-7; Isa. 24:1; 45:18; Jer. 4:23-26; 2 Pet. 2:4) do not speak about the original creation. Further, the Bible uniformly teaches that God made not only heaven and earth, but also all the hosts of them, in six days (Gen. 2:1; Exod. 20:11).

Framework Theory

Of all the alternatives to a literal interpretation of Genesis 1, the Framework Theory is the most insidious. It claims that the "days" of creation have nothing to do with time, but are "forms" or "images" designed by God to help us understand an otherwise unintelligible act of creation. Its basic approach to the first chapter of Genesis is thematic. It is as if a person takes a trip across the United States. When he returns, he arranges his photographs by subject rather than in the order in which they were taken. Hence pictures of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are on one page, pictures of the Rockies and Appalachians on another, and the deserts of California and New Mexico on a third. Those who hold to the framework theory find it necessary to interpret Genesis 1 in this way because exegesis compels a non-literal, non-chronological interpretation. Genesis 1 is, therefore, reclassified as a "literary device," "poetry" or "semi-poetic teaching device."

The exegetical considerations that supposedly compel a non-literal interpretation are of many different kinds. First, the sun was not created until Day Four (Gen. 1:14-19). Since the sun is the instrument used for measuring "days," the first three days could not have been what we now think of as "days." Second, God rested from his creative activity on the seventh day. Since then he has taken an eternal delight in his works (cf. Heb. 4). This, it is said, suggests that the seventh day is an eternal day and not a normal day. Now, if the first three days and the seventh day were not normal days, perhaps Days Four, Five and Six were not normal either. Genesis 2:5, accordingly, shows that God's *modus operandi* during the creation week was ordinary providence. This precludes any of the creation days from being normal twenty-four days because ordinary providence does not cause "oceans" to evaporate or animals to grow to maturity within such a short period of time. Thus, the creation account is regarded as figurative or poetic. Notice the correspondence between the first three days and the second three days: Day One (light), Day Four (light bearers); Day Two (separation of water and air), Day Five (fish and birds to inhabit the water and air); Day Three (dry land and plants), and Day Six (the inhabitants of dry land, including man and land animals).

Each of these considerations is easily answered. While it is true that the first three days were without the sun, they were not without light (which was created on the first

day) and this light, whatever its source was, waxed and waned in periods of "evening and morning." If time is defined as the succession of events, as Augustine said, this certainly qualifies. Even the length of the seventh day cannot be denied on the grounds that it was not described as "evening and morning." It differs qualitatively from the other six days, being a day of rest, not labor, and as such would allow an alternate closing. In fact, it seems that the early verses of Genesis 2 are just as definitive for the length of Day Seven as the other indicators are for the first six days. Notice, for example, that it is called the seventh day three times; that is, it is the seventh of whatever the first six were. If the first six days were normal days, the seventh day must be a normal day too.

As for Genesis 1 being poetry, it seems that there is an unspoken assumption that literary form and literal meaning are mutually exclusive. This necessarily involves an incomplete and defective view of language. Why must we assume that poetry is literally false? Are the Psalms literally false simply because they employ Hebrew parallelism? Jean-Marc Berthoud, a Swiss Reformed scholar, says, "What difficulty would it be for [the Sovereign Creator] to cause the most complex, refined literary form to coincide with the very way in which He Himself created all things in six days? Artistic form is in no sense opposed to an actual relation of facts, especially since the Author of the account is none less than the actual Creator of the facts which are described in that account...."

More to the point, Dr. Embree has already established that there is no reason to classify Genesis 1 as anything other than ordinary prose. We would add that the parallelism of the creation narrative, which supposedly warrants its reclassification as poetry, is not as exact as we are asked to believe. E.J. Young dealt with this in a rigorous argument covering several pages of his commentary on Genesis 1, but for our purposes I will quote just two paragraphs:

Do the second and fifth days parallel one another? On day two there is a twofold fiat ("let there be a firmament ... and let it divide") and the fulfillment consists of two acts of God ("God made ... divided"), followed by a further act ("God called"). On the fifth day there is also a twofold fiat ("let the waters bring forth ... and the fowl let it fly") and then comes a fulfillment consisting of a threefold creative act of God ("God created ... great whales ... every living thing ... every winged fowl") and this is followed by two additional acts of God ("God saw ... God blessed"). As far as form is concerned, the parallelism is by no means exact.

Nor is there exact parallelism in content. The swarming waters and their inhabitants which were created in the fifth day are not to be identified with the primeval waters of day two. Rather, it is expressly stated that the fish are to fill the waters in the seas (verse 22), and the seas were brought into existence on the third day. For that matter, if a mere parallel with water is sought, we may note that "the waters" and the "abyss" are mentioned in verse two also.

In a footnote Young says that this is sufficient "to show that the alleged parallelism between days two and five is an illusion."

Since Genesis 2:5 is a pivotal passage for defenders of the framework hypothesis, we want to deal with it separately. Mark Futato, who teaches at Westminster Seminary in California, believes that Genesis 2:5-7 is a "logical, highly structured, and perfectly coherent" presentation of two problems, their reasons and their solutions. The problems are stated in the first half of verse 5: there was neither "wild vegetation" (plant of the field) nor "cultivated grain" (herb of the field) in the earth. The reasons why these two kinds of plants did not exist are given at the end of verse 5: there was no wild vegetation because the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no cultivated grain because there was not a

man to till the ground. The solution to the lack of rain, which kept the wild vegetation from germinating, can be found in verse 6: God caused "rain clouds" (Futato's interpretation) to arise from the earth and water the whole ground. The absence of a cultivator is supplied in verse 7, where the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground. He concludes that these normal processes (rain and human cultivation) were present during the time of creation since these verses describe the origin of certain plants. In a footnote, he specifically says that "other biblical accounts of creation [Ps. 104:13 and Prov. 3:19-20 in particular, but probably including Job 38-39]... testify to the presence of rain from the beginning."

It seems that it is the concept of "other biblical accounts of creation" that causes the problem. The assumption seems to be that these other creation accounts diverge from each other so much that we must find a way to harmonize them. But a discrepancy appears only if we treat the other creation accounts as if they were independent of each other. In other words, we must assume the problem in order to find one. This is a clear case of *petitio principii* (begging the question). One would be hard-pressed to find any indication of chronological sequence in the other so-called accounts; yet, this is exactly what Genesis 1 purports to offer. If only one account claims to be chronological, the difficulty vanishes.

All this is to say that Genesis 2:4ff. is not a second version of the creation narrative. The account of the creation of heaven and earth concludes with Genesis 2:3. Genesis 2:4 begins with the phrase, "These are the generations. Many years ago." Dr. Young demonstrated that this phrase, which occurs several times in Genesis, always introduces the results of the previous section with a view toward analyzing some aspect in greater detail. Thus, Genesis 2:4 introduces a new section that concentrates on one part of the completed creation, namely, the creation of man. It first considers the environment in which man would appear and then narrates the creation of man and his helper. Thus, Genesis 2:5 functions as a detailed description of an already created world with specific information relating to man's place in that world. This being so, Genesis 2:5-7 anticipates the story that follows. Its function in the narrative is akin to the heading or subheadings of a newspaper article. That is, they provide the basic story, but the details of that story come in what follows afterward.

The plants mentioned in Genesis 2:5 are the same as those mentioned in Genesis 3:18. In fact, exactly the same words are used for herb of the field. Thus, Futato's definition of these plants as "wild vegetation" and "cultivated grain" is essentially correct. But what he misses is that neither of these kinds of plant life grew before the fall exactly as they grew afterward. When Adam sinned, God cursed the entire world: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread (Gen. 3:18-19). Wild vegetation became a hindrance and an annoyance to man; God himself provided rain to cause weeds to flourish in man's cursed world. Cultivated grain needed the tireless labor of a cultivator. No more would Adam and Eve simply reach out their hands to eat the abundant fruit of the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:5-7, then, helps the reader understand the drastic change that took place as a result of Adam's sin.

The Framework Theory, therefore, comes across as an unnecessary and fanciful answer to a non-existent problem. The church of Jesus Christ should not give it any credibility.

The Teaching of Scripture

Throughout Scripture, creation is spoken of as a six-day event. The clearest of these is the fourth commandment. When Moses gave the law to the Israelites, they knew what days were because they spent many of them out in the hot desert sun making bricks. The fourth commandment obligated them to follow the pattern for labor that God himself established at the very beginning. Now, if the days of Genesis

1 are not the same kind of days that we know today, then this commandment makes no sense. "God put together six images of creation and then rested forever; therefore, we must work six days and rest one day"? This is called the fallacy of equivocation; that is, the meaning of the terms is not consistent throughout the argument.

Kline recognizes the force of this argument, though he obviously does not want to admit it or accept it. He says, "The argument that Genesis 1 must be strictly chronological because man's six days of labor follow one another in chronological succession forces the argument unnecessarily." He does not say why he thinks so, but continues, "The logic of such argument would not allow one to stop short of the conclusion that the creation 'days' must all have been of equal duration and twenty-four hours at that." So it does. We are pleased that he agrees.

Conclusion

When the length of the days in Genesis 1 is discussed, believers are often reminded that science sometimes discovers information that requires the church to adjust its teaching. Did not the church hold once to the notion that the earth is the center of the universe? Was it not widely believed that our planet is a flat plane with four comers? Without Copernicus, Galileo and Columbus, we might still believe such things. Well, perhaps the same is true with the Biblical account of creation. If the church was wrong about the location and shape of the earth, could it be wrong about the length of creation days, too? Or are we so naive and provincial that the truth is over our heads?

Those who raise this objection ignore a very important fact: nowhere does the Bible teach that the earth is the spatial center of the universe or that it really has four corners. Passages that describe the earth in these terms employ obvious figures of speech. Sound principles of hermeneutics allow us to see this, and the same principles demand that God created the world in six consecutive days of approximately twenty-four hours in duration. Not only are there clear indications in the text of Genesis 1, but the entire Bible treats the early chapters of Genesis as literal history. There is not the slightest indication anywhere in the Word of God that the six days of creation were anything but ordinary days.

While the voice of the church down through the ages is not determinative of any doctrine (but is rather a witness to Biblical doctrine), it is helpful for us to see that the church has almost unanimously affirmed six-day creation. As Rev. Brice noted in his report, David W. Hall (a PCA minister) has done extensive research into the views of the Westminster divines and cannot find one who held to a figurative understanding. At least twenty-one divines are on record (either implicitly or explicitly) stating their agreement with Calvin, that God created the world "in the space of six days" (a phrase first used by Calvin and later quoted in the Irish Articles of Archbishop James Ussher and then repeated in the Westminster Confession). Given the etymology of this phrase, one wonders how anyone could be so naive as to think it allows for the possibility of long ages or a figurative interpretation of Genesis 1. Indeed, it was not until Enlightenment philosophy and natural religion entered the church that anyone thought it necessary to "harmonize" or "reconcile" the Biblical account of creation with the supposed facts of science. Sadly, some otherwise orthodox theologians fell prey to this kind of erroneous thinking, and today the church is even more willing to be led by science than it was then.

Why was the testimony of the church almost unanimous until the mid-nineteenth century? Dr. Embree shows that the basic issue in this debate is hermeneutics. Even the early church fathers, many of whom concentrated on allegorical and fanciful applications, generally acknowledged that there is in Scripture a literal meaning that can only be uncovered by the principles of what we call "historico-grammatical exegesis." That is, there are objective principles and laws that must govern any attempt to ascertain the meaning of a text. This is the only

intellectually honest approach to any piece of literature. The problem, however, is that hermeneutics has become increasingly subjective (especially since the time of Schleiermacher), thus allowing the interpreter to create and insert into the text whatever meaning suits his purpose. To put it plainly, there are no rules now. This has had devastating effects on Biblical research and especially on the church's understanding of creation.

Why does the RCUS insist that God created the world in six twenty-four hour days? Is it because we are backward and do not know any better? Many think this is the case. The real answer is that the Bible, when interpreted correctly (i.e., by the rules laid down in Scripture itself), allows no alternative. It is not that our attempt to evade this has been unsuccessful, for we do not want to evade it. Our response is what Martin Luther said to Charles V: "Here we stand; we cannot do otherwise."

This also implies that we are a confessional church: we confess the Bible. But because there are so many different opinions about what the Bible teaches, we have adopted subordinate standards that summarize what we believe, namely, the Three Forms of Unity (the Heidelberg catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort). These subordinate standards help us to unite in confessing the same faith.

Unfortunately, none of our confessions deals directly with the matter of six-day creation. The Belgic Confession has an article on the doctrine of creation but it does not specify the kind or length of days in Genesis 1. However, the Heidelberg catechism takes up the matter indirectly in relation to the fourth commandment. In Question 92 it quotes the entire text of Exodus 20:8-11, which specifically bases our observance of one day in seven upon the pattern that God himself followed when he formed the world. Unless the word day means a period of twenty-four hours in both instances, we have an excellent example of the fallacy of equivocation. At the very least, this would render the fourth commandment meaningless. Question 103 of the catechism supports this interpretation, for it distinguishes a "day of rest" from "all the days of my life." If this is not given as the proper interpretation of day in the fourth commandment and in the creation narrative of Genesis 1, then we are at a loss as to what the true meaning is.

Zacharias Ursinus, the chief author of the catechism, put forth the same argument in his commentary. He wrote, "The reason which is here given [for keeping the fourth commandment] is drawn from the example of God's resting on the seventh day from the work of creation which he had accomplished in six days" (p.558). and again, "That by the example of himself resting on the seventh day, he might exhort men, as by a most effectual and constraining argument, to imitate him, and so abstain, on the seventh day, from the labors to which they were accustomed during the other six days of the week" (p.561). Commenting on Question 26, he says that "God created the world, not suddenly, nor in a moment of time, but in six days" (p.145). Indeed, according to Pareus' calculations he believed that the world was only 5534 years old in 1616 (p.145).

Our conclusion, then, must be that the Heidelberg catechism teaches six-day creation. The RCUS affirmed this by its adoption of a position statement on the length of creation days in 1985. Since we admit no exceptions or scruples to our doctrinal standards, the RCUS requires all officers to teach, defend and promote the belief that God created the world in six normal days.