

Evangelical Commentaries on the Days of Creation in Genesis One

Simon Turpin, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, England.

Abstract

The length of the days of creation in Genesis 1 is a question today that generates much controversy. Both inside and outside the church, people mock the idea of God creating the world in six 24-hour days. Over the last 200 years Christian scholars have gone out of their way to try to find ways to fit the idea of millions of years of evolution into the text of Genesis 1 and today the majority of evangelical commentators on Genesis follow suit in their interpretation of the text. This paper will evaluate and critique six commentaries and the reasons they give for not taking the days of creation literally. While these commentaries are a great help in many ways, their stance on the days of creation is hindering the church's witness in a world dominated by evolutionary thinking.

Keywords: day, 24-hour, Genesis one, commentaries, Gordon Wenham, Victor Hamilton, Kenneth Matthews, Bruce Waltke, John Walton, C. J. Collins

Introduction

Why all the fuss concerning one word, *yom*, especially one that appears to have such little impact on Christian theology? It is probably fair to say that most Christians and Christian leaders today do not accept the days of creation in Genesis 1 as days of 24 hours. Is the text of Genesis then really that unclear with regards to the days of creation?

For much of church history the days of creation have been understood as a chronological sequence of days of 24 hours. Since the Reformation, with its emphasis on a consistent grammatical-historical hermeneutic to interpreting the Scriptures, the literal understanding of the days of creation has been the dominant view when it comes to interpreting Genesis. Even before the Reformation, the majority of Church Fathers understood the days in Genesis to be days of 24 hours. Although there may have been some Church Fathers who held to a figurative view of the days, they were not like the figurative understanding of the days that modern scholars hold to.

It was not until the rise of uniformitarian science in the 1800s that there was a re-evaluation of how the early chapters of Genesis were interpreted. The belief that the earth's history is millions of years old changed the way the days of creation were interpreted as it seemed that the geological data for an old earth was too convincing to maintain a belief in a literal view of the days (Mortenson 2009, pp. 83–104).

Today the vast majority of evangelical scholars who have written commentaries on Genesis do not interpret the days of creation to be 24 hours long. Some understand the days as spanning millions of years. Others view Genesis as being more concerned with teaching theology (God's relationship with the

universe) as opposed to its being concerned with cosmology (how the universe was created).

The question that needs to be asked is, why do these evangelical commentators not interpret the days literally? Is it because the text says something else? Are young-earth creationists reading something into the text rather than reading out of it God's intended meaning? Has science shown that a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 is unthinkable?

Dr. R.C. Sproul made the following helpful statement regarding what we should do when science and Scripture seem to conflict:

...if something can be shown to be definitively taught in the Bible without questioning, and somebody gives me a theory from natural revelation—that they think is based off of natural revelation—that contradicts the Word of God, I'm going to stand with the Word of God a hundred times out of a hundred. But again I have to repeat, I could have been a mistaken interpreter of the Word of God (Sproul 2012).

If it can be shown then that the definitive teaching of Genesis 1 is of six 24-hour days, then we need to ask ourselves whether we are going to stand with the plain teaching of the Word of God. Once we have established the actual teaching of Scripture, we will then have a solid foundation on which to stand. Unfortunately, far too often Christians assume that if anyone is wrong it has to be the person who is interpreting Scripture rather than questioning the sure and tested results of "science."

It is important to answer these questions since these commentaries are used by and influence seminary students, pastors, and lay people alike on the issue of the days of creation. This paper will evaluate the

reasons given by the scholars in their commentaries as to why they do not understand the days of creation to be literal and see whether their arguments are valid “exegetically and biblically” (Exodus 20:11).

To begin I will briefly explain the young-earth position on the meaning of the days of creation and defend the view that this position is a not a modern interpretation. Then we will examine the commentaries. The commentators who will be critiqued are: Gordon Wenham, Victor Hamilton, Kenneth Mathews, Bruce Waltke, John Walton and C.J. Collins. Their commentaries are probably the most popular and influential, modern-day evangelical commentaries on Genesis, which is why they have been chosen.

Young-Earth View of Day in Genesis 1

The young-earth view of Genesis 1 is that the Hebrew text is not written as myth, parable or poetry but as a chronological, historical narrative recording God’s divine acts of creation that occurred in space-time history (Kaiser 2001, pp.80–83).¹ The days of Genesis 1 are six literal 24-hour days (Exodus 20:11) which occurred around 6,000–10,000 years ago. The context of *yom* in Genesis 1 makes this clear (McCabe 2009, pp.225–228).

The Days in Church History

While the history of the teaching of the church should not rule our interpretation of Scripture, it can inform it. The idea that the days of creation are to be understood as days of 24 hours is seen by some as a modern interpretation:

Insistence that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 must be interpreted as six literal, twenty-four-hour days as we know...has not by any means been characteristic of all the great teachers of the church of the past. It seems rather to be the child of modern controversy (Culver 2006, p. 162).²

History, however, shows this to be patently false. Many of the Church Fathers understood the days in their plain and natural sense as days of 24 hours. Nevertheless, it seems that whenever the Church Fathers are brought up in the discussion over Genesis, there is either a preference over which Fathers to use or there is a misrepresentation of what they believed in order to support a particular view.

The truth of the matter, however, is that most biblical scholars before the rise of uniformitarian geology accepted Genesis as literal history, as did the Jewish historian Josephus (Josephus 1897, 1.1.1, 1.3.2).

The early Church Father Theophilus (AD181) of Antioch wrote “All the years from the creation of the world [to Theophilus’s day] amount to a total of 5,698 years...” Interestingly, Theophilus goes on to say of the chronology of the world set forth by the Greeks: “...yet not of thousands and tens of thousands, as Plato and Apollonius and other mendacious authors have hitherto written” (Theophilus 3:28, 29). The conflict over the age of the earth is not new but has always been a debate between pagans and Christians. Theophilus accepted that the chronology of the Bible was accurate and reliable.

Other early Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus believed the days of creation represented the future history of the world (of 1,000 years for each creation day) yet still believed that the days of Genesis 1 themselves were literal days (Mook 2009, pp.41–42). Lactantius (AD250–325), believed that the days in Genesis were six consecutive solar days. Whilst, Basil, the Bishop of Caesarea (AD370–379), also believed this saying that the words are to be understood by their plain meaning, and not to be allegorized (Mook 2009, pp.26–32). The medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) also agreed with six-day creation, as shown in his classic *Summa Theologica*:

Thus we find it said at first that “He called the light Day”: for the reason that later on a period of twenty-four hours is also called day, where it is said that “there was evening and morning, one day” (Aquinas 1947a).

Aquinas, speaking of the seventh day, went on:

Nothing entirely new was afterwards made by God, but all things subsequently made had in a sense been made before in the work of the six days (Aquinas 1947b).

Also the Reformers Martin Luther (1958, p.3) and John Calvin (1554, p.78) accepted the days in Genesis as days of 24 hours. As did John Wesley, who said concerning the age of the earth:

...the Scriptures being the only Book in the World, that gives us any Account, of the whole Series of God’s Dispensations toward Man from the Creation for four thousand Years... (Wesley 1763, vol.2, p.227).

Saint Augustine is often cited as someone who allegorized Genesis or took the days to represent long periods of time. In fact, the truth is that he did not believe the days were vast expanses of time or that the earth was very old. Rather, he believed that the earth was thousands of years old (Augustine 1467, 12:10), and he made precisely the opposite mistake of believing that creation was instantaneous, due

¹ Walter Kaiser believes in the day-age-theory but he does argue that Genesis 1 is history and chronological.

² Mark Noll in his book *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* also sees the young earth position as a modern invention. “Millions of evangelicals think they are defending the Bible by defending creation science, but in reality they are giving ultimate authority to the merely temporal, situated, and contextualized interpretations of the Bible that arose from the mania for science of the early nineteenth century” (Noll 1994, p.199).

to the outside influence of neo-Platonic philosophy. Augustine understood from Genesis 2:4 that everything was created simultaneously. However, he had to rely on the Old Latin translation of the Bible, the *Vetus Latina*, which mistranslated the Hebrew in this verse. Since he did not know Hebrew, he didn't know this and was most likely unaware that the Hebrew word for "instant" (*rega*—Exodus 33:5; Numbers 16:21) is not used in Genesis 2:4 (Sarfaty 2004, p.118).

The history of the teaching of the church on the days of creation lends extremely strong support to the 24-hour view being the correct interpretation of Scripture.

**Gordon J. Wenham,
Genesis 1–15: Word Biblical Commentary, 1987**

Gordon Wenham is a distinguished Old Testament scholar who has also authored commentaries on Numbers and Leviticus and written numerous articles for scholarly journals. He is currently a lecturer at Trinity College Bristol, England.

Wenham understands Genesis 1 to be unique in the Old Testament. He notes that it is neither typical poetry (Wenham 1987, p.10) nor normal Hebrew prose as "...its syntax is distinctively different from narrative prose." He instead calls it a "hymn" believing it to be elevated prose (Wenham 1987, p. 10). Wenham sees the use of phrases in day one that become a formula in the subsequent days as making the narrative highly stylized (Wenham 1987, p.37). Because of this, Wenham believes Genesis 1

...invites comparison with the psalms that praise God's work in creation (e.g., 8, 136, 148) or with passages such as Prov 8:22–31 or Job 38 that reflect on the mystery of God's creativity (Wenham 1987, p. 10).

Does Genesis, as Wenham and others claim, invite comparison with Hebrew poetry? Psalm 8 is often used as a comparison with Genesis. However, Robert Alter states:

The poem might be described as a kind of summarizing paraphrase of the account of creation in Genesis 1...The difference in form, however, between the two texts is crucial, and instructive. Genesis 1, being narrative, reports creation as a sequence of events...Psalm 8 assumes as a background this narrative process, but takes it up after its completion... (Alter 1990, p. 117).

Alter notes that the form of Genesis 1 is a sequential narrative which differs from that of the Psalms. The primary element of Hebrew poetry is parallelism and strophes with figurative language being more predominant than in prose and more difficult to understand (Osborne 2006, pp.238–239). Importantly, the characteristics of Hebrew poetry

are lacking in Genesis 1, in particular the absence of parallelism (Young 1964, pp.82–83). Although there may be a discussion concerning artistic elements of the Genesis creation account, there is compelling textual evidence to conclude that Genesis is not a poetic text (Blocher 1984, p.32; Hasel 1994, pp.19–21; Kaiser 2001, pp.80–82).

Wenham believes that historical and scientific questions were probably not on the author's mind, but are problems for the modern reader and that therefore the text should be read on its own terms and not ours (Wenham 1987, p.liii). Instead, the author's concern was a "polemic against pagan mythologies" (Wenham 1987, pp.xlv, 37).

While there could be truth in the suggestion that the author was concerned in giving a polemic against pagan mythologies, it is not clear from the text that this is the author's purpose. Even if Genesis were a polemic against other pagan mythologies this would not mean that we should not take the text in its plain sense. Nevertheless, there are several compelling exegetical and biblical arguments as to why we should reject Genesis as being a polemic against other pagan mythologies:

1. Truth, by its very nature, always functions as a polemic against what is false.
2. The *toledots* ("these are the generations of" in Genesis 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, etc.) strongly indicate that the content of Genesis 1–11 existed before any of the ancient Near East stories were written.
3. Paul says that people who worship idols are worshiping demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). So these ancient Near East stories from pagan idolatrous nations are demonically distorted versions of the truth. Genesis is not a modified version of the pagan myths. There is no biblical evidence that God ever uses myths as a basis to teaching truth. On the contrary, Scripture clearly distinguishes truth from myth (2 Timothy 4:4; 1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16).
4. There is no evidence in Genesis 1 that it was written for the conscious purpose of being a polemic (such as Galatians 1 or Romans 2 or 1 John indicate).
5. If Genesis 1 was written as a polemic, it is very subtle compared to the obviously polemical condemnations of pagan idolatry and false prophets by Moses (Exodus 32), Elijah (1 Kings 18), and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 23).
6. Moses had no motivation to give the Jews a polemic against ancient Near East pagan creation and flood myths, since they were not involved in evangelism and were told to destroy (or not associate with) the pagan nations around them. Also, they were leaving Egypt for good and would not enter Babylonia or Assyria until centuries later.

It is an assault on the character of the God of truth

to think that He would use idolatrous (and therefore demon-inspired) pagan stories mixing truth and error about creation and the Flood as a basis for telling His people the truth about these events.

Wenham reasons that because of the literary nature of Genesis 1, the chronological sequence is also not the narrator's concern (Wenham 1987, p. 19). He therefore advocates the framework view because of the structure of the days in Genesis 1 being symmetrical (Wenham 1987, pp. 6–7). Wenham offers four reasons for this:

- First, the literary devices used in the six day schema: repeating formulae, the grouping of words and phrases into tens and sevens, and literary techniques such as chiasm and inclusio and the arrangement of creative acts into matching groups.
- Second, evening and morning appear before the sun and moon.
- Third, Genesis 1 stands outside the main historical outline of Genesis (the *toledots*) therefore he sees it as an “overture” to the rest of the story and so it does not stand foursquare with the rest of Genesis.
- Fourth, all language about God is analogical, therefore we need not assume that “his week’s work was necessarily accomplished in 144 hours” (Wenham 1987, pp. 39–40).

Firstly, if chronological sequence was not the author's intent, then why did the author use a grammatical form [*wav* consecutive] that is regularly used to denote sequence of events (McCabe 2009, p. 217)? Even if symmetry existed in Genesis 1, this does not mean that chronology has been disposed of (Young 1964, p. 66). However, the symmetry that convinces Wenham et al. of the parallels between days 4–6 and days 1–3 just does not exist:

Environment		Contents	
Day 1	Heavens	Day 4	Sun, moon and stars
Day 2	Water and sky	Day 5	Fish and birds
Day 3	Land and plants	Day 6	Land animals and man

- Light on Day 1 is not dependent on the sun, as it was created on Day 4. Secondly, the waters existed on Day 1 and not only on Day 2.
- Water was made on Day 1 but the seas were not made until Day 3. The fish made on Day 5 were to fill the waters of the seas. The sea creatures of Day 5 were to fill the “waters in the seas,” which were created on Day 3 not Day 2, and none of the sea creatures or birds or land creatures other than man were to “rule” anything.
- On Day 2 it was not the sky that was created but the expanse *raqia* to separate the waters below from the waters above.
- On Day 4 we are told that God made the sun, moon, and stars in the expanse *raqia* (Genesis 1:17) and

that they were created to fill something that was created not on Day 1 but Day 2.

- Man was created on Day 6 not to rule over the land and vegetation (Day 3) but over the land animals created on Day 6 and the sea creatures and birds created on Day 5.

Unfortunately, the literary theory, a more “sophisticated” approach to Genesis 1, seeks to de-historicize the text. However, even if Genesis 1 did contain numerous literary devices it would not invalidate it as non-historical. For example, although there is much repetition in Genesis 1

...it takes the form one would expect from a list in an historical narrative in which a person states his intended action, does it—all shown by God's saying, seeing, blessing, calling etc.—and then assesses the result (Kay 2007, p. 96).

Of all the literary devices put forward, the grouping of words and phrases into numbers suffers most from the fallacy of begging the question.

The assertion that an apparent pattern of numbers necessarily indicates complete evacuation of historical content rests only upon itself. In other words, it is concluded to be a fact by re-circulating the premiss as the argument's conclusion (Kay 2007, p. 97).

Even in reference to Numbers 7:10–84, there is repetition of phrasing and numbers, but it is clearly a historical account of the dedication of the tabernacle.

Literary theorists often claim that the presence of chiasm signifies that the text is a-historical as chiasm is a common device in Hebrew poetry. However, chiasm is a literary device not confined to any one literary genre and is a genuine technique of ancient Near Eastern prose and isn't necessarily limited to poetry (Genesis 17:1–25; 18:1–16; 22:1–19; Leviticus 24:10–23) (Kay 2007, pp. 94–95). Furthermore, the employment of an

...inclusio technique suggests a tightly knit sequence is in place, and forbids random order or open ended chronology in the creation account (Craigie 2009, p. 207).

The argument for rejecting chronological sequence in order to accept the literary view of the days because evening and morning appears before the sun and moon is a common objection for many scholars (Mathews 1996, p. 149; Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 76). However, this argument is simply not valid. On the first day of creation God created light and although no light sources are mentioned, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a temporary light source existed up until Day 4. Is it really too difficult for the God who is light (1 John 1:5) to create a source of light without the sun or the stars? Not at all! He blinded Saul on the road to Damascus at noon and that light was not from the sun (Acts 9:3). Also, there will be no need for the sun in the new heavens and earth, because the presence

of the glory of God provides the needed illumination (Revelation 21:23). So, God is not dependent on the sun to produce the phenomenon of light.

Wenham's contention that Genesis 1 stands outside the main historical outline of Genesis (*toledot*) and, therefore, needs to be interpreted differently is invalid. There is no reason to separate Genesis 1:1–2:3 from the rest of the book. Bruce Waltke, who also sees Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a prologue, acknowledges that the ...narrator, however, binds the prologue to the first *toledot* by the catchwords "heaven and earth"... This intentional binding suggests that the narrator intends for the prologue to be understood as historical just as the ten *toledot* that follow (Waltke 2007, p. 189).

The first *toledot* in Genesis 2:4 is linked to Genesis 1 in the same way that Genesis 5:1 is linked back to the account of Adam in Genesis 4:25–26.

Wenham is not the only scholar who believes all language about God and the days are analogical (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p.77). Even if the language in Genesis 1 were analogical, John Calvin notes: "Such modes of expression...accommodate the knowledge of him [God] to our feebleness" (Calvin 1559, p.66). While the Bible does contain analogical language, there is more in Genesis 2 and 3 (Genesis 2:7; 3:8) than in Genesis 1. In fact analogical language is usually used to describe God's action in human form (for example, Exodus 15:3; Numbers 12:8; Isaiah 40:5). Analogical language never takes the form of a unit of time such as day (Beall 2009, p. 159).

Wenham correctly observes that in Genesis 1:5 "There can be little doubt that here 'day' has its basic sense of a 24-hour period" (Wenham 1987, p.19). However, because of his view of the literary nature of the text he believes that a divine (not a human) week is being described. Even though Wenham offers literary reasons for rejecting a chronological 24 hour sequence of the days of creation, "scientific discoveries" play a role in his interpretation. For example, he reasons

Astronomical knowledge makes it difficult to conceive of the existence of day and night before the creation of the sun... It must, therefore, be supposed that the first three days were seen as different... (Wenham 1987, p. 22).

Unfortunately, Wenham's hermeneutic is controlled more by "scientific discoveries" than by the text itself, the very thing he has already said must not be done.

Wenham believes it has been unfortunate that:

... the various creative acts to six days, has been seized on and interpreted over-literally, with the result that science and Scripture have been pitted against each other instead of being seen as complementary (Wenham 1987, p.39).

Wenham tries to avoid a science-versus-Bible debate believing that readers of Genesis 1 have been sidetracked and bogged down in attempting to

...squeeze Scripture into the mold of the latest scientific hypothesis or distorting scientific facts to fit a particular interpretation (Wenham 1987, p. 40).

What is really unfortunate is

1. Wenham actually does what he accuses of others (as noted above); and
2. Wenham's ascribing to Genesis 1 a genre that is foreign to the biblical text, by which he forces the text to speak of a literary framework that is non-existent and caricatures as "literalistic" those who understand the text naturally, according to its literature.

Victor P. Hamilton

The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 1990

Until 2007 Victor Hamilton was Professor of Theology at Asbury College in Kentucky and has written a two-part commentary on the book of Genesis.

Concerning the opening chapters of Genesis, Hamilton writes:

...the battlelines are drawn between the interpretation of the Creation story and scientific knowledge about the origin of the earth and mankind (Hamilton 1990, p.53).

Unfortunately, like Wenham (Wenham 1987, p.40) Hamilton raises a false dilemma between science and the Bible. There is no battle between the creation account in Genesis and science but between the Bible and fallible humans' beliefs about the past based upon their questionable, even anti-biblical, assumptions used to interpret the scientific evidence in the present.

Hamilton correctly affirms that a literal understanding of the word "day" in the Hebrew Bible is a day of one week (Hamilton 1990, p.53). Interestingly he states:

The burden of proof, however, is on those who do not attribute to *yom* in Gen. 1 its normal and most common interpretation, especially when *yom* is always described as being composed of an evening and morning (Hamilton 1990, p.53).

Hamilton, therefore, offers two caveats against a literal understanding to *yom*. Firstly he believes that this interpretation is not more spiritual and biblical and, therefore, is not inherently preferable. However, the issue is not whether the interpretation is more spiritual but whether the interpretation is biblical and reflects sound exegesis (of the historical grammatical method).

Secondly, he argues that a conservative reading of Genesis 1 does not always produce a conservative conclusion. Arguing against the liberal theologian James Barr's agreement with the "literalist" that

the author of Genesis was talking about literal days, Hamilton writes "...over the last few centuries science has shown that it is absurd and preposterous to think that the universe was created in one week" (Hamilton 1990, p. 53). Hamilton, however, believes that a literal understanding is not the only understanding of the text to keep biblical inerrancy from being refuted, something which he says never occurred to Barr (Hamilton 1990, p. 54). The other understanding that he proposes to be consistent with inerrancy is the literary interpretation which he says:

...leaves open the possibility for taking "day" literally or nonliterally...[and] still permits the retention of "day" as a solar day of 24 hours. But it understands "day" not as chronological account of how many hours God invested in his creating project, but as an analogy of God's creative activity (Hamilton 1990, pp. 54–56).

With regards to James Barr, Hamilton misses the point entirely with regards to what he is actually saying concerning Genesis. Barr is simply stating that sound exegesis of the biblical text, which includes the author's intended meaning, leads to the conclusion that the days of creation are the chronological days of 24 hours that we now experience. Because Hamilton sees "science" (which is really a naturalistic interpretation of the facts) as having shown this to be "absurd," he prefers the literary view as it "...leaves open the possibility for taking 'day' literally or nonliterally." He reasons:

The eight creative acts in Genesis 1 are over a six day period. This pattern is further evidence of the author's intention to describe the creation schematically (Hamilton 1990, p. 125). (See Wenham above for refutation.)

Regarding the interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2, Hamilton believes that verse 1 functions as both a superscription and as a summary statement and is equivalent to the colophon "these are the generations of," while he believes verse 2 "...describes the situation prior to the detailed creation that is spelled out in vv. 3ff" (Hamilton 1990, p. 117).

If Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement then this would mean it is not part of the first day. Genesis 1:1, however, is an independent clause of God's initial act of creating the universe, while the second verse does not introduce consecutive action because it is a disjunctive clause which distinguishes verse 2 as circumstantial, describing the unformed and unfilled condition of the earth after the initial creation. The narrative of events goes from verse 1 to verse 3. Verse 2 is not a narrative of events but a description of what the earth is like. The fact that Genesis 1:1 is not a heading or a summary statement is evident

...from the fact that the following account of creation commences with the *waw* (and) which connects the

different acts of creation with the first expressed in ver. 1, as the primary foundation on which they rest (Keil and Delitzsch 1886, p. 46).

Furthermore, Exodus 20:11 teaches that God made everything in six days—he did not make anything before the first day. Exodus 20:8–11 has a number of connections with the Creation week: a "six-plus-one" pattern, "the heavens and the earth," "the seventh day," "rested," "blessed," and "made it holy." All of this suggests that, at the least, one of God's purposes in creating the heavens and the earth within six, successive literal days followed by a literal day of rest was to set up a pattern for his people to follow. Also, Exodus 20:8–11 uses an adverbial accusative of time ("in six days") which indicates the duration of God's creative activity (Waltke and O'Connor 1990, p. 171). Exodus 20:11 stands firmly against putting Genesis 1:1 or 1:1–2 before the beginning of Day 1 (supposedly at Genesis 1:3).

Hamilton comments on Genesis 1:5 arguing that the repetitive phrase about evening and morning is not a foolproof indication that the Old Testament reckons a day from sunset to sunset. He gives evidence that a day was from sunrise to sunrise (Genesis 19:33–34; Judges. 6:38; 21:4), leading him to believe the

...refrain in Genesis refers not to the computation of a day but rather to the "vacant time till the morning, the end of a day and the beginning of the next work" (Hamilton 1990, p. 121).

Unfortunately, Hamilton's choice of verses is arbitrary and do not prove his point regarding the meaning of evening and morning. However, the fact that the Old Testament sometimes refers to a day being from sunrise to sunrise, does not in any way negate the fact that very often a day is from sunset to sunset. Nevertheless, the refrain in Genesis 1 there was

... "evening" and "morning" are respectively used to represent the conclusion of the daylight portion of a literal day, when God suspended his creative activity, and the reemergence of daylight, when God resumed another day of his creative work (McCabe 2000, p. 109).

Deuteronomy 16:4; Exodus 20:8–11; 31:14–17 would clearly support this conclusion.

Kenneth A. Mathews

Genesis 1–11:26: The New American Commentary, 1996

Dr. Mathews is a professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University. He is an acknowledged expert in the Dead Sea Scrolls, text criticism, biblical Hebrew and literary study of the Old Testament.

Mathews identifies two central problems that underlie the diverse interpretations of biblical creation:

- What is the proper relationship between Scripture and modern science?
- What is the literary genre of the Genesis description?

Mathews correctly rules out understanding Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a theological parable or story as we would have a theology of creation grounded neither in history nor the cosmos (Mathews 1996, p. 110).

However, he believes it is not “...the same kind of history writing as Genesis 12–50, or even chaps. 3–4, and it is quite different from Samuel and Kings” (Mathews 1996, p. 109). For Mathews, Genesis 1:1–2:3 does not clearly fit a traditional literary category. Unfortunately, Mathews gives no reasons for these bald assertions they are simply based on his own authority. Nevertheless, he states that although “...it comes closest to ‘narrative,’ we must conclude that it is a unique piece of literature.”

There can be no doubt that Genesis 1 is definitely a unique piece of literature. However, this is surely partly because of the unique events recorded. Furthermore, this does not make it unique in its form. Gerhard Hasel states:

...it is hardly *sui generis* [its own genre] in an exclusive literary sense which will remove it from communication on a factual, accurate and historical level (Hasel 1994, p. 20).

The liberal scholar Claus Westermann understands what Genesis 1:1–2:3 clearly implies:

The average reader who opens the Bible to Genesis 1 and 2 receives the impression that he is reading a sober account of creation, which relates facts in much the same manner as does the story of the rise of the Israelite monarchy, that is, as straightforward history (Westermann 1964, p. 5).

Mathews is convinced by the “literary symmetry” of Genesis 1:1–2:3 because the passage possesses a parallelism between the six days in which the creative acts of productivity in Days 1 to 3 correspond to the works of populating in Days 4 to 6 (see refutation in Wenham above). Although the symmetry does not preclude an historical telling of early Genesis it “...suggests at most that 1:1–2:3 may be topical in arrangement and dischronologized” (Mathews 1996, p. 110). It should be noted that a closer look at the days reveals the parallels that are often claimed to exist are simply not found in the text. Therefore, there is no need to view the text as dischronologized because of the supposed literary symmetry. However, even if the literary symmetry was there, as Young notes: “Why, then, must we conclude that, merely because of symmetry arrangement, Moses, has disposed of chronology” (Young 1964, p. 66).

Another argument Mathews raises for dismissing a chronological hermeneutic is that there was no sun for the first three days. For Mathews, this creates a

world difficult for us to envisage, where vegetation (Day 3) flourishes before the existence of the sun (Day 4), and where the concluding refrain about evening and morning on Days 1 to 3 presupposes a planetary situation that could not have existed without a sun (Mathews 1996, p. 110) (for refutation see Wenham above).

He goes on to say concerning the fourth day:

The creation narrative sends ambiguous signals since on the one hand the refrain “evening and morning” suggests a normal solar day, yet the sun was not created until the fourth day (Mathews 1996, pp. 148–149).

This objection is central to Mathew’s argument, although he admits that understanding “day” as a solar day on Day 4 has the advantage of its simplicity. Nevertheless, for him there are many indications (for his other indications see below) that “day” in its customary sense may not be intended. The most obvious indication is the sun’s absence for the first three “days” (Mathews 1996, p. 149).

The “ambiguous” signal Mathews supposes that Genesis sends is not existent within the text but in the presupposition of the need for the sun before evening and morning. On Day 1 God created light (Genesis 1:3) and all that is needed for evening and morning for the first few days is a light source, not necessarily the sun, and a rotational earth. Victor Hamilton even notes:

The creation of light anticipates the creation of sunlight... What the author states is that God caused the light to shine from a source other than the sun for the first three “days” (Hamilton 1990, p. 121).

Mathews at least recognizes that evening and morning suggest a normal 24-hour day (Mathews 1996, p. 149). Nevertheless, his arguments for discounting chronological sequence are not textual. Genesis 1 clearly teaches that God created light on Day 1 and created the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4.

When it comes to interpreting the days of creation, Mathews holds to the literary framework. Therefore he believes that the sequence of “evening and morning” is rhetorical, establishing the literary scheme of the creation week by distinguishing six units or “days” (Mathews 1996, pp. 147–148). Also, because each of the seven days are numbered and indefinite (that is, a second day) he sees this as fitting a sequential pattern rather than to strictly delimited units of time (Mathews 1996, p. 148).

Although evening and morning having a rhetorical function, they are part of a five-fold structure of God’s creative activity and cessation:

Narration: “God said...”

Commandment: “Let there be...”

Fulfilment: “There was”

Evaluation: “God saw that it was good”

And conclusion: “there was evening and morning” They are followed by a sequential number on each of the first six days which show that they are normal days of 24 hours. This five-fold structure is integrated with the use of the *wav* consecutive, which is used in Genesis 1 to advance the narrative (McCabe 2009, pp. 225–227).

Are the days indefinite, as Mathews suggests, fitting a sequential pattern rather than units of time? The Hebrew definite article is used with Days 1, 6, and 7 but is not attached to *yom* on Days 2 through 5. Mathews’s objection overlooks the significance of the opening and closing definite articles. Hasel points out:

Since the first and sixth days are definite, providing a clear boundary, the days are meant to be chronological and sequential, forming an uninterrupted six-day period of literal 24-hour days of creation. Thus, the definite use of the first and sixth days respectively mark and frame the six-day sequence into a coherent sequential and chronological unit of time, which will be repeated in each successive week (Hasel 1994, pp. 27–28).

The employment of the definite articles at the beginning and end of the narrative suggests that a firmly knit sequence is in place and removes the idea of a random chronology in the account or the idea of a non-chronological account.

Mathews’s other indications that day in its customary sense may not be intended are that *yom* is a designation for the “daylight” of the first creative day, not a reference to a full solar day (Genesis 1:5), and that it is used as a temporal expression for the entire creative period of six days “...in the day that they were created (Genesis 2:4)”. Mathews recognizes the argument used that when “day” occurs in the singular, with a number, or in a numbered series, it always means “solar day” or “daylight,” and never an undefined period of time. Yet he says it is begging the question to argue on this basis since it assumes that the author could not use a numbered series to describe non-literal days sequentially (Mathews 1996, p. 149). So why do none of the Old Testament authors do this? This merely begs the question itself.

Additionally, how can we have evening in the daylight of the first day? The phrase “there was evening and there was morning, the xth day” can’t possibly refer to anything but the first whole (24-hour, but not “solar”—there was no sun yet) day. Also, in a numbered series does *yom* ever mean daylight (as opposed to the daylight period of a 24-hour day) or just to the daylight portion of a 24-hour day (rather than to the whole 24-hour day)? Moreover, it is not logically proper to call the first three days of Creation

week “solar days” because there was no sun to make them “solar” days.

In Genesis 1:5 two primary meanings for the word “day” appear in the same verse: daytime and the whole 24 hours. The singular use of “day” (*yom*) in Genesis 2:4 is often cited as evidence to demonstrate that the word refers to the entire Creation week. However, the word here is used with the preposition *be* prefixed to the construct noun *yom* resulting in “*beyom*.” These words are followed by an infinitive construct verb. This construction “*beyom*,” meaning “when” (McCabe 2000, p. 117)³ is often simply translated idiomatically summarizing the entirety of the six days of creation. Therefore, to use the word “day” here as an example of the days being figurative in chapter 1 is a failure to recognize the difference between the absolute and numbered noun “day” (Genesis 1) and the construct noun “day” (Genesis 2:4).

In light of all of Mathews’s arguments against the days being literal, it is the age of the earth that seems to be the controlling factor in his interpretation of Genesis, for he states:

...modern interpreters are puzzled by the brevity of creation in light of geology’s testimony of the age of the earth (Mathews 1996, p. 148).

Unfortunately, Mathews does not see the bigger picture concerning the days when he says:

There is much in the Bible regarding creation but little concerning creation’s “six days”...in contrast to the modern fascination with the days (Mathews 1996, p. 148).

The reason there is a “fascination” in our modern era with the days of creation is because that is where the secularists have aimed their missiles.

Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks Genesis: A Commentary, 2001

Dr. Bruce Waltke is a Reformed evangelical professor of the Old Testament and Hebrew and has taught at a number of leading seminaries. Waltke left Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando in 2010 because of his stand on evolution and currently teaches at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Waltke recognizes that the “...historicity and scientific accuracy of the creation account has been the subject of much controversy and debate” (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 74). He advocates the literary framework view of creation, believing Genesis not to be about science or history but about theology (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, pp. 76–78). Waltke rejects the 24-hour meaning of day because it poses “scientific and textual difficulties,” namely that “most scientists reject a literal twenty-four-hour period” (Waltke with

³ For the same usage of this word see Genesis 2:17 and Exodus 10:28.

Fredricks 2001, p. 61). The word “day” he believes is part of the literary framework designed to illustrate the orderly nature of God’s creation (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 61).

Waltke states that:

Questions concerning the relationship of the Genesis creation account and science can only be addressed intelligently by determining the literary genre of Gen. 1:1–2:3 (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 74).

He understands that determining the genre must be founded upon the text.

He believes the author represents himself as an historian who gives an essentially chronological succession of events, using the Hebrew narrative verb form to validate his material by locating the story in time and space (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 29). Waltke believes that a careful textual analysis of Genesis 1 reveals that it is problematic to assign the passage to myth, science, history, or theology thereby rejecting Genesis as a myth or as science (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 74). While he believes Genesis 1 has historical elements to it in the sense that God created the cosmos and all that is in it, he does not believe it is straightforward history (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 75). He writes:

The creation account is unlike any other history. History is generally humanity recounting its experiences. The Genesis creation account is not a record of human history, since no humans are present for these acts (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 76).

As we have seen, Genesis 1 is a unique chapter although this does not make it unique in its form. Waltke’s belief concerning the genre of Genesis is purely arbitrary. Although no humans were present at creation, God was, and He has revealed the truth of those events to us through Scripture (Romans 5: 12–14; 1 Timothy 2:13–14). There is no legitimate reason to limit facts of history to human witness when God was a witness to His own act of creation. Furthermore, there is no difference in Genesis 1 grammatically and in form to the other historical accounts in Genesis as there is no break in the literary style in the first 12 chapters. These are all in the same literary category as they use the same rubric “*toledot*” to tell the story (Kaiser 2001, p. 82).⁴

Waltke believes Genesis 1:1–2:3 is a prologue representing the creation of the cosmos and is separate from the rest of the book (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 17). He rejects the idea that Genesis 1:1 functions as the first event of creation rather than a summary of the account because the grammar makes this impossible (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 58). He writes that

God did not create in time but with time (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 57). Waltke believes, “beginning” in Genesis 1:1 “refers to the entire created event, the six days of creation, not something before the six days” and therefore believes it to be a relative beginning. As verse 2 seems to indicate, there is a pre-Genesis time and space (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 58). He goes on to say concerning verse 2 that “There is no word of God creating the planet earth or darkness or the watery chaos” which is why Genesis 1:2 tells us nothing about an old or a young earth (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 59). This leads Waltke to conclude that “Chronologically, this must describe the state of the earth prior to verse 1” (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 60).

Waltke is mistaken with regards to Genesis 1:1–2:3 being a prologue. He thinks that the *toledots* in Genesis serve as headings, marking a transition and introducing the descendants of the account that follows (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, pp. 17–18). However, the only place where *toledot* is not found as a heading is Genesis 1:1–2:3 and this is because there was nothing created prior to it (Mathews 1996, p. 35). Unlike the other uses of *toledot* in Genesis, this is the only time the genitive phrase does not contain a personal name. The reason for this is that Adam as the first man had no direct predecessors. The purpose of the *toledot* in Genesis 2:4 is twofold. First, it looks back at Genesis 1:1–2:3. Brevard Childs understands the *toledot* to formulate the structure of Genesis and the role of the *toledot* in Genesis 2:4 “is to connect the creation of the world with the history which follows” (Childs 1979, p. 146).

Second, Genesis 2:4 also

...connects 2:4–25 with 1:1–2:3. First, while v. 4 looks back to 1:1–2:3, its main purpose is to shift attention to the creation of man and his placement in the garden (McCabe 2006, p. 73).

Genesis 1:1 is not a summary statement. This is evident from the fact that Genesis 1:1 is an independent statement describing the absolute creation of all things, while in verse 1 the verb is in the perfect tense form and in verse 3 the *wav* consecutive verb is used. Verse two, however, begins with a *wav* disjunctive (the *wav* conjunction is attached to the noun “the earth” rather than being connected to the imperfect verb). This means that verse 2 is a parenthetical statement saying something about what the earth was like when God first created it (just as Jonah 3:3b says something about Nineveh but is not part of the action of the narrative). The narrative of events goes from verse 1 to verse 3. Verse 2 is not a narrative of

⁴ The Hebrew word *toledot* is translated as “these are the generations of” or “this is the account of” in Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9 and eight other times throughout Genesis, tying the whole book together as a unity. There are scholars who agree with Wiseman that the *toledots* are endings to their sections signifying who the author or custodian of that text was as it was passed on through the patriarchs to Moses. See Taylor 1994.

events but a description the initial state of the earth, providing three circumstantial clauses to describe the existing conditions when God said, “Let there be light.” Waltke’s statement that God “did not create with time but in time” is meaningless. Time has a beginning (Genesis 1:1) and God is not subject to it (2 Peter 3:8) as He is the Creator of it. As human beings we clearly experience time because we were created in time (Genesis 1:26–27).

Waltke rejects fiat creation believing instead that God created the cosmos through “successive days” which serve as a paradigm for his development of humanity through successive eras of history (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 61). However, this overlooks not only what the text of Genesis states but what the rest of Scripture reveals about our Creator. No significant amount of time is needed in Genesis 1 because God works primarily through fiat supernatural creation speaking His creation into being.

This can be seen from Psalm 33:6, 9 where it says that “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made...for He spoke, and it was done;...” Hebrews 11:3 also affirms that the world was made by “the word of God.” The author of Hebrews has in mind the divine command “...Let there be light;...” (Genesis 1:3) interpreting it in the fashion of Psalm 33:6, 9 (Bruce 1990, p. 279). The divine command “let there be” is a jussive verb which is followed by “and it was so,” revealing rapid fulfilment of that command. Because God is the Creator of time, He does not need time to create. The New Testament bears witness to this through the miracles of the Creator of the world, Jesus Christ, who is called “the Word” (John 1:1–3). We see this most clearly with His encounter with the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:5–13 where the centurion’s servant was healed the very moment Jesus commanded it. All His miracles in fact were instantaneous.

Waltke gives several reasons for thinking the events in Genesis 1 are dischronologized in order to give a theological point:

- God created evening, morning, and days without luminaries and then created the luminaries in order to affect them.
- The order of events in the 1st and 2nd creation accounts differ (that is, Genesis 1:1–2:3; 2:4–25).
- It is also difficult to imagine that Adam named all the animals (both domestic and wild), underwent an operation, woke up, and composed a poem all within the daylight hours of the sixth day.
- The narrator speaks of the first five days as “a day”, not “the day.” (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 76)

Waltke’s arguments concerning the dischronologization of the days may seem convincing at first but under closer examination they do not hold up.

Firstly, all that is needed for a day-night cycle is a rotating earth and light coming from one direction. Genesis 1:1–5 clearly tells us that God created light on Day 1 as well as the earth.

Second, there is no contradiction between Genesis 1 and 2 when the text is closely examined. After being introduced to the creation of the world in the first chapter, the author focuses in chapter two on man and women in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2 gives no account of the creation of the heavens and earth, the expanse (firmament), sun, moon, stars, land, sea creatures, and creeping things. In other words, Genesis 1:1–2:3 gives us a wide-angle lens view of the whole Creation week, whereas Genesis 2:4–25 gives us the telephoto-zoom lens view of some of the events on Day 6. It is often the case in the ancient Near East that Semitic historians gave an historical overview followed by a recap of the details concerning events that have already taken place (Keil and Delitzsch 1886, p. 87) (Genesis 10–11 have a similar relationship—see also 1 Kings 6–7).

The third argument raised by Waltke is unwarranted given the fact that no time duration for the events is given in the text concerning what took place on Day 6. Waltke has to assume that a large number of animals were named, but again the text does not say how many animals Adam had to name. Genesis 2:20 tells us that Adam only named the cattle, beasts of the field, and birds of the air. He did not have to name the sea creatures, the beasts of the earth, or creeping things.

He also has to discount the fact that God miraculously put Adam to sleep to create Eve, which, for the Creator of the universe, could take no time at all. Lastly, regarding the lack of the article on each of the first five days, Andrew Steinmann states:

...by omission of the article it must be read as “one day,” thereby defining a day as something akin to a twenty-four hour solar period with light and darkness and transitions between day and night, even though there is no sun until the fourth day. This would explain the lack of definite articles on the second through fifth days. Another evening and morning constituted “a” (not “the”) second day (Steinmann 2002, pp. 583–584).

Waltke’s real reason for rejecting the days as a strict historical account seems clear when he states:

Contemporary scientists almost unanimously discount the possibility of creation in one week, and we cannot summarily discount the evidence of the earth sciences (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 77).

But majority vote doesn’t determine truth and the Ph.D. scientists who are young-earth creationists don’t “summarily discount” the “evidence” presented by old-earth geologists. Rather, it is rejected after careful analysis of that “evidence.” Furthermore,

contemporary scientists almost unanimously discount the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus, but Waltke doesn't have any problems believing the Bible on those points. So there is a serious inconsistency in Waltke's reasoning here. Interestingly, even secular scholars recognize that understanding Genesis in its "literal" or plain sense has been a help and not a hindrance to science (Harrison 2002, pp. 14–15).⁵

In order to confirm this idea concerning the earth sciences Waltke appeals to general revelation in creation as the voice of God: "We live in a 'universe,' and all truth speaks with one voice" (Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 77). This is a maxim that is frequently recited by those who believe in an old earth. However, we must remember that general revelation is referred to as "general" revelation because it has a general content and is revealed to a general audience. Robert L. Thomas rightly notes the problems with the maxim "all truth is God's truth":

Though all truth is God's truth, truth exists in varying degrees of certitude.

Though all truth is God's truth, all truth does not rest on the same authority.

...probably the major flaw in an integrative watchword that all truth is God's truth derives from wrong assumptions about the range of general revelation...information and discoveries originating in secular fields do not belong in the category of God's revealed truth. They therefore, have no basis for a ranking alongside God's special revelation (Thomas 2002, pp. 121–124).

Since general and special revelation both proceed from God, they cannot ultimately conflict each other and they do not when they are correctly interpreted in the light of Scripture (Psalm 119:30). Two more additional important points must be made:

1. Richard Mayhue persuasively argues in his chapter of *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*: The content of "general revelation" is the existence and attributes of God. Scripture does not say that by studying creation alone (apart from the special revelation of Scripture) we can reconstruct the past history of the earth so that we are without excuse if we reject that "truth." Rather Scripture (for example, Romans 1:18–20; Psalm 19:1; 97:6; Job 12:7–10; Jeremiah 31:35–36,) says that the Creation infallibly reveals the Creator, so that unbelievers of all sorts are without excuse for not honoring Him as God (Mayhue 2009, pp. 105–129).
2. Not all truth claims are actually true. There are lots of "truths" that are accepted by "all scientists" that are false (the history of science repeatedly

demonstrates this as scientists are constantly correcting the textbooks). So scientific "truth" is not infallible, whereas special revelation given in the Bible is infallible and unchanging.

This does not mean that we cannot learn anything from studying nature. It just means that our interpretation of what we observe must be consistent with the infallible revelation of Scripture. It is the eyewitness testimony that enables us to correctly interpret the physical evidence in the present as we seek to reconstruct the past history of the Creation, just as a police detective uses reliable eyewitness testimony to understand the circumstantial evidence at the scene of a dead body to figure out who committed the crime in the past. Therefore, it is not biblically sound to call the evidence a scientist uncovers as "general revelation."

John H. Walton

The NIV Application Commentary Genesis, 2001

John H. Walton is a professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. As well as writing a commentary on Genesis, Walton has written a book entitled *The Lost World of Genesis One*, which argues that Genesis 1 does not provide an account of material origins but functional origins.

Walton accepts the Bible as God's revelation of Himself and consequently writes:

I am committed to accepting without question whatever God has revealed. If I am convinced, for instance, that the Bible teaches a global flood, my worldview of faith dictates that whatever scientific or logical problems may exist must be set aside in deference to the text (Walton 2001, p. 43).

Yet he goes on to say that he does not want to bring the text into disrepute and subject it and ourselves to ridicule by making claims for the Bible that it never makes for itself. Walton gives as the example of the misplaced faith of the medieval church and their opposition to Galileo (Walton 2001, pp. 43–44).

Walton recognizes that

the seven day structure and the meaning of the word *yom* serve as the nucleus around which the theories and problems of Genesis 1 revolve (Walton 2001, p. 80).

He notes that

the idea of creation in seven days serves as one of the main sticking points in the attempts to harmonize science and Scripture (Walton 2001, p. 80).

Walton believes that Genesis 1–11 belongs to the genre of myth rather than history (Walton 2001, pp. 27–31). He suggests that in the ancient world mythology was like science in the modern world, that

⁵ Harrison (2002) recognizes that: "Had it not been for the rise of the literal interpretation of the Bible and the subsequent appropriation of biblical narratives by early modern scientists, modern science may not have arisen at all. In sum, the Bible and its literal interpretation have played a vital role in the development of western science."

is to say, it represented their explanation of how the world came into being and how it worked. Mythology, then, served as a window to culture, that is, as a reflection of the worldview and values of the culture that forged it (Walton 2001, p.27).

Walton acknowledges that Genesis is made up of a number of different types of literature, with narrative being the most prominent. However, he goes on to say that “identifying something as narrative is not the same as identifying it as history” as he believes narrative can be used for mythology (Walton 2001, p.45).

By using ancient Near East literature Walton is going outside of the Bible, which is committing *eisegesis*—reading meanings “into” the biblical text as opposed to “out of” the biblical text *exegesis*, this is to substantiate what he wants the Bible to say in order to accommodate those views.

There is much dissimilarity between the ancient Near Eastern accounts and the Bible. For example, how does one explain the polytheism, the theogony (creation of the various gods) the cosmic wars, the magic that is at the center of these epics. These are not found in the Bible. The Scriptures on the other hand give a true historical, chronological account of the event.

Furthermore, Genesis 1–11, while written as narrative, records events that took place in space-time history. In Genesis 11–12 there is no transition from non-historical to historical and it is not treated as a separate literary category from Genesis 12–50. Genesis 12 begins with a *waw* consecutive verb, *wayomer* (“and he said”) indicating that what follows is a continuation of chapter 11 and not a major break in the narrative. Genesis 1–11 also contains the same characteristics of historical narrative as Genesis 12–50, most of Exodus, much of Numbers and 1 and 2 Kings (see Mathews 1996). Genesis 1–50 is all in the same literary category as they use the same rubric “*toledot*” to tell the story (Kaiser 2001, p.82).

He points out that while some attempt to understand Genesis 1 as poetic/figurative and theological he says that, taken at face value, these approaches do not work (Walton 2001, p.82). While Genesis may contain poetic qualities, Walton believes this does not demonstrate that it is figurative (Walton 2001, p.83).

Walton admits that at face value

If we add up numbers, the result is something like the scheme devised in the seventeenth century by Bishop James Ussher, who assigned creation to 4004 BC.

However he goes on to say: “But we must ask whether the text as at face value requires us to add up numbers.” He says this because he believes that the genealogies have gaps (Walton 2001, pp.48–49).⁶

When it comes to interpreting Genesis 1:1, Walton asks what “in the beginning” (Hebrew: *beresit*) refers to (Walton 2001, p.67). Is it the beginning of time, history, matter, the universe, the human race or is it simply a literary beginning (that is, the beginning of the story)? In order to answer this question, Walton says we need to consider our methodological assumptions as the above question works on the fact that the word “beginning” indicates the beginning of something. He queries whether the Hebrew carries the same implication as the English (Walton 2001, p.67). Although Walton admits the Hebrew can use *beresit* to refer to the beginning of something, he refers to John Sailhamer who suggests that *beresit* refers to an initial period or duration rather than to a specific point in time, as for example in Job 8:7 and Jeremiah 28:1 (Walton 2001, p.68). While it is true that *beresit* is sometimes used this way (Jeremiah 28:1), Walton’s conclusion is very dubious.

Context must always govern interpretation. Bildad’s comment about Job is obviously referring in general terms to the beginning period and end period of Job’s life, not a precise moment in time. In contrast what God said He did “in the beginning” as well as God’s commentary on Genesis 1 in Exodus 20:11 clearly indicates that Genesis 1:1 is referring to the absolute beginning of creation. In Jeremiah, “in the beginning” is modified by “of the reign of Zedekiah.” However in Genesis 1:1 there is no such modifier. In Genesis 1:1 *beresit* is used in the absolute state and is independent of the verbal clause (“God created”) while the *qal* perfect verb (*bara*), refers to an action rather than a state of being.

The next question Walton asks is “what portion of the text was contained in this initial period?” (Walton 2001, p.69). Walton understands Genesis 1:1 as a dependent clause believing the best rendering of the text to be: “When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being unformed and void...God said (NJPS).” Walton gives two reasons to support this option:

1. The book of Genesis typically operates literarily by introducing sections with a summary statement. Thus, for example, beginning in Genesis 2:4 and ten additional times throughout the book, a *toledot* statement introduces a section.
2. Even more persuasive is that the account of the six days closes with the comment that “the heavens and the earth” were completed (Genesis 2:1) (Walton 2001, p.70).

This leads Walton to believe that the text is not suggesting that anything was actually created in Genesis 1:1. Rather it is a literary introduction, a summary of what follows with the initial period indicated by the word *beresit* not being described in verse 1 but in all of chapter 1 (Walton 2001, p.70).

⁶ See Pierce and Ham 2010 for a refutation of there being gaps in the Genesis genealogies.

Walton's understanding of *beresit* is a serious departure from the traditional position that Genesis 1:1 is in the absolute state. While the traditional translation "In the beginning, God created..." is correct, the alternative "When God began to create heaven and earth" is grammatically possible. However, there are strong arguments against it.

If Genesis 1:1 is a dependent clause then this would mean *beresit* is a construct and we could not deduce absolute creation from Genesis 1:1–3. However, Young points out:

In the Old Testament when a construct precedes a finite verb that fact is apparent either from the form of the word in construct or from the fact that the context demands that the word be taken as a construct... In Genesis 1:1 neither of these conditions is present (Young 1964, p. 6).

In the context of Genesis 1:1 *beresit* is used alongside of *bara* which is in the *qal* stem form and this form "...is employed exclusively of divine activity... [and the] subject of the verb is always God and never man" (Young 1964, p. 6). In every occurrence of the verb *bara*, God is always the subject, and the material out of which something is created (*bara*) is never mentioned, therefore making the verb *bara* most suitable to express creation out of nothing. For example, we are told that God created man (Genesis 1:27) but we are not told that God created man from the dust of the ground. In Genesis 2:7 we are told that God formed, *yatsar*, man from the dust of the ground and that he fashioned, *banah*, (Genesis 2:22) the woman from the rib which He had taken from the man.

It is, therefore, best then to view *beresit* in Genesis 1:1 as being in the absolute form (as in Isaiah 46:10; Nehemiah 12:44) rather than the construct form. Furthermore, if Genesis were a dependent clause then verse two should have had begun with a *waw* consecutive or with the perfect tense verb (see Jeremiah. 26:1; Hosea. 1:2) whereas it actually begins with a *waw* disjunctive.

Walter Kaiser explains that the Hebrew Masoretic punctuation and those Greek transliterations of the Hebrew text into Greek letters show convincingly that there was quite a respectable history of interpretation which took the first word, *beresit*, as an absolute noun, "in the beginning" rather than as a Hebrew construct noun, "in beginning of creating" (Kaiser 1991, p. 73).

Lastly, in the New Testament John's intentional echo of Genesis 1:1 makes sense only if John understands Genesis 1:1 as being in the absolute form and "in the beginning" as the absolute beginning.

Contextually it is best to view Genesis 2:4 as the true title of creation. The only place where the *toledot* is not found as a heading is Genesis 1:1–2:3 and this is because there was nothing created prior to it.

At 2:4 the author has joined the account of universal creation (1:1–2:3) and the singular story of human history (2:5–4:26) (Mathews 1996, p. 188).

The *toledot* heading introduces what came after creation. This is indicated by the fact that Genesis 2:4–25 is an expansion of chapter 1 by the similarity of 2:4 as with Genesis 5:1 and Numbers 3:1. *Toledot* is followed by a temporal clause "when" (*beyom*) and in both Genesis 5:1 and Numbers 3:1 the content of the "when" clause refers to the former prominent information, in order to bring it to the attention of the reader for understanding the context of the following *toledot* section. Furthermore, the language of Genesis 2:4 looks back to Genesis 1:1–2:3. "The heavens and the earth" has been used in Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 2:1, while "created" has been used four times in Genesis 1:1 21, 27; 2:3 and "made" 10 times in Genesis 1:7, 11, 12, 16, 25, 26, 31, 2:2 (twice), 3.

Commenting on the word *bara* he tells us that we must be careful to remember to interpret the Bible accurately, understanding *bara* in Hebrew terms. Noting two things about *bara*:

1. It takes only God as its subject and therefore must be identified as a characteristically divine activity.
2. The objects of this verb are widely varied (Psalm 102:18; Ezekiel 21:30; Isaiah 65:18; Exodus 34:10; Numbers 16:30; Isaiah 45:7; Amos 4:13; Psalm 51:10; Isaiah 57:19).

In light of this Walton believes

...[E]ven when then object is something that could be "manufactured" ("creatures of the sea" in Gen. 1:21), the point need not necessarily be physical manufacturing as much as assigning roles (Walton 2001, p. 70).

He goes on to say "In all of these cases, something is brought into existence, but rarely does the statement concern the issue of physical matter" (Walton 2001, p. 71). Regardless of this Walton does believe that God made matter out of nothing (Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 11:3) but believes that is not what Genesis means by *bara* and that the existence of matter was not the concern of the author (Walton 2001, p. 71).

Walton's use of the word "manufacturing" makes a ridiculous idea regarding the meaning of *bara*. What is more, no young-earth creationist would talk about *bara* this way. It is also illogical for Walton to reason that:

1. something can be brought into existence without involving physical matter (see Isaiah 40:25–26)
2. a false dichotomy is made in pitting (on the one hand) bringing a physical object into existence against (on the other hand) giving that object a role or function. There is no logical reason why it cannot be both. In fact, everything is created with a role or function in mind and it is irrational to think of something existing without a role. What would it mean for

plants and animals and earth and sun, moon and stars to exist but not to have a role or function? Walton's idea is illogical as well as inconsistent with the text of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11.

Even though *bara* does not inherently refer to creation *ex nihilo*, the context in Genesis 1:1 clearly implies this (as has already been shown above). Walton is correct to say that the New Testament suggests that God made matter out of nothing but it begs the question as to where the New Testament authors (Hebrews 11:3) got that concept. Surely it was Genesis 1:1.

Walton recognizes the semantic range of *yom* saying that

...though it is true that *yom* sometimes refers to an extended period of time, that usage is limited to certain expressions and collocations, and its meaning cannot be so glibly transferred to Genesis 1 (Walton 2001, p. 81).

Walton goes on:

We must instead try to determine what the author and audience would have understood from the usage in the context (Walton 2001, p. 81).

He admits that the original Israelite audience would have understood the word "day" in the context of Genesis 1 to have been 24-hour days (Walton 2001, p. 154).

Walton recognizes that *yom* in context means a 24-hour day and interestingly states

It is not the text that causes people to think otherwise, only the demands of trying to harmonize with modern science (Walton 2001, p. 81).

Unfortunately, Walton believes understanding *yom* as a 24-hour day will not be seen as posing the problem it has in the past once his functional approach to the text is understood (Walton 2001, p. 81). For him the days focus on functions and not making things or ordering the cosmos (Walton 2001, p. 154).

Although Walton acknowledges the meaning of *yom* as a day of 24 hours in its context, he just insists that God didn't make anything in Genesis 1 coming up with a unique approach to the text. In order to understand the text at face value Walton says "... we must clarify the distinction between a functional and structural approach" (Walton 2001, p. 83).

However, this is another false dichotomy from Walton in that why can it not be both? Also, he is really making a distinction between giving a pre-existing thing a function versus creating the thing (with function from the start), not a "functional versus structural approach."

However, this distinction Walton makes, is the reason he believes we must be careful on how we use material from the ancient Near East because we often go looking into the biblical account for information on its physical makeup and laws which is not what Walton believes the text is describing (Walton 2001,

p. 83). Again, this is yet another example of a straw-man argument. Young-earth creationists do not say that Genesis 1 gives information about the physical make up and laws of creation and neither do most old earth creationists. Rather, they say it is about the origin of the Creation.

Because of his functional approach to the text Walton believes:

It is fruitless to ask what *things* God created on day one, for the text is not concerned about *things* and therefore will not address itself to that question (Walton 2001, p. 84).

Walton does believe that God was involved in the material origins of the universe but for him Genesis is an account of the functional origins. Walton says "If we come to the Bible expecting it to discuss creation in terms of material structure, we will be sadly disappointed" (Walton 2001, p. 96). Again this misrepresents what young-earth creationists teach. They don't teach that Genesis 1 teaches the material "structure" of the universe and its contents, but rather the creation or origin of it all. Moreover, Walton's example of a functional creation is a computer, but here materials are involved. It is hard to assign functional properties to something that had no material existence.

Unfortunately Walton, like others, caricatures the position of young-earth creationists by saying that they have taken on a role in society declaring science as the enemy of the faith and using its own brand of theistic science to make sense of the Bible (Walton 2001, pp. 98–99). Walton goes on to say:

Our best theological, hermeneutical, and scientific minds need to work to forge a new consensus for the relationship between science and Scripture...rather than sacrificing more Galileo-type martyrs on the altar of stone-rigid, quasi-scientific presuppositions dressed up as if they were the Word of God (Walton 2001, p. 100).

Walton's caricature of the young-earth position maligns how biblical creationists understand the biblical text and its meaning. Also, like many others, Walton uses Galileo to attack creationists when Galileo himself believed in the trustworthiness of the Bible. Galileo was contesting against the geocentric understanding of the universe and was trying to show that the heliocentric system was not contradictory to the Bible.

Galileo was fighting against the interpretive principles of the church of his day, blinded by Aristotelian philosophy. The lesson from the Galileo incident is that many Christians are repeating the errors of the past by insisting on taking the popular ideas of the age, such as evolutionary naturalism, as their authority rather than the Bible. The history of the Galileo affair should serve as a warning to old-earth creationists.

Regarding the fourth day Walton argues that although the Hebrew verb *asah*, can mean “to do or make” it probably does not mean that here. Although he recognizes that Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 20:11 also use *asah* to speak of God making, Walton argues that when the verb is used in other cosmological contexts it can mean something other than create or make (Walton 2001, pp.124–125). The verses Walton lists for *asah* being used in a cosmological context are Job 9:9; Isaiah 41:17–20; 45:7. He writes,

It is significant that though there are numerous ambiguous usages, no passage using *asah* in a cosmological context demands the meaning “manufacture” rather than something more functional (Walton 2001, p. 125).

He concludes that on the basis of these passages that the author of Genesis used the term functionally.

However, Walton has clearly overlooked more verses than he gives of *asah* being used in a cosmological context. There are several verses (for example, Exodus 31:17; 2 Kings 19:15; 2 Chronicles 2:12; Isaiah 37:16) which use *asah*, yet clearly refer to the creation of the universe. Therefore, *bara* and *asah* can often be used interchangeably. While Isaiah 66:1–2 clearly refers to God making (*asah*) the heavens and the earth, it is not talking about their function but the fact that they came into existence.

Concerning Genesis 2:1–3 Walton states:

...the lexical information suggests that the seventh day is marked by God’s ceasing the work of the previous six days and by his settling into the stability of the cosmos he created... (Walton 2001, p. 147)

Walton’s rejection of Genesis 1 as an account of material origins of the universe does not fit with Genesis 2:1–3 which clearly tells us God ceased from working by the seventh day. If, as Walton suggests, God did not create anything in Genesis 1 but was only about assigning the functions that already existed, then what work had he ceased from? Walton’s functional approach also has nothing to do with the biblical text and it leaves the Bible without an account of the origin of the universe at the very place we would expect it to be.

C. John Collins

Genesis 1–4 A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary, 2006

C.J. Collins is a professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary. He is the Old Testament editor for the *English Standard Version Study Bible* and has authored among other books *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* which tries to resolve the perceived conflict between science and faith.

Collins recognizes that it is correct to call Genesis 1 a narrative because of the prominent use of the

wayyiqtol (*waw* consecutive) verb form to denote successive events (Collins 2006, p.41). Nevertheless, he sees it as an unusual narrative

not only because of the unique events described...but also because of the highly patterned way of telling it all (Collins 2006, p. 41).

He is right in saying it should not be called poetry, because parallelism is absent (Collins 2006, p.44), choosing instead to call it “exalted prose narrative.” For this reason he believes we should not impose a “literalistic” hermeneutic on the text (Collins 2006, pp.44 and 255). Collins caricatures the young-earth position as a “literalistic interpretation,” which is unfortunate as young-earth creationists explain their hermeneutic as grammatical-historical interpretation. Unfortunately, the discussion over the days of creation is often shaped by the way it is framed by those who caricature the young-earth position. By stereotyping the young-earth position as “literalistic,” Collins and others (for example, Wenham and Walton) try to show how it is wrong as they advance their own interpretation as the correct one.

But calling it “exalted prose” no more rules out that it is a revelation of literal history, just as Psalm 136 recites some of the key events of the history of Israel in poetic form.

When it comes to interpreting the days of creation, Collins holds to the

analogical day position: namely, the days being God’s workdays, their length is neither specified nor important, and not everything in the account needs to be taken as historically sequential (Collins 2006, p.124).

But we must ask why God put chronological information in Genesis 1, if it’s not important. God could have easily explained His creation work in general times without mentioning evening and morning, first day, second day, etc. This language, along with Genesis 5:5 and Exodus 20:11, certainly appears to shed some light on the specific length of the creation days (that is, 24 hours, just like all of Adam’s days and the days of the Jews at the time of Moses, and therefore like our days today). If what God has revealed to us in the Bible has a different meaning for Him than for us then surely the meaning of Scripture is incomprehensible. The Bible itself then would not be a reliable source of truth.

Collins believes that any attempt to take this story as making historical claims is inconsistent with the text itself, although, he states that he would change his mind if the evidence leads elsewhere (Collins 2006, p.124).

Although, Collins does not directly say what the evidence is that would lead him to change his mind, he does give several reasons for rejecting the literal approach in favor of the analogical approach:

- The first day starts in Genesis 1:3, and thus our author has not necessarily presented the six days as the first six days of the universe: the author presents the origin of everything, Genesis 1:1 as taking place an unspecified amount of time before the work week.
- The fourth day does not describe the creation of the heavenly lights
- The refrain evening and morning: Its effect is to present God as a workman going through his work week... This analogy cautions us against applying strict literalism to the passage... a good interpretation must account for the absence of the refrain on the seventh day [the seventh day] lacks the refrain because it has no end—it is not an ordinary day by any stretch of the imagination, and this makes us question whether the other days are supposed to be ordinary in their length.
- The Creation account makes no claim as to how old the universe is or about how old the earth itself is, since the author does not specify how long God waited between verses 1 and 2 (Collins 2006, pp. 125–126).

These evidences for Collin’s belief in the analogical view of the days will now be examined.

First, Collins’s contention that Genesis 1:1–2 is before the first creation day which begins with God’s speech in Genesis 1:3. Collins reasons that “since Genesis 1:1–2 does not use the *wayyiqtol*, we conclude that these verses stand outside the main stream of the narrative” (Collins 2006, p. 42). Later he says regarding the perfect tense verb (*bara*, create) in verse 1, “the normal use of the perfect at the very beginning of a periscope is to denote an event that took place before the storyline gets under way” (Collins 2006, p. 51). For Collins, Genesis 1:1–2 provides background material for the narrative. Collins is not alone in asserting that Genesis 1:1–2 stands outside the mainstream of the narrative. But as we have seen, these claims are unfounded (Hamilton 1990, p. 117; Waltke with Fredricks 2001, p. 17). Consequently, Collins reasons that the origin of time was before the workweek and that the first day began in Genesis 1:3 (Collins 2006, p. 125). This leads Collins to conclude that:

...the creation account makes no claim about how old the universe is or about how old the earth itself is, since the author does not specify how long God waited between verses 1 and 2...it makes no claim about how long the creation period was, because it is noncommittal about how long the days were (Collins 2006, p. 126).

Collins’s view is wrong for two reasons. First, while he may be right about “the normal use of the perfect,” there are many examples where his statement is not correct, particularly at the beginning of books. See, for example, Ezra 1:1; Esther 1:3; Job 1:1; Haggai 1:1; Obadiah 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1 and Zechariah 1:1, where the sentence with the perfect verb is the first event in the following narrative, not something outside that narrative, just as in the case of Genesis 1:1 and following.

Second, Collins’ argument is mistaken because it is based on a misunderstanding of the relationship of verses 1–3. In Genesis 1:1 the verb is in the perfect tense form and in verse 3 the *waw* consecutive is used. Verse 2, however, begins in a different way with the *waw* attached to the noun “the earth” rather than being connected to the imperfect verb. This is called a *waw* disjunctive.⁷ It means that verse 2 is a parenthetical statement describing the state of the earth when God first created it. The same grammatical structure occurs in many places, including Jonah 3:3–4, where the sentence in second half of verse 3 begins with the *waw* consecutive and describes the nature of the city of Nineveh. The narrative of events goes from verse 3a to verse 4.⁸

Moreover, in verse 4 God separates the light from the darkness, and in verse 5 He calls the darkness “night”—both verses begin with the definite article attached to the verb. However, the only darkness that has been mentioned so far is in verse 2 which means that verse 2 is describing the state of the earth at the beginning of the first night. Verse 5 has the first night between evening and morning as it defines the day. There is no need or grammatical necessity to place a time gap between verses 1:1–2 and verse 3 in order to separate it from the first day of creation unless you are trying to insert millions of years, which is what Collins and others are trying to do. Collins assertion regarding verses 1–3 stands opposed to the grammar of the Hebrew text and also conflicts with Jesus teaching in Mark 10:6 that “From the beginning of creation God made them male and female.” He then quoted from Genesis 1 and 2, showing that He believed that Adam and Eve were there at the beginning of creation, not billions of years after the beginning.⁹

Secondly, Collins argues that for those who believe the events of the fourth day refer to the creation of the heavenly lights (Genesis 1:14–19) and to the creation of light (Genesis 1:3) that this:

...presents a serious problem to those who want to correlate this account with a scientific description, because we assume that day and night are marked off

⁷ Waltke and O’Connor (1990, p. 129) cite Genesis 1:2 as an example of this.

⁸ For other examples of such *waw* disjunctives describing a state of being rather than action, see Genesis 2:10–14 (each verse starts this way), Genesis 3:1a; Judges 8:10; 1 Samuel 4:15 and Zechariah 3:3.

⁹ For a fuller treatment of this argument from Mark 10:6 see Mortenson 2007a.

by the heavenly lights—but how could that happen on the first three days (Collins 2006, pp. 56–57)?

He reasons:

...if we look closely at the Hebrew, we must conclude that the words used do not require that we take them as describing the creation of the lights [beginning of their being] though it is true that the words allow such a reading (Collins 2006, p. 57).

Collins argues that,

The verb *made* in Genesis 1:16 does not specifically mean “create”; it can refer to that, but it can also refer to “working” on something that is already there or even “appointed” (Collins 2006, p. 57).

Collins’s reason for rejecting the creation of light on Day 1 and the creation of the sun, moon and stars on Day 4 is ultimately not based upon the text.

Although Collins is correct to point out that *asah* can mean something other than “make,” *asah* means “make” everywhere else in Genesis¹⁰ and is justifiably translated that way in Genesis 1:16 in all the major English translations as well as by leading Hebrew-English lexicons (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 2006, p. 794).

Furthermore, it is poor exegesis to apply a different meaning to the same word simply to fit with evolutionary ideas such as the big bang.

Thirdly, the refrain “evening and morning” (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) “indicates the end of each workday, and its absence from the seventh day is so striking that an adequate reading must account for it” (Collins 2006, p. 42). He believes

the lack of refrain on the seventh day leads us to wonder whether that day is open-ended, which would mean that the rest of human history takes place during God’s Sabbath (Collins 2006, pp. 74–75).

Collins goes on to say that “this Sabbath rest continues into the present, a notion that underlines John 5:17 and Hebrews 4:3–11” (Collins 2006, p. 125).

According to Collins, the refrain “evening and morning” presents God as a workman going through his workweek, taking His daily rest (the night between the evening and the morning) and enjoying His Sabbath “rest.” It is this analogy that “cautions us against applying strict literalism to the passage” (Collins 2006, p. 125). The lack of refrain on the seventh day causes Collins to believe

it is not an ordinary day by any stretch of the imagination, and this makes us question whether the other days are supposed to be ordinary in their length (Collins 2006, p. 125).

Collins is not the only scholar to use this argument regarding the seventh day (for example, Mathews 1996, p. 149).

But we should note that the words of Genesis

2:1 introduce the completion of God’s creation. The seventh day is mentioned three times in verses 2:2–3 revealing its uniqueness and importance. The verbs “completed,” “rested,” and “blessed” indicate the uniqueness of this day, and these are all associated with the work of God on the first six days. Day 7 is not a day of creation, but a day of rest.

Dr. Robert McCabe (McCabe 2009, pp. 225–242) shows there to be a five-fold framework apparent in the first six days, which is absent on Day 7. This framework is used in Genesis 1:1–2:3 to shape each of the days:

Narration: “God said...”

Commandment: “Let there be...”

Fulfilment: “There was”

Evaluation: “God saw that it was good”

And conclusion: “There was evening and morning”

The evening and morning formula that has been used with the other days is no longer needed on Day 7 because the formula has a rhetorical function to mark the transition from the creative work of one day to the creative work of the following day. At the end of Day 6 the Creation week is now complete (Genesis 1:31) and, therefore, it is not necessary to use the evening and morning formula on Day 7. However, it is not only “evening and morning” that are missing from the seventh day but also all of the other parts of this framework. The framework is used to represent accurately God’s work of creation. The reason this framework is not used on the seventh day is to show that God had ceased creating. Furthermore, no terminator is needed for the seventh day, like the others, since the terminator to this day is the *toledot* (Genesis 2:4) as the next section of the narrative is about to begin.

Collins’s belief that the absence of the refrain on seventh day makes the other days non-literal is unwarranted. The Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch comment:

...the six creation-days, according to the words of the text, were earthly days of ordinary duration, we must understand the seventh in the same way...because in every passage, in which it is mentioned as the foundation of the theocratic Sabbath, it is regarded as an ordinary day (Exodus 20:11; 31:17) (Keil and Delitzsch 1886, pp. 69–70).

Collins’s use of John 5:17 and Hebrews 4 to show that the Sabbath day continues to the present day proves no such thing. John 5:17 says, “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working still, and I am working.’” In context, Jesus is referring to God’s providential and redemptive work, not His creative work. The verse says nothing about the seventh day continuing. Hebrews 4:3 is referring to the spiritual rest that all

¹⁰ For example, Genesis 1:26–27, where it is used interchangeably with *bara* (create). See more evidence of the interchange of *asah* and *bara* in Mortenson 2007b.

believers enter into through faith in Christ. Hebrews 4 quotes Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 95:7–11, and these are used by the author as an argument to warn of the danger of unbelief. Again, the text does not say that the seventh day continues but rather that God's rest (from His creation work) continues. Furthermore, if the seventh day is unending then this surely raises a serious theological problem: how could God curse the creation while at the same time blessing and sanctifying the seventh day (Whitcomb 1973, p. 68)?

Collins correctly points out that prior to the rise of the new geology in the eighteenth century, most Bible readers simply understood the creation period to be one ordinary week...and the creation took place somewhere in the vicinity of 4000BC (Collins 2006, p. 123).

He thereby recognizes that the various attempts to harmonize Genesis with old-earth geology and old-universe cosmology are novel.

Collins also recognizes that scientific history suffers from philosophical problems, the main problem being that neither scientists nor historians are not neutral (Collins 2006, p. 250). Regrettably, he does not see their non-neutrality when it comes to the age of the earth. He accepts the standard big bang cosmology stating:

The Big Bang theory is an inference from empirical data...That it has survived serious scientific challenges so far is no guarantee that it will continue to do so. On the other hand, we can at least say that it is compatible with the reading of Genesis for which I have argued here (Collins 2006, pp. 256–257).

Collins's reliance upon the big bang is unfortunate as it is not only based upon philosophical naturalism (the belief that nature is all there is and that everything, including origins, can be explained by time, chance and the laws of nature), not empirical data, but it also contradicts the biblical account of creation in several ways. First, accepting the big bang model is to ignore what the Creator has revealed concerning how He created the universe. The Bible clearly teaches that God created everything in heaven and earth by His word within six days (Psalm 33:6–9; Exodus 20:11). This is in contrast to the big bang model, which explains the universe and earth as being created over billions of years by natural processes. Second, in the big bang theory the stars existed for billions of years before the earth while the Bible teaches that the stars were created (not "appeared") three days after the earth. Finally, the Bible also teaches that the earth was made from water and was completely covered with water (Genesis 1:2–9; 2 Peter 3:5), whereas the big bang model teaches that the earth started out as molten rock and has never been completely covered with water.

Collins arguments for the analogical day view simply do not stand up under sound biblical exegesis

of the text of Scripture. Hopefully Dr. Collins will change his mind concerning the days of creation since the evidence is clear that God created in six 24-hour days (Genesis 1:1–2:3; Exodus 20:11).

Acknowledgments

The reviewers and editors are thanked for their input to this paper, which is also acknowledged.

Conclusion

After surveying the arguments of the six evangelical scholars as to their reasons why the days of creation are not literal days of 24 hours that occurred just a few thousand years ago, it is obvious that their arguments are not primarily textual but are driven by the claims of an evolutionary view of the world's history. It is interesting that most of the scholars recognize that Genesis is written as historical narrative and some even admit that the word *yom* in context refers to a day of 24 hours. However, it is unfortunate that many of the scholars caricature the young-earth position having not seriously considered the arguments and evidences presented by that position.

Inferences based on "science" as to how and when the universe came to be have always changed with the times and the changing theories of science. The Scriptures, however, have not changed since God last spoke through His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2) and sound exegesis confirms young-earth creationism.

References

- Alter, R. 1990. *The art of biblical poetry*. Edinburgh, United Kingdom: T&T Ltd.
- Aquinas, T. 1947a. *The summa theologica*, part 1, question 69. On the work of the third day, pp. 342–344. Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics. Retrieved from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum078.htm> on January 18, 2013.
- Aquinas, T. 1947b. *The summa theologica*, part 1, question 73. On the things that belong to the seventh day, pp. 352–354. Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics. Retrieved from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum082.htm> on January 18, 2013.
- Augustine. 1467. *City of God*. Repr. Trans. H. Bettenson, London, England: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Beall, T.S. 2009. Contemporary hermeneutical approaches to Genesis 1–11. In *Coming to grips with Genesis: Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp. 131–162. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Blocher, H. 1984. *In the beginning: The opening chapters of Genesis*. Nottingham, United Kingdom: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Brown, F., S. Driver, and C. Briggs. 2006. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Bruce, F.F. 1990. *The epistles to the Hebrews: The new international commentary on the New Testament*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Calvin, J. 1554. *Genesis*. Repr. Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Banner of Truth, 1984.

- Calvin, J. 1559. *Institutes of the Christian religion*. Trans. H. Beveridge, 2nd ed. Repr. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publications, 2009.
- Childs, B.S. 1979. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. London, United Kingdom: SCM Press Ltd.
- Collins, C.J. 2006. *Genesis 1–4: A linguistic, literary, and theological commentary*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing.
- Craig, T. 2009. Can deep time be embedded in Genesis? In *Coming to grips with Genesis: Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp.193–210. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Culver, R.D. 2006. *Systematic theology: Biblical and historical*. Ross-shire, United Kingdom: Christian Focus Publications.
- Hamilton, V.P. 1990. *The book of Genesis chapters 1–17: The new international commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Harrison, P. 2002. The Bible and the rise of science, *Australasian Science* 23, no. 3:14–15.
- Hasel, G.F. 1994. The “days” of creation in Genesis 1: Literal “days” or figurative “periods/epochs” of time? *Origins* 21, no. 1:5–38.
- Josephus, F. 1897. *The works of Flavius Josephus*. Trans. W. Whiston. London, United Kingdom: Ward, Lock & Bowden.
- Kaiser, W.C. Jr. 1991. *Toward an Old Testament theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Kaiser, W.C. Jr. 2001. *The Old Testament documents: Are they reliable & relevant?* Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Kay, M. 2007. On literary theorists’ approach to Genesis 1: Part 2. *Journal of Creation* 21, no. 3:93–101. Retrieved from http://creation.com/images/pdfs/tj/j21_3/j21_3_93-101.pdf on July 11, 2012.
- Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch. 1886. *Biblical commentary on the Old Testament, vol.1: The Pentateuch*. Trans. J. Martin. Repr. 1980. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing.
- Luther, M. 1958. *Luther’s works Volume 1: Lectures on Genesis, chapters 1–5*. Trans. G.V. Schick. Ed. J.J. Pelikan. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House.
- Mathews, K.A. 1996. *The new American commentary: Genesis 1–11:26*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Mayhue, R.L. 2009. Is nature the 67th book of the Bible? In *Coming to grips with Genesis: Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp.105–130. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- McCabe, R.V. 2000. A defense of literal days in the creation week. *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5:97–123. Retrieved from <http://www.dbts.edu/journals/2000/McCabe.pdf> on February 4, 2012.
- McCabe, R.V. 2006. A critique of the framework interpretation of the creation account. Part 2 of 2. *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 11: 63–133. Retrieved from <http://www.dbts.edu/journals/2006/McCabe.pdf>.
- McCabe, R.V. 2009. A critique of the framework interpretation of the creation week. In *Coming to grips with Genesis: Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp.211–250. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Mook, J.R. 2009. The church fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the age of the earth. In *Coming to grips with Genesis: Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp.23–52. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Mortenson, T. 2007a. Jesus, evangelical scholars, and the age of the earth. *Answers in Depth*. Retrieved from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/aid/v2/n1/jesus-and-the-age-of-earth>.
- Mortenson, T. 2007b. Did God create (*bara*) or make (*asah*) in Genesis 1? *Answers in Depth*. Retrieved from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/aid/v2/n1/did-god-create-or-make>.
- Mortenson, T. 2009. “Deep time” and the church’s compromise. In *Coming to grips with Genesis: Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp. 79–104. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Noll, M. 1994. *The scandal of the evangelical mind*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing.
- Osborne, G.R. 2006. *The hermeneutical spiral: A comprehensive introduction to biblical interpretation*. Rev ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Pierce, L. and K. Ham. 2010. Are there gaps in the Genesis genealogies? In *The New Answers Book 2*, ed. K. Ham, pp.173–182. Retrieved from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab2/gaps-in-genesis-genealogies>.
- Sarfati, J. 2004. *Refuting compromise: A biblical and scientific refutation of “progressive creationism” (billions of years), as popularized by astronomer Hugh Ross*. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Sproul, R.C. 2012. *When science and Scripture conflict—A reformed approach to science and Scripture*. Retrieved from <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/when-science-and-scripture-conflict-reformed-approach-science-and-scripture> on June 16, 2012.
- Steinmann, A. 2002. $\eta\kappa\alpha\varsigma$ as an ordinal number and the meaning of Genesis 1:5. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 4:577–584.
- Taylor, C.V. 1994. Who wrote Genesis? Are the *toledot* colophons? *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* 8, no.2:204–211. Retrieved from <http://creation.com/who-wrote-genesis-are-the-toledot-colophons>.
- Theophilus of Antioch. 180–185. *Theophilus to Autolycus: Book 3*. Retrieved from <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/theophilus-book3.html> on August 9, 2012.
- Thomas, R.L. 2002. *Evangelical hermeneutics: The new versus the old*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications.
- Waltke, B.K. 2007. *An Old Testament theology: An exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Waltke, B.K. with C.J. Fredricks. 2001. *Genesis: A commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Waltke, B.K. and M. O’Connor. 1990. *An introduction to biblical Hebrew syntax*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- Walton J.H. 2001. *The NIV application commentary Genesis*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Wenham, G.J. 1987. *Word biblical commentary, Vol. 1: Genesis 1–15*. Mexico City, Mexico: Thomas Nelson.
- Wesley, J. 1763. *A survey of the wisdom of God in the creation: or a compendium of natural philosophy*, 2 vol. Bristol, United Kingdom: William Pine.
- Westermann, C. 1964. *The Genesis accounts of creation*. Trans. E. Wagner. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press.

- Whitcomb, J.C. Jr. 1973. The science of historical geology in the light of the biblical doctrine of a mature creation. *Westminster Theological Journal* 36:68.
- Wiseman, P.J. 1946. *New discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*. London, United Kingdom: Marshall, Morgan and Scott.
- Young, E.J. 1964. *Studies in Genesis one*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.