

**Christians in the Public Square:
How Far Should Evangelicals Go in the Creation-Evolution Debate?**

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The debate between creation and evolution has gone on now for nearly 150 years. The cover story of the current issue of Time Magazine (Nov 13, 2006) is “God vs. Science,” in which there is a debate between the atheist biologist Richard Dawkins and the Christian geneticist Francis Collins, is just the latest indication that this topic is ever in the public square, and not likely to go away any time soon. When the Time magazine editor mentioned that some conservative Protestants took a literal view of Genesis 1 and 2, Collins responded that this is “a very narrow perspective that will put our faith at risk of looking ridiculous.” Dawkins suggested that Collins would “save himself an awful lot of trouble if he just simply ceased to give [his fundamentalist colleagues] the time of day. Why bother with these clowns?” So it is sad, but true, that if one attempts to view Gen 1 and 2 as literally true, a mainstream news magazine such as Time has no problem with one of their experts calling those who hold such a position “clowns”! Unfortunately, millions read these words, and are swayed by them.

So it is not news that the mainstream press thinks that those who take a literal position on Gen 1 and 2 are foolish; nor is it news that critical scholars, represented by Francis Collins and many others, also regard that position in the same light. What is amazing to me is that in the last 30 years, increasing numbers of evangelical scholars have also abandoned a literal understanding of the early chapters of Genesis.

The reason for abandoning a literal understanding of Gen 1 and 2 is not new. Christians who are convinced that evolution is, to a large degree, correct, have needed to try to harmonize what they view as “science” with their understanding of the Bible. For those who do not hold to an inerrant Scripture, this is not a big problem, since it is easy to say that the biblical accounts are not correct in such matters. But for those of us who call ourselves evangelicals, who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture, reconciling the teachings of modern “science” with Gen 1 and 2 is not so easy. How can one uphold the inerrancy of Scripture and still hold to evolution?

There were two older attempts to reconcile Genesis with evolution: the gap theory and the day-age theory. These have been joined in recent years by a third interpretation, the framework hypothesis. While we will look briefly at all 3 views, the major emphasis in this paper will be on discussing the merits of the framework hypothesis.

The Gap Theory: Full of Holes?

The gap theory, popularized by the Scofield Bible in 1909, held that there were two creations.¹ Gen 1:1 describes the first creation, after which Satan, the earth's ruler (over pre-Adamic “men”), rebelled. Because of Satan's fall, sin entered the universe and brought God's judgment upon the earth in the form of a flood (indicated by the water of 1:2) and then a global ice age. The plant, animal, and human fossils on earth today date from this flood, and are genetically unrelated to plants, animals, and humans on earth today. Gen 1:2 thus describes the ruined condition of the earth, and Gen 1:3-31 describes God's re-creation.

Support for the gap theory is seen in translating הַיְיִתָּהּ in Gen 1:2 as *had become*. Furthermore, וְבַהֲרֵי תוֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ (*without form and void*) is said to represent an evil, sinful condition, and thus not an original state of the earth (Isa 45:18 is said to support this understanding). Finally, it is claimed that a distinction must be made between עָשָׂה (*make*) and בָּרָא (*create*).

¹The gap theory is also supported by Arthur Custance, *Without Form and Void* (Brookville, Canada; published by the author, 1970). It is available online at <http://www.custance.org/Library/WFANDV/index.html>.

But there are major problems with the gap theory. First, the translation of 1:2 is strained, since *was* is the normal meaning of הָיָה, not *had become*. Second, הָיָה לִבְהוֹתָם simply means *unformed and unfilled*; it is often used in contexts of judgment (such as Isa 45:18), because the land is then swept clean and uninhabited. But the words themselves do not carry this connotation.² Third, the words עָשָׂה and בָּרָא are used interchangeably with respect to creation (for instance, עָשָׂה is used in Neh 9:6; Job 9:9; Prov 8:22, 23, 26; both words are used in Gen 1:21, 25-27; 2:2-4). Fourth, there are theological problems with the gap theory. Was there death before sin entered the world? Were there men without souls prior to Adam? Fifth, the gap theory contains a great deal of speculation. There is not one word about Satan's "reign" and fall on earth, and no mention of any pre-Adamic cataclysm (in the Bible, or in geology which presupposes uniformitarianism—if one is going to accept evidence for a cataclysm, why not simply accept the flood?). And finally, the Hebrew of Gen 1:1-2 seems to preclude the gap theory, since the *waw* consecutive form should have been used if the gap theory were correct; instead, the verb is a simple perfect. Yet, in every other verse in Gen 1, the *waw* consecutive is used. The *waw* consecutive implies consecutive action—first, God created the heavens and the earth, *and then* the earth became formless and void. However, the construction used indicates a break in the action—"and at that time the earth was formless and void." It describes the setting *at the time* the earth was created by God.³

The Day-Age Theory: Bad Science and Bad Exegesis?

For the above reasons, the gap theory is not popular among evangelical scholars today.⁴ The second theory, the day-age theory, is somewhat more popular.⁵ This theory states that the creation "day" is not 24 hours, but instead may be thousands (or millions) of years. So the six days of creation are "six sequential, long periods of time."⁶ Some attempt to support the theory by 2 Pet 3:8 ("One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"). Archer opts for the day-age theory, because he cannot imagine Adam naming all the animals and Eve being created in only one 24-hour day. He states, "Who can imagine that all of these transactions could possibly have taken place in 120 minutes of the sixth day?"⁷

²See further Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976) 113-30.

³F. F. Bruce mentions this argument against the gap theory ("And the Earth was Without Form and Void," *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 78 [1946]) 21-23. So also E. A. Speizer, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1964) 5; Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, 75-86.

⁴In the full-length treatment of three main views of the creation, David Hagopian calls the gap theory a "previously popular view," noting that it has not "been embraced by large numbers of evangelicals." Thus, he chooses not even to present it other than in an introductory paragraph. David Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux, 2001) 17.

⁵In addition to Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer (who co-wrote the section in Hagopian's book on the day-age theory [*Genesis Debate*, 123-63]), others who hold the day-age view are Derek Kidner (*Genesis* [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967]), 56-58; R. Laird Harris, "The Length of the Creative Days in Genesis 1," in *Did God Create in Six Days?* (eds. Joseph Pipa, Jr. and David Hall; 2nd ed.; White Hall, WV: Tolle Lege, 2005) 101-11; and Walter Kaiser (Peter H. Davids, Frederick F. Bruce, Manfred T. Brauch, and Walter C. Kaiser, eds., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996] 104). Ross and Archer claim that they have observed "a dramatic drop in support of the framework interpretation and young-earth creationism" among the university/seminary/church audiences they have addressed in the last few years. Hagopian, *Genesis Debate*, 158 n. 5. My own observation is that the framework interpretation has continued to grow in popularity over the past few years, while support for the day-age view has diminished.

⁶Hagopian, *Genesis Debate*, 123.

⁷Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1994) 201.

But there are problems with the day-age view, both from an evolutionary and a biblical standpoint. First, the day-age theory contradicts the evolutionary model, and thus does not really solve the problem of harmonizing the Bible with “science.” The order of events according to the day-age theory and evolution is radically different. According to the Bible, plants were created the 3rd day, marine animals on the 5th. The sun, moon, and stars were created the 4th day, *after* the plants (what about photosynthesis?). The birds were created with fish on the 5th day, but evolution says that the birds evolved from the fish *after* the reptiles (created on the 6th day). Insects were created on the 6th day, *after* plants (but insects were needed for pollination; also, the simple [insects] should not follow the other complex animals in the evolutionary model).⁸ Furthermore, according to Gen 2:7 man's creation was from the dust of the ground; the evolution model claims that man came from apes.

So, if the day-age theory does not solve the problem with “science,” why is it needed? Moreover, the day-age theory also fails on biblical grounds. First, יום (*day*) in Gen 1 does not mean an indefinite period of time. It does have this meaning 65 times (as in Gen 2:4), but over 2200 times it means a 24-hour day. And it never means an indefinite period when a limiting number is attached to it (first, second, third, etc.). In addition, the phrase *evening and morning* (as used in Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31) surely seems to imply a normal 24-hour day. Finally, Exod 20:8-11 provides proof for a literal 6 days: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God.... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.” The word יום can not be used literally in one part and then symbolically in the next verse!

This is why I am personally surprised that there are still some advocates of the day-age theory today. When analyzed carefully, it does not answer the problem with evolution, so it fails on those grounds; and it is contrary to the normal understanding of Gen 1 in terms of the use of “day,” so it fails on biblical grounds.

Six 24-Hour Days, But....

What is fascinating is that even many of those who do not believe that God created the world in six 24-hour days argue that the meaning the author intended in Gen 1 is six 24-hour days. For example, the critical scholar John Skinner asserts that “the interpretation of יום as *aeon*, a favourite resource of harmonists of science and revelation, is opposed to the plain sense of the passage, and has no warrant in Heb. usage (not even Ps. 90:4).... If the writer had had aeons in his mind, he would hardly have missed the opportunity of stating how many millenniums each embraced.”⁹ Similarly, Mark Ross notes that “the steady march of days—day one, day two, day three, etc.—strongly suggests a sequential, chronological account.”¹⁰ Victor Hamilton likewise states that “it needs to be affirmed that in the Hebrew Bible the normal understanding of *yom* is a day of the week.” Even though there are places where it can mean a long period of time, Hamilton says that “the burden of proof...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

⁸See further Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, 178.

⁹John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930) 21.

¹⁰Mark E. Ross, “The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?*, 113.

composed of an evening and a morning....Whoever wrote Gen. 1 believed he was talking about literal days.”¹¹ In addition, Gordon Wenham notes that “there can be little doubt that here ‘day’ has its basic sense of a 24-hour period. The mention of morning and evening, the enumeration of the days, and the divine rest on the seventh show that a week of divine activity is being described here.” Though he notes that “day” may also mean “when,” and Ps 90:4 says that a thousand years are similar to a day in God’s sight, Wenham concludes: “it is perilous to try to correlate scientific theory and biblical revelation by appeal to such texts.”¹² Finally, Allen Ross states that in Gen 1, יום “must carry its normal meaning....It seems inescapable that Genesis presents the creation in six days.”¹³

With this conclusion we wholeheartedly concur.

Since the meaning of Gen 1 appears to be that God created the world in six 24-hour days, it is surprising that many evangelicals either seem to be abandoning this view or becoming agnostic about the whole subject. Bill Arnold is typical of the latter approach. In his text, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (aimed at undergraduates in Christian colleges, according to the book’s preface), he says that we can’t really be sure what the Hebrew word יום means; then he points out that it is hard to square the 24-hour view with current geological evidence. He concludes that “we should not be too concerned with the issue...This is not a faith issue. If it were important to know how long it took God to create the world, the Bible would have made it clear.”¹⁴ To which I would like to respond, “He did! How much clearer could he have made it?”

Sadly, Arnold is hardly alone. G. C. Aalders says that “we are not talking about days in relationship to human beings because they had not yet been created. We are speaking rather about a day of God....It will always remain an idle effort to measure the length of the creation days.”¹⁵ Yet, is not God the author of Scripture, writing to human beings who presumably would know what is meant by a “day”? Why is it an “idle effort” simply to understand that by evening and morning we are dealing with a normal, 24-hour day?

John Walton’s discussion is verbose and confusing. He finally states,

If we press the question, did God *really* carry out the events of Genesis 1 in seven twenty-four hour days, the answer is certainly, yes. What we do not know is whether that literal seven days incorporated a ceremonial setting, focused on a declarative sequence, or something else again. If the interpretation offered in this commentary is correct in highlighting function over structure, the text may not suggest that all things were made in this seven-day period. God’s creation of

¹¹Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990) 53.

¹²Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word, 1987) 19.

¹³Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988) 109. Ross lists four reasons for taking יום as a 24-hour day: 1) elsewhere when used of a number, יום means 24 hours; 2) Exod 20 bases its teaching of the Sabbath day on the six days of creation; 3) there are days, years, signs, and seasons from the fourth day on, “suggesting that the normal system is entirely operative”; and 4) if יום means an age, then there would need to be a long age of “day” and a similarly long age of “night.”

¹⁴Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998) 23. Arnold concludes, “The important lesson from Genesis 1 is that he did in fact create it, and that he made it orderly and good in every respect.”

¹⁵G. Charles Aalders, *Genesis: volume 1* (Bible Student’s Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981) 58.

matter may not be confined to the seven days, nor is it the principle [*sic*] subject of Genesis 1.¹⁶ This confusing conclusion is in the popular NIV Application Commentary series, not in a more technical commentary. One is left to ponder, if God's creation of matter is not the principal subject of Gen 1, what is?¹⁷

Victor Hamilton, cited above in his statement that יום means a 24-hour period ("whoever wrote Gen. 1 believed he was talking about literal days"), then states the following: "Now, over the last few centuries science has shown that it is absurd and preposterous to think that the universe was created in one week."¹⁸ Similarly, Wenham, who also clearly holds that יום means a 24-hour period, then concludes that the six days are merely a "device which our narrator uses to express the coherence and purposiveness of the creator's work," and that the days should not be interpreted "over-literally."¹⁹ Likewise Robert Godfrey argues that "the days of Genesis 1 are ordinary, twenty-four-hour days," but then concludes that "these ordinary days are for us as a model for our working, not as a time schedule that God followed."²⁰

Derek Kidner seems to take the days as literal in some sense, such that even the human author understood as literal; but then he concludes that it is "phenomenological language" and "heavy temporal foreshortening which turns ages into days." He concludes condescendingly, "it is only pedantry that would quarrel with terms that simplify in order to clarify."²¹ In a similar manner, Bruce Waltke asserts that the author of Genesis "is not concerned with presenting a strict historical account," but instead gives truth about origins "in anthropomorphic language." He concludes that "the narrator has an agenda very different from the modern historian. He has a theological agenda: to tell us that God created the earth and that it is all very orderly."²²

So, according to these evangelical scholars, all we are left with from the Genesis account is that God did things purposefully and in order. Is that all that Gen 1 teaches?

Six 24-Hour Days—An Embarrassing View?

One is left to wonder why so many evangelicals have abandoned the six 24-hour day view or become agnostic on the whole matter. I would suggest that there are two primary reasons. Neither of these reasons has anything to do with the exegesis of Gen 1, since the simplest, most direct reading of the text indicates that God created the world in six 24-hour days, as many of these same evangelical scholars

¹⁶John H. Walton, *Genesis* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) 156.

¹⁷Elsewhere Walton states that we "get little information concerning the *structural* cosmos (i.e., matter per se). 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" (*Genesis*, 84). It seems to me that the *things* God creates are precisely what the text mentions in day one and in the subsequent five days of Gen 1:1-31. I count 22 *things* that God creates in this chapter!

¹⁸Hamilton, *Genesis*, 53.

¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 39.

²⁰W. Robert Godfrey, *God's Pattern for Creation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003) 90.

²¹Kidner, *Genesis*, 57-58.

²²Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) 76-77.

acknowledge.²³ The first reason is that many evangelicals are convinced of either evolutionary theory or (at the least) the geological evidence for the age of the earth. This understanding then guides their interpretation of Gen 1.²⁴ I believe that they are wrong to give such great credence either to current evolutionary theory or geology, since both are based upon the unproved assumption of uniformitarianism: the idea that the processes we see at work now in the universe were always at work at the same rate in the same way. So, for example, according to uniformitarianism, we can determine the age of fossils by using Carbon-14, since the rate of decay has remained a constant throughout time. However, a catastrophic event such as the flood of Gen 6-8 (see also 2 Pet 3:3-6) renders the uniformitarian assumption invalid; in fact, uniformitarianism is in direct contradiction to any miraculous event. Still, the continual teaching of evolution in public schools and universities for decades has taken its toll, and sadly even some evangelicals are convinced by the “scientific” assumptions of uniformitarianism and evolution.²⁵

I think there is a second reason why many evangelicals have either abandoned the six 24-hour day view or become agnostic. And that is, they are somewhat embarrassed by it. For years, evangelicals have been regarded by the mainstream (i.e., liberal) critical scholars as “out of touch,” with little scholarly work to their credit. Their view of the Bible, especially that it is inerrant, has been regarded as simple or naive. Evangelicals who have pursued doctorates in non-evangelical schools have found their reception disconcerting. They, too, want to be known as reputable scholars, not simply knee-jerk fundamentalists.²⁶ And what could be more “fundamentalist” than insisting on a literal six 24-hour day creation for Gen 1? Such an opinion is regarded as anti-intellectual and anachronistic: in the words of Richard Dawkins, those who hold such a view are simply dismissed as “clowns”!

The Framework Hypothesis: A Less Embarrassing Alternative, But At What Cost?

All of this has led some evangelical scholars to seek alternatives to the literal six 24-hour day creation view. Some have offered quite innovative alternatives. For example, John Sailhamer believes that אֶרֶץ in Gen 1:2 should be translated *land*, and that Gen 1:2-31 refers to the creation of the promised land, rather

²³For example, R. Laird Harris states, “I will freely admit that the view that the days were 24-hour days is a natural first reading of the chapter” (“Length of the Creative Days,” 103). See also the views of Mark Ross, Hamilton, and Wenham, discussed above on pp. 3-4.

²⁴For instance, Waltke dismisses the literal 24-hour view, explaining simply in a footnote that “most scientists reject a literal twenty-four hour period” (*Genesis*, 61 n. 29). Where, one might ask, is the good, high quality exegesis which Waltke displays in many of his other works? Because “scientists” reject the view, are we who hold to biblical inerrancy supposed to follow suit, without asking first what the biblical text actually says?

²⁵Time and space do not permit discussion of this important topic further. See recent works by Michael Denton (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*), Michael Behe (*Darwin's Black Box*), and Phillip Johnson (*Darwin on Trial*). All these authors demonstrate the flaws of evolution, though some would hold to an old earth. See also older classics by Henry Morris (*The Long War Against God, Scientific Creationism*, etc.). Whitcomb and Morris's *The Genesis Flood*, though dated, still provides excellent evidence against uniformitarianism.

²⁶I have long suspected (though I have only circumstantial evidence to back up my suspicions, so I may be completely wrong!) that those who come from the most fundamental backgrounds (either churches or schools such as Bob Jones University and even Dallas Theological Seminary, especially in earlier days) often are embarrassed by their former school's fundamentalism, and tend to react against it in some way. In my own case, coming from Princeton University, perhaps my “rebellion” was in remaining conservative in a hostile environment!

than the creation of the world.²⁷ And Duane Garrett believes that the seven days of Gen 1 do not represent the actual length of creation, but instead are “the seven days of divine revelation to Moses.”²⁸ While both of these views are novel, they also seem to necessitate reading in various assumptions into Gen 1 that are nowhere stated, nor even implied. Thus, it is not surprising that these views have not attracted a wide following, and they will not be discussed further here.

By contrast, the framework hypothesis has been embraced by numerous evangelical scholars.²⁹ The framework hypothesis addresses one of the major weaknesses of the day-age theory: unlike the day-age theory, the advocates of the framework hypothesis believe that the six days of creation are presented as normal, 24-hour days. In other words, they take יום with its normal meaning of a 24-hour day.³⁰ Yet, this “picture” of God’s creative work in a week is not to be taken literally; instead, “it functions as a literary structure in which the creative works of God have been narrated in a topical order.” So the commands of God (“Let there be...”) “are narrated in a nonsequential order within the literary structure or framework of a seven-day week.”³¹ Thus, Gen 1 is intended to provide the literary framework for creation, but not a literal or sequential chronology. Appeal is sometimes made to other Ancient Near Eastern myths to demonstrate that this approach is not limited to Gen 1. Furthermore, it is stated that Gen 2:5 indicates that it had not rained on the earth, showing that ordinary divine providence operated in the same way during creation as it does now, thus requiring far more than 24 hours between each creative act.³²

Often the following pattern is noted:

Creation kingdoms	Creature kings
Day 1: light; day and night	Day 4: light-bearers: sun, moon, stars
Day 2: sea and sky	Day 5: sea creatures; birds
Day 3: land and vegetation	Day 6: land creatures; man ³³

²⁷John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996) 47-59. One immediate problem with this view is that it gives two different meanings for ארץ in Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2. Further, nowhere in Gen 1 does it limit creation to the promised land.

²⁸Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991) 193. So also P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1948) 133-34. Yet, nowhere in the text does it indicate that these are days of “divine revelation to Moses,” nor is Moses even introduced in the book of Genesis.

²⁹For example, Meredith G. Kline, “Because It Had Not Rained,” *WTJ* 20 (1958) 146-57; Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3,” *WTJ* 60 (1998) 1-21; Lee Irons (Lee Irons with Meredith Kline, “The Framework View,” in *Genesis Debate*, 217-53); Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984); Waltke, *Genesis*, 58-59, 73-78; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 54-56; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 39-40; Mark Throntveit, “Are the Events in the Genesis Creation Account Set Forth in Chronological Order? No,” in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood* (ed. Ronald F. Youngblood; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990) 36-55; and Godfrey, *God’s Pattern*, 85-90. The Dutch theologian Arie Noordzij came up with the essence of the framework hypothesis in his work *Gods Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis*, published in 1924. An English translation of much of his work is given in N. H. Ridderbos, *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957).

³⁰Irons and Kline, “Framework View,” 219.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²See Kline, “Because It Had Not Rained,” 146-57; Irons and Kline, “Framework View,” 230-36.

³³See, for example, Meredith Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48 (1996) 2-15; Irons and Kline, “Framework View,” 224.

While the framework hypothesis may at first seem like a viable option, upon closer reflection, it has a host of insurmountable problems. First and foremost, Gen 1 is presented in a normal narrative, not poetic, form. It is presented in a sequential manner. In fact, it contains 50 *waw* consecutive imperfect forms (the standard marker for consecutive, sequential action³⁴), more *waw* consecutive forms than all but 3 of the first 20 chapters of Genesis.³⁵ There are an average of 1.61 *waw* consecutive imperfect forms in Gen 1. By contrast, in the poetic section in Gen 49:1b-27 (Jacob's blessing of his sons), there are only a total of 8 *waw* consecutive forms, or 0.30 per verse.³⁶ To put it another way, Gen 1 has 5 times more narrative sequential markers than a comparable poetic section. Is there any doubt that the author of Gen 1 intended that the narrative be understood as normal sequential action? The genre is clearly narrative, not poetry. As Pipa notes, "is there any way Moses could have more precisely indicated six, normal, sequential days?"³⁷

In fact, it is fascinating that the day-age advocates insist (correctly) that Gen 1 speaks of the days in sequential action, while the framework hypothesis advocates insist (correctly) that the days of Gen 1 are literal 24-hour days. Only the literal 24-hour day view holds that the days are both sequential **and** literal 24-hour periods.

A second objection to the framework hypothesis is that the nice pattern outlined above breaks down at several points. Furthermore, even if the pattern held true completely, it would not be an argument for a non-literal approach to the chapter, especially since the chapter has so many sequential markers! Just because something is presented according to a pattern does not mean that the pattern should not be taken literally. As E. J. Young states, "why, then, must we conclude that, merely because of a schematic arrangement, Moses has disposed of chronology?"³⁸ But the pattern itself does not hold. A few examples will suffice. First, the light of day 1 is not dependent on the sun, so the sun is hardly the "ruler" of it. The light of day 1 is a special creation of God, distinct from the sun. If some have a problem with understanding light without the sun, then they should recognize that something similar will be true in the eternal state. According to Rev 21:23 and 22:5, the sun will not be needed at all, since the Lord Himself is the Light. So just as in the first three days of the creation week, in the eternal state there will once again be light without the sun. Second, the waters existed on day 1, not just day 2. Third, in v. 14 the "lights" of day 4 are set in the "expanse" created in day 2 (not day 1). Fourth, the sea creatures of day 5 were to fill the "water in the seas" which were created on day 3, not day 2, contrary to the chart above (see Gen 1:10); and none of the sea creatures or birds or land creatures other than man were to "rule" anything anyway! Finally, man was created on day 6 not to rule over the land and vegetation (created on

³⁴Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 543.

³⁵The 3 chapters in Gen 1-20 with more *waw* consecutive imperfect forms are chaps. 5 (60), 11 (51) and 19 (64).

³⁶Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks, and Colin Smith, *Old Testament Parsing Guide* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000) 1-15, 46.

³⁷Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., "From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:2-2:3," in *Did God Create in 6 Days?*, 183.

³⁸Edward J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964) 66. I am amazed at the strength of Young's argumentation against the framework hypothesis (pp. 44-105). Having forgotten about this little tome that I purchased 35 years ago (when the framework hypothesis was not nearly as popular), and only picking it up after reading numerous more modern critiques of the framework hypothesis, I found Young's arguments to be more thorough than any of the others.

day 3), but over the land animals created on day 6 and the sea creatures and birds created on day 5! In other words, despite the nice chart, the patterns simply do not hold up!³⁹

Third, the appeal of Kline and others that Gen 2:5 supports a non-literal understanding of Gen 1 requires a particular understanding of that passage (and relationship of that passage to Gen 1) that is not warranted. First, one should acknowledge that Gen 2:5-6 is not an easy passage to interpret: do these verses refer to the preparation only of the garden of Eden, or to the entire state of the earth? Only in the latter case would Kline's interpretation possibly come into play. Second, even if Kline's interpretation of Gen 2:5-6 is correct, it would not rule out extraordinary providence during the third day of creation: as Young states, at most it would show that "such a mode [general providence] may have been present."⁴⁰ Furthermore, Gen 2 is not a second detailed chronological creation account; rather, its purpose is to provide further details concerning man and the garden that are necessary to understand the narrative of Gen 3.⁴¹

Fourth, if Gen 1 is not intended to provide details about creation but rather to demonstrate that God did it in an orderly way, then why are all the details provided? In other words, if the details are not the point of the chapter, then why did the author provide so many of them? In fact, there is no single marker or indication from the text that the days are simply a "form" or "framework," or that the details of what things are created on what day, are unimportant. Further, how could Exod 20:11 use God's six-day creative activity as a model for man's activity, if God Himself had not actually worked for six literal days?⁴² Kline's later attempt to introduce a two-level cosmology (an "upper invisible register," to which the "days" of creation in Gen 1 apparently refer; and a "lower register," which we actually see) only confuses matters further.⁴³

Finally, there is a major hermeneutical issue with the framework hypothesis. Simply put, it is this: if we regard Gen 1 as not literal, but rather figurative language that in essence says that "God did it," then when do we all of a sudden decide that the text of Genesis should be taken literally? Do we do that in chap. 3, where the serpent tempts Eve, or is that metaphorical as well? And if so, was there an actual historical fall? Or is that also a metaphor? What about the Flood? Or the Tower of Babel? Or Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph? In other words, since there is no internal marker to indicate that the text of Gen 1 should be taken figuratively, how do we decide when to stop? The NT clearly refers to creation in Gen 1 and 2, and regards the accounts as historically accurate (see Matt 19:19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; Luke 3:38; Rom 5:12-20; 8:19-22; 1 Cor 11:8-9; 15:22; 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Tim 2:13-14; 2 Pet 3:5; Heb 4:4; 11:3). The

³⁹See further Young, *Genesis One*, 68-73.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 64.

⁴¹For further discussion, see Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1:1-2:4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 1999) 121-26; Young, *Genesis One*, 58-65; Pipa, "From Chaos to Cosmos," 152-62. Young and Pipa also both deal with the questionable claim that the language of Gen 1 is "anthropomorphic," so we should take "day" and "evening and morning" as "anthropomorphisms." See further, Young, *Genesis One*, 55-58; Pipa, "From Chaos to Cosmos," 162-65.

⁴²So Young, *Genesis One*, 47.

⁴³See Kline, "Space and Time," 2-15; Irons and Kline, "Framework View," 236-48. Irons and Kline argue that the language of the "days" and "evenings and mornings" are instances of "lower-register terms being used metaphorically to describe the upper register....Scripture employs the language of earthly time to speak of the progress of heavenly time" (p. 240).

same is true for Gen 3, the flood accounts, and so forth.⁴⁴ Why do we have license to do otherwise? As E. J. Young aptly states, “if the ‘framework’ hypothesis were applied to the narratives of the virgin birth or to the resurrection or Romans 5:12ff., it could as effectively serve to minimize the importance of the content of those passages as it now does the content of the first chapter of Genesis.”⁴⁵

In other words, for those evangelicals who think that the framework hypothesis is a more satisfactory solution than the more “embarrassing” view that the days of Genesis 1 are meant to be taken literally and sequentially, I would ask, is it really worth it? Once one has decided to take the first chapter of Genesis as literary rather than literal, then where are the hermeneutical safeguards? Why should one insist on a literal fall or a literal flood? And if there is no literal first Adam who fell, then what is the need for the second Adam to redeem mankind from that fall (Rom 5:12-20; 1 Cor 15:22)? Are those who are adhering to the framework hypothesis really thinking about the hermeneutical ramifications of their choice?

Why not take the words of Gen 1 at face value, as simple, straightforward sequential narrative of God’s miraculous creative activity? If that causes some intellectuals to label us as “narrow-minded clowns,” then so be it. The claims of Christ are narrow (John 14:6: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by Me”); the gospel is narrow; and the cross is regarded as foolishness by the wisdom of this world (1 Cor 1:18-31). But it is true nonetheless. Heb 11:3 says that “by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” Do we really think that contemporary science is more authoritative than God’s revelation? Sometimes our intellectual pride may get in the way of our faith: if the inerrant Scripture in Gen 1 states that God created the world in six literal days, then why should we not simply accept it, rather than try to find all kinds of ways to explain it away? Sometimes the plain, simplest, most natural reading of the text is, indeed the best. Such is the case with Gen 1, despite all the attempts to explain it in some other, more complicated way.

⁴⁴For a list of NT references to the creation, fall, flood, and patriarchs, see Kelly, *Creation and Change*, 129-34.

⁴⁵Young, *Genesis One*, 99 n. 109. So also John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001) 21-24.