CREATION IN SIX DAYS

A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One

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Introduction

This book is designed primarily as an answer to the Framework Interpretation of Genesis 1, argued from the traditional normal day (168-hour week) reading of the passage. By "Framework Interpretation" I mean any approach to the text of Genesis 1 that pits its literary features against its plain historical and narrative sense. Thus, I include as "Framework Interpreters" some who do not wear that label themselves.

In attacking this subject, I must juggle three balls and try to keep them in some kind of balance. The first is a detailed critique of the Framework Interpretation, both in its general presentation (by Bruce Waltke) and in its more "sophisticated" presentation (by Meredith Kline and his followers). This is done in chapters two and three and in appendixes A–D. This critique is rendered a bit difficult in that there is no published large-scale defense of the Framework Interpretation; the approach has yet to be presented in what I would regard as a fully worked out fashion, as a detailed theological commentary on Genesis 1.

My second task is to answer fire with fire by setting forth what I think is a proper way to read Genesis 1. John Sailhamer does present a full discussion of Genesis 1 in his book, though not from a Framework Interpretation standpoint, and in chapter seven I have used his new Limited Geography

Interpretation as a foil to make an initial presentation of my own views. With this critical overview of Genesis 1, I am able to present a "positive" reading of it in chapter eight and supplement it in appendix B.

My third task, and the most difficult one, is to try to uncover the presuppositions that underlie the Framework Interpretation in order to try and explain its present-day attractiveness. My thesis is that the explanation lies in a too-ready acceptance of many of the questionable assumptions of modern science on the part of most Christians today, coupled with the pervasiveness of a gnostic, or nonhistorical, attitude toward the Christian religion. I have used two short essays by John Collins, whose position is similar to but not quite the same as the Framework Interpretation, as a springboard for a discussion of modern science in chapters five and six. I have sought to expose the gnostic root of modern thinking in chapter four to explain why a nonhistorical or pictorial approach to Genesis 1 finds such ready acceptance in Christian circles today.

I wish to thank Mr. Douglas Jones of Canon Press for his editorial criticisms of the original typescripts of this book and for his help in getting the material ready for publication. Thanks also to the many people who read parts of this book and provided encouragement and/or stimulating criticism. By no means do all of the following agree with what I have written, but they are due special mention here: Dr. Peter Wallace, Dr. Vern S. Poythress, Dr. Peter J. Leithart, Dr. John C. Whitcomb, Rev. Mark Horne, Rev. Jeffrey J. Meyers, and Dr. Gary North.

CHAPTER 1

In Professor Edwards's Class

William, a student at Evangelical University, had looked forward all summer to "Introduction to Christian Literature," a course taught by Professor Edwards. Enrollment for Professor Edwards's courses always closed almost immediately because so many students wanted to take them. William was thankful he had been able to get in.

Professor Edwards was not only highly regarded by his loyal students, but also a major figure in the evangelical world. He had authored several significant works, frequently delivered papers at scholarly societies, and was even taken seriously by liberal scholars and theologians. Moreover, William had heard Professor Edwards speak in chapel several times and had always found him moving, inspiring, and helpful. William was excited as he took his seat for the first class.

Professor Edwards began class with prayer and then gave out the curriculum for the course. "In this course, we'll be learning to read carefully, not superficially," he said. "And to begin with, I'm going to read to you from one of your assigned texts, and we'll discuss it today." So Professor Edwards began reading:

> His whole life, John Pigg had lived at 17 Almond Street, a large, white house.

"This is how the story begins," said Professor Edwards. "Do you notice anything strange about it?" No one raised his (or

her) hand, so Professor Edwards reread the sentence and asked his question again. Finally, he smiled and said, "Well, how can a house be both large *and* white?"

William was puzzled, but Professor Edwards went on: "You see, when a book begins with a startling conundrum, a virtual contradiction, like this, the author is telling us something. He is telling us that perhaps we should not take what he is saying at face value. We should consider what 'large' and 'white' mean, perhaps, but not think that John Pigg really lived in such a house."

William could see from the expressions of the students around him that they were impressed. They had seen the light! Yes, this was a deeper sentence than they had at first thought, and the pointer to that depth was the contradiction in the sentence itself. But William was still puzzled.

So he timidly raised his hand and asked, "Professor Edwards, sir, could you explain this further? It doesn't look like a contradiction to me. Why can't a house be both large and white? What is the problem?"

Professor Edwards smiled. "Good question,"—and he looked at his seating chart for students—"William, is it? Yes. Well, would anyone like to address William's question?"

The student next to William raised his hand and, being recognized, said, "Sure. I mean, don't you see it, William? The house is *big* and is also painted *white!* I mean, how can it be both?"

William nodded. He did not want to get into any kind of argument on the first day of class. In fact, he did not want to argue with any professor. The duty of a student was to learn from the professor, not think himself his equal. But inwardly, William was still upset. What was he missing? Why did everyone else see it while he didn't?

William could not get the matter out of his mind all day long. Sure, the fact that the house was large and white might make it a symbol for God's world, signifying that it was both spacious and pure. Sure, the name John Pigg could hint that

a swinish man does not belong in such a nice house. Maybe the large, white house is the Church, and John Pigg is the Christian: "John" as a saved person, and yet still a pig, still possessed of the flesh. William could see that the opening sentence might hint at depth in the narrative, though only the ensuing narrative of the story would confirm whether his conjecture was correct or incorrect. But William could not see how "large" and "white" were contradictory. The depth would still be there if such adjectives were complementary and not contradictory.

The more William thought about it in the days to come, the more disappointed he became in Professor Edwards. To be sure, there would be a lot to learn from the professor, but William was increasingly sure that his pitting "white" against "large" was ridiculous. And he was amazed that so many of his fellow students had fallen in line with Professor Edwards's argument. He could only assume that their respect and affection for the professor had blinded them to what he was actually saying on this particular matter.

In the course of the present book, we shall encounter several Professor Edwards, men who are fine scholars, godly Christians, who have made significant contributions to believing Christian scholarship. Like William, though, we shall find ourselves amazed at some of the arguments they propound concerning the opening chapter of the Bible. For like Professor Edwards, these men see contradictions where none exist. They manufacture problems in the creation narrative that are rather obviously not present therein and that nobody ever noticed before. Like William, we shall come away disappointed.

For instance, we shall find men saying that there is a contradiction of sorts between Genesis 1:11–12 and Genesis 2:5. They will tell us that, on the one hand, all the plants were made on the third day of creation week, and on the other, they will say the plants were not made until man was created. This, they will say, is an indication that we are not to take creation week "literally" as history.

But I ask you, courteous reader, to study these two passages and see if there be any contradiction, or any problem of any sort:

> And God said, "Let the earth shoot forth shoots, grain seeding seed, trees fruitbearing fruit, according to its kind so that its seed is in it, upon the earth." And it was established. And the earth produced shoots, grain seeding seed according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit in which is its seed. And God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:11–12)

> And none of the shrubs of the field was yet in the earth, and none of the grains of the field had yet sprouted, for Yahweh God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to serve the ground. (Gen. 2:5)

Now, do you see a problem, a conundrum, yea a contradiction, between these two statements? William does not. William notices right away that on the third day, only two kinds of plants are said to shoot forth from the earth: grains and fruit trees. Nothing is said about any other plants. To be sure, perhaps all the other plants are included, but when we come to Genesis 2:5, that initial impression is corrected. There are some plants, "shrubs of the field," that had not been made at the time Adam was created. Thus, William reasons, these were not made on the third day. Moreover, according to 2:5, the grain plants, though they existed, had not yet sprouted any grain, while according to 2:16, the fruit trees did already have fruit on them.

William meditates on what the passages say. When man was first created, the only plants in existence were two kinds of food plants: grains and fruit trees, probably including what in English we call nuts as well. But there were no grains yet to eat, only fruits and probably nuts. Thus, Adam's first food consisted of fruit and nuts, not yet grain, potatoes, broccoli, or any other food plant. And not grapes. Only fruits, nuts, and olives.

William meditates further. Olive oil is used to consecrate a man to priesthood and kingship. Thus, it is fitting that olives

come first. Olive oil is not made by cooking but only by pressing the olive. Thus, it involves no tools. It requires absolutely no development of human society to make olive oil. It requires absolutely no development of human society to eat fruits and drink water.

Grains come second, William notices. Bread is made from grain, but it involves much more work as well as mastery of fire. Thus, bread comes later on.

Finally, he notices that grapes are not included in any of the third-day plants. They must be among the plants made later on, after the fall of man, when the earth brought forth thorns and thistles (and apparently grapes as well). William considers how it takes a rather advanced technology to produce wine from grapes; it is appropriate for grapes to come last. Eating bread and drinking wine presupposes the development of human beings beyond the initial infant stage.

William notices that in the second feast of the Israelite year, Pentecost, two loaves of leavened bread were raised up before Yahweh (Lev. 23:17). At the third feast, at the end of the year, wine was celebrated (Deut. 14:26). Moreover, William notices that priests ("palace servants")[1] came before kings in the biblical narrative; Israel had priests for nearly five hundred years before she had a king. He notices that priests ate the bread of the sanctuary (Lev. 24:9) but were forbidden to drink wine at the sanctuary (Lev. 10:9), while kings in the Bible are pictured drinking wine quite often (Gen. 40:5; Neh. 1:11; Esther 1:7; 3:15; 5:6; 7:1; etc.). He notices that in celebrating the Lord's Supper, the bread comes before the wine. Thus, William finds that the later narrative of the Bible confirms his suspicions about the created order of oil, bread, and wine.

1. The Hebrew word *kohen* means "palace servant." See Peter J. Leithart, "The Priesthood of the Plebs: The Baptismal Transformation of the Antique Order" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1998), 41–73; also Leithart, "What Is a Priest?", *Biblical Horizons* 33 (January 1992).

But William's reflections do not arise from some supposed contradiction between Genesis 1:11–12 and 2:5. Quite the opposite. It is only because he has read the passages seriously, noting the clear differences between the two, that he is able to understand them in greater depth.

In this study we shall also see men arguing that there is a contradiction of sorts between the first and fourth days of creation week. Light was made on the first day, they note, while the lightbearers were not made until the fourth day. "How can there be light without lightbearers?" they ask. "Clearly, the sun and moon were really made on the first day, not on the fourth. This shows us," they continue, "that the seven days of Genesis 1 are not to be regarded as an historical sequence of events."

William, once again, is mystified. When he goes back to his dormitory room, he flips on the light switch, and the light comes on. Obviously, you don't have to have the sun and moon to have light. If Genesis 1 says that God "let there be" light on the first day and did not "make" the sun and moon until the fourth, where is the problem?

William notices that the Spirit was hovering in the region between heaven and earth on day 1. He notices that the Spirit is associated with God's glory in the Bible, and that God's glory is full of light. Thus, he reasons, it was the Spirit who provided created light the first three days of the creation week. Then the Spirit gave over His light, in part, to the objects placed in the firmament, which itself was not made until the second day. Thus, William reasons, the luminaries in the firmament are only temporary. They were not there in the beginning, and they will not be there at the end. He remembers that this is just what Revelation 21:23 and 22:5 say.

In fact, William notices that in Revelation 21:11, the New Jerusalem is said to have "starlight" and is positioned between the New Heavens and the New Earth. It occurs to him that the original light of the Spirit was transferred to the firmament

luminaries for the course of human history. At the end that light will be transferred again to glorified humanity, now positioned between heaven and earth.

We notice that once again, William is able to formulate these reflections precisely because he reads Genesis 1 in the traditional manner; he has *not* fallen for the notion that there are "contradictions of sorts" in the passage. Moreover, William checks out what others have said in the past, and he discovers that his "simple" reading of Genesis 1 fits with what the Church has always said.

Reading Genesis One

We could stay with William longer, but we won't. The book you hold in your hands is entirely devoted to the kinds of "problems" that William has encountered, problems that exist in the minds of certain twentieth century evangelical readers of Genesis 1 that are pretty hard to find in the text itself. At this point, then, we need to leave William behind and ask why such modern evangelical readers see such "problems" in the text of Genesis 1. Are they stupid? Are they so caught up in modern evolutionary ideas about the age of the universe that they are incapable of reading the biblical account accurately? Are they brilliant, godly men who are being influenced by unhelpful presuppositions? Or, are they right and William (and I) wrong?

It is a fact that before the modern era, nobody in the history of the church for over three thousand years ever questioned the chronology of the Bible, and only a tiny handful ever questioned that the six days of Genesis 1 were ordinary 24-hour-type days. The few who did question the six days of Genesis 1 did so for philosophical and not scientific reasons.[2] Even so,

2. Specifically the powerful influence of Platonism on certain thinkers: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine (to a degree), and later

no one suggested God took a vast amount of time. Augustine thought the six days were instantaneous. All accepted the biblical chronology and calculated the age of the earth from it. It has only been since the rise of modern science, including archaeology, that anyone has questioned the biblical chronology and traditional interpretation of Genesis 1. It is modern science, thus, that places a challenge before interpreters.

If someone said, "I noticed contradictions in Genesis 1 long before I'd ever heard of modern science," who would believe him? It is not a slur on anyone's character to say that modern science has provoked him to rethink Genesis 1. There is nothing wrong with going back and rereading the Bible after hearing a new thing to see if perhaps the Church has misread it. Perhaps she has. Only an examination of the text will tell.

Only one group of people has a problem with the biblical statements, and that group we may call "modern conservative Christians." The liberal or unbelieving expositor of Genesis has no problem with the text. It is obvious to him that Genesis 1 presents creation and world-building in 144 hours and that Genesis 5 and 11 provide a chronology of the world from creation to Abraham. The modernist and the unbeliever do not accept the Genesis account as historically true; for them it is a myth. But they perceive no problems or ambiguities in the text, nothing that indicates "gaps" in the chronology or some odd kind of "days" in Genesis 1.

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just before the Reformation, John Colet. On Colet's rampant Platonism, see C.S. Lewis, *Poetry and Prose in the Sixteenth Century,* The Oxford History of Literature 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 158ff. On the early fathers, see Robert I. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church,* chapter three (not yet published; available online at the time of this writing at www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Contents.htm.) For a history of the matter that is unsympathetic to the traditional 144-hour view, see Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 Through the Ages* (London: Thomas More Press, 1992) and my review of this book at reformed-theology.org/ice/newslet/bc/bc.98.03.htm (originally published in the online magazine *Premise*).

Similarly, those whom we may call "traditional conservative believers" also take the text in a simple and obvious way. For them it is quite clear that God made the world around 4000 B.C. and in the span of six ordinary days. This group includes many conservative Lutherans, conservative Calvinists, fundamentalists, and Orthodox Jews.

Thus, we have three groups that have always seen the text as clearly and obviously teaching a recent six-day creation that is chronologically datable from the Bible: (1) the historic Church and historic Judaism; (2) present-day "traditional conservatives"; and (3) unbelievers. We are left with a small group of evangelicals and other types of conservative Christians who are committed to believing the Bible while also being very impressed with the constructs of modern science. For this small group there is a problem with Genesis 1 and with biblical chronology.[3] Unlike the other three groups we have mentioned, this group of people is motivated to search out and find evidence in the text that can relieve them of the burden of having to believe in a young earth and universe.

One way to "get around" the "embarrassment" posed by Genesis 1 is to say that the early chapters of Genesis are simply not historical at all. These texts, in other words, exist for *ideas only* and not for *history*. The person who reads Genesis 1 this way is free to say that Genesis 1 is a completely coherent narrative and that there is no "apparent contradiction" between Genesis 1's plants and Genesis 2's plants. None of it really happened historically anyway, with this view.

According to this reading, Genesis 1 presents God as creating the world and building it up over the course of a normal week of 24-hour days. Then God planted a garden, which grew almost instantaneously, and put a fully-grown, newly created man into it. God pulled a woman out of the side of

3. It should be noted that there are a few six-day creationists who are open to the possibility of gaps in the chronologies of Genesis 5 and 11.

the sleeping man, they ate forbidden fruit, and then they were cast out of the Garden. They and their immediate descendants lived lifespans lasting almost a thousand years. Then there was a great flood that covered the entire world, and God started again with Noah and his family. This, according to such readers, is exactly and obviously what the text of Genesis says. But it never really happened. If you built a time machine and went back to watch, you would not see any of these events—because they are not events. They are just stories, "pregnant myths," designed to teach us about God and man and the world according to this view.

For reasons to be explained more fully in chapter four of the present book, orthodox Christians cannot accept this way of reading the early chapters of Genesis. In a word, such a reading is gnostic. Gnosticism entails a number of different things, but one thing it means is the rejection of history in favor of mere ideas. Liberal "Christianity," whose general approach to Genesis 1 we have just described, is gnostic. For the gnostic, it does not matter whether Jesus really rose from the grave or not. What matters is the *idea* of resurrection, or the *idea* of a virgin birth, or the *idea* of the mighty acts of God, or even the *idea* of history (as opposed to the *facts* of history). Once we understand the idea embedded in a supposedly historical narrative, we can dispense with the historical events. Christianity, however, stands opposed to all gnosticism. If there were not an original Adam and an original Fall into sin, then there could not be a final Adam (Jesus) and a redemption from sin. As mentioned, I shall address this matter more fully in chapter four.

Orthodox Christians are committed to history, to God's acts in history in creating the world and humanity, testing humanity, judging humanity, redeeming humanity, and transfiguring humanity and the world. Thus, orthodox Christians do not have the option of saying that the early chapters of Genesis are not historical.

Since Genesis 1 rather obviously does present God's creation and world-building as lasting for one normal week, orthodox Christians must either accept this and live with it or else find some indication in the text itself that Genesis 1 is not to be taken as lasting one normal week in length. There are two possible ways to get around the "normal week" interpretation.

The first is to find indications in the rest of the Bible that the week in Genesis 1 is a symbol, or rather that it is *only* a symbol. If there were a passage in the inerrant Bible that said something like, "As God portrayed Himself working in six days and resting on the seventh, so you should work six days and rest on the seventh," then a case might be made for this approach. No such passage exists in the Bible, however, nor does anything like it. Yet perhaps there are other, more general indications in the Bible that would lead us to take Genesis 1 in a nonhistorical fashion. The present book will explore such proposed possibilities.[4]

The second option is to find indications in Genesis 1 itself that the passage is not to be taken as the history of one normal week. Here is where the "apparent contradictions" come into play. Most of the first part of the present book is occupied with examining these supposed "difficulties" to see if they are really all that difficult. We have already, with William, glanced at two such proposed "apparent contradictions." We shall examine these in more depth as we go along.

The present book is a defense of the Church's traditional "normal day" reading of Genesis 1. I cannot know what the future may bring, but I am convinced that to date no one has brought forth any sound argument for reading Genesis 1 in any other way. Like William, I am disappointed in the intelligent,

4. Actually, there is only one such argument, which is that just as there is an upper-story heaven over the earth, there are also upper-story days over earthly days. This is the argument of the Klineans and will be discussed at length in due course.

scholarly, godly men who have adopted other views. I can understand that young students, rightly admiring their teachers, often adopt such views and promulgate them, but it is my hope that the present series of essays will cause them to rethink matters and, without rejecting all that their teachers have taught them, reject them at this particular point and return to the way the Church has always read the opening chapters of the Bible.

Thesis, Purpose, and Overview

The thesis of the present series of studies is that Genesis 1 intends to provide an historical narrative of the events by which God's Spirit, over the course of six normal days, brought His initial creation to a point where it was "very good" and ready to be turned over to His Spirit-infused surrogate, humanity. The purpose of these studies is to interact with those who have advocated other views and defend the historic Christian understanding of the text of Genesis 1.

My procedure will be to analyze several important and influential essays by writers taking other views. These essays together present all the arguments against the historical understanding of Genesis 1, which are of course also found elsewhere in various evangelical writings.

I have limited myself to evangelicals. My reason for this limitation is twofold. First, I am myself in the evangelical fold. Second, as mentioned above, it is only evangelicals (and a few conservatives in other branches of the Church) who have a problem with Genesis 1. It is only among the evangelicals that we find a concerted attempt to find a way to harmonize Genesis 1 with the evanescent opinions of modern science.[5]

5. For instance, in Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984), and N. H. Ridderbos, *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

I have not dealt at length with two other evangelical attempts to recast the historical understanding of Genesis 1: the Gap Interpretation and the Day-Age Interpretation. This is mainly because I don't take them seriously and because they have been adequately dealt with elsewhere and have few exponents any longer.

The Gap Interpretation, also called the Ruin-Reconstruction Interpretation, is based on a misreading of the phrase "without form and void" in Genesis 1:2.[6] Supposedly this phrase means that the world was in a condition of total chaos, an interpretation read back into the creation account from later passages that deal with sin and judgment. Thus, there is a time-gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Supposedly there was a pre-Adamite race, probably the angels, who governed the world and then wrecked it through sin, after which God rebuilt it in six days. There is absolutely no biblical evidence for this notion, and it flies in the face of the testimony of Genesis 1, which says that the sun and moon were not created until the fourth day of creation week. Gap Interpreters have tried to get around this by suggesting the notion that the earth had been shrouded in clouds for millennia before this fourth day, a position that assumes that Genesis 1 is written from the perspective of someone on the earth, something the text neither says nor hints. In chapter two of the present study, we shall find that Bruce Waltke, though an advocate of a pictorial understanding of Genesis 1, still holds to this discredited interpretation to some extent.[7]

6. See John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), chap. 5; and Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976).

7. Less compelling, since it has few advocates, is the notion that God did not create the world in six days but revealed it to Moses or someone over the course of six days. The definitive presentation of this view is found in P. J. Wiseman, *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1977). Wiseman states that God is addressing someone in Genesis

The Day-Age Interpretation is far-fetched on the face of it. Supposedly we are to believe that plants grew on the earth for an entire eon before the sun was created and for two eons before there were insects to pollinate them. Day-Age Interpreters do themselves no service when they attempt to rescue their position by saying that plants only "came into focus" in the third eon and that the sun "came into focus" in the fourth, etc. What does such a view accomplish? The proposed scheme bears no resemblance to the understanding of cosmic development presently in vogue in the declining years of Western Civilization. The interpretation itself is based on a radical misunderstanding of the word "day" in Genesis 1, a term defined in the text itself as a period of light that alternates with a period of darkness, periods measured by the apparent movement of the sun after its establishment on the fourth day. The entire 24-hour cycle, proceeding from night to day, is called "day," since "day" is the climactic part of the cycle. Although occasionally the Bible uses "day" to refer to a larger span of time, the "day" in Genesis 1 is the "24-hour day," and it has evenings and mornings. Clearly such a "day" is not an age or eon. It is hard to understand how such an approach to the narrative ever gained credibility among thinking people, unless one bears in mind the overwhelming influence of modern scientific constructions on the development of the cosmos.[8]

1, though we don't know who it is. Rather clearly, however, the "Let there be" statements of Genesis 1 don't have to be addressed *to* anyone; God was simply speaking to Himself, just as we, His images, often conduct internal dialogues. Other statements by God are addressed specifically to birds, fishes, and man. The rest of the Bible provides no evidence for Wiseman's conjectures.

8. About the time Western theologians have given up on such silly attempts, we find a prominent Eastern Orthodox publication advocating it. A crude attempt to mingle Genesis 1 with evolution, replete with grotesque misinterpretations of the text and misreadings of the early Church writers, can be seen in Alexandre Kalomiros, "The Divine Will: Some Thoughts

If these two attempts to rescue the historicity of Genesis 1 while extending time into the far reaches of the past have failed, there remain evangelicals who are not ready to discard the historicity of Genesis 1 altogether. One such is John Sailhamer, who argues that Genesis 1 is an historical account of the formation of the land of Canaan (which he says is Eden), not of the creation of the entire universe. I have determined to treat Sailhamer at length because (1) his view is quite likely to become popular, (2) Sailhamer actually moves through the text of Genesis 1, and thereby (3) he provides an opportunity for us to work through the text carefully as we answer his interpretation.

The present writer did not always hold this "strict" view. I was reared in a conservative Christian household and in a generally conservative Lutheran congregation. Like most American boys growing up in the 1950s, I had a general interest in science, and like a few of them, I developed a lifelong love of science fiction literature. My ruminations in high school and college led me quite naturally to the conclusion that "God used evolution" to bring the world to its present state. To be sure, I had heard and read Genesis 1, but I had never really thought about it, or faced the fact that its account of origins does not square with the hypotheses of modern science.

By my senior year of college, I had become an active evangelical and had begun to read the works of Francis Schaeffer, brand new at the time, as well as those from whom he drew much of his thinking, such as E. L. Hebden Taylor, Herman Dooyeweerd, Rousas J. Rushdoony, and Cornelius Van Til. Eventually I came in contact with the writings of John C.

Concerning Scriptural and Patristic Understanding of the Creation of Man and the World, Delivered at Mount Holly Springs Orthodox Conference in 1981," *The Christian Activist: A Journal of Orthodox Opinion*, vol. 2 (Fall–Winter 1997), 8ff. This widely distributed periodical is edited by Frank Schaeffer, the wayward son of Francis A. Schaeffer.

Whitcomb. I was struck by the fact that someone could take Genesis 1 "literally" and wed it to the data of the world while holding to a young earth. I thought that this was interesting and curious, but no more.

As time went along, however, I found my nose pushed into the text of Genesis 1. I could not rest until I had resolved the problems that now faced me. Eventually, after much struggle, I became convinced that Whitcomb was right and became an avid follower of the "scientific creationism" advocated by Henry Morris and his associates.

Over the years since I have come to see some problems in the "scientific creationist" approach. The notion of a water vapor canopy over the earth before the Flood finds no clear-cut support in Scripture, for instance. Also, I believe that too often the creationists look to specific texts of the Bible for "scientific" information that is not really there.[9] Thus, I have remained engaged with the issue.

As a Calvinist, I found that many in my intellectual arena subscribe to a nonhistorical, pictorial view of Genesis 1. At first glance, such an approach to the passage can appear as a valid alternative to the traditional historical interpretation, but I repeatedly found that it did not stand up to close inspection. Moreover it was founded on unrecognized gnostic presuppositions, which I discuss in chapter four. Thus, over the years, I have become more and more confirmed in the traditional understanding that Genesis 1 is an historical narrative, covering the course of one normal week of time. It is my purpose here to defend that understanding.

Because of their gnostic roots and presuppositions, the nonhistorical interpretations of Genesis 1 are not minor errors. They are dangerous aberrations from Christian orthodoxy, for

9. Let me hasten to add that I affirm the fundamental approach of the scientific creationists, which is to start with the statements of the Bible and then build our understand of cosmology and cosmogony on that basis.

they are grounded in non-Christian approaches to reality and to the text of the Bible. That many of those advocating these errors are not self-conscious of the pagan roots of their thinking does not change matters as far as the truth is concerned. I hope that in this book I have been courteous toward my Christian brothers who have fallen into these errors, while at the same time standing firm in advocating the orthodox way of understanding God, time, world, and text.

The pictorial interpreters of Genesis 1 proceed by attempting to show contradictions in the text that indicate that the text is not to be taken as an historical narrative. They complement this with discussions of the challenges posed by modern science and with discussions of the theology and literary structure of Genesis 1. My procedure, thus, is three-fold, as I mentioned in the Introduction. First, I argue that these contradictions and difficulties exist only in the minds of the advocates of the pictorial interpretation; they are not found in the text at all (chapters two, three, and five). Second, I argue that the notions of modern science are often fundamentally idolatrous, and thus they should not be allowed to direct the thinking of serious Christians (chapter six). Along with this, in chapter four, I seek to expose what I think is the pernicious tendency in post-Reformation evangelicalism to downplay the physicality and historicity of God's creation in favor of a religion of ideas.

Finally, I discuss in chapter eight the theological and literary character of Genesis 1, showing how much the pictorial interpreters have missed, showing that someone who takes the passage as historical narrative, like William, is in a better position to understand its theological and literary dimensions. Chapter eight presents in a summary the way I think Genesis 1 should be read. Most of the points in that chapter are found along the way in the chapters critical of my adversaries, but they are collected and expanded in the last chapter. Chapter eight is not what I regard as a full exposition of Genesis 1 and

its meaning; that will have to wait for another occasion. I do hope it is obvious that it is not necessary to agree with my proposed interpretations in order to agree with my proposed criticisms of other views.[10]

A couple of notes on terminology: I have often used "Genesis 1" to refer to the entire seven days of creation, which is actually found in Genesis 1:1–2:3. The chapter break between Genesis 1 and 2 is one of many really absurd chapter breaks in the Bible. The division of the Bible into chapters and verses occurred in the Middle Ages and in the Reformation era, and it badly needs to be redone.

I have also used the phrase "creation week," even though the actual act of creation happened all at once on the first day. One might write of the "world-forming week." Yet, in view of the fact that God "created" dinosaurs on the fifth day and "created" man on the sixth day, speaking of the entire week as "creation week" seems valid. The reader should always bear in mind, however, that apart from these two creative acts, the other acts of God in Genesis 1 always involve reshaping what had already been created in the beginning.

10. At this point, I must call attention to the fine study of Genesis 1 authored by fellow Calvinist Douglas Kelly, which appeared just as the present book was being completed. Dr. Kelly does a very good job of summarizing the arguments for the historic Christian understanding of Genesis 1. His primary focus is on the interaction of Genesis 1 with modern science, while my primary focus is on the biblical theology of Genesis 1. Accordingly, his study of the text is not as detailed as mine, nor does he provide as full a commentary on the passage as does the present book. As a result, there is little overlap between his study and mine, and I heartily recommend that his book be read in tandem with the present volume. Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1:1—2:4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Fearn: Mentor, 1997).

CHAPTER 2

The Framework Interpretation of Bruce K. Waltke

> Bruce K. Waltke, "The Literary Genre of Genesis, Chapter One," *Crux* 27:4 (1991): 2–10.

To begin with, let me write some words in praise of Bruce Waltke. Waltke is a brilliant language scholar, and he has done much work of tremendous benefit to the Christian world. His articles in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*[1] and the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*[2] (of which he is one of the three main editors) are rightly regarded with the highest esteem, and his co-authored *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*[3] is the seminal text on this important topic. Moreover, Waltke is a man willing to abandon his earlier dispensationalism for covenant theology, moving from Dallas Theological Seminary to Westminster Theological Seminary and later going on to Regent College. Also, early in his career, Waltke published arguments that the fetus is not a human being from conception, and thus stated that abortion is not necessarily always wrong, but frankly reversed his opinion after further study, doing so in the most public forum he could find, the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1975.

1. 4 vols, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–88).

2. With R. Laird Harris and Gleason L. Archer (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

3. With M. O'Connor (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988).

(I should add that back in the 1960s and 1970s, evangelicals were divided on the abortion issue, largely because the matter had not been much studied.)

All of which is to say that Dr. Waltke is a man for whom I have much esteem as a scholar and as a Christian man. But he's wrong about Genesis 1.

Waltke begins his essay with a Preface. He introduces his subject by saying that Genesis 1 (i.e., 1:1–2:3) needs desperately to be heard in the social sciences classroom, but instead it is being heard in the hard sciences classroom. Instead of seeing the implications for theology and society in Genesis 1, Christians are usually stuck debating the cosmological meaning of the passage. Waltke pits the two against each other as if we cannot have both.

Now, of course there is no need to pit the two against each other. Genesis 1 has implications for many, if not all, fields of endeavor. Moreover, it really is not correct to say that evangelicals have not applied Genesis 1 to the "social sciences." Any reading of creationist literature will find plenty about social Darwinism and about the other social and cultural implications of evolution, along with statements about the relevance of Genesis 1 in these areas.

Perhaps we should go light on Waltke at this point, however. It is not always easy to find a good introductory lead-in to an essay, and maybe all Waltke is trying to do is raise the issue in a general way.

Waltke does, however, go on to write that the question of whether Genesis 1 belongs with the hard sciences or the social sciences depends on its genre as literature. He states that the purpose of his essay is to help us identify the genre of Genesis 1 and that in so doing we shall find that it was never the intention of Genesis 1 to tell us how God actually brought the universe into being.