

God Said... And It Was So

A Comprehensive Defense Of Genesis 1:1-2:3 As Historical Narrative

Since the creation of the world, there have been no shortage of creation accounts. Whether from pagan mythologies, Jewish and Christian texts, or modern scientific proposals, the question of why there is something rather than nothing remains open for debate. Even within Jewish and Christian traditions, theologians have debated how best to interpret the opening chapter of Genesis in which God's creative activity is recorded. While many interpreters throughout history have assumed that Genesis should be interpreted as a historical account of the world, an increasing number of scholars are arguing that it should instead be interpreted poetically, figuratively, and metaphorically against the background of ancient Near Eastern literature. For example, John Walton has written,

God did not give Israel a revised cosmic geography—he revealed his Creator role through the cosmic geography that they had, because the shape of the material world did not matter. His creative work focused on functions, and therefore he communicated that he was the one who set up the functions and who keeps the operations going, regardless of how we envision the material shape. The creation account did not concern the material shape of the cosmos, but rather its functions.¹

For Walton and others, Genesis is not putting forth the “how” of creation in an historical report, but the “why” of creation in metaphor. Genesis could be teaching that the earth is God's temple that He has made for Himself,² or Adam could be a symbol of Israel and their special place in God's plan,³ or the text could also simply be a polemic against ancient deities.⁴ Regardless of its purpose, these scholars maintain, Genesis 1:1-2:3⁵ is not meant to be understood as an actual unfolding of literal history. The issue at hand is the question of genre. These scholars argue that Genesis 1 is not historical narrative, but theological prose; a story with little interest in history and great interest in worldview.

¹ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 60-61.

² *Ibid.*, 161.

³ Peter Enns, “Adam is Israel,” n.d., <https://biologos.org/articles/adam-is-israel>.

⁴ George H. Johnston, “Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165, no. 2 (June 2008), 179.

⁵ Hereafter referred to simply as Genesis 1.

However, though Genesis is written in an ancient Near Eastern⁶ context, it was revealed to Moses under divine inspiration and the key to understanding its genre is to not merely look at its similarity to ANE myths, but also how it was understood by other biblical revelation. This is known as the analogy of faith.⁷ Scripture is the only infallible interpreter of Scripture. This paper will argue that while Genesis 1 serves similar purposes to polemic literature from the ANE and while it shows elements of stylized language, it was intended by Moses to be an historical account of the function *and origin* of the world. It will do so by examining the language of Genesis 1 in comparison to other examples of biblical genres, its use by the Old Testament and New Testament writers, and how it has been understood through church history.

A Summary of the Case for a Non-Historical Interpretation of Genesis

There are, essentially, two ways to understand Genesis 1. The first is to understand it as an historical account of how God created all things. The second is to understand it, either partially or entirely, as a figurative, metaphorical, or poetic account of creation. In this second view, the author of Genesis is not intending to provide his readers with an historical account, but a theological treatise; one that teaches the truths that God exists, is distinct from His creation, and that we exist on purpose for His purposes. The days of Genesis are not sequential days in which God created, but are a framework for describing God's creative vision for the earth. This does not, of course, mean that God did not create in the historical past, only that Genesis 1 is not meant to teach history, but theology through the medium of metaphor.

In his Genesis commentary, Bruce Waltke presents a representative summary of arguments against reading Genesis one as an historical narrative.⁸ First, he argues that the order of creation events is not sequential and thus is not straight forward history. He uses the sun as an example. The sun, Genesis claims, was not created until day four, but light was created on the first day. Second, the similarities between Genesis and ANE mythologies are striking. This demonstrates, to Waltke, that

⁶ Hereafter referred to as ANE

⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Third. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 57.

⁸ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 76-77.

Genesis is using a “seven-day typology formula to speak of divine activity and rest.”⁹ In other words, the writer of Genesis is using common motifs and types to demonstrate Yahweh’s activity and superiority. Third, science has discredited the historical view of the text. He states, “General revelation in creation, as well as the special revelation of Scripture, is also the voice of God. We live in a ‘universe,’ and all truth speaks with one voice.”¹⁰ Finally, the text clearly uses anthropomorphic language. When God speaks in creation and when He walks and converses with Adam and Eve, we understand that God does not literally speak with lips and vocal cords or walk with a body. From this, Waltke suggests that we may infer that the days of creation are also anthropomorphic.

Answering Waltke’s Objections

At first pass, these reasons to treat the text as non-historical may seem substantial, but upon further inspection, they simply do not hold up. Waltke’s first point vanishes if one does not assume, as he does, that the light on day one is from the sun, moon, or stars. While it is not clear what the light is in Genesis 1:3,¹¹ the text itself does not state that it was sourced in the sun or stars. In fact, the counter intuitiveness of the light coming from a source other than the sun or stars is what gives the story its ring of authenticity.¹²

Second, his objection that the text’s similarity to ANE myths proves the text is only meant as a polemic against such deities backfires. If the text merely mimics ANE mythologies, why would such an audience take note? In fact, it is the dissimilarities that call attention to it. For Genesis to function as a polemic against ANE myths, it must be true as opposed to the false stories put forth by other religions. Steven Boyd has suggested three categorical differences between ANE mythologies and the Genesis account.¹³ First, God is described very differently from other ANE deities. Unlike these other deities, the Lord is self-existent, eternal, uncreated, assumed, and separate and sovereign over His creation. Second, the nature of creation is very

different from ANE myths. In Genesis, the Lord creates by fiat, unopposed action that takes place in sequence and with purpose. Third, the anti-mythical character of the narrative is in stark contrast to the narratives of ANE myths.

Further, this view assumes that the Genesis account was constructed by its author in opposition to the cultures around it. But this ignores the biblical data that other cultures did not develop simultaneously or earlier than the events themselves of Genesis but were an aberration of the true creation account that was passed down and corrupted by men over time as they spread out over the earth. As Colin Reeves has stated,

“In any case, where is the evidence that Israel based its foundational narrative on Near Eastern myths? It is surely equally plausible that the ANE texts are a polemic against the true account, being a corrupted version of an oral tradition dating from the scattering at Babel.”¹⁴

Third, in terms of the conflict between science and a historical view of Genesis, while the current scientific consensus is that astronomy, geology, and biology conflict with such a view, consensus changes. In previous generations, the consensus was different than it is today. But there is a greater problem. Waltke confuses the nature of special revelation and general revelation. The “two books” mentality is a very common one. Even some of the historical creeds of the Church have used this language.¹⁵ It is true that general revelation and special revelation cannot contradict each other because God is the revealer of them both. However, interpretations about the past are not general revelation. As Psalm 19:1-6 states,

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit

⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰ Ibid., 77.

¹¹ Some have argued that God himself was the light, based upon passages such as 1 John 1:5 and Revelation 21:23. But the text says that the light began to exist, whereas God never began to exist.

¹² Jonathan D. Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Powder Springs, Georgia: Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 116.

¹³ Steven W. Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1-2:3: What Means This Text?,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, Sixth. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012), 188-189.

¹⁴ Colin R. Reeves, “Bringing Home the Bacon: The Interaction of Science and Scripture Today,” in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. J.P. Moreland et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 1007, 718.

¹⁵ For example, see The Belgic Confession in Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds And Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1987), 79.

to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

Scripture certainly does teach that we worship God through creation. Romans 1:18-22 is clear that through general revelation, through creation, all men know that God exists and Romans 2:14-16 is clear that through conscience, all men know that there are moral obligations that they have not kept. Thus, all men are morally accountable. Creation reveals the existence, power, and morality of God. However, Scripture does not say we know history through general revelation, but that we know God through general revelation and that not with the same clarity of special revelation. In the same passage in Psalm 19, David contrasts nature with scripture when he writes in verses 7-9,

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

While nature perfectly displays the creativity and power of God, Scripture tells us about Him and about His specific actions in history. Special revelation interprets nature in the way God wants it interpreted. In Genesis 1:26-27, God creates Adam and Eve. But rather than let them interpret themselves or the world around them on their own, God spoke to them in verses 28-30 and told them where they came from, why they existed, and what they were to do. Morris and Whitcomb, in commenting on this very topic, have written, “After all, special revelation supersedes natural revelation, for it is only by means of special revelation that we can interpret aright the world around us.”¹⁶

It is also worth noting that these theologians and scientists never use theology or scripture to correct science, only science to dictate theology.¹⁷ If these two sources of knowledge are truly equal, why do naturalistic assumptions of science constrain scripture and not the other way around? Nature is not a brute fact and it is interpreted through a worldview. Science is not an objective source of knowledge but is done by people with worldviews. Today, our culture interprets natural history through the

worldview of uniformitarianism; the belief that present processes are the key to interpreting the past. The choice is not between Scripture and science but between our interpretation of Scripture and our interpretation of nature. Granted, if certain facts are seen in creation that seem to contradict an interpretation of Scripture, it is good to reassess our interpretation because it is Scripture that is inspired, not our interpretations.¹⁸ However, general revelation cannot make Scripture say what it does not say.¹⁹ Rather, Scripture, through inspiration, speaks with authority to whatever area it touches.²⁰

Yet, these scholars are assured of certain views of the age of the earth and of material processes from secular assumptions and, taking them for granted, interpret the text accordingly. For example, Bernard Ramm explicitly states, “With reference to the six days of creation, we reject the literal interpretation because by no means can the history of the earth be dated at 4000 B.C., or even 40,000 B.C.”²¹ Further, as Millard Erickson has written,

It should be apparent that there is no difficulty in reconciling fiat creationism with the biblical account. Indeed, this view reflects a strictly literal reading of the text, which is the way the account was understood for a long time in the history of the church . . . It is at the point of the scientific data that fiat creationism encounters difficulty.²²

While scholars do make biblical arguments against treating Genesis 1 as history, it is clear that modern scientific assumptions are often the impetus for their rejection and appraisal. But this approach is committing the very crime that those who advocate for a non-historical genre are accusing the historical position of committing: anachronistically reading science into the text!

Finally, while the Genesis text does clearly use anthropomorphic language in instances, an anthropomorphism in one area does not dictate that the whole account should be considered anthropomorphic. To argue such is the fallacy of

¹⁸ See Melvin Tinker, *Evangelical Concerns: Rediscovering the Christian Mind on Issues Facing the Church Today* (Mentor Publishers, 2001), 58.

¹⁹ See John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge Of God*, 1st ed., A Theology Of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987), 136.

²⁰ Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: IVPress, 1972), 35 and 76.

²¹ Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), 150.

²² Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 445.

¹⁶John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1961), 458.

¹⁷ Edward J. Young, “The Days of Genesis,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 25, no. 1 (1963), 11.

composition; assuming a part is characteristic of the whole. Further, many interpreters argue that God was appearing as a theophany in the Garden of Eden, much as He does as the Angel of the Lord elsewhere.

An Overview Of Divine Activity In Genesis 1

If Genesis is meant to be an historical narrative, what does it say? What is the narrative that God has given us to communicate truth? Below is a chart that provides a brief outline and overview of the references, days, and activities of each day of creation.

Days Of Creation ²³		
Text	Day	Activity
Genesis 1:1-5	First	Creation Of Space, Time, The Earth, Water, Light
Genesis 1:6-8	Second	Creation Of The Expanse In The Heavens
Genesis 1:9-13	Third	Creation Of Dry Land And Plants
Genesis 1:14-19	Fourth	Sun, Moon, Stars
Genesis 1:20-23	Fifth	Water And Flying Creatures
Genesis 1:24-31	Sixth	Land Dwelling Creatures And Man
Genesis 2:1-4	Seventh	Rest From Creation

Historical Markers In Genesis One

In contrast to the poetic, metaphorical, or allegorical views of Genesis 1, C. John Collins has written, “Without too much difficulty we can see that it is intended to be a record of something that actually happened; it seems further plain that it intends to present the general sequence in which things happened.”²⁴ Likewise, John N. Oswalt, in responding to the idea that Genesis is not historical but is only a metaphorical polemic against ancient deities, writes, “We will note that whatever the biblical narratives are, they are in a different category altogether. If they do not conform to all the canons of modern history writing, they are still much closer to

what characterizes that genre than they are to anything in the ancient world.”²⁵

But what in Genesis 1 leads us to think that it is an historical narrative genre and not merely a poetic polemic or theological treatise? First, the days of creation are clearly defined as twenty-four-hour days. It is true that the word “day,” in Hebrew *יוֹם*, need not be always a twenty-four hour day. For example, day-age theorists and progressive creationists have suggested that day can mean an indeterminate amount of time.²⁶ In support of this idea, 2 Peter 3:8 is often cited,²⁷ stating, “But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.”

However, contrary to the claims of day-age theorists and others who claim that these are God’s days and not human days, including Collins himself,²⁸ and who deny that “day” is meant in a literal sense, the word is specified in each usage. There are three usages in this account. The first, in Genesis 1:5, is for the period of light, as opposed to darkness. This corresponds to the idea of the “day-time.” The second, seen in each creative section, stands for a twenty-four hour period. This is seen from the repeated usage of “morning” and “evening” with each mention. Interestingly, Andrew Steinmann has argued that the lack of an article on the first day, being literally translated as “one day,” defines for the reader what makes a day.²⁹ The third usage is for an historical time period in the past, mentioned in the summary statement of Genesis 2:4. Because Genesis 1 and 2 distinguish between three types of “day,” it is exegetical malpractice to apply the same sense to both terms. One cannot make the six days equal indeterminate time periods when the text itself distinguishes the six days from a usage that clearly is referencing a time period.

Some, in responding to this data, suggest that the seventh day is an example of a non-literal twenty four

²³ For explanations of what each creative act entailed, see Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary On Genesis 1-11.*; Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976).; and Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation And Change: Genesis 1.1-2.4 In The Light Of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 1997).

²⁴ C. John Collins, “How Old is the Earth? Anthropomorphic Days in Genesis 1:1-2:3,” *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary* 20, no. 2 (1994): 109–130.

²⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 15.

²⁶ Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, “The Day-Age View,” in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruypress, 2001) 125-126.

²⁷ Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2003)., 642-644.

²⁸ Collins, “How Old is the Earth?: Anthropomorphic Days in Genesis 1:1-2:3.” 117.

²⁹ Andrew Steinmann, “אחד as an Ordinal Number and the Meaning of Genesis 1:5,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 4 (December 2002): 583–584.

hour day because the Sabbath continues.³⁰ However, the text does not say that the day continues, but that God's sabbath rest continues. Ironically, those who interpret the text poetically often admit that the days are meant to communicate twenty-four hour periods, but for a poetic purpose rather than historical one.³¹ Others object that Zechariah 14:7, which states, "For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light," and references the "day of the Lord," a future period of time of judgment and the return of Christ, demonstrates clearly that the construction of "day" with evening and light is not necessarily a twenty four-hour day.³² However, as Jonathan Sarfati points out in his rebuttal, the context of this passage is describing an event of a particular day³³ and there is no reason not to take the day as literal, even if it sets off a period of time.

Finally, 2 Peter 3:8 does not impact this passage at all for two reasons. First, once again, the Genesis text itself differentiates its own use of "day." Second, Peter is not saying that a day is a thousand years, but that God is not bound by our limitations. The context of Peter is the question of why Jesus is taking so long to come back and that God is not bound by our time tables.

Second, there is a clear sequential order to the creation narrative. These days are numbered one through seven. However, the key to the structure of the narrative is the *waw* consecutive with the imperfect verbs introducing each new activity and day. This Hebrew grammar device, translated best as "and then" indicates consecutive action and is common in historical narratives to move stories forward.³⁴ Even though days one through five do not include the article before "day" prompting some to argue that this shows the days were non-specific and

non-sequential time periods,³⁵ this fact is irrelevant because of the presence of the *waw* consecutive before each new action.

It is precisely this point that those who hold to the framework hypothesis contest. They argue that because there are examples in Genesis 1 of the *waw* consecutive not indicating consecutive action but recapitulation, such as in Genesis 1:12, 16-17, and 2:2-3, the use of *waw* consecutives cannot be used to indicate sequential action.³⁶ However, as Robert McCabe states, "My argument is not that *waw* consecutive always denotes sequence, (but that) it is quite certain that *waw* consecutive is predominantly used sequentially with a preterite in narrative literature."³⁷ In the same chapter, he goes on to show that, of the 55 *waw* consecutives in the creation narrative, 46 are clearly sequential.³⁸

Third, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 form an essential unity. Some would like to split Genesis 1 off from the second chapter, arguing that these chapters present contradictory accounts and thus indicate that Genesis 1 is not meant to be understood literally.³⁹ The usual example given is the order of the creation of plants, animals, and man in both chapters. In Genesis 1, God creates the animals and then creates man. However, in Genesis 2:7, God first creates man and then creates animals in Genesis 2:18-20 in response to the man's loneliness. While this may seem like a contradiction, this is not the case. Genesis 2:19 states, "Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name." In many English translations, the verb is translated as "formed."

However, there is reason to believe that, in the original Hebrew language, this word is in the pluperfect form,⁴⁰ which would be best translated as

³⁰ Hugh Ross, "Old Earth (Progressive) Creationism," in *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, ed. J.B. Stump, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 80

³¹ J. Ligon Duncan III and David W. Hall, "The 24-Hour Reply," in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruexpress, 2001), 95–119.

³² David Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth: Resolving The Conflict between the Bible and Science* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997).

³³ Jonathan D. Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of "Progressive Creationism (Billions Of Years), As Popularized By Astronomer Hugh Ross* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004).

³⁴ See discussion of verbal sequences in Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 86.

³⁵ David A. Sterchi, "Does Genesis 1 Provide a Chronological Sequence?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 4 (1996): 529–536.

³⁶ Duncan III and Hall, "The 24-Hour Reply." 222.

³⁷ Robert V. McCabe, "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. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, Sixth. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012), 217.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁹ Timothy Keller, "Creation, Evolution, and Christian Laypeople," https://wp.biologos.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Keller_white_paper-compressed.pdf, 4–5.

⁴⁰ C. John Collins, "The Wayyiqtol as 'Pluperfect': When and Why," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1995): 117–140.

“had formed.” This erases any contradiction of order and shows that Genesis 1 provides an overview of the creation week while the focus of Genesis 2 is on the creation of man and woman. Others, not satisfied with this particular explanation, argue that this could be a special group of animals that God formed and brought to Adam in the Garden.⁴¹ Regardless, the various ways of responding are sufficient to show that Genesis 1 and 2 are not contradictions but continuations of the same genre. This is significant because Genesis 2 demonstrates real places, rivers, and doctrines that demonstrate historical claims, demonstrating that these two chapters are of the same essential genre.

Fourth, when compared to Hebrew poetry and narrative, Genesis 1 looks far more like narrative. If this passage is supposedly not written as history, but as metaphor, allegory, or poetic literature, it should, in theory, be structured like other passages of poetry or metaphor. But when one examines such texts, even in the Mosaic Canon,⁴² Genesis 1 looks far more like narrative.

What exactly does Hebrew poetry look like? Unlike in much modern English poetry, Hebrew poetry does not typically revolve around word rhyme. This can be seen by the fact that there are very little to no examples of rhyming poetry in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, Hebrew poetry revolves around parallelism. In his article on Hebrew poetry,⁴³ Tim Chaffey outlines several types of parallelism used in Scripture. For example, this can take the form of synonymous parallelism, antithetic parallelism, synthetic parallelism, or emblematic parallelism. Further, Alviero Niccacci lists three characteristics of Hebrew poetry that make it distinct from what he identifies as “prose”: (1) segmented versus linear communication; (2) parallelism of similar bits of information versus sequence of different bits of information; (3) non-detectable versus detectable verbal systems.⁴⁴

⁴¹ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2, The New International Commentary On The Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 48.

⁴² This paper will not argue for Moses as the primary author/editor of the Pentateuch but will assume it on the grounds that Jesus did in passages like Mark 12:26 and that such a view was universal among the Jews of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament. For a summary of arguments in defense of a mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, see Norman L. Geisler, “Pentateuch, Mosaic Authorship Of,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 586-588.

⁴³ Tim Chaffey, “Parallelism in Hebrew Poetry Demonstrates a Major Error in the Hermeneutic of Many Old-Earth Creationists,” *The Answers Research Journal* 5 (2012), 115–123.

⁴⁴ Alviero Niccacci, “Analysing Biblical Hebrew Poetry,” *Journal For The Study Of The Old Testament* 74 (1997), 77-78.

Those who argue that Genesis is poetry cite the repetition of the phrases “morning and evening” and “it was good,” and appeal to the speech text of Genesis 1:26-27, in which God creates man in His image and likeness. Further, framework theorists also argue that the first three days focus on forming the environment and days four through six focus on filling it with living beings, demonstrating the parallelism so distinct to Hebrew poetry and indicating a non-linear structure.⁴⁵

However, when it comes to Genesis 1, as has been shown from the numbered days and the overwhelming sequential uses of the *waw* consecutive, there is clear movement and sequence in the text, which is not characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Instead, these are marks of historical narrative. In response to the parallelism of the days of creation, while the actions of creation and filling could be parallel, the days themselves are sequential days in which God does new things and in which the account progresses forward. It is no obstacle to the historical nature of the text to see God as structuring His activity. When a person seeks to build a house, he first builds the structure and then fills it. However, it is not at all clear that the actions truly are parallel.⁴⁶

For example, while the framework theory teaches that days one and four are parallel, the text says that God created the stars on day four but placed them in the expanse He had created on day two, not day one. Further, while the framework theory sees day two and five as parallel, the sea creatures are put in the seas created on day three, not day two. Finally, it is important to recognize that elements of style and instances of poetic language do not render an entire account poetic.⁴⁷ Once again, to argue that it does is to commit the fallacy of composition. The individual parts do not necessarily define the whole. For example, Job is clearly historical narrative but includes great poetic discourses.

Genesis 1, though unique in literature, is nonetheless historical narrative in genre. In a unique study, Steven Boyd has developed a methodology for distinguishing between narrative passages and poetic ones in connection with the RATE research group. By comparing 48 narrative texts with 49 poetic texts and using the ratios of *wayyiqtoles* to the total number of finite verbs, his model was able to correctly identify 95 of the 97 texts. When applying this ratio model to Genesis 1, his model labeled this text as

⁴⁵ Irons and Kline, “The Framework View.” 224.

⁴⁶ Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: A Theological, Historical, and Scientific Commentary On Genesis 1-11*, 55.

⁴⁷ Robert V. McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Account (Part 1 Of 2),” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 10 (2005), 51.

narrative to a probability between .999942 and .999987 with 99.5% certainty. In his words, “I conclude therefore that it is statistically indefensible to argue that this text is poetry.”⁴⁸

Fifth, Genesis 1 provides a comprehensive account of all major entities one would need to build a history of the world. Though its phrasing is grandiose and its details are simple, nevertheless, it includes the origin of space, time, matter, light, darkness, water, land, the sun, the moon, the stars, plants, animals, and man. In other words, Genesis reads how one would expect it to read if it were historical in nature. The author provides the account as a foundational background for all that he wishes to communicate about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his sons as a theological history for the Israelites as they proceed out of Egypt into the promised land.⁴⁹

It is clear that the view of Genesis 1 as historical narrative rests on solid exegetical grounds as opposed to the view that it is merely poetic, metaphorical, or allegorical. In referring to the question of how to categorize the genre of Genesis, E.J. Young has written,

Genesis one is not poetry or saga or myth, but straightforward, trustworthy history, and, inasmuch as it is a divine revelation, accurately records those matters of which it speaks. That Genesis one is historical may be seen from these considerations. (1) It sustains an intimate relationship with the remainder of the book. The remainder of the book (i.e., The Generations) presupposes the Creation Account, and the Creation Account prepares for what follows. The two portions of Genesis are integral parts of the book and complement one another. (2) The characteristics of Hebrew poetry are lacking. There are poetic accounts of the creation and these form a striking contrast to Genesis one. (3) The New Testament regards certain events mentioned in Genesis one as actually having taken place. We may safely allow the New Testament to be our interpreter of this mighty first chapter of the Bible.⁵⁰

What is ironic is that it is those who deny biblical inerrancy and do not hold to conservative views of inspiration who join with the advocates of

Genesis 1 as historical narrative. For example, James Barr has written,

So far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1-11 intended to convey to their readers . . . that creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience.⁵¹

Barr holds no commitment to inerrancy or even a conservative view of inspiration and he holds to the standard, secular view of the age and nature of the universe. He believed that Genesis was wrong about history. Yet, he taught that Genesis 1 was intended by its author to communicate real history and was not meant to convey a mere myth or metaphor.

The Use of Genesis 1 throughout the Biblical Canon

When Paul writes to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness,” he communicates a profound truth that God is the ultimate author of all of Scripture. The Bible, through the sovereign direction, enablement, providence, and at times dictation of God, is a unified whole that communicates eternal truth to its readers.⁵² It is not simply a collection of primitive thoughts and records of individuals but is ultimately God’s communication of Himself to His people. Thus, one should understand texts the way other Biblical authors understood these texts. Though we must not discount the background of an author and his historical situation, purpose, or understanding, because all of Scripture is written under the inspiration of God, the only way to know how God intends a passage to be understood is by interpreting it within the larger biblical canon. As Allen P. Ross states in his commentary on Genesis, “The starting point for this study is the presupposition that Scripture is revelation, a message from God to His people. Genesis thus has a dimension very different from the comparable literature of the ancient Near East.”⁵³ This section will review how the Old and New Testament writers understood and used Genesis 1.

Beginning in the Old Testament, and specifically the Pentateuch, it is clear that Genesis 1 is used historically. Beginning with Genesis itself, Christopher Cone has noted the use of speech acts

⁴⁸ Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1-2:3: What Means This Text?” 174-176.

⁴⁹ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 6.

⁵⁰ Edward J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964), 105.

⁵¹ James Barr, “Letter to David C.C. Watson,” April 23, 1984.

⁵² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Third. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 168-187.

⁵³ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessings: A Guide to the Study and Exposition Of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 23.

throughout the book of Genesis.⁵⁴ The pattern of “God said . . .,” or “the Lord said . . .,” and then specific actions follow is seen dozens of times throughout the entire book. The continuity of this literary device between Genesis 1 and the rest of Genesis gives evidence that the writer did not separate the genre of Genesis 1 from that of the rest of the book but intended them all to be historical narrative.

In terms of specific passages, just four chapters later, Genesis 5:1-2 states, “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.” Genesis 5, which is clearly meant to be historical because it begins the genealogies,⁵⁵ uses the account of God making mankind in his image as male and female in Genesis 1:26-28 to teach that when God made man, He named him Adam and that this Adam was an historical figure who had children. Even John Walton himself recognizes that Adam and Eve are treated as historical figures.⁵⁶ Thus, Genesis itself interprets the creation event of Genesis 1 as historical. It does not refer to Genesis 2, but to Genesis 1 to ground the existence and ancestry of Adam.

In Exodus 20:9-11, in which God gives the people of Israel the Ten Commandments, He includes as the fourth commandment,

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 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 creation week served as the foundation for the sabbath as God rooted this command in His own creative work. Here, Exodus 20 utilizes Genesis 1 as history. This is seen from the way the theology is structured. In the preceding verses, Exodus 20:1-3

states, “Then God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.’” Because God had brought them out of Egypt, an historical reality seen by those in attendance, Israel was to have no other Gods: the first commandment. Then, in the same passage, He roots the fourth commandment to honor the Sabbath in His own creative work. It is clear that Genesis 1 is functioning for the fourth commandment in the same way that Exodus 1-14 is functioning for the first commandment. Not only does God Himself quote with approval Genesis 1, but He grounds His commands to Israel in this passage in the same way that He grounds the first commandment to a clearly historical event. Both were considered historical realities. Again, John Oswalt writes,

Can the theology that is mediated to us through the historical narratives of the Old Testament be extricated from it? In other words, can we still believe in the God of Scripture if the medium through which he is presented to us is demonstrably false? I think not, because the theology of the Bible is presented as though it is an extrapolation from the experience of Israel and the church. The doctrine of election is a result of the historical fact of the Exodus, not the reverse. The land is Israel’s because it is a feudal gift from God given to them as they faithfully followed Joshua into the land in the conquest. God is God and the Babylonian gods are nothing because he predicts the future specifically and they cannot. (The New Testament’s claim to Jesus’ resurrection) is simply continuing on in the trajectory that was laid out from Genesis to Chronicles (in the Hebrew order of the books). If none of these events actually took place, we are left with two insuperable problems: Where did the theology come from, and where did the Israelites get the idea of rooting their theology in (fictional) human history?⁵⁷

The Old Testament roots theology and commands in the historical actions of God. As Graeme Goldsworthy writes, “The whole Bible presents its message as theology within a framework of history.”⁵⁸ Israel was to be God’s people because

⁵⁴ Christopher Cone, *Priority in Biblical Hermeneutics and Theological Method* (Exegetica Publishing, 2018), 19-32.

⁵⁵ The focus of this paper is not on the age of the earth and this point is true whether one sees gaps in the genealogies or not. For the record, I do not believe there are such gaps because the ancestor of the following generations is often still alive when the next generation is born.

⁵⁶ Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, 138.

⁵⁷ Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?*, 15-16.

⁵⁸ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 24.

He had actually led them out of Egypt. In the same way, Israel was to honor the sabbath and work six days because God had actually created all things in six days.

While the references to creation in the poetic and prophetic books that describe Genesis with metaphorical and poetic language, such as Psalm 33:8-9, which praises God for speaking creation into existence, Psalm 74:16, which extols God's work in creating light and dark, the sun, and the stars, or Isaiah 65:17, which states that God will create a new heavens and new earth, could be written off as poetic or metaphor because of the poetic genre of Psalms and metaphorical nature of prophecy, the historical books of the Old Testament treat Genesis one historically. These texts not only affirm God as creator of heaven and earth, as passages like Numbers 16:22, Deuteronomy 4:22, 1 Samuel 2:8, or Nehemiah 9:6 do, but the examples we have seen in Genesis and Exodus go further in rooting history, theology, and morals in the six day creation and the making of Adam and Eve in God's image as found in Genesis 1.

This pattern is carried into the New Testament. There are numerous doctrines in the New Testament that rest on a historical understanding of Genesis 1-11. Luke uses the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 10-11 as the basis of his own in Luke 3:23-38. Paul bases the need for atonement upon the historical Adam in Romans 5:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Once again, even John Walton recognizes that, in some sense, there must have been an historical Adam and Eve.⁵⁹ In Matthew 23:35 and Luke 15:51, Jesus referenced a list of individuals who were historic individuals and He includes Abel in that list. Jesus believed that marriage was a permanent but earthly union between a man and a woman because that is how God created mankind and instructed them at the beginning of creation in Matthew 19:3-6 and Mark 10:6. Jesus and Peter each referenced Noah's flood as an historical event in Matthew 24:38-39, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 2:5 and 3:6. There are good arguments⁶⁰ to show that both Peter and Jude understood the sons of God in Genesis 6 to be angels who had sinned and are now held in captivity in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6-7. Romans 1:18-21 teaches that creation itself is a testimony to God's existence and power and that all men can know God exists because of it. 1 Timothy

⁵⁹ Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, 138.

⁶⁰ For a treatment in defense of this idea, see Lee Anderson Jr., "Is the 'Sons of God' Passage in Genesis 6 Adapted Pagan Mythology?," *The Answers Research Journal* 8 (2015): 261-271 and William A. Van Gemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: an Example of Evangelical Demythologization?," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1981).

2:11-14 grounds the role of men and women in the church in the order of creation in Genesis 2. Jude 14 emphasizes the genealogy of Adam. However, while these passages and doctrines show a clear understanding of Genesis 1-11 as history, what about Genesis 1 specifically?

Like in the Old Testament, the New Testament also acknowledges and applies theological truths and themes that are grounded in Genesis 1. John 1:1-5 emphasizes the nature of the Word as creator of all and utilizes the themes of light and darkness. In Acts 17:24, Paul taught that God had created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. The writer of Hebrews states in Hebrews 1:10 that God had laid the foundations of the earth. Matthew 11:25; Romans 11:33-36, Colossians 1:16, and Revelation 4:11 praise God for His creative power and wisdom over all things. 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Ephesians 3:14-15 ascribe universal fatherhood to God. Finally, Revelation 21:1 culminates in the language of the new heavens and new earth after evil has been beaten and judged.

It is clear that the New Testament interpreted God as the creator of heaven and earth and of all things, but all sides of the debate agree with that. The question is whether the New Testament writers understood Genesis 1 to be a historical narrative of the way in which God created all things. In more explicit passages, Mark 10:6-9, as well as Matthew 19:3-6, contains Jesus' argument that divorce is contrary to God's plan because "from the beginning of creation, *God* made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." Jesus quotes from Genesis to define marriage.

The passage demonstrates three realities about Jesus' view of Genesis 1. First, Jesus based theological truth on historical action. He did not just make a command, but tied it, as in the Old Testament, to the actions of God. The implication is that if God had not created them male and female and joined them together, there would be no reason to think divorce is immoral. Second, Jesus quoted from Genesis 1-2 to ground this truth, showing that He interpreted them as historical and that He saw Genesis 2 as being in the same historical time frame as Genesis 1.⁶¹ Finally, Jesus flowed seamlessly between Genesis 1 and 2, treating them in the same fashion. It is clear that Jesus thought Genesis 1 was an historical narrative in the same vein as Genesis 2

⁶¹ Henry M. Morris, *Biblical Creationism: What Each Book of the Bible Teaches about Creation and the Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 148.

and that it was authoritative for the lives of His listeners.

This presents a problem to those such as John Walton who argue that Adam and Eve were not the first humans but were specially picked to bear the image of God.⁶² Jesus argues, on the basis of Genesis 1 and 2, that mankind has been male and female “from the beginning” and that their coming together was designed by God at this beginning.⁶³ Jesus ties humanity to the beginning of creation. This does not allow for a gap of hominoids that existed for hundreds of thousands of years between Genesis 1 and 2.

In Hebrews 11, often referred to as the “hall of faith,” the writer of Hebrews walks through the biblical canon of individuals used by God to do great things. This list includes Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, and David and lists many of the great things God had done. The list begins in Hebrews 11:1-3 when the text states,

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

It is by faith that these truths are seen when we cannot go back into history and observe. It is by faith in the word of God that these things are known. The writer then references the account of Genesis 1 by which God spoke and created all things. But how are we to understand this usage? Everything else in Hebrews 11 is treated historically as if they happened the way the text said they happened and there are no indicators that Hebrews 11:3 is treating the Genesis 1 account any differently.

Finally, in 2 Peter 3, Peter responds to those who mock the idea of Christ returning. He states in 2 Peter 3:5-6, “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.” This is an allusion to both creation in Genesis 1:1-2 and the flood of Noah in Genesis 6-9. Two points can be made here. First, Peter references Genesis 1 as the account of God’s creation. Second, he combines it

with the flood and treats them both as historical realities ignored by the mockers. Peter certainly thought the Genesis 1 account was historical.

When the Old and New Testament voices are allowed to speak, they speak with a unified voice that Genesis 1 is to be understood as a broad historical narrative of the way in which God actually acted in bringing about His creation. While there were theological themes and bigger picture issues going on than simple history, Genesis 1 is not less than history.

Historical Understandings of Genesis in Jewish and Christian History

We do not read the Bible in historical isolation from those who have come before us. There have been thousands of years between us and the writing of Genesis and trillions of people who have read the text, studied it, and sought to make sense of it. Learning from these individuals brings perspective and humility.

While Genesis 1 has not been universally interpreted as historical narrative throughout church history, it has been interpreted as such by a vast majority of theologians until the time of Darwin. J. Ligon Duncan III and David W. Hall state,

Conversely, the 24-hour view has been the consensus of the Church since the earliest hymns, chants, and doxologies, and long before Bach and Handel. If ever the Church agreed on anything, it has been on the days of creation. The paradigm shift occurred only recently when naturalistic and/or rationalistic paradigms were enthroned and Scripture was made subservient to them.⁶⁴

Throughout church history, those holding to non-historical views of Genesis 1 and the six days of creation are so few in number that the exceptions prove the rule. Clement, Origen, and Augustine are among the most notable examples of those who took a figurative, allegorical, or non-historical interpretation. Both Clement of Alexandria,⁶⁵ from the first to second century, and Origen of Alexandria,^{66,67} from the second to third centuries, interpreted Genesis 1 allegorically in keeping with their typical

⁶⁴ Duncan III and Hall, “The 24-Hour Reply,” 99.

⁶⁵ Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata, or Miscellanies,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 2.513.

⁶⁶ Origen, “Origen De Principiis,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 4.365.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.289-290.

⁶² John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 177-178.

⁶³ Terry Mortenson, “Jesus’ View of the Age of the Earth,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, Sixth. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012), 319-320.

allegorical style of searching for deeper, more spiritual meanings.

Augustine of Hippo, the church Father from the fourth to fifth centuries, also wrestled with the understanding of the creation days.⁶⁸ Instead, he most consistently posited, on the basis of texts like Genesis 2:4, that God created everything in the creation week in an instant⁶⁹ and that the days of Genesis 1 represent a logical framework for communicating the actions of God.⁷⁰ However, over and against those who quote these men in support of an old earth, both Origen⁷¹ and Augustine⁷² affirmed a recent creation less than 6,000-10,000 years ago as the intention of the biblical account of Genesis.

In terms of Jewish interpreters, Philo of Alexandria, who lived during the turn of the millennium from the first century B.C. to A.D., is often cited as another example of those who interpreted Genesis 1 allegorically.⁷³ It is true that Philo, in keeping with his Hellenistic roots,⁷⁴ understood the early chapters as an allegory and myth.⁷⁵ Instead, similarly to Augustine, Philo interpreted the Genesis account as an instantaneous act of God but that it was structured in six days for the sake of communicating order.⁷⁶

However, while a few key interpreters have held non-historical views of Genesis 1, many more explicitly held to Genesis 1 as historical narrative and interpreted the text literally. As Greg Allison points out, “Though not all early Christians interpreted Genesis 1 literally (Origen, for example, did not), most did, taking the six days of creation as also indicative of how long the created world would

exist.”⁷⁷ Across the Judeo-Christian spectrum, the view that Genesis 1 is historical narrative has been the mainline interpretation.

Beginning with Jewish studies, prominent first century A.D. historian Josephus clearly communicated that Genesis 1 was to be understood historically and literally and gave no indication that other interpretations had merit.⁷⁸ Further, as seen in the Jewish Talmud, the days themselves were understood historically by most ancient rabbis.⁷⁹

In Christian history, the case for Genesis 1 as historical narrative is even stronger as this was the majority view. Lactantius,⁸⁰ Ephrem,⁸¹ Basil,⁸² Ambrose (ironically, given that he was known for his allegorical interpretation),⁸³ Theophilus,⁸⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus,⁸⁵ Chrysostom,⁸⁶ Victorinus,⁸⁷ and

⁷⁷ Greg R. Allison, “Theistic Evolution is Incompatible with Historical Christian Doctrine,” in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. J.P. Moreland et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 931.

⁷⁸ Flavius Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” in *The Works of Josephus, Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1987), 1.1.1-2.

⁷⁹ Abraham Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud: The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages*, Revised. (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1995), 27–39.

⁸⁰ Lactantius, “The Divine Institutes,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. William Fletcher, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 7.211.

⁸¹ Ephrem the Syrian, “Commentary on Genesis 1.1,” in *Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, ed. Kathleen E. McVey, trans. Edward G. Mathews and Joseph P. Amar, The Fathers Of The Church (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 424.

⁸² Basil, “The Hexameron,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson, vol. 8 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 8.64.

⁸³ Ambrose, “Hexameron 1.10.3-7,” in *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church (The Catholic University of America Press, 1961).4.454.

⁸⁴ Theophilus, “Theophilus to Autolytus,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 2.99.

⁸⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, “Homilies on Genesis 4.4,” in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*, ed. Andrew Louth, vol. Old Testament 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 44.

⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Genesis 3.12,” in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*, ed. Andrew Louth, vol. Old Testament 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 45.

⁸⁷ Victorinus, “On the Creation of the World,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 7.341.

⁶⁸ Augustine, “The City of God,” in *The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. Marcus Dods, vol. 2, 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004). 2.208

⁶⁹ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. 1 Book 4, Chapter 33, paragraph 51–52. (New York, NY: Newman Press, 1982), 141.

⁷⁰ Augustine, “The City of God.” 2.210

⁷¹ Origen, “Origen De Principiis.” 1.19

⁷² Augustine, “The City of God.” 2.232

⁷³ John C. Lennox, *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning according to Genesis and Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 40.

⁷⁴ J.M. Bassler, “Philo,” ed. P.I. Achtemeier, *Harpers’ Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985), 791.

⁷⁵ Philo, “The Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis II,” in *Philo*, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. F.H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, vol. 1, LOBE Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 220.

⁷⁶ Philo, “On the Account of the World’s Creation Given by Moses,” in *Philo*, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. F.H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, vol. 1, LOBE Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 13.

Methodius⁸⁸ are among the more well-known church fathers who explicitly held to a six-day creation. Others, such as Justin Martyr,⁸⁹ the Epistle of Barnabas,⁹⁰ Irenaeus,⁹¹ Hippolytus,⁹² and Methodius⁹³ typologically used such days, citing 2 Peter 3:8, to estimate the end of the world in a total of seven thousand years. However, their typology was based upon a literal understanding of the days of Genesis.

In the years after the Nicene era, most of the notable theologians from a wide spectrum affirmed a literal history of Genesis. Thomas Aquinas,⁹⁴ Martin Luther,⁹⁵ John Calvin,⁹⁶ John Wesley,⁹⁷ Jonathan Edwards,⁹⁸ James Ussher,⁹⁹ and the Westminster Confession of Faith,¹⁰⁰ along with many others, explicitly embraced Genesis 1 as historical narrative

and took the days of creation as actual history or at least implied it by building other doctrines upon it. As Martin Luther wrote,

When Moses writes that God created heaven and earth and whatever is in them in six days, then let this period continue to have been six days, and do not venture to devise any comment according to which six days were one day. But if you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are. For you are to deal with Scripture in such a way that you bear in mind that God Himself says what is written. But since God is speaking, it is not fitting for you wantonly to turn His Word in the direction you wish to go.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

There may indeed be some poetic elements in Genesis 1, such as the refrain at the end of each creative day stating that “it was good,” it may be a polemic against ANE deities, and it may teach many theological themes. However, it is a false dichotomy to assume that Genesis 1 is either these things or it is historical. The verbal sequencing, similarities in teaching with Genesis 2, dissimilarities between clear Hebrew poetry and similarities with other Hebrew narratives, use in the Old and New Testaments, and consistent interpretation throughout church history show that Genesis 1 is first an historical narrative and that it should be believed, preached, taught, counseled, and defended as such.

⁸⁸ Methodius, “The Banquet of the Ten Virgins,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. William R. Clark, vol. 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 333.

⁸⁹ Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 1.239.

⁹⁰ A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 1.146.

⁹¹ Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 1.557.

⁹² Hippolytus, “Fragments from Commentaries,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2012), 5.179.

⁹³ Methodius, “The Banquet of the Ten Virgins,” 338–339.

⁹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 1, Christian Classics (Notre Dame, IN: Ava Maria Press, 1948), 357–359.

⁹⁵ Martin Luther, “A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis,” in *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker, trans. Henry Cole (Minneapolis, MN: Lutherans In All Lands Co., 1904), 39–41.

⁹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 142.

⁹⁷ John Wesley, “On the Sabbath,” <https://christianheritagefellowship.com/john-wesley-on-the-sabbath>.

⁹⁸ Jonathan Edwards, “A History of the Work of Redemption Containing The Outlines of a Body of Divinity Including a View of Church History in a Method Entirely New,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), 535.

⁹⁹ Philip Schaff, “The Irish Articles of Religion,” in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 529.

¹⁰⁰ “The Westminster Confession of Faith (IV.1),” 17–18, last modified 1646, https://impc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Beliefs_Westminster_Confession_of_Faith.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Martin Luther, *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian*, ed. Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 93.

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