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Defending the Foundation of the Gospel: Literal Days in the Creation Week

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Rather than affirming that God recently created the heavens, the earth, and all things therein within the sequence of six, literal days, many evangelical Christians tacitly affirm figurative interpretations of the creation week that allow for a billions-of-years-old earth. Unfortunately, some well-known Christian leaders even concede that, while on the surface it looks like the Bible affirms that God created the heavens, the earth, and all things therein in six, normal days, modern science has proven otherwise. For example, Gleason Archer, an Old Testament conservative scholar, concedes this very point: “From a superficial reading of Genesis 1, the impression would seem to be that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four-days.... This seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet Earth was created several billion years ago.”¹ In effect, this type of mixed statement implies that evolutionary-based interpretations of modern science are essentially the 67th book of the Bible. Hugh Ross has referred to science as the “sixty-seventh book” of our canon,² even as “dual” revelation to the Bible.³ Consider the following:

“Some readers might fear I am implying that God’s revelation through nature is somehow on an equal footing with His revelation through the words of the Bible. Let me simply state that truth, by definition, is information that is perfectly free of contradiction and error. Just as it is absurd to speak of some entity as more perfect than another, *so also one revelation of God’s truth cannot be held as inferior or superior to another*. It could be different, just like the content of Ezra is distinct from that of Romans, but it cannot be better or worse. Thus, when science appears to conflict with theology, we have no reason to reject either the facts of nature or the Bible’s words. Rather, we have reason to reexamine our interpretations of those facts and words because sound *science* and sound biblical exegesis will always be in harmony” (emphases mine).⁴

Consequently, science, in the hands of men like Hugh Ross, is placed on the same plane of authority as Scripture. For those who have a high view of bibliology, it is questionable anytime the Bible shares equal authority with any other extra biblical source of “truth.” However, one wonders with any construct that supports two competing sources of revelation if the Bible is not considered a lesser source of authority. In reality, science, as interpreted by Hugh Ross and

¹Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, p. 196. While Archer claims that his view is consistent with modern scientific research, there is clear scientific evidence that supports a young age for the earth, see chapter eight, [“How Old Is the Earth.”](#) in Sarfati’s *Refuting Evolution*.

²Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 56.

³Ibid., p. 58.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 57–58.

friends, has more authority than the Bible, for it is the Bible, in crucial areas, that has been reexamined and not science. More specifically, the traditional orthodox interpretation of the days of Genesis 1:1–2:3 has been abandoned and replaced by various figurative interpretations of the creation week.⁵ After all, if “science” is correct that the earth is billions of years old, then the literal interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3 is in error and this has one of two consequences for biblical authority. Either one abandons Genesis 1:1–2:3 as myth with the result of a loss of biblical authority for cosmogony, or one embraces this passage as a modicum of truth with the result of a water downed form of biblical authority for our understanding about the origin of the universe. Among evangelicals, one way of accommodating Scripture to the demands of “science” is to interpret the days of the creation narrative figuratively, for this allows for a billions-of-years-old earth. Since, as the argument goes, this accommodation relates to a non-salvific subject and seemingly has no impact on the Gospel, this seemingly has no substance since it only affects biblical authority on a non-salvific subject about the origin of the universe. Supposedly, it does not matter for one’s personal salvation since who has ever come to Christ after hearing an exposition of Genesis 1:1–2:3. What really counts, for evangelical old earth advocates, is that the Gospel is freely proclaimed! After all, even the last of the great Princeton Seminary theologians, Benjamin B. Warfield, held to a modified form of theistic evolution.⁶ And, no one has ever questioned Warfield’s orthodoxy! Therefore, as this old earth view goes, one’s view of cosmogony has no substantive impact for either one’s salvation or his theological purity.

In contrast to this type of reasoning, it is the contention of this workshop that a figurative interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3 allowing for an old earth undermines the message of the Gospel. In particular, the purpose of this workshop is twofold. The first purpose is to critique various figurative interpretations of the creation account in order to show that they undermine the Gospel. The second objective is to demonstrate that Scripture affirms that God created the heavens and the earth, and all things therein in the space of six, literal days and the result of this literal interpretation is that this provides a solid foundation for the Gospel proclamation.⁷

I. Figurative interpretations of the creation account

The following will present four figurative interpretations of the creation week followed by a brief critique of these views.

A. Theistic evolution

This view has also been described by one of its current advocates, Howard J. Van Till of Calvin College, as “the fully gifted creation.”⁸ This position sets forth that God originally

⁵For a discussion of this more recent movement away from a literal interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3, see David W. Hall, “The Evolution of Mythology,” pp. 267–305.

⁶See Smith, “The History of the Creation Doctrine in the American Presbyterian Churches,” p. 11.

⁷For beneficial introductions to the creation-evolution debate as well as defenses of young earth creationism, it would be good to acquire the following six sources: Chittick, *The Controversy*, Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, Kelly, *Creation and Change*, MacArthur, *Battle for the Beginning*, Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, and Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*.

⁸Van Till, “The Fully Gifted Creation (‘Theistic Evolution’),” p. 172. For a refutation of evolution, see Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution 2*. For a rebuttal to theistic evolution, see Poythress, “Response to Howard J. Van Till,” pp. 236–39; and Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, pp. 118–22.

created non-living matter that contained the resident properties that had the potential to evolve into the wide variations in life forms that are presently observable. Looking beyond God's minimal direct intervention, not to mention its deistic assumptions, the advocates of this view affirm that God used evolutionary naturalism through extended geological ages to produce all current life forms. According to this view, evolution uses random mutations and natural selection to develop this molecules-to-man hypothesis. Support for this hypothesis is drawn from the supposedly clear evidence of evolutionary naturalism. Since theistic evolutionists maintain that God has not revealed in Scripture how creation took place, they maintain that God has given man the scientific process to discover how creation happened. Accordingly, as modern man learns more about how evolution took place, he will continue to learn about God's creative process.

B. Day-age view

This view is essentially the same as Hugh Ross's progressive creationism.⁹ This position maintains that the six days of the creation week were six chronologically arranged geological ages. This position is supported by two key arguments. The first key argument provides evidence to support that the Hebrew term *yôm*, "day," may be used in a figurative sense to refer to an extended period of time, as in the expression "the day of the LORD," reflecting a long period of time. The second key argument supporting day being a geological age is based upon drawing conclusions from the so-called scientific methods of dating. "The evident advantage of this view is that, if the current scientific estimate for an earth 4.5 billion years old is correct, it explains how the Bible is consistent with this fact. Among evangelicals who hold to an old earth view, this is a common position. This view is sometimes called a 'concordist' view because it seeks agreement or 'concord' between the Bible and scientific conclusions about dating."¹⁰

C. Gap theory

Before the development of geology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Christians had explained that the earth's sedimentary rocks containing fossils of once-living creatures were results of the Noahic Flood. However, with the rise of modern geology, the sedimentary strata and fossil remains was reinterpreted as being a result of the slow-moving processes of nature that were the same in the past as what is currently observable. Recognizing the challenge that this new interpretation presented to orthodox Christianity, Thomas Chalmers of Scotland sought to harmonize Scripture and science. In a lecture of 1814, Chalmers set forth that the history of creation in Genesis 1 began at the middle of the second verse. Chalmers further explained that Genesis 1:1–2a ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was formless and void and darkness was on the face of the deep") was a reference to a pre-Adamic age that was brought to an end by a great catastrophe that left the earth "formless and void." The fossil remains provided evidence for this pre-Adamic age. Precisely stated, the gap theory sets forth that Genesis 1:1 describes a perfect and complete creation of the heavens and the earth, that 1:2 records the ruin of the originally perfect earth, and that an elapsed period of

⁹Ross and Archer, "The Day-Age View," pp. 123–63. For a good refutation of Hugh Ross's compromises, see Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*.

¹⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 298; for a solid rebuttal to the day-age view, see Duncan and Hall, "The 24-Hour Response [to the Day-age View]," pp. 165–77.

time (billions of years) between the originally perfect earth and its restoration set forth in 1:3–31.¹¹

D. Literary framework

The framework view is a more recent and novel figurative interpretation of the creation week. This position asserts that the creation week of Genesis 1:1–2:3 is itself a literary framework intended to present God’s creative activity in a topical, non-sequential manner, rather than a literal, sequential one. The overall literary structure used in the creation week is a scheme of “six work-day frames,” with each day of work in Genesis 1 serving as a picture frame. Each day of the creation week is introduced by a divine announcement, “God said,” *wayyō’mer* (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24). The use of *wayyō’mer* provides a frame for each day of the creation week. In addition, *wayyō’mer* is used twice on two different days: the third day (Gen 1:9, 11) and the sixth (1:24, 26). It is from the use of *wayyō’mer* that framework supporters derive that there are eight creative events.¹² Within each frame, the author of Genesis either gives one snapshot of God’s creative work, such as is reflected by the fiat-fulfillment expressions (Gen 1:3, fiat: “Let there be light”; fulfillment: “and there was light”), on the first day, second, fourth and fifth, or he gives two snapshots on each of the remaining days, the third day and the sixth. When the six workday frames are viewed as a whole, the eight creation events are evenly divided into two parallel units of three days, with Day 1 corresponding to Day 4, Day 2 to 5, and 3 to 6. Thus, the first three days form a unit of four creative activities that are paralleled by the last three days with the same number of creative events, with the concluding day in each triad, Days 3 and 6, presenting two snapshots of creation. The intent of both triads is for literary and theological purposes, rather than chronological. As such, the literary parallels of the two triads are subordinate to the seventh day that is set up as a Sabbath rest of the “Creator King.”¹³

E. Evaluation of four views

While some evangelical scholars over the last century and a half who have defended one of these four views have contributed significant theological works in other areas of biblical study, I am, nevertheless, convinced their works that have dealt with biblical cosmogony have contributed to the weakening of the Gospel’s foundation. There are three areas where figurative interpretations of Genesis 1:1–2:3 undermine the Gospel message.

1. Figurative interpretations of the creation account create a hermeneutical problem.

If the narrative in the creation week is historical literature, this indicates that Genesis 1:1 should be interpreted according to the conventions of that literary style. Though some want to figuratively interpret the “days,” “evening,” “morning,” and even the concept of a “week” (though “week” is not used in the creation account), the nature of narrative literature does not allow for a figurative hermeneutic in the creation week.

¹¹For a defense of the gap theory, see Custance, *Without Form and Void*. For a devastating refutation of Custance’s gap theory, see Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*.

¹²Irons and Kline, “Framework View,” pp. 227–28.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 224–25; for a refutation of framework view, see Duncan and Hall, “The 24-Hour Response [to the Framework View],” pp. 257–77; Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, pp. 51–69, 235–45; and Pipa, “From Chaos to Cosmos,” pp. 153–98.

To attempt any type of figurative interpretation of the creation week distorts the type of literature that Moses has preserved in this account. For example, poetry is characterized by poetic parallelism; however, historical narrative is characterized by the use of a grammatical device known as the *waw* consecutive. What we should carefully notice is that the *waw* consecutive is used 2,107 times in Genesis, which averages to 42 *waw* consecutives per chapter. What are noteworthy are the absence of poetic parallelism and the presence of 55 *waw* consecutives in Genesis 1:1–2:3. What characterizes Hebrew narrative literature is the *waw* consecutive, and this narrative device dominates Genesis 1:1–2:3. How can the creation account be anything less than narrative literature? If Genesis 1:1–2:3 is not normal narrative literature, then we have no hope of any meaningful interpretation because we have abandoned the literal sense of historical narrative. Hypothetically speaking, if the temporal markers of the creation account are figurative, was God only speaking figuratively when he formed Eve out of Adam’s side in Genesis 2:21?¹⁴ Is the serpent in Genesis 3 only figurative? What about the tree of knowledge of good and evil as well as the tree of life? Where will we draw line, once we start down the figurative slope of “unbelief”? Will Adam eventually be interpreted only as a figure, a model for humanity? My argument is that once we change the hermeneutical landscape of a clear-cut piece of narrative literature, like Genesis 1:1–2:3, we lay a foundation that will eventually under cut the historical fabric of the Gospels.

2. Figurative interpretations of the creation account are inconsistent with the perspicuity of Scripture.

The perspicuity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such way that believers can comprehend its basic doctrines. While the perspicuity of Scripture neither denies that there are problem passages nor that believers have misunderstood some passages, it affirms that the Bible’s basic message about creation, the fall, sin, redemption, and last things is clearly expounded in specific biblical texts and verified in other biblical texts with the result that an average believer in any age can understand its message.¹⁵

Throughout Scripture the literal nature of the creation account is both assumed and used as the basis for other commands,¹⁶ such as the Sabbath command in Exodus 20:8–11. Furthermore, the literal interpretation is set forth and assumed throughout Jewish and Christian history. The doctrine of creation is one of the doctrines that is clearly taught in Scripture and has been recognized by the church. In fact, it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century with the modern development of geology and biology that the literal interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3 was even questioned. As Pipa has questioned: “What in Genesis 1 or the rest of scripture suggests a non-literal view? Did the church make such a gross error in almost 2000 years of interpretation?”¹⁷

¹⁴For example, framework advocate Henri Blocher argues that God’s formation of the woman from Adam’s side cannot be taken literally (*In the Beginning*, pp. 98–100).

¹⁵Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 108.

¹⁶For a solid treatment of the literal interpretation of the creation account and how it is developed throughout the entirety of Scripture, see Duncan and Hall, “The 24-Hour View,” pp. 25–47.

¹⁷Pipa, “From Chaos to Cosmos,” p. 192.

3. Figurative interpretations of the creation account undermine an aspect of Christ's atonement.

Any view of the creation week that directly affirms or allows for chaos, suffering, and death before the fall of the head of the human race, Adam, and the Edenic Curse minimizes an aspect of Christ's atonement. In dealing with the fall of Adam, not only do we need to grasp the actual fall but also its effect on creation, the Edenic Curse. By the nature of all the views that we have just surveyed, all of them either directly or tacitly affirm that death entered the created order before the fall of Adam.¹⁸

To grasp the significance of the fall of Adam and Edenic Curse in Genesis 3, we must understand the dominion mandate, represented in the first two chapters of Genesis. Having been made in the image of God, Adam was created by God, in Genesis 1:26, 28, to represent him as vice-regent over creation. An aspect of Adam's role is spelled out as his *ruling* over the animal kingdom in v. 26 ("let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"), and again in v. 28 ("God said to them... 'rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'"). Adam's kingship over the animals is further reflected by his assigning names to the animals that God brought before him in 2:19 (for a poetic recounting of the dominion mandate, see Ps 8:6–7). Another aspect of Adam's dominion over creation is seen in 1:28, where Adam and Eve were to "subdue" the earth, and again in Genesis 2:5, 15, where man is to "cultivate" (or, "work") and to "keep" (or, "take care of") the ground. Based upon the dominion mandate, we can see that two aspects of Adam's dominion specifically include the animals and the ground.

The account of the fall in Genesis 3 records God's announcement of judgment on the serpent, the ground, Adam and Eve. In addition, we understand from the overall context of Genesis and other related biblical texts that those specifically mentioned in Genesis 3 are representative of other parts of Adam's kingdom, as the curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:14 implies: "Cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field." This is to say, when God judged his vice-regent, this judgment extended beyond Adam to the created realm over which God had given him authority. Not only does Moses set forth that divine judgment had an effect on Adam and the subjects of his dominion, but Paul also strongly suggests this in the New Testament. For example, the effects of the fall are seen on Adam's family. In Romans 5:12–21, Paul maintains that Adam brought death and condemnation to all those procreated in his family line, and by implication, his wife. Paul precisely states that humanity's death came by Adam: "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Rom 5:12; see also 1 Tim 2:11–15). In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul again teaches that "by a man came death" (v. 21), and "in Adam all die" (v. 22).

But death and destruction are not simply confined to Adam's family—it includes the created realm over which he had dominion. This is also strongly suggested in Romans 8 where Paul maintains, "the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it" (v. 20). The effects of the Edenic Curse brings the creation under such a bondage that Paul describes it as "slavery to corruption" (v. 21),

¹⁸While some framework advocates do not directly address the issue about when the death entered the created order, some of its advocates tacitly affirm this. See Blocher, *In the Beginning*, pp. 184–85; and Waltke, *Genesis*, pp. 68–69.

and further that this curse is so pervasive that “the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now” (v. 22).

Thus, death entered not only humanity with the fall of Adam, but also all of creation with the Edenic Curse. The death and corruption of Romans 5 and 8 are connected to the representative of the human race, Adam; likewise, the removal of death and corruption for the created order is tied to the headship of Christ. This is a major theological problem for any view that allows for chaos, suffering, and death before the fall of Adam.¹⁹ Failure to connect suffering and death with the headship of Adam also presents a problem for an aspect of Christ’s atonement, which is to deliver the created order from the bonds of the Edenic Curse: “the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). An aspect of the Christ’s atonement is to free the created order from the Edenic Curse. As the created order fell with the first Adam, so the created order will be redeemed with the second Adam. Consequently, any view that allows for suffering and death prior to the fall of Adam undermines that aspect of Christ’s atonement that guarantees the redemption of the created order.

II. Literal interpretation of the creation account

Any attempt to argue for a figurative use of “day” in Genesis 1 violates the literal meaning of Scripture. We will set forth five reasons why the unambiguous meaning of Scripture demands that the days of Genesis be interpreted as six, successive, literal days.

A. Semantic constraints of singular “day”

The Hebrew word translated as “day,” *yôm*, is always used of a literal day when it is used as a singular noun and is not part of a compound grammatical construction (e.g. “in-the-day-of” [Gen 2:4] is a compound grammatical construction). The word *yôm* may also be translated as “day,” “time,” “year,” or for any extended period of time.²⁰ From this, we can conclude that the term *yôm* may be used in a non-extended sense as “day” or in an extended sense such as “time,” “year,” etc. Many have contended that if we take *yôm* in an extended sense, then “day” is simply a figure denoting an age. This figurative interpretation would certainly solve our modern problem of harmonizing Scripture with geology. Following this type of thought, science interprets Scripture rather than letting Scripture interpret itself. However, a major problem for a figurative understanding is that Hebrew lexicons consistently connect the use of *yôm* in Genesis 1:1–2:3 with a normal day.²¹

What is significant for our discussion of Genesis 1 is that *yôm* always refers to a normal literal day when it is used as a singular noun and is not found in a compound grammatical construction (by compound grammatical construction, I am referring to the following types of items: the noun *yôm* being used with a preposition immediately attached to it, *yôm* being a part of a longer prepositional construction which has a verbal immediately following it, *yôm* being a part of the multi-word construction known as the construct-genitive

¹⁹Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, p. 622.

²⁰Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, pp. 130–31.

²¹Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:399 (hereafter cited as *HALOT*); for a citation of additional sources, see my article, “A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week,” pp. 101–2, nn. 14, 15; 19.

relationship, *yôm* being used in a compound construction [*yôm yôm*]).

The noun *yôm* is used in the Hebrew Old Testament 2,304 times. Of these it is used in the singular 1,452 times. *Yôm* is used in the Pentateuch 668 times. Of these the singular form is used 425 times. It is used in Genesis 152 times, with 83 of these in the singular.²² In Genesis 1:1–2:3 *yôm* is used 14 times, 13 times in the singular and once in the plural (v. 14). It is used in Genesis 1:5 (twice), 8, 13, 14 (twice), 16, 18, 19, 23, 31; 2:2 (twice) and 2:3. The lone plural use of “days” in 1:14 does not contradict our understanding of “day” as a normal day. Its use in 1:14 is consistent with our argument. While the use of the plural “days,” is clearly not a reference to any of the specific days of the creation week, its use in 1:14 has specific reference to calendrical “days and years.” The stuff that literal days and literal years are made is regular 24-hour days! Returning to our point about the 13 uses of “day” in Genesis 1, this type of singular use of “day” with a non-extended meaning is used consistently in this manner throughout Genesis, the Pentateuch, and the entire Old Testament to denote literal 24-hour days.²³

B. Numeric qualifiers and “day”

Another reason why “day” must be a literal day arises from the use of a numerical adjective with the word “day.” In each case where Moses summarizes God’s creative work for that day, the word “day” is qualified by a numerical adjective—“first day” (v. 5), “second day” (v. 8), etc. When *yôm* is used with a numerical adjective in the Old Testament, it is never used in a figurative sense. An example of this is found in Leviticus 12:3, “And on the *eighth day* the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.” This use of the numerical adjective is clearly demonstrated in Numbers 7. In this context, leaders from each tribe of Israel brought various gifts to the Lord on 12, sequential, literal days. Each use of the word “day” is qualified by a numerical adjective. Numbers 7:12 illustrates this point, “Now the one who presented his offering on the *first day* was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah” (for the remainder of the days along with their numerical qualifiers, see vv. 18, 24, 30, 36, 42, 48, 54, 60, 66, 72, 78). Thus, the use of day with a numerical adjective is a clear reference to a literal day. Hasel has made this same point, “When the word *yôm*, ‘day,’ is employed together with a numeral, which happens 150 times in the Old Testament, it refers in the Old Testament invariably to a literal day of 24 hours.”²⁴

C. “Evening” and “morning” as qualifiers of “day”

The singular “day,” in Genesis 1 is qualified further with the words “evening” and “morning.” The clauses in which these two nouns are found, “and there was evening and there was morning,” stand in juxtaposition with each enumerated day of the creation week (1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Whether “evening” and “morning” are used together in a context with “day” (19 times beyond the 6 uses in Genesis 1) or they are used without “day” (38 times), they are used consistently in reference to literal days.

“Evening” and “morning” have at times been taken as a reference to the entire 24-hour day. With this understanding, “evening” is used to represent the entire nighttime portion of a

²²*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. “יֹמִי,” by J. E. Jenni, 2:526–272.

²³Hasel, “Days,” pp. 23–26.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 26.

literal day, and “morning” to stand for the entire daytime segment of a day.²⁵ Another and more preferable literal interpretation of “evening” and “morning” takes “evening” and “morning” in Genesis 1 as references to the beginning and conclusion of the nighttime period that concludes each of the creation days, after God had ceased from that day’s creative activity.

This understanding is consistent with other Old Testament uses of “evening” and “morning.” The noun *‘ereb*, “evening,” is related to a rarely used verb *‘ārab*, to “turn into evening.”²⁶ In its Qal stem, this verb is used in Judges 19:9 to indicate “the arrival of evening, as indicated by its description as the ending of the day.”²⁷ While it would be imprecise to define “evening” for the first three creation days as “sunset” since the sun is not actually created until the fourth day,²⁸ “evening” and “morning” basically refer to the same type of physical phenomenon. This is to say, evening is a transitional period of light between the twilight of day and the darkness of night.²⁹ The noun *bōqer*, “morning,”³⁰ may refer to all the hours of daylight or from midnight until noon. It may also indicate “the arrival of daylight.”³¹ This last use is the most consistent with the overall context of Genesis 1. The terms “evening” and “morning” “respectively signify the end of the period of light, when divine creativity was suspended, and the renewal of light, when the creative process was resumed.”³²

“Evening” and “morning” are used in similar ways in other passages of the Pentateuch. One example is found in Exodus 27:21. Moses instructed Aaron and his sons to keep the lamps in the Tabernacle burning all night until they were extinguished in the morning: “In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from *evening* to *morning* before the LORD; *it shall be* a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.” The night cycle of evening to morning is also reflected in the description of the Passover ritual in Deuteronomy 16:4: “For seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh which you sacrifice on the *evening* of the first day shall remain overnight until *morning*.” These uses suggest that a literal use of “evening” and “morning” refer to the nighttime. As such, the alternation of “evening” and “morning” in Genesis 1 represents the nighttime portion that concludes a literal day and prepares for the next day. With this interpretation, each day of the creation week has an “evening-morning” conclusion. The use of *waw* consecutive with each clause containing evening (“and there was evening”) and morning (“and there was morning”) indicates that at the conclusion of a creation day, the next sequence was evening and this was followed by the next significant sequence, morning.

²⁵Ibid., p. 28.

²⁶HALOT, 2:877.

²⁷New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, s.v. “בֶּקֶר,” by A. H. Konkel, 1:715 (hereafter cited as NIDOTTE).

²⁸Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 8.

²⁹See Cassuto, *Genesis*, p. 28.

³⁰HALOT, 1:151.

³¹NIDOTTE, 1:711.

³²Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 8.

D. Scriptural Parallels with “day”

Further substantiating this understanding of “day” as a literal day is its parallel use in Exodus 20:11. The context is that of God giving Israel the Decalogue and, in particular, the third commandment about Israel keeping the Sabbath holy. God’s motive for this command (v. 11) was based on the pattern that He had set in the creation week, “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.” If we follow the figurative use of day, this verse could be translated: “For in six geological ages of a million years or so the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh geological age of a million years or so: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath geological age of a million years or so and hallowed it.” This is reiterated again in Exodus 31:14–17, “¹⁴Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.” Obviously, Moses had six literal days in mind with the seventh day also being a twenty-four hour period.

E. Sequence of events and “day”

The sequence of events in the creation week also demands a literal day. On the third day of creation, God created vegetation with fruit trees and seed-bearing plants (Gen 1:11–12). Much vegetation needs insects for pollination. Insects were not created until the sixth day (vv. 24–25). “If the survival of those types of plants which needed insects for pollination depended on them to generate seeds and to perpetuate themselves, then there would be a serious problem should the creation ‘day’ consist of long ages or aeons. The type of plant life dependent on this type of pollination process without the presence of insects could not have survived for these long periods of time, if ‘day’ were to mean ‘age’ or ‘aeons.’”³³

III. Summary and Conclusion

In this workshop, we have examined four figurative interpretations of the creation week: theistic evolution, the day-age view, the gap theory, and the literary framework. We have furthered demonstrated that these figurative interpretations compromise the foundation of the Gospel in three ways: by creating a hermeneutical problem for the literal sense of narrative literature, by having an inconsistency with the perspicuity of Scripture, and by undermining an aspect of Christ’s atonement. Any figurative interpretation that has corruption and death disconnected from the fall of Adam also has a disconnection with redemption in Christ’s atonement.

We have provided five reasons why Scripture demands a literal interpretation of the creation week: the semantic constraints of “day,” numeric qualifiers and “day,” “evening” and

³³Hasel, “Days,” p. 30.

“morning” as qualifiers of “day,” Scriptural parallels with “day,” and the sequence of events and “day.” Since these reasons are consistent with a literal hermeneutic associated with narrative literature, with the perspicuity of Scripture, and with the headship of Adam, along with the resultant judgment on the dominion over which he ruled, and the headship of Christ, along with his atonement providing for a restoration of creation order, a literal interpretation of the creation week is consistent with the demands of Scripture. Historically, this has been the view of the Christian church.

While Bible-believing Christians throughout the history of orthodox Christianity have generally recognized Scripture’s clarity on this subject, language scholars outside the doctrinal parameters of orthodox Christianity have also recognized Scripture’s clarity. James Barr, one of the twentieth century’s most celebrated, liberal Hebrew scholars and the Oriel Professor of Interpretation of Holy Scriptures at Oxford University, was written a personal letter, dated April 23, 1984, about the literal interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis. In response to this letter, Barr stated the issue like this: “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 through 11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience...”³⁴ We should notice that the Hebrew or Old Testament scholars, the professors at “any world-class university,” that Barr refers to, almost universally, do not accept the truth claims of Scripture. What Barr asserts is that the plain meaning of the text is clearly recognized by this group of scholars. If this group of scholars who are not friends to orthodox Christianity can recognize the meaning of the text, how can compromising evangelicals who claim to accept the authority of Scripture distort the clear meaning of the Mosaic material by defending old earth models of creation? May God give us the backbone not to compromise on this biblical subject and to stand where our forefathers stood!

IV. Bibliography³⁵

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³⁴Cited by Ken Ham, *The Lie*, p. 53

³⁵The most helpful books for defending a recent creation are preceded by a darkened circle, ●.

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