

# BOOK I: REFORMED CHURCH HERMENEUTICS

By

Roderick O. Ford, D.D., Litt.D., J.D., Th.D. (candidate)



“The question is this: Is man an ape or an angel? My Lords, I am on the side of the angels”

— Benjamin Disraeli

## CHAPTER FOUR: IS THE *HOLY BIBLE* AN ACCURATE HISTORICAL DOCUMENT?

### PART I. The Creation of the World and Mankind

The Christian Churches of the world almost universally believe that the *Holy Bible* is an accurate historical document, beginning with the story of the creation of the earth and humans that is described in Genesis 1:1-31. Because the *Holy Bible* spiritually is inerrant and infallible, its veracity regarding the history of the earth’s creation has to do with spiritual truths regarding the earth’s origin. The fundamental question that we seek to answer in this paper is this: Should we interpret chapter one of the *Book of Genesis*, figuratively or literally?

For one thing, the writers of the *Psalms* certainly interpreted chapter one of *Genesis* in a figurative or allegorical manner, so as to suggest that all of Creation is

not only an exemplification of the personality, majesty, and power of God, but also a reflection of the Laws of Nature (i.e., the “general revelation” of God through the sciences, astronomy, geology, biology, physics, etc)<sup>1</sup>:

*“The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.  
Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.”*

—**Psalm 19:1-2**

*“Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD  
From the heavens: praise him in the heights.  
Praise ye him, all his angels:  
Praise ye him, all his hosts.  
Praise ye him, sun and moon:  
Praise him, all ye stars of light.  
Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,  
And ye waters that be above the heavens.  
Let them praise the name of the LORD:  
For he commanded, and they were created.”*

--**Psalm 148:1-5**

In other words, when the sun, moon, stars, firmament, and heaven show “praise”, or “uttereth speech,” or “shewth knowledge,” what they do is lay bare the wisdom, knowledge, and insight of their Creator and of the very laws of their nature. Here theology and science become one essence, just as the human mind and the human brain operate in unison. Where the theologian says “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” and where the scientist says “the earth began roughly 4.5 billion years ago,” insofar as these two statements are truthful, they do not contradict one another. Moreover, where the *Holy Bible* itself says that God “created the world in six days”; that a “day with the LORD” is like “a thousand years”; and that “a thousand years” is like unto an unspecified but very long time span, insofar as these three statements are truthful, they do not contradict one another.<sup>2</sup> This paper is thus designed to help resolve certain hermeneutic problems regarding the biblical account of Creation, and to guide the reader through the hermeneutical question of whether chapter one of *Genesis* should be considered to

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<sup>1</sup> Christian theology is the “queen of the sciences.”

<sup>2</sup> I have reached this theological conclusion, utilizing the most conservative hermeneutical standards of the Reformed Church, namely, “Solo Scriptura” and “Scriptures interpret Scriptures.”

be a *figurative* or *literal* expression of the historical and spiritual fact that God is the sole Creator of all creation.

## **PART I: THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND MANKIND**

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#### **A.**

### **CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY ON THE CREATION OF EARTH AND HUMANS**

How should the first chapter of *Genesis* be interpreted, allegorically or literally? My dear sisters and brothers in the conservative Evangelical, Lutheran, Seven-Day Adventists, Baptists, and Reformed churches contend that *Genesis* should be *literally interpreted*. Whereas many of my brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian churches allow for a more liberal, *allegorical interpretation* of *Genesis*. Even though, admittedly, the allegorical method of interpretation opens the door to false conclusions and assumptions about Creation, I have adopted the viewpoint of St. Augustine of Hippo that the first two chapters of *Genesis* may be allegorically (i.e., figuratively) interpreted, but only within certain orthodox guidelines on interpreting bible prophecy in general.<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand my reasons for adopting St. Augustine’s allegorical method of interpretation, we must first ask whether the *Holy Bible*’s recording of the Creation is a reliable form of prophetic writing on the origins of earth and mankind, or whether it was meant to publish a scientific treatise on those origins. The *Book of Genesis*, even by ancient standards—i.e., the standards of ancient

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the primary biblical hermeneutical guideline is that “Scripture must interpret Scripture.” Here, there is plenty of room, even utilizing the most conservative hermeneutical standards, to conclude that within the Book of Genesis, the word “day” in connection with God is like “a thousand years” or a very long period of time.

Egypt, Greece and Rome—does not read like a scientific treatise; but rather, *Genesis* reads like a work of prophetic writing that is designed to provide a spiritual description of the origins of the world, subject to the hermeneutical rules for interpreting other forms of bible prophecy. At the same time, the *Holy Bible* and *Genesis* are also accurate descriptions of real history. We must, however, understand that this biblical history is not primarily the historical record of secular geological science and secular human history; but rather, this biblical history is a prophetic-historical record of the origins of sin and of righteous living among God’s faithful—nay, it is the *spiritual origins* of the Christian Church (i.e., the Old Testament Church of Israel and the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ). The *Holy Bible* is, first and foremost, a prophetic-historical record of the Fall of Mankind through Original Sin, and the subsequent plight of that society of righteous pilgrims called the “church” or the “congregation of the righteous,” that exists throughout the world.<sup>4</sup> This biblical history is, fundamentally, a prophetic-historical record of the spiritual origins and essence of the human soul.

The orthodox Christian Church, including the Reformed Protestant churches, believes that the *Holy Bible* is an **accurate historical record** of human history. The writer of the *Book of Genesis*, (i.e., Moses), for instance, certainly asserts what he believes was accurate historical information regarding mankind’s primordial origins. But the *Holy Bible* is not a record of secular political or economic history, although the histories of ancient empires are included in, and overlap with, the biblical historical record. Instead, the *Holy Bible* is a historical record of the human condition, to wit: the origins of mankind’s *moral* and *spiritual* condition. It is a historical record of the origins of holiness and righteousness, and of crime and sin. As St. Augustine of Hippo teaches us in *The City of God*, the *Holy Bible* is actually and really a *spiritual history* of men and women of faith. In other words, the *Holy Bible* is a historical record of “two cities” or “two societies,” as Augustine thus reminds us:

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<sup>4</sup> At this point, we should first clarify why the *Holy Bible* was compiled and who compiled it. Before there was a sacred canonized text called “Bible” or the “Holy Bible,” there was the *Torah*, or the first five books of Moses; next came the historical recordings of Israel’s judges, ending with the historical accounts from era when the Prophet Samuel lived. The Prophet Samuel anointed King Saul, and thus began the reign of Israelite kings up through reign of King Herod, during the time of the birth of Christ. But if we accept the general view of the Western Church (i.e., the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and non-denominational churches in the West), we would need to acknowledge that the *Holy Bible* is designed to record a specialized history, that of the “people of God” and of the “society of the saints.” The *Holy Bible* is thus a specialized history of the Church (i.e., the Church of ancient Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ). “This is the most glorious city of God,” writes Augustine of Hippo. “[T]his is the city which knows and worships one God; she is celebrated by the holy angels, who invite us to their society, and desire us to become fellow-citizens with them in this city.” St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 331.

This [human] race we have distributed into two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil...

Of these two first parents of the human race, then, Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God.... When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world was the first-born, and after him the stranger in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestinated by grace, elected by grace, by grace a stranger below, and by grace a citizen above....

These two series of generations accordingly, the one of Cain, the other of Seth, represent the two cities in their distinctive ranks, the one the heavenly city, which sojourns on earth, the other the earthly, which gapes after earthly joys, and grovels in them as if they were the only joys. But though eight generations, including Adam, are registered before the flood, **no man of Cain's line has his age recorded** at which the son who succeeded him was begotten. For **the Spirit of God refused to mark the times before the flood in the generations of the earthly city, but preferred to do so in the heavenly line, as if it were more worthy of being remembered.**<sup>5</sup>

Thus, rather than providing us with a political and economic record of the development of various races, nations, kingdoms and empires, the *Holy Bible* is a historical record of God's universal, holy, and apostolic church. Its emphasis is the **spiritual and moral development of mankind**, with a peculiar emphasis on particular men and women of faith, such as Noah, Sarah, and Abraham.

Therefore, prophetic-historical writings are absolutely needed within the *Book of Genesis*, as a prophetic biblical record of the origins of mankind—because *no man ever created himself, and because we must thus deduce that man was created by a Creator*, at some point in time known as the “beginning.” Prophetic-historical writings are needed in *Genesis* in order to express historical truths in **broad language** so that the entire range of spiritual truths, historical

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<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 478-479, 499.

truths, and scientific truths regarding the origins of humans and the world can be **rightfully ascribed to God's immutable, immaterial Spirit**. Is there a secular, scientific view of the Creation? If so, then the broad, prophetic language in Genesis incorporates that viewpoint as its own.<sup>6</sup> Is there an equally-valid theological view of the Creation? If so, then the broad, prophetic language in Genesis incorporates that viewpoint as its own. For this reason, when it came to the *Book of Genesis*, St. Augustine of Hippo honestly felt that the prophet Moses had purposefully written his words so that any number of valid truths could be taken away from the pages of this Sacred Scripture:

If I had been Moses... at the time that he was, and if I had been ordered by you to write the book of Genesis, I would surely have wished for such a power of expression and such an art of arrangement to be given me, that those who cannot as yet understand how god creates would still not reject my words as surpassing their powers of understanding. And I would have wished that those who are already able to do this would find fully contained in the laconic speech of your servant **whatever truths they had arrived at in their own thought; and if, in the light of the truth, some other man saw some further meaning, that too would be found congruent to my words....**<sup>7</sup>

But **in the midst of so many truths which occur to the interpreters of these words (understood as they can be in different ways), which one of us can discover that single interpretation which warrants our saying confidently that Moses thought thus** and that in this narrative he wishes this to be understood... But **which of them he did actually intend to express in these words I do not clearly see**. However, whether it was one of these or some other meaning which I have not mentioned **that this great man saw in his mind when he used these words I have no doubt whatever that he saw it truly and expressed it suitably....**<sup>8</sup>

Thus, when one person says, 'Moses meant what I mean,' and another says, 'No, he meant what I do,' I think that I speak more faithfully when I say: Why could he not have meant both if both opinions are true? And if there should be still a third truth or a fourth one, and I

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<sup>6</sup> Christian theology is the "queen of the sciences."

<sup>7</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 224-225.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

anyone should seek a truth quite different in those words, why would it not be right to believe that Moses saw all these different truths, since through him the one god had tempered the holy scriptures to the understanding of many different people, who should see truths in it even if they are different? ... [I]f I were to write anything that would have such a supreme authority, I would prefer to write it so that, whatever of truth anyone might apprehend from the matter under discussion, my words should re-echo in the several minds rather than that they should set down one true opinion so clearly on one point that I should exclude the rest, even though they contained no falsehood that offended me. **Therefore, I am unwilling, my god, to be so headstrong as not to believe that this man [Moses] has received at least this much from you. Surely when he was writing these words, he saw fully and understood all the truth we have been able to find in them,** and also much besides that we have not been able to discern, or are not yet able to find out, though it is there in them still to be found.<sup>9</sup>

It is thus that the *Holy Bible*'s description of God's Spirit during the Creation that all possible rightful approaches to interpreting the origins of earth and mankind—scientific, historical, and spiritual—are equally valid, and incorporated into the plain meaning of the text of *Genesis*. This was so, as St. Augustine reasoned, because God is the source of all Truth, and all men's discovery of truth are not their own private opinions, howsoever differing they may appear to be on the surface, but rather private opinions that are truthful are but manifestations of God's Truth. Only the Creator knows when and how the earth and mankind was created, and so, unless the Creator communicates with men and women, whether directly or through a prophet, then they will have no way of knowing exactly how or why the Creator made all that exists. And the only way to know how man was created is through some form of direct communication from God the Creator. The *Holy Bible* teaches us that God the Creator communicated directly with, and revealed the history of creation to, a prophet named Moses. But the words which Moses wrote in *Genesis* must ultimately be read and, furthermore, interpreted by individual readers, who, with the gift of the Spirit of Truth, receive the veracity of these Scriptures. This is what St. Augustine meant, I think, when he admitted in *Confessions* that multiple interpretations of *Genesis* may be equally valid and truthful.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 228-229.

The *Holy Bible*'s first historical account is that of the "beginning of the world" (i.e., the creation of the planet earth and the heavens.) This is a historical account of the beginning of time, which no human being was alive to observe; and so here, again, we must accept the writings of Moses in the *Book of Genesis* as factual and truthful.

**Genesis 1:1:** "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

**Genesis 1:2:** "And the earth was without form, and void..."

How did God create the earth, while simultaneously leaving it *without form*? Or, when and how did God create a "formless" and "void" earth? Formlessness, writes St. Augustine, "cannot have temporal change in it."<sup>10</sup> And everything "formed" was "formless before it was formed."<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, when the world and everything else that we see were made, they were first "void" and "formless," as it were. In other words, these things were something similar to "platonic forms" or "platonic ideals" inside of the supreme mind of God the Father and Creator. Augustine of Hippo teaches us that the "beginning" of creating the "platonic forms" from "formlessness" is, in essence "[God's] wisdom."<sup>12</sup> Significantly, a "thing" may be "named," while it is yet "formless." So that, the names of uncreated "formless things," can be applied to those same formless things, "after they become formed."<sup>13</sup> As such, the "earth" and the "waters," spoken of in the first chapter of *Genesis*, may be formless, before they become formed; such that, *Genesis* speaks of "earth" and "water," both in their "formless" phase, as well as after they become fully formed. According to St. Augustine and very many others, this conception of the phrase "the earth was without form, and void" pulverized our human understanding of "days" and "time" in natural human history. Hence, for St. Augustine of Hippo, the phrase "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" could have a variety of meanings.

### **(1). On Differences in Theological Opinion on the Creation**

As we have mentioned previously, there have long remained differences among all kinds of persons who hold all kinds of scientific, pseudo-scientific, and religious views, as to when and how the planet earth and human beings were

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



created. Even within the orthodox Christian Church, differences have long ago appeared and still remain. In his day, even the great Augustine of Hippo suggested the following solution for his fellow Christian brethren: “[i]n this discord of true opinions,” he wrote in *Confessions*, “let truth itself bring concord, and may our god have mercy on us all, that we may use the law rightly to the end of the commandment which is pure love.”<sup>14</sup>

In his work, *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo presented five different possible ways of interpreting verse 1, chapter one of Genesis, as follows:

**“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1)**

1. **First Interpretation:** “In his word, coeternal with himself, god made both the intelligible and the tangible, the spiritual and the corporeal creation.”<sup>15</sup>
2. **Second Interpretation:** “In his word, coeternal with himself, god made the universal mass of this corporeal world, with all the observable and known entities that it contains.”<sup>16</sup>
3. **Third Interpretation:** “In his word, coeternal with himself, god made the unformed matter of the spiritual and corporeal creation.”<sup>17</sup>
4. **Fourth Interpretation:** “In his word, coeternal with himself, god made the unformed matter of the physical creation, in which heaven and the earth were as yet indistinguished; but now that they have come to be separated and formed, we can now perceive them both in the mighty mass of this world.”<sup>18</sup>
5. **Fifth Interpretation:** “In the very beginning of creating and working, god made that unformed matter which contained, undifferentiated, heave and earth, from which both of them were formed, and both now stand out and are observable with all the things that are in them.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 219-220.

Similarly, in *Confessions*, Augustine presented seven different possible ways of interpreting the verse 2, chapter one of Genesis, as follows:

**“[T]he earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:2)**

1. **First Interpretation:** “That corporeal entity which god made was as yet the formless matter of physical things without order and without light.”<sup>20</sup>
2. **Second Interpretation:** “This totality called heaven and earth was as yet unformed and lightless matter, out of which the corporeal heaven and the corporeal earth were to be made, with all the things in them that are known to our physical senses.”<sup>21</sup>
3. **Third Interpretation:** “This totality called heaven and earth was as yet an unformed and lightless matter, from which were to be made that intelligible heaven (which is also called ‘the heaven of heavens’) and the earth (which refers to the whole physical entity, under which term may be included this corporeal heaven)—that is, he made the intelligible heaven from which every invisible and visible creature would be created.”<sup>22</sup>
4. **Fourth Interpretation:** ““The scripture does not refer to that formlessness by the term ‘heaven and earth’; that formlessness itself already existed. This it called the invisible ‘earth’ and the unformed and lightless ‘abyss,’ from which—as it had said before—god made the heaven and the earth (namely, the spiritual and the corporeal creation).”<sup>23</sup>
5. **Fifth Interpretation:** “ ‘There was already an unformed matter from which, as the scripture had already said, god made heaven and earth, namely, the entire corporeal mass of the world, divided into two very great parts, one superior, the other inferior, with all those familiar and known creatures that are in them.’”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p 220.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

6. **Response to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Interpretation:** “Now suppose that someone tried to argue against these last two opinions as follows: ‘If you will not admit that this formlessness of matter appears to be called by the term ‘heaven and earth,’ then there was something that god had not made out of which he did make heaven and earth. And scripture has not told us that god made this matter, unless we understand that it is implied in the term ‘heaven and earth’ (or the term ‘earth’ alone) when it is said, ‘In the beginning god created the heavens and earth.’ Thus, in what follows—‘the earth was invisible and unformed’—even though it pleased Moses thus to refer to unformed matter, yet we can only understand by it that which god himself had made, as it stands written in the previous verse, ‘god made heaven and earth.’”
7. **Reply to Response to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Interpretation:** “Those who maintain either one or the other of these two opinions which we have set out above will answer to such objections: ‘We do not deny at all that this unformed matter was created by god, from whom all things are, and are very good—because we hold that what is created and endowed with form is a higher good; and we also hold that what is made capable of being created and endowed with form, though it is a lesser good, is still a good. But the scripture has not said specifically that god made this formlessness... -- yet it is clear that god made all of these.... If truth instructs us, why may we not interpret that unformed matter which the scripture calls the earth—invisible and unformed—and the lightless abyss as having been made by god from nothing; and thus understand that they are not coeternal with him, although the narrative fails to tell us precisely when they were made?’<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, there is some valid orthodox viewpoints that what Moses meant to imply, in Genesis 1:1-2, was that the first “day” had not yet commenced, because the earth was still “without form, and void.”

This is a difficult idea to imagine, but we might image a carpenter who makes a set of tables and chairs from a tree. Theologically and philosophically speaking, the “idea” and “knowledge” of these items must first exist inside of the mind of the carpenter, before he begins his work in cutting down the tree and shaping the wood into a dining set of chairs and table. Similarly, Genesis 1:1-2

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 221-222.

recounts a pre-historic event, when the earth existed inside of the mind of God, even before it was actually created.

The other problem unknown to science is where the “rocks” and “sands” which comprise the planet earth were created. Suppose the very rocky substances of the planet earth took billions of years to form in outer space, before being fused together into the ball which we know today as our planet earth. This would mean that modern science’s current estimates of the earth’s age being about 4.5 billion years could be a significant misrepresentation of actual age of the earth itself: because the “rocks” which comprise the “earth” may indeed themselves be billions of years older than the earth. Similarly, a “tree” can be decades older than the “chairs” or “table,” which were extracted from the tree—even though the actual “age” of the wood comprising the “chairs” and the “table” would be the same age as the tree from whence they came. Who knows whether God made the earth’s substance billions of years before actually fusing them together into its spherical shape? Thus, the earth’s rocky and gaseous substances could have been 4.5 billion years in the making; while the earth’s final form and circular shape might be only about 10 million years old, or much younger.

Of critical importance, at least for those of us who adopt Augustinian views of creation, is that “things” actually exist, before they are formed. And thus when Genesis speaks of earth, it does so in a bifurcated way: first, before the earth was actually formed of its physical and gaseous substances; and, second, after its actual formation took place. Going back to our earlier analogy, the “tree” exists before the “chairs and table” exists; as the later is extracted out from the former, having first existed as *an abstract ideal* in the mind of the carpenter. “A thing that does not exist cannot be formed,” says Augustine. That is why, says he, the “sound comes before the tune.”<sup>26</sup> “For a tune is a formed sound, and an unformed thing may exist, but a thing that does not exist cannot be formed.”<sup>27</sup> “From this example,” Augustine goes on to explain, “**let one who is able to understand see that the matter of things was first made and was called ‘heaven and earth’ because out of it the heaven and earth were made.** This primal formlessness was not made first in time, because the **form of things gives rise to time**; but now, in time, it is intuited together with its form.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, according to Augustine and the teachings of orthodox Christianity, “time” did not commence until the earth was finally formed. Augustine of Hippo tells us: “[f]rom this formlessness a second heaven might be created and a second earth—visible and well formed, with the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

ordered beauty of the waters, and whatever else is recorded as created (though not without days) in the formation of this world. And all this because such things are so ordered that in them the changes of time may take place through the ordered processes of motion and form.”<sup>29</sup>

## **(2). On the Creation of Time, the First Day, and the First Man**

By Genesis 1:1-2, we are led to believe that God “conceptualized” the planet earth in His supreme mind, at which time, in the “beginning,” when the earth was still formless and void, as if to say, the formless earth was still a formless “dream,” “thought,” or an “imagination,” inside the supreme mind of God.<sup>30</sup> Augustine of Hippo says, “[i]t is also true ‘the beginning’ is [God’s] wisdom in which [He] created all things.”<sup>31</sup> At this point in time, “in the beginning,” there were no days, no sun, no moon, and time itself had not yet been created, because the planet earth was still a formless void inside of the supreme mind of God. But we now turn, in this section, to the supreme question: “When did time begin?”

The orthodox Christian Church believes that time began as described in Genesis 3-5, to wit: “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” After this point in “time,” God began the work of creating things, inside of “time,” as mentioned in Genesis 1:7-8, which states:

**Genesis 1:7:** “And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

**Genesis 1:8:** “And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.”

Thus, we are led to conceptualize two “heavens.” The first “heaven” being the galaxy beyond the earth, whereas the “firmament” is essentially the sky above the earth which also constitutes the gaseous sphere separating the earth from the outer galaxy of moons, stars, and other planetary systems or orbits. The second “heaven” is the “firmament” spoken of in Genesis 1:8, that is the circular “arc” of the planet earth’s sky. Augustine of Hippo further examined this point, where he

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<sup>29</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions* (New York, N.Y.: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2007), p. 213.

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 1:1 also says that in the “beginning,” God created “the heaven,” and here we may deduce that the word “heaven” means the sun, the stars, the moons, the planetary or galaxy systems which we find in the outer spaces apart from the planet earth. Again, the “heaven” as spoken of here in Genesis 1:1, is distinct from the “heaven.”

<sup>31</sup> St. Augustine, *Confession*, p. 219.

says, “ ‘In the beginning god created the heaven and the earth.’ For it immediately indicated which earth it was speaking about. When, on the second day, the firmament is recorded as having been created and called heaven, this suggests to us which heaven it was that he was speaking about earlier, without specifying a day.”<sup>32</sup>

In biblical order, the “light” was created on the first Day. See Genesis 1:5. Hence, the sun may be deduced as having been created on the first Day. The “light” was divided from the darkness. On the second Day, the “firmament” was created, as previously mentioned. This “firmament” was the earth’s sky or arc. Genesis 1: 7 states: “And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.” Thus, above this “firmament” were “the waters”; and below this “firmament” was “the waters.” Augustine of Hippo suggests that “the waters” mentioned in Genesis 1:2 were still yet “unformed,” where it says, “And the earth was without form, and void... And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” because the first Day had not yet been created.<sup>33</sup>

**Genesis 1:2:** “And the earth was without form, and void.... And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

**Genesis 1:5:** “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were **the first day**.”

**Genesis 1:6:** “And said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

**Genesis 1:7:** “And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.”

**Genesis 1:8:** “And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were **the second day**.”

**Genesis 1:9-10:** “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.”

**Genesis 1:13:** “And the evening and the morning were **the third day.**”

**Genesis 1:16:** “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.”

**Genesis 1:19:** “And the evening and the morning were the **fourth day.**”

**Genesis 1:20:** “And God said Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

**Genesis 1:23:** “And the evening and the morning were **the fifth day.**”

**Genesis 1:25:** “And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.”

**Genesis 1:26:** “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

**Genesis 1:31:** “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the **sixth day.**”

At this point, bible scholars differ as to how to define “day” in Genesis 1:5-31. In other words, should we define “day” as a 24-hour natural day, or as some other space of time? At first glance, we note in Genesis 2:2 that “on the seventh day God ended his work and he rested on the seventh day” but does not describe an “evening” or a “morning,” and many bible scholars interpret this to mean that this “seventh day” is an eternal rest that is on-going and has no “evening.” This description of the “seventh day” could likewise permit for another allegorical description of the first six days of creation as well.

**B.**  
**A BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICAL PROBLEM:**  
**HOW DO WE DEFINE THE WORD “DAY” IN GENESIS 1:5-31?**

We may only conjecture, along with St. Augustine of Hippo, who himself admitted, in *The City of God*, regarding the meaning of the word “day” in the *Book of Genesis*, that “[f]or in these days the morning and evening are counted, until, on the sixth day, all things which God then made were finished, and on the seventh the rest of God was mysteriously and sublimely signalized. **What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say!**”<sup>34</sup>

Nor is the *Holy Bible* a scientific record of the primordial origins of the planet earth but rather it is a *spiritual interpretation* of natural history. The orthodox Christian Church believes that the account of Creation in the Book of Genesis is historically accurate, not because it provides with scientific precision the chronological details of this Creation, but simply on account of its assertion that God created everything that exists within the **time span of six days**, and that, on the **seventh day**, He rested. The grouping of Reformed and Evangelical Protestant churches that broke away from the Church of England, or that broke away from mainline Protestant churches, have generally embraced the position that these six days of creation were twenty-four hour days. Indeed, the Westminster Confession of Faith has been described as advocating this same position:

**The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)**

**Chapter 4 - Of Creation.**

**Section 1.)** It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,(1) for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,(2) in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, **in the space of six days**, and all very good.(3)

(1) Heb 1:2; Jn 1:2,3; Ge 1:2; Job 26:13; Job 33:4 (2) Ro 1:20; Jer 10:12; Ps 104:24; Ps 33:5,6 (3) Heb 11:3; Col 1:16; Ac 17:24

**Section 2.)** After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and

<sup>34</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 350.



female,(1) with reasonable and immortal souls,(2) endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image,(3) having the law of God written in their hearts,(4) and power to fulfill it;(5) and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change.(6) Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;(7) which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.(8)  
(1) Ge 1:27 (2) Ge 2:7; Ecc 12:7; Lk 23:43; Mt 10:28 (3) Ge 1:26; Col 3:10; Eph 4:24 (4) Ro 2:14,15 (5) Ecc 7:29 (6) Ge 3:6; Ecc 7:29 (7) Ge 2:17; Ge 3:8,9,10,11,23 (8) Ge 1:26,28

Indeed, I am told by Dr. Kenneth Talbot, President of the Whitefield Theological Seminary that the orthodox Reformed Presbyterian Church believes that God created the world within six twenty-four hour days, and that this belief is mandatory for church membership. Similarly, at its 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Tampa, Florida, the Lutheran Synod passed a similar resolution, stating that God created the world in six natural days.<sup>35</sup> As I have described below, the theory that the word “day” in Genesis 1:5-31 means 24-hour days is not completely ruled out, when we consider that the time period from between the creation of Adam and the Fall and removal from the Garden is not recorded in *Genesis*.<sup>36</sup> Given that Adam and Eve were immortal beings before their Fall, the time-span of their existence in the Garden could have been 4.5 billions of years or longer.<sup>37</sup>

Two of the most vexing questions in the history of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic hermeneutics are (a) **“Did Moses intend to say in the *Book of Genesis***

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/lutheran-church-passes-resolution-saying-god-created-world-6-natural-days.html>

<sup>36</sup> **Theory of Timeless Perfection before the Fall:** This theory is based upon the conclusion that Adam and Eve lived in eternal bliss before the Fall, and that they did not begin to “age,” or to die, until after the Fall. Hence, the 930 years that Adam which lived, as recorded in Gen. 5:5, **would not have begun until after the Fall.** See, e.g., the following blog:



[Daniel Dwayne Sizemore](#)

I'm thinking that Adam's "age" did not start until "the fall." He could have been in the garden for thousands of years before he had sinned, perhaps even a long time before Eve. He named all the animals after all. There was no reason to count his years until he had sinned and took on death as it were. Just a thought. God Bless and keep reading His Eternal Word!

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

**that God created the world literally in six 24-hour-day increments?” And  
“How old is the planet earth?”**

The planet earth is estimated by modern scientist to be 4.5 billion years old. Meanwhile, the *Holy Bible* says that man was created on the sixth day of Creation. Is it therefore plausible to reconcile scientific data from modern science regarding the age of the earth with the *Holy Bible*'s six-day description of Creation, through redefining the word “day” to mean a “figurative” but unknown time-span? Under this hypothesis, God would have taken a much longer period of time than 6 consecutive 24-hour days (perhaps nearly 1 billion years to complete each “day” of His creation), but even where “day” is defined to mean one 24-hour period of time, there is no reason to conclude that the six days of creation in *Genesis* were consecutive days, or whether there was long period of “time” in between each “day” of creation:

**FIRST COMBINATION OF DAYS:**

Day One of Creation: 0.9 billion years

Day Two of Creation: 0.9 billion years

Day Three of Creation: 0.9 billion years

Day Four of Creation: 0.9 billion years

Day Five of Creation: 0.9 billion years

Day Six of Creation: 6,000 to 10,000 years ago

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**SECOND COMBINATION OF DAYS:**

- 4.5 billion years elapsed before the formless, voided Earth was formed,  
and then:

Day One of Creation: 1 thousand years

Day Two of Creation: 1 thousand years

Day Three of Creation: 1 thousand years

Day Four of Creation: 1 thousand years

Day Five of Creation: 1 thousand years

Day Six of Creation: 6,000 to 10,000 years ago

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### **THIRD COMBINATION OF DAYS:**

- God created the earth, Adam, and Eve in six, 24-hour days;
- Adam and Eve lived in complete perfection in the Garden of Eden for an **unrecorded period of timeless eternity**, (equivalent to 4.5 billion years or longer), which explains the current scientific age of the planet earth<sup>38</sup>;
- But after the Fall of Adam and Eve, time began to run; and Adam lived 930 years, 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. After the Fall, world history as we know it commenced, through a series of births and deaths; and,

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<sup>38</sup> **Theory of Timeless Perfection before the Fall:** This theory is based upon the conclusion that Adam and Eve lived in eternal bliss before the Fall, and that they did not begin to “age,” or to die, until after the Fall. Hence, the 930 years that Adam which lived, as recorded in Gen. 5:5, **would not have begun until after the Fall**. See, e.g., the following blog:



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- No more than six to ten thousand years have elapsed since the death of Adam and Eve, and the commencement of human history as mortal beings.
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#### **FOURTH COMBINATION OF DAYS:**

- 4.5 billion years elapsed before the formless, voided Earth was formed, and then:

Day One of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

Day Two of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

Day Three of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

Day Four of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

Day Five of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

Day Six of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day, 6,000 to 10,000 years ago

This calculation would explain the age of the earth, but not the age of the animal or human fossil remains purported as millions of years old.

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#### **FIFTH COMBINATION OF DAYS:**

- trillion years elapsed before the formless, voided Earth was formed, and then:

Day One of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

- 0.9 billion years elapse

Day Two of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

- 0.9 billion years elapse

Day Three of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

- 0.9 billion years elapse

Day Four of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

- 0.9 billion years elapse

Day Five of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day

- 0.9 billion years elapse

Day Six of Creation: 1 24-Hour Day, 6,000 to 10,000 years ago

Day Seven: God rests, 6,000 to 10,000 years have since elapsed

- Here, the word “day” denotes both “a 24-hour day” and “a epochal time period.”

Any number of combinations might be repeated here, ad infinitum. But the point is this: the planet earth would have become roughly about 4.5 billion years old during the process of Creation. On Day 6 of Creation, God created the first man, Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, as stated in the *Holy Bible*. From the time when Adam was created to the time of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden (i.e., the “Fall”), we do not know; but it is possible that Adam and Eve

lived a very long period of unrecorded time.<sup>39</sup> There is not firm orthodox viewpoint on how long Adam remained in the Garden before he first met Eve. Nor is there an orthodox viewpoint on how long Adam and Eve remained in the Garden before the Fall. And we really do not know if Adam and Eve began to grow old or aged at all, prior to the Fall; but it is quite reasonable to conclude they were immortal, perfect beings whose bodies could not “age,” grow old or die, until they had sinned. Therefore, Adam and Eve may have lived several hundred years or several hundred thousand years, before the events leading up to the Fall. According to this theory or hypothesis, human history as we know it today, did not begin until after the Fall of Adam and Eve. Further, this theory or hypothesis holds that no more than roughly six to 10 thousand years have transpired since the Fall of Adam and Eve, and the beginning of human history as we know it today.

Much of this hypothesis is predicated on the definition of the Jewish word “Yom” which means “day” in the English language. However, “yom” has been given several different definitions:

Although *yom* is commonly rendered as day in English translations, the word yom has several literal definitions:<sup>[1]</sup>

- Period of light (as contrasted with the period of darkness),
- **General term for time**
- **Point of time**
- Sunrise to sunset
- Sunset to next sunset
- A year (*in the plural; I Sam 27:7; Ex 13:10, etc.*)
- Time period of unspecified length.
- **A long, but finite span of time - age - epoch - season.**<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> **Theory of Timeless Perfection before the Fall:** This theory is based upon the conclusion that Adam and Eve lived in eternal bliss before the Fall, and that they did not begin to “age,” or to die, until after the Fall. Hence, the 930 years that Adam which lived, as recorded in Gen. 5:5, **would not have begun until after the Fall.** See, e.g., the following blog:



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<sup>40</sup> The meaning of “Yom” as defined in Wikipedia online.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom#:~:text=5%20Further%20reading-,Overview,Point%20of%20time>

A theory that the word “yom” or “day” in the *Book of Genesis* means anything other than a natural 24-hour day must have a scriptural basis, according to the conventional methods of biblical hermeneutics. Under a rule of thumb that “Scripture must interpret Scripture,” many bible interpreters have opined that the word “day” in the *Book of Genesis* does not mean a natural 24-hour day, but rather that “day” means a “general point of time,” a “point of time,” or a “long, but finite span of time, such as an age, epoch, or season.”

**Psalm 90:4:** “For a *thousand years* in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.”

**II Peter 3:8:** “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a *thousand years*, and a thousand years as one day.”

Hence, there is a scriptural basis that the word “day” in the Holy Bible, when interpreted scripturally and in relation to God, may mean 1,000 years. In addition, there is also a scriptural basis that the term “1,000 years” in the Holy Bible, means not literally one thousand years but that it means a “very long time” or “forever.”

**1 Chronicles 16:15-17:** “Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and had confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant....”

There is in the *Book of Matthew* and in the *Book of Revelation* references to the second coming of Christ. There is, then, a theological basis for theory that from the resurrection of Christ up to the Day of Judgment, Christ shall reign through his Church on earth “**a thousand years,**” which means not a literal block of time but rather “**a very long time.**”<sup>41</sup> Hence, a “**day**” with God may simply mean, in spiritual terms, “**a very long time.**”

Moreover, St. Augustine himself says, in *The City of God*, regarding the meaning of the word “day” in the *Book of Genesis*, that “[f]or in these days the morning and evening are counted, until, on the sixth day, all things which God then made were finished, and on the seventh the rest of God was mysteriously and

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<sup>41</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp 725-726 (“What the reign of the saints with Christ for a thousand year is, and how it differs from the eternal kingdom”)

sublimely signalized. **What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say!**"<sup>42</sup>

Not only does Augustine not accept the 24-hour-day as being an accurate description or definition of the word "day" in the *Book of Genesis*, but he opines that the "six days" of creation are "the same day" taken collectively to mean "perfection," meaning that all that God made was "good and very good," and thus perfect. In *The City of God* Augustine opines that the **six days** of Creation in *Genesis* denotes "**perfection**"; and that God's **rest on the seventh day**, after completing all of his creation, denotes "**perfect completeness**":

So is it with all other things—as, the firmament between the water above and below, which was called heaven; the gathering of the waters beneath, and the laying bare the dry land, and the production of plants and trees; the creation of sun, moon, and stars; and of the animals out of the waters, fowls, and fish, and monsters of the deep; and of everything that walks or creeps on the earth, and of man himself, who excels all that is on the earth—all these things are known in one way by the angels in the Word of God, in which they see the eternally abiding causes and reasons according to which they were made, and in another way in themselves; in the former, with a clearer knowledge; in the latter, with a knowledge dimmer, and rather of the bare works than of the design. Yet, **when these works are referred to the praise and adoration of the Creator Himself, it is as if morning dawned in the minds of those who contemplate them....**

These works are recorded to have been **completed in six days** (the same day being six times repeated), because **six is a perfect number**—not because God required a protracted time, as if He could not at once create all things, which then should mark the course of time by the movements proper to them, but **because the perfection of the works was signified by the number six**. For the number six is the first which is made up of its own parts, i.e., of its sixth, third, and half, which are respectively one, two, and three, and which make a total of six.... So much I have thought fit to state up, not twelve, but more, viz. sixteen. So much I have thought fit to state for the sake of illustrating the perfection of the number six, which is, as I said, the

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<sup>42</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 350.



first which is exactly made up of its own parts added together; and in this number of days God finished His work And, therefore, **we must not despise the science of numbers, which, in many passages of holy Scripture, is found to be of eminent service to the careful interpreter.** Neither has it been without reason numbered among God’s praises, ‘Thou has ordered all things in number, and measure, and weight.’ [Citing the *Book of Wisdom*, XI:20].”<sup>43</sup>

But, on **the seventh day** (i.e., the same day repeated seven times, which number is also a perfect one, though for another reason), the rest of God is set forth, and then, too, we first hear of its being hallowed. So that God did not wish to hallow this day by His works, but by His rest, which has no evening, for it is not a creature; so that, being known in one way in the Word of God, and in another in itself, it should make a twofold knowledge, daylight and dusk (day and evening). ... In it is the rest of God, the rest His people find in Him. For **rest is in the whole, i.e., in perfect completeness**, while in the part there is labour. And thus we labour as long as we know in part; ‘but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.’ [1 Cor. 13:10].”<sup>44</sup>

Thus, St. Augustine admonishes bible interpreters to take advantage of “the science of numbers” which has been found to be “of eminent service to the careful interpreter” of the *Holy Bible*,<sup>45</sup> citing the apocryphal *Book of Wisdom*, “‘Thou hast ordered all things in number, and measure, and weight.’”<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, if we consider the **laws of nature**, the “number 6” can be explained mathematically as the first “whole” or “composite” number and as the “first perfect number,” as follows:

A composite number is a positive integer that can be formed by multiplying two smaller positive integers. Equivalently, it is a positive integer that has at least one divisor other than 1 and itself. Every positive integer is composite, prime, or the unit 1, so the composite numbers are exactly the numbers that are not prime and not a unit. In number theory, a perfect number is a positive integer that is equal

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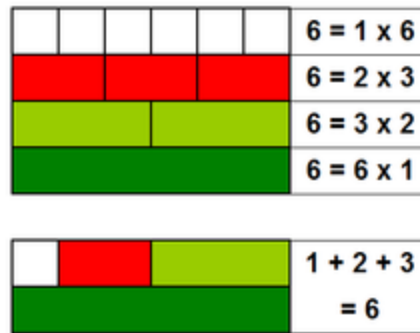
<sup>43</sup> The City of God, pp. 374-375.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 375-376.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

to the sum of its positive divisors, excluding the number itself. For instance, 6 has divisors 1, 2 and 3 (excluding itself), and  $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$ , so 6 is a perfect number. The sum of divisors of a number, excluding the number itself, is called its aliquot sum, so a perfect number is one that is equal to its aliquot sum.<sup>47</sup>



For this reason, even in the ancient world of the Greeks, up to the time when St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) preached, the number 6 was understood to be a whole number that represented perfection. Using the “Greek allegorical” methods of interpretation, the early Church were not loath to adopt many of the same Greek beliefs on numerology to Christian biblical hermeneutical interpretations of the *Holy Bible*:

The number six has been quite considered by the Greeks, and even by the ancient Greeks themselves, as **the whole number**. They argued that six is the sum of their divisions: 1, 2, 3 (not including himself):  $6 = 1 + 2 + 3$ . The next perfect number is 28, since  $28 = 1 + 2 + 4 + 7 + 14$ . Currently, according to the Bible, this is a **perfect imperfection number**. Man occupies the highest place among created lives. God created several lives in ascending order in six days.

Creation reached a peak on the sixth day because, on this day, God created a man according to his image and likeness. The highest of created lives would be perfect if it remained alone in the universe without being compared to others. The light of a candle would be perfect if the sunlight never shone. When the man was placed in front of the tree of life, Only when man accepts Christ as his personal Savior and His life, then is he completed in him. In Job 5:19, we read: “In six tribulations he will deliver you, and in the seventh, he will not be touched by evil.” “Six

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<sup>47</sup> “Perfect number,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfect\\_number#:~:text=In%20number%20theory%2C%20a%20perfect,6%20is%20a%20perfect%20number.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfect_number#:~:text=In%20number%20theory%2C%20a%20perfect,6%20is%20a%20perfect%20number.)

tribulations” is already too much for us; it represents “excess tribulations.” However, the power of God’s deliverance never manifests itself as greatly as when tribulations reach their perfect measure: seven.

Boaz’s gift to Ruth: “Six measures of barley” (Rt. 3:15) was, in fact, wonderful. But Boaz was going to do something else: he was going to become Ruth’s redeemer. The union of Boaz and Ruth gave rise to King David, and also, according to the flesh, to someone older than David, to our Lord Jesus. Before that happened, Ruth would marvel at those “six measures of barley,”<sup>48</sup>

Thus, even if we accept the very conservative position that the *Holy Bible* should be read literally, and even if we embrace the doctrine “sola scriptura” or “Scriptures interpret Scripture,” we are still left with the possibility, and the likely probability, that the word “yom” or “day” in Genesis does not mean a 24-hour day, but rather “yom” or “day” means an indeterminate block of time. Great theologians have taken different positions. For example, Luther and Calvin and many of the great Protestant divines held to the position that God created the world in six 24-hour days. However, the intellectual founding father of these Protestant Reformers, St. Augustine of Hippo, did not reach that conclusion, holding that the word “day” in the *Book of Genesis* simply could not be interpreted with precise definition. I believe that Augustine was right, not because the position of modern science is that the planet earth is 4.5 billion years old, but because the science of numerology, which the *Holy Bible* explicitly embraces in its various prophetic interpretations, is an express hermeneutical technique that must be used when interpreting the *Scriptures*.

### C. HOW OLD IS THE PLANET EARTH, AND DOES THAT REALLY MATTER?

The Christian Church should not concern itself with the whether the planet earth is old or young, because the arguments of modern science are clearly no mortal threat to the spiritual, universal truths contained in the *Book of Genesis*. Nevertheless, it is the duty of Christian apologists to sensibly and reasonably answer the objections of modern scientists. Indeed, the challenge to the conventional wisdom of the *Holy Bible*, that the earth is perhaps no older than about 10,000 years (i.e., the “young earth theory”), is not new or unique to modern times. For it is often repeated, many times, that only when the Enlightenment

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.redargentina.com/biblical-and-spiritual-significance-of-number-6/>

dawned in the late eighteenth century, did men began to question the “young earth” theory espoused in the *Holy Bible*. Indeed, in *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo had to defend the Church’s position that the creation of humans (*not the earth*) was certainly no older than about 6,000 years:

Let us, then, omit the conjectures of men who know not what they say, when they speak of the nature and origin of the human race....They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though, reckoning by the sacred writings, **we find that not 6000 years have yet passed....**<sup>49</sup>

In vain, then, do some babble with most empty presumption, saying that Egypt has understood the reckoning of the stars for more than a hundred thousand years. For in what books have they collected that number who learned letters from Isis their mistress, not much more than two thousand years ago? Varro, who has declared this, is no small authority in history, and it does not disagree with the truth of the divine books. **For as it is not yet six thousand years since the first man, who is called Adam, are not those to be ridiculed rather than refuted who try to persuade us of anything regarding a space of time so different from, and contrary to, the ascertained truth?** For what historian of the past should we credit more than him who has also predicated things to come which we now see fulfilled? And the very disagreement of the historians among themselves furnishes a good reason why we ought rather to believe him who does not contradict the divine history which we hold. But, on the other hand, the citizens of the impious city, scattered everywhere through the earth, when they read the most learned writers, none of whom seems to be of contemptible authority, and find them disagreeing among themselves about affairs most remote from the memory of our age, cannot find out whom they ought to trust. But we, being sustained by divine authority in the history of our religion, have no doubt that whatever is opposed to it is most false, whatever may be the case regarding other things in **secular books, which, whether true or false, yield nothing of moment to our living rightly and happily.**<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 390.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 648.

It may be safe to conclude that Augustine’s theological system is as follows:

**Table 1. St. Augustine of Hippo’s calculation of the Age of the Earth and Humans**

<p><b>Age of the Planet Earth</b></p>	<p>Created in Six Days; but each “day” as mentioned in the Book of Genesis could be a Thousand Years or More</p> <p>The age of the earth is therefore unknown</p>
<p><b>Age of Human Beings (i.e., mankind)</b></p>	<p>6,000 years, as of the year 400-430 AD</p>

Hence, there is within Augustine’s general conception of the Creation a bifurcated approach: with respect to the creation of the earth, Augustine allows for what might be termed an “old earth” theory; but with regards to the creation of human beings, Augustine remained theologically conservative, holding that Adam (i.e., the first man) was created no more than 6,000 years ago.<sup>51</sup>

Today, the secular science community almost universally hold that the earth is about 4.5 billion years old.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, secular historians almost universally hold that the history of human civilization extends back no further than 10,000 years ago.<sup>53</sup> Augustine of Hippo’s catholic theology does not directly refute these secular views. Indeed, for it was not until fourteen centuries later when modern science began to interpose the proposition that (a) human beings were at least 4 million years old and that (b) they “evolved” over time through a process of

<sup>51</sup> There is some confusion regarding the actual theology of St. Augustine on Creation. See, e.g., “Augustine on the Days of Creation,” <https://answersingenesis.org/days-of-creation/augustine-on-the-days-of-creation/>. However, I believe that Augustine’s theology **on the creation of human beings** to be very distinct from his theology **on the creation of the earth itself** (including sun, the moon, and the stars, etc.). He believed firmly that man was created only about 6,000 from the time in which he lived; but he gave no such numerical estimates regarding the creation of the earth.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., “How Old is Earth?” <https://www.space.com/24854-how-old-is-earth.html#:~:text=By%20dating%20the%20rocks%20in,range%20of%2050%20million%20years.>

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., “Human History,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_history#:~:text=Sumer%2C%20located%20in%20Mesopotamia%2C%20is,scrupt%2C%20appeared%20around%203000%20BCE.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_history#:~:text=Sumer%2C%20located%20in%20Mesopotamia%2C%20is,scrupt%2C%20appeared%20around%203000%20BCE.)

“natural selection” did the Christian Church began to insist upon the orthodox dogma on the Creation.<sup>54</sup> Thus came Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) which revolutionized mankind’s ideas about both the of the earth and the origins of the human species. According to Darwin, humans and animals may have evolved over

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<sup>54</sup> “*On the Origin of Species* (or, more completely, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*), published on 24 November 1859, is a work of scientific literature by **Charles Darwin** which is considered to be the foundation of evolutionary biology. Darwin's book introduced the scientific theory that populations evolve over the course of generations through a process of natural selection. The book presented a body of evidence that the diversity of life arose by common descent through a branching pattern of evolution. Darwin included evidence that he had collected on the *Beagle* expedition in the 1830s and his subsequent findings from research, correspondence, and experimentation.

“Various evolutionary ideas had already been proposed to explain new findings in biology. There was growing support for such ideas among dissident anatomists and the general public, **but during the first half of the 19th century the English scientific establishment was closely tied to the Church of England, while science was part of natural theology.** Ideas about the transmutation of species were controversial as they conflicted with the beliefs that species were unchanging parts of a designed hierarchy and that humans were unique, unrelated to other animals. The political and theological implications were intensely debated, but transmutation was not accepted by the scientific mainstream.

“The book was written for non-specialist readers and attracted widespread interest upon its publication. As Darwin was an eminent scientist, his findings were taken seriously and the evidence he presented generated scientific, philosophical, and religious discussion. The debate over the book contributed to the campaign by T. H. Huxley and his fellow members of the X Club to secularise science by promoting scientific naturalism. Within two decades there was widespread scientific agreement that evolution, with a branching pattern of common descent, had occurred, but scientists were slow to give natural selection the significance that Darwin thought appropriate. During "the eclipse of Darwinism" from the 1880s to the 1930s, various other mechanisms of evolution were given more credit. With the development of the modern evolutionary synthesis in the 1930s and 1940s, Darwin's concept of evolutionary adaptation through natural selection became central to modern evolutionary theory, and it has now become the unifying concept of the life sciences.

“Darwin's theory of evolution is based on key facts and the inferences drawn from them, which biologist Ernst Mayr summarised as follows:<sup>[6]</sup>

- Every species is fertile enough that if all offspring survived to reproduce, the population would grow (fact).
- Despite periodic fluctuations, populations remain roughly the same size (fact).
- Resources such as food are limited and are relatively stable over time (fact).
- A struggle for survival ensues (inference).
- Individuals in a population vary significantly from one another (fact).
- Much of this variation is heritable (fact).
- Individuals less suited to the environment are less likely to survive and less likely to reproduce; individuals more suited to the environment are more likely to survive and more likely to reproduce and leave their heritable traits to future generations, which produces the process of natural selection (fact).
- This slowly effected process results in populations changing to adapt to their environments, and ultimately, these variations accumulate over time to form new species (inference).”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On\\_the\\_Origin\\_of\\_Species#:~:text=On%20the%20Origin%20of%20Species%20\(or%2C%20more%20completely%2C%20On,the%20foundation%20of%20evolutionary%20biology.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Origin_of_Species#:~:text=On%20the%20Origin%20of%20Species%20(or%2C%20more%20completely%2C%20On,the%20foundation%20of%20evolutionary%20biology.)

millions of years from the same source, and that the reasons for that some species of plants and animals thrive and others go into extinction is due to a form of natural law called “natural selection.” Darwin, an Englishman who lived in Great Britain, became an affront to the Church of England. A few Anglican clerics were receptive to Darwin’s ideas, however, and the establish church, in light of Darwin’s discoveries, began to revisit the *Book of Genesis* and its orthodox dogma about creation. Their influence upon Darwin was noticeable, for in the second edition of *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin explicitly tied the evolutionary process to “its Creator.” A few liberal theologians within the Church of England were open, at least in part, to some of Darwin’s theories:

The book [*On the Origin of Species*] produced a wide range of religious responses at a time of changing ideas and increasing secularisation. The issues raised were complex and there was a large middle ground. Developments in geology meant that there was little opposition based on a literal reading of Genesis, but defence of the argument from design and natural theology was central to debates over the book in the English-speaking world.

**Natural theology was not a unified doctrine**, and while some such as Louis Agassiz were strongly opposed to the ideas in the book, others sought a reconciliation in which evolution was seen as purposeful. In the Church of England, some liberal clergymen interpreted natural selection as an instrument of God's design, with the cleric Charles Kingsley seeing it as "just as noble a conception of Deity". In the second edition of January 1860, Darwin quoted Kingsley as "a celebrated cleric", and added the phrase "by the Creator" to the closing sentence, which from then on read "life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one". While some commentators have taken this as a concession to religion that Darwin later regretted, Darwin's view at the time was of God creating life through the laws of nature, and even in the first edition there are several references to "creation". Baden Powell praised "Mr Darwin's masterly volume [supporting] the grand principle of the self-evolving powers of nature". In America, **Asa Gray argued that evolution is the secondary effect, or *modus operandi*, of the first cause, design, and published a pamphlet defending the book in terms of theistic evolution, *Natural Selection is not inconsistent with Natural Theology*. Theistic evolution became a popular compromise,**

and St. George Jackson Mivart was among those accepting evolution but attacking Darwin's naturalistic mechanism. Eventually it was realised that supernatural intervention could not be a scientific explanation, and **naturalistic mechanisms** such as neo-Lamarckism **were favoured over natural selection** as being more compatible with purpose.

Even though the book did not explicitly spell out Darwin's beliefs about human origins, **it had dropped a number of hints about human's animal ancestry and quickly became central to the debate, as mental and moral qualities were seen as spiritual aspects of the immaterial soul, and it was believed that animals did not have spiritual qualities.** This conflict could be reconciled by supposing there was some supernatural intervention on the path leading to humans, or viewing evolution as a purposeful and progressive ascent to mankind's position at the head of nature. While many conservative theologians accepted evolution, **Charles Hodge argued in his 1874 critique "What is Darwinism?" that "Darwinism", defined narrowly as including rejection of design, was atheism** though he accepted that Asa Gray did not reject design. Asa Gray responded that this charge misrepresented Darwin's text. **By the early 20th century, four noted authors of *The Fundamentals* were explicitly open to the possibility that God created through evolution,** but fundamentalism inspired the American creation–evolution controversy that began in the 1920s.

Some conservative Roman Catholic writers and influential Jesuits opposed evolution in the late 19th and early 20th century, but other Catholic writers, starting with Mivart, **pointed out that early Church Fathers had not interpreted Genesis literally in this area. The Vatican stated its official position in a 1950 papal encyclical, which held that evolution was not inconsistent with Catholic teaching.**

In 19<sup>th</sup>-century British high-society and secular political circles, the Tory politician and novelist Benjamin Disraeli, who later become Prime Minister, satirized the new Darwinian science, as follows:

In 1845 the Disraelis had encountered *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, published anonymously by Robert Chambers the year



before. ‘Dizzy is enchanted with it,’ Mary Anne had reported. A precursor to Darwin’s *Origins of the Species*, it was much discussed—in religious circles only with outrage—and Disraeli satirized its reception as Lady Constance explains its gist.

‘Everything is explained by geology and astronomy, and in this way. It shows you exactly how a star is formed; nothing can be so pretty! A cluster of vapour, the cream of the Milky Way, a sort of celestial cheese, churned into light, you must read it, ‘tis charming.’  
‘Nobody ever saw a star formed,’ Tancred retorts.

But, Lady Constance goes on, what is most interesting of all is the explanation of man’s development. ‘The principle is perpetually going on... First there was nothing; then there was something; then, I forget the next. I think there were shells, then fishes; then we came, let me see, did we come next? Never mind that, we came at last. And the next change will be something very superior to us, something with wings. Ah! That’s it: we were fishes and I believe we shall be crows.’

‘I do not believe I ever was a fish,’ insists Tancred.

It is all proved, Lady Constance continues. It is scientific and beyond contradiction. ‘You see exactly how everything is made; how many worlds there have been; how long they lasted; what went before, what comes next. We are a link in the chain, as inferior animals were that preceded us: we in turn shall be inferior; all that will remain of us will be some relics in ... red sandstone. This is development. We had fins; we may have wings.’...

It became a political, rather than a scientific, statement when, in Oxford, in 1864, Disraeli quipped about the contradictions between evolution and faith, ‘**The question is this; is man an ape or an angel? My Lords, I am on the side of the angels.**’<sup>55</sup>

In October 2020, I had the privilege of interviewing Dr. Kenneth Talbot, who was then President of Whitfield College and Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church, about Darwin’s two landmark books, *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*, as follows:

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<sup>55</sup> Stanleyh Weintraub, *Disraeli: A Biography* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Group, 1993), pp. 260-261.

Q. What do you make of Charles Darwin's "Descent of Man" and "Origin of Species"? Does the "Fall of Man" and the unleashing of "Sin" in Nature explain the "theory of natural selection?"

A. Brother, I think Darwin was a fool and he was trying to erase the hands of God from creation. The Bible teaches us that “all things are held together by the power of His thought.” Darwin was a naturalistic racist! Hitler was a Darwinian racist and stated his argument in his book [*Mein Kampf*] wherein he states “what great nation among Africans have demonstrated the Arian nations commitment to advance their people?” It was his way of saying, some nationalities deserve to serve other people [as slaves]. Why? That is what they were made for in the view of natural selection! I reject all forms of racism and especially any view that does not understand the sovereignty of God in human history. Life and survival is not based on mechanistic natural selection, but totally upon God and His teleological purpose in human history.<sup>56</sup>

Hence, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the movement known as “Social Darwinism” thus became the basis of several pseudo-scientific theories about the superiority of certain races over other races, and these theories were promoted in the world’s leading universities, such as Harvard and Yale.<sup>57</sup> Today, the orthodox Christian Church believes that Social Darwinism is not only an anti-Christ philosophy, but that it led naturally to a world order that was built upon race superiority, imperialism, and Apartheid. The orthodox Christian Church also believes that the results of Social Darwinism were two world wars, an untold number of skirmishes and anti-imperial wars in developing nations, and systematic wage exploitation among all races and nationalities, but particularly in the developing world.

Finally, the orthodox Christian Churches of the world believe that the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, when properly interpreted in accord with conventional hermeneutical standards (whether allegorically or literally) clearly teach that human beings were made in God’s image; that they are equal in dignity and

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<sup>56</sup> Interview of Dr. Kenneth Talbot, President of Whitfield College and Theological Seminary (October 2, 2020).

<sup>57</sup> In his book *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, Dr. Du Bois noted his experiences while a graduate student at Harvard during the early 1890s, where inside of one of its museums was a display of a human skull, a Negro skull, and the skull of a chimpanzee: the Negro skull ranked below that of “human” but just above that of a monkey. Thus was the movement known as “Social Darwinism” during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. See, e.g., Social Darwinism: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_Darwinism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Darwinism)

humanity; that their natural and inalienable rights are derived from God alone; and that all forms of slavery (with the exception of having been duly convicted in the law courts in accordance with due process) is un-Christian, immoral, and unnatural. The orthodox Christian Churches do not shirk or equivocate in saying that the eighteenth movement for the natural “Rights of Man” and twentieth century movement for “International Human Rights” were derived fundamentally from Christian biblical hermeneutics regarding the origins, essence and dignity of all of humanity. At the end of the day, Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection and evolution do not annul the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, or Christ’s Law of Love.

## CONCLUSION

Where the theologian says “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” and where the scientist says “the earth began roughly 4.5 billion years ago,” insofar as these two statements are truthful, they do not contradict one another. Moreover, where the *Holy Bible* itself says that God “created the world in six days”; that a “day with the LORD” is like “a thousand years”; and that “a thousand years” is like unto an unspecified but very long time span, insofar as these three statements are truthful, they do not contradict one another.<sup>58</sup> Notwithstanding, we must come to see that the *Holy Bible’s* theology of Creationism still has the upper hand far and above our current knowledge of modern science. For one thing, even though modern science has significantly improved the human standard of living, it has not fundamentally changed the spiritual and moral terms of the human condition. The *Golden Rule* has not been altered or scientifically disproven as the universal standard human behavior for all times and places, and neither can it be. We might argue that “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest” has been, and can be, avidly demonstrated when we examine animal life, but this has never been shown to be a valid maxim for human beings. Much of the purpose of the history contained in the *Holy Bible* is designed to demonstrate this very point that the *Golden Rule* is the law of God and humanity. Indeed, universal human reason and experience (both Christian and non-Christian) have bolstered the *Holy Bible’s* most fundamental presumptions about the dignity and worth of the most vulnerable, weakest members of the human family: **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”**

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<sup>58</sup> I have reached this theological conclusion, utilizing the most conservative hermeneutical standards of the Reformed Church, namely, “Solo Scriptura” and “Scriptures interpret Scriptures.”

**THE END**

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