

## Biblical Reasons to Doubt Justin Taylor's:

### “Biblical Reasons to Doubt the Creation Days Were 24-Hour Periods.”<sup>1</sup>

By Robert Sungenis

**R. Sungenis:** Justin Taylor, Ph.D. is the executive vice-president of book publishing and book publisher for Crossway and blogs at *Between Two Worlds*. His contribution to the issue of how to interpret Genesis 1 is that he is advocating a modern Reformed Protestant position that Genesis does not teach a specific chronology of creation and does not give us a specific calendar that leads from Adam to Christ.

Besieged by what these Reformed theologians see as “difficulties” of the text of Genesis, they have more or less thrown in the towel, giving up the belief that Genesis 1-2 gives us an accurate day-by-day description of what occurred. Even though Moses, who wrote Genesis and did so by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*cf.* Deut 31:24; 2Tim 3:16), gave us a specific chronology of both the creation and the genealogy that leads directly to Christ, these theologians have decided that the numbers of the Bible (*e.g.*, Genesis 1:3: “and there was evening and morning the first day” and “Adam lived 130 years and had a son named Seth, and Adam lived 800 years after...”) are somehow not as trustworthy as the prose of the Bible.

Since the Bible's numbers exclude us from accepting much of modern science's claims from cosmogony, cosmology, paleontology, archeology, physics and chemistry that the Earth is billions of years old but which many of these theologians have either accepted in part or in whole, the only thing they believe can bridge the gap is to rework the Genesis text to allow the long ages that modern science teaches. In this way, they hope to make it appear that Genesis is not speaking literally and chronologically, even though, ostensibly, the Genesis text is doing both. Their methods are often very subtle and very clever, but in the end I will show you that they are very specious and very wrong.

Rest assured, it is not only “Reformed theologians” who have tried to make the Bible say something different than what the text actually says. “Reformed Catholics,” if you will, are just as guilty. If you pick up almost any popular Catholic Bible today (*e.g.*, the New American Bible), the footnotes will try to convince you that what you are reading in the text of Genesis either didn't actually occur or that only a very little actually occurred. In a word, they attempt to empty the Genesis text of its painstaking attention to numerical detail and turn it into mere poetic expressions that really aren't specific about much at all. They do so for the same reason the “Reformed Protestants” do so – to make room for the theory of evolution, either for themselves,

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<sup>1</sup> January 28, 2015: <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2015/01/28/biblical-reasons-to-doubt-the-creation-days-were-24-hour-periods/>

or, if they don't believe in evolution, for their colleagues who do believe it. In this compromise everyone can be happy and few will be excluded. If you read Justin Taylor's website, this ecumenical approach is his ultimate goal. In the end, it is just another of the many attempts to water down the Bible so that men of different beliefs can join together. Rest assured, however it is the greatest sin of our times.

**Taylor:** R. C. Sproul, who drafted the original Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy, once said, "When people ask me how old the earth is, I tell them I don't know—because I don't." Contrary to what is often implied or claimed by young-earth creationists, the Bible nowhere directly teaches the age of the earth.

**R. Sungenis:** It is quite apropos that Taylor cites R. C. Sproul, but not for the reasons that Taylor is trying to convey. R. C. Sproul, one of the most respected and popular "Reformed" theologians of our day, has come to a point in his life in which he denies almost everything that Taylor writes in this paper. Let's go right to the horse's mouth to find out how and why. Below are the most recent words from Dr. Sproul on how to interpret the Genesis text. Notice that he says the same thing I said above, namely, that there have been recent attempts to rearrange the words of Genesis so that theologians can teach something quite opposite than what Genesis actually says:

In our time a considerable number of theories have arisen denying that the creation, as we know it, took place in twenty-four hour days. Common to these theories is the acceptance of the dominant scientific view that the earth and life on it are very old. Many consider the biblical account to be primitive, mythological, and untenable in light of modern scientific knowledge...This crisis has resulted in several attempts to reinterpret the Genesis account of creation.<sup>2</sup>

**R. Sungenis:** That's not all Dr. Sproul has to say. The next statement is a real barn burner – something that should shake the whole "Reformed" movement to its knees:

For most of my teaching career, I considered the framework hypothesis to be a possibility. But I have now changed my mind. I now hold to a literal six-day creation, the fourth alternative and the traditional one. Genesis says that God created the universe and everything in it in six twenty-four-hour periods. According to the Reformation hermeneutic, the first option is to follow the plain sense of the text. One must do a great

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-rc-sprouls-position-creation/>

deal of hermeneutical gymnastics to escape the plain meaning of Genesis 1-2. The confession makes it a point of faith that God created the world in the space of six days.<sup>3</sup>

**R. Sungenis:** So, the very first person that Taylor quotes in his paper has rejected the very thesis that Taylor advocates in his paper. My guess is that Taylor either didn't realize that Sproul had changed his mind, or he purposely cherry-picked from this very popular theologian to give the impression to his reader that Sproul was on Taylor's side. In either case, we have some shoddy research taking place, and you will see later that this is not the only shoddy research in Taylor's paper.

But while we are on the subject of R. C. Sproul, let me also make it known that Sproul himself has some cob webs remaining in his understanding of Genesis and the Bible that need to be cleared away. Perhaps it may be the case that the now old and wise Dr. Sproul will someday change his mind on the following issue as well. In the same website article, Sproul says this:

We are reminded of the sixteenth century, when Copernicus and his followers repudiated the old Ptolemaic view of astronomy. They argued that the center of the solar system is not the earth (geocentricity), but the sun (heliocentricity). It was a sad chapter in the history of the church, which had believed for more than fifteen hundred years that the Bible teaches geocentricity, when it condemned Galileo for believing and teaching heliocentricity. Both Luther and Calvin opposed Copernicus's views, believing them to undermine Scripture's authority.

Actually the Bible does not explicitly teach geocentricity anywhere. Scripture describes the movements of the heavens from the perspective of someone standing on earth: the sun moves across the sky, rising in the east and setting in the west. We use that same language today. The church thought that because the Bible uses this kind of descriptive language, it was therefore teaching something about the relationship between the sun and the earth. This is a clear case of scientific knowledge correcting the church's interpretation of the Bible.

**R. Sungenis:** As you know, I could spend weeks showing Dr. Sproul that just as he was deceived into thinking, for decades, that the "Framework" interpretation of Genesis 1 was correct and that the literal interpretation was wrong; if he opens his mind just a little more he will find that the "Copernican" interpretation of Genesis is wrong and the literal interpretation is correct. But I don't have time to go into those proofs in this paper. My focus will be on Justin Taylor's views. If any of you want to learn of how I would refute Dr. Sproul's advocacy of Copernicus,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-rc-sprouls-position-creation>. At the end of Sproul's words, these are added: "Dr. Sproul has also made a point of highlighting Dr. Douglas Kelly's book, *Creation and Change*, as formative in his position on the subject of Creation."

you can read the dozen or so books I've written on the topic, or watch our movies, *The Principle* and *Journey to the Center of the Universe*.

As to Dr. Taylor's contention above that "Contrary to what is often implied or claimed by young-earth creationists, the Bible nowhere directly teaches the age of the earth," by the same token, the Bible nowhere "directly teaches" the Trinity, or the two separate and distinct natures of Christ, or the two separate and distinct wills of Christ. As a matter of fact, the Bible doesn't "directly teach" that we are justified by "faith alone," since the only time the Bible uses the phrase is when justification by faith alone is negated (James 2:24), but somehow R. C. Sproul and Justin Taylor extract a "justified by faith alone" teaching out of the Bible. I'm sure you get my drift. What Dr. Sproul and Dr. Taylor should have said is that the Bible *indirectly teaches* the age of the Earth, at least for those who are willing to take the Bible's numbers at face value.

For example, the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11, along with help from Chronicles, trace the lineage of Christ back to Adam by giving us the exact years each patriarch died and when his successor was born. In other words, Genesis is giving us a chronological calendar of history. Although there are a few minor discrepancies among the Hebrew Masoretic, the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch texts, these three texts bring us to no more than 4000 or 5000 BC as the creation date of Adam. So, at the least, if Dr. Sproul wanted to give a ballpark figure to his inquirer, he could have said "the Earth is 6000 or 7000 years old." Or, he could have said that the three texts would give us dates of 4,185 BC (Masoretic text), 5,290 BC (the Septuagint text), or 4,265 BC (the Samaritan Pentateuch), respectively, for the creation of Adam.<sup>4</sup> With a little more work, we should be able to zero in on the correct year.

**Taylor:** Rather, it is a deduction from a combination of beliefs, such as (1) [Genesis 1:1](#) is not the actual act of creation but rather a summary of or title over [Genesis 1:2-2:3](#);

**R. Sungenis:** Not necessarily. First, let me say that the view that holds Genesis 1:1 as a title is because using the first sentence as a title was a common device in Hebrew literature. That Genesis 1:1 is a title may be especially possible since the verse does not begin with the regular phrasing of "And God said, let there be..." as do the remaining sections of Genesis 1.

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<sup>4</sup> See my book, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11*, "The Date of Adam," pp. 370ff. The dating depends on: (1) which text is the most accurate. In this case, the Hebrew Masoretic text is the one understood to be divinely inspired, although the difficulty is that its extant copies are from the late first millennium AD and post-date the Septuagint by over a thousand years; (2) how to get the correct number for three time spans in the Old Testament: The choice among 976, 975 or 931 BC for the beginning date of the division of Solomon's monarchy into Israel and Judah; the choice between 573 or 480 years as the time span between the laying of the foundation of the Temple in the 4th year of Solomon's reign and the departure of Israel from Egypt; the choice among 430, 215 or 239 years as the time span that Israel was in Egypt. The importance of this feature becomes evident in the fact that Bishop Ussher (whom Sproul mentions on the above website) chose 239 years as the amount of time the Israelites spent in Egypt, instead of 430 years. This was one issue that made him arrive at 4004 BC instead of 4185 BC as the year of Adam's creation. (3) the choice among an ancestral, paternal, or partial paternal genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11.

Be that as it may, even if Genesis 1:1 was not titular, this does nothing to advance Taylor's thesis. If Genesis 1:1 is an indicative statement as to what specifically occurred on the First Day of creation, this would mean that "the heavens" refer to space surrounding the Earth. Once this space is created, it can then be filled with ornamentation on later Days (*e.g.*, firmament, stars, galaxies, planets, quasars, etc.). In this case, the "heavens" of the First Day would essentially be just as "formless and void" as the Earth is said to be in the latter part of Genesis 1:1. Additionally, some hold that "the heavens" of Genesis 1:1 could be an oblique reference to the creation and/or abode of the angels (which implies that the angels were created on the First Day), although we must insist that including the angels in the creation story of Genesis 1 is not a necessity. There are several other books of the Bible that more directly speak of the creation of the angels. The point here is that it doesn't matter whether Genesis 1:1 is a title or not. In either case it is an indicative statement as to what occurred on the First Day and not what occurred on the Second to the Sixth Days.

**Taylor:** (2) the creation week of [Genesis 1:2-2:3](#) is referring to the act of creation itself; (3) each "day" (Heb. *yom*) of the creation week is referring to an 24-hour period of time (reinforced by the statement in [Exodus 20:11](#)); (4) an old-earth geology would necessarily entail macroevolution, hominids, and animal death before the Fall—each of which contradicts what Scripture tells us; and (5) the approximate age of the earth can be reconstructed backward from the genealogical time-markers in Genesis. These five points may all be true, but I think it's helpful to understand that the question "how old is the earth?" is not something directly answered in Scripture but rather deduced from these and other points.

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, many are deduced, but this is because Scripture is not a thinking personality that can connect the dots by itself; rather, it is a revelation of historical facts that need divine and/or human interpretation by those who can reason. By the same token, how does Taylor even know if Genesis is a book of the Bible? He deduces this conclusion from what he believes to be factual information about God's revelation, but there is no verse in the Bible that gives us an infallible list of the canonical books of the Bible (as even R. C. Sproul admits). In the end, the burden of proof is on Taylor if he is going to assert that the Days of Genesis are not to be taken at face value and therefore cannot give an age to the Earth.

**Taylor:** It is commonly suggested that this is such a "plain reading" of Scripture—so obviously clear and true—that the only people who doubt it are those who have been influenced by Charles Darwin and his neo-Darwinian successors. The claim is often made that no one doubted this reading until after Darwin. (This just isn't true—from ancient rabbis to Augustine to B. B. Warfield—but that's another post for another time.)

**R. Sungenis:** The preponderant evidence shows us that the "plain reading" of Genesis is true. The preponderance of rabbis believed in a six 24-hour interpretation of Genesis 1. The preponderance of Church Fathers did likewise. Augustine was the only one who had *two*

interpretations—a literal one and a figurative one—but this was not unusual for Augustine since he often had two, three or even four interpretations to a single verse. But we usually know why Augustine entertained more than one interpretation. It was because he had some extra information that he was trying to fit into the passage that did not necessarily fit. For example, against all the other Fathers, Augustine’s second interpretation of Genesis 1 assumed that the angels should be included. This presumption forced him to fit the angels into a text did not specifically mention angels or even show a need to do so. In another case, Augustine suggested from his reading of the Latin Vulgate of Sirach 18:1 that God made the creation all at once instead over six days. But in this case, Augustine was not privy to the Greek word behind the Vulgate translation (since Augustine was illiterate in Greek until he was an old man), which did not speak of an instantaneous creation but said, of all that was made, God is its creator. More on this later. As for Taylor’s reference to “B. B. Warfield,” he was a die-hard theistic evolutionist, so he obviously is biased in his interpretation of Genesis 1.

**Taylor:** So it may come as a surprise to some contemporary conservatives that some of the great stalwarts of the faith were not convinced of this interpretation.

- Augustine, writing in the early fifth century, noted, “What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible, to determine” (*City of God* 11.7).
- J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), author of the 20th century’s best critique of theological liberalism, wrote, “It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty four hours each.”
- Old Testament scholar Edward J. Young (1907-1968), an eloquent defender of inerrancy, said that regarding the length of the creation days, “That is a question which is difficult to answer. Indications are not lacking that they may have been longer than the days we now know, but the Scripture itself does not speak as clearly as one might like.”
- Theologian Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003), one of the most important theologians in the second half of the twentieth century and a defender of Scriptural clarity and authority, argued that “Faith in an inerrant Bible does not rest on the recency or antiquity of the earth. . . . The Bible does not require belief in six literal 24-hour creation days on the basis of Genesis 1-2. . . . it is gratuitous to insist that twenty-four hour days are involved or intended.”
- Old Testament scholar and Hebrew linguist Gleason Archer (1916-2004), a strong advocate for inerrancy, wrote “On the basis of internal evidence, it is this writer’s conviction that *yôm* in Genesis could not have been intended by the Hebrew author to mean a literal twenty-four hour day.”

**R. Sungenis:** Here is the fact that Dr. Taylor failed to tell you: J. Gresham Machen, Edward J. Young and Carl F. H. Henry were all theistic evolutionists. With that as their presupposition, it is obvious why they wanted to empty Genesis of being a literal six-day account of creation. As

regards Machen (who was the founder of my seminary, Westminster Theological), John Byl (who appears in our movie, *The Principle*) says this:

“...one cannot argue that, since Warfield and Machen were orthodox, we should accept all their teaching. I think it fair to say that Warfield and Machen were generally soundly Reformed. They were great theologians from whom there is still much to learn. Nevertheless, regretfully, they did depart from Scripture in their treatment of evolution. Hence some of their teaching is non-Reformed.”<sup>5</sup>

As for Gleason Archer, he also was a theistic evolutionist, of the “progressive” variety. Here are his own words:

‘From a superficial reading, the impression received is that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four hour days. If this was the true intent of the Hebrew author (a questionable deduction, as will be presently shown), this seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet Earth was created several billion years ago.’<sup>6</sup>

That Dr. Taylor did not make you privy to the fact that each of his aforementioned esteemed witnesses happens to believe in evolution is unconscionable, since he as well as anyone knows that a belief in evolution has been the single greatest cause for attempts to rearrange the Genesis text. Their non-literal interpretation is not a textual issue but is motivated by their philosophical presupposition about the universe’s origins. I’ve been doing this work for 40 years and I have yet to meet a Christian who insisted on interpreting Genesis non-literally who wasn’t an evolutionist or who didn’t sympathize with those who wanted to make room for evolution or long ages.

Actually, it is very easy to interpret the Days of Genesis as 24-hour periods, as all the Church Fathers did. They all realized that the angels don’t need to be accounted for in Genesis 1. As such, this will allow us to see the Light of Genesis 1:3 as Light, instead of seeing it as angels (as Augustine did in his second interpretation). Accordingly, we will not need to say that the Days of Genesis are not literal days but are “contemplations” of the angels (as Augustine did in his second interpretation). All we need do is understand that the very reason the light, sun, moon and stars were created was to “let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years,” as Genesis 1:14 says. What other time would these celestial bodies be keeping if it wasn’t the 24-hour day that they are keeping now, which would also be the same thing that the Light of Genesis 1:3 was doing for the first three days? If Dr. Taylor wants to use “deduction” as his *tour de force*, then let’s “deduce” what is most logically consistent with what we presently know and experience about the sun, moon and stars.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://jgmachen.org/2011/06/06/machen-and-creation-in-six-days/>

<sup>6</sup> Archer, G.L., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Moody, Chicago, p. 187, 1985; <http://creation.com/progressive-creationist-gleason-archer-on-the-obvious-meaning-of-genesis>

Likewise, when each verse of the Days of Genesis ends with the phrase, “and there was evening and morning the blank day,” what kind of evening and morning sequence do we know of other than a 24-hour period? The logical “deduction” is that Genesis 1 is speaking of 24-hour days, since there is no other “day” with that kind of specific description, as even R. C. Sproul finally had to admit. As such, the burden of proof is on the exegete who wants to set aside the literal interpretation of these passages, and it is a huge burden since the text offers him no such relief. So far, the only presumed “proof” that these exegetes bring forth is the modern claim that evolution is true and the Earth is 4.5 billion years old, as we saw in the case of Gleason Archer.

**Taylor:** I want to suggest there are some good, textual reasons—in the creation account itself—for questioning the exegesis that insists on the days as strict 24 hour periods. Am I as certain of this as I am of the resurrection of Christ? Definitely not. But in some segments of the church, I fear that we’ve built an exegetical “fence around the Torah,” fearful that if we question any aspect of young-earth dogmatics we have opened the gate to liberalism. The defenders of inerrancy above show that this is not the case. And a passion for *sola Scriptura* provides us with the humility and willingness to go back to the text again to see if these things are so.

**R. Sungenis:** Dr. Taylor “can question any aspect of young-earth dogmatics” he likes. This is, in fact, how the creation movement grew by leaps and bounds, as it is true of any enterprise. But if he is going to doubt or deny the creation dogmatics, he’d better have a good reason to do so, and his conclusions better be supportable. So far, Dr. Taylor gave us a red herring concerning the “title” of Genesis 1:1; he failed to mention that his esteemed colleagues who see the Days of Genesis 1 non-literally were all evolutionists with an axe to grind; and he failed to tell us that very esteemed R. C. Sproul that he quoted to support him actually denies the very thesis Taylor is trying to push in this paper. We will also see that the “textual reasons” Taylor advances are not textual problems at all but more his inability to exegete the text correctly.

**Taylor:** What follows are brief sketches of biblical reasons to doubt young-earth exegesis.

### 1. [Genesis 1:1](#) Describes the Actual Act of Creation Out of Nothing and Is Not a Title or a Summary

**R. Sungenis:** As I noted earlier, Genesis 1:1 does not have to be titular. Whether it is or isn’t, “the heavens” would refer to outer space that is not yet adorned with the firmament, stars and sun; and the Earth is likewise barren and not furnished with its land, plants and animals. If the heavens are not created on the First Day, then the only other possible time they could be created is on the Second day, when the firmament is created, which are called “the heavens” (Genesis 1:8).

**Taylor:** [Genesis 1:1](#) tells us that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This is not a title or a summary of the narrative that follows. Rather, it is a *background statement* that describes how the universe came to be.

**R. Sungenis:** This is a distinction without a difference. Of course “God created the heavens and the earth” can be considered a “background statement,” but how is that really different from a titular statement? If, as Taylor says, the first sentence of Genesis “describes how the universe came to be,” he must mean that it is referring to the fact that God created it, for there is nothing else that is “described.” But that is precisely what the titular interpretation of Genesis 1:1 is saying, namely, that only God was responsible for bringing into existence the heavens and the earth.

Then, on Day Two, the “heavens” are then filled by the “Firmament.” This is why Moses later calls it “the firmament of the heavens” (Genesis 1:14, 15, 17, 20), using the genitival phrasing wherein one object is placed in or becomes part of another (ברקיע השמים). We would say in English, “the water of the bucket,” or “the air of the balloon.” As such, it is the same reason why Psalm 19:1 says: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork,” since they are treated as two separate entities. Yet their occupation of the same location is the reason why Moses can also call the firmament “heavens,” as in Genesis 1:8 (“And God called the firmament heavens”). Once the firmament fills the space of heaven, then the heavens can be referred to as the “firmament or the heavens.”

We see a similar situation in Genesis 2:1. The verse says: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” This verse indicates that the original “heavens and the earth” were not “finished” with their “hosts” when they were created in Genesis 1:1. Since Genesis 2:1 comes after the six days of creation, we must assume that all the previous six days were for the purpose of “finishing” the heavens and the earth. As such, Day 2’s Firmament, Day 3’s plants, Day 4’s celestial bodies, Day 5’s fish and birds, and Day 6’s man and animals are all the “finishing” of the heavens and the earth. Once again, this confirms that the Firmament was created to fit into the heavens, since it also is part of the “finishing.”

Additionally, in all four uses of the genitival phrase (“the firmament of the heavens”), the article is placed before both “Firmament” and “heavens,” which denotes in Hebrew that the firmament is a separate entity or the *substance* of the heavens.

That “the heavens and the earth” refers only to the frame or outer structure which is then filled with “all its host” is suggested also in 2Maccabees 7:28:

“I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them: and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also.”

...and in Psalm 146:6: "...who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever." Similarly, Isaiah 44:24 affirms that God "makes all things" (Hb: עֲשָׂה כָּל) but then speaks of "the heavens," which he "stretched out," and the earth, which he "spread out," as two items within the "all things."

Incidentally, there is no passage of Scripture which says that the heavens were created first and the earth second (*cf.* 2Kg 19:15; 2Ch 2:12; Ps 121:2 [120:2]; 124:8 [123:8]; 134:3 [133:3]; Is 37:16). The heavens and earth, as stated in the first sentence of Genesis 1:1, affirms they were created together, and after the First Day they both await their complete material constitution in the remaining six days (*cf.* Ex 20:11; 31:17); and both are addressed separately from the material bodies subsequently added to them (*e.g.* Ps 146:6 [145:6]; Ac 4:24; 14:15; Cl 1:16; Ap 10:6; 14:7). This is affirmed again in Genesis 2:1 and 4 in which the creation of "the heavens and the earth" is reversed to say "the earth and the heavens."

**Taylor:** In [Genesis 1:1](#), "created" is in the perfect tense, and when a perfect verb is used at the beginning of a unit in Hebrew narrative, it usually functions to describe an event that precedes the main storyline (see [Gen. 16:1](#), [22:1](#), [24:1](#) for comparison).

**R. Sungenis:** Even if Taylor's analysis of Hebrew perfects were true, it doesn't prove anything for him. That is because if, indeed, the Hebrew perfect tense of בָּרָא (pronounced *bara*, "created") functions to describe an event that precedes the main storyline, well, this is precisely what Genesis 1:1 would be doing if the "heavens" refer to unadorned outer space. As such, the unadorned heavens would be created at the same time the unadorned Earth is created, and there would be no contradiction or chronological anomaly in Genesis 1:1.

Now, let's talk about motivation once again. What is Justin Taylor's real motivation for saying that Genesis 1:1 cannot act as a title for Genesis 1? As we shall see, he wants "the heavens" to stand for *everything*, both the heavens and the adornments of the heavens (sun, stars, moon, etc.). Why? Because if the heavens of the First Day contain the firmament, the sun, moon and stars, this will allow Taylor to claim that Genesis is merely giving us a topological, thematic, or non-chronological description of creation, since Day 4 is superimposed on Day 1 or perhaps some time preceding Day 1.

In turn, Taylor will then tell us that we can likewise superimpose other Days of creation, and the result will be that he totally removes the day-to-day, 24-hour "evening and morning" chronology from the Genesis text. Very clever, but very wrong. No one has the right to superimpose or conflate the Days of Genesis, as even Taylor's mentor, R. C. Sproul discovered. They were written in the exact order they were written for a very good reason.

**Taylor:** Furthermore, the Hebrew conjunction at the beginning of [Genesis 1:2](#) supports this reading.

**R. Sungenis:** Again, it makes little difference whether it does or doesn't since in either case Taylor cannot claim that the creation of "the heavens" in Genesis 1:1 refers to the stars and sun or any other adornment. He has basically trapped himself into a corner.

But let's deal with Taylor's "conjunction," nonetheless. The Hebrew conjunction ו, (pronounced *vav*, the Hebrew letter normally representing "and" but also "but," "then" or "now"), is placed before the noun ארץ ("earth") with its article ה ("the"), properly translated as "and the earth..." in Genesis 1:2. Grammatically, a ו placed before a noun (a disjunctive or explicative *waw*) is for the purpose of explaining a previous statement, having a different purpose than a ו placed before a verb (a consecutive *waw*), the latter denoting a continuing sequence of action. As such, Gn 1:2's *waw*-disjunctive וְהָאָרֶץ ("and the earth") is better understood as an expression equivalent to "now" or "to wit" (namely, "God created...the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty").

We should also remark on the Hebrew verb "was" in the expression "and the earth *was* void and empty..." The Hebrew is הָיְתָה, a verb in the Qal perfect, which denotes that the earth was created in this exact and particular state, not that it progressed to such after a previous series of events, a fact also noted in the use of תָּהוּ וְרֵבָהוּ ("void and empty"), which are simple nouns that do not denote a process.

As an aside, why did God create the earth barren? I think it is because God was sending us a message. Jeremiah 4:23 uses the words "void and empty" of Genesis 1:2 as a symbol of Israel's apostasy. What greater "apostasy" could there be than what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden? They tried to dethrone God and become gods themselves. Since they sinned so early, it was as if man, from the very beginning, was cursed with sin and death. The "Light" (Genesis 1:3) was then sent, which symbolizes Christ, and the water that enveloped the earth and its eventual separation in Genesis 1:6-9, was a symbol of baptism (2Cor 4:4-6). We would then spend the rest of our days building the kingdom as the Days of Genesis built the creation. On the final Day, the 7th Day, we will all rest (Hebrews 4:4-6). This shows us how deep the Bible is. It can give us an actual historical event but it can also use each of these events to represent a marvelous spiritual truth.

**Taylor:** If [Genesis 1:1](#) is merely a title or a summary, then Genesis does not teach creation out of nothing.

**R. Sungenis:** As we have shown, it makes little difference whether Genesis 1:1 is titular or not. If it is a title, it can also be a declarative statement as to how and what God created on the First Day, just as the words "John Went to the Store with Mary," can be a title as well as a brief description what actually occurred. The either/or imposition that Taylor seeks to put on the

opening words of Genesis actually work against him. It would be much better to understand Genesis 1:1 as both a title and an action statement.

**Taylor:** But I think [Genesis 1:1](#) is describing the actual act of God creating “heaven and earth” (a merism for the universe, indicating totality—like “high and low,” “east and west,” “near and far,” “rising up and sitting down,” “seen and unseen”). [Genesis 1:1](#) describes the creation of everything “visible and invisible” ([Col. 1:16](#)), with [Genesis 1:2ff.](#) focusing upon the “visible.”

**R. Sungenis:** If you didn’t notice, this is Taylor’s thesis statement, and he is doing exactly what we suspected. Notice how he wants to make “the heavens and the earth” of Genesis 1:1 to encompass *everything* created. This is because he wants to rid the text of a specific time-sensitive chronology so that he can turn it into mere topics or themes. We already saw the problems with this approach, but here is another.

The opening words of Genesis 1:1 are “In the beginning” (which could also be translated, “In beginning,” since the Hebrew has no article). In any case, this specific phrase puts a time element into the creation of the heavens and the earth so that their creation comes before the creation of the subsequent elements of the narrative. This is precisely how the phrase “In the beginning” is used throughout Scripture. When someone writes, “in the beginning,” it is denoted that there is a first action which is followed by a second, third and other actions, until we finally get to the end of the actions as specified in Genesis 2:1 when we find out that the heavens and the earth were finally “filled with all their hosts.” We would not use “in the beginning” if we wanted a statement devoid of time or sequencing.

**Taylor:** After the act of creation in [Genesis 1:1](#), the main point of the narrative (in [Gen. 1:3-2:3](#)) seems to be the making and preparation of the earth for its inhabitants, with a highly patterned structure of forming and filling.

<b>Location, Formation, Division</b>	<b>Inhabitants, Filling, Multiplication</b>
1. Light and dark	4. Lights of day and night
2. Sea and sky	5. Fish and birds
3. Land of earth	6. Animals and humans

**R. Sungenis:** We see that Taylor is now revealing what “topics” or “themes” he wants to impose on Genesis 1 (after, of course, he has dispensed with the actual chronology).

**Taylor: 2. The Earth, Darkness, and Water Are Created Before “The First Day”**

In [Genesis 1:1](#), God creates the “heavens and the earth.” (In [Joel 3:15-16](#) we see that “heavens” encompasses the sun, the moon, and the stars.)

**R. Sungenis:** Notice how Taylor slips Joel 3:15-16 into the discussion without a rationale as to how he justifies using a totally different context to interpret the historical context of Genesis 1:1. Be that as it may, Joel 3:15-16 actually speaks against Taylor's thesis (which thesis is to claim that "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 already includes the sun and stars of Genesis 1:14). Let's look at the passage:

15) The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. 16) And the Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

So, what Taylor has done is conflate these two verses into one event, that is, Taylor holds that "the heavens" are actually the sun, moon and stars. But what he didn't notice (or ignored) is that the sun, moon and stars are treated differently than the heavens and the earth. In verse 15, the sun, moon and stars are said to "withdraw their shining," but the heavens and earth are said to "shake." These are two different phenomena. That's because they are two separate groups of entities that perform different functions. This performing of different functions is precisely why Genesis 1:1 must start with a naked heavens and naked earth and then build into them the other elements of creation. Suffice it to say, no exegete in his right mind would use Joel 3:15-16 as a proof text for the thesis that "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 must mean that they include the sun and stars. It is called a "conflation of texts," among other things. Be that as it may, what other scriptural proofs does Taylor present to support his thesis? Apparently, Joel 3:15-16 is the only possible one. That tells us that, most likely, Taylor can find no other verses to support his contention.

**Taylor:** Then in [Genesis 1:2](#) we are told that this earth that was created is without form and void, that darkness covers the waters, and that the Spirit is hovering over it. If [Genesis 1:1](#) is *not* the act of creation, then where do the earth, the darkness, and the waters come from that are referred to in [Genesis 1:2](#) before God's first fiat?

**R. Sungenis:** As we saw already, Genesis 1:2 is not God's first fiat. Genesis 1:1 is. It is Genesis 1:1 which uses the word "created," not Genesis 1:2. The words in Genesis 1:2 merely tell us the barren condition that God created the earth. It was created with water around it, and in darkness, and void and empty. As we noted previously, the verb "created" in Genesis 1:1 is a Hebrew perfect, which means that the Earth was created at once in this condition, and this beginning condition is verified by the two Hebrew nouns, "void" and "empty."

**Taylor:** Further, if the sun is created in day four ([Gen. 1:16](#)), why do we have light already appearing in [Genesis 1:3](#)?

**R. Sungenis:** Notice that Taylor begins with the presumption that if he sees light in two different verses in the text, this must mean that there is really only one light, and naturally, he concludes

that the first mention of light must be the actual light. This is the perennial problem with modern skeptics who read Genesis 1. Since they can't conceive of the Light of Genesis 1:3 being an independent light and therefore different than the sun and stars of Genesis 1:14, they make their disbelief in two sets of lights the fundamental basis upon which they will interpret the rest of Genesis 1. If I had a dollar for every book I've read that insists that because there are two sets of lights in Genesis then we don't have to interpret the passage literally, I'd be a rich man. But the reality is, here we have a text that is little more than one miracle after another as God calls things into being out of nothing, but these skeptics can't believe that God can make two sets of lights, one for the first three days, and one for the next three days and beyond. This is little more than willful cognitive dissonance. In fact, I can usually tell how faithful an exegete is going to be with the Bible by asking him if the light of Genesis 1:3 is the same as the lights of Genesis 1:14-17. His answer will tell me whether or not he is ready to accept the word of God as it is written or whether he is going to fudge the text to support his own ideas.

Notice also that Taylor doesn't cite any Scripture passages that contend with his conclusion, such as Psalm 74:16: "Yours is the day, Yours also is the night; You have prepared the light and the sun." Notice that the "light" is not the "sun."

Before you argue that the "light" may be the stars, Ecclesiastes 12:1-2 prohibits one from making such a conclusion, since it says, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth...before the sun and the light, and the moon and the stars are darkened." Notice how the writer mentions all the known luminous bodies that emanate light, but he insists there is still an additional independent source of light. As in Ps 74:16, these four sources are specifically put in sequence by Hebrew *waw*-conjunctions so that it does not say "sun's light" but "the sun and the light and the moon and the stars."<sup>7</sup>

It also appears that Taylor either doesn't know or doesn't care for the idea presented by some of the Church Fathers that the sun and stars were made on Day 4 from the light of Day 1-3.

**Taylor:** It helps to remember that in Hebrew there are distinct words for *create* and *make*. When the Hebrew construction *let there be* is used in the phrase "Let your steadfast love . . . *be* upon us" (Ps. 33:22; cf. Ps. 90:17; Ps. 119:76), this obviously isn't a request for God's love to *begin* to exist, but rather to *function* in a certain way. Similarly, if the sun, moon, stars, and lights were *created* in Genesis 1:1, then they were *made* or *appointed* for a particular function in Genesis 1:13, 14, 16—namely, to mark the set time for worship on man's calendar.

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<sup>7</sup> In sequence, the Hebrew reads: לֹא־תִחְשַׁךְ (are not darkened) הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ (the sun) וְהָאֵר (and the light) וְהַיָּרֵחַ (and the moon) וְהַכּוֹכָבִים (and the stars), cf. Ez 32:6-8; Ps 104:2; Is 45: 7; 60:19; Br 3:33; Zc 14:6-7; 2Co 4:6; Ap 22:5; Gn 19:11; Ac 26:13. Some raise the objection that Gn 1:14-16's assigns the moon as one of the "two lights," even though the moon merely reflects light from the sun. This can be answered by pointing out that "light" in Genesis 1:14-16 is the Hebrew *meor*, (לְמְאוֹרֵת) which can refer to a emanating body or reflecting body (cf. Ps 74:16; Pr 15:30).

**R. Sungenis:** I don't know how Taylor can say this with a straight face. There are only three places that the Hebrew uses בָּרָא ("created") in all its various tenses and forms, in Genesis 1. They are:

- Genesis 1:1, to describe the creation of the heavens and the earth
- Genesis 1:21, to describe God's creation of large fish
- Genesis 1:27, to describe the creation of man

So, following Taylor, should we conclude that because Genesis 1 does not use בָּרָא ("created") when the firmament came into existence on Day 2; and when the plants came into existence on Day 3; and when the sun and stars came into existence on Day 4; and when the animals on Day 6, that this means all of them were already created and their appearance on these particular Days means only that they were "made or appointed for a particular function"?

Or, since the three verses use the word "created" only of fish and man, should we then conclude that the only ones who were actually "created" on their particular Days were fish and man?

Should we also conclude that the fish were not included in Taylor's version of "the heavens and the earth" of Genesis 1:1, but the firmament, the plants, the celestial bodies, and the birds would be included in "the heavens and the earth"?

For that matter, man himself would be included in Taylor's version of "the heaven and the earth" of Genesis 1:1, when the earth was "without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." How then could the plants, animals and man exist in such a condition?

As we can see, Taylor has it all backwards, but that's what one must do if he wants to loosen up the biblical record to make room for pet theories. As Dr. Sproul discovered, this is not what Genesis 1 is teaching.

It's no better for Taylor if we look at Genesis 2. Here there are only two uses of בָּרָא ("created"):

- Genesis 2:3, to describe all that he had created in the six days, and in which he says "created and made"
- Genesis 2:4, to describe all that he had created in the six days

Here we see that בָּרָא ("created") summarizes what God did with the *whole* creation, not just one thing here or one thing there. We even see a juxtaposition between "created" and "made," which tells us that they are referring to the same thing, namely, God calling them into existence *ex nihilo*. Contrary to Taylor's contention, there is no difference between the terms.

Now let's look at the places in which God עָשָׂה (pronounced *asah*) "made" certain things. Genesis 1 contains five places. They are:

- Genesis 1:7, when God makes the firmament
- Genesis 1:16, when God makes the sun, moon and stars
- Genesis 1:25, when God made the animals
- Genesis 1:26, when God made Adam and Eve
- Genesis 1:31, summarizing the whole creation that God made.

Again we see that the Hebrew words are completely interchangeable, even as we use them in English.

In Genesis 2 we have four instances.

They are:

- Genesis 2:4, when God made the earth and the heavens
- Genesis 2:9, when God made the plants grow
- Genesis 2:18, when God made Eve
- Genesis 2:22, when God made Eve

Again, we see the interchangeable nature of the Hebrew. In one instance Moses says "God created the heavens and the earth," and in the other he says "God made the earth and the heavens."

Now let's look at the Hebrew הָיָה (pronounced *hayah*), which is the phrase, "Let be..." There are 10 uses in Genesis 1. They are:

- Genesis 1:3, when God makes the Light
- Genesis 1:6, when God makes the Firmament
- Genesis 1:9, when God separates the waters
- Genesis 1:11, when God makes the plants
- Genesis 1:14, when God makes the sun, moon and stars
- Genesis 1:15, when the sun, moon and stars are made lights
- Genesis 1:20, when God makes the fish and birds
- Genesis 1:22, when God allows the fish to swim and bird to fly
- Genesis 1:24, when God made the animals
- Genesis 1:26, when God made man

Again, we see the same thing – a complete interchangeability of the Hebrew words. In fact, we see that הָיָה (“Let be”) appears in all the six days of creation. But Taylor told us that “Let be” only means an “appointment to do a function.” Conclusion: The major distinction Taylor tries to make between these Hebrews words simply doesn’t exist.

### **Taylor: 3. The Seventh “Day” Is Not 24 Hours Long**

In [Genesis 2:2-3](#) where we are told that “on the seventh day [*yom*] God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day [*yom*] from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day [*yom*] and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” The question we have to ask here is: was God’s creation “rest” limited to a 24-hour period? On the contrary, Psalm 95 and Hebrews 4 teach that God’s Sabbath rest “remains” and that we can enter into it or be prevented from entering it. Miles Van Pelt observes:

“In [Exod 20:11](#), the command for the people of God to remember the Sabbath day is grounded in God’s pattern of work and rest during the creation week. The people of God are to work for six solar days ([Exod 20:9](#)) and then rest on the seventh solar day ([Exod 20:10](#)). If, therefore, it can be maintained that God’s seventh day rest in Gen 2 extends beyond the scope of a single solar day, then the correspondence between the “day” of God’s rest and our “day” of observance would be analogical, not identical. In other words, if day seven is an unending day, still in progress, then our weekly recognition of that day is not temporally identical. As such, there is no reason to maintain that the same could not be true for the previous six days, especially if the internal, exegetical evidence from Genesis 1 and 2 supports this reality.”

**R. Sungenis:** Miles van Pelt is a professor of biblical languages at Reformed Theological Seminary and I respect his linguistic work in general. But I simply don’t accept his reasoning here. Certainly there is an “extended Seventh Day” into eternity that is “analogical” with the Seventh Day of Genesis 2:2-3. But that doesn’t mean the seventh day in Genesis 2 was longer than 24-hours. The symbol *derives* from the historical reality, but the symbol *is not* the historical reality. Let’s look at the text:

2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.

3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

The simple meaning is that on Day 7 God stopped creating, and thus he “rested” from creating. Certainly this “rest” extends to the eighth day, the ninth day and so on, but it was not on the eighth or ninth day that God *began* his rest, and thus Day 7 is unique in that sense. Just because

Day 7 ended 24-hours later does not mean that the “rest” would have to cease. The text says nothing about that issue. It simply says that Day 7 was the day God decided to cease creating. As such, contrary to van Pelt, Day 7 is not “an unending day, still in progress.” It is only the “rest” or cessation from creation that is still in progress. Historically speaking, Day 7 ceased but rest continued.

As a result, van Pelt’s next step is even more congruous. He says:

As such, there is no reason to maintain that the same could not be true for the previous six days, especially if the internal, exegetical evidence from Genesis 1 and 2 supports this reality.

This is hardly believable. Without giving us any exegetical justification, van Pelt insists on applying his “analogical” meaning to the other six days of Genesis! To support himself, van Pelt claims there is “internal, exegetical evidence,” but he names none, at least not in the portion that Taylor quotes.

As we have seen, there is no such evidence. The six days all use the phrase “and there was evening and morning,” which is always understood as 24-hours in Scripture. The “evening and morning” is used whether the original Light of Genesis 1:3 keeps the time, or the sun of Genesis 1:14 keeps the time. There is absolutely no indication in Genesis 1 of anything longer than 24-hour days.

As we saw, the only way Taylor can get to the idea that the Days of Genesis are not normal days is by imposing on the text his idea that the sun and stars were already created in Genesis 1:1-3 instead of, as the text says, on Day 4. So Taylor’s method is not “exegesis” of the text as much as it is a rearrangement of the text, and one that is probably spawned by a hidden agenda, namely, to make room for the theory of evolution, for himself or his colleagues.

Although I can’t find any evidence that van Pelt believes in evolution, it wouldn’t surprise me if he did, since his above “analogical” reasoning certainly suggests so. Van Pelt is saying that just as he believes Day 7 is “still in progress,” so the other six days of Genesis 1 are still in progress. This open-ended view of the Days of Genesis is vitally necessary for evolutionary theory, since it could be said that each element of the Genesis Days are still evolving and are thus “still in progress.”

#### **Taylor: 4. The “Day” of [Genesis 2:4](#) Cannot Be 24 Hours Long**

After using “the seventh day” in an analogical way (i.e., similar to but not identical with a 24-hour day), we read in the very next verse, [Genesis 2:4](#): “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day [*yom*] that the LORD God made the earth and

the heavens.” The precise meaning of this is debated. But what seems clear, if we believe the Bible does not contradict itself, is that this (singular) “day”—in which the creation events (plural “generations”) occur—cannot refer to a single 24-hour period. In fact, it does not seem to correspond to any one of the creation week days, but is either a reference to the act of creation itself ([Gen. 1:1](#)) or an umbrella reference to the lengthier process of forming and fitting the inhabitable earth ([Gen. 2:2ff](#)). In either case, this use of *yom* presents a puzzle for those who insist that “young-earth” exegesis is the only interpretation that takes the opening chapters of Genesis “literally.” Defenders of the 24-hour view acknowledge that *yom* can mean more than a single calendar day but often insist that “[numbered] *yom*“ (e.g., “first day”) always, without exception, refers to a 24-hour day in the Hebrew Bible. This is not true, however. Not only does the rest of the canon tell us that the “seventh day” is not 24 hours, but [Hosea 6:2](#) (“third day”) seems to be used in an analogical way that does not refer to a precise 24-hour time period.

**R. Sungenis:** So, Taylor is presenting three basic ideas.

- 1) that “day” in Genesis 2:4 is not 24 hours;
- 2) that the rest of the Bible tells us the seventh day is not 24-hour
- 3) “first day,” “second day,” etc., does not necessarily refer to 24-hours because the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 seems to use it in an analogical way and not 24-hours.

Let’s deal with each one. Here is Genesis 2:4 in English from the RSV:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,”

**Argument 1:** Taylor says, “‘day’ in Genesis 2:4 is not 24 hours.” Let’s examine this very carefully. In Genesis 2:4, we see that in the first part of the verse (“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created”) the focus is on “the generations” (תולדות) of the heavens and the earth, not on the heavens and the earth, *per se*.

In the second part of the verse (“In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens”) the focus is now shifted to the actual creation of the earth and the heavens.

So we have two different actions. The first action is on the *remaining creation* that follows the creation of the heavens and the earth. The second action is the creation of the *earth and the heavens*.

Now, notice that it is only on the second part of the verse that uses the word “day.” Why? Because according to Genesis 1:1-3, the “heavens and the earth” were created on one day, the

First Day. We have already accounted for that specific creation by showing that “the heavens” refers to the volume of space outside of the earth, and “the earth,” of course, refers to the earth.

Thus we see why the singular “day” is only used for the second action of Genesis 2:4 (*i.e.*, the creation of the heavens and the earth), not the first action regarding the *remaining days* of creation, since the remaining days comprise a plurality of “days,” that is, six different days.

One more thing. Notice that the first action says “when they were created.” This is the Hebrew **בְּהִבְרָאָה**, which root is the regular word **בָּרָא** (*bara* = “created”), but with the prefix **בְּ** added to the Niphal verb form. This is why it is translated “when” (due to the **בְּ** prefix) and put in the Niphal passive form (“they were created”). What this amounts to is that the **בְּ** prefix denotes that each part of creation (its “generations”) had its own particular time *when* it was made, indicating that they were not made all at once, contrary to Taylor’s thesis.

**Argument 2:** Taylor says, “the rest of the Bible tells us the seventh day is not 24-hours.” The actual reality is that the Bible never tells us that the seventh day is anything other than 24-hours. It is only Taylor’s (and van Pelt’s) imposition of their “analogical” sense onto the historical text of Genesis 1-2 that is the origin of such an assertion.

I looked up every reference to “the seventh day” in Scripture and there is not one passage that uses it for more than a 24-hour period. Taylor’s mistake, of course, was presuming that just because God’s “rest” extended after the seventh day that this must mean that the seventh day must also extend beyond 24-hours. No, this is just a simple case of understanding that the seventh day is when God began his “rest,” and when the seventh day ends, the “rest” continues on the eighth day, the ninth day, and into eternity. Historically that is exactly what happened. Symbolically, Taylor can make the seventh day as long as he wants, since it doesn’t change the historical fact that the seventh day was one day of 24-hours.

**Argument 3:** Taylor says, ‘first day,’ ‘second day,’ etc. of Genesis 1 does not necessarily refer to 24-hours “because the ‘third day’ of Hosea 6:2 seems to use it in an analogical way and not 24-hours.” It is rather ironic to see Taylor arguing this way. Anyone familiar with the Bible knows that references to the “third day” in Scripture are a subtle prophetic reference to the fact that Christ rose on the third day when he sealed his work and our salvation. But the more interesting fact is that the “third day” when Christ rose is an *actual literal day of 24-hours*. So, in the allegorical, prophetic or even analogical sense, the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 refers to an actual literal 24-hour day in the future concerning when Christ rises from the dead.

Let’s recap. For Genesis 2:3-4, Taylor projected the seventh day into the future and this made it open-ended by means of his “analogical” method. But when the same “analogical” method would have applied to the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 and point to the actual “third day” when

Christ arose from the dead, suddenly Taylor decides not to follow the bread crumbs to where they actually lead and admit that the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 refers to an actual literal day.

That being said, when Taylor says, “Hosea 6:2 seems to use it in an analogical way,” he doesn’t tell us what the analogical application is. Why? Because in his heart Taylor knows that if applied analogically to Christ, the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 would naturally point to the literal “third day,” of 24-hours long, when Christ arose.

If, on the other hand, Taylor wants to claim that the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 can be “analogically” applied to the time of Hosea, then again, what proof does he have that it is only analogical and not literal? The answer is, none. Historically, the “third day” of Hosea 6:2 could apply to an actual third day that God would rescue the Israelites. The whole point of Hosea’s context is that as soon as the Israelites repent of their sins, God will be there to rescue them. Here is Hosea 6:1-3:

1 "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

3 Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."

We see this time element elaborated in verse 3 in which Hosea says that God will come as “surely as the sun rises.” Well, the sun rises every 24 hours, does it not? So at most, the Israelites would have to wait only two days of 24 hours for God to “revive” them, and three days of 24 hours for God to “restore” them. That’s how quickly God will respond when they repent.

### **Taylor: 5. The Explanation of [Genesis 2:5-7](#) Assumes More Than an Ordinary Calendar Day**

In his article “Because It Had Rained” ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#)), Mark Futato of Reformed Theological Seminary explains the logic of [Genesis 2:5-7](#) and shows its role in OT covenantal theology.

Futato sees in this passage a twofold problem, a twofold reason, and a twofold solution.

<b>Problem</b>	No wild vegetation	No cultivated vegetation
<b>Reason</b>	No rain	No cultivator
<b>Solution</b>	God sent rain clouds	God formed a cultivator

The twofold problem?

1. No wild vegetation had appeared in the land.
2. No cultivated grains had yet sprung up.

The twofold reason for this problem?

1. The Lord God had not sent rain on the land.
2. There was no man to cultivate the ground.

The twofold solution to this problem?

1. God caused rain clouds to rise up from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.
2. The Lord God formed the man.

Note the reason why there were no shrubs or small plants in the Garden: because “it had not yet rained.” The *explanation* for this lack of vegetation which is attributed to *ordinary providence*. But if the sixth day is a 24-hour period, this explanation would make little sense. The very wording of the text presupposes seasons and rain cycles and a lengthier passage of time during this “day [*yom*]” that God formed man. This doesn’t mean that it refers to thousands of years, or hundreds of years. It just means that it’s very doubtful it means a 24-hour period.

**R. Sungenis:** Mark Futato’s assertion is fallacious. Adam was placed in one tiny part of the Earth, the Garden of Eden. He obviously could not till the whole Earth. As such, the Earth was made so that it could produce plants on its own from the soil and the water given to it that God created and separated on Day 3, but Adam was given the special task of cultivating the Garden of Eden.

The other important feature of Genesis 2:4-6 that Taylor overlooks is that its vegetation is different than that appearing in Genesis 1:11-12, and thus we have two entirely different events being described.

For example, between the creation of man in Genesis 2:7 and the creation of woman in Genesis 2:18-25, God plants a garden in 2:8 and causes trees to grow in 2:9 (including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life). Some claim that such a scenario would entail

the rapid growth of the trees that would have to occur between the appearance of Adam and the appearance of Eve. But this objection presumes to limit God's action to natural occurrences during an obviously miraculous creation week. Considering that Eve is said to be created miraculously from the side of Adam, it is quite apparent that miraculous *ex nihilo* activity is continuing to occur and thus God planted whole trees in the Garden. That's not too hard for God to do, is it?

While we are here, a second objection states that, according to Genesis 2:5, there were no plants prior to the creation of man, which seems to conflict with the account in Genesis 1:11-12 that the plants were made prior to man. But Genesis 2:5 only refers to the "shrub" (שִׁיחַ) of the field, but this word does not appear in Genesis 1:11-12 or 1:29-30.<sup>8</sup> Rather, Genesis 1:11-12 refers to the "herb" (עֵשֶׂב)<sup>9</sup> and the "tree producing fruit" (עֵץ פֵּרִי).<sup>10</sup> So, the first distinction between Gn 1:11-12 and Gn 2:5 is that the former indicates only two kinds of vegetation, whereas Gn 2:5 adds a third kind. Apparently, the two plants of Gn 1:11-12 served as food for Adam and Eve in Gn 1:29-30.

Moreover, Genesis 2:5 specifies that "not every herb of the field had yet sprung up," which would mean there were some that had sprung up on the third day of creation, and some which sprung up on or after the sixth day of creation.

Also, Gn 2:5 says the "shrubs" and "herbs" had not yet produced (יִצְמַח), contrasting with דָּשָׁא of Gn 1:11-12. The former refers to a budding for the next generation,<sup>11</sup> while the latter refers to an original sprouting of the first generation of fruits. Hence, Adam and Eve's food, on the first day of their creation, was the original fruit of the two plants in Gn 1:11-12, while the "shrubs" and the budding plants would have to wait until the appropriate time.

A third objection claims that, after the creation of the trees in Gn 2:8-9, God then makes a river to flow out of Eden in Gn 2:10, from which it is divided into four other rivers. This would involve even more time and more miraculous activity prior to the creation of the woman. But Gn 2:10 does not specifically say that God made the rivers at that time. It is more likely that the rivers may have been a product of the waters separated on day three of Gn 1:9-13.

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<sup>8</sup> *Siach* (שִׁיחַ) is used four times in the OT to refer to some type of plant (cf., Gn 2:5; 21:15; Jb 30:4, 7), yet a plant that does not produce fruit, but some other kind of edible product, e.g., vines.

<sup>9</sup> *Eseb* (עֵשֶׂב) is used also in Gn 2:5; 3:18; 9:3; Ex 9:22, 25; Dt 11:15, et al. This may refer to plants that produced grains, such as wheat, corn, etc.

<sup>10</sup> *Peri* (פֵּרִי) is used also in Gn 1:29; 30:2; Ex 10:15; Lv 23:40; et al.

<sup>11</sup> This meaning can be seen, for example, in Jb 38:27; Ps 85:12; 104:14; cf., Gn 41:6; Ex 10:5; Lv 13:37; Dt 29:22; Jg 16:22; 2Sm 10:5; Ps 132:17, et al.

A fourth objection says that Gn 2:18-20 indicates the animals were created after man, whereas Gn 1:24-26 indicates that the animals were created before man. But The Hebrew word *yatsar* (יצר) used in Gn 2:19 (“and out of the ground the Lord God *formed* every beast...and every bird...and brought them to the man to see what he would call them”) is a Hebrew imperfect tense, which, since Hebrew only has two tenses, past and future, can be understood as a pluperfect, which would then be understood as: “and out of the ground the Lord God *had formed* every beast...”

This explanation makes the most sense, since the quest given in Gn 2:18 is to find a “suitable helper” for Adam. Since God knew the animals would not be a suitable helper (*i.e.*, Adam could not communicate and procreate with them), then it would be rather aimless for Him to create the animals after He created Adam merely to see if a suitable helper could be found among them. It makes more sense that, having previously created the animals, it was already known that none of them served as a suitable helper, and thus Eve’s creation had already been anticipated. In this way, Gn 2:18-20 serves as an alternate perspective on the chronology of Gn 1:24-26 so as to set up the theological underpinnings of Eve’s creation, a theology which will serve as the basis for Adam’s headship over Eve (*cf.*, 1Tm 2:13; 1Co 11:5; Ep 5:22).

Some object that the birds are created on the Fifth day in chapter one and on the Sixth day in chapter two. They also object that in Genesis 1 the animals are created first, and male and female humans afterwards, but in Genesis 2, the male is made first, and he is alone. Next the animals, including birds are made to keep him company, but he is not totally pleased with them. So God then makes a female. Why are the accounts different if they are describing the same day?

Here is the answer. Literally interpreted, Gn 2:19a does not use the phrase “the sixth day,” nor any numerical designation for a day, thus we cannot say it is referring exclusively to the sixth day. If Gn 2:19 had said, “And on the sixth day the Lord created the birds...” then there would be a contradiction. But since Gn 2:19 doesn’t mention any specific days, there is no contradiction. The specificity of the number of the Days only occurs in Genesis 1, since only Genesis 1 is interested in exact chronology. Genesis 2 is interested in how God is going to relate to the man he created. And since Genesis 2 is now under the name of Yahweh Elohim (Gn 2:4) as opposed to Elohim (Gn 1:1-2:3), it shows the personal side of God as he contemplates the intimate needs of his creation. In such cases Hebrew commonly employs either an introductory event or a recapitulation to set up the reason for subsequent events.

For example, in 1Kings 6-7, the building and completion of the temple are recorded several times in 1Kg 6:9, 14, 37, 38. Afterward it is stated that the royal palace was thirteen years in building, and then the writer adds in 7:13: “And king Solomon sent for Hiram from Tyre...and he came to king Solomon, and did all his work, and made the two pillars...” If we were to understand the historical situation as giving an exact order of sequence, Solomon would have sent for Hiram thirteen years after the temple was finished. Logically, the writer is expressing, in the usual Semitic style, the simple idea that Hiram came sometime during the thirteen year

period. The same is true with Gn 2:18-20, and many other instances in the Hebrew Old Testament.

Finally, the accepted rule of biblical exegesis is to interpret the more ambiguous passages by the clearer passages. Obviously, Gn 1:20-31 is the clearer passage regarding the exact chronology of the creation since it specifically mentions the various days (*e.g.*, fifth day and sixth day). But insofar as describing the relationship between God and man, and man and the animals, Genesis 2 borrows facts from Genesis 1 and puts them in the order that best displays God's plan and purpose, yet without contradicting Genesis 1 (since Genesis 2 does not mention any specific days).

### **Taylor: So What Does God Mean by “Days” in Genesis 1?**

Let's go back to the “seventh day.” On the seventh day, according to [Exodus 31:17](#), God “rested and was refreshed.” Why would an omnipotent and inexhaustible God need to be “refreshed”? It's the same Hebrew word used for getting your breath back after running a long race ([Ex. 23:2](#); [2 Sam. 16:14](#)). The reason it is not improper to say that God was refreshed is the same reason it's not improper to say that God breathes, hovers, is like a potter, gardens, searches, asks questions, comes down, etc.—all images of God used in Genesis. God's revelation to us is *analogical* (neither entirely identical nor entirely dissimilar) and *anthropomorphic* (accommodated and communicated from our perspective in terms we can understand). So when God refers to “days,” does he want us to mentally substitute the word “eons” or “ages”? No. Does he want us to think of precise units of time, marked by 24 exact hours as the earth makes a rotation on its axis? No.

**R. Sungenis:** Notice what Taylor is trying to do. His purported logic is that because certain passages in the book of Genesis use anthropomorphic language concerning God, Taylor, imposing, as he often does, out-of-context passages on Genesis 1, claims that the days of Genesis are not to be understood in their plain sense. But what do anthropomorphisms that are used of God have to do with the days of Genesis, which are obviously not describing God but only what God created?

As we noted, Genesis 1 uses “and there was evening and morning” for each of the six days. But Taylor doesn't even mention this important fact, much less deal with it in his exegesis. Why? Apparently because the phrase is much too explicit about the fact that the Day of Genesis 1 is 24-hours.

At the least, Taylor should admit that because of the specific language of “evening and morning,” which we know from the rest of the Bible refers to a 24-hour day, the burden is on him to show how and why they would not be 24-hours days. The use of “evening and morning” in Scripture shows that it always refers to the sequence of darkness and light comprising a single period of a day, a 24 hour period. Outside of Genesis, there are only eight appearances of

“evening and morning” (cf. Ex 16:8-13; 27:21; 29:39; Lv 24:3; Nm 9:21; Dn 8:26) and all have the same meaning.

There are some cases in which the words “morning” or “evening” appear separately with the word “day,” some of which refer to a literal solar day and some which are indefinite of time. But in Genesis, and the other aforementioned passages, “evening and morning” are coupled together and are specified as one unit of time.

Here are more facts about the Hebrew word YOM (“day”). Whenever YOM is used with an ordinal number in Scripture, it never refers to an indefinite or long period of time. In Genesis 1, there are six ordinal numbers enumerated: the first day...the second day...the third day...and so on to the sixth day. There is no instance in Hebrew grammar in which “day” preceded by an ordinal number is understood figuratively or as a long period of time (and that includes Taylor’s use of Hosea 6:2, as we saw earlier. The fact that Hosea 6:2 was Taylor’s only attempted defense of his thesis speaks volumes. It shows that Taylor has no other instance in Hebrew in which YOM preceded by an ordinal number is to be understood analogically).

Incidentally, one of the better Hebrew grammars known to scholars, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, elaborates on the fact the YOM preceded by ordinal numbers refers to a 24-hour day (ed. E. Kautzsch, second English edition, revised by A. E. Crowley, 1980, pp. 287-292; 432-437).

Also significant is the fact that if the writer of Genesis intended to teach that YOM meant an indefinite period of time, such that he desired to convey long ages of process and change, he had numerous ways to convey such an idea in Hebrew. He could have used the plural YOMIM (as in Numbers 20:15, or as Moses does in Genesis 1:14 (“let them be for days and for years”) or Genesis 3:14 (“dust shall you eat all the days of your life”). But even then we must interject that, of the 702 uses of the plural YOMIM in the Old Testament, literal days are always in view.

As an alternative, the writer could have connected YOM with other Hebrew words of indefiniteness, such as DOR, OLAM, NETSACH, TAMID, or any of a dozen similar words and concepts in Hebrew. But the writer of Genesis 1 chose none of these possibilities; rather, he chose the most specific phrase for a 24-hour day that one can find in Hebrew.

**Taylor:** Does he want us to think of the Hebrew workday? Yes, in an analogical and anthropomorphic sense. Just as the “seventh day” makes us think of an ordinary calendar day (even though it isn’t technically a 24-hour period), so the other “six days” are meant to be read in the same way.

**R. Sungenis:** As we saw earlier, Taylor has yet to prove that the seventh day of Genesis 2:3-4 is not a 24-hour day. The only thing Taylor can say is that God’s “rest” continued after the 24-hour period of the seventh day.

Be that as it may, the seventh day does not include the phrase “and there was evening and morning,” so how can Taylor claim that “the other six days are to be read in the same way” as he reads the seventh day? As we noted, Taylor just ignores this specific language. That is because he already accepted a particular view of Genesis 1 (which is called the “Framework hypothesis”). This results in forcing the grammatical nuances of Genesis 1 into the mold that the exegete wants them to fit. Most of the conservative Protestants, especially those of Westminster Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary, are using the Framework hypothesis. R. C. Sproul, also intimately associated with these seminaries, finally saw the light and rejected their misappropriated exegesis.

**Taylor:** This is what the great Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) believed: “The creation days are the workdays of God. By a labor, resumed and renewed six times, he prepared the whole earth.” This is also what the Presbyterian theologian W.G.T. Shedd (1820-1894) advocated: “The seven days of the human week are copies of the seven days of the divine week. The “sun-divided days” are images of the “God-divided days.” This agrees with the biblical representation generally. The human is the copy of the divine, not the divine of the human. Human fatherhood and sonship are finite copies of the Trinitarian fatherhood and sonship. Human justice, benevolence, holiness, mercy, etc., are imitations of corresponding divine qualities.

**R. Sungenis:** Although each of the above statements is true, they do nothing to prove Taylor’s thesis, namely, that the days of Genesis 1 are not 24-hours. Each of the above statements would just as well be true if God worked on a 24-hour basis.

**Taylor:** The reason given for man’s rest upon the seventh solar day is that God rested upon the seventh creative day ([Ex. 20:11](#)). But this does not prove that the divine rest was only twenty-four hours in duration any more than the fact that human sonship is a copy of the divine proves that the latter is sexual.

**R. Sungenis:** Taylor has a bad habit of taking extraneous issues not germane to Genesis 1 and superimposing them onto Genesis 1, which then leads him to illogical or non-sequitur conclusions. It is certainly true that human sonship is sexual and the divine is not, but what does that have to do with the Days of Genesis 1? Nothing.

Notice also how Taylor continues to ignore that there was, indeed, a seventh day of 24-hours. If there was not a seventh day, and it did not matter that there was a seventh day, then the Hebrew would have said, “And God rested and continued to rest all the remaining days.” What Taylor misses is that the Hebrew writer is purposely stating the specific day, the seventh day, in which God ceased from creating.

In other words, if we were to ask the question: “On which day did God cease from creating?” the answer to the question would only be “the seventh day,” not the eighth or ninth or some other day. Why is this 24-hour day in which God ceased creating important? Because it will serve to complete the pattern that man is to follow, that is, he works six days and stops working the seventh day. Since man is finite, then he must continue to repeat the same pattern.

Of course, this blunder of Taylor’s is nothing compared to the greater blunder of trying to say that an open-ended seventh day (even if it were true) is to be the guiding pattern for understanding the six days of Genesis. The text of Genesis 1-2 makes no such bridge for Taylor, and neither does any other Scripture that speaks about the creation week. Taylor merely asserts there is such a correspondence, but gives not one proof for his contention.

**Taylor:** Augustine (the most influential theologian in the Western Church) believed something similar,

**R. Sungenis:** I always find it amazing how theologians cherry-pick from Augustine’s work when Augustine appears to be on their side about a certain issue. Sometimes it is very easy to do with Augustine since he wrote more than all the Fathers (Chrysostom running a close second) and did so over a period of several decades. During that long interval of voluminous writing, sometimes Augustine developed alternative views and often wasn’t sure which view he would settle on. The exegesis of Genesis 1 is one such example. Augustine had two views of Genesis 1, a very literal view and a more figurative view, and he never decided which was the correct one.

All in all, Augustine does not claim he has found the final answer to the problems of exegeting Genesis 1. He writes: “This is my explanation, unless someone can propose an interpretation that is clearer and more in keeping with the text.”<sup>12</sup> In the same book he writes: “...we should not rush in headlong and so firmly take our stand on one side that, if further progress in the search of truth justly undermines this position, we too fall with it. That would be to battle not for the teaching of Holy Scripture but for our own, wishing its teaching to conform to ours, whereas we ought to wish ours to conform to that of Sacred Scripture.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise, he states that God purposely inspired Scripture to be difficult in some places, stating that we are left with “interpreting words that have been written obscurely for the purpose of stimulating our thought.” But in the final analysis he says, “I have not rashly taken my stand on one side against a rival interpretation which might possibly be better.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, 5, 5, 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 18, 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 20, 40.

But, of course, those predisposed to evolution only cite Augustine's figurative view so they can then claim that Augustine left room for the concept of evolution, even though Augustine did not follow the Greeks in their views evolution.

But even then, they are wrong, since Augustine's figurative view said that the creation was made instantaneously, in one day, as it were. There simply is no room in Augustine's figurative interpretation to fit in evolution, if that is what Taylor is hankering for.

Notice also how Taylor totally avoids all the other Fathers on the interpretation of Genesis 1, as do many Catholics who are predisposed to viewing the days of Genesis 1 as non 24-hour days. That's because the other Fathers and doctors never diverge from a 24-hour interpretation. The Fathers who wrote about Creation taught that God made the universe *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, in six literal days, although they sometimes differed on its details. Thomas and the Medievals also agree, Thomas going to great lengths to affirm a six day Creation (*Sent.* 12, q. 1, art 2, ad 8), even though he sympathized with Augustine's second view.

Of the Fathers who commented on Genesis 1, the majority specify that they understand the "day" as a 24-hour period, many using the very phrase "twenty-four hours." Those who do not use "twenty-four hours" refer to the Creation days as a fraction of a week, or some other literal designation which cannot be misconstrued as a long or indefinite period of time.

In fact, one contemporary researcher, noting his exasperation in not finding anything but a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 in the Fathers, stated: "It was too speculative and difficult to appeal to the majority, who preferred to believe that the six days were really periods of time."<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, even the prominent Catholic theistic evolutionist, Fr. Stanley Jaki, admits:

"As I reviewed one after another the great commentaries on Genesis 1, I could not help feeling how close their authors were, time and again, to an interpretation which is strictly literal..."<sup>16</sup>

Let's see what Jaki was talking about. Observe how close and specific the interpretation of the Fathers is on Genesis 1:

**Basil** (329-379): "Thus were created the evening and the morning. Scripture means the space of a day and a night...If it therefore says 'one day,' it is from a wish to determine the measure of day and night, and to combine the time that they contain. Now twenty-

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<sup>15</sup> F. E. Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature*, University of Chicago, 1911, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Genesis 1 Through the Ages*, p. xii.

four hours fills up the space of one day – we mean of a day and of a night” (*Hexameron* 2, 8).

**Gregory of Nyssa** (335-394): Gregory confirms the views of Basil on the details of the Creation in the following passage: “Before I begin, let me testify that there is nothing contradictory in what the saintly Basil wrote about the creation of the world since no further explanation is needed (*Hexameron*, PG 44:68-69).

**Eustathius** (270-337), Bishop of Antioch, called Basil’s commentary on Genesis 1 an “overall great commentary” (PG 18, 705-707).

**Ambrose** (340-397): “But Scripture established a law of twenty-four hours, including both day and night, should be given the name of day only, as if one were to say the length of one day is twenty-four hours in extent.” (*Hexameron* 1:37, FC 42:42).

“In the beginning of time, therefore God created heaven and earth. Time proceeds from this world, not before the world. And the day is a division of time, not its beginning.” (*Hexameron* 1:20, FC 42:19).

“But now we seem to have reached the end of our discourse, since the 6th day is completed and the sum total of the work has been concluded.” (*Hexameron* 6:75, FC 42:282).

**Victorinus** (c 355-361): “The Creation of the World: In the beginning God made the light, and divided it in the exact measure of twelve hours by day and by night, for this reason, doubtless, that day might bring over the night as an occasion of rest for men’s labours; that, again, day might overcome, and thus that labour might be refreshed with this alternate change of rest, and that repose again might be tempered by the exercise of day. “On the fourth day He made two lights in the heaven, the greater and the lesser, that the one might rule over the day, the other over the night... (cf. *NPNF1*, vol. 7, pp. 341-343).

**Ephrem the Syrian** (306-373): “‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,’ that is, the substance of the heavens and the substance of the earth. So let no one think that there is anything allegorical in the works of the six days. No one can rightly say that the things that pertain to these days were symbolic.” (*Commentary on Genesis*, 1:1, FC 91:74)

**Theophilus** (c 185): “Of this six days’ work no man can give a worthy explanation and description of all its parts...on account of the exceeding greatness and riches of the wisdom of God which there is in the six days’ work above narrated” (*Autolytus* 2,12).

**Irenaeus**, (140-202): “For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded...For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years;

and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year” (*Against Heresies* 5, 28, 3).

**Lactantius** (250-317): “God completed the world and this admirable work of nature in the space of six days, as is contained in the secrets of Holy Scripture, and consecrated the seventh day (*Institutes* 7, 14).

**Methodius** (c 311): For you seem to me, O Theophila, to have discussed those words of the Scripture amply and clearly, and to have set them forth as they are without mistake. For it is a dangerous thing wholly to despise the literal meaning, as has been said, and especially of Genesis... (*Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Discourse III, Ch 2).

**Clement of Alexandria** (150-216): One can get a clearer picture of how literally Clement interprets Scriptural numbers in Book 1, Ch. 21 of the *Stromata*. There he enumerates a long series of chronological data. For our purposes, Clement specifies the length of time from Adam to Noah’s Flood to the very day: “From Adam to the deluge are comprised two thousand one hundred and forty-eight years, four days” (*ANF*, Vol. 2, p. 332).

**Epiphanius** (315-403): “Adam, who was fashioned from the earth on the sixth day and received breath, became a living being (for he was not, as some suppose, begun on the fifth day, and completed on the sixth; those who say have the wrong idea), and was simple and innocent, without any other name.” (*Panarion* 1:1).

**Cyril of Jerusalem** (315-386): “In six days God made the world...The sun, however resplendent with bright beams, yet was made to give light to man, yea, all living creatures were formed to serve us: herbs and trees were created for our enjoyment...The sun was formed by a mere command, but man by God’s hands” (*Catechetical Lectures* 12, 5).

“...but the earth is from the waters: and before the whole six days’ formation of the things that were made, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water. The water was the beginning of the world...” (*Catechetical Lectures*, 3, 5).

**Hippolytus** (160-235): “But it was right to speak not of the ‘first day,’ but of ‘one day,’ in order that by saying ‘one,’ he might show that it returns on its orbit, and, while it remains one, makes up the week....On the first day God made what He made out of nothing.” (Genesis 1:5, 1:6; *ANF*, vol. 5, p. 163).

**Chrysostom** (344-407): “Acknowledging that God could have created the world ‘in a single day, nay in a single moment,’ he chose ‘a sort of succession and established things by parts’...so that, accurately interpreted by that blessed prophet Moses, we do not fall in with those who are guided by human reasonings” (*PG*, Homily 3, col 35).

**Athanasius** (295-373): “For as to the separate stars or the great lights, not this appeared first, and that second, but in one day and by the same command, they were all called into being. And such was the original formation of the quadrupeds, and of birds, and fishes, and cattle, and plants; thus too has the race made after God’s Image come to be, namely men; for though Adam was formed out of earth, yet in him was involved the succession of the whole race” (*Discourse Against the Arians*, Discourse II, 48; NPNF2, vol. 4, pp. 374-375).

**Taylor:** ...as did Franz Delitzsch (perhaps the great Christian Hebraist). It was the most common view among the late 19th century and early 20th century conservative Dutch theologians. God is portrayed as a workman going through his workweek, working during the day and resting for the night. Then on his Sabbath, he enjoys a full and refreshing rest. Our days are *like* God’s workdays, but not identical to them.

**R. Sungenis:** But what does that prove for Taylor? Nothing. There is nothing that we are that is identical to God. No big revelation there. But how does that prove that the Days of Genesis 1 were not 24-hours? It doesn’t and it can’t.

In fact, Taylor’s above description that “God is portrayed as a workman going through his workweek, working during the day and resting for the night” is not even correct in itself, for Taylor has God resting on each evening of the creation week, but previously he told us that God doesn’t rest until the seventh day.

**Taylor:** How long were God’s workdays? The Bible doesn’t say. But I see no reason to insist that they were only 24 hours long.

**R. Sungenis:** Well, since the Bible uses the phrase “twenty-four” 26 times but never uses the phrase “twenty-four hours” one could safely say that the Bible does not “directly” say that the Days of Genesis 1, or any day in Scripture for that matter, is 24-hours.

But we deduce that the days are 24-hours because the Bible consistently speaks of “the evening and morning” as encompassing the sunrise and sunset, which we know from measurements to be 24-hours. That Taylor didn’t even mention the consistent and belabored use of “evening and morning” in Genesis 1; or that the time-keepers of Genesis 1:14-19 are the same sun and stars we see rise and set everyday at the present time, and are specifically placed in the sky to keep time during the creation week; and that the Light of Genesis 1:3 uses the same pattern for the first three days, means that Taylor is not really interested in paying attention to the finer points of Genesis 1. Rather, he focuses on trying to find contradictions in the creation account to make it appear chronologically incoherent so that he can then make room for his Framework hypothesis and/or evolution. But he found no real contradictions. The only thing he revealed was his

inability to deal with the apparent difficulties. The truth is, every difficulty Taylor complained about is easily answered if one does his homework, as I have shown quite handily.

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## The 1909 Pontifical Biblical Commission and the Interpretation of “Day”

Finally, I would like to deal with the issue concerning the 1909 Pontifical Biblical Commission’s response to the question of whether the word “day” in Genesis 1 should be interpreted as a 24-hour period. The Commission stated the following:

Question VIII: Whether in that designation and distinction of six days, with which the account of the first chapter of Genesis deals, the word (deis) can be assumed either in its proper sense as a natural day, or in the improper sense of a certain space of time; and whether with regard to such a question there can be free disagreement among exegetes?—Reply: In the affirmative.<sup>17</sup>

First, we must understand that the Commission has essentially declined to answer the question of whether the Days of Genesis 1 are literal or figurative. That means that the Church has declined to give an official answer to whether the Days of Genesis are 24-hours or not. At this juncture (1909), it is all about what is legal and not legal, not about what the text of Genesis 1 actually teaches, since no one at the 1909 PBC seems to know for certain. Accordingly, the only thing the 1909 PBC decided was that exegetes are free to use the proper or improper sense in their books and articles, and that means they can do so without canonical retribution from the Church.

Unofficially, however, the Church had been teaching for quite a while that the Days of Genesis 1 were 24-hour periods, since the preponderant evidence from the Fathers and medievals told us so. So, the burden is certainly on the “exegete” who seeks to go against that consensus.

In any case, the 1909 Commission was not advocating the theory of evolution or that a day in Genesis 1 comprises millions of years. Even the best opposition to a 24-hour day, which is Augustine’s second theory, doesn’t allow for evolution since in his second theory Augustine said the whole creation was created instantaneously. As such, the Church had never advanced the concept of evolution, at least not in 1909. In fact, evolutionary theory had been virtually silenced by the Church, as was the case about 50 years earlier in 1860 when the Council of Cologne condemned the idea of human evolution in very straightforward words:

Our first parents were formed immediately by God. Therefore we declare that...those who...assert...man...emerged from spontaneous continuous change of imperfect nature to the more perfect, is clearly opposed to Sacred Scripture and to the Faith.

In this statement the Church teaches that man, as defined by the Church, was definitely not the product of an evolutionary process. The Church defines man as a person with a physical body and an eternal soul. This means that both man’s physical body and his eternal soul are not the product of evolution. Whatever one believes about the origin of animals (*i.e.*, that they were made over millions of years), the Church, at least in this instance, is clear that man is not a product of animals; rather, he was made independently.

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<sup>17</sup> Denzinger, 2138.

Ten years later, Vatican Council I in 1870, laid out this infallible dogmatic statement, along with an accompanying anathema, saying:

If anyone does not confess that the world and all things which are contained in it, both spiritual and material, as regards their whole substance, have been produced by God from nothing, let him be anathema.

Vatican I adds new strictures that were not in previous conciliar statements. Not only is man in view, but Vatican I specifies that “the world and all the things which are contained in it” are the product of *ex nihilo* creation.

Moreover, notice the words, “their whole substance,” the first time the Church had specified this phrase. The requirement that things be made “out of nothing” is one thing, but in “their whole substance” makes it very difficult for anyone to advance the theory of evolution, for unless evolution can show that it’s upward processes results in fulfilling Vatican I’s “whole substance” criterion, then its efforts are futile.

Vatican I does not say “the parts of their substance have been produced by God from nothing,” or “the inner workings of progressive development,” but it says specifically “their whole substance has been produced by God from nothing.” The sequence is: Nothing > Whole Substance, which doesn’t leave much room for anything else to occur.

This is especially significant since Vatican I specifies that, along with the corporal creatures, the “spiritual” creatures were made out of nothing in their whole substance. “Spiritual” must refer to the angels. But no one has ever argued that the angels came into existence by an evolutionary process. The Church has always taught that the angels were created out of nothing, instantaneously, in their whole being.

That being the case, we are on safe ground in concluding that Vatican I was not simply interested in combating the idea of materialism (that is, the Greek concept that things came into being from pre-existing matter) but of promoting the idea that God created his creatures whole and complete, both spiritual and corporal creatures. If we adhere to the syntax of Vatican I’s statement, then if instantaneous wholeness applies to the angels in the spiritual realm, it must also apply to humans in the physical realm, otherwise Vatican I would be creating a contradiction in terms.

Pope Leo XIII, in his 1880 encyclical *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, stated this about Creation:

We record what is to all known, and cannot be doubted by any, that God, on the sixth day of creation, having made man from the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, gave him a companion, whom He miraculously took from the side of Adam when he was locked in sleep.

Notice that Leo makes mention of the “sixth day of creation” when God created Adam from the dust. It is apparent that Leo is not viewing the sixth day as representing millions of years, since evolution would require the existence of primates or hominids between the dust and Adam. Leo makes no such provision. His interpretation of Genesis is clear that the dust was instantaneously fashioned into the first man.

We surmise this is Leo’s precise intent because he purposely adds that Eve was “miraculously” taken from the side of Adam on the same sixth day when Adam was in a “locked” sleep. If Eve was miraculously made, then she was made instantaneously in one day. Consequently, if Leo thought Eve was created in one day, it would be logical to assume that he meant that Adam was miraculously made in one day, for Leo offered no hint of a methodological distinction between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve.

If Leo thought there was an evolutionary distinction in Adam and Eve’s respective appearances, then it is reasonable to assume he would have mentioned it. Without it, Leo’s silence is deafening against theistic evolution. In fact, knowing the insurmountable problems Eve causes for theistic evolution, in 1932 one Catholic evolutionist, J. Paquier, proposed that Adam and Eve were twins from the same immediate ancestor!

Yet we must still deal with the fact that Scripture may sometimes use the word “day” in reference to an indefinite period of time. For example, Isaiah 4:2 says:

In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the earth will be the adornment of the survivors of Israel.

Perhaps this passage is suggesting more than a 24-hour period, since the Lord’s glory is to go on indefinitely. But that is not necessarily the case. “That day” could refer to an actual 24-hour day that the Branch of the Lord appeared and was beautiful and glorious. The remaining days that the Branch was beautiful does not negate the fact that the beauty started on a particular day. As such, the passage is ambiguous, and perhaps decidedly so.

So what was the 1909 Biblical Commission to do? In light of the other Scriptures that possibly use the word “day” in an indefinite sense, perhaps the Commission thought it really had no choice but to affirm that the Hebrew word YOM, in itself, could sometimes be translated figuratively or as an indefinite period of time. In fact, there are five different ways YOM is used in Scripture, as we do also in English.

The basic question, however, is whether Genesis 1 is using any of these less-than-literal meanings of YOM? We have already answered that question from the text of Genesis 1. Someday the Church may decide to make it official, as She should with other doctrines believed and practiced by the ancient Church, such as the prohibition of usury, the wearing of head coverings for women, the full inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and a few other doctrines.

Further, in its 1909 statement, we notice again that the Commission only felt compelled to answer the legal issue and not get into the finer points of biblical exegesis since it did not comment on the other important time-clues in Genesis 1 that were traditionally understood as 24-hour periods. For example, the Commission never said that the phrase “evening and morning” could be taken in a “less strict” or figurative sense, since Scripture never offered them any cases in which that phrase was used in a non-literal way. “Evening and morning” is very specific, and as such, it is used less than a dozen times in Scripture. In contrast, the Hebrew word YOM is used over 2000 times in Scripture, and it is inevitable that with that many usages it is going to have various shades of meaning, even as we have in English.

So, if someone wants to claim that because the 1909 PBC allowed exegetes to interpret YOM as either 24-hours or a certain period of time, they have the legal right to interpret the day of Genesis as something other than 24-hours, and they can do so without being suspect of heresy. But this doesn’t mean, of course, that a non 24-hour interpretation is correct or even the best interpretation of the text. It only means that someone will not be canonically liable if he decides against a 24-hour interpretation.

As such, if the 1909 PBC wanted to give more than a legal answer to the question of whether one could use YOM in its improper sense, it would have added that the preponderant and traditional answer is that YOM is a 24-hour day in Genesis 1, since not only was 24-hours the consensus of the Fathers (save Augustine’s alternative, although he never relinquished the 24-hour interpretation), but the phrase “and there was evening and morning” directs us, out of all five possibilities for the meaning of YOM, to interpret it as a 24-hour period, since evening and morning occurs only within that specific time frame.

The 1909 PBC was also confronted with the warning given to scientists and exegetes from Pope Leo XIII in 1893, namely, that we are obliged to interpret Scripture literally, in its plain and ordinary meaning, unless someone can provide us with a sufficient reason to the contrary.

The Commission also knew that the boasts of modern science are often overturned. We know this especially today, more than they did in 1909. As biologist and physician Lewis Thomas, who died in 1993, admitted:

Science is founded on uncertainty. ...We are always, as it turns out, fundamentally wrong...The only solid piece of scientific truth about which I feel totally confident is that we are profoundly ignorant about nature. ...It is this sudden confrontation with the depth and scope of ignorance that represents the most significant contribution of twentieth-century science to the human intellect.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lewis Thomas, “On Science and Certainty,” *Discover Magazine*, 1980, p. 58.

In the end, the purpose of the 1909 PBC statement was not to teach the finer points of biblical exegesis or to examine the claims of science, but to give a stop-gap answer to the pressing legal question before it, and thus to defer the correct answer of what, precisely, YOM means in Genesis 1 to a future canonical decision from the Church. Often the Church works very slowly since it has so many pressing issues before it. Often its grassroots parishioners and its theologians are way ahead of the Church on certain issues, but the Church will address and finalize them only when the time is right.

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