

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE FRAMEWORK HYPOTHESIS

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## **Introduction**

Throughout the first eighteen centuries of church history, there was near unanimity among believers in regards to the proper interpretation of Genesis One. The traditional view states that God created everything in a span of six normal-length days approximately six thousand years ago.<sup>1</sup> However, as the new science of geology grew in popularity, so did belief in an older age for the earth. Convinced that this new science was accurate, many Christians abandoned the church's historic stance and began developing interpretations that sought to harmonize old-earth ideas with the words of Genesis.

For the past two centuries, various harmonistic models have been promulgated. Each of these views is beset with serious complications since they attempt to import foreign concepts into the text of Scripture. Nevertheless, many of these views continue to be promoted by pastors and theologians as acceptable

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<sup>1</sup>This age is deduced by adding together the age of each man from Adam to Isaac at the birth of their sons in the Messianic line. These genealogies are recorded in Genesis 5 and 10. Abraham's age at Isaac's birth is given in Genesis 21:5 and Isaac's age at Jacob's birth is recorded in Genesis 25:26. The most famous calculation of Earth's age was done by Archbishop James Ussher whose computations produced 4004 B.C. as the date of Creation.

interpretations. As a result, this topic has become extremely controversial in the modern Church.

The latest view to gain prominence is known as the Framework Hypothesis. Although each of the harmonistic views has done damage to the veracity of Scripture, the Framework Hypothesis may be the most dangerous of all. The reason for this is twofold. First, while each of the other views makes an effort to interpret the text, the Framework reclassifies the text so that it has no bearing on the controversial subject of the age of the earth. The major promoter of this view concluded that "as far as the time frame is concerned, with respect to both the duration and sequence of events, the scientist is left free of biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the Bible does not deal with the issue of the age of the earth. As such, a Christian is free to believe whatever he wants to about the age of the earth.

This type of thinking has led to the second danger arising from the view. Its acceptance has generated apathy in the Church concerning Genesis and the entire creation v. evolution debate. This is unfortunate because this controversy is especially intense in the world today and many in the Church

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<sup>2</sup>Meredith Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48:2 (Ipswich, MA: American Scientific Affiliation, 1996). Available online at: <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>

seem content to ignore it. As such, Christians are neglecting Peter's instruction to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks" a reason for the hope that they have (1 Pet. 3:15).

The purpose of this paper is to define and refute the Framework Hypothesis. To properly achieve this goal, the other harmonistic views will be defined and briefly critiqued. Special attention will be given to Progressive Creation because of its current popularity. The history and definition of the Framework Hypothesis will then be given followed by a thorough examination and refutation.

## **Survey and Critique of the Different Interpretations of the Genesis Account**

Before examining the Framework Hypothesis, it is essential to detail the history of the harmonistic views. The various views will be treated in a chronological manner with the earliest view mentioned first. After providing a description of the view as well as some of the major arguments employed in its defense, a brief critique will be given to demonstrate the particular view's falsity. There will not be an exhaustive critique of each view since a thorough examination is beyond the focus of this paper. Also, some of the criticisms will apply to all of the views. For example, it is telling that not one of these views was developed prior to the rise of uniformitarian geology. This supports the idea that the harmonistic views do not find their basis in biblical exegesis but in the desire to marry Scripture and secular science.

### Theistic Evolution

Theistic Evolution is a broad view that can accommodate nearly any belief attempting to reconcile belief in God and evolution. Simply stated, this view promotes the idea that God used evolution as His means of creating the world. This view is a natural move for one who wants to believe in God and

evolution. However, as one studies the intrinsic inconsistencies of Theistic Evolution, it becomes completely untenable in light of Scripture.

Theistic Evolution is generally rejected by conservative Christians because of its denial of the special creation of Adam and Eve. Rather than being made in God's image, adherents of this view claim that the first man and woman evolved from ape-like ancestors. Nevertheless, many have entertained the concept for a time before leaving it for another view.

Bernard Ramm endorsed Progressive Creation but apparently had little difficulty with Theistic Evolution. He stated, "We have noted that already orthodox thinkers (Protestants and Catholics) have affirmed that evolution, properly defined can be assimilated into Christianity."<sup>3</sup> Many others, including various Roman Catholic popes have unofficially endorsed this idea.<sup>4</sup>

Of all the accommodation views, this is the easiest to refute. Three simple approaches can be used to demonstrate the flaws in this system. First, the Bible clearly emphasizes the special creation of man rather than a developmental process spanning millions of years. Second, the order of events provided in the first chapter of Genesis is completely at odds

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<sup>3</sup>Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954), 292.

<sup>4</sup>Henry M. Morris, "Evolution and the Pope." Available online at <http://www.icr.org/article/812/>

with the evolutionary model. Third, and perhaps most important, the very idea that God used evolution assaults the holiness and goodness of God.

Genesis 2:7 states that God made Adam from "the dust of the ground." Verses 21 and 22 reveal that Eve was formed from one of Adam's ribs. The Apostle Paul agreed that Adam was created before Eve (1 Tim. 2:13). The theistic evolution model states that mankind was not specially created by God but that God guided the evolutionary development of man from apelike ancestors. A logical conclusion from this view is that woman must have come before man. This is entirely opposite of clear biblical instruction.

Genesis 1 details that God created everything in a span of six days. The meaning of the term "day" will be discussed later. Nevertheless, no matter how long these days were, there is a sequence of events that occurred. The biblical sequence is much different than evolutionary models propose. For example, the Bible places the earth before the sun (Gen. 1:1, 16) and birds before reptiles (Gen. 1:21, 24). Evolutionary models place the sun before the earth and reptiles before birds.

Finally, the concept of Theistic Evolution libels God's character. Atheist Jacques Monod pointed this out in a 1976 interview. He stated:

Selection is the blindest, and most cruel way of evolving new species, and more and more complex and refined organisms...the more cruel because it is a process of elimination, of destruction. The struggle for life and the elimination of the weakest is a horrible process, against which our whole modern ethic revolts. An ideal society is a non-selective society, it is one where the weak are protected; which exactly the reverse of the so-called natural law. I am surprised that a Christian would defend the idea that this is the process which God more or less set up in order to have evolution.<sup>5</sup>

Monod is right. The God of the Bible is a God who does not enjoy the death and suffering of any of His creatures. It is appalling that anyone would dare to accuse God of this atrocious method of "creation."

#### The Gap Theory Defined

The Gap Theory was first promoted in 1804 through a series of sermons made by a young Presbyterian minister named Thomas Chalmers. Ten years later, Chalmers published the idea of the Gap Theory. Chalmers eventually became the "principal organizer of the Free Church of Scotland."<sup>6</sup> As a result of his popularity and tremendous success in church planting the Gap Theory gained acceptance as a possible response to old-earth geology. To

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<sup>5</sup>Monod's comments were part of an interview entitled "The Secret Life" broadcast by the Australian Broadcast Commission on June 10, 1976.

<sup>6</sup>J. D. Douglas, Philip Wesley Comfort and Donald Mitchell, *Who's Who in Christian History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1997, c1992).

provide a better understanding of the times in which Chalmers lived, Fields stated:

He lived concurrently with Lyell and Darwin, and was part of the age during which men were breaking loose from and thrusting aside what they felt had been the shackles of the Scriptures, and were placing all their hopes in the new science and its "assured" results. It is not without significance that Chalmers deemed it necessary to harmonize the Scriptures and science in order to save Christianity from the onslaught of atheism!<sup>7</sup>

The theory garnered further support in 1870 when a German scholar Johann Heinrich Kurtz published *History of the Old Covenant*. While expanding on the initial Gap Theory by adding a second gap one verse later, Kurtz summarized the attitude of many harmonizers when he wrote that

Between the first and the second, and between the second and the third verses of Gen. I, Revelation leaves two blank pages on which Science may write to fill up the gaps which Revelation has left in regard to subjects which lay beyond its province.<sup>8</sup>

The greatest boost to this view's popularity came when C.I. Scofield promoted it in his popular study Bible. Being included in the study notes of a Bible granted the Gap Theory a perceived legitimacy that no other book could provide. Over time problems with this view became apparent and its popularity diminished.

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<sup>7</sup>Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (Collinsville, IL: Burgener Enterprises, 1976), 40.

<sup>8</sup>Johann Heinrich Kurtz, *History of the Old Covenant*, trans. by A. Edersheim, I, p. cxiii.

Rather than returning to the historical interpretation, harmonizers developed other views.

Gap theorists often argue that the word translated as "was" in most English versions of Genesis 1:2 should actually be translated "became" as in "the Earth *became* formless and void." By doing this, Gap Theorists claim that God created a perfect world in Genesis 1:1; however, after an undetermined amount of time, Satan rebelled and led this original creation in rebellion against God.<sup>9</sup> As a result God destroyed the world with a flood, which they believe is described in verse 2.<sup>10</sup> Allegedly, this flood and the indeterminate ages in between verses 1 and 2 allow for the deposition of the geologic strata. Following this verse, Gap Theorists generally believe that the rest of Genesis 1 describes the creation of the present world.

There are a number of serious problems with the Gap Theory. First, time cannot be inserted between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 because verse two does not follow verse 1 in time. Verse two uses a Hebrew grammatical device called a "waw-disjunctive." This is where a sentence begins with the Hebrew word for "and" (*waw*) and is followed by a noun such as the "earth." A *waw*-

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<sup>9</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary, Volume 1: Genesis 1:1-11:32* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 50, 52.

<sup>10</sup>C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1909), 3-4.

disjunctive indicates that the sentence is describing the previous one - it does not follow in time. In other words, verse 2 is describing the conditions of the earth when it was first created. Hebrew grammar does not allow for the insertion of vast periods of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.

Secondly, Exodus 20:11 clearly states that everything was created in the span of six days and that these days form the basis of the work week. This passage eliminates any possibility of vast periods of time between or during any of the days of creation.

Third, since Gap Theorists propose a worldwide flood prior to the Noachian deluge to explain the geologic layers, the latter flood is necessarily reduced to a local or tranquil event. This is due to the fact that if Noah's flood was a worldwide event, then it would have completely reworked the sediments and left little or no evidence of events prior to it. The concept of a tranquil flood is almost unanimously rejected because it is paradoxical. Large floods, by their very nature, are catastrophic and leave vast evidence.

Finally, the Gap Theory does not accomplish what it was designed to do. It was proposed as a possible solution to the apparent conflict between the Bible and scientific hypotheses. While it does accommodate the billions of years it does not

follow the sequence of events inherent in the geologic record if it is to be viewed as evidence of vast ages.

### The Day-Age Theory

This view was developed by an Anglican clergyman, George Stanley Faber in 1823.<sup>11</sup> It grew in popularity when Hugh Miller, a prominent geologist and friend of Thomas Chalmers, switched his view from the Gap Theory to the Day-Age. Charles Hodge promoted this view in his *Systematic Theology*.

It is of course admitted that, taking this account by itself, it would be most natural to understand the word in its ordinary sense; but if that sense brings the Mosaic account into conflict with facts, and another sense avoids such conflict, then it is obligatory on us to adopt that other. Now it is urged that if the word "day" be taken in the sense of "an indefinite period of time," a sense which it undoubtedly has in other parts of Scripture, there is not only no discrepancy between the Mosaic account of the creation and the assumed facts of geology, but there is a most marvellous coincidence between them.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, this great theologian advocated an extremely dangerous hermeneutic in that he advised that one follow the dictates of scientific opinion over the Word of God. In recent times, many Day-Age adherents have become followers of the Progressive Creation view, which is essentially a modern update

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<sup>11</sup>Terry Mortenson, *The Great Turning Point* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004), 35.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Originally Published 1872. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 1:570.

of the Day-Age view with a heavier emphasis on God's creative work. This view will be examined later.

The Day-Age Theory interprets the days of the creation week as long periods of time. Supporters of this view will often point to 2 Peter 3:8, which states: "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Another argument for this view comes from an examination of the events of the sixth day. The late Gleason Archer used this as an argument against the literal day interpretation. He wrote:

We are told that God created Adam first, gave him the responsibility of tending the Garden of Eden *for some time* until He observed him to be lonely. He then granted him *the fellowship* of all the beasts and animals of earth, with opportunity to bestow names upon *them all*. Some *undetermined period after that*, God observed that Adam was *still* lonely and *finally* fashioned a human wife for him by means of a rib removed from him during a "deep sleep." Then *at last* he brought Eve before Adam and presented her to him as his new life partner. Who can imagine that all of these transactions could possibly have taken place in *120 minutes* of the sixth day (or even within twenty-four hours, for that matter)? And yet Gen. 1:27 states that both Adam and Eve were created at the *very end* of the final day of creation. Obviously the "days" of chapter 1 are intended to represent stages of unspecified length, not literal twenty-four-hour days.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), p. 201. Italics added to indicate Archer's attempts to add time elements that are foreign to the text.

Sadly, in an effort to prove his point, Archer engaged in a tremendous amount of eisegesis. He inserted several phrases indicating a passage of time that are not found in the text. The Bible does not say that Adam tended the Garden for some time until God ordered him to name the animals. Neither does it include the phrases "some undetermined period after that," "still lonely and finally fashioned," "at last," that "Adam and Eve were created at the very end of the final day of creation" or that all of these things had to occur in "120 minutes of the sixth day."

It may seem convincing that Adam had to name so many animals that there would not have been time to complete such a task. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the text will demonstrate that this would not have been too difficult for him. According to Genesis 2:20, Adam only needed to name the birds of the air, the cattle, and the beasts of the field. Excluded from this chore were the sea creatures and creeping things. Also, Adam needed only to name the original *baramin* not every single species.<sup>14</sup> This would have drastically reduced his workload. In

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<sup>14</sup>*Baramin* is a recent term used in creationist circles. It is transliterated from the Hebrew words for "created" and "kind." It refers to the original created kinds of animals. The term "kind" is not to be understood to be the same as any modern taxonomic term such as genus or species. For example, there are many species of dogs in the world yet they are all the same kind of animal. Therefore, Adam did not need to invent

fact, it has been demonstrated that Adam could have named all of the animals with plenty of time to spare for the other events of the sixth day.<sup>15</sup>

The problems with the Day-Age Theory are numerous. First, it is based on faulty exegesis. The 2 Peter passage quoted above is pulled from the context of Christ's Second Coming, not the creation of the world. Also, the verse is simply stating that God is not limited by time. It is not a formula to figure out how to interpret the days of creation. Even if it were a formula, this would only yield an extra six thousand years when more than four billion are needed.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the Day-Age Theory introduces some absurdities into the Genesis text. For example, God created vegetation on the third day (Gen. 1:11-13) and the sun on the fourth (Gen. 1: 16). If these days were millions of years long, one must wonder how the plants survived for so long without the sun.<sup>17</sup> Moreover,

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names for wolves, coyotes, foxes, etc., but merely had to name the dogs.

<sup>15</sup>Andrew Kulikovsky, "How Could Adam have Named All the Animals in a Single Day?" *Creation* 27:3 (June 2005), pp. 27-28.

<sup>16</sup>Keith Harris alleged that some young-earth creationists believe this; however, he does not document this claim. Keith Harris, *Jurassic Mark* (Columbia, SC: Olive Press, 1996), 64.

<sup>17</sup>One may respond by saying that God created light on the first day and that this light provided heat as well. However, this is unacceptable for the Day-Age Theory since it attempts to mimic the evolutionary order of events. The creation of light

Adam was made on the sixth day, lived through the seventh day, and died 930 years later (Gen. 5:5). Did Adam die on the same "day" he was created? There are many other problems with this view and some of these will be explained in the Progressive Creation section.

### The Revelatory Days Theory

The Revelatory Days Theory is not well-known today but has enjoyed more support in the past.<sup>18</sup> This view states that God revealed his creative works to Moses through visions that took place over a six day period.<sup>19</sup> The days of creation are not seen as strictly chronological but partly chronological and partly topical.

Perhaps the greatest problem with this view is that it has absolutely no support from Scripture. There is not the slightest hint in Genesis that Moses was recording a vision.

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on the first day is generally viewed by Day-Age proponents as the creation of the sun. The "creation" of the sun on the fourth day is often seen as God allowing the sun, for the first time, to break through a thick blanket of clouds surrounding the Earth. Millard Erickson promoted this idea in his brief defense of a modified version of the Day-Age Theory. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 408.

<sup>18</sup>Bernard Ramm seemed to endorse this view at one point in his life but later opted for a form of Progressive Creation. A fuller treatment of this view is found in P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1948).

<sup>19</sup>Archer, 199.

Another problem is that it is highly unlikely that God would take an entire six days to convey thirty-one verses to Moses. Finally, if Genesis 1 can be interpreted as a vision from God, then what prohibits a person from interpreting any other passage that seems to be historical narrative as merely a vision? It is crucial for the interpreter of God's Word to remain consistent in his hermeneutic.

#### The Literal Day with Gaps Theory

The Literal Day with Gaps Theory is also known as the Multiple Gaps Theory and is appropriately named. This view states that God created everything in six literal, twenty-four hour days. However, this differs from the traditional interpretation in that it adds a gap of undetermined length in between each of the days. One proponent of this view wrote:

Now, if the days of Genesis are taken as 24-hour days, then that certainly rules out any process extending over vast periods of time. The days could easily have been twenty-four-hour days and the earth still date to great antiquity provided that indefinite periods of time separated the six creation days (1972, pp. 110-111, emp. added).<sup>20</sup>

Although it is an ingenious attempt to reconcile the Bible with modern scientific views, the Multiple Gaps Theory still suffers from many of the same problems as the other harmonistic

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<sup>20</sup>Dr. Donald England, *A Christian View of Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1972), 110 - 111.

views, especially the Day-Age Theory. One additional problem can be added here. There is absolutely no biblical support for this position. Its supporters do not even attempt to cite Scripture to bolster their claims. As such, it is a theory based on the silence of Scripture. It is for this reason that very few actually take this view seriously.

## **Progressive Creationism**

Progressive Creationism is a modified form of the Day-Age Theory. Whereas the original Day-Age Theory was a form of Theistic Evolution, Progressive Creationism denies that God used biological evolution in creating everything.<sup>21</sup> Instead of using evolution, Progressive Creationists believe God intermittently stepped into history to bring about new life forms. Erickson stated that "God created in a series of acts over a long period of time."<sup>22</sup>

Progressive Creationists accept the belief that the geologic column is a record of the death of countless animals and plants over billions of years.<sup>23</sup> By doing this, they agree

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<sup>21</sup>Apparently, Dr. Hugh Ross, the leading promoter of Progressive Creationism, does allow for some naturalistic evolution. On his ministry's website, he wrote that his position believes that "Natural biological evolution fails at all levels except for those species numbering more than about one quadrillion individuals with generation times less than three months and body sizes smaller than one centimeter." Ross does not document this claim so it is difficult to know where he obtained his information or if any biologist would make such a claim. This is available online at:  
<http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/p0015.shtml>.

<sup>22</sup>Erickson, 409.

<sup>23</sup>Plants do not "die" in the same sense as animals and man since they are not alive in the same sense. This is a strong point of contention between Progressive Creationists and those

with the vast ages needed for evolution to take place. However, Progressive Creationists add a new twist to this tale in that whenever gaps are present in the chain of life, God stepped in to create the next creature along the way. For example, many evolutionists claim that birds evolved from dinosaurs. Progressive Creationists would accept the evolutionary dates for these creatures, however, they would say that God created dinosaurs and they roamed the earth until about 65 million years ago. After they became extinct, God created the birds. Ross states,

...while God did not create sea mammals or birds previous to creation day five, He did replace fifth-day sea mammals and birds that went extinct with new species of sea mammals and birds on the sixth day.<sup>24</sup>

The same type of story could be told for each of the distinct types of creatures on Earth.

Progressive Creationism has found strong support from many well-known evangelical leaders. Dr. James Dobson has embraced this view and has repeatedly invited Dr. Ross to promote it on his popular Focus on the Family radio program. Dr. Norman Geisler has expressed his support for this view in numerous publications. His comments on the subject seem to come directly

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holding the traditional view. Progressive Creationists claim that plants are alive and do die.

<sup>24</sup>Dr. Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 235.

from Ross' *Creation and Time*, which he favorably endorsed.<sup>25,26</sup>

Other Christian leaders supporting this view include Millard Erickson, John Ankerberg, Pat Robertson, and Jack Hayford.

### Progressive Creationism Refuted

The errors of Progressive Creationism are many and serious. It suffers from the same flaws listed earlier in the critique of the Day-Age Theory. It is based on a faulty hermeneutic of using non-contextual Greek words to reinterpret the plain meaning of Hebrew words in Genesis 1 and Exodus 20. Like the Day-Age Theory, it creates numerous absurdities in the text. More of these will be examined here. One of the biggest

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<sup>25</sup>Geisler frequently cites Ross in his books and sometimes uses the same faulty arguments. One example is found in his Systematic Theology series in which he argues that the seventh day of the creation week is still continuing because God is in His "Sabbath rest." Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume Two* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2003), 643. The argument is based on a flawed interpretation of Hebrews 4:3-5, which states that God entered His rest on the seventh day and is still resting. This does not imply that it is still the seventh day, which was blessed and hallowed by God (Ex. 20:11). If this day is still continuing then God must have cursed the animals, man, woman, and ground (Gen. 3:14-19) on the same day that He blessed the world. This concept is inconsistent with the God of truth. Ross makes the same argument in *Creation and Time*. Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 49.

<sup>26</sup>On the back cover of *Creation and Time*, Geisler stated, "Creation and Time is the best book on this topic in print. It is a must for anyone interested in the conflict between science and Scripture."

problems with this view is that it cannot be supported scientifically or scripturally.

Progressive Creationists, like every other harmonistic view, seeks middle ground where none exists. Because Progressive Creationists claim that their view is derived from a straightforward reading of Genesis 1 and that this perfectly comports with the scientific data, they are forced to reinterpret or misrepresent either the scientific evidence or the biblical record.<sup>27</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to thoroughly examine scientific arguments but two examples of these types of mistakes will be given here. Following these, other difficulties with Progressive Creationism will be examined.

First, the order of events presented in Genesis 1 is flatly contradicted by modern scientific opinion. In *A Matter of Days*, Ross provides a chart which supposedly lists the order of events described in Genesis 1. However, his list does not match what the Bible actually states. For example, the first event listed is the creation of "matter, energy, galaxies, stars, planets,

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<sup>27</sup>Erickson notes that Progressive Creationism "fits well the biblical data" and that it lines up with what scientists find in the fossil record. Erickson, 409. Gleason Archer stated that "in its broad outlines, the sequence set forth in the Hebrew account is in harmony with that indicated by the data of geology." Archer, 202.

etc.”<sup>28</sup> Following this statement, Ross states that God created in the following sequence: the oceans, continents, plants, small sea animals, birds and sea mammals, land mammals, and humans. It is relatively easy to see some of the problems here. The Bible states that the sun was not created until the fourth day, after the creation of dry land and vegetation. To cover this anomaly, Ross claims that the stars were really made first but earth’s atmosphere was too dense and cluttered with interplanetary debris for light to show through. It was not until the fourth day that God finally cleared the atmosphere up enough for light to shine through. Rather than creating the sun on the fourth day, Ross reinterprets this to say that God merely allowed the sun’s light to hit the earth for the first time on that “day.”<sup>29</sup>

This list also fails to mention the creation of reptiles and amphibians. This is no small omission because the majority of scientists believe that these creatures evolved prior to birds. Yet the Bible reveals that birds were created on the fifth day and the reptiles (land animals) on the next day. Rather than dealing with the actual text, Ross conveniently fails to even mention reptiles.

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<sup>28</sup>Ross, *A Matter of Days*, 236.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Dr. Ross' misinterpretation of Genesis 1 and modern scientific views does not stop here. Along with the creation of stars, planets, and galaxies, Ross claims that an ocean covered the whole surface of the early Earth. While the concept of an ocean covering the early Earth is certainly biblical (Gen. 1:2), it does not correspond to the views of most scientists who believe that Earth was originally a molten ball of lava. According to Big Bang cosmologists, Earth has never been entirely covered with water. The water for the oceans allegedly arrived in the form of comets hitting the earth's surface over a period of half a billion years or so. There is no middle ground here. Either Earth was originally covered with lava or it was originally covered with water. Rather than informing his readers of the problem, Ross overlooks it and acts as though the problem does not exist.

Progressive Creationism's reliance upon secular dating assumptions leads to an extremely serious problem. The creation of Adam and Eve occurred approximately six thousand years ago based upon a closed view of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. Dr. Ross and others have argued for gaps in the genealogies so that the creation of Adam and Eve occurred some 25,000 to 50,000 years ago.<sup>30</sup> The problem is that many secular scientists date

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<sup>30</sup>During a televised debate in January 2006, Ross flatly denied ever making such a claim. However, Ross originally

the Australian Aborigines to 30,000 to 68,000 years old.<sup>31</sup> If the true date is near the earlier end of this range, then Ross will either have to change his dates again or claim that the Aborigines cannot be saved. Thankfully, Ross would not make such a claim about the Aborigines, but one must wonder why he chooses to selectively reject the dating methods that he trusts in so many other instances? At which point can a Progressive Creationist disagree with modern scientific views?

#### Implications for the Rest of Scripture

One crucial aspect of this debate that is often overlooked by those who accept Progressive Creationism is the biblical account of the Flood.<sup>32</sup> Since the geologic column is used to

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claimed in a children's book that Adam was created approximately 10,000 to 25,000 years ago. He wrote, "Starting about 2 to 4 million years ago, God began creating man-like mammals or 'hominids.' These creatures stood on two feet, had large brains, and used tools. Some even buried their dead and painted on cave walls...However, they were different from us. They did not worship God or establish religious practices. In time, all these man-like creatures went extinct. Then, about 10 to 25 thousand years ago, God replaced them with Adam and Eve. (Reasons To Believe Web Site, updated July 8, 1997).

<sup>31</sup>Bowler, JM et al, "Letters: New ages for human occupation and climatic change at Lake Mungo, Australia", Nature 421, (February 2003), 837-840.

<sup>32</sup>It seems that many scholars are simply unaware of the implications of accepting an old earth based on the geologic strata. For example, in his discussion on the topic, Erickson does not mention the Flood other than to misrepresent the traditional interpretation of Genesis. Erickson, 406. He

support the notion of billions of years, Progressive Creationists cannot allow for a worldwide flood during Noah's day. This is because a worldwide flood would completely rework the sedimentary layers that make up the geologic column. Also, a worldwide Flood would deposit hundreds of feet of rock strata filled with the fossilized remains of animals. Instead, to be consistent with their beliefs about the "days" in Genesis 1, Progressive Creationists must believe the Genesis flood was merely a local or regional event.

Many of his fellow Progressive Creationists are unwilling to reject the global extent of the Flood and instead, believe in a worldwide flood that left little to no record of its existence. The concept of a tranquil flood is an oxymoron. Despite the absurdity of such a notion, many of Ross' closest allies in this debate do not accept his notion of a local Flood.<sup>33</sup> Either these men have not understood the inconsistency

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claims that those who hold the traditional view believe that at the time of Noah "the earth was covered by a tremendous flood, with huge waves with a velocity of a thousand miles an hour...The various rock strata represent various waves of the flood." While young-earth creationists have written numerous works on the subject, including the landmark book *The Genesis Flood* by Morris and Whitcomb which directly deals with this issue, Erickson cites a book written in 1923! This student has never heard of a young-earth creationist claim that the waves traveled at a thousand miles per hour and that the strata represent the various waves of the Flood.

<sup>33</sup>Both Geisler and Archer have written in favor of a worldwide flood.

of believing in an old earth and a worldwide flood, or they hold to the bizarre tranquil flood theory.

For his part, Dr. Ross claims to believe in what he calls a "universal" flood. He wrote:

"Any flood that exterminates all human beings, all the soulish animals with whom they have contact, and all their material possessions - except on board Noah's ark - would be universal and would achieve God's purpose in pouring out judgment."<sup>34</sup>

According to Ross, the Flood was limited to the Mesopotamian region, as were all the people of the world at the time.<sup>35</sup> At least Ross understands that an old earth and worldwide flood are incompatible. Nevertheless, he is forced to perform hermeneutical gymnastics to arrive at his local flood conclusions.

The notion of a local flood is easily refuted, which is why many old-earth theologians either ignore the issue or are inconsistent. First, the language of Genesis unequivocally states that "all flesh in which is the breath of life" would be destroyed (Gen. 6:17) and that "all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered" (Gen. 7:19). There is no responsible way to interpret these statements as anything other than a

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<sup>34</sup>Dr. Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 140.

<sup>35</sup>Once again, Ross' inconsistency with modern scientific opinion is revealed. Most scientists believe that man originated in Africa and at no time was all humanity confined to the Mesopotamian region.

worldwide flood. Second, God's promise of the rainbow is a decisive argument against a local flood. God promised Noah that the world would never see another flood like the one he had just survived. God gave the rainbow as a sign of this promise (Gen. 9:12-12). If the flood in Noah's day was only a local event, then God has been guilty of lying every time a local flood inundates a region of the Earth. Surely, this is a serious problem for Progressive Creationists since it makes Him into a liar.

Progressive Creationism strikes at the character of God in other ways, too. The late atheistic astronomer Carl Sagan recognized the inconsistency of those who sought to harmonize their belief in God with evolutionary beliefs:

If God is omnipotent and omniscient, why didn't he start the universe out in the first place so that it would come out the way he wants? Why is he constantly repairing and complaining? No, there's one thing the Bible makes clear: The biblical God is a sloppy manufacturer. He's not good at design, he's not good at execution. He'd be out of business if there was any competition.<sup>36</sup>

If God used billions of years to create everything then Sagan is right. God is a poor designer. Why would He create millions of animals just so they could become extinct? More importantly, why create all of these animals just so they would suffer and die long before man ever came on the scene. One of the main

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<sup>36</sup>Carl Sagan, *Contact* (New York: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, 1985), 285.

purposes of man was to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). If man was to rule over the earth and enjoy God's creation, why would God create a world in which most of what He had made would be dead before man could enjoy it? Ross' claim that God had all these creatures die so that man could enjoy coal, oil, gas, and more is clearly incredible.<sup>37</sup>

#### Concluding Remarks about Progressive Creationism

Dr. Hugh Ross and other Christian scientists who attempt to prove God's existence through evidence in the world are typically well-intentioned. Those who have been led to the Lord through their efforts will surely be eternally grateful. Nevertheless, Progressive Creationism does more harm than good because it undermines the authority of God's Word. The clear words of Scripture are twisted in such a way so that they allegedly conform to modern views. Modern man's scientific opinions are placed on the same level as Scripture and are given the status of infallibility.<sup>38</sup> Ross and others seem to pick and

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<sup>37</sup>Ross, *Genesis Question*, 56.

<sup>38</sup>Ross claims that "the facts of nature can be likened to a sixty-seventh book of the Bible. Just as we rightfully expect interpretations of Isaiah to be consistent with those of Mark, so too we can expect interpretations of the facts of nature to be consistent with the message of Genesis and the rest of the canon." Ross, *Creation and Time*, 56-57. This is a very dangerous claim and is at the heart of the problem for the harmonistic views. The so-called "facts of nature" are the

choose which "facts of nature" they accept and those do not. In the same way, the historical-grammatical method of interpretation is used inconsistently. Ultimately, God is made into a liar and is incapable of creating a world for man to enjoy without forcing millions of creatures to suffer.

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interpretations of fallen men who are examining a sin-cursed world. To place these "facts" which so often change on equal footing with Scripture is hazardous. Ross follows this statement by trying to say that he is not trying to put God's revelation through nature on the same level as Scripture but then he does exactly that by stating, "Just as it is absurd to speak of some entity as more perfect than another, so also one revelation of God's truth cannot be held as inferior or superior to another."

### **The Framework Hypothesis**

The failures of each of the previous harmonistic views have led to the current popularity of the Framework Hypothesis. Many conservative Christians are uncomfortable with the other harmonistic views because they cannot adequately reconcile the straightforward reading of Genesis with the claims of evolutionary scientists. As a result, the Framework Hypothesis, with its reclassification of the genre of the first three chapters of Genesis, has appealed to many Christians who believe the vast ages are scientific fact.

#### Definition

It is rather difficult to define the Framework Hypothesis due to its linguistic and theological complexities. In short, this view states that the early chapters of Genesis should not be interpreted in the traditionally literal fashion. Instead, its adherents claim to see indicators which demonstrate that Genesis 1 was written according to some sort of literary framework. Viewed this way, the text must be interpreted as something other than historical narrative. Based on three of these identifying marks, Framework promoters claim that Genesis

1 and 2 should be interpreted "topically and not chronologically."<sup>39</sup>

The defenders of this view also make the claim that the author of Genesis was not interested in providing scientific details of creation. For example, VanGemereren wrote, "The literary thrust of Genesis 1 and 2 has a theocentric, rather than a scientific, focus."<sup>40</sup> VanGemereren fails to realize that even if these chapters have a "theocentric" focus, it would not preclude that they are historically and scientifically accurate. This is a major problem with the Framework view and will be examined further in the critique of this view.

To better understand exactly what this position states, it is necessary to explain the three indicators in the text that supposedly point to its non-literal style. At this point, the arguments will be presented to provide a deeper explanation of the view. Later, each of these alleged poetic indicators will be scrutinized to see if the Framework Hypothesis is a defensible position from Scripture.

The first and most common argument used to support the Framework Hypothesis is the parallelism that allegedly exists

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<sup>39</sup>Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall, editors, *Did God Create in Six Days?* (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 154.

<sup>40</sup>Willem VanGemereren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1988), 50.

between the six days of creation. Parallelism is a hallmark of Hebrew poetry. Framework promoters claim that if the Genesis narrative contains parallelism then it should be viewed as poetry rather than historical narrative.

VanGemeran provides a chart in which days one, two, and three are compared to days four, five, and six, respectively.<sup>41</sup> It is claimed that the creation of light on the first day is the same as the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on day four. He also states that day two saw the creation of water and the heavens, which would apparently correspond to day five in which God made the fish and the seas to inhabit the water and sky. Finally, on the third day, God made the seas, land, and vegetation. This supposedly corresponds to the creation of land animals, man, and the provision of food for man.

VanGemeran is not alone in this approach, although his listing of events is most closely aligned to the text. Kline wrote, "...the successive members of the first triad of days correspond to the successive days of the second..."<sup>42</sup> Blocher claimed that there is "powerful symmetry between the two triads of days."<sup>43</sup> Wenham sets up a freer framework by ignoring the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>42</sup>Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony".

<sup>43</sup>Blocher, Henri, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 51.

waters altogether. It will be demonstrated later that this omission seemingly removes one major problem with this argument.

The second leg on which the Framework stands is known as the ordinary providence argument. Kline boldly states that this argument provides "a decisive word against the traditional interpretation."<sup>44</sup> The primary passage utilized to support this argument is Genesis 2:4-7, which states:

This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:4-7)

Kline proposed that these verses indicate that the plants had not grown at this point because it had not rained on the earth yet. Since this passage is allegedly referring to the third day of the creation week, then apparently God was allowing normal processes to run their course during that time. Kline believes "that divine providence was operating during the creation period through processes which any reader would recognize as normal in

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<sup>44</sup>Meredith Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained," *Westminster Theological Journal Volume 20* (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1958; 2003), 20:148.

the natural world of his day."<sup>45</sup> In other words, since this passage allegedly indicates that God was working through the same means as He normally does today, then there is no reason to assume that the events in Genesis 1 were performed in any other manner.

It is noteworthy that, although Framework adherents claim to believe in ordinary providence, this argument is hardly any different than Theistic Evolution. The one major difference between the two views is that most Framework proponents reject the biological evolution of man. Those who would be classified as conservative do believe that Adam and Eve were special creations of God made in His image and did not evolve from an ape-like creature.

The third major argument from the Genesis text used to support the Framework view is known as the Cosmogony argument. It is also the most recent argument used to support the Framework. This claim is rather complicated. Kline wrote, "A two-register cosmos is thus the scene of the biblical drama, which features constant interaction between the upper and lower registers."<sup>46</sup> He explains:

It is found that a metaphorical relationship exists between the two levels; the heavenly level (upper register) is described in figures drawn from the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 149-150.

<sup>46</sup>Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony".

earthly level (lower register). As for the seven-day scheme, it belongs to the upper register and is, therefore, to be understood figuratively, not literally.<sup>47</sup>

Essentially, this argument claims that the "days" mentioned in Genesis 1 should be understood from a heavenly perspective. As a result, the "days" should be interpreted figuratively.

All three of these arguments will be critiqued later. At this point, it is necessary to trace the history of this view to provide an even deeper understanding of what it claims and why it was developed.

### History

The Framework Hypothesis is a relatively recent view of Genesis 1. Although some would claim that it can be dated back to the first century, this is unlikely and it does little help the case of those who defend the Framework view.<sup>48</sup> The fact that Framework adherents can cite Philo and Origen in support of

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>In a review of Dr. N. H. Ridderbos' work on the subject, Clarence J. Vos claims that Philo of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine held views similar to the Framework Hypothesis. Clarence Vos, *Book Reviews, Westminster Theological Seminary Volume 20* (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1958; 2003), 20:130. Vos mistakenly labels Philo as a church father. Despite this faux pas, it must be pointed out that Philo, Origen, and the early Augustine often allegorized Scripture. Many Framework adherents want to avoid being tagged as allegorists so this link does not help their cause.

their view demonstrates how far away the Framework Hypothesis is from the grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

The true date for the origin of this view is 1924. Dr. A. Noordtzij of the University of Utrecht wrote *Gods Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis (God's Word and the Testimony of the Ages)* in which he promoted an early form of this view.<sup>49</sup> Noordtzij's work emphasized the alleged parallelism of the first three days with days four through six.

A quarter of a century later, the Framework gained worldwide attention as it was promoted by two popular scholars on different continents. Meredith Kline published his influential paper on the subject in 1956.<sup>50</sup> This work would have a tremendous sway on Reformed theologians in the United States. A year later in Europe, N. H. Ridderbos published *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* in which he defined the Framework as:

In Genesis 1 the inspired author offers us a story of creation. It is not his intent, however, to present an exact report of what happened at creation. By speaking of the eightfold work of God he impresses the reader with the fact that all that exists has been created by God. This eightfold work he places in a framework: he distributes it over six days, to which he adds a seventh day as the day of rest. In this manner he gives expression to the fact that the work of creation

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<sup>49</sup>Edward J. Young, "The Days of Genesis First Article", *Westminster Theological Journal Volume 25* (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1963; 2002), 3.

<sup>50</sup>Kline, "Because It Had Not Rained."

is complete; also that at the conclusion of His work God can rest, take delight in the result...<sup>51</sup>

Over the past fifty years, the Framework Hypothesis has taken on a life of its own among scholars and church leaders. New ideas are being promoted to bolster this view. Kline published another paper in 1996 promoting the Cosmogony argument. In 1998, Dr. Mark Futato published a paper in which he developed the Ordinary Providence argument.<sup>52</sup> Other scholars have joined these men in promoting the Framework in one form or another. As a result, this view is rapidly gaining acceptance in Bible colleges and seminaries.<sup>53</sup>

#### Goal

The goal of the Framework Hypothesis is rather straightforward. In his second article promoting this view, Kline stated that his goal was:

To rebut the literalist interpretation of the Genesis creation week propounded by the young-earth theorists is a central concern of this article. At the same time, the exegetical evidence adduced also refutes the harmonistic day-age view. The conclusion

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<sup>51</sup>H. N. Ridderbos, *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 45.

<sup>52</sup>Dr. Mark Futato, "Because it Had Rained: A Study of Gen. 2:5-7 With Implications for Gen. 2:4-25 and Gen. 1:1-2:3", *Westminster Theological Journal Volume 60* (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1998; 2002).

<sup>53</sup>This point will be established in the Influence section.

is that as far as the time frame is concerned, with respect to both the duration and sequence of events, the scientist is left free of biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting that Kline claims to have refuted the Day-Age Theory. This is because his article essentially does away with the notion of the "days" in Genesis 1 as having any chronological meaning at all. At the same time, Kline believed he was succeeding in dismantling the young-earth position. His goal is stated in his conclusion. He wanted the scientist to be "left free of biblical constraints in hypothesizing about cosmic origins." This move sets the Framework apart from every other harmonistic view. Instead of trying to make the text fit the secular science, Framework proponents attempt to reclassify the text altogether so that it no longer has any bearing in the age of the earth debate.

Other Framework adherents usually claim that their goal is simply to provide the best exegesis of the Genesis text in light of the findings of modern scientific research. Tremper Longman III wrote:

Scientific research concluded that the world is old, the process that brought the cosmos into being took huge amounts of time, and that human beings are relative latecomers to the process and are themselves the product of a long evolution. It seemed that

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<sup>54</sup>Meredith Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48:2 (Ipswich, MA: American Scientific Affiliation, 1996).

scientific models of creation clashed with the biblical description. But did they really?

Some theologians immediately adopted an apologetic stance and tried to sow doubt concerning the validity of the scientific model. However, cooler heads raised the question of the interpretation of Genesis 1-2. They used the new discoveries as an occasion not to review the truth of the Genesis account but to review whether the traditional interpretation was correct.<sup>55</sup>

Longman comes close to inadvertently admitting that the harmonistic views are a result of trying to marry the text with science. Instead, he claims that the developments in science caused interpreters to rethink Genesis 1. As a result, the "cooler heads" developed what he believes is the proper view. He went on to add:

It appears that Genesis itself is not interested in giving us a clear and unambiguous understanding of the nature of the creation days. This ambiguity fits in with the overall impression we get of the passage, that it is not concerned to tell us the process of creation. Rather it is intent on simply celebrating and asserting the fact that God is Creator.<sup>56</sup>

Longman's arguments for the literary framework will be examined later. For now, his comments are given because they are representative of many others who hold this view.

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<sup>55</sup>Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 104.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

## **The Influence of the Framework Hypothesis**

The impact of the Framework Hypothesis on the modern Church is difficult to gauge. This is due to the fact it has allowed interpreters to believe anything they want to about the text of Genesis 1 and 2. As a result, it may be impossible to figure out exactly just how many people accept some form of this view. One thing is certain; there has been a major shift in evangelicalism away from the traditional interpretation in favor of non-literal views. The Framework represents the latest view to capture the support of many evangelical and conservative scholars.<sup>57</sup> As these scholars have promoted this view, more and more pastors and laymen have accepted it. The danger of this theological shift will be examined in the next section. At this point, it is necessary to study the ramifications caused by the promotion of this view. This will be done by inspecting two areas. First, to demonstrate the danger of this view, it will be necessary to show that it has influenced a large number of people, from scholars to laymen. Second, it will be established that this view has severe implications for the way in which Christians view and interpret the Bible.

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<sup>57</sup>Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. and Michael R. Butler, *Yea, Hath God Said? The Framework Hypothesis / Six-Day Creation Debate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), vii.

## Christian Leaders

Several Christian leaders have already been cited in an effort to define the Framework Hypothesis. In this section, the leading proponents of this view will be listed along with some biographical information and some of their remarks relevant to this subject. This exercise will demonstrate that the Framework Hypothesis has been accepted in some of America's top seminaries. As a result, the Framework has been taught to thousands of Christian pastors over the past few decades. Naturally, the teaching one receives in seminary is often passed on to those to whom the seminary graduate influences. This section will also highlight some more of the arguments that are commonly used by laypeople that have been influenced by these leaders. These arguments will be refuted in the final section of this paper.

The late Dr. Meredith Kline was the foremost promoter of this view. As a well-respected professor at numerous Reformed seminaries<sup>58</sup> for over fifty years and an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, his influence in Reformed circles

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<sup>58</sup>Most recently, Kline served as professor emeritus and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). Prior to this, he served as an Old Testament professor at these schools, as well as at Claremont School of Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Westminster Seminary in California.

can hardly be overstated. He earned his doctorate in Assyriology and Egyptology from Dropsie College in 1956. Kline's papers and articles were often published in theological journals and commentaries.<sup>59</sup>

With all due respect, it is telling to see how Kline referred to himself in an article in which he proposed a rather novel interpretation of the identity of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6. He called himself a "demythologizing old Israelite existentialist."<sup>60</sup> While this comment may have been a bit of self-deprecating humor in an otherwise serious article, it offers insight into his hermeneutical approach. His background in Egyptology and Assyriology led Kline to view many of the Pentateuch's accounts as a result of the Israelites' borrowing from or polemic against their pagan neighbors.<sup>61</sup> To support his concept of the "two register cosmology" he appealed to an Assyrian relief which shows a victorious king in the "lower

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<sup>59</sup>A complete list of his publications can be found on a website set up as a tribute to Kline:  
[http://www.covopc.org/Kline/Meredith\\_Kline\\_Online.html](http://www.covopc.org/Kline/Meredith_Kline_Online.html).

<sup>60</sup>Meredith Kline, "Divine Kingship and Genesis 6: 1-4", *Westminster Theological Journal Volume 24* (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1962; 2002), 187. This view was novel at the time but is now typically listed as one of the three major possible solutions to this difficult text.

<sup>61</sup>For example, Kline claimed that the author of Genesis 6 borrowed the term "sons of God" from Ugaritic epics to refer to kings who were often viewed as divine. *Ibid.*, 93.

register" and his god in the "higher register."<sup>62</sup> Recognition of the cultural and historical background of a given passage is surely important, but Kline and others go too far to the point where one could rightly accuse them of demythologizing certain passages in the same manner as critical scholars.

Following Kline's lead on the subject, Dr. Mark Futato published a paper in which he relied upon the idea that Genesis can only be interpreted rightly if one understands Israel's pagan neighbors. Dr. Futato is the Academic Dean and an Old Testament professor at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. He is also the author the *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* textbook. As an expert in the original language, he wields substantial influence in Reformed circles. In his 1998 article he promoted the Framework Hypothesis by claiming that Genesis should not be read as literal history but must be understood as a polemic against the Baal-worshiping Canaanites. He concluded his article by writing that "One central aspect of the kerygmatic message of Genesis 1-2 is now clear: Not Baal but 'The LORD he is God! The LORD he is God!'"<sup>63</sup> In other words, Futato's claim is that preachers should proclaim that the central message of Genesis 1-2 is that the God of the Bible and not Baal is the only God.

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<sup>62</sup>Kline, "Space and Time"

<sup>63</sup>Futato, "Because It Had Rained", 21.

While Kline and Futato have made a large impact in the Presbyterian denominations, Dr. Willem VanGemeran may rightly be credited with transporting the Framework into the Evangelical Free Church of America. Dr. VanGemeran taught at Reformed Theological Seminary for fourteen years before transferring to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1992 where he currently serves as professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages. He is also the director of the Doctor of Philosophy in Theological Studies program. For the past fifteen years, his writings and teachings have helped shape the beliefs of hundreds of evangelical pastors.

#### A Flawed Hermeneutic

VanGemeran's *The Progress of Redemption* develops a hermeneutical principle that he calls the redemptive-historical approach. This approach seeks to improve upon the traditional historical-grammatical hermeneutic by adding an interpretive step to the process known as the Christological or theocentric focus. For VanGemeran, it is not enough to simply discover the author's intended meaning because without application, exegesis is merely academic.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the interpreter must also discover what each particular passage reveals about Christ and His redemptive work on behalf of man.

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<sup>64</sup>VanGemeran, 38.

The Christological Principle holds some validity, especially at the point of application. However, there is a very real danger in misusing this principle in one's exegesis. If not used carefully, it can easily lead to allegorical and other non-literal interpretations of texts that are real history. If the interpreter is attempting to locate Christ in a passage that is not about Christ then he will be forced to commit eisegesis by inserting ideas that are foreign to the text. One local evangelical pastor who uses this principle told this student that the story of Naaman the Syrian had "Jesus all over it."<sup>65</sup> Certainly one could pull spiritual insights and application points from this passage, but to claim that the story is actually all about Jesus misses the point entirely. Moreover, this approach allegorizes the text so that what is written becomes virtually meaningless and wrests the meaning from the divinely inspired author and gives it to the interpreter.

This insight may provide a clue as to why the Framework is so popular in circles that interpret in this manner. Covenant theologians are more likely to adopt the Christological Principle in their interpretations because they view both Old and New Testament believers as being under the same covenant of

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<sup>65</sup>Personal correspondence with an Associate Pastor at a local Evangelical Free Church. Email on file.

grace. This belief often forces them to read the New Testament back into the Old.<sup>66</sup> However, by doing this, the covenant theologian is importing concepts and ideas that the original audience would have never thought about.<sup>67</sup>

This hermeneutical style lends itself perfectly to the postmodern worldview that is so prevalent in society and has been making steady inroads into the Church. For the postmodernist, the meaning of any text is not found in the author's intentions but in the mind of the reader. Known as deconstructionism, this view of literary works lies at the heart of postmodernism.<sup>68</sup> This is not to say that all Framework advocates are postmodernists. Many are not; however, their abuse of the Christological hermeneutic brings them in line with that mentality. Perhaps the major difference would be that postmodernists seek to interpret a text according to their own

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<sup>66</sup>A covenant theologian, James Orr stated that covenant theology "...failed to seize the true idea of development, and by an artificial system of typology, and allegorizing interpretation, sought to read back practically the whole of the New Testament into the Old." James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n.d.), 303.

<sup>67</sup>Of course, no dispensationalist would deny that the New Testament sheds tremendous light on the Old Testament and that if one has been saved by Christ, he has the Holy Spirit who will guide him in his efforts to interpret.

<sup>68</sup>David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2006), 120. Noebel defines deconstructionism as "a means of textual criticism that considers a text open to the reader's interpretation and laden with hidden bias, assumptions, and prejudices."

biases to make it say whatever each individual chooses, whereas those who wrongly apply the Christological Principle temper their eisegesis with other Scriptures.

Although its supporters deny that they allegorize the text or make it non-literal,<sup>69</sup> this is precisely what the Framework Hypothesis does to the creation account in Genesis. Thankfully, Kline realized that this account is not allegory, but it is a very small step to go from his view to a full-fledged allegorical hermeneutic. For example, if an interpreter identifies figurative language or literary devices in a given text, should he immediately dismiss the historical-grammatical interpretation? To be consistent, Framework advocates would have to respond in the affirmative. However, numerous texts contain figures of speech but are still interpreted in the normal, historical-grammatical fashion. For example, after Cain killed Abel, God scolded Cain for his murderous act and told him that the voice of his brother's blood cried out from the ground, which had opened its mouth to receive his blood (Gen. 4:10-11). No one would claim that Abel's blood had a voice or that the ground had a mouth. These are obvious figures of speech inserted into a narrative passage. Should these figurative

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<sup>69</sup>Kline stated, "Exegesis which disregards this [that particular elements in Genesis 1 should be viewed as literary devices] degenerates into allegorizing and these chapters are not allegories." Kline, "Because it Had Not Rained", 156.

elements force one to conclude that this story should not be interpreted literally? The fact that Framework advocates do not do this points up their inconsistency and reveals that the true motive for reinterpreting Genesis 1 - 2 is not based on the text but on a desire to allow for a belief in billions of years. Kline's claim that the Framework frees the scientist "of biblical constraints when hypothesizing about cosmic origins" also supports this notion.<sup>70</sup>

#### The Text Does Not Matter

Believing that they have achieved their goal of showing non-literal elements in the text, Framework adherents proceed to completely ignore the words in Genesis 1. Ronald Youngblood proclaimed that there were only three "hard data" that could be ascertained from Genesis 1. He states:

1. "God (whose existence is assumed rather than argued) created the universe at the beginning of time...2. God brought into being all the denizens of the universe...3. Creation is unfolded in a beautiful and orderly pattern, for our God is a God of order and not of confusion."<sup>71</sup>

No conservative Christian would disagree with these particular statements; however, Youngblood's statements demonstrate his

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<sup>70</sup>Kline, "Space and Time".

<sup>71</sup>Ronald Youngblood, "Moses and the King of Siam" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 16* (Evangelical Theological Society, 1973), 221-222.

reliance upon the accuracy of the Framework. Following his second point, Youngblood follows Kline's example of accusing Moses of writing against Canaanite and Babylonian deities.<sup>72</sup> By stressing the "orderly pattern" of creation, Youngblood emphasizes his belief in the Framework Hypothesis.

What is more telling are his claims made immediately following the third point. He wrote, "There is an unmistakable progression from simple to complex, from lower forms to higher..." Readers should immediately recognize that this sounds exactly like evolution. The reason for this is that Framework proponents have no problem with a belief in evolution, as long as a person believes that God is ultimately responsible for starting and guiding the process. Another Framework promoter, J. A. Thompson, declared:

But the method by which God achieved all this is not given. Was it by the separate instantaneous creation of each and every creature? Or was it by some process which, in the case of living things,

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<sup>72</sup>Youngblood writes, "God made even His traditional enemies: the Babylonian *Ti'amat* (the lexical equivalent of Hebrew *tehom*) is denied divine status and equated with the waters in Genesis 1:2, and the Canaanite *tannin* (the only specifically named creature in Genesis 1 ["great sea creatures"]) is described as proceeding from God's creative hand in 1:21 and pronounced 'good.'" Ibid. In other words, Youngblood views this passage as a polemic against the Babylonian and Canaanite gods or creation myths. One must remember that Moses and the Israelites had not yet entered the Promised Land. They would have been familiar with Egyptian culture but probably would not have been very familiar with Canaanite and Babylonian myths. To approach the Scripture in this manner is hardly different than the liberal hermeneutic.

began with some simple organism and arrived finally under the hand of God at the completed product, that is by some evolutionary process? In my view, the narrative in Genesis 1 yields no information about the divine method, only that, whatever the method, it was divine, so that any concept of purely naturalistic evolution without God is ruled out. But there are alternatives to the two extreme positions of fiat creationism and naturalistic evolution, and men of deep Christian conviction can be found who hold such intermediate positions as theistic evolution or progressive creationism.<sup>73</sup>

Thompson is correct that "men of deep Christian conviction" can hold to theistic evolution and progressive creationism, but this misses the point. It is possible to have a sincere love for the Lord and completely undermine the authority of Scripture. For example, Seventh-day Adventists reject the doctrine of eternal punishment and yet many of them are sincere and devoted followers of Christ. Christian commitment is not the standard for truth; God's word is. If Christian commitment was the determining factor in determining orthodoxy, then one may as well strip the Bible of all non-salvific essentials and declare them as being unimportant.

Sadly, it seems that Thompson views the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1 as being "extreme." Also, Thompson is simply wrong that Genesis 1 "yields no information about the divine method" of creation other than that God was responsible for it. Genesis 1 reveals that God spoke several things into

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<sup>73</sup>J. A. Thompson, "Genesis 1: Science? History? Theology?" *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 50 (Spring 1968), 20.

existence (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26) and that plants and animals would only bring forth "after their kind" (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). This common phrase completely eliminates the possibility of any evolution from one "kind" of creature into another.<sup>74</sup>

#### The Orthodox Presbyterian Church: An Example of the Growing Influence of the Framework Hypothesis

Since it was originally proposed in the early 1930s, the Framework Hypothesis has gained enough influence to make a significant impact on one of America's more conservative denominations. In the late 1990s, leaders from the Presbytery of Southern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church held meetings over the course of two years to debate whether or not the Framework Hypothesis should be viewed as an acceptable interpretation of Genesis 1. At present, the various Presbyteries have not endorsed this view. This is evidenced by the fact that some Presbyteries refuse to ordain anyone holding this view while others will ordain if the view is held privately. For example, The Credentials Committee of the Presbytery of Northern California orders that prior to ordination, a Framework advocate must proclaim that he is out of

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<sup>74</sup>The biblical word "kind" is intentionally used here. It is not to be confused with the modern taxonomic term "species." Creationists readily recognize the possibility of speciation, through which new species can arise from a given population.

accord with the Westminster Confession on this point.<sup>75</sup> However, support is growing in the various forms of Presbyterianism and is being promoted by some professors in Presbyterian seminaries, such as Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and California, as well as the Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando.

Kenneth Gentry and Michael Butler are professors at Westminster Classical College in Maryland and ordained elders in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In *Yea, Hath God Said?* they bemoaned the direction of Presbyterian churches as a result of the growing acceptance of the Framework Hypothesis. Their book is comprised of several papers written as part of an ongoing debate in their denomination. In their critique they examine the Majority Report given during their conference on the subject. The authors express concern that because their denomination is considering the Framework Hypothesis as an acceptable view, they are straying from the truth of Scripture and from the stated views of the Westminster Standards.<sup>76</sup>

Gentry's and Butler's concerns are validated when one considers that this view started in the 1900s and is now having a major impact on Presbyterian denominations. There is cause

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<sup>75</sup>Kenneth L. Gentry and Michael R. Butler, *Yea, Hath God Said? The Framework Hypothesis / Six-Day Creation Debate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 6.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 27 - 28.

for concern outside of the Presbyterian church, too. For example, VanGemeren's promotion of this view at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School will undoubtedly impact the Evangelical Free Church of America and other Evangelical denominations.<sup>77</sup>

### Genesis Apathy

One of the most frustrating effects that the Framework Hypothesis has had on the Church is that many Christians have been led to believe that Genesis 1 is unimportant. Ever since the early 1800s the Genesis accounts of the Creation and the Flood have been under constant attack. Sadly, many Christians are apathetic because they have been led to believe that it is nothing more than a side issue. Yet this is one of the most important battles the Church can be fighting at this time since this is where the secular society has been attacking.

The Framework Hypothesis bears some of the responsibility for this since it actually attempts to downplay the biblical text. Ultimately, the Framework Hypothesis turns Genesis into a sort of divine Aesop's Fable. For example, it does not matter that a race never occurred between a pokey turtle and speedy hare. All that matters is that a person understands the main

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<sup>77</sup>This student knows several pastors who have graduated from Trinity and are now either Framework supporters or hold it as a viable alternative to the traditional view.

point behind the story: the turtle won the race because perseverance pays off. In the same way, the Framework Hypothesis attempts to invalidate the vast majority of the words in Genesis 1. It does not really matter if God created over the course of billions of years or six days or whether or not He used evolution to do it. All that matters is that a Christian believes that God created everything and that man was specially created. Kline attempted to show that he still cared about the Genesis text, but, in actuality, he only cared for a few verses in the first chapter. He wrote:

In this article I have advocated an interpretation of biblical cosmogony according to which Scripture is open to the current scientific view of a very old universe and, in that respect, does not discountenance the theory of the evolutionary origin of man. But while I regard the widespread insistence on a young earth to be a deplorable disservice to the cause of biblical truth, I at the same time deem commitment to the authority of scriptural teaching to involve the acceptance of Adam as an historical individual, the covenantal head and ancestral fount of the rest of mankind, and the recognition that it was the one and same divine act that constituted him the first man, Adam the son of God (Luke 3:38), that also imparted to him life (Gen. 2:7).<sup>78</sup>

Apparently, Kline believes that one can pick and choose which portions of Scripture are necessary to believe in order to be considered an inerrantist. This is nonsense. Paul clearly stated that "all Scripture" is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). As such, God has not left it up to the individual to decide

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<sup>78</sup>Kline, "Space and Time" n. 47.

which passages are important and which are not. He does not waste words and He expects His followers to believe all of His words. Unfortunately, the Framework Hypothesis encourages believers to reject the plain meaning of the very first chapter of the Bible. In a society in which Christians already believe they can pick which parts of the Bible to believe, the Framework Hypothesis adds fuel to the unbelieving fire.

## Critique

Having defined the Framework Hypothesis, provided a brief history, and demonstrated the growing influence of this view, it is time to offer a critique of this view. This critique will address some of the erroneous argumentation inherent in the promotion and defense of this view. Following this will be a thorough examination of the three major arguments used to support the Framework, which were briefly discussed earlier. This critique will conclude with an overview of some of the hermeneutical violations practiced by Framework supporters.

### Faulty Argumentation

The supporters of the Framework Hypothesis are guilty of committing the logical fallacy known as a *non sequitur*. This occurs whenever the conclusion does not follow from the arguments provided. In this case, even if Framework proponents are correct in their claims about Genesis 1 being non-literal, it does not follow that the scientist is free of biblical constraints when discussing the age of the earth.

First, it is entirely possible to write literal history and utilize figurative elements, including parallelism. Consider

the following true account about deer hunting told to this student by his father recently.

Since I started hunting sixteen years ago, I have shot 25 deer. There has been a 3 to 2 ratio of those killed with a gun to those killed with bow and arrow. Of those shot with a bow and arrow, there was a 3 to 2 ratio of does to bucks.<sup>79</sup>

This student immediately recognized the parallelism in this account yet the story is one hundred percent true. The parallelism does not negate the historicity of the account nor does it mean that one should question what the storyteller means by the terms ratio, deer, does, or bucks.

The second major problem with the claim of figurative language in Genesis 1 is that it does not deal with the other biblical texts that address this issue. The Bible is consistent in teaching that God created the universe and everything in it several thousand years ago, and He did it in a period of six days of ordinary length. If one reinterprets Genesis 1 as the Framework advocates propose, then he will be forced to reinterpret the plain meaning of numerous biblical texts. A handful of these will be cited here to illustrate this point.

Exodus 20:11 states, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day." God told Moses that this was the reason for

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<sup>79</sup>Personal conversation between this student and his father on November 21, 2007.

the length of man's workweek and the reason why man was to keep the Sabbath commandment. This passage clearly states that the reason man is to work six days and rest for one is because that is what God did. Nevertheless, some Framework advocates have claimed that the opposite is true. The Majority Report given during one of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's conferences on this subject stated:

"So we conclude, that the creation narrative - specifically the picture of God's completing His creative work in a week of days - have [sic] been presented in terms of an analogy to a human week of work."<sup>80</sup>

This declaration turns Exodus 20:11 on its head. God did not reveal Genesis 1 to man in this way because of the way man's workweek was set up. Man's workweek is set up this way because it follows what God had done during the creation.

Another problem for the Framework Hypothesis is found in the diets of the birds and the creatures created on the sixth day. In Genesis 1:29, God told Adam and Eve that they were allowed to eat every herb and every fruit.<sup>81</sup> What is even more interesting is that in the very next verse, God reveals that the birds and land animals were also created as vegetarians. Since

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<sup>80</sup>"The Report of the Committee to Study the Framework Hypothesis," Majority Report. Presbytery of Southern California, Orthodox Presbyterian Church. October 15-16, 1999.

<sup>81</sup>This would not include the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The prohibition against eating this tree's fruit was given in the following chapter (2:17).

this passage is found in Genesis 1, Framework advocates might simply dismiss it as a literary device. Nevertheless, this would contradict the plain teaching of Genesis 9:3 in which God told Noah that mankind could now eat meat in addition to the plants. This passage confirms the earlier teaching in chapter one that man and beast were originally created as vegetarians.

The New Testament provides some passages that Framework advocates cannot fit into their system. When the Pharisees asked about the issue of divorce, Jesus responded by quoting Genesis 1 and 2. He said, "But from the beginning of creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh:'" (Mark 10:6-7). The only possible way for Jesus' statement to be accurate is if Adam and Eve were created in "the beginning." If God used ordinary providence for billions of years prior to the creation of man and woman, then Jesus would have been mistaken since there is no way that "from the beginning of creation" could refer to something that occurred billions of years after the beginning.

A similar problem for the Framework is found in Romans 1:20, which states that "...since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead..." In this passage Paul states that all men can know about God through

general revelation so that they are without excuse if they do not believe. Often overlooked is the fact that Paul stated that God's invisible attributes have been clearly seen "since the creation of the world." One may want to claim that the angels were the beings that clearly saw these attributes for billions of years until man was created. However, this passage has nothing to do with the angels. The context reveals that Paul is talking about human beings. Hence, Paul claimed that human beings have been around to clearly see God's invisible attributes "since the creation of the world." Needless to say, this is only possible if Adam and Eve were made at about the same time as the world.

#### Textual Parallelism

The argument known as Textual Parallelism was defined earlier. Briefly stated, this argument claims that the "days" of Genesis 1 exhibit parallelism and, as such, they should be interpreted figuratively rather than literally. This argument is the most common as it is used by virtually every Framework supporter. Several quotes were provided in an earlier section while defining the Framework. In addition to those citations, Futato claimed, "Days 1 and 4 are two different perspectives on

the same creative work.”<sup>82</sup> Although it seems that every Framework supporter uses the textual parallelism argument, some have proposed different schemes of parallelism in Genesis 1.

Despite its popularity there are numerous problems with this argument. First and foremost, the parallelism is not as precise as Framework supporters claim. In fact, the argument is misleading because the creative events must be rearranged in order achieve this alleged parallelism.

VanGemeren’s parallelism chart below is similar to the majority of those studied for this paper. For example, Longman’s chart is identical except that he does not mention the vegetation on day three or the provision of food on day six.<sup>83</sup> It will be used as an example of the many problems with this argument.

Day	Formation of the World (Item Created)	Day	Filling of the World (Item Created)
1	darkness, light	4	heavenly light-bearers
2	heavens, water	5	birds of the air; water animals
3	seas, land, vegetation	6	land animals; man; provision of food

At first glance, the Framework supporters seem to have a pretty strong argument; however, one needs to only take a close look at the text to see the flaws in this argument. A

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<sup>82</sup>Mark Futato, “Because It Had Not Rained”, 16.

<sup>83</sup>Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 105.

straightforward reading of the text will reveal that VanGemerer's chart is incorrect. Following is a description from Genesis 1 of the items (*italicized for emphasis*) that God created on each day.

On the first day, God created the heavens, earth, light, and waters. Genesis 1:1-3 states:

In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the *earth*. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the *waters*. Then God said, "Let there be *light*"; and there was *light*.

All of these events happened on the first day. Two points from these verses are crucial for this study. First, verse three states that God made light (Heb. 'owr) on the first day. It does not say that he made the sun (*shehmesh*), which was created on the fourth day.

Second, verse two unequivocally declares that the waters (Heb. *mayim*) were already in existence prior to the second day. By itself, this fact destroys the alleged parallelism of the text. With the exception of Wenham who does not mention water at all, every Framework advocate has claimed that water was made on the second day. In his chart, VanGemerer places the creation of water on the second day. Framework advocates make this claim because day two allegedly corresponds to the fifth day. However, if parallelism exists, then day five must correspond to

the first day. Perhaps this is why Wenham decided not to mention the creation of the waters at all.

The second day of creation saw the creation of the firmament or expanse. God said, "Let there be a *firmament* (Heb. *raqiya`*) in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Gen. 1:6). Once again, it is apparent that the waters were already in existence prior to the second day. Many scholars have assumed that the firmament refers only to earth's atmosphere since verse 20 indicates that the birds would fly upon the face of the expanse. However, it must be much larger than this since the sun, moon, and stars of day four are placed in the firmament (Gen. 1:17).

On the third day, God created the dry land and certain types of vegetation. Genesis 1:9-11 state:

Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the *dry land* appear"; and it was so. And God called the *dry land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called *Seas*. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth *grass*, the *herb that yields seed*, and the *fruit tree that yields fruit* according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so.

This passage will be examined in greater detail during the Ordinary Providence critique. For now, it is important to notice that God called the waters "Seas" on this day and that the dry land was made.

On the fourth day, God made the sun, moon, and stars and set them in the firmament. It reads:

Then God made two great lights: the *greater light* to rule the day, and the *lesser light* to rule the night. He made the *stars* also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness."

The fact that God placed the stars in the firmament repudiates the Framework's position that days one and four are the same event. This is because the firmament was not created until day two yet it had to be in existence prior to the creation of the sun, moon, and stars for these things to be placed in it. Once again, this reiterates the necessity that the days are arranged chronologically rather than thematically as Kline suggested.<sup>84</sup>

On the fifth day, God created the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. Genesis 1:21 states, "So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind." The alleged parallelism breaks down again on the fifth day. First, the fish were to fill "the waters in the seas" (v. 22). This is supposed to correspond to the second day; however, it actually corresponds to the first day when God made the waters. Even worse, the third day is also

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<sup>84</sup>Kline, "Space and Time".

a better possible parallel than the second because this is when He named the waters "seas."

Second, that the birds which fly upon the face of the firmament allegedly corresponds to the second day when the firmament was made. However, the birds actually reproduce "on the earth" (v. 22) and spend most of their time on the land which was formed on the third day. Perhaps there is a stronger link between the third day and the fifth day than the second and fifth. Indeed, even the birds of the air were given plants for food (v. 30).

On the sixth day, God made the land animals and mankind. This is the only one of the alleged parallelisms that does not have major problems because there is a general correspondence to the events of the third day and the sixth. The dry land and plants were made on the third and the creatures that would dwell on the land and eat those plants were made on the sixth. However, this fact reveals a fatal flaw in the overall goal of the Framework Hypothesis. Since the goal of the Framework is to make the Genesis text allow for the possibility of a "very old universe" and "the theory of the evolutionary origin of man"<sup>85</sup>,

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<sup>85</sup>Kline, "Space and Time", fn. #47. Here, Kline also calls the insistence of the young-earth creationists on a young-earth interpretation a "deplorable disservice to the cause of biblical truth." This is an extremely harsh statement that has little or no place in an intellectual debate nor should Christians treat fellow believers with this type of vehemence.

then they must accept one necessary evil of this view. Namely, the old universe concept and the evolutionary origin of man concept must include the killing of countless creatures for food prior to the Fall. This is because the fossil record provides numerous examples of carnivorous activity among land animals in rock layers that were allegedly laid down millions of years before man was created. It is impossible that land animals, birds of the air, and mankind were all created as vegetarians if they evolved or were created over the course of millions of years and participated in carnivorous activity.

An accurate chart of the creation events is given below to provide visual evidence that the alleged parallelism does not exist.

Day	Formation of the World (Item Created)	Day	Filling of the World (Item Created)
1	heavens; earth; light; waters	4	heavenly light-bearers
2	expanse (firmament)	5	birds of the air; water animals
3	seas (named); land; vegetation (fruit trees, grass, and herbs with seed)	6	land animals; man (male and female)

One final point must be made here that has been briefly touched upon earlier. The order of events in Genesis 1 must be interpreted chronologically or else the text becomes hopelessly

convoluted and contradictory. The waters made on the first day were separated on the following day. The dry land of the third day appeared from the midst of these waters on the third day and the vegetation of the third day grew on the ground but extended into the air of the second day. The sun, moon, and stars of the fourth day were placed in the firmament of the second day. The birds of the fifth day flew on the face of the firmament of the second day, multiplied on the ground of the third day, and ate the plants of the third day. The fish swam in the waters made on the first day. The land animals of the sixth day ate the vegetation of the third day and walked on the ground of the third day. Finally, mankind was created last and given dominion over everything else God had made. These events cannot be scrambled without forcing the text to make contradictory claims.

#### Ordinary Providence

Since the Ordinary Providence argument has been called "the most decisive argument" against the traditional interpretation it requires close inspection.<sup>86</sup> The papers by Kline and Futato represent the most detailed explanation of this argument.<sup>87</sup> This

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<sup>86</sup>Kline, "Rained", 158.

<sup>87</sup>Kline and Futato make the case that Ordinary Providence in Genesis 2:5 indicates that Genesis 1 should not be interpreted literally. It is somewhat ironic that the titles to their respective papers directly contradict one another. Kline

argument uses the text of Genesis 2:5-6 in an effort to prove that God created everything via means of ordinary providence.

Kline stated:

Embedded in Gen. 2:5 ff. is the principle that the *modus operandi* [*sic*] of the divine providence was the same during the creation period as that of ordinary providence at the present time. It is not to be demonstrated that those who adopt the traditional approaches cannot successfully integrate this revelation with Genesis 1 as they interpret it. In contradiction to Gen. 2:5, the twenty-four-hour day theory must presuppose that God employed other than the ordinary secondary means in executing his works of providence. To take just one example, it was the work of the 'third day' that the waters should be gathered together into seas and that the dry land should appear and be covered with vegetation (Gen. 1:9-13). All this according to the theory in question transpired within twenty-four hours. But continents just emerged from under the sea do not become thirsty land as fast as that by the ordinary process of evaporation. And yet according to the principle revealed in Gen. 2:5 the process of evaporation at that time was the ordinary one."<sup>88</sup>

Essentially what Kline claimed in this passage is that Genesis 2:5 contains evidence that Genesis 1 should be interpreted non-literally. This supposed evidence is that no "plant of the field" or "herb of the field" (Gen. 2:5) had grown yet because God had not caused it to rain yet. Kline believes this passage provides additional detail to the third day and, as such, indicates that God must have used the process of ordinary

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claimed that it had not rained while Futato claimed that it had rained.

<sup>88</sup>Kline, "Rained", 151-152.

providence to bring forth the dry land and create the plants. If this is truly the most decisive argument against the traditional interpretation then the Framework is on extremely shaky theological ground.

*Ordinary Providence Equals Uniformitarianism*

First, it must be pointed out that Kline's suggestion here is just a repackaging of the unbiblical philosophy of uniformitarianism. This happens to be the underlying philosophy of every single old-earth view, whether naturalistic or theistic in nature. The Glossary of Geology defines uniformitarianism as follows:

[It is] the fundamental principle or doctrine that geologic processes and natural laws now operating to modify the Earth's crust have acted in the same regular manner and with essentially the same intensity throughout geologic time, and that past geologic events can be explained by phenomena and forces observable today; the classical concept that 'the present is the key to the past'.<sup>89</sup>

Uniformitarianism has moved beyond the discipline of geology and has been accepted in astronomy, biology, and nearly every scientific field that attempts to study past events. However, this philosophy does not accurately describe the past history of the planet or universe. Modern natural disasters

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<sup>89</sup>Robert Bates and Julia Jackson, *Glossary of Geology*, 2nd edition (Alexandria, VA: American Geological Institute, 1980), 677.

have demonstrated that catastrophes can have tremendous effects on the geologic features of an area. Moreover, the Bible explicitly warns that scoffers would come in the last days that would hold this view. The Apostle Peter cautioned his readers:

...knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Pet. 3:3-4)

Peter went on to explain that these scoffers would reject three important doctrines of the Christian faith: the Creation, the Flood, and the Second Coming of Christ. Peter undoubtedly accurately described the modern state of affairs. It is sad that godly men feel the need to reinterpret the plain words of Scripture because they have bought into the unbiblical philosophy of uniformitarianism. This belief undermines acceptance of the worldwide flood of Noah's day, too. Ultimately, it undermines every single miracle because if they are not occurring today, then they could not have happened in the past.

Sadly, influential Christians have accepted and even promoted the acceptance of this view. Bernard Ramm stated:

If uniformitarianism makes a scientific case for itself to a Christian scholar, that Christian scholar has every right to believe it, and if he is a man and not a coward he will believe it in spite of the

intimidation that he is supposedly gone over into the camp of the enemy.<sup>90</sup>

Surely it is dangerous to allow ungodly philosophies to form the basis of one's hermeneutic yet this is precisely what Ramm advocated.

By promoting the argument of Ordinary Providence, the Framework supporters are repeating Ramm's error. To claim that God did not use miraculous means to bring the creation into existence is out of step with the plain teaching of Scripture. This fact alone should cause one to reject the Ordinary Providence argument; however, there are other reasons to discard it.

#### *Principle of Immediacy*

God displays His power in this universe through at least two means: miracles and ordinary providence. Through miracles God demonstrates His power in that He temporarily overrides ordinary providence to perform His work. When this happens, it is immediately clear that something extraordinary has occurred. God also demonstrates His power through ordinary providence. Hebrews 1:3 proclaims that Christ "upholds all things by the word of His power." Oftentimes, men fail to credit God in this

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<sup>90</sup>Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishers 1954), 171.

area because it is taken for granted since this is what one consistently observes in the world.

Psalm 33:8-9 provides some interesting comments on this subject. Concerning the creation events, the Psalmist declared, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." When God brought something into existence during the creation week, "He spoke, and it was done."

This principle of immediacy can be found in the New Testament and reveals the importance of this concept. When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter back to life, Mark revealed that after Jesus had commanded her to arise, that "immediately the girl rose and walked" (Mark 5:42). This is critical because if she would have stayed dead for another week and then risen after Jesus had left the area, no one would attribute the miracle to the Lord. However, since she rose as soon as the words left His mouth, no one could deny that He performed the miracle. The same thing happened when Jesus healed Bartimaeus from blindness that he "immediately" received his sight (Mark 10:52). Once again, the fact that the healing occurred immediately after the command causes one to attribute the miracle to Jesus.

The Old Testament contains many examples of this as well. One miracle is particularly relevant to this subject. When the Israelites first entered the Promised Land they had to cross the

Jordan River. The Bible reveals that the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant and all the children of Israel crossed over on "dry ground" (Josh. 3:17). Psalm 33:8-9 demonstrates that God did not create via means of ordinary providence but miraculously. If it can be demonstrated that Kline's claims regarding Genesis 2:5 are unfounded then perhaps a continent just emerged from under the sea could become thirsty ground.

### *Genesis 2:5 is not About Day Three*

The strongest argument against the Ordinary Providence argument is that Genesis 2:5 does not even refer to the third day of the creation week. Kline's and Futato's entire argument rests on the claim that Genesis 2:5 is describing the state of affairs on the third day of the creation week. This is simply inaccurate.

Genesis 2:5-6 states:

...before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

Two specific types of plants are named here. The "plant of the field" (Heb. *siah hassadeh*) and the "herb of the field" (Heb. *eseb hassadeh*) are specific terms that refer to "wild shrubs of

the steppe" and "cultivated grain" respectively.<sup>91</sup> These are different than the grass (Heb. *dese*), the seed-yielding herbs (Heb. *eseb mazria zera*) and the fruit trees (Heb. *es periioseh peri*) which were created in Genesis 1:12.

When this is considered, it becomes obvious that Genesis 2:5-6 is not referring to the same event as Genesis 1:12. In fact, Genesis 2:5-6 is describing the situation that existed on the sixth day prior to the creation of man and the Garden of Eden. There was a very good reason why these plants did not exist yet. The "wild shrubs of the steppe" are plants that contain thorns and thistles. These could not exist before Adam's sin because it was his sin that caused the very existence of thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:18). Also, there were no "cultivated grains" because Adam was not created yet to cultivate the grains. It becomes clear that Genesis 2:5-6 is simply preparing the reader for what is about to happen in the following chapters: man is going to be created and man will fall into sin bringing death and suffering into the world. The fact that Genesis 2:5-6 does not refer to the third day thus destroys the most decisive argument against the traditional interpretation.

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<sup>91</sup>Futato, "Because it Had Rained", 4. It is interesting that even Futato recognizes the differences between these words and those used in Genesis 1 yet he believes these two terms create a merism standing for every sort of plant.

## Two-Register Cosmogony

Despite the problems with the two most common arguments for the Framework, Kline believed that he had unlocked another previously unnoticed detail in the Genesis account. This detail once again directs the reader to interpret the text in a non-literal fashion. This argument is clearly the strangest argument of the three and is difficult to fully comprehend.

As described earlier, Kline believed that Genesis 1 reveals a two-register cosmogony. In other words, the Bible describes an upper or heavenly reality and a lower or earthly reality. These two realms measure time differently. According to Kline, the "days" of Genesis 1 refer not to heavenly days but to earthly days. He stated:

The six evening-morning days then do not mark the passage of time in the lower register sphere. They are not identifiable in terms of solar days, but relate to the history of creation at the upper register of the cosmos. The creation "week is to be understood figuratively, not literally" that is the conclusion demanded by the biblical evidence.<sup>92</sup>

In developing this view Kline certainly demonstrated his vivid imagination. In the same article, Kline tries to support the claim of a two-register cosmogony with the following account:

Eden was the sacred center of the earthly reproduction of the heavenly reality. Here in the

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<sup>92</sup>Kline, "Space and Time".

garden of the Lord, the Spirit-Glory that fills the heavenly temple was visibly manifested on the mountain of God (cf. Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13 ff.; 31:8f.), the vertical cosmic axis linking heaven and earth. The revealed presence of the King of Glory crowning this sacred mountain marked the earth as a holy theocratic domain. Reflecting the identity of Eden as a sanctuary was the priestly responsibility assigned to man to guard the garden from profanation (Gen. 3:15). The sequel underscores this. When man forfeited his priestly role, guardianship of the holy site was transferred to the cherubim (Gen. 3:24). They were guardians of the heavenly temple throne and the extension of that function to Eden accents the identity of this earthly spot as a visible reproduction of the temple above.<sup>93</sup>

Kline's arguments go far beyond the plain meaning of the text. Most of this passage is wild speculation and yet it is used to support his main argument.

If Kline is correct about making a distinction between the two registers then one must wonder how he knew which register is being referred to in Genesis 1. He answers:

Therefore, when we find that God's upper level activity of issuing creative fiats from his heavenly throne is pictured as transpiring in a week of earthly days, we readily recognize that, in keeping with the pervasive contextual pattern, this is a literary figure, an earthly, lower register time metaphor for an upper register, heavenly reality.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid. This passage is cited to demonstrate Kline's excessive allegorizing mentality. Nowhere does the Bible claim that Eden was a reproduction of a heavenly reality. Nor does it state that Adam's role was one of a priest to guard against profanation or mention any sort of cosmic axis linking heaven and earth. Kline's tendency to this sort of allegorizing of the text calls into question his acceptance of the literal historical-grammatical hermeneutic.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

So Kline "readily recognize[s]" something that no other exegete has ever seen before in the Genesis text. More likely is that Kline discovered this only because he was trying to find a way to make the text figurative.

There are several problems with this argument as well. First, the entire argument is based on the assumption of textual parallelism. Since Framework advocates believe that days one and four are parallel and must be interpreted figuratively, then this allegedly proves that they are not referring to solar days. This is circular reasoning and it has already been demonstrated that the textual parallelism argument does not hold up under scrutiny. On this basis alone, the Two-Register Cosmogony argument also crumbles.

The second problem is that Kline cannot show that time moves at a different pace in the heavenly realm than it does in the earthly realm.<sup>95</sup> The Bible does not reveal this information. In fact, quite the opposite is probably true. In Daniel 10:13 an angel reveals to Daniel that he had been delayed by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" for "twenty-one days." Most conservative commentators believe the prince of Persia

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<sup>95</sup>It must be noted that Kline is not proposing that God is bound by time. When he refers to the upper (heavenly) register, he is referring to the realm in which angels live - not the abode of God. Angels, as created beings, probably experience time in some way.

refers to a demonic being. If this is the case, then it is certainly interesting that the angel gives Daniel information about time in the upper register and it corresponds to earthly time. A similar example is found in Luke 1:36 when the angel Gabriel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy. Once again, an angelic being refers to earthly time. These arguments are by no means conclusive to prove that heavenly time, if it exists, and earthly time are the same; however, they definitely show that the Bible does not reveal a difference between the two.

Finally, the greatest problem with this argument is that the focus of Genesis 1 is on the lower register. It begins with the creation of Earth and moves through the creation of the atmosphere, land, vegetation, animals, and man. Since the focus is on the earthly register then the time indicators must refer to earthly time. Indeed, this is demonstrated by the phrase "evening and morning" which was written at the end of each day's activities. Since there is presumably no "evening and morning" in the heavenly register, one should assume that this refers to the earthly register. This troublesome phrase is seldom mentioned by Framework proponents.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Kline only briefly mentions it and dismisses it without much discussion. He claims, "The imagery of the evening and morning is simply a detail in the creation-week picture. This refrain thus functions as part of the formularized framework of

## Hermeneutical Violations

The three major arguments for the Framework Hypothesis have not held up under closer examination. While this is a serious issue, there is another issue that is even more critical. Those who are promoting the Framework Hypothesis are guilty of some serious violations of standard hermeneutical principles. This should not surprise traditional exegetes since the Framework was not developed from Scripture but has been imposed on it by those seeking to harmonize God's word with the fallible claims of man.

As was demonstrated in the Faulty Argumentation section, when one passage is "reinterpreted" it strains or unravels other passages in the Bible. This demonstrates that the Framework violates one of the most important principles in biblical interpretation known as the *analogia Scriptura* (analogy of Scripture). This principle reveals that since God cannot lie and the Bible is His word then the Bible cannot be wrong in any of its teachings. With their unwarranted reclassification of

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the account." This question begging response is insufficient to overturn the clear words of Scripture. Notice Kline's effort to turn this phrase into nothing more than image-laden refrain making it sound like poetry rather than sober history. Kline, "Space and Time."

Genesis 1 as "semi-poetic"<sup>97</sup>, Framework supporters foist numerous contradictions upon the text.

Framework advocates are also guilty of using obscure passages to interpret clear passages. Exegetes have traditionally used clear passages to reinterpret difficult passages. By basing their most "decisive" argument on Genesis 2:5-6 the Framework advocates violate this principle. Numerous commentators agree that Genesis 2:5-6 are somewhat ambiguous.<sup>98</sup> This is a risky move, especially when one is developing an entirely new concept.

Framework advocates fail to respect the collective wisdom of nearly two millennia of Christian scholarship and three-and-one-half millennia of Jewish scholarship on the issue. Although unanimity on this subject is not found among these scholars, it is highly unlikely that anyone had ever considered the Framework until the 1920s. While Church history does not determine one's doctrine, it is important to allow it to inform one's doctrine. As such, if one's interpretation is at odds with the weight of scholarship throughout the centuries, he must be extremely careful in promoting his view. God has gifted men throughout the history of the Church with the ability to read and

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<sup>97</sup>Kline, "Rained", 157.

<sup>98</sup>Gentry and Butler cite Wenham, Cassuto, Mathews, and Kidner as declaring the passage is difficult or ambiguous. Gentry and Butler, *Yea, Hath God Said?*, 85.

understand His word. It would certainly be strange that only a select few scholars would arrive at the proper interpretation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This error leads to another hermeneutical violation. One of the most important advances during the Reformation was the rediscovery of the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. This doctrine refers to the clarity of Scripture. Since God is infinite in wisdom, He is able to communicate His word to man in a language that man is able to understand. God created man with the ability to understand Him.<sup>99</sup> As such, most of Scripture can be understood by the common believer armed with a sound mind, a humble and prayerful spirit, and who utilizes the standard rules of interpretation. On the contrary, the Framework, with all of its sophisticated argumentation, relegates understanding of the opening chapter of the Bible to the intellectual elite.

Promoters of the Framework have committed two other serious errors regarding hermeneutics. First, they have demonstrated a greater concern for the words of modern secular scientific opinion than for the word of God. Second, they have demonstrated a greater concern for the structure of the Genesis text than they do for the text itself. This is evidenced by the obvious errors found in the textual parallelism argument. While

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<sup>99</sup>The doctrine of Perspicuity does not deny that God's ways and thoughts are higher than man's. Nor does it claim that man can fully understand everything about Scripture.

the structure of the passage is surely important, one must not miss the message that God has given because he is too busy looking at the beauty in the way that He has given it.

## **Conclusion**

The Framework Hypothesis is an ingenious attempt to allow the Genesis text to fit the opinions of modern secular science. It is far more sophisticated than any of the other views which have attempted to do this. Its sophistication makes it difficult to understand and, consequently, difficult to refute. This difficulty is enhanced since the Framework does not really make claims about what Genesis 1 actually states. Instead, it advances the idea that the text does not really matter. As a result, it does little good to debate a Framework proponent on the text itself.

Nevertheless, three main arguments have emerged from the writings of Framework supporters. These three arguments have been examined and refuted. Without its three most important arguments against the traditional interpretation, the Framework Hypothesis crumbles. Even more important is the fact that in order to adopt the Framework one is forced to violate numerous hermeneutical principles. As a result, no Christian should accept the Framework Hypothesis as a valid interpretation of Genesis 1.

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