

The Framework Hypothesis

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Introduction

The Framework Hypothesis is an intriguing paradigm which seeks to interpret Genesis 1 (and even 2) in a non-literal manner. This paradigmatic interpretation is, it must be said, completely new in concept.¹ While it is granted that some of our church fathers, such as Augustine and Anselm, believed in an instantaneous creation, they saw the description in Genesis one as a divine accommodation wherein God sets out in stylistic writing His creative acts, but yet in chronological order. This much must be granted. However, the Framework Hypothesis seeks to propose a new interpretative schema wherein the normally accepted chronological sequence is denied. According to the Framework Hypothesis, it is not that there are seven sequential creative days, but that there is a triad of two sets of days. In this manner, day 1 corresponds to day 4, day 2 corresponds to day 5, and day 3 corresponds to day 6. The final day, the divine Sabbath rest is the final day, the climax of the triad. These sets of triads are “snapshots” into that particular day. In this way, the common way to describe this is that in days, 1-3, the realms are created, while in days 4-5, the rulers of the respective realms are created. For example, in 1, the light is created, the realm, but in day 4, the rulers of that realm are created, viz., the sun, the moon, and the stars. Admittedly this is a very basic introduction to the Framework Hypothesis; clarification and expansion will come later.

My assumption in this paper will be that the Framework Hypothesis is an unacceptable interpretative schema. I will seek to present as many cogent arguments as I can assemble to demonstrate that it is a schema that is unnecessary at best, and incorrect and unsound exegesis at worst. At the outset, I must note that as I read the arguments for the Framework Hypothesis, I am struck by the epistemological quandary in which the advocates and proponents of the framework schema involve themselves in. What I mean is this: We are being asked to read the account of Genesis 1 non-literally. We are being asked to read it as one would read metaphor, or poem, or piece of apocalyptic literature. We are counseled not to read it as straightforward narrative history. Yet again and again, I return to the question, is Genesis 1 like the Psalms, or the Prophets, or Revelation in genre? It is true that at times we read a section of Biblical text and we are constrained to interpret the passage at hand non-literally. For this reason, in a critique of the Framework Hypothesis one must be careful not to cut off the branch while the critic is sitting on it.

By this I mean, if we were to take such passages as Revelation 20 or Zechariah 14, there is a possible literal and a possible non-literal interpretation and/or meaning of these passages. It is a given, for example, that a first reading of Revelation 20 lends itself to a literal millennial interpretation. When Reformed Amillennialists deal with this chapter, this concession is made. But a case is then presented within the context of Revelation, wherein the symbolic nature of the text is established. It is then argued that given the specific *genre* of Revelation there is sound warrant to interpreting Revelation 20 non-literally. Then is added the supporting arguments that, indeed, a literal interpretation of Revelation leads to contradictions within the Canon of Scripture. By this it is meant that if Revelation 20 is literal, then by necessary inference, other clearer statements of the New Testament (for example) are denied.² The same holds for the Psalms. Clearly, the Psalms are poetry. They contain all the standard Hebrew marks of poetry. What is more, a literal reading of some parts of the Psalms will lead to absurdity. For we all know that God does not have feathers, for example. The same holds for Zechariah. Yet when I read Genesis 1, in no way am I constrained by anything within the text to read it non-literally. Surely this has significant import for this question. While it is granted that it is stylized writing, there is no immediate sense of the text demanding a non-literal reading of the text.³

¹Historically, the earliest proponent of a framework interpretation was of Arie Noordtjij in 1924. Borrowing much from Noordtjij, N.H. Ridderbos popularised the teaching in his *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957).

²One of the best works on this very point has to be Lewis Neilson, *Waiting for his Coming* (Cherry Hill, New Jersey: Mack Publishing, 1975).

³Obviously, I say this in the belief that my responses in the body of this paper to the Framework arguments are cogent.

James Jordan has accused the Framework theologians of espousing a form of Neo-Platonism. Douglas Kelly has accused the Framework theologians of holding to a form of nominalism or conceptualism.⁴ Yet another hermeneutic-epistemological problematic for the framework position is that as Reformed Christians we are committed to the axiom of allowing the clearer parts of Scripture interpret the not-so-clear. How does this even begin to apply in the case of the Framework reading of Genesis 1? What other part of Bible is clearer, in that we are enabled, even constrained, to read Genesis 1 non-literally? In fact, all the evidence for a non-literal reading must come from within the passage itself. But herein, there is the serious danger of begging the question, *petitio principii*. Often the fallacy of begging the question is misunderstood. In the media it is used in the sense of something like, ‘that statement now demands that a subsequent question now be asked.’ But properly defined, it is the fallacy of assuming what you are attempting to prove. In a formal syllogism, one or more of the premises cannot just assumed to be true, or be held to be true because of the conclusion. What can result in such fallacious reasoning is one big circularity. There are circles and then there are circles. Some circles are necessary, while others are bad.

Furthermore, recall that Genesis 1-3 is the very foundation of the Bible. It lays the theological ground for creation, fall, sin, and redemption. Normally the method is the literal is laid down, upon which the non-literal builds.⁵ For example, when we read poetry, we see God referenced as a strong tower. He we see God as metaphorically described. Using the literal idea of strength, endurance, fortitude, we posit a certain continuity of concept when we apply this expression, figuratively to God. Thus we can see in God a certain strength, endurance and fortitude. The formal terminology of this procedure is to reason analogically. Analogy is defined essentially as “similarity with a difference.” The standard method has been then, to assume the literalness of Genesis 1-3, and thus as a baseline literal reading, use analogical language to invoke the metaphor. For example, the apostle Paul in Corinthians does exactly this. He says, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out into darkness,’ made his light shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”⁶ The normal reading, the type of procedure we use in every other part of the Bible, and even for life generally, is that here Paul is building his metaphorical application upon the literal. We know, analogically, what it means to be spiritually enlightened, because there is an analogical continuity between spiritual light and natural light. As I can appreciate the benefits of natural light, I can further appreciate the benefits of a spiritual light.

What is of further interest here is that the apostle Paul actually quotes from Genesis 1. The normal reading, wherein there is nothing that would constrain us to take it in any other manner, is that Paul is alluding to a literal and natural event, the very creation of physical light, the natural benefits wherein are readily and easily discerned, upon which he builds a metaphorical use of spiritual light. If we could liken hermeneutics to sanding wood along the natural grain, this reading of Paul, his use of the non-literal, building upon the literal, is a natural, ‘along the hermeneutical grain,’ reading of the text. Now, however, if this is not so, if the foundation upon which Paul builds his argument for a non-literal light, is indeed itself, a non-literal light, the natural reading is denied. What this amounts to is a non-literal reading built on another non-literal reading of another text - a metaphor built upon another metaphor. If that is, then the very purpose of

⁴I will examine this in a little detail below. At first glance, it seems absurd to accuse the Framework theory of holding to both Platonism (realism) and to nominalism, which are philosophically speaking, mutually exclusive metaphysical paradigms.

⁵Carefully, I want to draw attention to Paul’s comment: “The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and then after that the spiritual” (1 Cor 15:47). The context of this statement is the resurrection of the body, yet also, part of this context is Paul’s mentioning of the heavenly bodies, such as sun, moon and stars. I would not want to press the potential force of this verse too far. At most it can lend itself to adding weight to a probable case against the Framework Hypothesis. It does seem that the Apostle Paul does imagine that the normal creative means is the natural followed by the recreatively spiritual. This would add weight, in my mind, to seeing the creative week Genesis 1 as a normal natural week. Indeed, even that the spiritual heavenly register did not come before the natural lower register in Genesis 1 itself, even before the eternal and immortal new heavenly-earthly register of the eternal age. (I say heavenly-earthly register, for in the eternal age, heaven comes down to earth, irrevocably and eternally.) For first the natural and then the spiritual.

⁶2 Corinthians 4:6.

the analogy is weakened. Further, unnecessary complexity is imported.⁷ It would be just plain wrong to assume that Paul is telling us that just like the very literal natural light of that God created in Genesis 1 *specifically*,⁸ gave us all a natural light, wherein we can see and perceive the things of day rightly, so too, in a similar *analogical* manner we are to understand that the spiritual light that now God has called into being which now shines into our hearts, wherein we now see and perceive things of the spiritual aright. Yet, strikingly, this does seem to be his very intent.

Where am I heading with this? My point is that what must happen with the Framework Hypothesis is that the normal method of reasoning, of cognising and processing propositions must be reversed if the Framework Hypothesis is true. The *prima facie* reading of the text, not only of Genesis 1 but also of verses such as 1 Cor 4:6, and many verses like it, must be overturned and the normal reading-understanding order inverted. To illustrate this point, I am reminded of a cartoon I once saw. Two men, sitting in a convertible, were stopped at an intersection, before a stop-sign. The driver is sitting up on the top of his seat, and with hand to chin, he asks his companion, “but does it really mean stop?” When Moses so wrote his prose with specific chronological markers such as the number of days, the with use of the vav-consecutive, are we like the men in this illustration if we seriously question the non-literal import of these very markers? The man who seriously questions the intent of the stop sign is foolish, for there is a sense where we know that the authorial intent of the sign is self-evident. The *prima facie* reading is just the self-evident reading. For centuries, the orthodox church has so read Genesis 1 in this same manner⁹. It has assumed that the literal nature of the text is self-evidently attested. Should we now be like the imaginary driver and seek to “get behind” the meaning of the text in order to ascertain its true meaning? The Framework theologians would say yes. They would say that given the internal inconsistencies of the literal view, we must in a sense “get behind” the text to ascertain the true intent of the divine author.¹⁰

What I want to do in this paper is to examine some of their arguments that given the textual inconsistencies of a literal reading, the Framework Hypothesis should be the adopted reading. Yet I will argue that their counter-arguments against a literal reading do not hold, what is more, that their reading itself entails, itself, new problems. I will seek to show that the Framework reading runs contrary to the hermeneutical grain as laid out by the Westminster Confession, when it lays down two vitally important hermeneutical axioms: (1) all scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, by the *analogy of faith*, wherein the less clear parts of Scripture are interpreted by the clearer parts thereof; and (2), all things are either expressly laid down in Scripture, or are known by *good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture.¹¹

⁷Occam’s razor has bearing here. In spite of the invocation of Occam’s razor by the Irons and Kline, I would argue that they are the ones who violate this general principle.

⁸Please note, this is just not any light of day, but the very light of day that God called into being in Genesis 1.

⁹There have been a few exceptions for sure (as noted).

¹⁰For the purposes of this introduction, one more consideration must be mentioned. It can easily said that had it not been for evolution and modern secular theories of cosmogony, the Framework Hypothesis would never have arisen. To this, the framework advocates strongly deny that they are so bound to science. For them, they affirm, sacred Scripture comes first, science a good second. This they affirm in their response to the day-age view (see Lee Irons and Meredith Kline, *The Framework Response in The G3n3sis Debate*, ed., David Hagopian, {Mission Viejo, California: Cruxpress, 2001}, pp 180-1). Later, they refer to the *data of revelation*, not scripture as deciding the age of the universe (p., 218). Scientific questions must be set aside, they affirm (p., 180). Yet what is interesting, after affirming that it is Scripture first, they do make the statement: “The order of narration alone is not sufficient in itself to determine the historical sequence; other considerations such as theological concerns and *general revelation* must be factored in as well.” [Emph., mine.]

¹¹Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:6 and 9. The exact wording of this is: The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added. Normally speaking, the phrase good and necessary consequence is a term from the discipline of logic, the import of which a conclusion must be necessary, not merely probable or possible. In a syllogism the conclusion must be established by good (sound) and necessary (valid) reasoning. Noel Weeks brief discussion of the role of

As it can be seen, this is a complex area. Indeed, this is like no other theological or historical topic. This subject brings together ideas and arguments from lexicography, history, systematics, redemptive historic covenant theology, theology of hermeneutics, and logic. It is unsound to attempt to reduce this down to one discipline. In that light, what I want to do here is to attempt an examination of this question via the writings of select authors. My method here will be to set out the positive arguments of Irons and Kline, which will be taken from their recent joint contribution in *The G3n3sis Debate*.¹² At this point I will outline their key arguments progressively. Then I will begin to examine their arguments in more detail using other sources and authors as aids. For where someone else has presented a keen argument or point, that person should be allowed to speak for himself and receive due credit for the insight. I will, in this way, present the cases of certain authors.

Thus we come to the question, “Is the Framework Hypothesis a good and necessary consequence which comes from reading the data of Genesis 1?” To which I answer “no.” And to the question, “Is the Framework exegesis the result of Scripture determining the means and bounds of Scripture?” Again I answer “no.”

The Framework Hypothesis as Argued by Irons and Kline.

Before opening up with their positive exposition and presentation of the Framework Hypothesis, Irons and Kline make the following strongly worded statement in relation to the competing day-age and literal 24 hour day views:

At just this point, the framework view holds a distinct advantage. Both the 24-hour and day-age views hear the test as speaking to issues about which it is silent, and consequently, they fail to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. The real theological message has been drowned out by its alleged sequential and chronological message. This fundamental misreading of the text is based on an unexamined assumption regarding the nature of biblical history. Both the 24-hour and day-age views fail to recognise that, while Scripture inerrantly reports historical and chronological information, it always does so with a covenant and redemptive historical purpose.

Genesis 1 was given to stimulate and strengthen our response of faith to its disclosure of the creation events. Biblical history is not video footage¹³ but theological proclamation (kerygma). Both alternative views misconstrue the character and purpose of the creation narrative because they read the text in such a way as to make it speak to empirical questions regarding sequence, order, and date of creation. Consequently, adherents of those views lose sight of the covenantal and theological burden of the narrative. By contrast, the framework interpretation removes the false expectations that have muzzled the text in the past and liberates it to address the people of God kerymatically and theologically.¹⁴

parable and its interpretation is very germane to the very point I am trying to make here. He point out, if Genesis 1 is taken metaphorically or parabolically, then we face the problem external context which interprets the alleged metaphorical or parabolic nature of Genesis 1; Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), pp., 103-104.

¹²Lee Irons and Meredith Kline, *The Framework View* in *The G3n3sis Debate*, ed., David Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, California: Cruxpress, 2001), pp 217-256.

¹³Given that this same article will describe the frames of the Framework as “snapshots” this comment has the slight taste of irony. Genesis 1 may not be video, but it may be a Kodak moment!

¹⁴Irons & Kline, pp., 218-9. These statements seem quite loaded. Earlier they cite Gerhardus Vos in a footnote: “Vos has taught us that eschatology is prior to soteriology, and that soteriology is the means for the accomplishment of the original eschatology of creation” (p., 188, fn. 19). This is, indeed, a problematic statement. In the context of Vos’ supralapsarian theology, the question should be asked: “does this proposition take on an inordinate dimension?” Is creation a simple straightforward means to an end? Is the creation account to be seen through simple teleological covenantal-redemptive grids? There is the danger of reading too much into the creation account. Supralapsarians hold to the Aristotelian axiom, viz., The last in action was the first in thought. Thus, creation was a mere means to an end, never a substantive end in and of itself, as per the Infralapsarian position.

It is difficult, at this early juncture to gauge the value of such statements. It is surely arguable if they really mean that a sequential reading of Genesis 1 is unable to supply adequate foundations for biblical covenantalism and a sound kerymatic foundation. But that aside, it can be seen that the wording is strong, and the stakes are placed higher than one would normally expect. Now to their actual definition of the framework hypothesis:

What then is the framework interpretation? It is that interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 which regards the seven-day scheme as a figurative framework. While the six days of creation are presented as normal solar days, according to the framework interpretation the total picture of God's completing his creative work in a week of days is not to be taken literally. Instead it functions as a literal structure in which the creative works of God have been narrated in a topic order. The days are like picture frames. Within each day-frame, Moses gives us a snapshot of divine creative activity. Although the creative fiat-fulfilment (e.g., "Then God said, 'Let there be light' [fiat]; and there was light [fulfillment]") refer to actual historical events that actually occurred, they are narrated in a nonsequential order with the literary structure or framework of seven-day week. Thus there are two essential elements of the framework interpretation: the nonliteral element, and the nonsequential element.¹⁵

From this, Irons and Kline set out to establish exegetically the case for the acceptance of these two *elements*. However, having noted that, Irons and Kline, are keen to establish that by a non-literal and non-chronological reading of Genesis 1, they do not mean to deny or undermine the historicity and factuality of the Genesis 1 creation event, such as the historicity of Adam and Eve and their real space-time fall into sin. They acknowledge that they are, "Cognizant of the grave theological implications considered." They resume, "the framework interpretation maintains the historicity of Genesis, which contains the presuppositional foundations for the subsequent unfolding of progressive revelation."¹⁶

Regarding the question of sequentialisation of Genesis 1, they then affirm that there are instances of *Dischronologisation* in the Bible. Even in Genesis 1, itself.¹⁷ After this they cite the narrative in Ezra 4:1-24. From this they conclude that verses 6-23 were "inserted as an illustration of the kind of opposition encountered in the attempt to rebuild the temple... The author structures his narrative to maintain thematic unity rather than a strict chronological sequence."¹⁸ Again they cite Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13, wherein they note that these two authors present the temptation of Christ in different chronological orders.¹⁹

From this, they then present biblical instances of temporal recapitulation, "Genesis 1-2 contains some clear illustrations of temporal recapitulation."²⁰ Further, they say:

One is the account of the creation of man, male and female. This event is resumed and expanded upon in chapter 2 by an account of the creation of Adam (2:7) and Eve (vv. 21-25). It is obvious that the account of the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 returns to the sixth day of chapter 1... Another illustration of temporal recapitulation is Genesis 2 is the twofold account of the placement of Adam in the garden... Moses recapitulates the placement of man in the garden to provide more detailed information about this covenant probation as it relates to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."²¹

Irons and Kline find another example of recapitulation in the book of Genesis as a whole:

Another large scale example of thematic arrangement involving chronological recapitulation is the overall ordering of the ten sections of the book of Genesis. After the prologue (Gen., 1:1-2:3), Genesis is divided into

¹⁵Ibid., p., 219.

¹⁶Ibid., p., 220.

¹⁷Here they note that the creation of the luminaries coincides with Day 1. I shall return to this argument below.

¹⁸Ibid., p., 222.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., pp 222-3.

ten sections, each introduced by the formula, “These are the generations of...” (*eleh toledoth*). Each section is an account of the subsequent historical developments of the individual named... In many instances, the *toledoth* formula picks up the thread of the historical narrative at a point earlier than the previous section.”²²

From these examples they conclude that not only in biblical history, in general, but also in Genesis, in particular, we find instances of a narration that do not follow a strict chronological sequence. Yet, they note, this, in no way, detracts from the historicity of the Genesis account, any more than the respective reordering of the temptation account of Jesus detracts from the historicity of that event.²³

Now we come to their defence of the Framework Hypothesis from Genesis proper. For the sake of accuracy, I shall quote their opening definition:

The first exegetical argument for the framework interpretation begins with the observation that the days form a framework consisting of two parallel triads. The first triad (Days 1-3) deals with the *creation kingdoms*, while the second triad (Days 4-6) deal with the *creature kings*, who exercise dominion over those kingdoms. The fact that the first six days form a two-triadic unit highlights the uniqueness of the seventh day, which depicts the Creator King enthroned in His heavenly Sabbath rest over all creation. So strong is the parallelism that many scholars consider it to be a literary device intentionally crafted by the author. This symmetry may be represented as follows:

Creation Kingdoms		Creature kings
Day 1 Light		Day 4, Luminaries
Day 2 Sky		Day 5 Sea creatures
Seas		Winged creatures
Day 3 Dry land		Day 6 Land animals
Vegetation		Man
The Creator King		
Day 7	Sabbath ²⁴	

Next it is important to note that in their own words, they make the following comment:

The first triad deals with the forming of the creation kingdoms, while the second triad deals with the creature kings. Since the motifs of dominion and kingship are prominent in Genesis 1:1-2:3, the king/kingdom rubric nicely distills the theological significance of the two-triad structure. In each of the days of the second triad, the created entities are assigned a ruling task. The luminaries of Day 4 are established to “rule over” the day and night (1:16). The fish and the birds of Day 5 are blessed with a dominion mandate that implies rule over the spheres established in Day 2.²⁵

After this, they invoke two apparently auxiliary arguments. Firstly, the import of Sabbatical symbolism is adduced as their next argument. Here they argue that elsewhere in the Bible, Sabbath symbolism is invoked. They cite the case of Daniel and the 70 weeks. Assuming that the 70 weeks of years do not point to an exact 70 years, they note that the point of the 70 weeks is rather to make a profound theological point that the coming of Christ and the abrogation of the Old Covenant order will usher in the eschatological Sabbath rest for the people of God. And again, they argue, similarly, that Matthew employs sabbatical theology to structure history: “He purposely dropped at least four names and counted

²²Ibid., p 223.

²³Given their later invocation of the “heavenly register” concept, I am not sure how to take this.

²⁴Ibid., p., 224 (emphases Irons and Kline). I quote them in this manner because I want to represent their position accurately and in their own words. Later I want to challenge this triadic schema therefore it is important that it is represented as accurately as possible.

²⁵Ibid., p., 225.

David twice to construct a sabbatical structure of the history of redemption from Abraham to the Messiah.”²⁶ They conclude that the use of the Sabbath concept is a literary device upon which redemptive history is arranged theologically and not necessarily chronologically.²⁷ They also note the presence of chiasm:

Further demonstrating the presence of an artistic arrangement, the author reverses the kings/kingdoms on the middle days (Days 2 and 5). On Day 2, he narrates the creation of the sky and the sea kingdoms in the following order: the sky is created first, then the seas. The parallel day-frame in the second triad (Day 5) records the creation of the corresponding kings in the reverse order: the creation of the kings of the sea-kingdom is narrated first, then that of the winged creatures to rule over the sky-kingdom. Thus we have a typical Hebrew chiasm, or inverted parallelism, based on the two kingdoms dealt in the second and fifth day-frames (sky-sea-sea-sky). This chiasm strengthens the symmetry of the two triads.²⁸

Moving on, Irons and Kline now begin to discuss their central arguments. They, at last, discuss the alleged problem of the “creation” of the luminaries in day 4. Again in their own words,

The problem for any sequential view is that precisely these same purposes were accomplished on Day 1 when God said “Let there be light.” This difficulty is made all the more apparent in the Hebrew when one observes that the exact same verb is used in both Day 1 and Day 4 (“to separate”). In other words, the divine purposes in creating the light on Day 1 and the luminaries on day 4 are identical. That this separation of light from darkness was satisfactorily accomplished on Day 1 is evident from God’s declaring it to be “good” (Gen 1:4). Those who insist that Day 4 chronologically follows Day 1 must ask themselves why God felt the need to discard the arrangement established on Day 1 and replace it with a new one on Day 4.

Importantly, Irons and Kline argue that the creation of the luminaries cannot be considered to be a mere unveiling: “The language of the text does not allow for this, though this argument. The same divine fiat language is used for acts of divine origination on the other six days as is used on Day 4 as well...”²⁹ From this they press a very problematic argument, posed as a rhetorical question, viz., if God had already called the light, as originally created in Day 1, *good*, why then did God have a need to replace that already existing mechanism for light bearing, with a new mechanism for light bearing? They state, further, that a sequential reading of the days, by doing this, calls into question God’s wisdom.³⁰

The next major polemic they adduce is the “because it had not rained” argument first adduced by Kline in the 1950s. Referring to this original article they affirm:

In this article, Kline argues that Genesis 2:5-6 establishes the principle of continuity between the mode of providence during and after the creation period. But a sequential interpretation pits Genesis 1:1-2:3 against Genesis 2:5-6 in numerous ways. Both the 24 hour view and the day-age view must invoke *extraordinary* providence at certain points to maintain a sequential interpretation, in contradiction to Genesis 2:5-6, which teaches that God used *ordinary* providence during the creation period.³¹

It is important to represent their arguments here accurately. Irons and Kline want to establish the idea that during this creation week the normal and ordinary means of providence operated in sustaining the earth. This being so, they want to argue, then it is incongruous to imagine that we have in Genesis 1 and 2 a literal sequential and chronological

²⁶Ibid., pp., 226-5.

²⁷Ibid., p., 226.

²⁸Ibid., p., 228. This is a difficult argument to assess. It may be said that sometimes Chiasms are in the eyes of the beholders.

²⁹Ibid., p., 229. It should be noted that in what they say here, they are partly correct. The attempt to make the creation of the luminaries fails to do justice to the force of the Hebrew words used to describe their production.

³⁰Ibid. Of all the many sophisticated and complex arguments Irons and Kline adduce, this one is the most gratuitous, simplistic and transparently unrealistic.

³¹Ibid., p., 230. [Emphasis theirs.]

description of the creation week. To this end, they note that God himself notes that there are two deficiencies. Firstly, there is no vegetation for it had not yet rained, and also that there were no humans to cultivate the land. It is important for their polemic that God brings about the *rain*, which would indicate the use of ordinary providential means. And so it is for this that they then labour to argue that translations which imply anything other than ordinary rain are inaccurate and contradictory. For example, they contend that the NASB reading of Genesis 2:6 with the reading: But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground” is incorrect. Importantly they now note:

[T]he verb “to rise” can be translated in one of two ways, defining either the durative action in the past (“used to rise”) or inceptive action in the past (“began to rise”). The first option must be rejected because it makes nonsense of the flow of thought. According to the NASB, verse 6 would be affirming the *presence* of an ample supply of a water at the very time when, according to verse 5, the lack of such a water supply is stated as the reason for the absence of vegetation. If the past durative translation is chosen, why does verse 5 bother to go to such lengths to explain why there was no vegetation (there was no rain, since there was no man, there was no artificial irrigation system either), only to be followed by an explanation that there was a watering mechanism in place after all (“a mist used to rise”)? The context demands an inceptive meaning.³²

From this their argument moves to the establishment of the argument that it was indeed rain that began to rise, and not a mist (NASB) or streams (NIV). They then note that the only other occurrence of this word in the Old Testament is in Job 36:27-28. Here they concur with the NIV translation of verse 28: “the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind.” Now they are ready to state their argument clearly:

If our exegesis of Genesis 2:5-6 is correct, then it informs us that the Creator did not originate plant life on the earth before He had prepared an environment in which he might preserve it without having recourse to extraordinary means... Genesis 2:5-6 tells us that in planning the order which He would call the various creatures into existence, God did not reply upon supernatural means to maintain them once they were created.³³

this leads them to the conclusion that if normal ordinary providence was operating through out the creative week, in that God was so concerned to invoke ordinary means in this period, and to avoid extraordinary means, then a sequence of literal creative days would be incorrect, and further: “would we not be imputing the divine procedure with inconsistency if we suggested that the Creator was not similarly concerned to avoid unnecessarily relying upon the extraordinary providence in His maintenance of daylight and the division between day and night.”³⁴

The third argument they adduce is the argument from the seventh day Sabbath. Irons and Kline argue that the seventh day Sabbath of God is eternal primarily for the following reason: Hebrews 4 tells us that God’s Sabbath rest is eternal. Henri Blocher adds the further argument based on Jesus’ own acknowledgement that God, his Father is, himself by implication, working on the Sabbath day³⁵

³²Ibid., 231. [Emphasis theirs]. Due to space constraints, this paper cannot spend the time detailing their complex arguments. BDB cite “mist” as the definition of the Hebrew word

³³Ibid., P., 232. This position surely entails an assumption that the days even within the narrative imply a day-age theory. If God waits for rain to sufficiently cause plants to grow, sufficient for the earth to be ready to receive man, and if ordinary growth was the chosen means, then surely we now have to sacrifice the framework claim that within the terms of the Genesis account, literal days were in view, even though the account as a whole does not presuppose literal sequential days of creation. For this argument of theirs, now presupposes non-literal day spans, even within the terms of the creation account. If plant growth was by ordinary means, then the days within the creation week cannot be anything other than non-literal days.

³⁴Ibid. Indeed, what a problematic argument they present here. If the argument holds any water, then surely we should embrace, to be consistent, the idea that even the creation of the earth, the production of man, was by ordinary means. How does Irons and Kline mediate or discern between creation by divine fiat and creation (the coming into existence on the earth the vegetation) by ordinary means?

³⁵Henri Blocher *In the Beginning*, (Leicester, England: IVP, 1984), p., 57.

Circuitously, then, the arguments against the literal sequential and chronological reading of Genesis 1 and 2 comes down to 3 primary arguments.³⁶ The first is the claim that the creation of the luminaries on Day 4 is identical with the creation of light on Day 1. Rightly, they argue that this creation of the luminaries cannot refer to a mere unveiling, but a divine *fiat* creation. Blocher, himself, calls the idea of a creation of the luminaries on the Day 4 as a “problem;” for the framework theologian, he says, no longer has the problem of *six solar days* where for 3 of those days there was no *sun*.³⁷ As noted, the framework theologians argue that it would be to impugn the wisdom of God to assert that a mechanism of light-bearing, upon being declared good, was now somehow inadequate, such that a new mechanism of light-bearing had to be established. The second is the “because it had not rained” argument. The third argument seeks to address the idea that as the seventh day Sabbath of God is not literal, but eternal, therefore, the previous 6 days are not literal either (though not eternal for sure).

At this point, this paper will now move to respond to these three arguments. What I will do is first introduce some general comments regarding the framework schema. There are, I believe, some glaring problems which serve to undermined the arbitrary triadic organisation. I will present some arguments against reading the creation account as poetry. Then I will seek to respond specifically to the three arguments adduced by Irons and Kline. The aim here will be to show that their interpretations are forced and unnecessary.

Response: General Considerations

The first general response is to note the use of the Vav-Consecutive in Genesis 1. The presence of the Vav-Consecutive indicates to us that Genesis 1 is not poetry. It tells us that the writer was intending to present to us narrative history. The Vav-Consecutive is *not* used in Hebrew Poetry. Its presence here must indicate something other than poetic metaphor as the authorial intent. It is granted, readily, that the writing of Genesis 1 is high prosed. It may even be called stylized writing to some extent. But high prose is not the same as poetic writing. These points are also confirmed by the absence of any figurative language. There are no metaphors, or tropes in Genesis 1. Regarding the Hebrew “Yom” there is no internal evidence to suggest that anything other than a literal day is in view. The literal reading of “yom” is further sustained by the presence of other time-markers, which are normally taken literally. For example, the luminaries are created in order to mark the “seasons, days and years.” There is no reason to imagine that this is not literal. The phrase “evening and morning” adds further weight to the authorial intent of literal days. All this being so, the natural reading, the most probable reading, is that the author truly intended his readers to imagine a literal chronological reading of the days as a literal sequence: Day 2 follows Day 1, Day 3 follows Day 2, Day 4 follows Day 3, and so forth, on to the climax of the divine Sabbath rest. As confirming evidence, E.J. Young points out that the “in the near eastern world there was recognised a scheme of six successive days or items followed by a climatic seventh,” which mirror to varying degrees Genesis 1, and which are perfectly and naturally sequential.³⁸ The point demonstrates a probable case against the triadic reading of Genesis 1.

Another consideration has to be Pipa’s comments:

[T]he use of the “day” with the ordinal number demands a sequential reading. An ordinal number “one” in verse 5 is not an ordinal (in a list the cardinal number “one” is at times used for “first” cf. 2:11), the numbers “second” through “seventh” are ordinal numbers. When an ordinal number is used with *yom* not one example of non-sequence can be found. In the Pentateuch, Moses uses ordinal numbers with the word *yom* well over one

³⁶Regarding the “heavenly register” argument, I agree with Duncan and Hall that this is not properly speaking a proof for the framework interpretation but something else. See below for a discussion of Kline’s heavenly register hypothesis.

³⁷Blocher, p., 52. Surely this is odd reasoning. When God created the light in Genesis 1:3, there is already the sequence of evening and morning. We have no reason to assume that anything extraordinary is entailed by that phrase, or that its meaning in verse 1 differs from the ordinary sense in verse 4, for example.

³⁸E.J. Young, *Studies in Genesis 1*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1975), pp., 79-81.

hundred times. Every use involves sequence and, with the possible exception of Genesis 2:1-3 (the seventh day) all appear to be twenty-four hour days.³⁹

Pipa then effectively cites Young:

It is this remarkable fact of progression, both in method of statement and in actual content, which proves that the days of Genesis are to be understood as following another chronologically. When to this there is added the plain chronological indications of day one, day two, etc., climaxing in the sixth day (note that the definite article appears only with the sixth day) all support for a non-chronological view is removed.⁴⁰

The Problem of Triadic Parallelism

Further, Genesis 1 lacks the parallelism that is the mark of Hebrew Poetry. Indeed, Ex 20:8-11 apparently assumes a literal chronological creation week as the foundation for the 6 day work week, followed by the seventh day Sabbath rest. This point is further underlined when Genesis 1 is compared to an actual poetic account of the creative week which we find in Ps 104. At this point, all the normal indicators which indicate to the reader that the authorial intent was that of a 6 chronological sequential days, followed by a climatic 7 day are, indeed, present. But this does not exhaust the case against an alleged parallelistic triadic structure of Genesis 1.

For example, “what about the framework triad itself?” “Is it accurate?” As noted the essence of the triad is as follows:

The first exegetical argument for the framework interpretation begins with the observation that the days form a framework consisting of two *parallel* triads. The first triad (Days 1-3) deals with the *creation kingdoms*, while the second triad (Days 4-6) deal with the *creature kings*, who exercise dominion over those kingdoms. The fact that the first six days form a two-triadic unit highlights the uniqueness of the seventh day, which depicts the Creator King enthroned in His heavenly Sabbath rest over all creation. So strong is the *parallelism* that many scholars consider it to be a literary device intentionally crafted by the author.⁴¹

Yet, powerfully, E.J. Young points out some glaring problems with this schema. Young first introduces the idea he wants to address. It is well to quote him extensively so that the force of his argument becomes self-evident.

In favour of a non-chronological order of the days, it is also argued that there exists a certain parallelism between the first three and the last [three] days. Thus it is held, the six days are divided into two groups of three each. The parallelism is thought to be seen in the light of the first day and the light-bearers of the fourth. Again, on the second day the firmament is created with divides the waters above and below it, and on the fifth day the waters are filled with living creatures. On the third day, dry land appears and on the sixth the inhabitants of the earth are created.⁴²

Now, importantly, Young goes on to point out a significant problem for the framework triadic parallelism:

As soon as one examines the text carefully, however, it becomes apparent that such a simple arrangement is not actually present. We may note that the light-bearers of the fourth day are placed in the firmament of heaven (1:14, 17). The firmament, however, was made on the second day (1:6,7). Inasmuch as the fourth day is said to parallel the first, it follows that the work of the second day (making the firmament) must precede that of the second day (making the firmament) must precede that of the first and forth days (i.e., placing the light-

³⁹Joseph A. Pipa, *From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:3*, in *Did God Create in Six Days?* ed., by Joseph A Pipa and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), p., 183.

⁴⁰Young cited by Pipa, p., 183.

⁴¹Irons and Kline, p., 224. [Last emphases is mine.]

⁴²Young., *Studies*, p., 68.

bearers in the firmament). If the first and fourth days are really parallel in the sense that they present two aspects of the same thing, and if part of the work of the fourth day is the placing of the luminaries in the firmament, it follows that the firmament must be present to receive the luminaries. The firmament, therefore, existed not only before the fourth day, but, inasmuch as it is parallel to the fourth, before the first day also. This is an impossible conclusion, for verse three is connected with verse two grammatically, in that the three circumstantial clauses of verse two modify the main verb in of verse three... To hold that days two-five precede days one-four is simply to abandon all grammatical considerations.⁴³

Recall that the basis of the triad is the realm-ruler motif. The realm is created and then the ruler of that realm in the subsequent triadic parallel. But this motif completely breaks down.⁴⁴ What Young is addressing is a two-fold point. The first is a grammatical issue, as he notes. The second notes that the realm-ruler motif is not applicable, for the realm of the luminaries is not created until day 2. It must be recalled that the argument is that in the first parallel of the triad, the realm is created, and then the ruler, in the first triad. Yet the *expanse*--that is, the realm in which the light-bearers are to rule--is not created until day 2, not on day 1. The framework triad wants day 4, the creation of the light-bearers, the rulers, to correspond to day 1, when, allegedly, their realm was to have been created, according to the alleged schema of the triadic parallelism.

The framework triad also suffers from another, similar, problem. Again, Young notes this well:

On the fifth day the birds fly in the open firmament of heaven, as the fish fill the seas... The fish are to swim in the seas... but the seas were not formed until the third day. Day five, it must be noted, does not refer to the primal ocean, but to the seas.⁴⁵

What does this all this mean exactly? Again the point is clear. The realm in which the fish are to rule is not actually created until day 3. The seas are created on day 3 (vs 1:9-13). The rulers of this realm, the fish, are created on day 5. Recall, though, that the framework triad wants day 5 to correspond to day 2, but if the realm-ruler motif is held consistently, the correspondence is actually days 3-5⁴⁶ for the second alleged triad. This result of these simple facts demonstrate that the framework triads are arbitrary. If there is no realm-ruler correspondence between days 1 and 4, and between days 2 and 5 as the framework theologians posit, then the framework schema does not hold. It becomes, now, an arbitrary imposition upon the text. It becomes eisegesis.

The Day 4 Problem.

Now we must come to addressing the so-called problem of the creation of the light-bearers on day 4. Kline and Irons are correct in noting that this cannot refer to a mere unveiling of already present, though hidden, luminaries. They rightly say: "[T]he text explicitly says that God 'made' (v 16) the luminaries on Day 4 and employs the same fiat-fulfillment language employed on the other five days for acts of creation."⁴⁷ Yet having granted this point, does this argument lend support to the framework schema? No. God saw fit use a number of Hebrew words to denote his creative acts. Bara, Asah, Banah, Yatsah, and Hayah. In the creation of man and woman, Genesis 1 and 2 uses bara (male and female, 2:27), asah (man 2:26), yatsah (man, 2:9), and Eve was built (banah, 2:22). This little analysis can shed some insight into the nature of divine creativity as used in the Genesis account. Now, it is granted that Eve was not created *ex nihilo*, indeed, nor was Adam. Furthermore, the creation of the luminaries in day 4 need not be taken immediately as the very creation of light in day 1. For the language need not imply this. As the creation of the earth and sky is described in terms of "let

⁴³Ibid., p., 69.

⁴⁴For me, it is striking that Irons and Kline do not address this problem in their recent article. Their article is well-written while being concise and thorough, such that such a problem as this should have been addressed in my opinion.

⁴⁵Young, *Studies*, p., 69 and 70.

⁴⁶Please review the chart supplied by Irons and Kline above on page 7 of this paper. The chart has the seas created on day 2. This is simply factually incorrect.

⁴⁷Irons and Kline, p., 185.

it be' an expanse between the waters above and the waters below... so God made (asah) the expanse, and the dry land is to appear, upon the separation of the waters into the seas" all of which do not lead us to believe that these creative acts were all absolutely *ex nihilo*, and identical with the creation of the heavens and the earth in day 1; likewise, the language "let it be" lights, in the expanse, in the sky, to separate night from day... and so God (asah) made two great lights, one to govern the day, the other to govern the night, and he set them in the sky (the expanse)" need not be taken to denote an absolutely *ex nihilo* creation as described in day 1. Thus, the creation luminaries need not be seen as the same creation of light, absolutely *ex nihilo*, and, therefore, there need be no alleged parallelism that the framework theologians posit. From this perspective, Calvin's comments do the most justice to the creation of the luminaries:

Moses passes onwards to the fourth day, on which the stars were made. God had before created the light, but he now institutes a new order in nature, that the sun should be the dispenser of diurnal light, and the moon and stars should shine by night. And He assigns them this office, to teach us that all creatures are subject to his will, and execute what he enjoins upon them. For Moses relates nothing else than that God ordained certain instruments to diffuse through the earth, by reciprocal changes, that light which had been previously created. The only difference is this, that the light was before dispersed, but now proceeds from lucid bodies; which in serving this purpose, obey the command of God.⁴⁸

This mode of interpretation was a given for a large number of interpreters who adopted a 6 day sequential creation. For just as God could make (asah) man from preexistent material, there is no reason to infer that in regard to the luminaries, their making (asah) could not be also from a preexistent material, namely the original created light of day 1.⁴⁹

To the question that this new arrangement, if seen in terms of the denial of the framework triad impugns the wisdom of God, who called the very first creation of light good, and yet apparently needed to modify the light to meet a new purpose is gratuitous. The light is clearly declared to be good, in and of itself. The making of the luminaries and their function is also declared good. For now the *end* of the luminaries is to mark the days, the seasons, the years and to rule the day and the night, respectively, and all this, too, God considers good. The argument of Irons and Kline's rests, it would seem, on a certain univocal form of reasoning which denies that there could be multiple "goods" which have varying "ends" (goals or purposes). God declares the creation of the land and the sky good (1:10). Yet later, God declares the entire new arrangement was also good, indeed, very good (1:31). To the objection that there was vegetation apparently thriving before the creation of the luminaries, this is no objection, for there is no reason why it should not be accepted that the original creative light itself was sufficient to sustain life - after all, we are dealing with divine fiat and miracle.

To conclude this section, it can be seen that in two key ways, there is no parallelism after the manner of the framework triadic parallelism. For not only does the realm-ruler motif not hold (for the realm of the luminaries is not created until day 2, contrary to the framework schema) but also the internal language in no way lends itself, necessarily, to a framework triadic reading. There is no reason to assume that the creation of the luminaries on day 4, parallels, in the manner the framework theologians wish us to accept, the creation of light, *per se*, on day 1. In the end, there is no *problem* of a sequential reading of Genesis 1, wherein the luminaries are created on day 4.

Because It Had Not Rained

Again, the intent of this argument is to suggest that ordinary providence was the mode such that a literal sequential and chronological 6 creation should be rejected. Douglas Kelly sums up the Kline position: "Kline argues that the

⁴⁸Calvin *in loco*.

⁴⁹It should be noted that there is, properly speaking, not an exact identity operating here. In day 1, it is the light that is created, yet in day 4, it is the *light-bearers* which are created. The light and the light-bearers are not properly speaking the exact same thing.

Genesis 2:5 allusion to the working of God's normal providence within the created order precludes its having taken place within six twenty-four days."⁵⁰ Kelly then cites Kline at length:

In contradiction to Genesis 2:5, the twenty-four-hour day theory must presuppose that God employed other than the ordinary 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 seas do not become thirsty as fast as that by ordinary process of evaporation. And yet according to the principle revealed in Genesis 2:5 the process of evaporation in operation at that time was the ordinary one.⁵¹

Kelly then argues that the often so-called second creation account following Genesis 2:4 is not a separate account at all. And following E.J. Young, it is a superscription, not a subscription.⁵² What this means is that the following Genesis 2 account of the creation of man is meant to be taken as a further elaboration and expansion of the creation of man as described in Genesis 1. It, in a sense, recaps and telescopes God's specific activity of creating man and planting him in the garden on day 6. This is why the statement that God placed man in the garden is repeatedly emphasised. Young approvingly quotes Cassuto:

The narrative begins with a description of the conditions existing prior to the creation of man. There were no *siah* of the field yet, and the '*esahb* of the field had not yet sprung up; the word *terem* means "not yet"... What is meant by the *siah of the field* and the '*esebh of the field* mentioned here? Modern commentators usually consider the terms to connote the *vegetable kingdom as a whole*; thence it follows that our section contradicts the preceding chapter, according to which vegetation came into being on the third day.... All interpretations of this kind introduce something into the text that is not there, in order to create the inconsistency. When the verse declares that these species were missing, the meaning is simply that *these* kinds were wanting, but *no others*. If we wish to understand the significance of the *siah of the field* and the '*esebh of the field* in the context of our narrative, we must take a glance at the end of the story. It is stated there, in the words addressed by the Lord God to Adam after he had sinned: THORNS AND THISTLES it shall bring forth to you, and you shall eat the '*esebh of the field* (iii:8). The words '*esebh of the field* are identical with the expression of our verse; whilst thorns and thistles, which are synonyms with the *siah of the field*, are a particularization of the general concept conveyed by the latter...⁵³

Cassuto then points out that the grains and the thorns and thistles did not exist until man had begun to work in the field. Other vegetation had existed, says Cassuto, because they were not dependent upon the presence of man - his work in the field to produce such as grains and barley, along with the cursed thorns and thistles. Thus, Cassuto would point out, it is not the case that there were no plants *per se* because they had not yet grown due to the lack of normal providence operating. Further, while what Cassuto says here is part of the answer it is not all of the answer. E.J. Young also tackles this very question in response to Kline's article. But Young takes a somewhat different approach. He wonders what is the geographic scope under considering in Genesis 2:5. He says well:

Two reasons are given why plants had not yet grown. On the one hand it had not rained, and on the other there was no man to till the ground. The garden cannot be planted until the ground has been watered, nor can it be tended until man is on hand. Both of these reasons, therefore, look forward to man's home, the garden, and to the one who is to inhabit that garden. At this point, however, an exegetical question arises. Does Genesis 2:5

⁵⁰Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1997), p., 121.

⁵¹Ibid. The *prima facie* reaction to this is that Kline's reasoning smacks of a rationalizing that is surely speculative which *a priori* rejects miracle.

⁵²E.J. Young, *In the Beginning* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), pp., 61-62. The point here is that Genesis 2:4 does not bring to close the earlier account, but rather it is an introduction of what is to follow. Here 2:4 serves to introduce a "sequel" as it were.

⁵³Cited from Kelly, pp., 124-125. [Emphases Cassuto's.]

intend to state that the entire earth was barren, or is its purpose rather to show that in contrast to a waterless waste, the abode of man was to be a garden? Perhaps the question cannot be settled entirely, and it is the part of wisdom not [to] be dogmatic, although the latter alternative has much to commend it.⁵⁴

Young goes on to point out two things. If the geography in view was the whole world, then divine watering of the world was a unique act never to be repeated, even if it was a providential act. But then he importantly adds:

If, on the other hand, the *Adamah* here has a somewhat restricted sense, as is probably the case, then we certainly cannot in any sense appeal to this verse for help in the interpretation of Genesis one, for in this case the verse merely emphasises that the paradise was planted in what once was a wasteland. In the second place, the fulfillment of the need for man to cultivate the garden was not met by ordinary providential working. To meet this need there was special supernatural activity, namely, the divine forming and the divine inbreathing.⁵⁵

Joseph A. Pipa drives home his point that the geographic scope here is the garden and the earth as a whole. To this effect he even cites Kline himself:

[T]he text is not dealing with a universal defect but highlights the placing of Adam in the garden.... a number of Dr. Kline's critics do not accept the twofold deficit view of Gen. 2:5. Even if there were a two-fold deficit, its reference is to the garden and not to the creation as a whole. Dr Kline, himself, admits that 2:4ff is a topic introduction focusing on the garden: "This prepares for the central role of certain objects of the vegetable kingdom, i.e., the Garden of God and specially the trees in the midst of it, in the earliest history of man as recorded in the immediately following verses (cf 2:8ff and 3:1ff)." Therefore, one ought not to apply the reference to providence to the entire time of creation.⁵⁶

Pipa then quotes Noel Weeks and E.J. Young to affirm that from the fact that "it had not yet rained" it is wrong to infer that there was a long period of time prior to the reported situation of 2:5, from the time of the separation of the land and seas.⁵⁷ From Young, he notes the latter's point that all through the creative week, God is superintending with creative and miraculous acts, all of which prove that divine providence prevailed (i.e., was the alleged *normal* means), during the creative week. In response to the idea that it would have taken a long time for the now separated land to dry out, as the normal course of evaporation would have taken a long time, Pipa exclaims:

Some Framework advocates point out that one cannot follow the chronology of Genesis 1, since that would necessitate extraordinary (miraculous) evaporation for the ground to become dry enough for plants. The extraordinary providence necessary would have been different from what occurred when the children of Israel crossed the red sea (Ex. 14:21). Just as extraordinary providence works alongside regular providence in history, we may assume God operated the same way during creation.⁵⁸

To sum up this section, it seems, then, that the most natural reading is that the geographical reference is the garden, not to the world as a whole. Further, in this garden, the grains, barleys and thorns, were not yet to be found, because the normal means of watering had not yet begun, and nor was man yet placed in the garden. Therefore, God, himself, caused a mist to rise and to water the garden in preparation for man, which he would soon place in this garden. There is no substantive suggestion from the text that lends itself to the assumption that normal providence operated, and there were long periods of time between the separation of the land and the placing of man in the garden; and hence the creative week should not be taken non-literally and non-sequentially. Indeed, is not the sense that normal providence had not yet

⁵⁴Young, *Studies*, p., 61.

⁵⁵Ibid., p., 63.

⁵⁶Pipa, p., 161.

⁵⁷Cited from Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), p., 108.

⁵⁸Pipa, p., 163. Pipa points out, along with Young, that even if ordinary providence was working at this time, as it surely was, it would be fallacious to assume that *only* ordinary providence was working.

begun to operate, just as much as men had not yet begun to till the land? The phrase “for it had not yet begun to rain” points to the absence of normal providence, not to its presence. For this, God himself causes a mist to rise because of the absence of normal providence.

The Seventh Day Sabbath

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither shall you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals nor the alien within your gates. For in six days The LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.⁵⁹

For centuries, this passage has been adduced by Evangelicals to refute those who would deny a literal chronological creation of the heavens and the earth in 6 days. It was cited against the those who held to an instantaneous creation (Augustine) or a long age creation (that is, against Darwinians and evolutionists, or theistic evolutionists). Now, however, the passage is again pressed into service against the Framework Hypothesis. Specifically, then, what has been for centuries been taken as clear and distinct is brought into question by Irons and Kline.

Let us hear Irons and Kline state their position:

Far from being a devastating refutation of the framework interpretation, the Fourth Commandment actually argues very strongly *for* the framework interpretation. Why? Because Exodus 31:14-17 (a clear parallel to Exodus 20:11) demonstrates that the language of God’s working and resting is profoundly anthropomorphic. This truth can be seen in the unique verb used to describe God’s rest: “on the seventh day He rested and refreshed himself” (our translation).... A person only needs to rest and be refreshed if he is weary and suffering from exhaustion. However, when Exodus 31:17 says that God rested on the seventh day and refreshed himself, we cannot take this reference to God’s rest literally, as if God were exhausted from the difficult work of six days of creation.

Literalists are selective, They argue that the Fourth Commandment loses its cogency if the days are not taken literally. Using their reasoning, we would be compelled to conclude that the Sabbath command loses its cogency if God’s resting and refreshing himself are not taken literally. For the Fourth Commandment to be valid on their view, we would be forced to interpret each element of God’s rest literally (the nature of the rest, the presupposed weariness that was the occasion of the rest, the length of time of rest). But this interpretation is patently absurd.

Literalists must admit that the command is still valid because there is an *analogy* between God’s rest and man’s, even if there is not an exact identity. God’s rest sets the pattern for man’s, even though His rest is that of “the Creator of the ends of the earth [who] will not grow tired or weary” (Isa 40:28). But if the literalists recognize that the *nature* of the rest is not identical to man’s, why not recognize the same thing with respect to the duration of the rest? If a non-literal interpretation of the divine refreshment does not invalidate the Fourth Commandment, neither does a non-literal interpretation of the seventh day. Thus the objection from Exodus 20:8-11 completely loses its cogency, unless the literalists insist on taking the divine refreshment of Exodus 31:17 literally.⁶⁰

They then go on to argue that the seventh day is actually an eternal day. They then assert a closing remark: “The fundamental weakness of this objection, then is that it assumes *identity* rather than *analogy* between God’s rest and man’s... So rather than refuting our view, the Fourth Commandment actually supports it.”⁶¹ In other words, what they

⁵⁹Exodus 20:8-11.

⁶⁰Irons and Kline, pp., 249-250.

⁶¹Ibid., p., 250.

mean is that because a part of the passage is non-literal, the whole passage is non-literal. Obviously, one must be very careful when reasoning in that manner.

Kline also argues: The word ‘day’ must be figurative because it is used for eternity during which God rests from his creative labors.⁶²

Against all this, Pipa aptly counters:

Since the phrase “was refreshed” is obviously anthropomorphic then the time statement in Exodus 20:11 may be anthropomorphic as well [say the framework theologians]. They are comparing apples and oranges. We know that God needs no rest so we look for the comparison. The phrase expresses the great delight God took in the contemplation of his handiwork. Exodus 20:11 refers to time and as... the time indicators are not anthropomorphic. Just as in Genesis 2:7, when God refers to himself anthropomorphically as a potter, he does not imply that he did not create man at a specific moment on day six.... It is not proper to say “day” may not be interpreted chronologically, because one use of the term day is not literal in a paragraph that is structurally different from the remainder of the context. In fact, to be consistent, Dr Kline would need to maintain that days 1-6 are all eternal days.⁶³

Now comes the question regarding Hebrews 4, John 5:17 and the seventh day rest. Firstly, it is simply a logical fallacy to insist from John 5:17 that because the Father is working now, even during his eternal Sabbath rest, the 7th day of Genesis must be eternal. If I say, “today, day 7, I rested from researching material for this paper,” and even though it is true that I also rested from searching for material for this paper on the next day, day 8, as it were, and for the rest of my days on earth, for I had finished the paper, does not mean that the first day I rest really means nothing more than that I rested for all my days. I am simply making a statement about *that* day. I rested on day 7. One cannot infer from that what I did or did not do on any other day. And so, my rest on day 7 was still a rest on a literal day, viz., day 7. Herein, God is saying that he rested on the seventh day. That he may continue his creative rest on day 8, and indeed into eternity, in no way proves that the seventh day rest was not literal.

Thus regarding Blocher’s comment, “Jesus’ reasoning is sound only if the Father acts *during his Sabbath*; only on that condition has the Son the right to act similarly on the Sabbath” is obviously true. Yet his conclusion that this verse proves that the seventh day Sabbath of Genesis is thereby eternal is a false conclusion.⁶⁴ Furthermore, it is also clear that the seventh day rest in Genesis is meant to be a picture for us of God’s eternal rest.⁶⁵ Regarding Hebrews 4, Irons and Kline’s demonstrate that a “systematic” paradigm is operating, not necessarily a “biblical” paradigm.⁶⁶ The Genesis seventh day Sabbath is used typically. It is the foundational pattern, for the seventh day Sabbath of the covenantees under the Old Covenant. The creation Sabbath was the foundation for the then covenantal Sabbath. That covenant Sabbath, in turn, was a type of the true Salvation-Sabbath, wherein there is true rest from one’s works for salvation. We enter this rest by faith, not by works. This is why legalists, old and new, will never enter the true Salvation-Sabbath rest of God - for they will never cease from their works, and enter therein by faith alone. The redemptive flow is forward and progressive. The literal seventh day rest of God sets the foundation for man’s weekly seventh day covenantal rest. Which in turn, is given as a picture of the true Salvation-Sabbath rest for the people of God. The framework view inverts this and thereby destroys the very teleological lesson of God in his unfolding of redemptive history. In regard to Blocher’s reference to Jn 5:17, Weeks also notes well: “But there is another way of understanding the argument. The argument

⁶²Cited from Pipa, p., 167.

⁶³Ibid., p., 171. C.f., Weeks, p., 114.

⁶⁴Blocher, p., 57.

⁶⁵C.f., Pipa, p., 168.

⁶⁶I am using these terms to refer to the traditional compartmentalisation of theology according to the two disciplines, that of the Scholastic and topic arrangement of various *loci* following Lombard’s Sentences, in accordance with the structure of the Apostle’s Creed, versus the biblical pattern of theology set out historically along the lines of redemptive history, as per the works of men like Cocceius down to Vos.

would have equal force if God was working on the regular weekly Sabbath. In context, the work in question would not primarily a work of creation or providence but the work of redemption and mercy.⁶⁷

It now that we are ready to better receive Weeks' comments:

A far more crucial case of appeal to Genesis 1 is found in the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11. There the reason for the pattern of six days of work and one of rest is the activity of God in creation. Man is to imitate the model set by God. The notion of the precedent-setting role of the creation reappears here again.

This passage provides a crucial problem for the framework theory. The non-literal approach argues that the six days are not to be taken literally but are merely a framework in terms of which the events are reported. Why is this framework used? Sometimes this is represented as another anthropomorphism. God's creative activity is described in terms of a human work-week. However, the fourth commandment says the precise reverse. God's activity is not described in terms of man's. Rather, man's work-week is described in terms of God's Activity.

What can we infer about the narrative in Genesis 1 from this reference? At the very least there has to be some sort of divine activity which man can imitate. Further than that, it has to be an activity that is adequately represented by a pattern of six days of work and one of rest. Here the framework theory is shown to be untenable. For it alleges that the seven days of Genesis 1 are only a framework to describe events. God's activity did not have that form. How then could man imitate God's activity in the weekly cycle of God's activity was not the originally as described in Genesis 1.⁶⁸

To conclude this section, there is no reason to suppose that the seventh day Sabbath in Genesis was to be taken as anything other than literal. There is no reason to suppose that the reference to the weekly Sabbath for men was not meant to be taken as being grounded in the seventh day Sabbath of God in Genesis. There is no reason to read Jn 5:17 or Hebrews back into Genesis, reversing the progress of Redemptive history, as if their meaning is *the* meaning of the seventh day Sabbath in Genesis.

Two Register Cosmology

Now we come to the most baffling aspect of the Framework Hypothesis. The two-register cosmology is invoked by Irons and Kline to further sustain their claim that the days and the references to days and to evening and morning refer not to earthly time but to upper register heavenly time. The argument comes to this, in the creation account we find that days 1 and 7 refer not to lower register earthly time, but to upper register time. If the two *inclusio*'s⁶⁹ (so to speak) are non-literal, even atemporal according to lower-register time, then what comes between them (days 2-6), likewise, is atemporal in the same way, and in no way reflects literal lower register time.

It should not be a point of contention that Scripture does speak, in some sense, of an upper register heaven where in God dwells, has his throne, is served by angels, and the intermediate state of the departed. It should not be a problem to concede that many physical phenomena, such as rainbows, lightening, clouds, and thunder, are used to described God and his heaven in some way. The literal are used as symbols of something trans-literal. They are all invoked as anthropomorphisms. But it is another question to suggest that the temporal references in Genesis 1 are not literal earth-time markers, but heavenly-time markers - whatever that may mean.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Weeks, p., 114.

⁶⁸Weeks, pp., 112-113. C.f., Pipa, p., 169-170.

⁶⁹That is, day 1 and day 7 (see below for explanation of this argument).

⁷⁰The problem here is that Kline, and Irons with him, have in fact created a third time category - a *tertius quid*. This heavenly register time is not eternal, but not exactly discursively earthly either. Our time is discursive and linear. Eternal time is non-discursive, and eternal. This heavenly register time must have qualities of both, it seems. Its not earthly time, i.e., not equivalent to earthly 24 hour days, it is heavenly time. It is not eternal or timeless, it is discursive, for angels share in this upper register time. It is a baffling concept indeed.

The time-markers, then, are given to objectify something in the heavenly register: Our argument, then, is that the language of the *days* and the “evenings and mornings” is not literal but an instance of lower-register terms being used metaphorically to describe the upper register.... Because of the analogical relationship between the two registers, Scripture employs the language of earthly time to speak of the progress of heavenly time⁷¹.

And if one asks “to what on earth do these heavenly or upper register time markers refer?” Irons and Kline resort to saying that while the “upper register “six-day” period is a real unit of time”: “At present we cannot translate it into its lower-register equivalent--God has not chosen to reveal that information. However, it is not therefore less real or less historical.”⁷² It is amusing, at best, tragic, at worst, to imagine that God went to all this trouble to thoroughly confuse us and leave us in the dark regarding this fundamental passage.

How does one know that Genesis 1 is actually speaking about upper register realities and time-frames and not lower register realities and time-frames? Well, firstly, Irons and Kline take Genesis 1:1 to denote that creation of the heavens (upper register heavens that is) and the earth (lower register heaven and earth). The lower register earth is in turn divided into two planes, the starry sky and the earth upon which we all walk. Genesis 1:1, then, is not a summary of what was to follow. If it were a summary, then the heavens referred to in Genesis 1:1 would be the visible heavens (the starry sky) and the earth would be the visible earth. Irons and Kline reject this. Rather, for them, Genesis 1:1 refers to the absolute beginning, the creation of the heavens (upper register) and the earth (lower register). They say: “‘The earth’ mentioned in verses 1-2 is fashioned not only into the land and seas, but into the visible heavens, for on the second day the firmament of heaven is formed by a separation that occurs *within* the “earth” of verses 1-2. From the upper register, God issues his divine fiats, which find fulfilment in the lower register earth.”⁷³ Thus, I take Irons and Kline to mean that Genesis 1:1 refers to the creation of the upper and lower registers in the absolute beginning, before the time markers of days, and of evenings and mornings.⁷⁴

In support of this, they cite Proverbs 8:22-31, where wisdom is described as being possessed by the LORD at the beginning of his work. They then identify this “beginning” has the same as in Genesis 1:1. I find that problematic. The parallelism of Proverbs 8:22-23 seems to identify the “in the beginning” as eternity, and unless we want to posit that the “in the beginning” of Genesis 1:1 refers to eternity, we must accept that something discontinuous is present here, that the two phrases as not exactly identical.⁷⁵ And above all this, there is no reason, exegetical or otherwise, to imagine that the 6 days described in Exodus 20 are anything other than normal days: “for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth...”⁷⁶

The second argument is that the final *inclusio*,⁷⁷ the divine seventh day Sabbath is also a non-temporal marker. That is, it is not a day in terms of lower register time, but of heavenly register time. This upper or heavenly register day is eternal. I have shown that this is an unnecessary reading of the text. But yet, I have to wonder, if the closing time-marker

⁷¹Irons and Kline, p., 240.

⁷²Ibid., 248.

⁷³This sort of cosmic dualism even leads Irons and Kline to posit that the “us” of Genesis 1:26, where God says “let us make man...” is a reference to angels, who form the upper register judiciary: Man himself is created is created in the image not only of God but also of the judicial council which is the central feature of the upper register... Man is the lower register counterpart to the judicial authority of God and His angels in the upper register;” Irons and Kline, p., 241. How this bears on God evicting men from the garden, for fear that they become like God, and how it is possible that God himself says there are none like me, or that he cannot share his glory with another, I know not. It does appear now Irons and Lines are entering into a Platonic Gnosticism.

⁷⁴To be honest, the concept of “the absolute beginning” taken in a non-eternal sense baffles this writer.

⁷⁵I confess I must be missing something here. Wisdom is possessed by the LORD in eternity, not at a point of time, i.e., non-temporal, yet not eternal, and yet a-temporal. Aristotle, and I believe, Aquinas too, held to the creation of the world in eternity, and not in time.

⁷⁶Ex 20:11. Ironically, when Irons and Kline cite Proverbs, they do so with the express intention of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

⁷⁷By *inclusio* this is a term I am using, not Irons and Kline.

is eternal time, why not the first, and why not the “days” in between? Why could it not be the case that it is not merely that we have a time-marker of heavenly time, which is unknown to us (but yet allegedly not eternal⁷⁸), but that they are, indeed, eternal days?

In the end, the two register cosmology is an ingenious schema. But sadly, it begs the question. It is invoked as evidence for the framework interpretation, but yet it fundamentally relies on it as an assumption to sustain itself. Weeks says it well:

Those who favor a non-literal view of Genesis 1 fall back upon a number of other arguments. Essentially they argue that God’s activity, while described in terms of our weekly cycle, is in terms of some other divine ‘timetable.’ The problem with this argument is that it introduces something not said in any Biblical text and certainly not expressed in this particular text. Surely what they are arguing for this text would hold for any other description of God’s activity. That is, though expressed in terms comprehensible to man, it really means something else. God’s activity is in some other realm and in terms of some other system.⁷⁹

Pipa also cites Grossman:

Kline’s position makes an arbitrary distinction by taking the creative acts of God to be real as they are reported, while taking the time elements of days, mornings and evenings, their numbering, as figurative. There is no base in the text for such sifting. Even worse, no method has been suggested for the distinguishing the real from the allegorical method in such historical narratives as Genesis 1 which can be applied without destroying the text’s ability to communicate anything authoritatively.⁸⁰

Historical Testimony

The framework advocates have often cited Augustine and others as further support for their non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1. Irons and Kline, for example, assert:

A nonliteral approach to the text is not, as many assume, a recent innovation devised to accommodate modern geological and astronomical evidence for an old earth/universe. Augustine held to a nonliteral interpretation of the days, and he was followed by Anselm, Peter Lombard, and others. While these church fathers did not teach the framework interpretation in the precise form we advocate here, no one can deny that the nonliteral approach to the creation days have a venerable place in the history of the Christian interpretation.⁸¹

I do not want to labour this point beyond necessity. Two things need to be pointed out. In his work *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine held to an instantaneous creation, where the creative day is described 6 times. At no point did he embrace or endorse a day-age view of the Genesis account. What is more, he never endorsed anything comparable to the framework triadic schema. But the other thing that needs to be pointed out is that what should concern orthodox Presbyterians even more than Augustine’s opinion, is the statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith: “It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, *in the space of six days*; and all very good.”⁸²

⁷⁸It is well to remember that for Irons and Klines, this upper register time is not eternity, not timelessness, but time; just a time we apparently are unable to conceptualise.

⁷⁹Cited from Pipa, p., 193. I re-cite Weeks and Grossman here because their comments are so applicable and so forceful.

⁸⁰Cited from Pipa, p., 193-4.

⁸¹Irons and Kline, p., 219.

⁸²WCF, 4:1. C.f., LC 15 and SC 9 which both restate the “in the space of six days” formula.

David Hall has been attempting to document the position of the various Reformed divines at the Westminster Assembly. His intent has been to show that the authorial intent behind this terminology is the rejection of an instantaneous creation in favour of a literal sequential 6 “24 hour” days of creation. His work is to be commended. Yet the historical question brings to the table the more complex question: Are we bound by not just the words of the Confession, but also by the Authorial intent of the writers of the Confession as well?” Framework advocates appear to be siding on the negative answer to this question.⁸³ Yet given the testimony of the Westminster divines, the authorial intent was that the world was created in the space of six literal days. The instantaneous creation of Augustine was rejected, and Genesis 1 was seen as a historical narrative of literal space-time events, of the lower register.⁸⁴ Then the issue comes to this: Are the Framework Theologians moving outside the bounds of Westminster orthodoxy, and if so, should they be censored for so doing? Is there a case that they are departing from Westminster theology?

Conclusion

It seems apparent that at every point, the framework polemic cannot sustain itself. It tries to elevate the high prose of Genesis 1 into the status of metaphor or poetry by identifying parallel triads. In doing this, it inverts the normal order of literal and then non-literal, that is, of natural non-metaphoric foundations upon which metaphor and simile are built. It has metaphor as the exegetical grounds for metaphor. That seriously inverts the normal literary method of grounding non-literal upon the literal.⁸⁵ Further, the triadic classification breaks down. It tries to recreate the day 4 problem and then proffer a solution. But this fails, too. There is simply no day 4 problem. It then tries to establish a case for ordinary providence in the creative weeks, which would militate against a literal chronological and sequential 6 days consisting of 24 hours. Yet if the ordinary providence argument does work, the framework advocates have implicitly connected themselves with an old earth view, a concordist view of the age of the earth. How does one make congruent the ordinary providence argument with the heavenly register motif that runs through, allegedly, Genesis 1, I know not. However, the ordinary providence argument does not hold. It cannot be sustained exegetically or logically. Nor is the argument that the seventh day Sabbath is eternal hold exegetically. They have inverted the order of redemptive history at this point, reading back into Genesis systemic considerations. The argument to upper and lower registers, while containing elements of obvious truth, in fact, when applied as they are to Genesis 1, robs the chapter of meaningful truth. James Jordan’s claim that this platonises the text holds. For Plato, the particular is a representation of the ideal form. When Irons and Kline portray man as a representation of an upper register council, they tread into Platonic categories. When they insist that days and other time markers are described using lower register language, but which actually represent upper register time, they platonise the text. Its one thing to associate the anthropomorphic use of clouds, lightening, rainbows, and thunder, among other things, as indeed God does himself, it is another to read, and purely speculatively at that, such anthropomorphisms into the Genesis account as a whole.

Weeks pertinently puts to us the question:

In the absence of any Biblical evidence to the contrary, and the presence of frequent references to the narrative as historical narrative, the obvious way to read the text of Genesis 1 is the obvious way. It is

⁸³Robert Letham has an interesting article in the Westminster Theological Journal. Unfortunately, it is impossible for me to examine this article in depth because of the constraints of this paper. Nor is it possible for me to discuss the question of authorial intent. In my opinion, in such a case the authorial intent must be taken into account, as with any official church statements regarding its interpretation of this part of the Confession. Letham is hard pressed to find framework thinking in the early church fathers. While they did believe that the first 3 days were creation, and the second block of 3 days (days 4-6) are works of adornment, they did not hold to a framework triadic parallelism. Robert Letham, “The Days of Creation” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 61 (1999) pp., 149-174.

⁸⁴C.f., David Hall’s two articles “What was the view of the Westminster Assembly Divines” and “The Evolution of Mythology” in *Did God Create in Six Days*, ed., by Pipa and Hall, as already cited.

⁸⁵At this point, I would wonder how one can be sure, truly sure, if the framework schema is correct, that one could really know that there were literal historical persons called Adam and Eve?

impossible for God to use a misleading form of description... if Genesis 1 was not meant to be taken as a literal account, why was it written that way?⁸⁶

In the end, the Framework Hypothesis seems to be an odd interpretation. It is unnecessary to say the least, absurd to say the worst. It serves no real function, other than to supply a concordist foundation for the marriage of faith and secular science. It solves no real exegetical problem. It produces no real substantive cosmogony. In fact, it reduces us to scepticism. For example, while the chronological markers are described in lower register terms, what they mean for heavenly register time is not known, indeed, not revealed. And yet, Irons and Kline chide their critics for suggesting that their framework schema reduces the time-markers and other statements to “empty or meaningless literary devices.”⁸⁷ What they say in response to this criticism may be true. It may be that the references in Genesis 1 are not meaningless literary devices, but what they do mean, they cannot tell us, for as they say, “God has not chosen to reveal this to us, yet.”⁸⁸ They dodge one bullet, affirming that the days and other markers do point to objective realities, albeit in the upper register realities, but they take another bullet, adding, we just don’t happen to know what these objective realities are. Young’s words are stinging accurate here: “If Moses had intended to teach a non-chronological view of the days, it is indeed strange that he went out of his way, as it were, to emphasise chronology and sequence.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶Weeks, p., 100. C.f., Pipa, p., 195. I quote these, even as Pipa quotes them, because they are so sharp in driving home the force of the point.

⁸⁷Irons and Kline, p., 247.

⁸⁸Ibid., p., 248.

⁸⁹Young, *Studies*, p., 100. C.f., Pipa, p., 195.

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