



What's Happening?

Welcome to many new readers who attended the various Hugh Ross events in the Seattle area in October. The goal of our newsletter is to provide thought-provoking articles on science and faith. We hope you enjoy the information.

The Seattle Chapter plans to resume our *Sound Reasons* meetings after the first of year. These meetings are designed to provide an opportunity to fellowship with other local RTB supporters, while giving informative talks that are designed to equip and assist you in your apologetic efforts. If there are topics you would like us to discuss at future meetings, please contact us at seattle@reasons.org.

Reasons To Believe is at the forefront of trying to reach unbelievers by using science to remove the obstacles to faith in Jesus Christ. The harvest is great, but the workers are few. Our goal for 2012 is to change that. What that will require is building a strong body of local believers to spread the RTB message—and to do that we need your help and involvement. We ask you to think prayerfully over the holidays about how you might contribute to our local ministry efforts.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments. Contact us at seattle@reasons.org or our new facebook page,  RTB Puget Sound.

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Coming to Grips with the Early Church Father's Perspective on Genesis

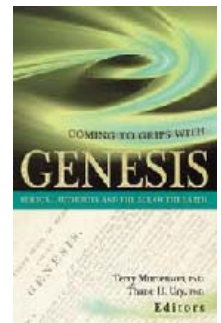
By Dr. John Millam

NOTE: This is Part 2 of this article. Part 1 can be found in the October issue archived at: <http://www.reasons.org/get-involved/chapters-and-networks/seattle>.

Hermeneutics in the Early Church

Now let's consider those whom Mook has deemed "literalists," namely Lactantius, Victorinus, Ephrem the Syrian, and Basil.²² Mook asserts these four taught that the creation days were normal 24-hour days. So, if these fathers interpreted Genesis "literally," does that mean theologians today should interpret it the same way?

Over the last decade, both young-earth and old-earth creationists have written many books and articles purporting to demonstrate how the patristics support their own creation view. Typically, both camps present the ancient leaders' interpretations as isolated quotes or simplistic caricatures. This tactic makes everything seem so neat and clear. Reading the original writings in their entirety, however, completely shatters overly simplistic understandings of the church fathers. Studying these august figures in their original historical context is critical to piecing together a more complete picture of what they believed and, more importantly, to understanding how they arrived at their conclusions.



Having read much of the original writings for myself, I was surprised at how differently the church fathers interpreted the Old Testament compared to how most people would understand it today. Some of the fathers' conclusions seem illogical or even bizarre by modern standards. Robert Bradshaw recognized this as well. In his study of the early church, Bradshaw provides an important discussion of early church hermeneutics and how it differs from today.²³ Though Bradshaw views this subject from a young-earth perspective, he takes a well-balanced approach to the topic of early church hermeneutics. (I'll provide only a limited summary here. See Bradshaw's work for additional information.)

The key reason the church fathers often interpreted Scripture differently than we do today is because they saw the Old Testament

as being primarily Christological. According to Gerald Bray, “Christians generally believed that the Old Testament spoke about Jesus Christ, not merely prophetically but in types and allegories which the Spirit revealed to Christians.”²⁴ They employed typology and other nonliteral devices to allow them to see Jesus in these passages and, hence, connect Scripture to their current situation. The literal/historical meaning would correspondingly have been treated as secondary (not surprising since straight Jewish history would have had little meaning to non-Jewish Christians.) All the church fathers interpreted in this fashion, albeit to different degrees.

For example, Justin Martyr saw references to trees or wood in the Old Testament, e. g., the tree of life in Eden (Genesis 2:9), the Oak of Mamre (Genesis 13:18; 14:13), the staffs of Moses and Aaron, and the floating wood of Elisha (2 Kings 6:1-7) as prefiguring the cross of Christ. Origen added several more examples, such as the cedarwood that played a part in the ritual cleansing of lepers (Leviticus 14:1-7) and the wood that made the bitter water sweet (Exodus 15:22-27) to this list and other church fathers provided still more. So, it seems that almost any piece of wood mentioned in the Old Testament could be viewed as prefiguring the cross of Jesus. Water, particularly Noah’s flood, was likewise seen as prefiguring baptism.

Numerological association was another commonly used tool in interpretation. A simple example is the popular notion of the “eighth day.”²⁵ Given that creation occurred in seven “days,” the eighth was taken as symbolizing the new creation. This idea was established when the fathers saw parallels to Jesus Christ being raised on the eighth day (i. e., the first day of the second week) and even babies being circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12). Even more important, the church fathers viewed the eighth day as marking the beginning of the new creation after seven “days” of one thousand years each. (This idea was also based on numerical association—see below.)

In some cases, numerological arguments were taken to the extreme. For example, in the apocryphal *Epistle of Barnabas*, Abraham’s 318 servants (Genesis 14:14) are interpreted as prefiguring the cross of Christ.²⁶ This is done by first interpreting 318 as 300+10+8. Next, the numbers 10 and 8 are seen as denoting the letters “I” and “H” (initials for Jesus) and 300 is denoted by “T,” which resembles a cross.²⁷

While we may be confused and surprised by these examples of “spiritual” rather than literal interpretation, it did not come from a low view of Scripture. The church fathers held a high view of Scripture—seeing even the most minute details as pointing toward Jesus Christ. We must understand that the plain historical/literal interpretation would have had little meaning to the fathers and their non-Jewish audience. By using non-literal association, they could connect it to their own lives.

So the “literalists” shared the same need for a meaning beyond the simple literal as the allegorists, whom I described last week, did. Most importantly, the literalists often employed nonliteral devices. In fact, the distinction between the literalists and allegorists is, at times, more an issue of degree than kind. Mook’s crisp delineation between the two groups is, therefore, rather misleading. In sum, simply because the literalists did not resort to allegorical interpretation, it does not necessarily follow that they always interpreted Scripture literally.

Victorinus’ Numerology

Bible & Science In the News

■ Christianity Bad for America?

This tothesource article reports on a recent debate between David Silverman, president of American Atheists, Inc., and Dinesh D’Souza, best seller author and president of King’s College. It is an interesting exchange that gives insight into the evils atheists associate with faith. Go to www.tothesource.org/11_3_2011/11_3_2011.htm.

■ DNA Trash Talk

In this interview with Johathan Wells, author of *Icons of Evolution*, Casey Luskin discusses his latest book, *The Myth of Junk DNA*. Luskin asks a number of probing questions about the function of of this DNA and why the “junk DNA” argument against intelligent design is no longer valid. Go to: www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo18/18luskin.php.

■ Circular Reasoning and Adam & Eve

This article by RTB’s Dr. Patricia Fanning explains how evolutionary scientists use circular reasoning to explain the disparity between species trees that show evolutionary relationships and phylogenetic trees based on gene sequence similarities. Go to www.reasons.org/assumptions-circular-reasoning-and-literal-adam-and-eve.

■ Who’s Allowed in the Public Square?

This article by Jennifer Lahl, producer of the documentary *Eggsploitation* which deals with female egg donation, discusses how people are excluded or marginalized on the basis of their religious beliefs and how that cannot be allowed if the public square is to be truly open. Go to www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/18022.

■ Secularism’s Secret Gag Order

This tothesource article comments on a book by Steven Smith, *The Dischantment of Secular Discourse*, which contends that secularism is having a negative impact on judicial reasoning because it replaces a moral code from God with a personal freedom to choose what is right. Go to: www.tothesource.org/10_26_2011/10_26_2011.htm.

Victorinus of Pettau (late third century) is cited by Mook (and many others) as teaching that the creation days were specifically 24-hours long. This is based on the surviving fragment of his treatise, *On the Creation of the World*. Mook supports his conclusion with a short quote from Victorinus' work, which I will include verbatim to show what details Mook does and does not include.²⁸

Even such is the rapidity of that creation; as is contained in the book of Moses, which he wrote about its creation, and which is called Genesis. God produced that entire mass for the adornment of His majesty in six days; on the seventh to which He consecrated it...In the beginning God made the light, and divided it in the exact measure of twelve hours by day and by night...

This passage seems to be one of the strongest declarations in the early church that the days of creation were 24-hour periods—but a full reading paints a different picture. Victorinus' primary focus is numerical association—not an attempt to correctly interpret Genesis 1. For example, the fourth creation day he associates with the four elements, four seasons, four Gospels, four rivers in Eden (Genesis 2: 10-14), four living creatures around God's throne (Revelation 4: 6–9), etc. He makes frequent use of the number seven (the key number in Genesis 1), relating it to at least twenty other occurrences throughout Scripture. Twenty-four also held great significance for him as found in the final paragraph of *On the Creation of the World* (which Mook does not quote).

The day, as I have above related, is divided into two parts by the number twelve—by the twelve hours of day and night...Therefore, doubtless, there are appointed also twelve angels of the day and twelve angels of the night, in accordance, to wit, with the number of hours. For these are the twenty-four witnesses of the days and nights which sit before the throne of God...

We see that Victorinus' emphasis on a day as 24-hours is just a numerological parallel to the 24 elders (or angels) that surround the throne of God (Revelation 4: 4). Subdividing a day into exactly two 12-hour periods is likewise driven by numerical symbolism because the actual length of daytime varies considerably with location and season. In no case is Victorinus specifically trying to address the nature of the Genesis days.

Mook's use of Victorinus to support a calendar-day view shows deficient scholarship and selective quoting. Clearly, Victorinus is far from being a literalist (according to how we use that term today). So he actually does more to undercut Mook's 24-hour day interpretation than he does to support it.

Hippolytus' Chronological Symbolism

Mook lists Hippolytus of Rome (third century) as defending the idea that human history would last exactly 6,000 years. Here, I'll focus on a related point where Hippolytus

teaches that Jesus was born in the year 5500 from creation (*Commentary on Daniel*, Fragment 2.4–6). However, Hippolytus did not derive this value from adding up the ages in Scripture (although he may have borrowed that estimate from others who did). Instead, his argument rests on an allegorical interpretation of three different Bible verses.

First, he interprets Revelation 17: 10 ("Five [kings] have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come") as referring allegorically to millennia, hence suggesting that Christ lived between the fifth and sixth millennia. Second, he views the sum of the Ark of the Covenant's dimensions (5 1/2 cubits in Exodus 25: 10) as marking 5 1/2 millennia to Christ. (The Ark was commonly seen as a Christological symbol.) Third, he interprets the words "now is the sixth hour" (John 19: 14), as corresponding to a half day or 500 years (i. e., half of a millennial "day"). In all three cases, Hippolytus' arguments are highly nonliteral.

"Literal" Hebrew

There is an even broader and more significant problem that applies to all of the church fathers—they did not know Hebrew. This is critical because ancient Hebrew is very different from Greek and Latin. The church fathers were dependent upon Greek and Latin translations, which affected how they interpreted Genesis. So, it is rather misleading to refer to Basil and company as literalists when their interpretation was not, in fact, based on the actual Hebrew. This same problem exists today where commentators rely heavily on English translations.

Allegorists/Literalists Conclusions

The implication of all this is that Augustine and company's creation views should be dismissed because—according to Mook—they did not interpret Genesis literally. That would support Mook's conclusion by effectively removing any early church opposition to a calendar-day view.

Allegory vs. Allegorical Interpretation

Mook draws a sharp line between the allegorists and literalists among the church fathers. In reality, this distinction is blurry. When it came to the Old Testament, all the early church fathers used an assortment of nonliteral modes of interpretation to varying degrees.²⁹ In the end, even the so-called literalists weren't always literal and were not following ancient Hebrew. As a consequence, we would be better served by reexamining Genesis 1 in its original Hebrew rather than relying on the interpretation of the early church fathers.

The creation week as a pattern for human history is another key example of typological (nonliteral) association that came to dominate the early church's thinking about the age of the earth.

Patristics Were Young Earth Creationists?

Since the church fathers were clearly divided on the interpretation of the days of creation, Mook shifts his focus

to the age of the earth, where he can show that there was widespread agreement among the church fathers that the earth is very young (less than 6,000 years old). Many of the fathers, including allegorical interpreters, taught this specific view. (By my own research, none of the fathers taught an old earth.³⁰) Mook concludes, “Allegorical interpreters among the fathers were especially remarkable in resisting the old-earth theories of their day.”³¹ Mook sees this agreement between the allegorists and those he deems “literalists” as proof that the church was united in rejecting the idea that the earth is billions of years old. Taken together, Mook’s evidence seems to lend strong support for viewing the fathers as young-earth creationists.

As if that is not enough, Mook then plays his ultimate trump card: “Another strong proof of the young-earth creationism of the Church fathers is their sex/septa-millennial view that the earth was less than 6,000 years old.”³² This refers to a popular belief among the fathers that Jesus Christ would set up his millennial kingdom on the six thousandth year after creation.³³ Those holding to this framework would have had to believe the world was less than 6,000 years old; hence, Mook’s claim that the patristic fathers were young-earth creationists. Surely, this is an open-and-shut case. Or is it?

Creation-Week Pattern for Human History

What Mook names the sex/septa-millenary construct, I prefer to call the creation-week pattern for human history. This view posits that the creation week of Genesis 1 serves as a template for God’s plan for humanity. God created the world in six “days” (regardless of the nature of those “days”), so human history would also span six “days,” each 1,000 years long, based on Psalm 90:4 (“...a thousand years in your sight are like a day...”).³⁴ Taken together, all of post-creation history would encompass exactly 6,000 years. This would be followed by a seventh millennial “day” (paralleling the Sabbath rest) that the church identified with Christ’s millennial kingdom. After this is the start of the “eighth day,” which marks the inauguration of the new creation.³⁵ Mook documents that at least eight fathers seem to have taught this millennial framework.³⁶ Robert Bradshaw, a young-earth creationist, also provides an extensive discussion of this view and includes additional names.³⁷

The exact origin of this model is uncertain but it seems to have arisen in Jewish circles perhaps a century or two before Jesus’ time. It’s likely that this model developed, at least partially, out of the apocalyptic ferment of the time. With Israel under the control of the Greeks and later the Romans, apocalyptic literature emphasized God’s sovereign control over all things—including history. Having a clear formula for when God would act on behalf of his people encouraged faithfulness amid such chaotic times.

This particular six-thousand-year framework was popular among Jewish rabbis, who further subdivided it into three 2,000-year periods: the *age of chaos*, the *age of the law*,

and the *age of the Messiah*.³⁸ To put this in context, some early Jewish sources placed creation around 4000 BC.³⁹ Using that as a start point, the age of the law would have begun with Abraham around 2000 BC and the Messiah would inaugurate the messianic age in the early first century. For the apocalyptic writers of the first and second century BC living under foreign domination, the promise of the Messiah coming soon to rescue them was enormously encouraging. Thus, this framework was popular even though it was not derived from a literal interpretation of Scripture.

Christians later adopted this model. Since the church used the Greek Septuagint instead of the Hebrew text, they generally thought creation occurred around 5600–5500 BC.³⁹ The church then used the creation week framework to predict Christ’s return on the six thousandth year (rather than his coming on the four thousandth, as the Jewish rabbis had taught). The seventh millennium (paralleling the Sabbath rest) was identified with Jesus’ millennial kingdom. All of this had important eschatological implications because it predicted that the end times would be around the fourth century.

Starting with Eusebius in the fourth century, the date for creation was revised to around 5200 BC, pushing Christ’s return back three hundred years. Apparently, this was done to cool eschatological fervor.⁴⁰ As time went on, age estimates continued to be adjusted to stay within the six-thousand-year framework. In his own research, Bradshaw writes, “For the purposes of our present study the important point to note is that it was ecclesiastical concern over eschatology rather than arguments that the world was more ancient that caused these changes.”⁴⁰

In the fifth century, Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translation restored the ages at fatherhood (in the Genesis genealogies) given in the Hebrew text. So as the Vulgate became accepted, dates for creation subsequently shifted to around 4000 BC. Following the Jewish model, scholars placed Jesus’ first coming around the four thousandth year, but this placed his second coming in what was then the far future (around 2000 AD).

Not surprisingly, the creation-week pattern waned in popularity during the Middle Ages, since it no longer predicted Christ’s return as imminent. Interestingly, James Ussher and John Lightfoot revived this pattern in the mid-seventeenth century by assigning 4004 BC as the date for creation. That date is no accident because it placed Jesus (c. 4 BC) exactly four thousand years after Adam. Its popularity was assured because Christ’s second coming would again be expected to be only a few centuries away.

Analysis

Much of this discussion may seem to provide Mook with substantial support for his claim that the fathers were young-earth creationists. However, a closer examination reveals a more complex story.

- *Nonliteral origin* – Scripture does not teach the chronological framework or the idea of the world lasting just 6,000 years. Instead, this model is based on typological comparison rather than a literal one. (Ironically, Mook does acknowledge that the creation-week pattern involves “typological interpretation” but does not admit this fact makes the framework nonliteral.)⁴¹ Additionally, the use of Psalm 90:4 to equate a day to a millennium is not hermeneutically justified and is, therefore, not a literal interpretation.⁴² While the Bible certainly does teach that Jesus will return, it does not in any way affirm this particular eschatological model.
- *Popular tradition only* – Mook appeals to the fact that this 6,000-year model was widely held (by at least 8 fathers) as strong support for his contention that the fathers were young-earth creationists. But popularity does not determine truth. Many popularly held beliefs are later rejected. For example, many of the early church fathers taught that Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 were written about Satan, but Martin Luther and later theologians correctly pointed out that these passages refer primarily to the kings of Babylon and Tyre.⁴³
- *Emphasis on eschatology* – The creation-week framework set up an absolute timeline for understanding history (past and future). If one was able to date backward to creation, then one could work forward to determine when certain key events would happen. For the church, this meant a way to predict Christ’s return, while for the Jews it pointed to the coming of the Messiah. Lactantius—one of the fathers Mook mentions—went so far as to incorporate this idea into his discussion on the end times (*The Divine Institutes* 7.14–25). Historically, we see that both this model and the age estimates were flexed to achieve the desired goal—a sense of immanence for the next step in God’s plan.⁴⁴
- *Constrained interpretations of Genesis* – Mook focuses on the fact that even the allegorical interpreters (e. g., Origen and Augustine) taught that the world was young. For him, that suggests that the age of the earth was the pivotal issue. What he misses is that this framework (which is just human tradition) prevented any church father from even considering the earth to be older than 6,000 years. In other words, no one could hold that the creation days were long periods of time or that there might be significant gaps in the Genesis genealogies because that would not fit within this millenary construct and, thus, would be perceived as denying Christ’s return.⁴⁵ So, for those who rejected a calendar-day interpretation of Genesis 1, there was no room to even consider a position other than instantaneous creation. The patristic fathers’ failure to teach an old earth should not be construed to mean this idea is

incompatible with Scripture.

Conclusion

Mook devotes many pages to documenting the creation-week pattern for human history (or sex/septa-millenary construct) and its popularity among the church fathers. For him, it is the crowning argument for his claims of early young-earth creationism. The irony is that while many indeed saw the earth as young, the view was driven primarily by human tradition. It is incorrect, therefore, to conclude that the young-earth view in the early church is grounded on a literal interpretation of Genesis—in fact quite the opposite. As such, the popularity and consistency of young-earth creationism in the early church is almost entirely artificial and so should not be construed as supporting *modern* young-earth creationism. We would be better served by reassessing Genesis 1–11 for ourselves rather than relying on the early church for direction on this issue.

Was the age of the earth considered vital to Christian orthodoxy in the early church?

While the days of creation, the age of the earth, and the extent of Noah’s flood were subjects of popular speculation in the early church, they were never treated as *critical* issues. First of all, not one of these topics was included in any of the early church creeds. In fact, no prominent church doctrinal statement or confessions of faith discussed any of these controversial issues prior to the twentieth century.⁴⁶

Second, not one of these three issues was ever listed as part of the “rule of faith” (Latin *regula fidei*), which was a statement of key doctrine. Third, most of the discussion about the age of the earth and the flood occurred as secondary points or illustrations rather than primary topics. The age question was concerned mainly with apologetics, not a literal reading of Scripture. (To be fair, some important works regarding Genesis have been lost, so my statement only applies to the works that still exist.) Fourth, the church was clearly divided on the nature of the creation days, but those rejecting a calendar-day interpretation were never condemned as heretical.

As a matter of contrast, there was only one doctrine related to creation that was considered essential—creation *ex nihilo* (or “creation out of nothing”). It was explicitly taught by many individuals and included in key creeds and doctrinal statements (as I document here). Creation *ex nihilo* does not in any way require a recent beginning—only that there was a definite beginning to matter in the finite past. So, the early church fathers clearly required a creationist view but not specifically a young-earth view.

Did any of the early Jewish or Christian writers teach that the days of creation were long periods of time? Or that the earth was older than 10,000 years?

To the best of my knowledge, none of the church fathers taught an old earth. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus are

sometimes put forward as teaching that the days of creation were a thousand years each and so holding to a type of day-age view. Further investigation, however, shows that the “day as a thousand years” formula was only applied to post-creation history, not the days of creation themselves. Other people have claimed to even find proponents of the framework hypothesis and gap theory among the church fathers but this is not correct and represents poor scholarship. According to my research, the first people to clearly teach that the earth is old were Sir Isaac Newton and Thomas Burnet in the late seventeenth century. So, on this point, Mook seems correct (and Bradshaw agrees). Nevertheless, that is only part of the story.

It is incorrect to assume that this absence of an early old-earth interpretation represents a definite rejection of the position as unbiblical. It was not rejected, *per se*, it simply was never considered for the following reasons. First, the fathers’ reliance on Greek and Latin translations of Genesis meant they read Scripture as far more narrow and precise than the text actually is. Second, the creation-week pattern for human history—a popular eschatological tradition—ruled out any possibility of considering a world older than 6,000 years. Taken together, these circumstances show that the early presence of young-earth creationism and the absence of an old-earth view resulted from faulty understanding and human tradition rather than a solid interpretation of Genesis.

Were the church fathers young-earth creationists?

There is evidence that at least 12 fathers believed the earth to be less than 6,000-years old in their own day and so in that limited sense can be considered young-earth creationists.⁴⁷ The real question, however, is whether or not this meaningfully supports the claims of Mook and other modern young-earth creationists. The answer to that is a strong “no” for two reasons. The first is that the patristics’ understanding of the age of the earth and the days of creation was driven by a variety of concerns other than Scripture, as I described under the previous question. The second is that modern young-earth creationism is a package that contains a lot more than the simple claims made by the early church fathers. In other words, simply finding a popular belief in a young world among early Christian writers is insufficient to support modern young-earth creationist claims.

To clarify this latter point, it is important to delineate modern young-earth creationism from its ancient counterpart. The most important difference is that the modern variety generally elevates the age of the earth and related issues to the level of Christian orthodoxy—not merely a private interpretation. That is a very marked contrast to the early church. The second distinction is that modern young-earth creationism generally teaches that creature mortality began at the Fall and so was not present in the original creation. In other words, there was no animal death prior to sin being introduced by Adam and

Eve.⁴⁸ Moreover, this issue is usually treated as essential doctrine. Scripture, however, is silent on this point. So it is not surprising that the early church fathers wrote almost nothing on pre-Fall animal death. They certainly didn’t see it as vital doctrine.

While the church fathers wrote little about animal mortality, they were notably divided on the closely related question of whether Adam and Eve were created mortal or immortal (prior to the Fall). Bradshaw, for example, notes that at least four fathers (namely Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Augustine) taught that the first humans were created mortal.⁴⁹ So, while some components of modern young-earth creationism can indeed be traced back to the earliest days of the church, the most critical ones cannot. In fact, modern young-earth creationism really began in the twentieth century and so is, ironically, newer than old-earth creationism, which appeared near the end of the seventeenth century.

Conclusions

- The early church fathers based their understanding of Genesis on Greek and Latin translations, not the original Hebrew.
- The allegorical interpreters (e. g., Origen and Augustine) did have specific scriptural reasons for rejecting a calendar-day view of Genesis 1. In particular, the creation days could not be solar days if the Sun was not created until the fourth day. Moreover, the seventh creation day is not closed out by the “evening and morning” phrase, so it is considered longer than a 24-hour day.
- Even the so-called “literalist” fathers often relied on nonliteral modes of interpretation in dealing with the Old Testament, such as typology and numerological association.
- The cornerstone of Mook’s proof of young-earth creationism in the early church is a widespread belief among the patristics that human history would last exactly 6,000 years. Ironically, this idea was merely a popular human tradition concerned primarily with eschatology—not creation. This model artificially constrained the age of the earth even though the Bible itself does not require it to be so.
- The central issue for the early church was the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, not the days of creation or the age of the earth.

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ENDNOTES

18. Philo, *Allegorical Interpretations* 1.2; *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things* 34. Origen, *Against Celsus* 6. 60–61; *First Principles* 4.1.16. Augustine, *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 4.26.43, in *The Patristic Understanding of Genesis*, eds. William A. Dembski, Wayne J. Downs, and Fr. Justin B. A. Frederick (Riesel, TX: Erasmus Press 2008), 428.
19. Philo, *Allegorical Interpretations* 1.8; *Questions and Answers in Genesis* 1.1. Clement of Alexandria *Miscellaneous* 6.16. Origen, *Against Celsus* 6.50, 60. Augustine, *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 4.27.44.
20. Origen, *Against Celsus* 5.59; 6.61. Augustine, *Confessions* 13.51.
21. Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 81–83.
22. James Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth,” in Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis* (Green Forest, AR: Masters Books, 2008), 29–32.
23. Robert I. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church*, last updated January 25, 1999, <http://www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Contents.htm>.
24. Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 50.
25. Ironically, part of the impetus for the “eighth day” is a misreading of the headers of Psalms 6 and 12. The Hebrew reads *sheminith*; the word’s meaning is uncertain but most modern translations understand it to be a musical term. The early church fathers, however, followed the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, which rendered it “on the eighth.”
26. The *Epistle of Barnabas* was popular in the early church, in part because its author was misidentified as being the biblical Barnabas.
27. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church*, chapter 1.
28. James Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth,” 29–30.
29. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church*, chapter 1.
30. Let me offer two minor caveats. First, Origen actually wrote that the “world is not yet ten thousand years old, but very much under that” (*Against Celsus* 1.19) but this statement can be understood as being consistent with a 6,000-year framework. Second, Philo (a Jewish scholar not discussed by Mook) is unique in rejecting attempts to date the origin of the world (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.1). While this leaves open the possibility that he would be open to an old-earth, there is no actual evidence to suggest that he actually was. John Millam, “The Genesis Genealogies,” *Reasons To Believe*, accessed September 28, 2010, <http://www.reasons.org/files/non-staff-papers/The-Genesis-Genealogies.pdf>.
31. James Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth,” in Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis* (Green Forest, AR: Masters Books, 2008), 32.
32. *Ibid.*, 39.
33. *Ibid.*, 38–48.
34. Justin Martyr (*Dialog with Trypho, A Jew* 81) and Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.23.2) are sometimes mistakenly cited as teaching long creation days on the basis of equating “day” with a thousand years. This is a common error and we see it, for example, in Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 43. A day as a thousand years was never applied to the creation days themselves, only to post-creation history.
35. The idea of the “eighth day” seems to be drawn mainly from a misunderstanding of the headers of Psalms 6 and 12. The Hebrew word *sheminith* is likely a musical term but was translated “eighth” in the Greek Septuagint as used by the church fathers. In addition, Jesus’ resurrection on the first day of the week could also be viewed as an eighth day (i.e., the first day of the second week) and so prefigured the new creation on the eighth day.
36. James Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth,” 40–48. According to my own study, 11 out of the 50 church fathers and 2 out of the 30 Jewish sources taught this framework. John Millam, “The Genesis Genealogies.”
37. Bradshaw, chapter 3, table 3.2.
38. Bradshaw, chapter 3.
39. There were a number of attempts to date back to creation using the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. The ages at fatherhood in these genealogies as given in the Greek Septuagint were noticeably older than the actual values given in the Hebrew text. Using the Septuagint, the early church arrived at distinctly different estimates compared to Jews following the Hebrew. In the end, these age estimates are not rigorous and rely on a lot of assumptions, and are, therefore, should not be used in attempts to determine the age of the earth. For complete documentation and analysis, see John Millam, “The Genesis Genealogies.”
40. Robert I. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church*, last updated January 25, 1999, chapter 3, <http://www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Contents.htm>.
41. James Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth,” 39.
42. Psalm 90:4 is clearly a simile (a comparison using “like” or “as”) to illustrate that that which we would

consider a very long period of time (a thousand years) is to God like a brief period of time (a day or a watch in the night). Nothing in this or any other passage remotely suggests that we can equate a solar day to a millennium.

43. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church*, chapter 8.
44. The creation-week framework changed and evolved over time, as has already been described. (1) Jewish rabbis, following the Hebrew values in Genesis 5 and 11, placed the Messiah's coming in the four thousandth year. (2) Early church fathers (first three centuries), following the Septuagint values, held that Jesus would return on the six thousandth year. (3) Church fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries suggested a younger age for the earth to postpone expectations of Jesus' return. (4) Later theologians, following the Vulgate (and hence the Hebrew values), restored the idea of the Messiah coming on the four thousandth year and placed his return on the six thousandth.
45. John Millam, "The Genesis Genealogies," *Reasons To Believe*, accessed September 28, 2010, <http://www.reasons.org/files/non-staff-papers/The-Genesis-Genealogies.pdf>.
46. The closest any important creedal statements come to dealing with the days of creation is one curious statement that God created the world "in the space of six days" found in the Irish Articles (1615) and Westminster Confession of Faith (1647). This phrase only declares the days were real periods of time—not instantaneous—but do not define their duration. It was primarily intended to reject Augustine's instantaneous creation interpretation. See William S. Barker, "The Westminster Assembly on the Days of Creation: A Reply to David W. Hall," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 62 (2000): 113–20.
47. John Millam, "The Genesis Genealogies," *Reasons To Believe*, <http://www.reasons.org/files/non-staffpapers/The-Genesis-Genealogies.pdf>.
48. James Stambaugh, "Whence Cometh Death? A Biblical Theology of Physical Death and Natural Evil," in Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, (Green Forest, AR: Masters Books, 2008), 373–97.
49. Bradshaw, *Creationism and the Early Church*, table 4.2.



Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, God's Word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science and the Bible.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of RTB.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, to expose them to God's word.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

Questions? Get Answers.

If you're looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. Or call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.