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Chapter 1

The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth

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Personal Note on Dr. Whitcomb

My first exposure to Dr. Whitcomb came in my Bible college studies and my first church youth ministry when I read *The Genesis Flood* (co-authored with Dr. Henry M. Morris). I had been educated in public schools, so I had been taught evolutionary theory — without being exposed to creation science. When I became involved in a church youth program in the 1970s, I wanted high school teens to read and learn about creation science, so they could see its validity and have an intelligent response to science teachers who advocated evolution in their high schools and later, in their colleges and universities. Those teens found Dr. Whitcomb's books especially enlightening. Later, in the 1990s, in my teaching as a seminary professor, my students also found these works illuminating and liberating as they noted Darwinism's unscientific and philosophical presuppositions, and discovered that the geological data are scientifically compatible with the biblical creation and Flood accounts. When I finally met Dr. Whitcomb in recent years, I found him a godly, affable, kind, and precise theologian and apologist, and I was able to personally express to him what I reaffirm here — my deep appreciation for his diligent and courageous work in confronting and refuting evolutionary concepts of the origin and history of the earth, both inside and outside the Church.

1. I am indebted to Thane Ury for his considerable help in getting this chapter into final form.

The Importance of the Church Fathers to the Age Controversy

The opening chapters of Genesis are the most foundational in all of Scripture. Indeed, for the Christian faith, nothing makes lasting sense if these chapters are undermined. Here the foundation of nearly every major Christian theme can be found. This explains in part why the early Church writers dealt so much with these chapters, reminding us in the process that the history of theological development is essentially the history of exegesis.

From the early days of the Church, appeals to patristic exegesis have always played a key role in theological debate and helped to clarify the parameters of orthodoxy. The controversies over Christological, Trinitarian, and canonizing matters were intense, and sometimes took centuries to resolve. But what God-fearing Christian today is not profoundly grateful for those like Athanasius in the early community of faith, who risked even their lives to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3; NKJV).

Fast-forward to our day, where the controversy over the age of the earth continues. There has been a renewal of interests in the Church fathers, and how they handled matters such as the length of the creation days, the age of the earth, and the Genesis Flood.² Since their voice on theological matters has always been coveted, it would be expected that, along with a cautious use of their wisdom, there is also a tendency with some to misread the patristic literature. The teachings of the fathers can be just as surely taken out of context, eisegeted, or muffled altogether, as the Scriptures can be.

It is not insignificant that notable authors have recruited some fathers as accepting the idea of deep time. Scholars like William G.T. Shedd believe some in the patristic era taught the day-age theory. Henri Blocher claims Augustine held to a framework type view. Arthur Custance finds a champion of the gap theory in Origen. Such diversity of opinion can be highly confusing to the layperson, and leads us to ask four important questions. First, which specific ancient treatises were these modern scholars using to class the ancients into such post-Darwinian-sounding categories? Second, were there any treatises or resources these modern writers overlooked? Third, if there were overlooked resources, was this innocent oversight due to perhaps consulting only secondary sources? And fourth, if these men were presented with sufficient patrological counter-evidence, would they acknowledge this in subsequent writings? This chapter aims to counter some

2. Useful resources on the fathers have been scarce. One bright spot recently has been the massive undertaking, by InterVarsity Press, *The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Project*, general editor, Thomas Oden. This 28-volume series highlights the patristic commentators up to A.D. 749, and really should be on the shelves of every evangelical scholar or Christian who desires to understand the fullness of their heritage. Here we sample what reverence for the Revealer and His revelation looks like, unfettered by the constraints of modernity (cf. note 12 below). The demarcation of A.D. 749 is not arbitrary, but marks the death of John Damascene, which closed the era of the Eastern fathers. The Western fathers are dated by Isidore’s death in A.D. 636.

of the misreadings of the fathers, and provide clarity by analyzing the original sources to see if their writings aid and abet modern deep-time theories.

Contemporary Misreadings of the Fathers

Proponents of the day-age view and framework hypothesis claim six-day creationism is of fairly recent vintage, and a reactionary movement against uniformitarian or proto-Darwinian ideas. They propose that prominent early Church exegetes pursued *theological* meaning as of the highest priority (rather than historical meaning), and would not identify with modern young-earth theses. While some may wonder whether their views have any relevance in the current debate, others, such as Hugh Ross, know the value that a theological position has if it can claim the imprimatur of the Church fathers.

Thus, like Shedd, Blocher, and Custance, Ross makes an attempt to buttress his old-earth position with some patristic clout. And four common lines of reasoning seem to link all their proposals. First, these modern old-earth advocates think that at the time when the Church was clarifying and fortifying its creeds, the age of the earth was less vital to the fundamentals of Christianity. Second, it is implied (if not stated), if these God-fearing men from the past (the fathers) felt comfortable with a wide spectrum of exegetical method and hermeneutical conclusions on the age of the cosmos, we should emulate them. Third, they say, we have sufficient patristic confirmation that young-earth creationism was not the position of the Early Church, and definitely not compulsory to classic orthodoxy. And, fourth, when modern scholars invoke Augustine and others as comfortable with deep time, the pivotal premise seems to be that belief in millions of years is not a fallback concession brought on by uniformitarianism, but has always been a position compatible with orthodoxy.

Christians should be aware of the great cloud of witnesses in Church history, and a judicious use of the fathers can be both relevant and edifying.³ And even though the Christian's highest and final authority should always be Scripture, the more knowledge of Church history one has, the better. In being tutored by the fathers, we will be better armed to discern and respond to the novel theological heterodoxies in their day and ours.

Ross's use of the fathers can be found in *Creation and Time*, and then later, in concert with Gleason Archer, in *The Genesis Debate*.⁴ But his strongest appeal to the fathers can be found in his book *A Matter of Days*. There his chapter, "Wisdom of the Ages," is devoted to showing that the early churchmen paid comparatively little attention to the length of the creation days. Those who did address the matter, says Ross, would not take the creation days as 24 hours in

3. *Ad fontes*, or *back to the sources* (literally, "to the fountains, springs"), is as appropriate now for Christians, as ever.

4. Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, "The Day-Age View" (and responses to the 24-hour view and the framework view), in David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001).

length. He further asserts that the extant writings indicate that the fathers “acknowledged” that the length of the days of creation “presented a challenge to their understanding and interpretation,” so, except for Augustine, they “expressed their views tentatively” and “charitably tolerated a diversity of views.” rather than dogmatically insisting on only one interpretation.⁵

Earlier, Ross contended that: “Many of the early Church Fathers and other biblical scholars interpreted the creation days of Genesis 1 as long periods of time.” He suggests that Irenaeus, Origen, Basil, Augustine, and Aquinas were all day-age proponents.⁶ Even though Ross is somewhat more nuanced than his earlier views in his *Creation and Time* chapter, “Interpretations of Early Church Leaders,”⁷ his portrayal is still substantially the same, and thus, as we will demonstrate below, still very inaccurate. A natural reading of the Church fathers shows that though they held diverse views on the days of creation, and correctly gave priority to the *theological* meaning of the creation, they definitely asserted that the earth was created suddenly and in less than 6,000 years before their time. They left no room for the “old earth” views promoted by Ross and other moderns.

The Naturalistic Milieu of the Fathers

Common sense would have us agree with Ross’s view that the fathers were not influenced by Darwinism or modern geological interpretations for an old earth.⁸ This seeming truism misses the deeper picture that Greek thought included kinds of evolutionary and uniformitarian concepts even before the time of Christ.⁹ The early apologists opposed Greek cosmogonies by asserting the biblical revelation of creation. For example, Hippolytus (c. A.D. 170–225 or 235), a presbyter in Rome, was familiar with and rejected many Greek naturalistic teachings. In Book

5. Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2004) p. 48–49. See also *Creation and Time* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1994), p. 24.

6. Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God* (Orange, CA: Promise Publishers, 1991, 2nd ed.), p. 141.

7. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 24.

8. Ross, *Matter of Days*, p. 49.

9. In a search for precursors to evolutionary theory, Henry Osborn was astonished to find that many Darwinian-like notions could be detected as far back as the 7th century B.C. See Henry F. Osborn, *From the Greeks to Darwin*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1929), p. xi; cf. 41–60 and 91–97). Osborn relied heavily on Edward Zeller, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, trans. S.F. Alleyne (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881). Anaximander (611–547 B.C.) believed man descended from fishes; and Empedocles (490–435 B.C.) has been called “the father of evolution.” See Richard Lull, *Organic Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 6. On the furor over Darwinism, Matthew Arnold remarked to John Judd: “Why, it’s all in Lucretius (99–55 B.C.)” See John Judd, *The Coming of Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 3. I am indebted to Thane Ury for these references.

I of *The Refutation of All Heresies*, he defined the various views of Greek “natural philosophers,” summarizing them as follows:

From a body devoid of quality and endued with unity, the Stoics, then, accounted for the generation of the universe. For, according to them, matter devoid of quality, and in all its parts susceptible of change, constitutes an originating principle of the universe. For, when an alteration of this ensues, there is generated fire, air, water, earth. The followers, however, of Hippasus, and Anaximander, and Thales the Milesian, are disposed to think that all things have been generated from one (an entity), endued with quality. Hippasus of Metapontum and Heraclitus the Ephesian declared the origin of things to be from fire, whereas Anaximander from air, but Thales from water, and Xenophanes from earth. “For from earth,” says he, “are all things, and all things terminate in the earth.”¹⁰

Basil of Caesarea (A.D. 329–379), Bishop of Caesarea, frequently alludes to the views of the philosophers and their cosmologies. He opposed Greek error with the observation that each of these theories has been overturned by succeeding views, and none of them really held to an intelligent first cause, but ascribed everything to “chance.” He wrote:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” I stop struck with admiration at this thought. . . . The philosophers of Greece have made much ado to explain nature, and not one of their systems has remained firm and unshaken, each being overturned by its successor. It is vain to refute them; they are sufficient in themselves to destroy one another. Those who were too ignorant to rise to a knowledge of a God, could not allow that an intelligent cause presided at the birth of the Universe; a primary error that involved them in sad consequences. Some had recourse to material principles and attributed the origin of the Universe to the elements of the world. Others imagined that atoms, and indivisible bodies, molecules and ducts, form, by their union, the nature of the visible world. Atoms reuniting or separating, produce births and deaths and the most durable bodies only owe their consistency to the strength of their mutual adhesion: a true spider’s web woven by these writers who give to heaven, to earth, and to sea so weak an origin and so little consistency! It is because they knew not how to say “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Deceived by their inherent atheism it appeared to them that nothing governed or ruled the universe, and that all was given up to chance. To guard us

10. Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies* 10.2, in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994 reprint ed.), vol. 5. Hereafter cited as *ANF*. See also 10.3, which further specifies names and theories of Greek natural philosophers.

against this error the writer on the creation, from the very first words, enlightens our understanding with the name of God; “In the beginning God created.”¹¹

Consider also Lactantius (c. A.D. 250–325), who strongly opposed the old-earth views of Plato and other Greek philosophers:

Plato and many others of the philosophers, since they were ignorant of the origin of all things, and of that primal period at which the world was made, said that many thousands of ages had passed since this beautiful arrangement of the world was completed; and in this they perhaps followed the Chaldeans, who, as Cicero has related in his first book respecting divination, foolishly say that they possess comprised in their memorials four hundred and seventy thousand years; in which matter, because they thought that they could not be convicted, they believed that they were at liberty to speak falsely. But we, whom the Holy Scriptures instruct to the knowledge of the truth, know the beginning and the end of the world, respecting which we will now speak in the end of our work, since we have explained respecting the beginning in the second book. Therefore let the philosophers, who enumerate thousands of ages from the beginning of the world, know that the six thousandth year is not yet completed, and that when this number is completed the consummation must take place, and the condition of human affairs be remodeled for the better, the proof of which must first be related, that the matter itself may be plain. God completed the world and this admirable work of nature in the space of six days, as is contained in the secrets of Holy Scripture, and consecrated the seventh day, on which He had rested from His works. But this is the Sabbath-day, which in the language of the Hebrews received its name from the number, whence the seventh is the legitimate and complete number. For there are seven days, by the revolutions of which in order the circles of years are made up. . . .¹²

It simply will not do to claim that the fathers’ concept of the creation was formed in a vacuum (i.e., without the pressure of modern evolutionary and uniformitarian concepts). The fathers asserted their views in large part to refute Greek philosophy’s naturalistic theories of origins, which were very similar to modern ideas.¹³

11. Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 1.2 in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) vol. 8. Hereafter cited as *NPNF2*. Basil’s words about the temporary life of naturalistic theories should be considered when we use current scientific theories of origins as epistemic foundations for interpreting Scripture.
12. Lactantius, *Institutes* 7.14, in *ANF*, vol. 7
13. Though the fathers did not deal with the same challenges we face today, theirs were just as challenging, and they were just as prone as anyone to being products of their

The Length of the Days of Creation

The fathers favored a sudden, not a gradual, creation. Literalists specified that the six days of creation were each 24 hours long. Allegorists, like Clement,¹⁴ Origen, and Augustine, did not consider the days of creation as 24-hour days, but, even as old-earth advocate Davis Young states, neither did they see non-literal days conflicting with their young-earth view.¹⁵

The Literalists

In the ancient Church there was a tension between allegorists and literal interpreters. One prominent literalist, Lactantius, a rhetorician who became the tutor of Constantine's son, viewed the creation days as 24-hour days.¹⁶ He invoked the biblical account of creation against the old-earth views of Plato and other Greek philosophers, contending that less than 6,000 years ago God had created in six days. He believed that the "seven days" make up one week, "by the revolutions of which in order the circles of years are made up."¹⁷ It seems clear that for Lactantius the creation days were the same kind of days that make up every week of a year.

Victorinus, bishop of Pettau (d. A.D. 304) affirmed that the first day of creation was divided into 12 hours for day and 12 hours for night. He said, "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

environment. A variety of strong philosophical and cultural pressures were always in the air. The impact of these factors on the theologizing of each father is sometimes easy to detect, and other times can only be inferred. Suffice it to say, none of their thoughts were forged in a hermetically sealed milieu. In addition to the influences from their own upbringing and training, threats like NeoPlatonism, Stoicism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Graeco-Roman mystery religions, polytheism, and a wide variety of philosophies, cults, and Christological heresies were always in the background.

14. Thinkers like Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius are better classed as Ecclesiastical writers. We use "fathers" in this chapter with slightly wider semantic latitude than might patrological purists. It is only for convenience.
15. Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), p. 19 and 22.
16. Many who do not specify a 24-hour length nevertheless seem naturally read as understanding each day to be a normal solar day, since they are giving literal meaning to the other terms of Genesis 1. See Theophilus of Antioch (c. A.D. 115–168–181), *To Autolytus* 2.11–12; Methodius (A.D. 260–312), *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 8.11; 9.1; Epiphanius of Salamis (A.D. 315–403), *Panarion* 1.1.1.; Cyril of Jerusalem (c. A.D. 315–386), *Catechetical Lectures* 12.5. For more discussion, see Robert Bradshaw, "Creation and the Early Church," chapter 3, n.p. [cited March 31, 2005], www.robbrad.demon.co.uk/Chapter3.htm.
17. Lactantius, *Institutes* 7.14, in *ANF*, vol. 7. See the full quote above.

it in the exact measure of twelve hours by day and by night. . . . The day, as I have above related, is divided into two parts by the number twelve — by the twelve hours of day and night.”¹⁸

Ephrem the Syrian (c. A.D. 306–373) (deacon, hymnwriter, and influential theologian and Bible commentator) was one of the few fathers who knew Hebrew. He was very literal in his concept of the length of the Genesis 1 days: “Although the light and the clouds were created in the twinkling of an eye, still both the day and the night of the First Day were each completed in twelve hours.”¹⁹ Ephraim opposed an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1:

So let no one think that there is anything allegorical in the works of the six days. No one can rightly say that the things pertaining to these days were symbolic, nor can one say that they were meaningless names or that other things were symbolized for us by their names. Rather, let us know in just what manner heaven and earth were created in the beginning. They were truly heaven and earth. There was no other thing signified by the names “heaven” and “earth.” The rest of the works and things made that followed were not meaningless significations either, for the substances of their natures correspond to what their names signify.²⁰

In his *Hexaemeron* (“six days”), a group of Lenten homilies on the days of creation,²¹ Basil of Caesarea specifically also opposed the “distorted meaning of allegory,” accusing allegorists of serving “their own ends” and giving “a majesty of their own invention to Scripture”; advocating instead a humble acceptance of the “common sense,” the “literal sense” of Scripture “as it has been written.”²² Basil was specific that creation happened quickly, and in 24-hour days. Referring

18. Victorinus, *On the Creation of the World*, in *ANF*, vol. 7. p. 341

19. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis 1*, quoted by Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man: The Orthodox Christian Vision* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000), p. 101.

20. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis 1.1*, in Kathleen E. McVey, ed., *Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, trans. Edward G. Mathews and Joseph P. Amar, in *The Fathers of the Church (FC hereafter)* (Washington, D.C., 1961), 91:74.

21. Hexaemera is the body of treatises, sermons, and commentaries ordering all knowledge in terms of the six days of creation: some more exegetical and others more allegorical. Hexaemeral literature is the whole corpus of writings dealing with the subject, whether formal, secondary, or poetic renderings of the Genesis creation account. This genre became a special focus of some Church fathers, especially for Lent, remaining quite popular into the 1600s. Many authors followed Basil’s pattern of nine homilies. Basil’s brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose wrote a *Hexaemeron*. For Jewish and Christian hexaemeral authors before Basil, like Chalcidius, Philo Judaeus, Hippolytus, Papias, Pantaeus, and numerous other later hexaemerists, see Frank Eggleston Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature: A Study of the Greek and Latin Commentaries on Genesis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1912).

22. Basil, *Hexaemeron 9.1*, in *NPNF2*, vol. 8.

to the creation of light on the first day, he says, “So, with a single word and in one instant, the Creator of all things gave the boon of light to the world.”²³ Note Basil’s clarity with respect to the length of the days:

And the evening and the morning were one day. Why does Scripture say “one day the first day”? Before speaking to us of the second, the third, and the fourth days, would it not have been more natural to call that one the first which began the series? If it therefore says “one day,” it is from a wish to determine the measure of day and night, and to combine the time that they contain. Now twenty-four hours fill up the space of one day — we mean of a day and of a night; and if, at the time of the solstices, they have not both an equal length, the time marked by Scripture does not the less circumscribe their duration. It is as though it said: twenty-four hours measure the space of a day, or that, in reality a day is the time that the heavens starting from one point take to return there. Thus, every time that, in the revolution of the sun, evening and morning occupy the world, their periodical succession never exceeds the space of one day. . . . God who made the nature of time measured it out and determined it by intervals of days; and, wishing to give it a week as a measure, he ordered the week to revolve from period to period upon itself, to count the movement of time, forming the week of one day revolving seven times upon itself: a proper circle begins and ends with itself.²⁴

23. *Ibid.*, 2.8, in *NPNF2*, vol. 8.

24. *Ibid.* Ross and Archer are incorrect when they assert that in the very next paragraph one can find proof that Basil allowed for the possibility that the creation days could be longer than 24 hours. The point that Basil was making is that day “one” is *not* the rest of eternity (“age of age, and ages of ages”). Basil’s previous comments still control the meaning of “day” as a 24-hour period. Here is the section in question: “But must we believe in a mysterious reason for this? God who made the nature of time measured it out and determined it by intervals of days; and, wishing to give it a week as a measure, he ordered the week to revolve from period to period upon itself, to count the movement of time, forming the week of one day revolving seven times upon itself: a proper circle begins and ends with itself. Such is also the character of eternity, to revolve upon itself and to end nowhere. If then the beginning of time is called ‘one day’ rather than ‘the first day,’ it is because Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity. It was, in reality, fit and natural to call ‘one’ the day whose character is to be one wholly separated and isolated from all the others. If Scripture speaks to us of many ages, saying everywhere, ‘age of age, and ages of ages,’ we do not see it enumerate them as first, second, and third. It follows that we are hereby shown not so much limits, ends and succession of ages, as distinctions between various states and modes of action.” See Ross and Archer, “The Day-Age Reply,” p. 205.

Robert Letham seems to think that there is a tension between Basil’s concept of 24-hour days and his saying that everything was created “in less than an instant” in the “rapid and imperceptible moment of creation” (1.6). The tension is resolved by observing that Basil held a view that everything was created by God foundationally, and then

“Basil the Great” was one of the most important Church leaders and theologians of the fourth century, strongly defending Nicene Trinitarianism against the Arian and Sabellian heresies.²⁵ He also is noted for famine relief; establishing a poorhouse, a hospital, and a hospice; and writing monastic guidelines. History has judged Basil’s *Hexaemeron* the most substantial; it inspired many others to also write commentary on the six days. In his own *Hexaemeron*, Gregory said, “What the saintly Basil wrote about the creation of the world . . . should suffice and alone take second place to the divinely inspired Testament.” Gregory said that in his own writing he would not “fall in line with common opinion.” He wished only “to understand . . . what the text means which follows a certain defined order regarding creation. ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ [Gen 1.1], and the rest which pertains to the cosmogenesis which the six days encompass.”²⁶

The Allegorists

Allegorical interpreters among the fathers were especially remarkable in resisting the old-earth theories of their day, even though they did differ on whether the days of creation were real days of 24-hours each, or simply symbolic representations of the order of creation.

Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150–211 or 216), head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, claimed that the six days were not literal but rather symbolic expressions of the sequential order of creation in an instant before time began:

God’s resting is not, then, as some conceive, that God ceased from doing. For, being good, if He should ever cease from doing good, then would He cease from being God, which it is sacrilege even to say. The resting is, therefore, the ordering that the order of created things should be preserved inviolate, and that each of the creatures should cease from the ancient disorder. For the creations on the different days followed in a most important succession; so that all things brought into

formed through the seven days of creation. “The beginning, in effect, is indivisible and instantaneous.” See Robert Letham, “‘In the Space of Six Days’: The Days of Creation from Origen to the Westminster Assembly,” *WTJ* 61 (1999): p. 152–153.

25. Thomas Torrance nicely sums up Basil’s historical significance: “Essential to [Basil’s] cosmological outlook lies the Christian concept of the radical contingency of the universe and its rational order. And central to all that is the conception, so impossible for the ancient Greeks, of the contingent nature of the human mind created by God out of nothing but given a unique relation to his own transcendent Mind through grace. The incorporation of those ideas in Basil’s *Hexameron* played a very important role, not only in challenging the intellectual foundations of the classical outlook upon the world of visible and invisible reality, but in helping to transform the Greek mind in a way that has left its mark upon the very basis of western culture.” Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind: Reason, Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers and Howard, 1989), p. 5.
26. Gregory of Nyssa, *Hexaemeron*, trans. Richard McCambly, in J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris: Migne, 1863), 44:68–69.

existence might have honor from priority, created together in thought, but not being of equal worth. Nor was the creation of each signified by the voice, inasmuch as the creative work is said to have made them at once. For something must needs have been named first. Wherefore those things were announced first, from which came those that were second, all things being originated together from one essence by one power. For the will of God was one, in one identity. And how could creation take place in time, seeing time was born along with things which exist.²⁷

This view, that God created everything “at once” and “together,” would be espoused later by Origen and Augustine of Hippo.

Origen (c. 185–254) was also a head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria. Even though his teachings are now recognized as aberrant in significant ways, he was one of the greatest minds in Christian antiquity. Unfortunately, despite the fact that he was one of the most prolific authors of his time, most of his works have perished. He was one of the most controversial scholars between Paul and Augustine, and is referred to as the “father of biblical criticism.” His *On First Principles* was the first attempt at a systematic theology in the East. But he is chiefly remembered as one of the main formulators of the allegorical hermeneutic in the ancient Church. As a result, he viewed the six days as only “apparent” in signifying literal days.²⁸ Indeed, Origen held that no one with “understanding” will interpret Genesis 1 as a “pure history of events.” These things should not be taken as having actually occurred, but rather should be taken in a spiritual

27. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.16, in *ANF*, vol. 2.

28. Origen, *Contra Celsus* 6.60, in *ANF*, vol. 4: “We answered to the best of our ability this objection to God’s ‘commanding this first, second, and third thing to be created,’ when we quoted the words, ‘He said, and it was done; He commanded, and all things stood fast;’ remarking that the immediate Creator, and, as it were, very Maker of the world was the Word, the Son of God; while the Father of the Word, by commanding His own Son — the Word — to create the world, is *primarily* Creator. And with regard to the creation of the light upon the first day, and of the firmament upon the second, and of the gathering together of the waters that are under the heaven into their several reservoirs on the third (the earth thus causing to sprout forth those (fruits) which are under the control of nature alone, and of the (great) lights and stars upon the fourth, and of aquatic animals upon the fifth, and of land animals and man upon the sixth, we have treated to the best of our ability in our notes upon Genesis, as well as in the foregoing pages, when we found fault with those who, taking the words in their *apparent* signification, said that the time of six days was occupied in the creation of the world, and quoted the words: ‘These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.’” See also 4.11–13 on Origen’s trichotomous “threefold” hermeneutic. See also Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970), p. 31–33, for Jean Daniélou’s caution that Origen’s practice was more allegorical than his theory. Cf. Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1950), p. 20.

sense.²⁹ Origen also maintained that the seventh day of Genesis 1 continues until the end of the world.³⁰

In the same paragraph, Origen asserts: “And the attentive reader may notice in the Gospels innumerable other passages like these, so that he will be convinced that in the histories that are literally recorded, circumstances that did not occur are inserted.”³¹ Since evangelicals clearly cannot hold to biblical inerrancy while also embracing Origen’s concept of Genesis and the Gospels, the perceptive reader will ask for clarification. If Ross can be faulted for cherry picking the fathers for statements lending themselves to a deep-time conclusion, what exempts creationists from the similar charges here? How can we affirm some of Origen’s handling of Genesis, and not the rest, especially later when he writes that the Gospels are literal history? These are valid questions, and we offer seven caveats.

First, we include Origen here in response to deep-time advocates who invoke him in their argument against literal days to show that Origen is no real help to them. Second, creationists seldom refer to Origen, and when they do, it is usually to highlight his occasional “young-earth” type statements, but only for their historical value, and never using his ideas as any type of endorsement. Third, while Origen’s allegorizations may have devotional, historical, or some other value, we would warn that they should be handled responsibly and very cautiously. Fourth, an important element to keep in mind is that even though Origen did not take Genesis 1 as literal history, he does affirm some things that Ross and Letham curiously disregard. For example, in rebuking Celsus, Origen clearly states that “the Mosaic account of creation . . . teaches that the world is not yet ten thousand years old, but very much under that.”³² Elsewhere he asserted this view specifically against views held by Greeks and Egyptians that the “the world is uncreated” and eternal.³³ So Letham’s or Ross’s appeals to Origen as an ancient precedent for “a non-literal view of Genesis 1” are mitigated by (as Letham admits) Origen’s Neoplatonic allegorism and his young-earth assertions (which Letham does not mention).³⁴ Fifth, granting that Origen did not take the days literally, it is a huge leap of eisegetical faith to say he held a day-age view or a framework hypothesis. Nowhere does he enunciate such a thesis. Sixth, Origen’s handling of Scripture is usually showcased in evangelical seminaries today as a

29. Origen, *De Principiis* 4.1.16 (Greek translation), in *ANF*, vol. 4; Ross, *Matter of Days*, p. 44.

30. Origen, *Contra Celsus* 6.61 in *ANF*, vol. 4: “. . . the day of the Sabbath and rest of God, which follows the completion of the world’s creation, and which lasts during the duration of the world, and in which all those will keep festival with God who have done all *their* works in *their* six days, and who, because they have omitted none of their duties, will ascend to the contemplation (of celestial things), and to the assembly of righteous and blessed beings.”

31. Origen, *De Principiis* 4.1.16 (Greek translation), in *ANF*, vol. 4.

32. *Ibid.*, 1.19.

33. *Ibid.*, 1.20.

34. Letham, “Space of Six Days,” p. 151–152.

primer on how *not* to handle the Bible. And such suspect method, leads to our seventh and final point: many of Origen's beliefs are so clearly unorthodox that he seems hardly the type of figure with which modern-day accommodationists would want to be aligned. Any advantages he might offer are totally eclipsed by the disadvantages he brings to the hermeneutical table. The suggestion by Letham and Ross that creationists are not acknowledging or respecting Origen's authority is misleading. Given Origen's break with orthodoxy in so many areas, the more interesting question should be posed to Letham and Ross as to why the use of Origen is seen as helpful in buttressing an apology for deep time.

Ambrose (c. A.D. 338–397), bishop of Milan, and spiritual and exegetical mentor of Augustine, used his understanding of Greek to study Philo, Origen, and Athanasius, and to correspond with Basil. Though a Neoplatonist and an Alexandrian type of allegorist in general,³⁵ Ambrose had a literal concept of the length of the six days in his commentary on Basil's *Hexaemeron*:

Scripture established a law that twenty-four hours, including both day and night, should be given the name of day only, as if one were to say the length of one day is twenty-four hours in extent. . . . The nights in this reckoning are considered to be component parts of the days that are counted. Therefore, just as there is a single revolution of time, so there is but one day. Thus were created the evening and the morning. Scripture means the space of a day and a night, and afterwards no more says day and night, but calls them both under the name of the more important: a custom which you will find throughout Scripture.³⁶

So Ambrose held that each “day” of creation was 24 hours in length, and the term “day” also included the night, because the day is the more important of each 24 hours.

Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) is the most commonly cited authority who, it is claimed, allowed for the days of creation to be longer than 24 hours. Jack Lewis says that Augustine believed that Genesis 1 was an allegory about the future.³⁷ But he further asserts that Augustine also wanted to set forth what the author was “trying to say about God and the world.”³⁸ Augustine took Genesis 2:4 to indicate that everything was created simultaneously — not in six days.³⁹

35. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 85, 153–154.

36. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 1.10.3–7, in Ambrose, *Hexaemeron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage, in FC (Washington, D.C., 1961), 42:42–43.

37. Jack P. Lewis, “The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation,” *JETS* 32 (1989): p. 440–444. Lewis's synthesis of Augustine's view is the major basis of my summary. See also Letham, “Space of Six Days,” p. 154–157; Bradshaw, “Creation and the Early Church,” chapter 3, www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Chapter3.htm.

38. Lewis, “Days of Creation,” p. 440.

39. Louis Lavalley noted the source of Augustine's instantaneous creation view as being a mistranslation of the LXX of Sir 18:1: “According to translator J.H. Taylor (*The Literal*

His view was that God created matter and souls as they are inherently; He created everything else in invisible forms (seminal principles) that would develop from these “seminal principles” in the ongoing providential, post-creation working of God. The initial creation was made without “any interval of time.”⁴⁰ Lewis notes that this concept of providential progressive development was appealed to as precedent for later evolutionary systems. But this appeal is highly ironic, since on closer examination it is apparent that Augustine believed in instantaneous completion of the distinct kinds of plants and animals. As Lewis sees it, according to Augustine, God finished creating after His work symbolized by the portrayal of the “sixth day” and creates no new creatures in the ages of providential post-creation work.⁴¹

But Sarfati well observes that Augustine relied almost exclusively on the Latin Bible, because he did not know Hebrew and only came to have a basic facility in Greek in later life, long after his Genesis commentary was done. As Sarfati notes, because he did not know Hebrew, he perhaps did not know of the Hebrew word for “instant” (עָרַב, used in Exod. 33:5; Num. 16:21, 45; Ezra 9:8). Perhaps if Augustine had known Hebrew, he would not have espoused his view of the total creation occurring in an instant. But such it was and, as Sarfati points out, Augustine’s interpretation “is *diametrically opposite* to what long-agers claim!”⁴²

Augustine asserts that the six days are difficult for people to conceive, but that they were not literal days, because there was only one day of creation.⁴³

Meaning, 1. 254), “The word *simul* (“at one time,” “all together”) in the Latin version seems to be a mistranslation of the Greek *koine* (“commonly,” “without exception”).’ Jerome, not accepting the Apocrypha as Scripture, did not retranslate Sirach, so the Vg today contains this OL reading.” (Louis Lavalley, “Augustine on the Creation Days,” *JETS* 32 (1989): p. 469–61, n. 20) Since Clement and Basil held a similar view (based on Gen. 2:4), it is unlikely that Augustine invented this view.

40. Augustine, *Confessions* 13.33.48, in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1 (NPNF1 hereafter)* (reprint ed.; 14 vols; Hendrickson, 1994), vol. 1: “They have therefore their successions of morning and evening, partly hidden, partly apparent; for they were made from nothing by Thee, not of Thee, nor of any matter not Thine, or which was created before, but of concreated matter (that is, matter at the same time created by Thee), because without any interval of time Thou didst form its formlessness. For since the matter of heaven and earth is one thing, and the form of heaven and earth another, Thou hast made the matter indeed of almost nothing, but the form of the world Thou hast formed of formless matter; both, however, at the same time, so that the form should follow the matter with no interval of delay.”
41. Lewis, “Days of Creation,” p. 441–442.
42. Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004), p. 118. On the distinction between יוֹם (*yôm*) and עָרַב (*rega*) in the Hebrew Bible, see also Jim Stambaugh, “The Days of Creation: A Semantic Approach,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 7 (Fall 2003): p. 61–68.
43. Augustine, *City of God* 11.6, in NPNF1, vol. 2: “And if the sacred and infallible Scriptures

Lewis accurately observes that Augustine believed that the six days of Genesis 1 are the progressive revelation of the creative activity to the angels and to those humans who cannot understand that He created everything at once. The days of Genesis 1 are the manifestation of the sequence in the one moment of creation. And yet what they portray happened in one instant. The days are not solar days, and they are not long ages of time, but revelatory symbols of the progression in the one creation moment.⁴⁴

Lewis is correct in noting that Augustine did not believe that creation occurred within the span of six literal days. But what appears at first glance to be a point against a recent creation dissipates on closer reflection. First, it is a *non sequitur* to infer that a non-literal interpretation implies an old-earth interpretation. Second, there is no evidence to suggest that Augustine (or any of the fathers) would entertain the idea that creation took place millions of years ago. On the contrary, thirdly, it seems clear that Augustine believed creation happened in an instant. Indeed, fourthly, he explicitly argued that scriptural history contradicted those who held that the world was “many thousand years” old. He believed that the Scriptures taught that the earth was not even 6,000 years old.⁴⁵

They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though, reckoning by the sacred writings, we find that not 6,000 years have yet passed.⁴⁶

As to those who are always asking why man was not created during these countless ages of the infinitely extended past, and came into being

say that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, in order that it may be understood that He had made nothing previously — for if He had made anything before the rest, this thing would rather be said to have been made ‘in the beginning’ — then assuredly the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time — after that which is past, before that which is future. But none could then be past, for there was no creature by whose movements its duration could be measured. But simultaneously with time the world was made, if in the world’s creation change and motion were created, as seems evident from the order of the first six or seven days. For in these days the morning and evening are counted, until, on the sixth day, all things which God then made were finished, and on the seventh the rest of God was mysteriously and sublimely signaled. What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible, for us to conceive, and how much more to say!”

44. Lewis, “Days of Creation,” p. 441–442; Augustine, *City of God* 11.33, in *NPNF1*, vol. 2: “. . . first of all, the creation is presented in sum, and then its parts are enumerated according to the mystic number of the days.”

45. In general, most of the early fathers relied on the Septuagint or Latin translations, did not know Hebrew or Aramaic (Origen and Eusebius were notable exceptions), and were not particularly well-versed in Semitic patterns of thought.

46. Augustine, *The City of God* 12.10, in *NPNF1*, vol. 2.

so lately that, according to Scripture, less than 6,000 years have elapsed since (h)e began to be. . . .⁴⁷

Lest it be argued on the basis of Augustine's statements that Adam was created less than 6,000 years ago but the rest of creation is much older than that, it should be remembered that Augustine believed that God created everything, at least seminally, in an instant. And attention should be paid to Augustine's comments that those who believe that the earth is much older are in opposition to the history set forth in Scripture (see below). Furthermore, as will be demonstrated shortly, Augustine believed that the "six days" of creation typologically predicted that the entire history of the earth would last six millennia.

In summary, we would ask those who invoke Augustine's authority in defense of deep time and against literal 24-hour days, to bear the following six points in mind. First, his *Interpretation of Genesis* was based on Jerome's Latin translation, not the original language. Second, he had to use the Latin because he did not know Hebrew, so he never personally grappled with the original text of Genesis. Third, he is identified with the Alexandrian school, which is well known more for its heavy allegorizing than any rigorous systematic philological method. Fourth, he did not believe there was human death before the Fall. Fifth, he believed in a literal global Flood. And sixth, modern readings of his work do not inspire confidence that he ever distanced himself far enough from his early Neoplatonic leanings. Given these facts, old-earth proponents are not justified when they invoke Augustine's convictions on the length of the creation days as an argument in support of the acceptance of millions of years and against the young-earth perspective.⁴⁸

The Eschatological Typology of the Six Days

Contrary to the impression left by Hugh Ross and others, consideration of the fathers' views of the length of the days of creation leads to the conclusion that the Church fathers were young-earth creationists. First, most treated the days as 24 hours in length, some even specifying the number of hours. Second, those who maintained that the days of Genesis 1 were only symbolic still believed that creation occurred over a relatively short period of time, even in one instant.

47. *Ibid.*, 12.12.

48. Old-earth and young-earth creationists must resolve to be consistent in their use and trust of Augustine or any patristic authority. Obviously we are not saying the fathers cannot be invoked, trusted, and emulated at times.

Quite the contrary, since a strong thesis of this volume is *ad fontes* ("back to the sources"). We are aware that some of the limitations above also apply to those fathers whom young-earth creationists showcase. We are just putting forth the modest proposal that we appeal responsibly to icons of the past, and not engage in proof-texting or special pleading. While the fathers' authority is a precious commodity, integrity demands that we also acknowledge any areas in these luminaries which offset or even nullify our argument.

Third, no father's writing leaves room for current old-earth creationists to appeal to them for support for their interpretation of the creation days as being long ages of millions of years each.

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 — and would not remain in its current state after the end of 6,000 years. In the first two centuries of Church history, the Church fathers had a premillennial eschatology in which the seventh age of 1,000 years would be the Millennium. Later the predominant eschatology became amillennialism as Christianity became not only a legal religion, but also the official religion of the Roman Empire. But even after the eschatological shift, the fathers continued to espouse the 6,000-year schema of world history.

Background

The basis of the sex/septa-millenary view was a typological interpretation of the six days of creation. Based on Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 (“with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” NKJV), the fathers believed that each day of creation typified a period of one thousand years in the future history of the earth.⁴⁹ This typology had a pre-Christian history. In the 19th century, D.T. Taylor summarized much of the literature on the sex/septa-millenary concept.⁵⁰ He noted that according to 18th century astronomer David Gregory, the ancient Cabalists⁵¹ derived the 6,000 years from the six occurrences of the Hebrew letter *aleph* (the notation for 1,000 in Jewish arithmetic) in Genesis 1:1 and from the six days of creation, since 1,000 years are as one day. Taylor notes that Plutarch said that the Chaldeans, Zoroaster, and the Persians held that human history would last 6,000 years. According to Arnold Ehlert, the Tuscans, Persians, and Etruscans believed that there were six ages of

49. This section contradicts Ross and Archer, who state: “Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Lactantius, Victorinus of Pettau, and Methodius of Olympus all explicitly endorse six consecutive thousand-year periods for the Genesis creations days.” (Ross and Archer, “The Day-Age Response,” p. 69; see also Ross, *Matter of Days*, p. 45). This statement is quite inaccurate as Duncan and Hall demonstrate in response (J. Ligon Duncan III and David W. Hall, “The 24-Hour Reply,” *The Genesis Debate*, p. 99–102). The fathers considered in this section were not stating that the days of creation were each 1,000 years long, but that the days typologically predicted subsequent ages of world history, each of which would be 1,000 years long. See also Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, p. 114–122.

50. D.T. Taylor, *The Voice of the Church on the Coming and Kingdom of the Redeemer: or, a History of the Doctrine of the Reign of Christ on Earth* (8th ed.; Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997), p. 32–36. The eighth edition was published in 1866 by the Scriptural Tract Repository.

51. Cabal (Hebrew קבל “to receive”) basically refers to a corpus of ancient mystical teachings with rabbinical origins, based on an esoteric interpretation of the Hebrew Old Testament, and containing strong elements of pantheism. The esoteric teachings of Cabalism are still seen in the ultra-Orthodox Hasidic and Lubavitch sects.

1,000 years each in the creation, and humanity would exist for another 6,000 years.⁵² Jewish rabbis especially held the typological eschatology of the six days. Edersheim's summary of the Talmud (Sanhedrin) includes this opinion of Rabbi Kattina based on Psalm 90:4:

The world is to last 6,000 years, and during one millennium it is to lie desolate, according to Is. 2:17. R. Abayi held that this state would last 2,000 years, according to Hosea 6:2. The opinion of R. Kattian was however, regarded as supported by this, that in each period of seven there is a Sabbatic year, the day here = 1,000 years of desolateness and rest — the appeal being to Is. 2:17; Ps. 92:1, and 90:4.⁵³

Ante-Nicene Premillennialists

Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100–165) asserted to the Jew, Trypho, that “right-minded Christians” believe that after a resurrection of the dead, there will be “a thousand years in Jerusalem. The city will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.”⁵⁴ Justin's concept that a “day” can be a typological prediction of 1,000 years is seen in his view that Adam died in less than 1,000 years — so he died “in the day” he ate of the tree, just as God had warned. Justin associated this predictive nature of a day with the “the expression, ‘The day of the Lord is as a thousand years.’” And then he linked this expression to the apostle John's prediction that “those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”⁵⁵

52. Arnold D. Ehlert, “A Bibliography of Dispensationalism, Part 1,” *BSac* 101 (January 1944): p. 99.

53. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (2 vols.; reprint ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 2:738.

54. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, p. 80, in *ANF*, vol. 1.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 81. The full quote reads: “For as Adam was told that in the day he ate of the tree he would die, we know that he did not complete a thousand years. We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, ‘The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,’ is connected with this subject. And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.” Justin does not say that the sixth day of creation was meant to last 1,000 years — but that within the time limit of the day (1,000 years) in which Adam lived, he would die, if he ate of the tree. Justin cannot be justifiably used (contra Ross and Archer, “Day-Age Reply,” p. 204; Ross, *Matter of Days*, p. 43) as precedent for allowing for the days of creation to be long ages. (A similar argument against Ross and Archer can be made about Irenaeus' words in *Against Heresies* 5:23.2. Irenaeus did not mean that the sixth day of creation was 1,000 years, but that in the sixth day, the day in which Adam was created, he began his own day (of 1,000

The *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. A.D. 130–131) is an early indication of the acceptance of this six-day typology. Built on the Sabbath command in the Decalogue, the six days are said to point to God’s working in the present world to end in 6,000 years, with the return of Christ at the beginning of the “seventh day” to commence His Sabbath, and the “eighth day,” the day of Jesus’ Resurrection, being the final Sabbath for the resurrected in a new world.⁵⁶

Crutchfield notes that Barnabas viewed days 1–5 as foreshadowing the first 5,000 years of history (the past). He saw day 6 as looking toward his own age, the 1,000 years of the sixth age (the present). Day 7 was a prediction of the millennium, the seventh era of 1,000 years. And day 8 anticipated the eternal state. Barnabas’ use of this typology would be echoed by many later fathers, even though those who disagreed with his premillennialism (e.g., Origen and Augustine). They would equate the seventh day with the eternal state.⁵⁷

Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130–202 or 212), Bishop of Lyon, was the first great systematic theologian of the early Church. A strong opponent of Gnosticism, Irenaeus felt that the number 666 in Revelation sums up “the whole of that

years), became a debtor to death in that day, and did not live until the end of *his* day (his 1,000 years). Cf. Bradshaw, “Creationism and the Early Church,” www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/chapter3_pf.htm. Justin is also reported to have held that because the seventh day of Genesis 1 was not described as having “evening” and “morning,” it “is a distinct indication of the consummation which is to take place in it before it is finished.” — *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Justin* 15 (*ANF*, vol. 1) — from the writings of Anastasius.

56. *Epistle of Barnabas*, p. 15, in *ANF*, vol. 1: “Further, also, it is written concerning the Sabbath in the Decalogue which [the Lord] spoke, face to face, to Moses on Mount Sinai, ‘And sanctify ye the Sabbath of the Lord with clean hands and a pure heart.’ And He says in another place, ‘If my sons keep the Sabbath, then will I cause my mercy to rest upon them.’ The Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the creation [thus]: ‘And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it.’ Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, ‘He finished in six days.’ This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifieth, saying, ‘Behold, to-day will be as a thousand years.’ Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. ‘And He rested on the seventh day.’ This meaneth: when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day. . . . ‘Your new moons and your Sabbath I cannot endure.’ Ye perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that is which I have made, [namely this] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead. . . .”
57. Larry V. Crutchfield, “The Early Church Fathers and the Foundations of Dispensationalism: Dispensational Concepts in the Apostolic Fathers,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 2 (1998): p. 258–259.

apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years.” And then he affirmed that the world will be “concluded” in the same number of thousands of years as the number of days in which it was made. The six days of creation followed by the seventh day of God’s rest was “an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come.” The basis of this eschatological linkage was that “the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.”⁵⁸ Irenaeus went on to provide a premillennial picture of the Second Advent. After the “Antichrist” will have reigned “in the temple at Jerusalem” for “three years and six months,” the Lord will return, send the Antichrist and his followers “into the lake of fire,” and bring in “the times of the kingdom . . . the rest . . . that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that ‘many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ ”⁵⁹

Hippolytus, commenting on the image of Daniel 2, identified the toes of clay and iron as the “ten horns,” the “antichrist” being “the little horn springing up in their midst.” The “stone” that will break the image and fill “the whole earth” is Christ, “who comes from heaven and brings judgment on the world.” Christ’s “first appearance . . . in the flesh . . . in Bethlehem, under Augustus” occurred “in the year 5500.” (The dating was confirmed by John’s words, “Now it was the sixth hour,” indicating that it was the middle of “the day,” since one day with the Lord “is 1,000 years,” and half of that is 500) For the next 500 years the gospel would be preached to the whole world, and then “the 6,000 must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day ‘on which God rested from all His works.’ ” The Sabbath is the symbol of the “kingdom of the saints,” which will fulfill the typological prophecy of the six days of creation.⁶⁰

. . . for “a day with the Lord is as a thousand years.” Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6, 000 years must be

58. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.28.2-3, in *ANF*, vol. 1.

59. *Ibid.*, 5.30.4. See also 5.33.2; 5.29.2.

60. Hippolytus, *On Daniel* 2.3-6, in *ANF*, vol. 3. Other fathers also gave specific dates for the age of the earth: Theophilus of Antioch (c. A.D. 180) — 5,698 years (*To Autolytus* 3.28); Cyprian of Carthage (c. A.D. 205–258) — “six thousand years are now nearly completed since the devil first attacked man” (*Exhortation To Martyrdom* 11); Julius Africanus (c. A.D. 200–232–245) lists both 5500 and 5531 as the date of the First Advent (*The Extant Fragments Of The Five Books Of The Chronography Of Julius Africanus* 1; 18.4). Three who were not premillennialists, but did specify the age of the earth, were Clement of Alexandria (5,592 years — *Stromata* 1.21); Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 270–340) (5,228 years — *Chronicle*); and Augustine of Hippo (*City of God* 12:11). See Bradshaw, “Creationism and the Early Church,” chapter 3, Table 3.4, www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Chapter3.htm.

fulfilled. And they are not yet fulfilled, as John says: “five are fallen; one is,” that is, the sixth; “the other is not yet come.”⁶¹

Victorinus of Pettau also looked forward to the “seventh millenary of years, when Christ with His elect shall reign.” He called this future kingdom “that true and just Sabbath.” And he also based his time construct on the typological prophecy of the days of creation in keeping with the biblical association of a thousand years with one day: “Wherefore to those seven days the Lord attributed to each a thousand years; for thus went the warning: ‘In Thine eyes, O Lord, a thousand years are as one day.’ Therefore in the eyes of the Lord each thousand of years is ordained, for I find that the Lord’s eyes are seven. Wherefore, as I have narrated, that true Sabbath will be in the seventh millenary of years, when Christ with His elect shall reign.”⁶²

Methodius (A.D. 260–312), Bishop of Olympus, was a literalist opponent of Origen’s allegorism. Methodius posited that the six days of creation were followed by the seventh day of God’s resting from His works of creation, and the ingathering of fruits in the seventh month for “the feast of the Lord,” signify “that, when this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years, when God shall have completed the world, He shall rejoice in us.”⁶³ This “feast” appears to be the OT feast of tabernacles, which, to Methodius, pointed to the believer’s resurrection, the departure from the “Egypt of this life,” the setting up of “my tabernacle, adorned with the fruits of virtue, on the first day of resurrection” to “celebrate with Christ the millennium of rest, which is called the seventh day, even the true Sabbath.” After this, even as the Israelites “after the rest of the Feast of Tabernacles came in to the land of promise,” “after the space of a thousand years” believers will have their bodies changed “from a human and corruptible form into angelic size and beauty” to ascend “into the very house of God above the heavens.”⁶⁴

Lactantius addressed his *Institutes* to Constantine, and made extensive use of the typological eschatology of the days of creation in setting forth his premillennial scheme:

Therefore, since all the works of God were completed in six days, the world must continue in its present state through six ages, that is, six thousand years. For the great day of God is limited by a circle of a thousand years, as the prophet shows, who says “In Thy sight, O Lord, a thousand years are as one day.” And as God labored during those six days in creating such great works, so His religion and truth must labor during these six thousand years, while wickedness prevails and bears rule. And again, since God, having finished His works, rested the seventh

61. Hippolytus, *On Daniel* 2.4, in *ANF*, vol. 3.

62. Victorinus of Pettau, *On the Creation of the World*, in *ANF*, vol. 7.

63. Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins (or Concerning Chastity)* 9.1, in *ANF*, vol. 6.

64. *Ibid.*, 9.5.

day and blessed it, at the end of the six thousandth year all wickedness must be abolished from the earth, and righteousness reign for a thousand years; and there must be tranquility and rest from the labors which the world now has long endured.⁶⁵

Lactantius believed that the making of “the earthly man” on the sixth day and placing him “into a home now carefully prepared,” so in the present “sixth day,” “the heavenly people,” “the true man,” “a holy people” is being “formed by the word of God,” “fashioned for righteousness by the doctrine and precepts of God.” The first man was “mortal and imperfect” and was “formed from the earth” to “live a thousand years in this world.” Even so, “a perfect man” is being formed “from this earthly age” to be “quickenened by God” and “bear rule in this same world through a thousand years.”⁶⁶ When will this happen? When “the six thousand years shall be completed,” and “the last day of the extreme conclusion is now drawing near.” In fact, based on the “foretold signs” of this “consummation,” everyone who has written on “how great is the number of years from the beginning of the world,” though varying greatly among themselves on the amount of these years that have passed, at most allow that the remaining time would be no more than 200 years (“all expectation does not exceed the limit of two hundred years”).⁶⁷

We know that Lactantius was thinking about a literal “thousand years of the kingdom” by examining his treatment of the beginning and ending of the “seven thousand of the world.” He said that at the outset of the “sacred reign” that Satan “will be bound by God.” And when this era begins to end, Satan will be “loosed afresh” and will “assemble all nations” to “make war against the holy city.” When this “innumerable company of the nations” shall “besiege and surround the city,” “the last anger of God shall come upon the nations, and shall utterly destroy them.”⁶⁸

It is especially pertinent to note that Lactantius wrote these things based on his confidence in Scripture — and in opposition to old-earth philosophers of his day:

If any one wishes for them, or does not place full confidence in us, let him approach to the very shrine of the heavenly letters, and being more fully instructed through their trustworthiness, let him perceive

65. Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 7.14, in *ANF*, vol. 7.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*, 7.25. Lactantius believed that this will not happen until the city of Rome falls, so God should be implored to delay, if possible, “that detestable tyrant should come who will trader-take so great a deed, and dig out that eye, by the destruction of which the world itself is about to fall.” (Remember that Lactantius was in the service of the emperor. How different is the attitude about Rome since the earlier days of persecution!) Lactantius was not anticipating the continuation of Rome for a long time.

68. *Ibid.*, 7.26.

that the philosophers have erred, who thought either that this world was eternal, or that there would be numberless thousands of years from the time when it was prepared. For six thousand years have not yet been completed, and when this number shall be made up, then at length all evil will be taken away, that justice alone may reign.⁶⁹

Post-Nicene Anti-Chiliasts

With the eschatological shift away from premillennialism beginning in the third century, it is not surprising that not as many extant writings seem to appeal to the sex/septa-millenary construct. Yet the view did survive — but in an altered eschatology. Taylor noted that Jerome (c. A.D. 340–420) and Hilary of Poitiers (c. A.D. 291–371) asserted that at the end of the 6,000 years, the Second Advent would occur, followed by the eternal, heavenly (i.e., non-earthly) kingdom.⁷⁰

Augustine rejected premillennialism as a “carnal” doctrine after having espoused it earlier in his life,⁷¹ but he did not reject the sex/septa millennial

69. Lactantius, *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 70, in *ANF*, vol. 7.

70. Taylor, *Voice of the Church*, p. 82–84.

71. Augustine, *City of God* 20.7ff., in *NPNF1*, vol. 2. Note his change from his earlier “chiliasm”: “The evangelist John has spoken of these two resurrections in the book which is called the Apocalypse, but in such a way that some Christians do not understand the first of the two, and so construe the passage into ridiculous fancies. For the Apostle John says in the foresaid book, ‘And I saw an angel come down from heaven. . . . Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’ Those who, on the strength of this passage, have suspected that the first resurrection is future and bodily, have been moved, among other things, specially by the number of a thousand years, as if it were a fit thing that the saints should thus enjoy a kind of Sabbath-rest during that period, a holy leisure after the labors of the six thousand years since man was created, and was on account of his great sin dismissed from the blessedness of paradise into the woes of this mortal life, so that thus, as it is written, ‘One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,’ there should follow on the completion of six thousand years, as of six days, a kind of seventh-day Sabbath in the succeeding thousand years; and that it is for this purpose the saints rise, viz., to celebrate this Sabbath. And. this opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual and consequent on the presence of God; for I myself, too, once held this opinion. But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal. They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians. It were a tedious process to refute these opinions point by point: we prefer proceeding to show how that passage of Scripture should be understood.” See also *Psalms* 6.1 for Augustine’s change of the normal structure of 7,000 years before the Second Advent.

construct of earth's history. As was noted earlier, he believed that not even 6,000 years had passed since the beginning of creation.⁷²

It needs to be emphasized again that Augustine held this 6,000-year view because he believed that Scripture taught it, and he maintained the view against old-earth views of his day. For example, he opposed the Egyptian claim that it had had knowledge of the stars for more than 100,000 years — because their claim contradicted the history given by God. He also rejected other historians on this point, because they contradict each other:

In vain, then, do some babble with most empty presumption, saying that Egypt has understood the reckoning of the stars for more than a hundred thousand years. For in what books have they collected that number who learned letters from Isis their mistress, not much more than two thousand years ago? Varro, who has declared this, is no small authority in history, and it does not disagree with the truth of the divine books. For as it is not yet six thousand years since the first man, who is called Adam, are not those to be ridiculed rather than refuted who try to persuade us of anything regarding a space of time so different from, and contrary to, the ascertained truth? For what historian of the past should we credit more than him who has also predicted things to come which we now see fulfilled? And the very disagreement of the historians among themselves furnishes a good reason why we ought rather to believe him who does not contradict the divine history which we hold. . . . But we, being sustained by divine authority in the history of our religion, have no doubt that whatever is opposed to it is most false. . . .⁷³

Augustine's eschatology changed the "seventh day" from being the seventh period of 1,000 years to being the eternal state following the Second Advent. He said that the "seventh day" looked to the "Sabbath of eternal life."⁷⁴ Like Pseudo-Barnabas, Tertullian, and Victorinus, Augustine did refer to an "eighth day" and built his argument for Sunday being the worship day of the Church as the "eighth day." He did not hold to an earthly millennium for the seventh day, but he emphasized the "eighth day" (the first day of the week) as symbolizing resurrection and the rest of the "seventh day," which was eternal:

If, in reading Genesis, you search the record of the seven days, you will find that there was no evening of the seventh day, which signified that the rest of which it was a type was eternal. The life originally bestowed was not eternal, because man sinned; but the final rest, of which the seventh day was an emblem, is eternal, and hence the eighth day also will have eternal blessedness, because that rest, being eternal, is taken

72. See quotes at footnotes 44 and 45.

73. *Ibid.*, 18.40.

74. Augustine, *Confessions* 13.36.51, in *NPNF1*, vol. 1.

up by the eighth day, not destroyed by it; for if it were thus destroyed, it would not be eternal. Accordingly the eighth day, which is the first day of the week, represents to us that original life, not taken away, but made eternal.⁷⁵

Based on this quote, note carefully that Augustine explicitly appealed to “the seven days” of Genesis 1 as a typological pattern for the ages of earth’s history, so he definitely considered the creation of the earth (including the creation of man) to have occurred less than 6,000 years ago. Augustine closed his *City of God* with the “eighth day” symbolizing the eternal heavenly life of the “seventh day” — after a history of six ages on earth:

This Sabbath shall appear still more clearly if we count the ages as days, in accordance with the periods of time defined in Scripture, for that period will be found to be the seventh. The first age, as the first day, extends from Adam to the deluge; the second from the deluge to Abraham, equaling the first, not in length of time, but in the number of generations, there being ten in each. From Abraham to the advent of Christ there are, as the evangelist Matthew calculates, three periods, in each of which are fourteen generations, — one period from Abraham to David, a second from David to the captivity, a third from the captivity to the birth of Christ in the flesh. There are thus five ages in all. The sixth is now passing, and cannot be measured by any number of generations, as it has been said, “It is not for you to know the times, which the Father hath put in His own power.” After this period, God shall rest as on the seventh day, when He shall give us (who shall be the seventh day) rest in Himself. But there is not now space to treat of these ages; suffice it to say that the seventh shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord’s day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?⁷⁶

Thus, Augustine saw the first five ages/days of world history to have been complete, and the sixth age/day was, in his day, “passing.” It is not clear that he believed that each age of earth’s history would be exactly 1,000 years, as previous writers believed. In fact, it appears that he believed that one could not determine the length of the sixth age. But it would be ended by the seventh. Augustine saw the “seventh age” to be not “of this world”:

75. Augustine, *Letter 55: Part 2 of Replies to Questions of Januarius* 9.17, in *NPNF1*, vol. 1.

76. Augustine, *City of God* 22.30, in *NPNF1*, vol. 2.

. . . at the beginning of the world, and at the time when God made heaven and earth and all things which are in them, He worked during six days, and rested on the seventh day. For it was in the power of the Almighty to make all things even in one moment of time. For He had not labored in the view that He might enjoy (a needful) rest, since indeed “He spake, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created;” but that He might signify how, after six ages of this world, in a seventh age, as on the seventh day, He will rest in His saints; inasmuch as these same saints shall rest also in Him after all the good works in which they have served Him — which He Himself, indeed, works in them, who calls them, and instructs them, and puts away the offenses that are past, and justifies the man who previously was ungodly.⁷⁷

Note again that Augustine held that God “made heaven and earth and all things which are in them . . . even in one moment of time.” The “seventh day” in the Genesis account signified “a seventh age,” which would be “after six ages of this world.” Augustine was explicit that the seventh age would not be on earth, but in heaven:

In the creation God finished His works in six days, and rested on the seventh. The history of the world contains six periods marked by the dealings of God with men. . . . the sixth is now in progress, and will end in the coming of the exalted Savior to judgment. What answers to the seventh day is the rest of the saints — not in this life, but in another, where the rich man saw Lazarus at rest while he was tormented in hell; where there is no evening, because there is no decay.⁷⁸

Later in life, Augustine may not have been totally committed to his concept that the six days were not literal days. Indeed, in his *Retractions (Revisions)*, he indicated that in his *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he had asked more questions than “answers found,” and of these answers found “only a few were assured.”⁷⁹ Since he did not specify the “answers,” it cannot be concluded that he was referring to the nature of the six days. But the even more relevant point to note here is that even in his most allegorical moments in studying Genesis, Augustine held that the earth was less than 6,000 years old in his day, and to believe that the earth was considerably older was to oppose God’s history given in Scripture. Augustine was the climax of the mainstream majority young-earth creationist patristic tradition.

77. Augustine, *The Catechising of the Uninstructed* 17.28, in *NPNF1*, vol. 3.

78. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon* 12.12, in *NPNF1*, vol. 4. For this period, see also *Sermon 75.4* (vol. 6); *Tractates on John* 15.6, 9 (vol. 7).

79. Augustine, *Revisions* 2.24, in John E. Rotelle, ed., *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), p. 167.

The Fathers on the Flood

The fathers do not seem to have based their concept of the age of the earth on Noah's Flood, obviously because geological concerns were not then at issue in judging the age of the earth. Later in post-Reformation Europe, geology, the Flood, and the age of the earth would be linked together. For the moment it is sufficient to note that most of the fathers treated the Flood as a real and worldwide event — condemning pagan flood stories as not referring to the biblical Flood, since these stories concerned only localized floods.

Justin Martyr did not have much to say on this subject. But he did remark that “the whole earth, as the Scripture says, was inundated, and the water rose in height fifteen cubits above all the mountains.”⁸⁰

With even more specifics, Theophilus (c. 115–185), Patriarch of Antioch, contradicted Plato, who had said that the deluge “extended not over the whole earth, but only over the plains, and that those who fled to the highest hills saved themselves.” Theophilus also rejected other Greek views that Deucalion and Pyrrha were preserved through the deluge in a “chest,” and that a certain Clymenus lived in a second flood. He referred to these Greeks as “miserable, and very profane and senseless persons,” countering them by noting that “Moses, our prophet and the servant of God, in giving an account of the genesis of the world,” described the details of how the Flood “came upon the earth” — “relating no fable of Pyrrha nor of Deucalion or Clymenus; nor, forsooth, that only the plains were submerged, and that those only who escaped to the mountains were saved.” Theophilus went on to argue that Moses never taught that there was a second flood, but “that never again would there be a flood of water on the world; as neither indeed has there been, nor ever shall be.” According to Theophilus, Moses recounted that “the flood lasted forty days and forty nights,” that “the water overtopped every high hill 15 cubits,” and that “the race of all the men” was “destroyed” except for the eight people in the ark. Theophilus further comments on the Flood by noting that “of the ark, the remains are to this day to be seen in the Arabian mountains,” and closes his section by referring to Moses' account as “the history of the deluge.”⁸¹

The important early North African Trinitarian theologian Tertullian (A.D. 115–222) asserted that the “whole orb” was “overrun by all waters.” His proof was that “To this day marine conchs and tritons' horns sojourn as foreigners on the mountains, eager to prove to Plato that even the heights have undulated.”⁸² Tertullian also referred to the deluge as “that world-wide calamity, the abolisher of all things.”⁸³

Gregory of Nazianzus (A.D. 329–389) was a Bishop of Constantinople (380–381) and one of the anti-Arian “Three Great Cappadocian” theologians.

80. Justin Martyr, *Dialog* 138, in *ANF*, vol. 1.

81. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolytus* 3.18-19, in *ANF*, vol. 2.

82. Tertullian, *On the Pallium* 2, in *ANF*, vol. 4.

83. Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women* 1.3, in *ANF*, vol. 4.

Gregory pointed to Noah as having been “entrusted with the saving of the whole world from the waters” and as having “escaped the Deluge in a small Ark.”⁸⁴ And the great western theologian Augustine climaxed the fathers’ affirmation that the Noachian Flood was worldwide. Augustine argued against an exclusively allegorical interpretation by asserting that the Flood was “so great” that its waters rose “fifteen cubits above the highest mountains.”⁸⁵

Further evidence of the fathers’ consistency of the worldwide Flood view is given by Young, who relates that Procopius of Gaza (c. A.D. 465–528) in his *Commentary on Genesis* and Pseudo-Eustathius (n.d.) in his *Commentary on Hexaemeron* argue for the worldwide extent of the Flood by recalling that marine remains (e.g., shells, various types of fish) had been found on high mountains. Pseudo-Eustathius claimed that the fish must have been “gathered together in the caves of the mountains when they were caught in the mud.” Young notes that Pseudo-Justin (probably Theodoret of Cyrus — c. 393–466) was the only extant father to suggest the possibility of a local Flood.⁸⁶

Conclusion

The Church fathers had much to say about the creation. Indeed, for them, the chronological framework in Genesis foreshadowed the entire eschatological unfolding of world history. They saw that the present and the future were implicitly anticipated by the beginning of the created order. And, in opposition to the naturalism of their day with respect to the age of the earth, the fathers were clear:

1. The fathers wrote in an intellectual milieu that was filled with naturalistic cosmogonies, most of which held the earth to be either very old or even eternal. The fathers considered these thinkers to be atheistic, even if the philosophers posited an intelligent cause, because they did not believe in the God of the Bible.
2. Most of the fathers countered the naturalistic theories of origins of their day with the authoritative scriptural account of creation. The Alexandrians allowed for more use of scientific studies, but they still saw Scripture as having the final say on their view of the divine act of creation.
3. We have shown that most of the fathers held to the six days as being literal 24-hour days. At the very minimum, they all believed that creation was sudden. In strong contrast to the claims of Hugh Ross, we have demonstrated that no father proposed anything that could be taken as affirming deep time. It does not follow logically that if a father did not specify the exact

84. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Second Theological Oration* 18, in *NPNF2*, vol. 7.

85. Augustine, *City of God* 15.27 in *NPNF1*, vol. 2. For more on the fathers and the Flood, see Bradshaw, “Creationism and the Early Church,” chapter 6, table 6.1. Online: www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/Chapter6.htm

86. Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 26–27.

length of each creation day, or even treated them as purely symbolic, then he would not see the time frame of creation as being important, or that deep time was a viable option. The oft-used counter examples of Clement, Origen, and Augustine, best understood through the lens of Alexandrian allegorical hermeneutics, all held that the creation had been fully completed in an instant.

4. Regardless of their differing hermeneutical approaches to Genesis 1, the fathers held to the *sex/septa*-millenary typological eschatology of the six days. The tradition among the fathers was that the creation occurred less than 6,000 years in the past, and the world would end or dramatically change at the Second Advent, which would occur at the end of the 6,000 years.
5. The fathers asserted that the Flood in Genesis 6–8 was worldwide in extent, and some held that the existence of fossils was evidence of this cataclysm.
6. The fathers were young-earth creationists.
7. The fathers were not striving for novelty. They merely saw their task as culling from, accentuating, and preserving ancient apostolic orthodoxy.

The writings of the Church fathers can give understanding to Christians today. The fathers were not perfect, but they sought to reverentially interact with the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, and they articulated the great foundational orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ. Their doctrinal work still beneficially influences the evangelical Church today through their creeds, which we hear resonating with Scripture. It ought not be assumed, therefore, that the fathers' thoughts on the age of the earth, the days of creation, and the worldwide Flood should be considered inferior to and be replaced by Enlightenment science. This is especially the case, when, as seen above, the fathers had such unanimity in their belief that the Bible truthfully teaches that the earth was created in six literal days and only several thousand years ago, and that the Flood was a worldwide cataclysm. The fathers held fast to this Bible-based cosmogony in the face of the naturalistic evolutionary theories of their time, because the fathers believed that the latter concepts were rooted in paganism, not in Scripture. We believe it would please the Lord for the Church to heed and affirm what John Chrysostom wrote 1,600 years ago:

Not to believe what is contained in the Divine Scripture, but to introduce something else from one's own mind — this, I believe, subjects those who hazard such a thing to great danger (*Homilies on Genesis*, XIII, p. 3).