THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
ABOUT THE INTERPRETATION
OF THE DAYS OF CREATION
(Mark Hartman - July, 2011)
Christians view the universe and life within it not as an accident or a product of some type of undirected spontaneous generation, but as the act of a Creator God. We see Genesis Chapter One, along with the other creation passages of scripture, as a God inspired explanation of how He created our universe.

Though the general issues related to creation are widely agreed upon, there are some specifics about the creation story that invoke different views. One of those is the understanding of how the word “day” is being used in the narrative.

The word “day” in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word “yom” and is used widely in scripture to denote at least three proper interpretations of its use, depending upon the context of the passage. Those interpretations include: (1) a portion of a solar day, (2) the full 24 hours of a solar day, (3) any time longer than a solar day including a week, years or longer. All three usages of the word “day” are utilized in scripture extensively. William Wilson, in his Old Testament Word Studies, explains that “yom” is “frequently used for time in general, or for a long time; a whole period under consideration…Day (yom) is also put for a particular season or time when any extraordinary event happens.” (p. 109)

There are some examples of these three ways in which the Bible uses the Hebrew word “yom.” First, the Bible uses the word “day” to indicate a portion of a solar day that is daytime as opposed to night time. That idea is used in Genesis 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (yom): and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. (KJV) It is apparent that the reference here is about the daylight portion of the solar day that is being referenced. It is also used in Exodus 13:21-22 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. In this passage “yom” is used to refer to daylight – a portion of a solar day. The Bible seems to use the word “yom” most frequently to describe the daylight portion of a solar day.

The second most frequent use of “yom” is to denote a 24 hour period. For instance, Genesis 8:4-5 ...and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 5 The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible. (NIV) It is obvious Genesis 8 is referencing a day on a calendar, which would be a 24 hour period.
Finally, the word “yom” is used in scripture to denote long or short periods of time but which exceed 24 hours. For instance in the creation passage itself in *Genesis 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day (yom) that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens…* (KJV). No matter what position one takes on yom, this verse has consistently historically been interpreted to use the word to denote a period of time greater than 24 hours. In *Proverbs 25:13 “Like the coolness of snow at harvest time is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the spirit of his masters.”* The word translated “time” in this verse is actually the same word “yom” that is translated “day” in other places. Another example is *Isaiah 4:2 “In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.”* the word “yom” is used to describe a period of time longer than a solar day. *Zechariah 14:8* is another example, *“On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.”* The context is obvious the word “day” (yom) is being used to describe a period longer than 24 hours.

We use the word “day” in English in the same ways. We certainly use it to denote both a 24 hour period and to reference daylight. Plus, we say things such as, “*In my grandfather’s day,*” which denotes a longer period of time than 24 hours. So, both the Hebrew language and English language uses the word “day” to denote the same variety of meanings.

When Genesis One uses the word to denote six days of creation, how are we to understand the word “yom” that is used in the text? History demonstrates that the debate among Christian theologians about this issue has actually been going on throughout Christian history. What I have discovered in my research is that the various differences of interpretation about this issue are nothing new. What is new is the emotional equity that has been added to the conversation.

Five explanations of creation are among the most popular today. The five include the interpretation of “yom” to be the **24 Hour Creation Day Model** in the making of the earth. This would imply that the universe is only 6,000 – 10,000 years old. The second position is called **The Day-Age Model** which sees the word “yom” as denoting long periods of time or epochs which would make the earth and universe potentially very old. **The Gap Theory** suggests that there was an undetermined *gap of time* between *Genesis 1:1 & 1:2* which holds that though the word “yom” in Genesis should be viewed as consecutive 24 hour periods, at the same time, the earth and universe are very old because of the length of the gap of time between those two verses. The fourth is called **The Framework View** which contends that the days of creation form a figurative framework in which the acts of creation are organized not according to chronology but according to topic. It suggests that Genesis One was not intended to reveal the length of time of creation but was to simply reveal what God did in creation. The fifth is called **Theistic Evolution** which accepts the evolutionary model but grants that God started the process and depending upon which variation of Theistic Evolution, may have stepped back into the process from time to time.

Two of the explanations, The Gap Theory and Theistic Evolution, are actually quite new and appear to be a result of the popularity of the theory of evolution over the past two hundred years. The Gap Theory is also motivated by the need to answer the issue of the creation and fall of Satan, a topic that is not addressed in Genesis One nor easily
able to be answered in the 24 Hour Model. The Gap Theory was very popular among evangelicals at different periods throughout the last century. However, to my knowledge, neither of these two finds their roots in Christian writings earlier than recent years. So, for the purpose of this research, I am setting those theories aside. The argument could be made that the fourth view, The Framework View, does find its origins in Christian history, which I will allude to in the next section. However, I have decided to also set it aside for this discussion. An excellent explanation and evaluation of that view may be found in the book, *The Genesis Debate* by David Hagopian. So, for the sake of this study, I am concentrating on just two models: the 24 Hour Creation Day model and the Day-Age theory.

**This paper has the goal of answering two questions.**

*First, how did the Church throughout its history view the length of “yom” in Genesis One?*

I have heard pastors and read Christian authors claim for decades that throughout Christian history the only creation model seriously held by the Church was the 24 Hour Creation Day Model (young earth). I have always just taken that claim at face value. But, I began to wonder about its accuracy so; I decided to test the idea to see if it is actually true.

Since the New Testament is silent on the matter, I decided to go back to the original writings of church theologians and pastors known by many as *The Church Fathers*. The documents actually begin at the start of the 2nd Century and go through the Reformation Period. The documents are available in Bible software, internet sites and book form. I used all of these tools to comprise this report on my findings. The most comprehensive book, to my knowledge, on the subject is *The Patristic Understanding of Creation* by Dembski, Downs & Frederick. It is a nearly 600 page collection of all the materials of the Church Fathers specifically referencing the creation writings. The content of the book is simply their words offered without commentary, outside of a brief summary at the beginning of each section.

*Second, was the interpretation of how to understand the “days” of creation in Genesis One considered to be a foundational doctrine in Church history?*

Rupertus Meldenius, a German Lutheran theologian of the early seventeenth century, is probably the correct one to be credited with coining, “*In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity.*” Should this issue about the interpretation of “yom” in Genesis One be considered an essential or a non-essential? Even auxiliary issues in scripture have value and importance. It is not my intention to minimize anything in the Bible. The point is, was the length of days in Genesis One considered to be a foundational doctrine of the faith throughout Christian history or was liberty of interpretation allowed?

For example, I am a proponent of the premillennial, pre-tribulation view of eschatology. As I read scripture this view, in my opinion, appears to most closely align with scripture. Not everyone agrees. There appears to be liberty in Christian history for competing viewpoints on this subject. Was that also true about the understanding of “yom” in Genesis One or should it be viewed as an essential doctrine and any deviation then considered heresy? Does this issue qualify to have acceptable alternative points of
view? If there were alternate views in Church history, how did the Church Fathers treat each other when they had different views on this subject? As I began my search, my contention was that IF there was more than one view accepted by the Christian Church demonstrated in Church history, maybe history’s response to those could speak a word of wisdom about what should be our response to each other’s opposing views.

My purpose is not to express endorsement for ANY of the positions that ANY of the groups, theologians and authors quoted in this study hold. Why? I am still personally learning and evaluating the information about this topic and have not settled on my own view of how “yom” is being used in Genesis One.

I also have no interest in manipulating the findings. I am only interested in writing what I found and in presenting a summary of each group’s and theologian’s opinions as accurately as possible. I will always be more than open to any new evidence previously overlooked.

The very searching out of the various views seems to me to be the Biblical thing to do. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 challenges us to, “Test everything. Hold on to the good.”

At the very beginning, I decided that evaluating this particular aspect of the discussion would not be enough to settle my opinion about what might or might not be the correct creation model. I assumed there are many components that go into locking down that position. So, even after this research, I still haven’t sifted through all the information needed to develop my own position. In actuality, this paper only begins my search, it does not end it.

There is one perspective that this search will only serve to reaffirm. There is no doubt the world was supernaturally created and has been guided throughout its existence by the sovereign God of the Bible. An evolutionary model, in its conclusion of origins, simply doesn’t work with scripture. Even the Theistic Evolutionary Model, in my opinion, is too weak for a serious Bible student to embrace for it requires giving up too many foundational truths.

Genesis 1:1 declares, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Uncaused First Cause of this universe is God. He has not only created it, however, He has intricately designed and guided His creation every moment along the way. Acts 17:24, 26-28 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. 26 From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 28 ‘For in Him we live and move and have our being...’ (NIV)

The Bible does not describe a God who set the universe in motion and then withdrew. Instead, the Bible reveals a God Who personally and intricately created every detail. Since this truth is so connected to the Personhood of our Creator, I consider it to be an essential of the faith and consequentially a non-negotiable! Not only do I consider that to be the case but as I read theologian after theologian throughout Church history, it was obvious they shared the same conclusion.
Now, understanding how God created it all; synthesizing the many creation accounts within scripture into a detailed statement of faith, becomes the quest in which the interpretation of days is only one aspect of the journey. The primary purpose I wanted this study to accomplish was to discover for myself what Christian history actually demonstrated about the two questions I posed.

Why this paper? It just happened. I was collecting too many post-it-notes of my research and finally realized I needed to collate my thoughts and discoveries into a report. So, here it is.

It appears to me that one way to view church history as it relates to our subject can easily be divided into four sections. Those sections include the first three centuries of post apostolic history, commonly called The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Augustine Impact, The Reformation and The Modern Era. Within these sections I have provided direct quotes from the writings of Church leaders and theologians. The quotes are from their own writings, not commentary about their writings.

Then, I attempt to frame the discussion more specifically around the 24 Hour Creation Model and Day-Age Model. I explore the history of both models and offer some strengths and weaknesses of each.

I consider this document to be an ongoing exploration of our subject and have given myself permission to alter my conclusions in the future, as needed.
I realize that some may not really want all the details about each Church Father’s writings. Maybe you are one of those who just want to cut to the chase about what these early theologians believed. This chart is for you. When you have absorbed it, head on to page 26 to the section What We Have Learned Thus Far and finish out the paper. Whatever you do, don’t pass over the last few sections. They are too important to bypass. For you, this big document won’t be so big, after all.

Others of you are like me. You want to see the facts. So, that evidence has been provided. Browse the chart and then delve into the pages that follow. Everything is documented. I have provided brief introductions to all the personalities referenced and their exact quotes which impact our subject. After each personality I have offered what I believe to be the compelling point. Then, after each section I have given my overall observations of my findings in the accompanying summaries.

### Views Held in Christian History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Father</th>
<th>Period of Writings A.D.</th>
<th>24 Hour Creation Day View</th>
<th>Modified Day-Age</th>
<th>Framework View</th>
<th>Ignored the Issue</th>
<th>Page #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justin Martyr</td>
<td>100-165</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irenaeus</td>
<td>120-200</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athenagoras</td>
<td>133-190</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theophilus of Antioch</td>
<td>? - 183</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clement of Alexandria</td>
<td>150-215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertillian</td>
<td>155-220</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td>185-254</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basil</td>
<td>329-379</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrose</td>
<td>337-397</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephrem the Syrian</td>
<td>306-373</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athanasius</td>
<td>296-373</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eusebius</td>
<td>260-339</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyril of Jerusalem</td>
<td>315-386</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory Nazianzen</td>
<td>329-389</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Other Authors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustinian Influence</td>
<td>350-1500</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Reformation</td>
<td>1500-1800</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERPRETATION OF THE DAYS OF CREATION

THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS TO AUGUSTINE
(AD 100 – 400)

These are direct quotes from the writings of pastors and theologians during the period indicated, not commentary about their writings. I can verify that no words were altered from their writings that you see presented below. (Emphasis through bold, underline & italics are from me.)

Sources:
2. The Patristic Understanding of Creation, Dembski, Downs & Fredrick.
3. Various internet websites and other writings indicated

1. JUSTIN MARTYR (100-165)

Justin Martyr was born in Palestine and converted to Christianity as an adult. He devoted the rest of his life studying the Bible and teaching. He ultimately settled in Rome as a Christian teacher of the 2nd Century. He was arrested and beheaded by Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius sometime between the years 162-168. Among Martyr’s collection of writings are as follows:

Dialogue with Trypho, chapter 81, Chapter 81. He endeavours to prove this opinion from Isaiah and the Apocalypse.

For Isaiah spake thus concerning this space of a thousand years: ‘For there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, or come into their heart; but they shall find joy and gladness in it, which things I create. For, Behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and My people a joy; and I shall rejoice over Jerusalem, and be glad over My people. And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, or the voice of crying. And there shall be no more there a person of immature years, or an old man who shall not fulfill his days. For the young man shall be an hundred years old; but the sinner who dies an hundred years old, he shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and shall themselves inhabit them; and they shall plant vines, and shall themselves eat the produce of them, and drink the wine. They shall not build, and others inhabit; they shall not plant, and others eat. For according to the days of the tree of life shall be the days of my people; the works of their toil shall abound. Mine elect shall not toil fruitlessly, or beget children to be cursed; for they shall be a seed righteous and blessed by the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will hear; while they are still speaking, I shall say, What is it? Then shall the wolves and the lambs feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent [shall eat] earth as bread. They shall not hurt or maltreat each other on the holy mountain, saith the Lord.’ Now we have understood that the expression used among these words, ‘According to the days of the tree [of life] shall be the days of my people; the works of their toil shall abound’ obscurely predicts a thousand years. 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. Just as our Lord also said, ‘They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, the children of the God of the resurrection.

The relevant point here is that Justin Martyr, at the beginning of the second century, taught that a Biblical day could be viewed as 1,000 years and should be applied to Adam in that he sinned and died all within the span of “a day.” Thus, Martyr’s understanding was that the word day “yom”, as it related to Adam, should be viewed as 1,000 years. The question that remains in his explanation is whether Martyr believed that “day” Adam sinned, lived and died was also the day Adam was created making the 6th day of creation a period of 1,000 years. That is open for debate with Martyr’s writings but not for those of Irenaeus’.

2. IRENAEUS (120-200 AD)

Irenaeus was Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, then a part of the Roman Empire (now Lyons, France). He was an early church father and perhaps the most respected theologian and apologist of the 2nd Century. His writings were essential in the early development of Christian theology and apparently widely distributed. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who in was a disciple of the Apostle John. The quotes I reference are taken from his collected writings.

*Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter XXIII, Section 2, Chapter 23*: The devil is well practiced in falsehood, by which Adam having been led astray, sinned on the sixth day of the creation, in which day also he has been renewed by Christ.

Thus, then, in the day that they did eat, in the same did they die, and became death’s debtors, since it was one day of the creation. For it is said, “There was made in the evening, and there was made in the morning, one day.” Now in this same day that they did eat, in that also did they die? But according to the cycle and progress of the days, after which one is termed first, another second, and another third, if anybody seeks diligently to learn upon what day out of the seven it was that Adam died, he will find it by examining the dispensation of the Lord. For by summing up in Himself the whole human race from the beginning to the end, He has also summed up its death. From this it is clear that the Lord suffered death, in obedience to His Father, upon that day on which Adam died while he disobeyed God. **Now he died on the same day in which he did eat.** For God said, “In that day on which ye shall eat of it, ye shall die by death.” The Lord, therefore, recapitulating in Himself this day, underwent His sufferings upon the day preceding the Sabbath, that is, the sixth day of the creation, on which day man was created; thus granting him a second creation by means of His passion, which is that [creation] out of death. **And there are some, again, who relegate the death of Adam to the thousandth year; for since “a day of the Lord is as a thousand years,” he did not overstep the thousand years, but died within them, thus bearing out the sentence of his sin.** Whether, therefore, with
INTERPRETATION OF THE DAYS OF CREATION

respect to disobedience, which is death; whether [we consider] that, on account of that, they were delivered over to death, and made debtors to it; whether with respect to [the fact that on] one and the same day on which they ate they also died ([for it is one day of the creation]); whether [we regard this point], that, with respect to this cycle of days, **they died on the day in which they did also eat**, that is, the day of the preparation, which is termed “the pure supper,” that is, the sixth day of the feast, which the Lord also exhibited when He suffered on that day; or whether [we reflect] that he (Adam) did not overstep the thousand years, but died within their limit, — it follows that, in regard to all these significations, God is indeed true. For they died who tasted of the tree; and the serpent is proved a liar and a murderer, as the Lord said of him: “For he is a murderer from the beginning, and the truth is not in him.”

The point important to our discussion is that Irenaeus, a contemporary theologian with Martyr, connects the days of creation to be more than 24 hour periods. Was this also Martyr’s intention? We aren’t absolutely sure but Irenaeus’ clear connection gives more credibility to suggesting that Martyr’s words had a similar meaning. Also, Irenaeus’ comment also identifies others, who he says, hold this view to be true, giving added reason to include Martyr among possible proponents of this view.

Irenaeus identifies the 6th day of Creation to have lasted as long as 1,000 years and that in that 1,000 year period Adam was created; he sinned and died. It is obvious that he viewed the “evening and morning” references of creation symbolically not literally.

Irenaeus is the disciple of the disciple of the Apostle John. That doesn’t mean that the Apostle John also held this view but it certainly can’t be ruled out. It is interesting that someone that close to the Apostle John would hold what is, in essence, a Day-Age view, even if that Day-Age is only 1,000 years.

With each day representing 1,000 years it would mean that by the 6th day early life on the planet would have already existed for thousands of years. To my knowledge, Irenaeus does not address any consequential modifications on the origin of death this view might have impacted. However, imagine for thousands of years mosquitoes and flies proliferating as God created them to do and none dying.

3. **ATHENAGORAS (133-190)**

Much less is known about this pastor than the first two. He lived during the 2nd Century and wrote a book entitled *Apology* (also known as *A Plea for the Christians*) which was written around 177 AD. Athenagoras was a Greek philosopher who came to faith in Christ. His book was written to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. His main purpose was to refute the charge that Christianity was atheistic. That charge came because Christianity did not believe in the Greek gods. Involved in his defense of the Christian faith was a significant section on creation. Interestingly, within that section Athenagoras claims that the earth was created as a sphere – round. (A second century Christian espousing that the earth was round is very interesting, isn’t it?) He describes the creation and God’s continuous involvement and care for it. He outlines a beautiful description of Intelligent Design comparing the universe as a well-tuned instrument.
The compelling issue here is that although his creation section is detailed and elaborate, he never references the meaning of the word “day.” Given the writings of Martyr and Irenaeus and Irenaeus’ reference that many others held his “Day-Age” view, Athenagoras never addresses the subject. It could be assumed that he did not because it didn’t fit into the purpose of his writing. As it turns out, Athenagoras is only one of many who wrote about creation but never addressed the meaning of the word “yom” within the text, as we will soon see.

4. THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH (?) – 183 AD

Theophilus is the 7th Bishop of the Church of Antioch. He was born not far from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. He was influenced to become a Christian because of the impact and persuasion of Bible prophecy. Theophilus was an effective spokesman against heresies emerging in the 2nd Century with special mention of his work against Marcionism, which ultimately negatively influenced Tertillian. He was a prominent apologist of his day.

*Theophilus to Autolycus, Book II: Chapters X to XVIII*

The references within this section of Theophilus are so numerous that his point cannot be missed. Theophilus describes creation in detail by going day by day through the six days of Genesis One. He clearly identifies each day as a 24-hour period and provides an excellent interpretation of creation very similarly to the young earth 24-hour model of today. He also calculates the age of the universe at that point to be 5698 years old at the death of the Emperor Aurelius Versus (169 AD). That would put the date of creation to be 5529 BC and if extrapolated out to today would make the universe 7540 years old.

The pertinent issue here is that during the same period lived Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athenagoras and Theophilus. It appears these men took three different approaches to the word “yom” in their writings. Martyr and Irenaeus seem to take a Day-Age position. Theophilus adheres to the 24-hour model. Athenagoras totally ignores the topic within his elaborate discussion on creation. Every one of them is considered to be celebrated theologians and beloved founding fathers. None argue against the other on this issue. They certainly don’t accuse each other of heresy over this issue. One could conclude they did not know of the others’ point of view and that is possible. It is more probable, however, they did know of the various views but saw the subject as a minor issue with freedom of interpretation.

5. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (150-215 AD)

Titus Flavius Clemens known as Clement of Alexandria [to distinguish him from Clement of Rome], was a Christian theologian and the head of the noted Catechetical School of Alexandria. His writings provide a Christian apologetic against Gnosticism. He addresses a series of issues in Book 6 and one of those is a detailed explanation of a Christian view of the Ten Commandments. On the 4th commandment he works his way through an extensive comparison of the importance of numbers as they relate to
creation. Within the context of talking about creation, Clement writes the two paragraphs I identify.

**The Stromata; Book 6; Chapter 16 – Gnostic Exposition of the Decalogue**

For the creations on the different days followed in a most important succession; so that all things brought into existence might have honour 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.

And now the whole world of creatures born alive, and things that grow, revolves in sevens. The first-born princes of the angels, who have the greatest power, are seven. The mathematicians also say that the planets, which perform their course around the earth, are seven; by which the Chaldeans think that all which concerns mortal life is affected through sympathy, in consequence of which they also undertake to tell things respecting the future.

The significant point here is that 2nd/3rd Century Clement did not believe that the days of creation in Genesis One were literal 24 hour periods. Clement seems to be arguing from a Framework View perspective by saying that the creation could have been made all at once, with the “6 days” being a figurative outline employed to explain the components of the creation. At least at the beginning stages of creation, he explains that time did not even exist but rather time was created itself within the process of creation. Thus, the days cannot be viewed as 24 hour periods.

6. TERTILLIAN (155-220)

Called the Father of the Latin Church, Tertillian is credited by many as the creator of the papacy through his then novel interpretation of Matthew 16:13-20. His interpretation would gain widespread acceptance in the following 100 years. He was a lawyer converted to Christ. His writings are primarily answers to the Gnostic heresy. Though his views are sound on the subject of creation and many other topics, some of his views were later condemned by the church. When he became a follower of the Marcion heresy he was excommunicated.

The relevant point about Tertillian is that though he describes creation in great detail, he totally ignores the issue of “yom” in Genesis One. Contrary to Athenagoras’ possible reason for excluding a discussion of the word day, Tertillian does not seem to have a purpose for leaving out that part of the creation discussion. As an accomplished attorney, Tertillian is known for his attention to detail so his exclusion of the word “yom” seems odd. Tertillian lived during the time of Clement of Alexandria and Origen and even in the same general region. He would have certainly heard of their Framework View and may have even
discussed it with them but did not choose to endorse or reject their or any view of this subject in his writing. Why? Was it considered to be such a minor issue he didn’t feel any compulsion to address it?

7. ORIGEN (185-254 AD)

Origen was an early Christian scholar and considered both a brilliant theologian and distinguished writer of the early Christian Church. Origen is both loved and detested within Christian history. He is loved for his talented exegetical skills and his inspiring teaching. However, he has also been held in disrepute for some of his beliefs, notably those concerning the possibility of the existence of the soul before birth and questions about his views concerning the final fate of unbelievers. Nevertheless, many of his teachings and insights became foundational principles to future beloved Biblical scholars. Origen died a martyr’s death, remaining faithful in his commitment to Christ.

ORIGEN AGAINST CELSUS; BOOK 6, CHAPTER LX, Chapter 60.

But after this investigation of his assertions, as if his object were to swell his book by many words, he repeats, in different language, the same charges which we have examined a little ago, saying: “By far the most silly thing is the distribution of the creation of the world over certain days, before days existed: for, as the heaven was not yet created, nor the foundation of the earth yet laid, nor the sun yet revolving, how could there be days?” Now, what difference is there between these words and the following: “Moreover, taking and looking at these things from the beginning, would it not be absurd in the first and greatest God to issue the command, Let this (first thing) come into existence, and this second thing, and this (third); and after accomplishing so much on the first day, to do so much more again on the second, and third, and fourth, and fifth, and sixth?” 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.”

What we discover here is that Origen, in the early 3rd Century was arguing that the six days of creation cannot be taken as six 24 hour periods since time did not yet exist...essentially the same argument as Clement of Alexandria. Origen also contends that God simply spoke a word and everything came into being at once.
INTERPRETATION OF THE DAYS OF CREATION

His Framework View sees the reference of six days to be a symbolic reference which simply provides a sense of order of understanding about what God created.

Origen observes what both young and old earth proponents today acknowledge that the word “Day” as used in Genesis 2:4, does not mean 24 hours.

8. **BASIL (329-379 AD)**

Basil of Caesarea was the bishop of Caesarea Mazeca in Cappadocia, Asia Minor [modern day Turkey]. Basil was an influential theologian of the 4th Century. He was known for his care for the poor and underprivileged. He was an early monastic and is credited for developing the guidelines for the monastic life of that day. He is considered the father of communal monasticism in Eastern Christianity. His writings on creation are very inspiring. He captures the wonder of creation and the awe of God, especially in his writings entitled Hexaemeron. The word Hexaemeron means Six Days. I quote from Basil’s writing of his description of the Genesis One account of creation. I only list a few of his thoughts; however, taking the time to read his entire description is worth the effort.)

**HEXAEMERON, HOMILY 1, CHAPTER 6**

6. Such being the different senses of the word beginning, see if we have not all the meanings here. **You may know the epoch when the formation of this world began, it, ascending into the past, you endeavour to discover the first day. You will thus find what was the first movement of time; then that the creation of the heavens and of the earth were like the foundation and the groundwork, and afterwards that an intelligent reason, as the word beginning indicates, presided in the order of visible things.** You will finally discover that the world was not conceived by chance and without reason, but for an useful end and for the great advantage of all beings, since it is really the school where reasonable souls exercise themselves, the training ground where they learn to know God; since by the sight of visible and sensible things the mind is led, as by a hand, to the contemplation of invisible things. “For,” as the Apostle says, “the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” Perhaps these words “In the beginning God created” signify the rapid and imperceptible moment of creation. **The beginning, in effect, is indivisible and instantaneous.** The beginning of the road is not yet the road, and that of the house is not yet the house; so **the beginning of time is not yet time** and not even the least particle of it. If some objector tell us that the beginning is a time, he ought then, as he knows well, to submit it to the division of time—a beginning, a middle and an end. Now it is ridiculous to imagine a beginning of a beginning. Further, if we divide the beginning into two, we make two instead of one, or rather make several, we really make an infinity, for all that which is divided is divisible to the infinite. Thus then, if it is said, “In the beginning God created,” it is to teach us that **at the will of God the world arose in less than an instant, and it is to convey this meaning more clearly that other interpreters have said:** “God made summarily” **that is to say all at once and in a moment.** But enough concerning the beginning, if only to put a few points out of many.

**HOMILY 2, CHAPTER 8**
“And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Evening is then the boundary common to day and night; and in the same way morning constitutes the approach of night to day. It was to give day the privileges of seniority that Scripture put the end of the first day before that of the first night, because night follows day: for, before the creation of light, the world was not in night, but in darkness. It is the opposite of day which was called night, and it did not receive its name until after 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.

HOMILY 3, CHAPTER 1

1. **We have now recounted the works of the first day, or rather of one day.** Far be it from me indeed, to take from it the privilege it enjoys of having been for the Creator a day apart, a day which is not counted in the same order as the others. Our discussion yesterday treated of the works of this day, and divided the narrative so as to give you food for your souls in the morning, and joy in the evening. **To-day we pass on to the wonders of the second day.**

The interesting issue here is that if you take the time to read Basil carefully you get mixed signals. On the one hand, it certainly appears he accepts the word “day” in Genesis One to be a 24 hour period and he believes that the entire creation was begun and finished within 144 hours. On the other hand, he then makes the comment that God spoke and in an instant it was all created...similar to Origen’s point. Basil also addresses the word Day to also mean more than a 24 hour period. This is why some could argue that Basil’s phrasing can be interpreted differently. I am identifying him with both the 24 hour model and the Framework View proponent. One thing for certain, when one reads Basil’s work he cannot help but be struck by how beautifully he articulates the majesty of creation. It was a joy reading Basil’s writings.

7. **AMBROSE (337-397 AD)**

Ambrose was a bishop of Milan who became one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the 4th Century. He was educated in Rome, the son of the Roman praetorian prefect of Gaul. His parents were Christians. Ambrose is the early church leader most quoted by young earth adherents because in his Hexaemeron he gives a strong case for viewing the days of creation as 24 hour periods of time. His writing’s purpose is to challenge the Greek and Roman views of the origin of the universe with an explanation of the Biblical account of creation.

HEXAEMERON: SIX DAYS OF CREATION, HOMILY 1, CHAPTER 6

*In the beginning of time, therefore, God created heaven and earth. Time proceeds from this world, not before the world. **And the day is a division of time, not its beginning.***
In the course of our account we may affirm that the Lord created day and night, which constitute time changes. And, on the second day He created the firmament by which He divided the water which was under the heaven from the water above the heaven.

HOMILY 2, CHAPTER 9

And God called the light, day and the darkness, night, in order that day and night might be distinguished even in name. For this reason we notice that the rising of the light rather than that of the sun seems to open the day. The beginning of day closes up night’s exit and a definite time limit and an established boundary seem to have been prescribed for night and day. The sun gives the day its brilliance; the light, its existence.

HOMILY 2, CHAPTER 10

But 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.

Therefore, just as there is a single revolution of time, so there is but one day. There are many who call even a week one day, because it returns to itself, just as one day does, and one might say seven times revolves back on itself. This is the form of a circle, to begin with itself and to return to itself. Hence, Scripture speaks at times of an age of the world. Although in other passages there is a mention of an age, there Scripture seems to mean the diversitics in public and private affairs: “For the day of the Lord is great and Glorious.”

The relevant point here is that it is obvious Ambrose sees the word “day” in Genesis One to be a 24 hour period. He does note other usages for the Hebrew word “yom” including seeing it as an “age” but there is conclusive evidence he sees “day” in Genesis One to be a 24 hour period.

8. EPHREM THE SYRIAN (306-373)

Ephrem was a prolific hymn writer who enjoyed including creation elements in his hymns. He also wrote commentaries on the Book of Genesis and believed that the word “day” in Genesis One should be seen as 24 hour periods and outlines what would be viewed today as the young earth position. His details of those six days, however, would have some variances from the traditional young earth presentation. Just one example, for instance, is that he rejected the idea that the Holy Spirit was the spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis One. He acknowledges that others hold a different opinion than his. He believed that God created from nothing only 5 things – heaven, earth, fire, wind and water with everything else that was created from these five elements.
9. ATHANASIUS (296-373)

Archbishop of Alexandria is known most for his defense of the doctrine of the deity of Christ. He wrote extensively about the subject of creation and uses the concept developed by Athenagoras of describing the universe as a fine-tune instrument, a great analogy for Intelligent Design. His writings suggest that he is familiar with Athenagoras' writings. He lived in the same area as Clement of Alexandria and Origen and would have obviously been familiar with their Framework View, yet he ignores it in his writings on creation. At the same time, Athanasius strongly argued for doctrinal positions on other subjects so why ignore this one if it was so important?

EUSEBIUS (260-339 AD)

Eusebius Pamphili was the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine around the year of 314 AD. He was an historian, scholar and an accomplished exegetical preacher. He wrote several books designed to give a defense for the gospel against its distracters and to teach believers. In one particular work, Preparations for the Gospel, Eusebius writes an extensive apologetic work. He arranged this work into 15 books. In book 7 he devoted six pages to explaining the Genesis creation account. However, within those pages he never addressed the issue of how to interpret “yom” in Genesis One. That seems odd to me. If the understanding of the word day was an essential of the faith and there were obviously different opinions about its interpretation, why did he not address it?

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (315-386)

Bishop of Jerusalem from 348-386. He is best known for his Catechetical Lectures in which he wrote about the essentials of the Christian faith. He intended his work to be a doctrinal preparation for baptism. Within the context of his work he writes significantly about creation and the uniqueness of Adam and Eve. Yet, within that context he never mentions the issue of “yom” or even uses the word “day” in his explanation. Cyril must have known about the various views within the Christian community about the word “yom.” Through his writings, he openly grappled with several doctrinal conflicts of that day and was invited to attend the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. So, he would have been familiar with the various doctrinal issues of his day and would have considered an important doctrinal voice of that time. He would have been familiar with the various interpretations of “yom.” Yet, he ignores the subject.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN (329-389)

Known as Gregory the Theologian, Gregory was considered one of the great conservative theologians of the 4th Century. He was a great preacher and was also invited to attend the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. He greatly contributed to an expansion of the doctrine of the Trinity and was considered an expert on the theology of creation. And yet, he never addresses the word “day” in his writings on creation.
WHAT DO ALL THESE MEN HAVE IN COMMON?

The compelling issue here is that these and many others I don’t list lived during a time in which there were different points of view about the understanding of “yom” in Genesis One. They were scholarly leaders who would have known of the various views. Some lived in the region in which different issues were popular. They were theologians. They were conservative in theology. They wrote significantly and some even extensively on the subject of creation. Their writings debated and argued doctrinal points. Yet none of them took up this issue. This begs the question of why? I think the answer is becoming obvious, isn’t it? While some chose to include “yom” in their theological discussion, those who did never made a major issue of it, not once. As you read their writings it is obvious that their references are only incidental within their discussion. Most early church writers simply never mentioned it. Others initiated alternative ideas. Yet, no one calls out anyone else as a heretic over this issue. No one. Why? It is obvious this subject was seen as a side issue. It was never a primary doctrinal issue. It certainly was never considered a test of orthodoxy.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PERIOD OF THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS TO AUGUSTINE:

From the beginning of the 2nd Century to the 4th Century it appears that three different interpretations are embraced for the interpretation of the usage of the word “yom” in Genesis One. Many held the 24 Hour View; some, especially in the 2nd Century, held the Day-Age View; some held the Framework View. However, it appears that everyone held his view loosely and did not see this topic as a primary doctrine of the faith. Most early church writers never even brought up “yom” in their discussion of creation. No one called the others “names” (like we see today) over this issue. In their writings they did debate and argue over other doctrines but never over this one. Doesn’t that speak volumes about what was the traditional view of this issue in the first 400 years of Christian history?

This revelation was very surprising to me! This was very different than I had been told was the case.

Furthermore, it is obvious that alternative positions were not posed because of any scientific discoveries or because of the influence of Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy taught that there was no creation. It taught that the universe always existed. All of these Christian theologians are taking the Biblical position of creation instead of the prevailing Greek thought of their day. Yet, they had differences of opinion over the length of the word “yom” in Genesis One. What the evidence shows is that based upon the first 400 years of Christian history there was “liberty of interpretation” allowed concerning this issue.
Augustine was the most influential voice on Christian theology throughout the medieval period. Gerald Bonner’s work entitled Augustine as Biblical Scholar said, “Jerome surpassed Augustine for philological expertise, and perhaps Origen for intellectual ability but Augustine was an able philosophical thinker and theological synthesist.” Augustine had the greatest impact among Christian theologians on the subject of creation in Genesis. His work, The Literal Meaning of Genesis addressed this subject more directly than perhaps any other Christian writer in the first fifteen hundred years.

**CITY OF GOD - BOOK XI, CHAPTER 6;** That the World and Time Had Both One Beginning, and the One Did Not Anticipate the Other.

For if eternity and time are rightly distinguished by this, that time does not exist without some movement and transition, while in eternity there is no change, who does not see that there could have been no time had not some creature been made, which by some motion could give birth to change,—the various parts of which motion and change, as they cannot be simultaneous, succeed one another,—and thus, in these shorter or longer intervals of duration, time would begin? Since then, God, in whose eternity is no change at all, is the Creator and Ordainer of time, I do not see how He can be said to have created the world after spaces of time had elapsed, unless it be said that prior to the world there was some creature by whose movement time could pass. And if the sacred and infallible Scriptures 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 signalized. What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say!

**THE LITERAL MEANING OF GENESIS, BOOK 4, CHAPTER 27**

And, if we are able to make any effort towards an understanding of the meaning of those days, we ought not to rush forward with an ill-considered opinion, as if no other reasonable and plausible interpretation could be offered. Seven days by our reckoning, after the model of the days of creation, make up a week. By the passage of such weeks time rolls on, and in these weeks one day is constituted by the course of the sun from its rising to its setting; but we must bear in mind that these days
indeed recall the days of creation, but without being really similar to them in any way.

THE LITERAL MEANING OF GENESIS, BOOK 4, CHAPTER 28

Now it must be thought that these interpretations are applicable to “day” and “evening” and “morning” not literally but only in some figurative and allegorical way. These interpretations, of course, are different from our ordinary understanding of light in the material sense. But it is not true that material light is literally “light,” and light referred to in Genesis is metaphorical “light.”

GOING DEEPER INTO AUGUSTINE

There are some things Augustine says that many evangelicals, like myself, struggle to digest. I find myself at odds with Augustine over some theological issues and struggle over some of his comments on this topic. But, in all fairness, because Augustine has had more impact on this topic than probably any other writer in Christian history I decided to spend some time trying to understand his position beyond these simple quotes. I recommend that approach to you, as well. It may or may not change your views about his positions but it will enhance your theological perspective of him about this issue. Augustine was a brilliant scholar…maybe the greatest scholar in our history. We are separated from him by almost 1600 years. Sometimes being removed by time and cultural context fogs up the language and consequently skews the communication.

I came across two documents worth your read. The first that is Davis A. Young’s work called, “The Contemporary Relevance of Augustine’s View of Creation.” (http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1988/PSCF3-88Young.html) Young writes from the Department of Geology at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. He discusses much of the rationale of Augustine’s, On the Literal Meaning of Genesis. It is an interesting perspective.

One of the most notable quotes Young uses of Augustine is from, The Literal Meaning of Genesis; Volume 1 (pages 43-44). Augustine says he has:

“worked out and presented the statements of the book of Genesis in a variety of ways according to my ability; and, in interpreting words that have been written obscurely for the purpose of stimulating our thought, I have not rashly taken my stand on one side against a rival interpretation which might possibly be better. I have thought that each one, in keeping with his powers of understanding, should choose the interpretation that he can grasp. Where he cannot understand Holy Scripture, let him glorify “and fear for himself.”

I thought it was interesting as Augustine reveals that more than one popular interpretation existed of Genesis One during his time. From his statement, those different interpretations do not seem to be “at war” with each other, as we see among evangelicals today.
In Augustine’s same work, on page 41 he makes this statement, “In matters that are obscure and far beyond our vision, even in such as we may find treated in Holy Scripture, different interpretations are sometimes possible without prejudice to the faith we have received. In such a case, we should not rush in headlong and so firmly take our stand on one side that, if further progress in the search of truth justly undermines this position, we have gone too far with it.”

What an interesting statement and wise advice. It appears to me Augustine is taking the same position we have seen demonstrated throughout the first 400 years of Christian history of “liberty of interpretation” for various views of this subject. It is apparent that this subject was viewed as a non-essential of the faith. It was not a “test for orthodoxy” in Augustine’s perspective.

One of the most profound quotes from Augustine that Young employs is this quote from On the Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book 1, and Chapter 19:

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience. Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn. The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of the faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men.... Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by these who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books. For then, to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon Holy Scripture for proof and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position, although they understand neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion.

Haven’t we seen this happen many times?

Upon completion of Young’s work, you then need to take the time to read Andrew Brown’s response to Young in his work, “The Relevance of Augustine’s View of Creation Re-evaluated.”

Brown wrote this work while gaining his PhD in Religious Studies at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. Brown has served as the pastor of Murwillumbah Baptist Church in northern New South Wales. Brown opens up the cultural and theological issues related to Augustine’s work and assists the reader to gain an insight into the hermeneutic principles that Augustine used in his Genesis commentaries.
Since Augustine had such a profound impact on this issue lasting not just for 1100 years but actually impacting the debate today, learning a little more would be valuable, even if it is nothing more than to better understand what may be viewed as a rival position on this topic.

The relevant point here is that Augustine clearly did not view the word day in Genesis One to mean a 24 hour period. In addition, he understood the evenings and mornings of the Genesis creation days to be used in a symbolic sense. At one point he appears to be arguing for the “Day Age View” of “yom” being viewed a longer periods of time. Later, it appears that he settled on the Origen concept of all creation being brought into existence immediately.

It appears that Augustine’s view of an instantaneous creation (Framework View) become the prevailing view during the Medieval Period. It appears this view became the prevailing view for the next 1100 years and was not successfully challenged until the Protestant Reformation. Even with that, this position probably continued among Catholics beyond that time.
THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION
(1500 – 1800)

1. MARTIN LUTHER (1483 – 1546)

Martin Luther was a German priest and professor of theology who initiated the Protestant Reformation with the nailing of The Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany protesting the selling of indulgences to build St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. He is known as one of the great theologians of the 16th Century and one of the greatest theologians of all time. He translated the Bible into German, was the author of many hymns including the still beloved, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”, and was a powerful preacher. He is the founder of the Lutheran Church. I consider Martin Luther one of the great heroes of the Christian Church.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTER 1

(Note: These are not sequential paragraphs because Luther’s full explanation was too long to include. I have pasted key paragraphs from his commentary on Genesis One as they relate to our topic.)

We know, however, from Moses, that the world did not exist 6000 years ago; but of this no philosophizing man can in any way be persuaded; because, according to Aristotle, the first and last man cannot be at all determined.

Hilary and Augustine, who are as it were two great lights in the church, believe that the world was made on a sudden, and all at once, and not successively, during the space of six days. And Augustine plays upon these six days, in a marvelous manner, in treating of them. He considers them to be mystical days of knowledge, in the angels, and not natural days.

With respect, therefore, to this opinion of Augustine, we conclude, that Moses spoke properly and plainly, and neither allegorically nor figuratively: that is, he means, that the world, with all creatures, was created in six days, as he himself expresses it.

The obvious point here is that Martin Luther viewed the word “yom” of Genesis One to be a 24 hour period. He is writing to argue against the Augustinian idea of creation. That point, in itself, verifies that Augustine’s view was still the prevailing view of creation at the time that Luther is challenging it. Notice the respect and kindness Luther expresses toward Augustine, though they disagree on the topic.

2. JOHN CALVIN (1509 – 1564)

John Calvin was an influential French theologian and pastor and a principle figure in the Protestant Reformation. Trained to be a lawyer, he broke with the Catholic Church and devoted himself to the teaching and preaching of the Bible. Calvin has a remarkable
ability to synthesize scripture into patterns and systems. He is the author of the 
Institutes of the Christian Religion and several commentaries of the Bible. I include 
quotes from his commentary on Genesis.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis 1:5

"And God called the light". That is, God willed that there should be a regular vicissitude 
of days and nights; which also followed immediately when the first day was ended. For 
God removed the light from view, that night might be the commencement of another day. 
What Moses says however, admits a double interpretation; either that this was the 
evening and morning belonging to the first day, or that the first day consisted of the 
evening and the morning. Whichever interpretation be chosen, it makes no difference in 
the sense, for he simply understands the day to have been made up of two parts. 
Further, he begins the day, according to the custom of his nation, with the 
evening. It is to no purpose to dispute whether this be the best and the legitimate 
order or not. We know that darkness preceded time itself; when God withdrew the 
light, he closed the day. I do not doubt that the most ancient fathers, to whom the 
coming night was the end of one day and the beginning of another, followed this mode of 
reckoning. Although Moses did not intend here to prescribe a rule which it would be 
criminal to violate; yet (as we have now said) he accommodated his discourse to the 
received custom. Wherefore, as the Jews foolishly condemn all the reckonings of other 
people, as if God had sanctioned this alone; so again are they equally foolish who 
contend that this modest reckoning, which Moses approves, is preposterous.

"The first day". Here the error of those is manifestly refuted, who maintain that 
the world was made in a moment. For it is too violent a cavil to contend that Moses 
distributes the work which God perfected at once into six days, for the mere purpose of 
conveying instruction. Let us rather conclude that God himself took the space of six 
days, for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men. We 
slightingly pass over the infinite glory of God, which here shines forth; whence arises this 
but from our excessive dullness in considering his greatness? In the meantime, the 
vanity of our minds carries us away elsewhere. For the correction of this fault, God 
applied the most suitable remedy when he distributed the creation of the world into 
successive portions that he might fix our attention, and compel us, as if he had laid his 
hand upon us, to pause and to reflect.

Genesis 1:14

"To divide the day from the night." He means the artificial day, which begins at the rising 
of the sun and ends at its setting. For the natural day (which he mentions above) 
includes in itself the night. Hence infer, that the interchange of days and nights 
shall be continual; because the word of God, who determined that the days should 
be distinct from the nights, directs the course of the sun to this end.
The relevant point here is that John Calvin obviously viewed the word “yom” of Genesis One to be a 24 hour period. He is writing to argue against the idea that all of creation happened all at once without a period of 144 hours of Creation process. Just like Luther, he is arguing against the Augustinian model, which gives further evidence that Augustine’s position was the prevailing one at that time – around 1100 years after Augustine.

3. JAMES USSHER (1581 – 1656)

Ussher was the Archbishop of Armagh of the Church of Ireland. He was a prolific scholar who held that the word day in Genesis One was a 24 hour period. Some view Ussher as the originator of the effort to set a date for creation; however, it appears that John Lightfoot should actually hold that honor. Ussher published a chronology that he believed established the time and date of the creation to be on the night preceding Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC. The King James Bible inserted Ussher’s dates into their text causing many people to accept Ussher’s dating as inspired scripture.

Other dates that have been chosen include John Lightfoot (3929 BC), Johannes Kepler (3992 BC) and Sir Isaac Newton (4000 BC).

The period of the Reformation brings an obvious change in view for how to interpret “yom” in Genesis One. The reformers pushed back against many Catholic doctrinal positions including Augustine’s understanding of the days of creation. I think it would be fair to assume the Catholic Church may have still held onto Augustine’s view. However, from the mid-16th Century to the mid-19th Century the majority of Protestants took a 24 Hour Creation Day Model position following the views of the major reformers.
WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED THUS FAR

Maybe this is a good time to remind us what this entire trek through Church history has been about. It is not to persuade toward any of the views we have considered. Rather, it is to answer two questions about Christian history: (1) Was there more than one accepted view of “yom” held in Christian history? (2) Was this issue considered an essential of the faith or a non-essential in which liberty of interpretation was allowed.

It has been demonstrated that there were three accepted views of “yom” presented during the Ante-Nicene to Augustine period: A Modified Day-Age; 24 Hour & the Framework View. There is simply no record of a combative spirit between their adherents and there was certainly no name calling. The writings of these spirited theologians did address disagreements about many doctrines but never about this issue.

Most of these early theologians addressed the subject of creation within their writings. Yet, surprisingly most of them totally ignored the subject of “yom” within the creation narrative even though it would have been obvious to at least the majority of them that various opinions existed. The research also demonstrated that those who addressed the “days” of creation never treated the subject as a primary feature of their presentation. When it was mentioned it always came across somewhat incidentally.

As I demonstrated in the research, there is every reason to conclude that the subject of the length of the creation days was considered a minor issue throughout the first 400 years of Church history.

We discovered that Augustine appears to have held two views of creation at different points in his life. The Age-Day view seems to fit many of his statements related to his interpretation of the word “yom” in the Genesis One narrative. However, it also appears that he settled on the instantaneous creation position with his view of the “days of creation” being more in line with the Framework View and that became his ultimate position. We also learned that there were other theologians who held differing views on the interpretation of the days of creation during Augustine’s day because he references it. Instead of contentious spirit, Augustine urged an accepting and non-combative relationship between the various adherents. He seemed to even hold his own view gently. It is obvious that he viewed this subject as a non-essential.

It is interesting to me that Ambrose and Augustine were contemporaries who held very different views of the word “yom” in Genesis One. It is also interesting they were both embraced by the Church of that day. What differentiates them from the attitudes we see today in the evangelical church is that they did not use their writings to berate or criticize others who differed with them. The quote I used from Augustine demonstrated his position of openness in the discussion about this subject. This suggests to me that the discussion concerning the correct interpretation of “yom” in Genesis One was not allowed to become divisive nor was one opinion required to be upheld as orthodoxy.

Quite honestly, this one revelation from both of the early periods of Christian History has been worth the effort of this research.
INTERPRETATION OF THE DAYS OF CREATION

During the Augustine era of perhaps 1100 years, it appears that Augustine’s view of an instantaneous creation may have become the prevailing view not so much because of its validity but rather because of Augustine’s powerful influence. It is obvious that this view was not advanced because of any modern scientific discoveries because those obviously did not yet exist. This position was taken because of his interpretation of scripture. This position was not successfully challenged until the Protestant Reformation and probably continued within the Catholic church beyond that time.

During the Protestant Reformation the 24 Hour Creation Day view clearly became the dominate view. The strength of the argument for a 24 hour position was maintained for 300 years from the mid-1500’s to the mid-1800. Only when geological conclusions of an earth older than 6,000 years began to become the accepted notion within the scientific community did the 24 Hour Creation Day model find itself challenged among Protestants. Then, the rise in Darwin’s evolutional model brought greater pressure upon the 24 Hour model, as we will see in the Modern Era section.

What we now know is that the claim that the Christian Church held only the 24 Hour View of creation throughout Church history is simply not true. What is true is that there were competing and accepted models from the 2nd Century through the end of the Augustine period.
THE MODERN ERA

With the geological discoveries and theories to explain those findings along with the rise of the popularity of the theory of evolution in the mid-nineteenth Century, a decline developed in what became known as the young earth position in the 19th & 20th Centuries among some Protestants.

Most scientists of the 17th, 18th and 19th Century were Christians. Many of them were Protestants. As more scientific discoveries and theories developed, these Christian scientists began trying to harmonize their findings with their understanding of scripture. Consequently, other Biblical theories began to emerge. Thomas Chalmers, the founder of the Free Church of Scotland, attempted to face the problem posed by this new geology in 1804 when he suggested that Scripture and modern geology could agree. He suggested that there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 which accounted for eons of geology to fall between. His idea was popularized as the Gap Theory and caught on through the work of well-known evangelical theologians Cyrus Scofield, Arthur Pink and Donald Barnhouse.

Others simply adopted a more Theistic Evolutionary Model that allowed for God as the Uncaused First Cause but not as the guiding force for an evolving universe. Bernard Ramm’s book in 1954, The Christian View of Science and Scripture, argued against both the Gap Theory and the Creationist Model. Though he was an evangelical, Ramm provided the theological foundation for Christian scientists to accept the evolutionary model for origins.

THE 24 HOUR CREATION DAY MODEL RESPONSE

To combat the shift, early nineteenth century theologians developed a group called Scriptural Geologists who produced counter arguments to the new geological and evolutionary theories. The effort had only limited success. The Victoria Institute was then developed in Great Britain in 1865 to combat Protestant defections from the 24 Hour Creation Day Model. It enjoyed success in arguing against evolution for several decades but began to fade in the beginning years of the 20th Century. In a remarkable shift, by the 1920’s, the Victoria Institute had morphed into the Theistic Evolutionary Model. Its library and facilities were destroyed in World War Two by German bombings.

In 1923, prominent Canadian creationist, Seventh Day Adventist and amateur geologist, George Price wrote the book, “The New Geology” which was a rebuttal against geological theories related to the age of the world. The book sought to give more scientific validity to the 24 Hour Creation Day Model. The key component to his work centered on “flood geology” which interpreted the issues related to the geological history of the earth to be directly caused by Noah’s flood.

It was then, for conservative Christians, that Dr. Henry Morris emerged like a proverbial knight on a white horse. He and John Whitcomb adapted and expounded upon Price’s work in their book, The Genesis Flood in 1961. Morris and Whitcomb argued that the
earth was geologically recent, that the fall of Adam had actually triggered the beginning of the Second Law of Thermodynamics and that the flood had laid most of the geological strata on earth in the space of one year. (Please note: the 24 Hour Model has now changed its position about connecting the Second Law of Thermodynamics to the fall of Adam. http://www.answersingenesis.org/get-answers/topic/arguments-we-dont-use)

Don’t underestimate the positive impact that Henry Morris had on Christianity in America. His work spawned a new sense of confidence, mainly among evangelicals, that an effective answer to the more atheistic evolutionary model had been found. Early in my life Dr. Morris’ writings gave me answers for many of my questions and the questions of others. I have had a deep respect for him throughout my life. No matter which creation position you may espouse, Dr. Morris should be a man you remember with fondness and gratitude.

Henry Morris is considered the father of modern creation science. From Morris emerged the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) that maintains a young earth model. Other young earth organizations have risen such as Answers in Genesis (www.answersingenesis.org), the Creation Research Society (www.creationresearch.org) and Creation Ministries International (www.creation.com). All of these organizations provide resources and arguments which support a young earth position.

Due to Henry Morris’ efforts, there was a revival of support for the young earth position, especially among evangelicals. The 24 Hour Creation Day Model holds the Bible to be infallible and an historical Adam and Eve. One of Morris’ most compelling arguments is that a simple reading of the Genesis One would naturally lead a person to immediately conclude that it was referring to six 24 hour days and thus a young earth. He points out apparent discrepancies in dating methods and an unfair bias by the scientific community toward the young earth position. Dr. Henry Morris died in 2006. Today all the answers of the universe he worked so hard to uncover have been finally answered for him by the One who made it all. His work, through the Institute of Creation Research, continues through his son, John Morris. His views are available online at www.icr.org

According to a Gallup poll in December 2010, around 40% of Americans believe in the young earth position, rising to over 50% among Republicans but reducing strongly with level of education (only 22% of respondents with postgraduate degrees compared with 47% of those with high school only or less). (http://www.gallup.com/poll/145286/Four-Americans-Believe-Strict-Creationism.aspx )

The exact question asked in the poll was: **Which of the following statements comes closest to your views on the origin and development of human beings?**

1) Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process,

2) Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life but God had no part in the process,

3) God created human beings much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so

It is not known how much of this success for the young earth position is directly attributable to Henry Morris but one has to think that he and the creation ministries
related to the young earth model had a significant role. It is an astounding accomplishment within a society heavily influenced by the theory of evolution. Over the past two generations, the only model allowed to be taught in public schools has been evolution. Every secular form of media presents evolution as the only acceptable explanation of origins. The theory of evolution is presented throughout almost every public venue as *unquestioned fact*. Yet, the poll identifies the various creation models as the ones preferred by 78% of Americans! That is absolutely amazing to me. As an aside, young earth adherents will be disappointed to know, however, that the 40% result is actually down from 47% in 1999.

Other responses to the poll included those who chose:

1) Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process,

This could be considered to include adherents to the Gap Theory, Framework View and Day-Age response. (This option may or may not be legitimately identified with a Theistic Evolutionary model for that perspective would not include the last statement for some strains of this position, “*God guided this process.*” However, the question asked “*which statement comes closest to your views.*” Therefore, the results are unclear whether some Theistic Evolutionists would have chosen this option.) Thirty-eight percent of Americans chose this option. So, there is essentially little difference in the number of those who chose a young earth and an old earth response. The overall 38% reflects no change from earlier polls.

The differences in this most recent poll primarily show up when considering the level of education and the level of involvement in church attendance. The poll demonstrated that the higher the educational level of a respondent the higher the percentage for an old earth choice with total postgraduates in America scoring a 49% old earth position. However, 60% of regular church attendees prefer the young earth model with only 31% holding the old earth model of creation.

Those who chose the second option which disavows God's involvement in the development of life totaled 16%. That reflects a change from 9% in 1982. The gains of the atheistic model are the same as the losses of the young earth model.

I don't pretend to know any more than anyone else nor do I have a strong science background. I do, however, know how to read and think and I do love the Word of God and enjoy science, among other things. So, I offer my opinion, for what little it is worth.

**Four strengths I see in the 24 Hour Creation Day position:**

1. **It is the most natural and simplest way to read Genesis One.** A total stranger to the Bible could pick it up, read Genesis One and easily conclude a young earth position. In addition, the explanation of Exodus 20:8-11 works easier and more naturally within this view. This simplicity makes the 24 hour a strong position.

2. **It upholds more commonly held positions of connecting sin to all death.** Every evangelical model connects sin to death. However, other competing models demonstrate that a closer look at scripture may demonstrate that it only connects sin to
the death of humans, not death in general. The 24 Hour Model connects all of death with the sin of Adam and Eve, which has been more commonly held. It upholds the concept of a worldwide flood instead of a localized flood. It takes the traditional approach to the usage of the genealogies of the Bible. This makes the 24 Hour model very attractive.

3. The implications of a worldwide flood provide very credible explanations for some of the phenomena usually connected to old earth geology.

4. This explanation can clearly find strong roots within Christian history.

Four weaknesses I see in the 24 Hour Creation Day position:

1. It seems to habitually ignore the other creation passages outside of Genesis One. This work may have been done and I have yet to read it but I have never encountered a young earth proponent who gives a serious attempt to harmonize all the creation passages into an argument consistent with the 24 Hour Creation Day model. One of Day-Age claims is that when all the passages are harmonized the story points more in their direction. So, my question is why has that challenge apparently been ignored by young earth?

2. Some of its proponents tend to present science as “the enemy.” I believe that is a major mistake. Science is not an enemy to Christianity but rather the combatant is a naturalist philosophy that keeps some scientists from objectively evaluating scientific evidence that points to God. Many of the 24 Hour Model’s scientific arguments tend to convince only those who have already accepted the position and cannot or will not effectively question them. Many of those arguments, however, tend to be effectively refuted and rejected by people of strong science backgrounds and the position not taken seriously.

3. I have heard and read the young earth’s basic answers against the compelling evidences in astronomy of an old universe and then have heard the rebuttal by old earth apologists. The young earth model does not seem to have the better of the arguments. I think the issues in astronomy presents one of the greatest challenges to the young earth model especially if one sees the universe as a record of God’s Work.

4. Some of the young earth answers related to the various dating methods of the earth seem weak. It is my understanding that new attempts are being made by young earth proponents to give better answers to dating through radio isotopic decay and I am glad to see the emphasis.

These are not all the strengths and weaknesses I see in the 24 Hour Creation Day position. I have many more questions to get answered about this position.
James Hutton (1726-1797), regarded as the father of modern geology, is the one primarily responsible for championing the concept of an old earth in science. Hutton's main line of argument was that the tremendous displacements and changes he was seeing could not have happen within a short period of time by means of catastrophe, but that the same incremental processes of uplift and erosion happening on the earth today had caused them. Hutton's ideas were popularized by Sir Charles Lyell in the early nineteenth century. By the 1830s, mainstream science had abandoned young earth creationism as a serious hypothesis. However, it became important for Christian scientists and scholars to harmonize the Genesis account with these new scientific discoveries.

In the mid-19th Century, American geologist and Christian, Arnold Guyot, sought to harmonize science and scripture by viewing the interpretation of “yom” as a long period of time. Similar views were held by John Dawson, a Canadian geologist and Christian. These two were instrumental in a rebirth of the Day-Age Model of creation among Christian scientists. In effect, they helped in the process of fueling a rebirth of this model among Protestants in the western world.

The Day-Age Model today reconciles the literal Genesis account of creation with modern scientific theories on the age of the universe, the earth and life itself. The Genesis account is then interpreted as an account of the involvement of God in His creation over a long period of time. The modern Day-Age proponents take Genesis One much more literally than Augustine. Most in this camp see the creative order exactly as Genesis One articulates and believe in a literal Adam and Eve. The essential difference between the Day-Age and 24 Hour Creation Day Models is in the length of time it took for creation to unfold.

That position then affects how other related Biblical issues are understood such as the death of plant life, insects, fish and animals before the fall of Adam and Eve. Day-Age proponents point to the passages that connect sin and death and make the case that those passages are all referencing death with mankind only. They hold that death for mankind did indeed come with the sin of Adam. However, death for plants, insects, fish and animals already existed before the fall of Adam.

Day-Age proponents also tend to see the flood of Noah as a localized flood instead of worldwide. They provide Biblical rationale for that opinion noting many places in the Bible in which similar phrases to “the whole world” was clearly used to reflect more of the known world instead of the entire planet.

A notable adherent to the Day-Age Model was William Jennings Bryan, the Scopes Trial prosecutor. In the trial he held that evolution was incorrect, that the universe was created and guided by God, but that the days of Genesis One were longer periods of time than 24 hours.

Association and of the Anti-Evolution League of America was another prominent Day-Age creationist in the first half of the 20th century. In fact, he defended this position in a famous debate with friend and prominent young earth creationist Harry Rimmer.

Today, the most well known name of the Day-Age position is astrophysicist Hugh Ross who has written several books defending the concepts of the Day-Age view. His books relate the scientific evidence for intelligent design and defend an old earth perspective on the basis of Biblical texts. Ross believes in Biblical inerrancy, a literal interpretation of Genesis One as actual history and a literal Adam and Eve. His views are available on-line at www.Reasons.org. This website also provides in-depth resources for understanding recent scientific discoveries through a Biblical structure.

Answers in Creation (www.answersincreation.org) and Evidence for God (www.godandscience.org) are websites that offers many resources for an old universe position. They provide Biblical and scientific arguments for the various issues related to old earth.

Biologist and philosopher Stephen Meyer, author of Signature in the Cell, is among other noted Day-Age (old earth) Christian scientists. Meyer is one of the founders of the Intelligent Design movement and the director of the Discovery Institute. Though Meyer is a Day-Age proponent, the Intelligent Design movement and the Discovery Institute has taken an official position of earth age neutrality. A brief explanation of Meyer’s position is found on youtube in a Chuck Colson Center video entitled, “The Age of the Earth, by Dr. Stephen Meyer”. In the interview, Meyer states that while there is a mixture of both young and old earth scientists within the intelligent design community, as many as 90% embrace an old earth position. Meyer’s views are also available online at www.discovery.org.

The intelligent design movement is an interesting phenomenon. It began as a movement by scientists who had become disenchanted with the evolutionary model because of its obvious inconsistencies. These scientists point to the many dramatic examples in nature of design. The most profound relate to the properties and functions of DNA. I recommend to you the stunning video produced by ID entitiled, “Unlocking the Mystery of Life: The Scientific Case for Intelligent Design.” In the video they demonstrate how Charles Darwin’s model of evolution simply breaks down at the point of DNA. They challenge the scientific community to honestly face the clear evidence of design which points to a Designer. ID materials are used by both young and old earth proponents because, as I mentioned, they present neutrality concerning the age of the universe. They take the position that the age of the universe is a side issue to the overall subject of creation.

The Day-Age Model embraces many of the modern scientific discoveries and theories, including the age of the universe, but rejects the evolutionary explanation of the universe. While some continue to accuse Day-Age adherents of being evolutionists, they do so incorrectly. The position holds that science demonstrates intelligent design which points to a Creator God who guided the entire process of creation. Most proponents believe that Genesis One is to be taken as literal history and hold that the Bible is inerrant. They believe there is Biblical foundation for the word “yom” to be interpreted as a long period of time instead of 24 hours.
Four strengths I see in the Day - Age position:

1. It provides a solid Biblical argument utilizing all of the creation passages in the Bible. It has defendable Biblical positions with its model of sin / death and a localized flood. The criticism that Day/Age is weak on scripture is more rhetoric than reality. I have carefully read its Biblical argument. I am not saying I am convinced by all its Biblical positions, which I express below, but the criticism about the position's lack of Biblical foundation is simply not true. This is a viable Biblical explanation of creation.

2. It finds its roots, to a degree, in the 2nd Century with Martyr & Irenaeus and more so, in the comments of Augustine.

3. It is easily defended scientifically providing its adherents not only a Biblically and scientifically credible argument but the opportunity to effectively witness to the scientific community.

4. It proposes that there are two books from God – the book of the Bible and the book of creation and effectively brings both together. This position allows it the ability to be at peace with “good” science and has been a great benefit to those who are rooted in both the scriptures and science. I found this approach to be an attractive and interesting position.

Four of the weaknesses I see in Day - Age position:

1. Many of its details for Genesis One are the same as young earth. When it deviates from the young earth position its arguments do not come out of the pages of scripture as “easily” as young earth. The explanations are intriguing and credible but debatable. It requires a person to rely more heavily upon known science in its Biblical interpretation. This is why many of its critics believe the position relies too much on isogetical explanations and I think they make a good point. To my knowledge, most of the details of this position were not developed until the 20th Century and the impression is they are still under construction. This observation does not mean the position is without Biblical merit. It does mean that the details of its argument would not have been developed in any previous century. It makes me wonder how much of the position might change as science changes which is the foundation of the complaints against it.

2. Though the position’s Biblical explanations about sin / death and a localized flood have credible Biblical defense; those positions are different than the more common understandings and give me pause. The jury is still out on those positions for me. I want to do explore all the Biblical ramifications of these positions before weighing in.

3. Aligning Biblical genealogy with this positions’ chronology about mankind, even with the apparent generational gaps within the various genealogies, seems like a formidable task. I am unsure if it is effectively possible to reconcile the two.

4. The position seems to rest on the idea that at the beginning of creation all the laws of physics were immediately fixed and the universe immediately operated
then as it does today. That scenario is obviously possible and may then require more of a Day – Age explanation. It is also possible, however, that through the creation process God, who created the laws, altered some or all of them until He then chose to “fix” or “re-fix” them. After all, every miracle of God is a temporary suspension of some law or laws. If that happened, it might explain the universe very differently than the Day – Age position, which seems to be the young earth’s contention. We don’t really know for sure which scenario God chose. The Biblical account is not designed to answer all our questions.

Just as with the 24-Hour Creation Day Model, I am not attempting to list all the strengths and weaknesses of this model.
EVALUATION

The strengths and weaknesses of both positions seem to settle into obvious patterns. The 24 Hour Creation Day Model allows for more traditional Biblical positions on the impacted issues. Personally, that is a much more comfortable posture for me and for many evangelicals.

The charge against the 24 Hour Creation Day Model by Day-Age is that: The universe is God’s handiwork. Whether a young earth proponent wants to admit it or not, pull together a team of scientists fully committed to Christ and who have no evolutionary bias and at the end of the evaluation, many of the scientific positions of the young earth model will still have some serious problems fitting into what is being viewed in nature. So, since scientific facts about the age of the universe have demonstrated a weakness in some common Biblical interpretations, do not change the Bible but change some of the interpretations.

Just like the advocates of the 24 Hour Creation Day Model, The Day-Age proponents I have encountered genuinely love and uphold the Bible. I have found those Day-Age proponents to be sound in the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Their problem with the age of the universe issue is that they are seeing contradictions in nature to a young earth position. They believe that since the universe is a record of God’s Work then what is seen in creation has the ability to challenge traditional Biblical interpretations to establish better Biblical interpretations about this issue.

The charge against the Day-Age Model by the 24 Hour Model proponents is that the scientific observations are being interpreted incorrectly, the universe will eventually be proven to be young and to change any traditional Biblical interpretations is a mistake.

Many of you may have already decided your position. Fantastic! Go with it. For me, there are a lot of issues still to reconcile for both the 24 Hour and Day-Age models. I see positives and negatives in both and look forward to working through them in the days ahead. Personally, I still have a lot of work to do.

This discussion in the Christian community needs to happen and is I believe it is healthy for evangelicals. History demonstrates this same discussion has been happening for almost 2,000 years. In my opinion, the Day-Age Model has forced the 24 Hour Model to develop better answers both Biblically and scientifically while the 24 Hour Model has done the same for Day-Age. Though they may be at odds in their conclusions, the presence of the other has been a necessary and positive agitation for both positions.

In reality, Christian theology is stronger today because we have allowed debate and argument over our history. Debate has never been an enemy to the Christian faith. Periods of intense debate and theological refinement have been a part of our history, especially during the height of the Reformation Period. It has served us well to uphold, enhance and solidify our theological positions for two millennia. Those who like to live their lives in neat unchallenged packages may not like this debate but, quite honestly, I think this is an exciting time!
The caveat to all of this is that a few proponents have ramped up the fear rhetoric among their followers and have chosen to replace serious debate with name calling. Some are guilty of falsely accusing those who choose a different understanding of creation of being heretics and compromisers. I want to address this disappointing development.

**A CALL TO CIVILITY AMONG CHRIST FOLLOWERS**

A few months ago I was watching a video presentation by a leading proponent of one of these views. I had ordered 10-15 videos of various topics from one particular ministry so I could hear its key spokesmen articulate their positions in their own words. I found many of the arguments well done. Many of the videos had helpful insights. They made me think and I liked that! I found myself frustrated, however, from time to time when I heard what I knew to be misrepresentations about the actual positions of specific spokespersons of other views. I don’t know why it is so important to misrepresent opponents, do you? We’re Christians. Why not stick to the facts and let one’s arguments speak for themselves?

Then, in one of the videos, the spokesman began calling anyone and everyone who disagrees with his position compromisers and worse. There in front of a group of Christian middle school and high school students, this spokesman began identifying some of those compromisers by name. The names offered were of men I know to be Godly, Biblically conservative and deeply devoted followers of Christ. Many of them have contributed heavily to the cause of Christ among evangelicals. A couple of them are household names of the faith but a couple of the others who aren’t have positively impacted my ministry personally and the ministries of hundreds of other evangelical pastors. They were all labeled compromisers by name by this spokesman because they have all come to embrace the Day-Age position.

One of those he named was Dr. James Dobson. James Dobson, a compromiser? Are you serious? James Dobson has never been nor ever will be a compromiser! If there is anyone who has stood strong, oftentimes seemingly alone, among vicious wolves defending Truth it has been Dr. James Dobson. If anyone has courageously paid the price for standing boldly for the Word of God in this country against overwhelming odds it is James Dobson.

At first I was shocked at the speaker’s words. Then, I was angry! (I have that problem.) Then, I felt so sad. I wondered if Dr. Dobson had heard this man say these things. I wondered what pain that false accusation might have brought this Christian hero.

I could hardly believe this man said what he did in front of several hundred CHILDREN. “What was the point of that?” I thought. “These children should grow up knowing what a great man Dr. Dobson and these others actually are. Instead, this man took it upon himself to malign them in front of innocent children.” I was so frustrated with this particular person for his lack of kindness, Christian love and frankly, his lack of just good common sense. The sin of Dobson and others, in his mind, was they had studied the scriptures and decided on a view different than his.
INTERPRETATION OF THE DAYS OF CREATION

Over the last months I have now come to realize these kinds of attacks are a frequent part of this person’s writings and speeches.

Is this what we are coming to?

Why do SOME Christians do things like this to others? I don’t think for a moment this behavior represents the vast majority of conservative Christians in our churches.

In my study on this topic, I noticed a fear tactic used by a few of the more charismatic leaders in the 24 Hour Model is their claim that anyone who disagrees with their interpretation of the word “day” is denying scripture and now cannot be trusted with any of the other doctrines of the faith. That claim is not just untrue, it is manipulation and I don’t appreciate it. Such a position takes a topic that has obviously been a minor issue in theology and places it in an elite position not previously held for two thousand years of Christian history.

Though my natural bent is closer to the 24 Hour Model, I have found the attitudes and rhetoric of a few of these outspoken proponents to be the model’s greatest enemy…at least for me. It says something to me when a person no longer believes his argument is enough to win the conversation and so his strategy then moves to attempting to generate fear and to manipulate others. I personally think this is shameful especially in light of what I believe is a solid argument in the 24 Hour model. It has the ability to stand on its own.

As we saw in this research, our Christian forefathers gave liberty of interpretation over this issue. I understand debate and disagreement -- developing and defending one’s perspective. I understand holding one’s ground. I get all of that. I DO all of that. But, the name calling, the berating, the manipulation and the lack of Christian kindness is wrong.

Providentially, a few days later, a deacon of our church, whom I greatly respect and who holds the 24 Hour Creation Model, suggested that I read the book, The Genesis Debate. I had told him that I was reading and listening to all the sides of this issue and was excited about what I was learning. So, he recommended this book to augment my research.

The Genesis Debate is a respectful but spirited debate between leading theologians from the 24-Hour View, the Day-Age View and the Framework View. The format is unique and fair. The emphasis is on content not accusations and misrepresentations. It gives us an opportunity to read for ourselves what each proponent actually believes. I recommend this book for any believer who is a serious learner.

As I began to explore the book, what got my attention was the forward by the renowned Dr. Norman Geisler. I have the highest respect for Dr. Geisler and for his knowledge and wisdom in apologetics. He is deeply devoted to the Word of God. I urge you to take the time and read this extended quote from another of our heroes of the faith.
INTERPRETATION OF THE DAYS OF CREATION

Norman L. Geisler

FORWARD to THE GENESIS DEBATE

“The Genesis Debate is an example of the venerable adage, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.” All the participants – J. Ligon Duncan III, David W. Hall, Hugh Ross, Gleason L. Archer, Lee Irons, and Meredith G. Kline – hold a high view of Scripture, affirming both the infallibility and inerrancy of Holy Writ. Within this context, the participants carry on a civil and scholarly interchange on a topic of considerable interest: whether the Genesis creation days are 24 hours long, ages of time, or merely a literary framework. The participants shed light on the importance of this debate and where it fits into an orthodox understanding of the faith.

The Genesis Debate teaches us several important lessons. First, the creation-day debate is not over the inspiration of the Bible, but over its interpretation. Each participant holds firmly to the full inspiration of Scripture. No one holding any of the views should be charged with unorthodoxy for the position he espouses in this volume.

Second, at best the creation-day debate is not one of evangelical authenticity but of evangelical consistency. That is, the maximum charge that should be leveled by one proponent against another is that his view is not consistent with Scripture or the facts of nature, not that it is unorthodox.

Third, the time of creation is not as important as the fact of creation. That is, it is far more important to defend the biblical position that God created the universe, all basic kinds of life, and man in His image than it is to argue about how long it took God to do so.

Fourth, the Church needs to shift its focus to the real enemy – evolutionism – not to other forms of creationism that remain true to the historicity of the events recorded in Genesis. Our foe is liberalism, not different stripes of conservatism. Evangelicals need to start turning their cannons on naturalists, not on other supernaturalists.

Fifth, just as the issue is not one of orthodoxy, so it also is not one of morality. Good and godly people are found on all sides of the creation-day debate. No one should impugn another’s faith or character simply because he holds one of the views represented in this volume.

Sixth, popularity should not dictate orthodoxy. In the long history of the Church, several views of the creation-day debate emanating from those who hold to the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture have been within the pale of orthodoxy. Indeed, many of the greatest champions of the highest view of Scripture have held divergent views regarding the age of the earth.

Nonetheless, a warning is in order. We must not sacrifice our orthodox understanding of Genesis 1 and 2. The Church must uphold the historical nature of the creation account, for on it rest other important doctrines of Scripture (see Romans 5:12 and Matthew 19:4-6). In addition, we must uphold the factual nature of the record as important to orthodoxy. We should reject all attempts to reduce the creation record to fable as opposed to fact, or to mythology as opposed to history. Finally, we must preserve the literal sense of Scripture, no matter what literary devices biblical authors employ. We must preserve at all costs the historical-grammatical method of interpreting the Bible, since denying it undermines other important doctrines. If we deny the historical-grammatical method when interpreting the first few chapters of Genesis regarding creation, why not do so when interpreting the last chapters of the Gospels regarding the resurrection? Our understanding of creation affects our understanding of the rest of Scripture.

There could not be wiser advice for committed conservative Christians today, including the appropriate warning.
I also noticed on the back cover these recommendations:

R.C. Sproul, Jr.
Editor, Table Talk

“For years those who affirm the Bible is without error have had differences about the days of creation. Here six able men, each committed to the absolute authority of Scripture, charitably discuss those differences. Regardless of which view you hold, The Genesis Debate is a powerful read for anyone interested in the creation debate. It will make you think and deepen your faith, helping you to see that God not only made the world, and all that is in it, but that He did it by the Word of his power, and for His glory.”

The bottom line all of these men are requesting is civility toward fellow brothers and sisters who may see the issue of “yom” differently than you or me. Debate, discuss, be aware of strengths and weaknesses, compare all the arguments with God’s Word, form your own opinions but don’t misrepresent and name call others. Instead, treat fellow believers with the loving respect Christ called for us to demonstrate.

Probably the greatest apologetic work in our time is called The Truth Project with Dr. Del Tackett. It is a must course in a Biblical Worldview for every Christian in this culture. Two lessons in the course are dedicated to the issue of creation. A fantastic overview of creation vs. evolution is addressed in those two hours. What struck me when I first reviewed those lessons is that not once does Del Tackett talk about the word “yom” in his presentation of creation. Not once. The length of the universe is not addressed.

It struck me that Tackett understands the real issue. It isn’t about the fight among believers over what I have demonstrated in this paper has been considered throughout Christian history as a side issue to the overall creation discussion. The real battle is over evolution and its ultimate devastating effect upon our culture.

I noticed that Tackett used the materials from the Intelligent Design community and it seems he mirrored their approach – to be neutral about the age of the universe and to address the real enemy.

This is my hope in our church will seriously consider the wisdom of Dr. Normal Geisler’s forward and the example of Tackett and others. Let’s use our ammo not on each other but on the real enemy of our culture – a naturalist worldview.

That does not mean that we skirt the issues related to the various positions we have addressed. They matter. But, we don’t use these side issues to lose sight of the real enemy of the faith. When we disagree, we do so respectfully as true followers of Christ.
SUMMARY

It appears there have been four distinct periods in Christian history as it relates to the debate between the 24 Hour Creation Day Model and the Day – Age Model.

1. **The Ante-Nicene Fathers** – It is obvious that both models were taught and accepted as plausible explanations of Creation by early Christian theologians.

2. **The Augustine Period** – Through the persuasion of Augustine, an instant creation model became the accepted model from 400 – 1500 AD. Neither the Day-Age nor 24 Hour models were the popular models over this span of 1100 years. That represents more than half of Christian history.

3. **The Reformation** – Most, if not all, of the Reformers adopted the 24 Hour Creation Day Model which became the primary Protestant model for over 300 years while, to the best of my knowledge, the Catholic Church maintained a level of commitment to the perspective of Augustine.

4. **The Modern Era** – From the mid–19th Century until today there has been an epic battle between at least three groups – Evolutionists, 24 Hour Creation Day Model (young earth) and the Day-Age Model (old earth) Model. The central dividing line between the two Christian camps appears to be the length of “day” in Genesis One.

As I think about what I have learned, I recall that in the first 1700 years of Church history, none of the positions were held as a reaction to science and especially not to evolution. Even during that time, these Christian theologians differed with each other about how to view the word “yom” in Genesis One. It seems obvious that the 24 hour Creation Model, Framework View and the Day-Age Model are clearly articulated during our Church history, yet I could find no record of discord in the Church over this issue during those centuries. That suggests that while this is an important issue, this was not viewed as “an essential.” It appears there was liberty of thought, without animosity, about how to view this aspect of creation during the first 1500 years of Christian history.

This was a good time of exploration for me. I am in the process of digging deeper into the strengths and weaknesses of both of the primary creation models and look forward to my journey now that I have a clearer understanding of Church history about the interpretation of the “days” of creation.

I hope this journey has been a help to you as you explore this subject.