In Six Days: The Creation Study Committee and the PCA’s Struggle for Consensus on Anti-Darwinism

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ABSTRACT

Michael C. Wilkerson: In Six Days: The Creation Study Committee and the PCA’s Struggle for Consensus on Anti-Darwinism

Under the Direction of Dr. Theresa Levitt

This thesis explores the historic struggle and development of the American Evangelical community to form a unified front against naturalistic evolution during the twentieth century: focusing on the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) as a microcosm in the battle for a general consensus. Conservative six-day creationists who felt threatened by more liberal views within the denomination over the issue pressured the 1998 PCA General Assembly to appoint a special Creation Study Committee. The outcome of the work of the committee only broadened acceptable views within the denomination, much to the chagrin of the conservative elders who pushed for the Committee’s formation. The central argument of this thesis is that the resolution of the PCA Creation Study Committee findings both mirrored national trends in the ongoing creation and evolution debate, but also highlighted the struggles of a young denomination seeking its own public and private identity within the boundaries of Reformed distinctive. The secondary sources employed for the national movement include Ronald Numbers The Creationists (1992) and Michael Ruse’s But Is It Science? (1988). Primary material
include interviews with Dr. C. John Collins and Mr. Samuel Duncan, chairman of the Committee. Further research was conducted through various General Assembly and Presbytery Minutes, as well as the responses to the decisions reached in these Minutes.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) formed the Creation Study Committee to explore the complex issues surrounding the Genesis 1-2 creation account. This committee was the culmination of rising tensions within the denomination concerning the proper interpretation of these two chapters and its increasing prominence as an issue of serious contention. The creation narrative had not previously been a matter of intense controversy, but the historical context within which the debate was placed had pushed the issue to the forefront of the denomination. Conservative elders sought closure on the issue, hoping that the denomination would adopt a strictly literal six-day rendering of the creation account. The decision of the 2000 General Assembly on the Committee’s findings can only be properly understood in light of the historical moment.

American Christians in general, and Reformed Christians more particularly, felt an acute threat to their worldview from certain naturalistic interpretations of Darwin’s theory of evolution by means of natural selection.¹ These naturalistic interpretations excluded supernatural forces as a valid means of explaining the

world, and by the early 20th century many American Christians found themselves on the defensive against broader naturalistic criticisms attacking portions of the Bible that did not fit with empirical observations of natural laws. At the forefront of this attack on Biblical literalism were assaults on passages in the Book of Genesis that narrate a supernatural creation of the universe, the earth, and all life contained therein.

While some Christians were comfortable interpreting Genesis based on the observations of the natural sciences, others saw a clear conflict between the record of Genesis and the claims of empirical science. This second camp, known as scientific creationists, emerged as a vocal minority in America during the 1960s, insisting that the universe and earth are actually quite young, and that biological evolution is not a viable explanation for the origin of species. This position put them at odds with the near unanimous opinion of scientists, but the creationists were unwilling to compromise on their convictions that their interpretation of Genesis was correct and that the Bible offers the only source of authoritative truth.

No Reformed Christian would side with strict naturalism; however, a rift opened in Reformed denominations on the proper interpretation of the Genesis creation account, ushering in a breadth of opinions on the topic. The issue has not abated since its inception, and the recent struggle for consensus within the Presbyterian Church in America, a young, conservative Reformed denomination, offers a unique glimpse into the ideological and theological struggles of the broader Christian community. Tensions within the PCA over the issue led to the formation of a Creation Study Committee in 1998 to give fair hearing to all sides of the debate,
and the results of this committee both mirror and differ from the larger national anti-Darwinian movement. Only by placing the formation of the PCA within the historical context of American anti-Darwinism can one make sense of the convoluted decision of the 2000 PCA General Assembly to commend several mutually exclusive interpretations of Genesis to the sessions and presbyteries of the denomination.

The PCA is a denomination of typically Reformed character, and it emerged from a tradition of religious sectarianism. Since the Reformation itself, reformed denominations have followed the principle of *semper reformanda*, always reforming and, if necessary, fracturing when the theology of their respective denominations broadens to a critical point. The PCA followed in the tradition of J. Gresham Machen, who advocated secession and reformation from a broadening of theological opinion, rather than having disparate opinions exist in unity under an ideologically expansive denomination. However, the argument over the proper interpretation of Genesis is unique to the moment in history being examined, as differing opinions on this matter had never before been considered a test of fellowship, so long as certain truths concerning the historicity of Genesis were maintained.

Those seeking a denominational agreement that only ministers holding to young-earth creationism be ordained insisted that young-earth creationism was the historic opinion of the church, as outlined in the Westminster Assembly of 1643-1652. The men seeking this consensus were following in the militant sectarian tradition of Machen by seeking to oust all divergent opinions from the denomination, but this attempt was an abuse of the bounds of acceptable division.
for Machen, who did not hold to a young-earth creationist position himself. The final decision of the 2000 General Assembly evidences a denomination struggling for consensus on epistemological identity in an increasingly empirical time. It is not only a story of where one may find authoritative truth, but also of how to interpret the very sources of truth that one goes to. The discussions contained herein raise interesting arguments in the fields of the history of religion, science, and broader theological debates within America.
CHAPTER I: FUNDAMENTALISTS AND CREATIONISTS

Two new classifications of Evangelical Christians emerged in the 20th century that shared a peculiar, though not undivided, alliance. Christian Fundamentalists, those who practice strict literal adherence to the Bible, became prominent during this time, as did the creationists, those who reject Darwinian evolution in favor of a supernatural creative process. Throughout the century, fundamentalists and creationists became wed to each other through shared ideologies. However, a wide range of opinion existed within fundamentalism on what constituted a legitimate literal interpretation, as well as similar latitude for acceptable anti-Darwinian proposals. All Christian creationists believed in a literal interpretation of Genesis, but not all creationists agreed on what that interpretation consisted of. The militant belief in a young earth, a universal Noachian flood, and the special creation of each species within solar days did not gain notable momentum until the 1960s, but it owes much of its success to the anti-Darwinian groundwork laid by its more moderate creationist forerunners.

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2 Fundamentalism as a whole is more nuanced than this treatment. Different translations of the Bible were abundant, and the fundamentalist movement as a whole was more defined by premillennial dispensationalism. For more on this discussion, see Lindsell, Harold. *The battle for the Bible*. Zondervan, 1976. Dollar, George W. *A history of fundamentalism in America*. Bob Jones University Press, 1973.
Beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a split occurred in Christian denominations between those holding to a more literal, and those adopting a figurative or allegorical interpretation of the Bible. This split became known as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. Although it was occurring across many denominations, it was particularly pervasive within the Presbyterian Church. In 1910, Lyman Stewart, the founder of Union Oil and an ardent supporter of dispensationalism, used his wealth to support the publication of several pamphlets and essays from a multidenominational effort that was called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. Also at this time, Cyrus I. Scofield published his famous *Scofield Reference Bible*, which became a standard for fundamentalists and dispensationalists in particular. This period was formative for Christianity in America, as Christians began moving into two separate camps based on their own personal interpretation of the Scriptures.

For Presbyterians, the leader in the fight against the liberalizing of Christianity was Dr. J. Gresham Machen, a professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary from 1906 to 1929 who led a withdrawal movement from the Northern Presbyterian Church to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and

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Westminster Theological Seminary.\textsuperscript{7} His approach to liberal opposition, highlighted in his book *Christianity and Liberalism*, was to secede from the liberal influences.\textsuperscript{8} In his magnum opus, he lamented that “modern naturalistic liberalism” had over “the past one hundred years” began “a new era in human history”.\textsuperscript{9} This new era had been occasioned by the “application of modern scientific methods”, and he feared that “no department of knowledge can maintain its isolation from the modern lust of scientific conquests”.\textsuperscript{10} These modern scientific methods applied scientific methodology to all spheres, including those of the humanities. No institution was safe from the conquering spirit of scientific investigation, and Christianity was already under vicious attack. Machen doubted “whether first-century religion can ever stand in company with twentieth-century science”.\textsuperscript{11} Machen asked the question that most serious intellectual Christians of the time were grappling with, namely, “may Christianity be maintained in a scientific age?”\textsuperscript{12} There could be no mere separation of the two spheres, the religious and the scientific, in this new modern age. “In the intellectual battle of the present day there can be no ‘peace without victory’; one side or the other must win”.\textsuperscript{13}

While it might initially appear that Machen was opposed to science in favor of holding fast to religious dogma, this was hardly the case. He did not believe that it

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{8} Machen, J. Gresham. "Christianity and Liberalism. 1923. Grand Rapids, MI: William B." (1946).
\item \textsuperscript{9} Machen, 2
\item \textsuperscript{10} Machen, 3
\item \textsuperscript{11} Machen, 4
\item \textsuperscript{12} Machen, 6
\item \textsuperscript{13} Machen, 6
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
was "the Christianity of the New Testament which is in conflict with science, but the supposed Christianity of the modern liberal Church", and his chief concern in his work was to show that "modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions". Commenting on the influence of Machen, historian George M. Marsden pointed out that Machen "declined to join in the antievolution crusade". His legacy was one of insistent "ecclesiastical separatism", not antievolution polemic. Machen was a protégé of the Old School Princeton Theologians Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield, both defenders of "solid empirical science and to the concursus of divine and natural action". Warfield was such a staunch defender of a literal interpretation of Scripture, that he actually is credited with coining the term "inerrancy". Their views on the creation account were nuanced; Machen, Hodge, nor Warfield did not hold to a literal 24-hour day creation account. Machen advocated secession from liberalism, which "provided not only an acceptable, but in many respects an honorable, solution to irreconcilable disagreements of principle". It is significant to note that holding to

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14 Machen, 7
16 Marsden, 184
20 Longfield, 122
some aspects of divine guidance over natural processes in the creation account did not amount to “irreconcilable disagreements of principle” for these giants of conservative Presbyterian theology, and did not fall into the category of divisive issues that warranted schism.

Surprisingly, given the current context, many of the most conservative and fundamental theologians in America during the early 20th century had few qualms with the idea that the earth was very old, far older than the 6,000-10,000 year time frame currently espoused by many young-earth creationists. George Frederick Wright, an amateur geologist and Congregational minister, was a prominent Christian Darwinist who proposed that, “the intended purpose of Genesis was to protest polytheism, not to teach science”.21 The Scofield Reference Bible held to a theory known as gap theory, which sought reconciliation between science and Biblical interpretation. In this theory, Genesis 1-3 actually recounts two separate creations. The “in the beginning” of Genesis 1:1 referred to the first creation “perhaps billions of years ago” and a second, six-day creation occurred “approximately four thousand years before the birth of Christ”.22 Animal life perished catastrophically between the first and second creations, and the remnants of this animal life is what can be found in the fossil record.23 This accommodation of Scripture to the fossil record allowed fundamental theologians who clung tightly to the Scofield Reference Bible to still believe in a special creation of human beings.

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22 Ruse, 228

Belief in the special creation of human beings was the crux of the argument for most avowed fundamentalists. Theologians such as Charles Hodge supposed that Darwinism led to strict naturalism, which would eventually lead to atheism in America. Perhaps the most combatant politician of this time, who held to the gap-theory and to the special creation of man, was the populist William Jennings Bryan. A politician in the wake of the carnage of World War I, Bryan saw in Darwinism support for “a dangerous theory based on ‘the law of hate’”. Survival of the fittest was seen as an anti-populist message, and Bryan was afraid that subscribing to it would throw the Western world back into the bloodshed and violence of a world at war. He was particularly wary of Darwinism being taught in public schools to impressionable youth growing up in an age of uncertainty. Bryan argued for the cessation of the attack on the Bible in public schools and the teaching of evolution until it had satisfactorily proven and had persuaded a clear majority.

William Jennings Bryan led a nationwide crusade against the teaching of evolution in public schools that eventually culminated in the notorious Scopes “Monkey” Trial. The Scopes Trial was a legal case in 1925 between the state of Tennessee and a substitute high-school biology teacher named John Scopes. Scopes violated Tennessee’s Butler Act by teaching evolution in a Dayton,

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24 Ruse, 228
Tennessee, high school. The subsequent trial of John Scopes set the stage for a showdown between fundamentalists and modernists, led by the prosecuting attorney William Jennings Bryan and the defense attorney Clarence Darrow, respectively. Over the course of the trial, Bryan was forced to admit that he did not believe that the days of Genesis were six literal solar days. In private, he later admitted that so long as humans were not the product of evolution from lower life forms, he could accept evolution generally. John Scopes was indicted, though the verdict was later overturned. The outcome of this trial was a perceived victory for fundamentalists, despite the scathing and embarrassing cross-examination of Bryan by Darrow. Bryan’s cross-examination at Dayton spotlighted a major chink in the armor for anti-evolutionists: their inability to agree on which theory of creation was the most viable alternative to Darwinian evolution.

The anti-evolution movement was far from unified, and three theories competed for the majority view. Strict six-day, young earth creationists abounded, but so did gap-theorists and day-age theorists. Six-day creationists took comfort from the work of George McCready Price, who published a monumental work in 1923 called The New Geology. This work laid the foundations of catastrophism, the

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30 Smout, 70


32 Ruse, 237

belief that a worldwide deluge, the Genesis Flood, accounted for the fossil record and various levels of strata that geologists attributed to millions of years of evolutionary history. According to Price, deceptive conformities and thrust faults “proved that there was no natural order to the fossil-bearing rocks, all of which he attributed to the Genesis flood”. The day-age theorists believed that each day in Genesis corresponded to an indefinite period of time, which allows for vast ages of the Earth in each creation day.

Despite the admission during the cross-examination of the difficulty of holding fundamental views in light of plain science, the verdict was a conviction for John Scopes. The goal for Clarence Darrow and the defense, however, was to open up the case for an appeal in the hopes that the law might be declared unconstitutional in a higher court. The defense was very aware that they had no chance of avoiding a conviction in the highly fundamental state of Tennessee, but the legal landscape of America was changing. Soon federal laws would take precedence over states’ rights, and the American public school system would find their curriculum not in state court houses but in the Department of Education in Washington, D.C.

The battle for the heart of American public education was far from over after the Scopes Trial, as several later cases would show. Two years after Scopes, in 1926,

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34 Ruse, 236
35 The Hebrew word for “day” is yom, and the precise meaning of this word is highly contested. See Kelly, Douglas, and Douglas Kelly. Creation and change. Christian, 1997. for a detailed treatment
anti-evolutionists won a legislative victory in Mississippi and then again two years later in Arkansas.37 Additionally, anti-evolutionists set out on a campaign to “emasculate textbooks, purge libraries, and hound teachers of evolution”.38 Under these tactics, “Darwinism virtually disappeared from high school texts, and for years many American teachers feared being identified as evolutionists”.39 The Deep South became a victorious battleground for anti-evolutionists.

Another, more vital, effort came out of the aftermath of the Scopes Trial. Fundamentalists refocused their energy towards establishing a centralized institutional base from which they could reach out and evangelize their anti-evolution materials to the larger world. This base consisted of “radio ministries, colleges, and the all-important Bible institutes, the greatest of which was the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago”.40 In the 1930s, they relaxed the pressure that had formerly pressed on state legislatures, and began localized pressure of school boards through the use of creationist societies. George McCready Price, Dudley Joseph Whitney, and L. Allen Higley, formed one such society, the Religion and

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Science Association, in 1935. This society was formed to create “a united front against the theory of evolution”. Price also organized his own Deluge Geology Society in 1938, which began publishing from 1941-1945 a *Bulletin of Deluge Geology and Related Science.*

This campaign to wage a war of information with modernists was spurred partially by the negative press fundamentalists were receiving in the wake of the Scopes Trial. While the case could technically be considered a victory for evolution, the cross-examination of Bryan did not help the cause of fundamentalism in the eyes of the American public. The Scopes Trial fused two forces that perhaps would not have been joined together had the trial never occurred: evolution and higher criticism. Before the Scopes Trial, conservative Christians saw higher criticism as the greater threat to orthodox faith, but the Scopes Trial highlighted the negative effects of reading the Bible as a historical document and not as the inspired Word of God. In fact, one contributor to *The Fundamentals “traced the roots of higher criticism to Darwin.”* and labeled it as “the principal cause of disbelief in the Scriptures”

During this transitional phase for the anti-evolutionists, a new problem became readily apparent – young, college-educated scientists aiming to harmonize

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evangelical Christianity with mainstream science.\textsuperscript{44} A case in point for this cross-generational struggle can be seen in Harold W. Clark. Clark was a pupil of Price, and after earning a master’s degree in biology from the University of California, he became a professor at an Adventist college in the state. However, by the 1940s, his exposure in academia as well as his personal explorations in biology led him to believe that Price’s \textit{New Geology} was “entirely out of date and inadequate.”\textsuperscript{45} Price was understandably mortified at this challenge to his geological prowess\textsuperscript{46}, and his response to Clark was both personal and revealing. Price accused Clark of falling to the seductive lies of “tobacco-smoking, Sabbath-breaking, God-defying evolutionists”.\textsuperscript{47} Price even went so far as to release a pamphlet entitled \textit{Theories of Satanic Origin}, attacking his one time student and confidant.\textsuperscript{48}

The American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) further departed from the creationist, catastrophist geological views of Price. One of its members, J. Laurence Kulp, earned his Ph.D. in geology from Princeton University. He criticized Price’s \textit{New Geology} and warned that Price’s work has “infiltrated the greater portion of fundamental Christianity in America primarily due to the absence of trained Christian geologists... the major propositions of the theory are contradicted by

\textsuperscript{44} Ruse, 239  
\textsuperscript{45} Ruse, 239 from letters in the possession of Ronald Numbers, H.W. Clark to G.M. Price, [April 9, 1940] in Price Papers  
\textsuperscript{47} Ruse, 239 from letters in the possession of Ronald Numbers, G.M. Price to H.W. Clark, June 9, 1940 in Price Papers  
\textsuperscript{48} Numbers, 128; see Price, George M. \textit{Theories of Satanic Origin}. Loma Linda, CA: Author. n.d.
established physical and chemical laws.". Societies like the ASA were home to many members who were drifting first from strict creationism to a more progressive form of creationism and eventually to outright theistic evolution. As more Christian geologists became university trained, they began to become suspicious of the authority of Price and relied more on what they had been taught from their respective schools. Ronald Numbers notes "by 1948, many evangelical scientists in the ASA were ready to follow Kulp in boldly shedding the trite fundamentalism apologetics of the past" in the name of "scientific honesty". A split between the old and new schools would soon emerge.

Bernard Ramm, a theologian close to the ASA, published in 1954 a most significant book – *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. This book guided its readers away from strict creationism towards a more progressive creationism, which cast doubt on a young earth theory, the universal Noachian flood, and the man's recent arrival. Ramm was the leader of a new strand of evangelicals who were attempting to distance themselves from old school fundamentalism. *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* challenged the view that the Bible could or even should be a “reliable source of scientific data”. His book was wildly popular, earning the respect and support of distinguished evangelicals such as Billy Graham.

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50 Numbers, 165
52 Numbers, 184
Ramm accused the once hallowed Harry Rimmer\textsuperscript{54} and George McReady Price of imposing the untrustworthy gap and flood theories on unsuspecting Christians.\textsuperscript{55} Catastrophism found no support in actual geological scholarship, and the flood and gap theories were incompatible with each other as evidence for geological ages.\textsuperscript{56}

Progressive creationism offered a counter proposal to the flood and gap theories. This proposal encouraged Christians to think of Genesis as offering a rough sketch of Earth’s history. P.J. Wiseman, a notable progressive creationist, concluded, “creation was revealed [pictorially] in six days, not performed in six days”.\textsuperscript{57}

According to this new brand of Christian thinkers, the whole point of Genesis 1-3 was to show how God had prepared Earth and made it suitable for human life – as humans were the crowning achievement of God’s guidance of evolution. Despite selling tens of thousands of copies, \textit{The Christian View of Science and Scripture} did not to garner a supportive majority among evangelical scientists.\textsuperscript{58}

Rather than winning over the crowds of evangelical Christians seeking answers on this decisive issue, the work of progressive creationists like Ramm and Wiseman only opened the door for an intense conservative backlash. The 1960s saw a revival of young-earth creationism, and from this backlash emerged John C. Whitcomb, Jr., one of the most influential young-earth creationists of the 20\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{55} Numbers, 186
\textsuperscript{56} Numbers, 186
\textsuperscript{58} Numbers, 187
century. Whitcomb was a professor of Old Testament at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. At the 1953 annual convention of the ASA, Whitcomb heard the presentation “The Biblical Evidence for a Recent Creation and Universal Deluge” from Henry M. Morris, a civil engineer graduate from Rice University. This presentation was highly persuasive, as it defended flood geology against the progressive creationists views prevalent at the time in the ASA. The encounter between Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, Jr., at the 1953 ASA convention sparked a friendship between two men who would become champions of young-earth creationism for a disillusioned generation of evangelicals.

Bolstered with confidence from this encounter, and receiving much support from the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), John Whitcomb made it his mission to write a Th.D. dissertation denouncing the work of Ramm. Whitcomb condemned Ramm’s book as being “a rallying-point for the ‘New Deism’”. Whitcomb had a 450-page dissertation entitled “The Genesis Flood” completed by 1957. Moody Press, an evangelical publisher, agreed to take the project into their hands. Whitcomb struggled to find any legitimate support from geological scientists, and he quickly realized that he needed a collaborator before his book could be published. After many Christian geologists turned his offer for co-authorship down, he turned to Henry Morris in desperation. Morris was reluctant at first, but he eventually agreed

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59 Numbers, 188 from letters of H.M. Morris to J.C. Whitcomb, September 22, 1953, and J.C. Whitcomb to W.J. Tinkle, July 13, 1955, both in the Whitcomb Papers. The printed program of the 1953 ASA convention carried an abstract of Morris’s paper.

60 Numbers, 189 referencing J.C. Whitcomb, “A Questionnaire on Creation and the Flood,” [1955], and J.C. Whitcomb to H.M. Morris, October 8, 1955, both in the Whitcomb Papers.

to co-author the book with Whitcomb. As Numbers notes, “thus was sealed the pact that would soon make ‘Whitcomb and Morris’ a by-word among evangelical Christians”.62

Whitcomb and Morris teamed up in 1957, when Henry Morris was dean of the civil engineering program at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Initially Morris was slated to write only around 100 pages of the book, but he contributed nearly 350 pages and “eventually overshadowed Whitcomb’s shrinking contribution by better than a two-to-one margin”.63 By 1961, the long awaited project was complete, and the two men released the 500-page *The Genesis Flood*.64

Historian Kary Smout calls the publication of *The Genesis Flood* “perhaps the most significant event in the recent development of American creationism”.65 However, the methodology of the book was questionable at best. From the onset of the book Whitcomb and Morris admitted that the literal belief in the account of Genesis informed their quest, and that they sought evidence in nature to support their presupposition of Biblical inerrancy.66 Their approach to science was one of compiling scientific data that favored creation against evolution.67 This tactic characterized the career of these two men, and it sparked a revival in creationism.

*The Genesis Flood* was a wildly successful publication, selling in its first decade tens of thousands of copies.68 In the eyes of biblical catastrophists, it had the

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62 Numbers, 192
63 Numbers, 197
65 Smout, 111
66 Morris, Whitcomb 1
67 Smout, 111
68 Numbers, 204
appearance of intellectual respectability, while one opponent denounced it “as a reissue of G.M. Price’s views brought up to date”.69 This work had the appearance of a legitimate scientific contribution, but many of the sales were likely the result of the rebuttals of its most fierce opponents. 70 No publicity is bad publicity, however, and the release of this work instantly pushed Whitcomb and Morris into the limelight of stardom for creationists. Within 25 years, their book went through twenty-nine printings and sold over 200,000 copies, turning these two men into celebrities, as Numbers puts it, “famous among fundamentalists as the Davids who slew the Goliath of evolution”.71

A slew of publications followed in the wake of The Genesis Flood. John C. Whitcomb published The Early Earth72 in 1972, a work against the gap-theory; The World That Perished73 in 1973, a return to the topic of flood geology; and The Moon: Its Creation, Form and Significance74 in 1978. Morris became a keynote speaker for many creationist audiences throughout the country, and he even earned a speaking spot at the Houston Geological Society. He gave a lecture there on biblical catastrophism, but he faced a very unreceptive audience. In fact, the president of a local geological society “quipped that ‘evidently Dr. Morris doesn’t know that we know it takes 6,000 years to make an inch of limestone’ at the close of his speech”.75

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70 Numbers, 204
71 Numbers, 209
Morris and Whitcomb received practically no recognition in the scientific community despite their popularity in conservative religious circles.\textsuperscript{76}

As a theologian, John C. Whitcomb could comfortably answer his critics and admirers in the Christian religious community. Henry M. Morris, on the other hand, was an engineering educator at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, home to one of the more reputable civil engineering programs in the country. Additionally, he was an officer of the American Society for Engineering Education, a member of the editorial board for the \textit{Journal of Engineering Education}, and the author of an extensively used textbook, \textit{Applied Hydraulics in Engineering}.\textsuperscript{77} After the arrival of a new dean of engineering, Willis G. Worchester, pressure began mounting for Morris to step down from his post at VPI. Morris left the faculty voluntarily in 1969.

Several leading creationists now saw a need to form an informal society with the intent of performing actual research on the issues of flood geology and to study the effects of the Genesis flood on the natural world. Headlining this association was the geneticist Walter E. Lammerts\textsuperscript{78}, a defector from the Deluge Geology Society and the American Scientific Affiliation. He, along with Whitcomb and Morris, set out to form a “Team of Ten” men that would become the Creation Research Society, the foremost creationist organization of its time.\textsuperscript{79} The society formally began in 1963,
and its mission statement ended up being much more broad than Whitcomb or Lammerts envisioned. It did not mandate acceptance of flood geology or recent creation, but it did bar non-Christians from membership. The central focus of the CRS was research and education, not evangelism or political engagement, and with its scanty resources, it focused its attention on publishing the periodical *Quarterly* and the publication of a high-school biology textbook. This dream was finally realized with the publication of president Henry M. Morris’ *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity* (1970).

The revival of creationism in the 1960s would finally garner the public attention it so desperately desired, though not in the way that it originally intended. An unexpected vote from the California State Board of Education required that public school textbooks include creation alongside evolution in the classroom. California became the battleground over public school textbook curriculum, and the fight would once again enter the public sphere. After the 1961 Supreme Court ruling in the Madalyn Murray case that would ban required prayers in public schools, Nell Segraves sought to protect her children from secular influence in California public schools. She asserted that likeminded creationists’ parents “were entitled to protect our children from the influence of beliefs that would be offensive to our

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80 Numbers, 230
religious beliefs”. After the victory in the California State Board of Education to allow creationism to be taught alongside evolution, she joined in on the effort to organize a Creation-Science Research Center (CSRC), in affiliation with Christian Heritage College in San Diego. Recently retired from his post at VPI, Henry M. Morris set up a research society, the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), at Christian Heritage College to serve as a center of research and education rather than political engagement.

Creationists found momentum in the California education movement, prompting Henry Morris to announce, “creationism is on the way back, this time not primarily as a religious belief, but as an alternative scientific explanation of the world in which we live”. From his new post as academic vice chancellor in San Diego, Morris taught a course titled “Scientific Creationism” at Christian Heritage. This shift in terminology put creationism and evolution on equal footing in Morris’ eyes, and he described them as “competing scientific hypotheses”. In 1972, the Creation Research Society began promoting the term “creation science” to lend even further credibility to the science of creationism. Essentially, this shift in terminology only mirrored the efforts of the pre-existing creationism movement.

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84 Ruse, 245
85 Ruse, 245
86 Ruse, 245
89 Numbers, 245
The goal was to amass viable scientific data for creation, and in 1974 Henry Morris released a book entitled *Scientific Creationism* compiling the evidence.\(^{90}\)

There are subtle differences in the terminology, however, which are not insignificant. A 1981 Arkansas law requiring "balanced treatment" for creation and evolution in education succinctly clarified what was meant by creation science in six essential beliefs.\(^{91}\) This Arkansas statute outlined creation science as being encompassed by:

(1) Sudden creation of the universe, energy, and life from nothing; (2) The insufficiency of mutation and natural selection in bringing about development of all living kinds from a single organism; (3) Changes only within fixed limits of originally created kinds of plants and animals; (4) Separate ancestry for man and apes; (5) Explanation of the earth's geology by catastrophism, including the occurrence of a worldwide flood; and (6) A relatively recent inception of the earth and living kinds.\(^{92}\)

The definition diverges from the old creationist school in several significant ways. For one, this included a call for geological catastrophism, which would have been an outlier opinion before the 1960s. Henry Morris saw the Genesis flood as “the real crux of the conflict between the evolutionists and creationists cosmologies”.\(^{93}\) While placing an increased emphasis on the Genesis flood, Morris encouraged scientific creationists to omit as facts “the six days of creation, the

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\(^{90}\) Smout, 111; Morris, Henry M. *Scientific creationism*. New Leaf Publishing Group, 1974.

\(^{91}\) Numbers, 245


names of the first man and woman, the record of God’s curse on the earth because of human sin, the story of Noah’s ark, and other such events which could never be determined scientifically". They also introduced evidence from the fossil record, which has no mention in the Bible. By doing this, Morris and the other adherents of scientific creationism hoped to lend credibility to their views as a science rather than as a movement completely rooted in the narratives of Genesis 1-3 and 6-9. Despite this, Morris was inconsistent by insisting that one could arrive at his conclusions without specific reference to the Bible all the while affirming, “only in the Bible can one find this concept of special creation”. His 1974 book Scientific Creationism appeared in two practically indistinguishable editions: one for public schools (which did not reference the Bible) and one for Christian schools (which did reference the Bible).

Creation scientists had to attempt to change the way science was perceived in order to defend their claims to empirical truths. Two philosophers were quite influential in this pursuit: Karl Popper and Thomas Khun. Popper required that all theories in science must be falsifiable; thinking in this vein led creation scientists to reject evolution on the premise that it could not be falsified (and therefore did not constitute science). Kuhn did not see science as a continuous gathering of objective knowledge, but allowed for competing models on the same issue. Creation scientists

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95 Numbers, 245 citing Morris, Henry M. "Director’s Column." Acts & Facts 4, no. 3 (October 1975)
96 Numbers, 246
saw no reason why an accumulation of knowledge in support of flood-geology could be bad for science, as it expanded paradigms and offered alternative theories to the same questions. 99 Creationists were advised to appeal to school boards with the premise that banning the teaching of creation as an alternative theory to evolution in public schools was tantamount to censorship and “smacked of getting into the province of religious dogma”. 100 This two-model approach to the issue of origins won support in the state legislatures of Arkansas and Louisiana, but in 1982 the Arkansas law requiring “balanced treatment” of creation and evolution was declared unconstitutional by a federal judge. In 1985, a synonymous decision was reached for the Louisiana law. 101

The heart of this issue became properly defining the terms religion and science. The National Academy of Sciences released a booklet entitled Science and Creationism in 1984 in which they challenged creation science as being a misnomer. 102 The United States Constitution does not ban the teaching of poor science in public schools, only the teaching of religion. Essentially, both sides in the debate accused the other of practicing pseudo-science on the premise that their theories were not falsifiable. Harvard Paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould concluded that scientific creationism is at once false and unfalsifiable, a discordant harmony indeed. 103 He summed this up by stating that the necessary tenets of creationism

99 Ruse, 246
“cannot be tested and its peripheral claims, which can be tested, have been proven false.”

During the Arkansas trial appeal to the Supreme Court, Michael Ruse advised Judge William Overton on “the essential characteristics of science” which included “naturalness, tentativeness, testability, and falsifiability”. Judge Overton agreed with Ruse that scientific creationism failed to meet these criteria and that teaching it was an unconstitutional advancement of religion and not science.

The campaign for balanced treatment in public schools having suffered a major setback, the creationists of the 1980s now devoted most of their energy to proselytizing in the public sphere. Notable creation scientists engaged in numerous debates, usually on college campuses. The ICR staff singlehandedly took part in over one hundred of these debates throughout the 1970s, never losing one (by their own account).

Morris himself was not fond of these public confrontations, favoring factual lectures, but he valued them for proselytizing to "more non-Christians and non-creationists than almost any other method". Unlike Morris, Duane T. Gish, a giant in this movement and a vehement debater, preferred open confrontation. Gish held a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of California, which he brought into


104 Numbers, 249
106 Ruse, 246
his fiery debates.\textsuperscript{108} According to his own reckoning, Gish went “for the jugular vein” of his opponents.\textsuperscript{109}

In addition to the public debate campaign, the ICR turned its attention to training and equipping young university trained creation scientists. The ICR was determined to not see resurgence in the defecting mistakes evidenced in the Harold W. Clark case. In 1981, the ICR began a graduate degree program in assorted creation-oriented fields.\textsuperscript{110} Their vision was to bridge the gap in the demand for creation science teachers, as well as to provide a prejudice free academic environment for interested students. Students holding to creationists’ views at secular universities reported discrimination for their unorthodox beliefs, and were even reportedly being expelled from school. Leaders of the ICR warned graduate students to hide their beliefs in secular universities “because if you don’t, in almost 99 percent of cases you will be asked to leave”\textsuperscript{111}. To prevent defections to “orthodox” science, and to protect students from discrimination, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church established graduate programs in scientific creationism at Loma Linda University, where Price had once lectured.\textsuperscript{112} Into the later part of the twentieth century, the ICR and the Seventh-day Adventists’ Geoscience Research Institute did much to advance scientific creationism with tangible scientific data.

The creationist revival of Whitcomb and Morris had a tremendous influence among evangelical Christians, but the crusades support was likely stemming from


\textsuperscript{109}Ruse, 247 citing from an interview with Harold Slusher and Duane T. Gish, 6 Jan. 1981.

\textsuperscript{110}Ruse, 247

\textsuperscript{111}Ruse, 247 from interview with Duane T. Gish, 26 Oct. 1980

\textsuperscript{112}Ruse, 247
an already supportive base. In a 1982 nationwide Gallup poll, nearly 44% of Americans believed in “a recent special creation”, 38% believed in theistic evolution and 9% believed in nontheistic evolution. By comparing these figures to a 1963 poll, in which nearly 30% of California church members opposed evolution, it can be surmised that creationism gained traction over these two decades, presumably sparked by Whitcomb and Morris.

The creationism revival saw much international fruit, particularly among creation scientists in Australia and New Zealand. Australian physician Carl Wieland organized the Creation Science Association, modeled after the CRS and ICR, in 1977. Their vow was to present “the very substantial scientific case for creation”, which they began to do in the publication of the magazine, *Ex Nihilo* in 1978.

Australian creation science made its way to America in the man Ken Ham, an engaging public speaker and biology teacher, who joined the ICR staff.

Ken Ham became the face of the next generation of scientific creationists, into the present day. Alongside colleagues Mark Looy and Mike Zovath, he founded Answers in Genesis (AiG) in 1994. Ham is a militant advocate of young earth creationism and flood-geology, believing that the Genesis narrative should be

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113 Ruse, 248
115 Ruse, 248
116 Numbers, 332
read as authoritatively literal and true and that it provides a flawless explanation of
the relevant scientific data concerning origins.\textsuperscript{120} In May 2007, he opened the
Answers in Genesis Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, an enormous, $27
million project. Ham has received much public attention, appearing in Bill Maher’s
mockumentary \textit{Religulous} in 2008.\textsuperscript{121} Ham’s biggest public appearance came in a
February 2014 debate hosted at the Creation Museum between himself and science-
educator Bill Nye (“Bill Nye the Science Guy”).\textsuperscript{122} Despite being widely discredited
by the scientific community, Ken Ham’s message has been embraced by millions of
followers, and his Creation Museum was visited by more than 250,000 in its first six
months of operation.\textsuperscript{123}

The fundamentalists-creationists alliance stood strong against the rising tide
of naturalism attacking the evangelical community, but this alliance was a shaky one
at best. Having lost the battle for equal treatment in public schools in 1982,
progressive creationists and other more moderate anti-evolution movements
receded to the background even as young-earth creationism was imbued with
renewed vitality. Led by Ken Ham, the successor of Henry Morris, the young-earth
creationists seemed to only become more convinced of the truth of their claims the
more that natural scientists disregarded them as pseudo-scientific. Tensions
between the more moderate anti-Darwinists and the more radical young-earth
creationists would begin to emerge in the 1990s, particularly in denominations

\textsuperscript{120} Stephens, Giberson, 11
\textsuperscript{122} Nye, Bill. \textit{Undeniable: evolution and the science of creation}. Macmillan, 2014. and Ham,
\textsuperscript{123} Stephens, Giberson, 11
where large numbers of both coexisted. Just such a denomination would form in 1973, the Presbyterian Church in America, and it became a case study in the interactions of the competing models for anti-Darwinism.
CHAPTER II: THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA: STIRRINGS AND FORMATION

The formation of the PCA in 1973 was a result of several related influences that frustrated the more conservative members of the Presbyterian Church United States (PCUS). Members of the PCUS seceded and formed the PCA because of antagonism towards racial integration and the PCUS emphasis on funding and supporting civil rights efforts. Coupled with this struggle was a broader continuance of the decades old Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. Higher criticism of the Bible was pervasive among liberals in the PCUS, and conservatives perceived that the civil rights movement, framed as the Social Gospel, had begun to take on a larger importance perhaps than the propagation of the Gospel itself. Such higher criticism left no portion of the Bible safe from scrutiny, and the Book of Genesis was the easiest to target. Some of the conservatives who left the PCUS to form the PCA highly favored six-day creationism, and for them the PCUS affirmation of theistic evolution as a valid position in 1969 was a disturbing development. However, issues other than young-earth creationism were of primary concern among those who left the PCUS to escape its liberalism, and this omission of distinction on acceptable anti-Darwinian viewpoints would only postpone the argument.

124 Alvis, 47; see also Bradley Longfield’s "For church and country: The fundamentalist-modernist conflict in the Presbyterian Church." for a more complete discussion of the controversy
The height of racial turmoil for the church and for the nation itself unfolded in the turbulent decade of the 1960s. As a whole, the PCUS supported civil rights both financially and organizationally, although there were members of the congregation who believed that too much emphasis was placed on the Social Gospel. In 1964, the General Assembly of the PCUS formed a Fellowship of Concern (FOC), which aimed to start an intra-denominational witness for civil rights.126 The FOC operated for four years, contributing money to various areas of racial reconciliation; it disbanded in 1968 under pressures from conservative congregants who viewed it as an interest group.127

Iconic civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed the PCUS at the Christian Action Conference at Montreat, North Carolina, in 1965.128 Several conservative Southern churches and presbyteries were opposed to King speaking at this conference, including the Sessions of the First Presbyterian Church of Bainbridge, Georgia, the First (Scots) Presbyterian Church of Charleston, South Carolina, and the Presbyteries in Alabama and South Carolina.129 Many of these and other conservative Presbyterians were concerned with King’s affiliation with the National Council of Churches (NCC), and there was strong outcry from those insisting that the PCUS withdraw from the NCC – as some opposed to it viewed the

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127 Alvis, 114
129 Alvis, 114
NCC as a communist organization.\textsuperscript{130} Letters to the editor submitted to the church’s official publication, the \textit{Presbyterian Survey}, charged it with becoming “a publication of integration, not inspiration” and being “slanted in favor of integration”.\textsuperscript{131} To some congregants, there seemed to be a growing connection between the ecumenical movement in the United States and civil rights; affiliation with the National Council of Churches meant compromise of doctrinal dogma in favor of ecumenism. The ecumenical movement sought to bring unity to all the disparate parts of the church, both nationwide and throughout Christendom. A growing number of conservative congregants would not stand for this shift and called for the denomination to withdraw its membership from the NCC.\textsuperscript{132} Hugh J. Harper of Birmingham protested in the \textit{Presbyterian Survey}, “the mission of the church is saving men’s souls” which could not be accomplished “by the NAACP, CORE, NCC, or UN programs”.\textsuperscript{133}

Perhaps the most disturbing development to the conservative Presbyterians within the PCUS was the 1969 General Assembly authorization of the initiation of talks for reunion with UPCUSA (the two denominations would eventually reunite in 1983, forming the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)).\textsuperscript{134} Opposition to this reunion had


\textsuperscript{132} Alvis, 117

\textsuperscript{133} Alvis, 118, citing \textit{Presbyterian Survey} 54, (July 1964): 6; (September 1964): 8; and (October 1964): 6-7

been strong among conservatives in the denomination, especially Southern
Presbyterians who felt that “radicals, determined ecumenists, have a timetable for
the liquidation of the historic witness of the PCUS”. After inadequate attempts to
heal the growing rift between conservatives and liberals, a discontent group of
Presbyterians formed The National Presbyterian Church in America on December 4,
1972, at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Leaders of this
new denominational effort, which soon came be known as the Presbyterian Church
in America (PCA) stressed separation as a necessity on account of the PCUS
abandoning the Reformed creeds for human logic and reason.

Historical continuity with the formation of the Presbyterian Church in the
Confederate States of America is apparent in light of the undertones of resistance to
integration as part of church policy. The PCA formed exactly 112 years to date from
the formation of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America
(which formed in 1861). James Henley Thornwell led the charge for the formation of
that church in an *Address to all the Churches in Jesus Christ throughout the Earth*,
and the PCA commissioners titled their injunction *A Message to All the Churches of
Jesus Christ throughout the World*. Not only was the title of their charge a play on
the title of the 1861 *Message*, but also several of the same justifications and issues

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135 Alvis, 132 quoting W. Jack Williamson from *Presbyterian Survey* 60 (September 1970): 8
136 Alvis, 133; see also Nutt, Rick. "The Tie that no longer binds: The Origins of the
Presbyterian Church in America." *The Confessional Mosaic: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century
Theology* (1990): 236-56. and Smith, Frank Joseph. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America:
137 This address is featured in *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in
the Confederate States of America*: with an appendix; Columbia [S.C.]: Steam-Power Presses of Evans
& Cogswell, 1864.
138 This message can be found on the PCA Historical Center website
were addressed. At the very least, the founders of the PCA were inspired in their secession from the national denomination by their Confederate predecessors, and at most they were attempting to forge a particularly Southern identity with the formation of the PCA.  

Two matters mentioned in the founding documents of the PCA include church governance and the authority of Scripture. The 1972 assembly in Birmingham was not attempting to answer any one specific question; rather, it addressed the perceived gradual “change in the Presbyterian Church in the United States”. Pressure to join in the ecumenical movement threatened the denominational autonomy to practice church governance as the new PCA founders saw fit. The PCA separatists sought to maintain autonomy within the denomination rather than be influenced by organizations external to the denomination. In order to stay in an organization such as the National Council of Churches, the PCUS would be expected to adhere to certain agreements common to churches within the NCC. Those in the PCA wanted to be unhindered by arrangements and attachments of extra-denominational organizations.  

Historian Joel Alvis claims that “the fundamentalists’ worldview often was not challenged by segregation”, and that the Presbyterian fundamentalists even found Biblical justification for segregation in the Biblical segregation of Israel from

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140 Alvis, 134, citing "National Presbyterian Church in America." Minutes of the First General Assembly 1 (1973): 40-42. [hereafter NPC, Mins]  
141 Alvis, 134  
142 Alvis, 134
the Canaanites.\textsuperscript{143} PCA founding father Morton Smith wrote in 1973, “it is debatable as to whether the Church should get into the matter of trying to change that particular pattern, and branding one form of culture as sinful as opposed to another,” an argument that sounded eerily similar to Thornwell’s defense of slavery in the 1861 \textit{Address}.\textsuperscript{144} To these men, because the Bible did not explicitly condemn segregation, just as it did not explicitly condemn slavery, the Church had no business in deciding or influencing such social issues. In answer to the question of whether or not slavery is a sin, the \textit{Address} made it clear that “the church knows nothing of the intuitions of reason, or the deductions of philosophy, except those reproduced in the sacred canons... we have no right, as a church, to enjoin it as a duty or condemn it as a sin”.\textsuperscript{145} Just as the 1861 secessionists saw pertinent social issues as outside of the realm of responsibility for the church, the 1973 secessionists would not take a congregational stance on segregation as the PCUS had. Autonomy in church governance and an affirmation of Biblical inerrancy were paramount.

The separatists of 1973 were increasingly frustrated with the higher criticism and new scholarship that emerged after the publication of Darwin’s \textit{Origin of Species}.\textsuperscript{146} They feared that the true Christian faith would be diluted if it was examined under the light of new scholarship and the critical method, an argument

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{143} Alvis, 136; see also Gillespie, G. T. "Defense of the Principle of Racial Segregation." \textit{The Presbyterian Outlook} 137 (1955): 5-9.
\bibitem{144} Alvis, 136, citing Smith in Smith, Morton H. "How is the Gold Become Dim." \textit{Presbyterian Outlook} 156, no. 3 (July 8, 1974): 210.; see Morton H. Smith’s \textit{Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology} for a more complete discussion of Thornwell’s theology
\bibitem{145} Smith, 39, citing \textit{Minutes, C.S.A.}, 1861, pp. 51-60
\bibitem{146} Alvis, 134; See also John C. Greene’s \textit{Darwin and the Modern Worldview} for a more complete discussion of Darwin’s influence on Modernism and Higher Criticism
\end{thebibliography}
made earlier in the OPC separation movement of Machen.\textsuperscript{147} In fact, General
Assemblies of the Southern Presbyterian Church declared on four separate
occasions (1886, 1888, 1889, 1924) that theistic evolution was “out of accord with
Scripture and the \textit{Confession},” but this position was renounced by the PCUS in
1969.\textsuperscript{148} This modern critical method had been put on trial at the Scopes “Monkey
Trial” in 1925. Despite much ridicule being born from the Scopes Trial, the Christian
anti-evolution subculture was not extinguished from holding fundamental views.\textsuperscript{149}
Instead, it seemed that the fundamentalist-creationist culture only became more
entrenched in its orthodoxy against outside attacks.\textsuperscript{150}

Issues of civil rights were tied inseparably to the discontent over the dilution
of the denomination that led to the formation of the PCA. Civil rights activism helped
to delineate liberal and conservative theology and ideology within the PCUS, as well
as demarcate those seeking union with the UPCUSA and those opposed. Leaders on
both sides criticized one another on various issues of race relations and human
rights, structuring of church programs, and denominational politics.\textsuperscript{151} The ongoing
Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy over the proper interpretation of Scripture
and the role of the church in the world found a battleground in the proper response
of the Presbyterian Church to issues of civil rights. The founders of the PCA and
those who followed in the rift chose to distance themselves from the political and

\textsuperscript{147} Alvis, 136 referencing NPC \textit{Mins}, 1973, pp. 27-29
\textsuperscript{148} Creation Study Committee (7) referencing the Digest of Acts and Proceedings of the 1924
General Assembly, p. 6-8
\textsuperscript{149} See Edward Larson’s \textit{Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing
Debate Over Science and Religion} for a more complete discussion of the negative effects of the Scopes
Trial on Fundamentalism
\textsuperscript{150} Alvis, 136
\textsuperscript{151} Alvis, 137
social battle surrounding integration by withdrawing from a politically and socially active denomination. Instead, they emphasized a more literal interpretation of Scripture while narrowing the scope of the church’s rightful spheres of influence.

This systematic, methodical approach to dividing the Word of God carried with it hermeneutical implications that lend themselves to a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis. While a literal interpretation of Scripture can manifest itself in a belief in six-day creation, this belief is not a necessity for someone who professes to uphold the inerrancy of the Bible as God’s Word. A diversity of views remained in the newly formed denomination on the issue, but gradually militant young-earth creationists attempted to frame non-six-day creationists as belonging in the same camp as the liberals from which the denomination had just succeeded. This constant attempt to narrow the scope of what can be defined as orthodox is aptly demonstrated in the legacy of separation left by J. Gresham Machen.

In a 2003 article by John M. Frame, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary titled Machen’s Warrior Children, Dr. Frame discussed at length the legacy left by J. Gresham Machen and Westminster Theological Seminary on American evangelicals within the Reformed tradition. Machen was influenced by the inductive methods of Francis Bacon, who began his methodology with established “facts” that could be drawn out to more general statements through the process of induction. Facts about God, humanity, and nature could be found in the Bible, and once found, became indisputable. These facts were

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then moved into the realm of infallible, and finally to the realm of inerrant. According to this inductive reasoning, facts found in the Bible were both without fault and without error, and to dispute them would be logically inconsistent.\textsuperscript{153} When confronted with the choice of either compromising on inerrant truth or seceding to form a new denomination, the correct choice was secession.

Machen’s methodology greatly influenced all elements of Reformed Christianity, and Frame argues that his movement “provided [the] theological leadership” for Reformed Christians seeking to uphold the Reformation principle of \textit{semper reformanda} (that is, the church is always to be reformed).\textsuperscript{154} Frame goes as far as to claim “although Machen’s Westminster was not a large seminary, it was one of the most important influences, perhaps the most important institutional influence, upon conservative Reformed theology in the twentieth century”.\textsuperscript{155} One indication of this influence can be found in the formation of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS), founded in Jackson Mississippi in 1966, which now has three campuses and numerous extension centers. RTS “readily acknowledges a large debt to Westminster, in curriculum, theological emphasis, and faculty”.\textsuperscript{156} Many of the founders of the PCA were either educated at RTS or owed their theological dispositions to the teachings of RTS.

The danger of Machen’s principle of secession presented itself in deciding what comprises an inerrant truth that has been compromised. In fact, some

\textsuperscript{152} Alvis, 136; see also Perry, John. "Dissolving the inerrancy debate: how modern philosophy shaped the evangelical view of Scripture." \textit{Quodlibet Journal} 3, no. 4 (2001).
\textsuperscript{153} Frame, 3; see also Horton, Michael. "Semper reformanda." \textit{Tabletalk Magazine} 1 (2009).
\textsuperscript{154} Frame, 4
\textsuperscript{155} Frame, 4
\textsuperscript{156} Frame, 4
followers of the movement have misrepresented it, ignoring Machen’s tradition of deliberately encouraging theological diversity.\textsuperscript{157} Frame draws the connection between the 1973 secession and the future accusations that some within the denomination were liberal in this way: “Machen’s children were theological battlers, and, when the battle against liberalism in the PCUSA appeared to be over, they found theological battles to fight”.\textsuperscript{158} Frame asserts that the Machen movement “was born in controversy over liberal theology”, but once the Machenites had found a common identity within a truly Reformed Presbyterian church, “they were unable to moderate their martial impulses”.\textsuperscript{159} Without an explicitly liberal theology to combat, they engaged in infighting.\textsuperscript{160} These battles have continued into the present, and the fight over the extent and duration of the creation days represents just one manifestation of many such theological battles within the PCA.\textsuperscript{161}

Having divorced the denomination from liberal theology and higher criticism, the PCA hoped to maintain doctrinal purity. Other Presbyterian denominations had already seceded from the mainline denomination before 1973, and a denominational merger would occur in the next decade that brought about a broadening of what could be deemed orthodox in the PCA. The extent and duration of the creation days would become a source of controversy that served as a microcosm for the ongoing struggle of the PCA to find a conservative identity that sufficiently shielded itself from the future encroachment of liberalism.

\textsuperscript{157} Frame, 3
\textsuperscript{158} Frame, 4-5
\textsuperscript{159} Frame, 26
\textsuperscript{160} Frame, 26
\textsuperscript{161} Frame, 4-5
CHAPTER III: A TEST OF ORTHODOXY

The newly formed PCA was an autonomous denomination held only to the standards of the inerrancy of Scripture and the tenants of the Westminster Standards, and they enjoyed relative ideological purity for a time. This new denomination had a particularly Southern identity, as evidenced by the influence of such luminaries as James Henley Thornwell and Robert Lewis Dabney (both strong adherents of a literal six-day creation) on the PCA’s founders. However, another merger occurred in 1982 that changed the dynamic of the situation, moving the denomination away from its Southern identity into a more national manifestation.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, merged with the Presbyterian Church in America in 1982 in an action known as the “joining and receiving”162, bringing with it the RPCES seminary Covenant Theological Seminary. This seminary was founded in 1956 in St. Louis, Missouri, along with an accompanying liberal arts college known as Covenant College. The seminary and college were initially founded by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (which later merged with the Reformed Presbyterian Church) on principles of strong conservative theological opposition to rising liberal influences within the

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denomination.\footnote{Clarke, Sathianathan. "Harriet A. Harris, Fundamentalism and Evangelicals (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xiv+ 384.£ 25.00 (pbk)." \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 65, no. 02 (2012): 249-251. (p. 260)} In 1964, the undergraduate school moved to Lookout Mountain, Georgia, and formally divided from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1966.\footnote{William F. Hull, \textit{Lookout Mountain}, Arcadia Publishing, 2009, (p. 94)} With the 1982 merger of the RPCES and the PCA, Covenant Theological Seminary became the national seminary of the denomination. The denomination oversees its work and elects its Board of Trustees.\footnote{Nutt, 236-256} The seminary professes to adhere to the Reformed Creeds, Covenant Theology, and the inerrant and inspired word of God;\footnote{Covenant Theological Seminary. https://www.covenantseminary.edu/why-covenant/} regardless, accusations of liberalism were leveled at the seminary during the 1990s due to expansive views on the creation days.

The 1982 merger and transition to an official denominational seminary was not a wholly smooth one, as Presbyterians have historically struggled with the idea of church unity.\footnote{Hart, D. G. "After the Breakup, Heartbreak: Conservative Presbyterians without a Common Foe." \textit{Journal of Presbyterian History} 1 (2008): 61.} Frame suggests that Reformed thinkers favor pluriformity, the notion that denominations are a good thing.\footnote{Frame, 22} The debate over pluriformity is two-sided. Some view denominations as a God ordained means of dealing with theological differences of opinion, while others view it as a disruption of the peace and purity of the Body of Christ. Pluriformity gained popularity in the late twentieth century, and while the RCPES joined and was received by the PCA in 1982, the PCA General Assembly turned down an application for merger by the OPC (the denomination of Machen) in 1986 that would have further broadened the PCA.\footnote{Frame, 22}
Frame traces a historical tendency of Reformed churches to be hesitant at the notion of unity, opting instead to be needlessly divisive.\(^{170}\) He comments, “Reformed churches tend to glory in their distinctives: their history, their ethnic origins, the theological battles of the past that have made them different from others”.\(^{171}\)

A notable proof of this principle of divisiveness can be found in the cool reception of Covenant Theological Seminary as the national seminary of the PCA. In a 2015 interview with Sam Duncan, an attorney from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and influential elder from First Presbyterian Church Hattiesburg (PCA), Duncan opined that Covenant Theological Seminary was responsible for much of the current liberalizing of the congregation on the issue of the length and extent of the creation days.\(^{172}\) Duncan recalled that the creation issue started with a general murmuring among the presbyteries about some of the teachers and teachings at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. Duncan’s home presbytery, Grace Presbytery in southern Mississippi, was particularly disgruntled over the apparent liberal influence seeping into the denomination. Some seminary professors at Covenant Seminary were expansive on their views on the length of the days of Creation. For many conservatives, where a pastor fell on the spectrum of views on the length of the Creation days was thought to be “the latest, greatest test of ones orthodoxy in the PCA”.\(^{173}\)

\(^{170}\) Frame, 22
\(^{171}\) Frame, 22
Some PCA presbyteries were discontent with expansive views on the days of creation being taught at Covenant Seminary, a likely indicator of continued wariness of the 1982 joining and receiving. This particular difference of opinion amounted to a test of fellowship, and the conservative thinkers within the denomination were determined to not let the issue rest until the denomination came into agreement. At stake were which disagreements constitute true tests of orthodoxy, and which disagreements should be tolerated within the church. Frame argues that, “the Machen movement thought little about the difference between tolerable and intolerable disagreements in the church”. Nevertheless, a resistance movement to encroaching liberal influences was growing among certain Presbyterian teaching and ruling elders.

In December 1992, the organization Concerned Presbyterians was founded by several elders who were discontent with Covenant Theological Seminary and the general liberalizing of the PCA. Chairman Rev. Charles L. Wilson lamented in the first Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter publication of 1996 that, “many people in the PCA had been led astray by a group of ‘Modernists’ using the false name of ‘Evangelicals’”. Among a list of other areas of concerns for the Concerned Presbyterians was a straying away from “the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture” and a particular amendment to the PCA Book of Church Order “which delegates all judicial cases to a Standing Judicial Commission, without any right reserved to the

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174 Frame, 27
175 Frame, 27-28
176 Frame, 27
Assembly to question or debate the decisions of this Commission”\textsuperscript{178} Clearly, these two issues are reminiscent of the very issues that led to the formation of the PCA, namely autonomy in church governance and an affirmation of the inerrancy of Scripture. This was not lost on Rev. Wilson, who wrote in a December 1996 newsletter of \textit{The Concerned Presbyterian} expressing alarm at a 24\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly committee review of Presbytery records which found that “several Presbyteries... are receiving men who deny six day creation”.\textsuperscript{179} He saw this as a “movement among some PCA Churches to discard the doctrinal beliefs that the Holy Bible is the word of God and the only infallible guide for faith and practice”.\textsuperscript{180} In an April 1997 article of the newsletter, Rev. Wilson expressed concern that history was repeating itself as the PCA moved “away from its Biblical moorings”.\textsuperscript{181} He lamented further “many Presbyteries receive men who do not believe in literal 6-day

\textsuperscript{179} Wilson, Charles. “An Open Letter to the PCA.” \textit{The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter} 1, no. 4 (December 1996): 1
\textsuperscript{180} Wilson, Charles. “An Open Letter to the PCA.” \textit{The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter} 1, no. 4 (December 1996): 1
Creation”.\textsuperscript{182} These men “interpret Scriptures by our culture rather than interpreting Scripture by Scripture”, and he assured his readers that the PCA would soon become like the PCUS at the time of the split: “more concerned with political, social and economic issues than with Scriptural issues”.\textsuperscript{183}

A looming cloud of non-literal views of the Genesis account had descended on the denomination, and tracking *The Concerned Presbyterian* newsletter publications offers a unique view into the frustrations of the ultra-conservative within the PCA. This watchdog publication sounded the first alarm with the handling of Report of the Committee for the Review of Presbytery Records at the 25th General Assembly, held in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Rev. E.C. Case of First Presbyterian Church, Woodville, raised concern that in the course of the debate over a James River Presbytery’s licensure of a candidate who took a “poetic view” of the account of the first chapter of Genesis, evidence was present that suggested widespread support in the General Assembly for the notion that “non-literal views of the creation account in Genesis are perfectly acceptable and should not be considered as exceptions to our Standard”.\textsuperscript{184} According to Rev. Case, “the non-literal view of the Genesis account is a cancer which will grow and metastasize and eventually destroy this denomination”.\textsuperscript{185}

Covenant Theological Seminary Professor of Old Testament Jack Collins was particularly culpable in teaching divergent views on the creation days, and Sam

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\item Case, E.C “Editorial.” *The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter* 2, no. 3 (July 1997): 1-4
\item Case, E.C “Editorial.” *The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter* 2, no. 3 (July 1997): 1-4
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Duncan attributes much of the controversy to his teachings. “I think most of it goes back to the Old Testament teacher Jack Collins who is the professor there at Covenant Seminary... he is a really sharp guy”.186 In order to understand the Creation Days controversy in the PCA, it is essential to understand C. John Collins. Collins has served as Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary since 1993, but his journey with the reconciliation of science and faith began long before his position with the seminary. Collins received a B.S. and an M.S. in Computer Science and Systems Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1978. Both he and his wife boast two degrees from MIT, and Collins spoke on their science and engineering background in a 2015 interview. “We think very highly of science in our household, but we also know how science works. Just because the scientists say it doesn’t mean its true. I think we have a lot of respect and we know how to properly evaluate scientific pronouncement”.187 After heeding a call to ministry, Collins moved to Tacoma, Washington, to attend the Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, where he received his MDiv in 1985.188 Upon receiving his PhD in Hebrew Language from the University of Liverpool School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies in 1989, he returned to Spokane to plant Faith Presbyterian Church in Spokane from 1989-1992.189 From there, he departed to

take up the role of Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, where he has served as the Department Chair since 2005.\textsuperscript{190}

Collins claims that during the 1980s, he had not really thought much about the reconciliation of science and religion; rather, he was more concerned with exegetical, grammatical issues in the first few chapters in Genesis.\textsuperscript{191} While a doctoral student in England in the late 80s, he attended a church where the pastor was an avid Young-Earth Creationist. Collins claims this pastor was “actually the [current] English representative of Answers in Genesis. A very good friend. He made various points, but I was always non-committal on the subject”.\textsuperscript{192} The breakthrough to Collins’ current view did not occur until July 1987 when he listened to a paper at Tyndale House in Cambridge, Leslie McFall’s \textit{The Anthropomorphic Case for Creation}, which argued that Augustine’s approach to the Creation Days was anthropomorphic.\textsuperscript{193} According to Collins, the creation days’ account is full of anthropomorphisms, attributing human characteristics and emotions to God, in order for the reader to better understand the narrative. The six days of creation were not literal solar days, just as God did not literally need to rest (fatigue is a human condition) on the seventh day. “That was the thing that got me thinking more

\textsuperscript{193} February 1, 2016 email correspondence with Jack Collins
seriously, over the course of the next several years off and on I was thinking about it some more”.194

He was finally prompted to write an article in 1994 for his seminary journal that he claims “aroused the interest of some of the intelligent design folks”.195 Collins’ interest in working through the exegetical issues of Genesis had been ignited by this journalistic foray, and he set out to “figure out how Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 could live together and not be contradictory”.196 His self-proclaimed breakthrough came five years later, and the insight was published in the Westminster Theological Journal.197 Collins admits that all along, the reconciliation of linguistic and exegetical issues, rather than issues of scientific and Biblical reconciliation, has been the purpose of his work. “That has been my motivation, how do you resolve these tensions in the Hebrew text”.198 Having begun his own personal journey down the

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path of reconciling the Genesis text, he was primed for the completion of his journey when the denomination began to take this issue seriously.

Collins’ mention of his work arousing the interest of the intelligent design community places the controversy within the PCA in the broader historical context. The entire episode of the PCA creation days controversy can be framed in the larger context of anti-Darwinism within America at the time. After the failure of scientific creationism to gain national scientific legitimacy under John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris, those who still held to scientific creationism viewed this as an ultimate test of holding fast to God’s Word in the midst of persecution and ridicule. Those Christians who did not hold to scientific creationism were labeled as liberal, unorthodox, and not serious about upholding the Word of God against the attacks of modern science and naturalism. Meanwhile, the more scientifically minded anti-Darwinism front found an ally in the Intelligent Design movement.199

Intelligent Design began as a movement among Christian intellectuals in the 1980s and saw its first fruit with the 1993 publication of Darwin on Trial, authored by University of California law professor Phillip Johnson.200 Johnson’s approach was not blatantly fundamental, as he avoids proposing an identity for the intelligent designer. It is not necessary that the designer be the God of the Bible, though his own religious affiliation betrays the identity of the proposed designer. A critique of his work is that it focuses more on the consequences of accepting evolutionary

theory than on the truth of the theory itself.\textsuperscript{201} Despite an unenthusiastic reception from the scientific community, Johnson pressed forward with establishing The Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute, a conservative think tank, in 1996. The Center quickly grew, and by 1999 it employed 45 fellows and had an operating budget of $750,000.\textsuperscript{202} At the same time as the founding of the Center, biochemist Michael Behe published \textit{Darwin’s Black Box} in 1996.\textsuperscript{203} This work introduced the concept of irreducible complexity, the idea that certain biochemical structures are too complex to have originated through random variance. Mathematician and philosopher William Dembski further proposed a theory of specified complexity to demonstrate that complex life forms could never have arisen through naturalistic evolution apart from an intelligent designer.\textsuperscript{204} Phillip Johnson remains the figurehead of the movement, and Behe and Dembski provide the intellectual credibility that the anti-Darwinian movement so desperately craves.

Not only did Intelligent Design boast a strong cast, it also had a clear vision. Operating under the “Wedge Strategy”, the Discovery Institute intended to publish 30 books and 100 scientific or technical papers within 5-year periods.\textsuperscript{205} The goal of the Wedge Strategy was to break the monopoly of naturalism on science, with a clear emphasis on injecting Intelligent Design into public school curricula as an

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{201} Young M, Edis T. Why intelligent design fails: A scientific critique of the new creationism. Rutgers University Press; 2006. 3
\item \textsuperscript{202} Young M, Edis T. 3
\item \textsuperscript{203} Behe, Michael J. \textit{Darwin’s black box: The biochemical challenge to evolution}. Simon and Schuster, 1996.
\item \textsuperscript{205} Johnson, Phillip E. "The wedge of truth." \textit{Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism}. Downers Grove, InterVarsity (2000).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
alternative to evolution. Despite its lack of an explicitly religious agenda, veiling the God of the Bible as simply an Intelligent Designer, the Intelligent Design community has been labeled as “neocreationism”. Philosopher Barbara Forrest has called the movement “Creationism’s Trojan Horse”, reminding her readers that science cannot appeal to supernatural explanations “because there is neither a methodology for testing them nor an epistemology for knowing the supernatural. Science has a naturalistic methodology, known less controversially as ‘scientific method’”. Even so, the Intelligent Design community admits to the age of the earth and agrees to certain premises of evolution, such as descent with modification. These concessions to mainstream science make Intelligent Design an attractive alternative to the highly controversial scientific creationism of Whitcomb, Morris, and Ham.

Speaking on the situation within the seminary, Collins asserts that most of his students are very thoughtful in their attempts to grapple with the issue. Some of them retain their young earth creationism, but Dr. Collins insists that they be fair in their assessment. “If they are going to give a critique of a view that they don’t hold, [I insist] that they represent it fairly and honestly – represent it in its best light”. Collins believes that most of his students come from backgrounds where the issue is

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206 Young M, Edis T. 3
207 Young M, Edis T. 1
not hugely important, so there is not great pressure to hold to a certain position or another. Within the faculty itself, there have been conversations on the issue but an atmosphere of respect has been maintained even when there is disagreement.

Collins recalls that in the 90s and early 2000s, his senior colleague Dr. Robert Vasholz was an advocate for the Calendar Day Reading of Genesis 1. “It was important for us to show that we could bear our disagreements and also work together”.\textsuperscript{210} Collins likes to think that his presentation of his view is persuasive, but he has not done a poll of his colleagues to see what the individual view of each faculty member is. “It’s actually not a huge issue with us, so we don’t talk about it very much”.\textsuperscript{211}

While the creation days issue was not a source of intra-seminary controversy, animosity towards Covenant Theological Seminary and all non-literal views of Genesis 1-3 were at an all-time high around the time of Collins’ breakout publications. He recalls this tension well: “there was controversy roiling during most of the 90s over ‘do we have just one view allowed, and that’s the confessional view or are we going to have a variety of views allowed in the PCA’”?\textsuperscript{212} Aspiring pastors seeking ordination in the PCA must accept the Bible as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, and they also must accept the Westminster Standards (\textit{The Westminster Confession of Faith}, the \textit{Shorter Catechism}, the \textit{Larger Catechism}, and the \textit{Book of Church Order}). If they have particular concern with an aspect of the Westminster Standards on a certain issue, they are required to make

their exception known to their Presbytery of their own initiative, provided they can justify their exception Biblically to the satisfaction of the presbytery’s examining committee.213 A pastor may still be ordained while taking an exception to the Standards, but whether or not he should be allowed to teach his exception is a matter of continuing controversy.214 Pastor William Harrell argues that since exceptions are “errant views opposing what our standards have stated as scriptural teaching”, they should “not be taught from the pulpit or by other means”.215 This principle is known as confessional subscription, and as such the PCA is known as a subscriptionist denomination. Frame sees a certain danger in giving the Confessions a nearly unamendable status. “Reformed theology embraces sola Scriptura and therefore must allow practical means by which the Bible can lead us to revise the confessions if need be”.216 The proper avenue for propagating views errant to the Standards is through the formation of a General Assembly study committee, to be voted upon by the General Assembly itself.

Debatably, the wording of the Westminster Standards open up the door for a broad range of beliefs on what is meant by the duration of a day in the Genesis creation account:

_It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make_
of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.\textsuperscript{217}

J. Ligon Duncan, current president of Reformed Theological Seminary, suggests that there are three plausible interpretations around what was meant by “in the space of six days”.\textsuperscript{218} First, the Westminster Assembly was intentionally ambiguous in their language as a result of openness to a non-literal interpretation of the creation days. Their indecision was deliberate, being aware of “ancient or contemporary non-literal interpretations of the creation days”.\textsuperscript{219} Second, the Assembly was committed to a literal, six-day, view of creation, and was aware of the various ancient and contemporary non-literal interpretations to the contrary. With these alternative interpretations in mind, they “did not attempt to make any assertion whatsoever about the nature of the creation days in the Confession or Catechisms”.\textsuperscript{220}

The third option, and the most historically probable according to Duncan, is that the Assembly was either generally or unanimously committed to a literal six day view, and “chose to employ Calvin’s explicitly literalist language (“in the space of six days”) in an effort to promote one particular view of the manner and time-span of creation as over against other views”.\textsuperscript{221} The debate over the precise meaning of the language employed by the Westminster Divines strikes at the heart of the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[	extsuperscript{218}] Duncan, J L. "Animadversions on Alex Mitchell’s View of the Westminster Assembly and the Days of Creation." \textit{The Presbyterian Witness} XII, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 31-35.
\item[	extsuperscript{219}] Duncan, 31
\item[	extsuperscript{220}] Duncan, 31
\item[	extsuperscript{221}] Duncan, 32
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creation day controversy, and the Concerned Presbyterians were demanding clarity from Covenant Theological Seminary on the issue.

In a December 1997 meeting of the Covenant Theological Seminary Executive Committee, then president Bryan Chapell defended himself and his seminary against the growing tendency of disgruntled presbyteries to accuse his college of being unorthodox, or perhaps even out and out liberal. Dr. Chapell defended his seminary in the midst of what he saw as the two most pressing issues threatening to divide the church – the Genesis creation account and the interpretation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The creation controversy came as a surprise: “for generations there has been an informed allowance for differences among Bible-believing Presbyterians about how best to interpret these accounts, so long as they were believed to be accurate and historical”. The climate had changed, however, and combatant elders and presbyteries were asserting that those not holding to literal six-day creationism should not be ordained to minister in the PCA churches.

This was a troubling development for Dr. Chapell, who asserted that “Covenant Seminary has not changed its position on this issue in its 40 years of existence” in a letter to a PCA elder. Boasting conservative credentials, he assured the concerned elder that “no one here endorses evolution… denies God’s creation out of nothing, the historicity of Adam and Eve, the special creation of man, the

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223 Chapell
224 Chapell
reality of the Fall”. A Covenant Seminary professor (presumably Jack Collins) had actually worked closely with author Phillip Johnson, who wrote *Darwin on Trial*, and Michael Behe, who wrote *Darwin’s Black Box*, to launch “one of the most powerful intellectual assaults on Darwinism in the last half century”. Rather than working to pacify those opposed to Covenant Seminary, the alliance between certain professors at Covenant Theological Seminary and leading Intelligent Design authors Phillip Johnson and Michael Behe, as well as Jack Collins’ work with the Discovery Institute, appeared as the ultimate compromise that sounded the alarm for a resurgence of liberal theology more generally.

Dr. Chapell continued his rebuttal against “accusations of liberalism creeping into the seminaries” by assuring the Executive Committee that Covenant Seminary still teaches the theology of all of the “giants in the faith” as it had for the past 40 years. He juxtaposed those theologians, modern and ancient, into the two categories of those who believed in a 144-hour creation and those who did not. The 24-hour day creationists included John Calvin, John Girardeau, Thornwell, Dabney, and Louis Berkhof. Those open to not limiting the Creation to strict 24-hour days included:

ancient church fathers such as Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas; the puritan, William Ames; the great 19th Century defenders of Presbyterian orthodoxy such as Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, and B.B. Warfield; major 20th Century advocates of Biblical inerrancy such as J. Gresham Machen, J. Oliver Buswell, E.J. Young, Donald Grey Barnhouse, and Francis Schaeffer; and, current men who have taught at each of the

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225 Chapell  
227 Chapell
major Reformed seminaries including R. Laird Hams, Meredith Kline, Jack Collins, Willem VanGemeren, Nigel Lee, R.C. Sproul, Morton Smith, and Bruce Waltke.\textsuperscript{228}

Perhaps the most interesting man on this latter list was Dr. Morton Smith, a founding father of the PCA and respected Southern Presbyterian who stressed that “a man’s position on the length of the creation days alone should not keep him from being ordained as a PCA minister”.\textsuperscript{229} Smith was perhaps mistakenly put into this latter list. In his early years, while receiving his undergraduate degree in botany from the University of Michigan, he tended towards a non-literal view. However, he has since moved “back to the literal creation account” and holds that the “Westminster Standards must be understood as teaching a six literal day creation”.\textsuperscript{230} Any other view falls outside of the purview of the Standards, “an honest subscription to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms requires the acceptance of the position of six literal days”.\textsuperscript{231} Without interpreting the Standards in this way, the Standards and subscriptionism slip into meaninglessness. “To be allowed to handle the Standards in some way other than that which was intended by the authors is not ethically or morally honest”, and Morton warns that the PCA will soon apply the same principles of confessional interpretation to the much weightier matters of the atonement and the resurrection.\textsuperscript{232}

Notwithstanding the case of Morton Smith, that all of these respected men of the faith had “fallen into some form of liberalism... or kept their views under wraps"
was an accusation that some ultra-conservative Presbyterians were still willing to make.\textsuperscript{233} The liberal witch-hunt had begun, or perhaps had never ceased even with the denominational split, and the “issue of creation days” had become “hot in some PCA presbyteries”.\textsuperscript{234} Chapell agreed that “we should have no patience for liberalism”, but was flustered that presbyteries would deny ordination to men who held views “deemed for decades, or centuries, to be legitimate Biblical interpretations that fall within our system of doctrine”.\textsuperscript{235} He attributed fear as the leading cause of this push for a test of orthodoxy, and decried that “we ought to be able to recognize that a different perspective on timing does not necessarily mean that a brother has abandoned Scripture or has left the realm of orthodoxy”.\textsuperscript{236} The denomination was being divided over issues of “personal preference rather than Biblical principle” in an attempt by some to “establish what (and who) is orthodox among us”.\textsuperscript{237} He did not feel that the matter would resolve quickly or quietly, and blamed “those who want to cast fear of ‘liberal drift’ into our people” for using the issue of the creation days “without explaining (or even learning) the complexity of the details and exegesis involved”.\textsuperscript{238} At the time of his writing, the PCA General Assembly had already voted twice, both in 1995 and 1997, to not make adoption of
the 144-hour Creation week a requirement for interpretation of the PCA Standards.\textsuperscript{239}

Rather than assuage the complaints of his accusers, Dr. Chapell’s address only confirmed the suspicions of those who had an ambivalent opinion of Covenant Theological Seminary. Dr. Jack B. Scott was prompted by Chappell’s address to write a response calling the address “The Handwriting on the Wall”, a reference to the Old Testament feast of Belshazzar in which God numbers the days of the kingdom of Babylon in judgment of Belshazzar’s blasphemy against God.\textsuperscript{240} He begins his response by recalling his horror while a student at Columbia Theological Seminary, a theological seminary of the PCUS, upon hearing his professor assert "no Bible scholar any longer believes that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are history."\textsuperscript{241} Dr. Scott, a PCA teaching elder who signed the December 7, 1972, declaration that brought the PCA into existence, warned that this type of skepticism towards the Bible was reentering the church again on the issue of the days of Genesis 1. Dr. Scott made clear that this issue was not some “new standard of holiness”, or even an issue of interpretation, but rather a matter of “standing for what God’s Word says”.\textsuperscript{242} To teach anything other than a literal six-day account of Genesis 1 was not a presentation of the Gospel in a different way, but rather amounted to the presentation of “a very different Gospel”.\textsuperscript{243} Dr. Chapell’s assertion that Covenant

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\textsuperscript{239} Chapell; See Gunn, Grover. "A Response to Dr. Bryan Chapell’s ’98-’99 President’s Goals and Reports." \textit{The Presbyterian Witness} XII, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 27-28. and footnotes for a full explanation of Chapell’s claims concerning the 1995 and 1997 decisions of the General Assembly
\textsuperscript{241} Scott, 13
\textsuperscript{242} Scott, 15
\textsuperscript{243} Scott, 16
\end{flushright}
Theological Seminary had not changed its position over the past 40 years was particularly alarming, because this meant that the seminary had “began wrong”. Nor was this an issue of little consequence, as it threatened the “integrity of the entire Word of God as the authority for what we are to believe and teach”. Dr. Scott concluded by demanding that all teaching elders ordained in the PCA hold to a literal six-day view of the creation account. Those who doubted whether or not this is what God truly meant in Genesis 1-3 were falling for the same question that Satan, in the guise of a serpent, posed to Adam and Eve – “hath God truly said?”

Others joined in the suspicion. Grover Gunn, a pastor of Carrollton Presbyterian Church in Carrollton, Mississippi, was more generous in framing the controversy as one of an acceptable range of latitude over the interpretation of Genesis 1. However, he did see a dangerous precedent set for pastors to defend their non-literal position by stating that their methodology has taught them “to read the Confession through the lens of Scripture, not to read Scripture through the lens of the Confession (Dr. Chapell's own words)”. This flexibility theoretically allows a minister to apply “this same principle to other issues such as paedocommunion, hyper-preterism, dispensationalism, etc”.

This relationship between the Confession of the Church and the interpretation of Scripture has great potential for abuse. The greatest fear was that pastors would begin to question the historicity of Genesis 3, wherein God curses

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244 Scott, 16
245 Scott, 17
246 Scott, 18
247 Gunn, 22
248 Gunn, 22
man for his sin and death enters the world. Without this death (spiritual and physical), there remains no need for the atonement for sin, and thus no need for a Savior, namely Jesus Christ. Such a degeneration of the Bible strikes at the core of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, and the unease exhibited by these concerned Presbyterian elders was indicative of a return to the same liberal theology that caused the 1973 rift in the first place. Byron Snapp, the editor of The Presbyterian Witness, said as much. As an increasing number of men entered the PCA with non-literal views of Genesis 1, it became ever more likely that “the non-literal view can become the dominant position”.249 Before long, “someone holding to a non-literal view of Genesis 3 will desire to enter a PCA presbytery. Just because no one with this view could get into a presbytery now does not mean that the threat will not be a reality in the future”.250 Further narrowing the field, Snapp reminds his readers, “All interpretations of Genesis 1 cannot be correct. In fact, there is but one correct interpretation”.251

A real tipping point for the congregation was reached at the 25th General Assembly in June 1997 in Colorado Springs. A particular complaint being heard by the Standing Judicial Committee at this time was Mount Carmel Session vs. New Jersey Presbytery (Case 97-5).252 Mount Carmel Session of the New Jersey Presbytery challenged differing views on the creation days, and attempted to limit

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250 Snapp, 4
251 Snapp, 5
252 Minutes of the Twenty-fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1997) (p. 64)
and define what was meant by the phrase of “in the space of six days” as understood in the Westminster Standards.

Recommendations and a majority report on the Mount Carmel case were not made until the 26th General Assembly, held in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1998. The facts were summarized and showed that Mt. Carmel Church Session begun the incident in January 1996, as they petitioned the New Jersey Presbytery to form a committee on creation days. The resolution of the committee, which reported in February 1997, was titled “Affirmations and Denials Regarding the Interpretation of Genesis One”. Unhappy with this resolution, the Mt. Carmel Session forwarded their complaint to the 25th General Assembly. The “Affirmation” included a denial “that the theories held by the physical sciences, history, sociology or anthropology are to be preferred over Scripture when it speaks to an issue” and a caveat that no presbyter has the right “to privately judge the consistency of his views with the Westminster Standards when they differ in any respect whatever from the Standards”. The “Affirmation” went on to “deny any doctrine of the gradual evolution of human species from more primitive life forms” and affirmed “that one natural interpretation of Genesis One is the 24-hour day exposition” while

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253 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 103-122)
254 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 103)
255 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 105)
insistently denying “that the 24-hour day interpretation is the only exegetically possible interpretation”.\textsuperscript{256}

This incredibly conservative resolution did not go far enough for the Mt. Carmel Session, as they sought a definitive statement maintaining the orthodoxy of only one view for Genesis One. The complaint to the General Assembly argued that \textit{Affirmations and Denials} “denies the plain and ordinary sense of the creation account as revealed in Genesis One”. Mt. Carmel sought “only one single, right interpretation of creation days”.\textsuperscript{257} The New Jersey Presbytery made a counter-argument that the Westminster phrase “within the space of six days” does not of necessity mean “24-hour days”.\textsuperscript{258} The majority opinion of the Standing Judicial Committee was to rule in favor of the presbytery over the Mt. Carmel session. The ruling was not an affirmation of multiple acceptable views of the meaning of days, rather it was a judgment made “on the right of a church court to determine questions of doctrine and discipline properly brought before it”.\textsuperscript{259} The Standing Judicial Committee was acting on the precedent of the 19\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly statement that “the PCA has granted a measure of freedom... in the area of creation, where some may hold to a form of ‘age-day’ creation”.\textsuperscript{260} The Standing Judicial Committee was acting on the precedent of the 19\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly statement that “the PCA has granted a measure of freedom... in the area of creation, where some may hold to a form of ‘age-day’ creation”.\textsuperscript{260}

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\bibitem{256} Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 106)
\bibitem{257} Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 106)
\bibitem{258} Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 107)
\bibitem{259} Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 107)
\bibitem{260} \textit{M19GA}, 1991, p. 84 Case 90-8, Bowen, see also Exhibit F, p. 545 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 107)
\end{thebibliography}
Commission denied the complaint, though with a significant minority: 12 concurring, 9 dissenting, 2 recused, and 1 absent.\(^{261}\)

Dr. Collins, remarking on this incident, was surprised that Mt. Carmel even brought the complaint to the General Assembly. “That controversy was for a lot of people in the denomination strange because we already had a gentleman’s agreement [that] we shouldn’t be revisiting this (having already made decisions in 1995 and 1997)”\(^{262}\) He recalled that there was “a significant minority that was very unhappy”\(^{263}\) The respective minority and concurring opinions were quite telling. The minority opinion held “that there is only one acceptable view in the PCA – the ’24 hour day’ view”, while the concurring opinion affirmed that the 24-hour day view “is not the only possible faithful interpretation”.\(^{264}\) The concurring opinion attempted to reach a middle ground that “all agree that God created ’in the space of six days,’ but they do not agree that the word ’day’ must only be interpreted as a ’24 hour day’”.\(^{265}\)

The authors of the concurring opinion then made a hotly contested assertion, namely that this issue “is not a question of orthodoxy, or of keeping the PCA from going liberal”.\(^{266}\) In order to back their assertion, appeals were made to Charles and A. A. Hodge, B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, and other classic conservative

\(^{261}\) Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 107)
\(^{264}\) Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 108)
\(^{265}\) Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 109)
\(^{266}\) Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 109)
Presbyterians who “did not hold to the ’24 hour day’ view”. Dr. Collins adamantly agreed, “traditional Presbyterians in this country usually think of the Princeton theologians as sort of a bastion of Presbyterian orthodoxy (Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield, J. Gresham Machen). Those guys had a very nuanced approach to evolution”. Not all agreed with Collins or the concurring opinion on this matter. The minority report warned of “that slippery slope of culturally conditioned interpretation which has brought too many once sound denominations to disaster”.

*The Concerned Presbyterian* had much vitriol to spit at this decision and the implications it brought with it. Rev. E. C. Case referred to this attempt to “legitimatize the various non-literal [views] of the creation account” by appealing to Reformed luminaries as “particularly disturbing”. Rev. Case cautioned the denomination in this article that “however much they may have been right about other things, about this point they were wrong, and their error has produced mischief and opened the door to ... the final apostasy of the PCA if it is tolerated in our midst”. Men such as Hodge, Warfield, and Machen were writing during the 19th century “when Darwinism was rising like an unstoppable tide”, and their reaction “must not be imported either to the framers of the confession or to the

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267 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 110)
269 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 122)
270 Case, E.C “Editorial.” The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter 2, no. 3 (July 1997): 1-4
271 Case, E.C “Editorial.” The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter 2, no. 3 (July 1997): 1-4
Church courts from the 17th century to our own time.”

Rev. Case continued, "though these men were sound on perhaps as much as ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths percent of what they taught, this single departure was the seed from which has sprung up the bitter weed of apostasy." This editorial particularly disturbed Dr. Chapell, who reminded the Executive Board of Covenant Theological Seminary that "the statement that these men who gave their lives to defending the Word of God against liberalism somehow ushered in the demise of our church not only is a horrible injustice, it discloses unfortunate attitudes behind the current debate that must be identified." Particularly distressing was Rev. Case’s unwillingness to let men preach in the church “who agree with 99.44 percent of what we believe”. Chapell warned, “there is little question that our church will soon be rather small in size and even smaller in influence”.

Such men as Rev. Case would cede nothing on this particular issue, viewing it as one of instrumental importance to the denomination. Sam Duncan aptly explained the mentality, “the PCA has always been looking for a bright line test to support one’s orthodoxy or unorthodoxy. Presbyterians are always looking for a way to say I’m more orthodox than you are”. The danger was not far from Grace Presbytery, the presbytery of both Sam Duncan and Rev. Case. Duncan recalled the drama surrounding Jeremy Jones, a young Covenant Seminary graduate seeking

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273 Case, 3

274 Chapell

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ordination from the Grace Presbytery Examination Committee as the Reformed University Fellowship pastor at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, where he was installed October 27, 1996. Recalling his ordination, Duncan emphasized, “He had a rather flippant attitude, as some do who graduate from Covenant Seminary”. When Jones came to the floor of Presbytery, he was asked about the length of the days of Creation, and he expressed some reservations as to their duration. However, no specific questions were asked of him, and he was approved by a large margin. Some time later, the presbytery got a complaint by certain preachers about approving this pastor. Teaching Elder George G. Felton, Sr., filed a complaint to the presbytery on the case, which the presbytery denied on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Felton then appealed to the General Assembly. Because the Standing Judicial Committee minutes showed almost nothing except that the pastor had some reservations, Sam Duncan filed a request for the Standing Judicial Committee to send this case back to presbytery for an evidentiary hearing to figure out what Jones actually believed, because no one was really sure. Duncan surmised that Felton “was hoping to win the case based on no evidence”, and he withdrew the complaint at that particular point.

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278 Minutes of Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (Volume XXV) (p. 31)
282 Minutes of Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (Volume XXIV) (p. 107)
283 Minutes of Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (Volume XXV) (p. 54-65)
284 Minutes of the Twenty-Fifth General Assembly (63-64)
285 Duncan, Sam. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi November 6, 2015. and Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth General Assembly (103)
commented on this decision that Pastor Felton would make sure that the precise views of “any candidate who expresses reservations about or exceptions to the Standards” be carefully recorded in the future. Rev. Case was doubtful of a future in which he saw the General Assembly accept “this apostasy” and eventually sweep under the rug “those who refuse to accept it”.

This firestorm was matched by other similar incidents throughout the denomination, and shortly thereafter Central Carolina and Westminster Presbyteries sent overtures to General Assembly. The Central Carolina overture was entitled “Erect a Study Committee on Exegetical, Hermeneutical and Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3”, and it was joined by the Westminster presbytery overture to “Appoint Study Committee on Creation”. These overtures were answered in the affirmative by the General Assembly, and Duncan believed the motivation behind these was to paint those who believed in anything other than a literal twenty-four hour view as being less orthodox. Duncan does not believe that there was even slight congregational pressure for these overtures to the General Assembly. In the early stages of formation, the conservative visionaries thought that it was an issue that people in the pews could understand and get

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288 For other firestorms see “reports from other quarters”: Case, E.C “The Times and the Manners.” The Concerned Presbyterian Newsletter 2, no. 4 (October 1997): 8
289 Minutes of the Twenty Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (191-98)
290 Minutes of the Twenty Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (191-98)
behind. In reality, “people don’t really care. We have been so attuned to the earth being billions of years old that most people take it for granted that it is... I hope I’m wrong”. The views on creation, even literal ones, are probably just in the pews more as nostalgia than anything else. “Perhaps the congregants are even out and out Neo-Darwinian. At some time we might have been able to keep the Biblical and secular creation separated, but they are not as easily separated as they once were. At the end of the day, everyone does a [personal] pilgrimage throughout that”. Duncan attributes the History Channel, National Geographic, and the National Parks with bombarding Americans with information on the age of the earth as fact rather than as theory.

The whole controversy was truly a top down ordeal, primarily led by the ruling elders in the pews. Conservative elders throughout the congregation were looking for a test, a badge of orthodoxy. Duncan believes, “this is an issue that the ruling elder who is not particularly studied can grasp and understand”. At this time the conservative pastors were not on a full scale witch-hunt to oust pastors from the denomination, but perhaps in light of the final decision of the General Assembly they would have been more militant. “Some of the [holders of] more tangential views were fearful that they would have to make an exception or even be taken out of the church. The [final] vote we took on the issue [in 2000] ended discussion for all intents and purposes”. The decision had finally been made that

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the issue of the creation days had become a dominant issue in the PCA that deserved the attention of a special committee. The Creation Study Committee, an ad interim committee appointed by the 26th General Assembly, to “study and review the issues surrounding the interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2 – i.e. the question of ‘the days of creation’” was thus born.296

Sam Duncan, the outgoing moderator from the 25th General Assembly gave an exhortation to the 26th General Assembly that would be more fitting than he realized at the time. He warned against "the seeds of apostasy [which] are all around us," and encouraged the PCA to remain “faithful to her founding standards: chiefly the Bible, then the doctrinal standards” 297 In reference to the Creation debate and the meaning of the word “day” in the first chapter of Genesis, Duncan “commended the advice of Dr. Bryan Chapell, President of Covenant Theological Seminary, that we "not go beyond Scripture".298 Duncan cautioned those assembled against “going into liberalism as Princeton [Theological Seminary] or the old PCUS" and further insisted that Genesis 1 must "never be viewed as poetic in any way".299 Duncan mused that the PCA has "passed through its adolescent years and is maturing".

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297 See Shapiro article at http://www.presbyteriannews.org/volumes/v4/3/duncan.htm
298 http://www.presbyteriannews.org/volumes/v4/3/duncan.htm
299 http://www.presbyteriannews.org/volumes/v4/3/duncan.htm
Expressing gratitude to the PCA founders, he said: "I just hope that my generation will be as faithful as that generation".\textsuperscript{300}

An ideological rift ensued, with the more conservative Presbyterians agreeing with Ken Ham's Answers in Genesis group that modern evolutionary science was a worldview opposed to Biblical Christianity. The more moderate, non-literal views of the creation days mirrored the national trend of the Intelligent Design community. The antagonists of the controversy were the literal six-day creationists who demanded an official PCA position. This test of orthodoxy, culminating in the Creation Study Committee, would bring the issue to the forefront of the denomination, and would have unintended consequences for the very conservative elders who demanded an official PCA position.

\textsuperscript{300} http://www.presbyteriannews.org/volumes/v4/3/duncan.htm
CHAPTER IV: THE CREATION STUDY COMMITTEE

The decision of the 1998 PCA General Assembly to appoint a Creation Study Committee now set the stage for PCA elders to thoroughly study the creation-days issue, as well as the issue of whether or not it was an exception to the Standards to teach non-literal views of creation. If proven as a valid exception, the debate extended further to whether or not exceptions could be taught. The elders who requested the formation of a study committee hoped that the denomination would reach a final, definitive position on all of these intertwined issues.

Sam Duncan got the firsthand opportunity to exhibit his faithfulness to the denomination when he was called upon by 26th General Assembly Moderator Kennedy Smartt to be committee chair of the newly formed committee.\(^{301}\) Reflecting on his appointment as committee chair, Duncan claims that he had no particular knowledge of the issue at all at the time of the committee's inception.\(^{302}\) Duncan


acted as “the required lawyer and referee of the committee”\textsuperscript{303}, and Collins applauded Duncan in this role as “brilliant”.\textsuperscript{304}

Smartt was in charge of appointing all of the other members of the committee, taking advice from various seminary presidents on whom to appoint. Jack Collins reflected that he and the other members “learned of our appointment sometime in the fall of 1998”.\textsuperscript{305} The committee began getting together from the end of 1998 to the beginning of 1999. They reported to the 27\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly in 1999 that they were meeting and working, and they asked for a yearlong extension.\textsuperscript{306} They were granted this extension, and they met in Charlotte, North Carolina, on the campus of Reformed Theological Seminary during September for a very sharp fall meeting with much banter.\textsuperscript{307} They reported in 2000 at the General Assembly in Tampa, after two years of mostly individual work.\textsuperscript{308} They had a few telephone or email conversations, and the formal meetings were quarterly until they reported in June of 2000. The last meeting of the group was in March 2000, and they were not quite finished, which warranted a telephone conversation in April or May

\textsuperscript{303} Duncan, Sam. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi November 6, 2015.
\textsuperscript{306} Minutes of the Twenty Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (96-97).
of 2000. "We sealed the deal and were happy that we could all agree with what we were presenting".  

In the selection process, Smartt went through great lengths to make sure there were many different sides of the view presented. Naturally, the committee was heavy on the side of theologians and historians, and Collins claimed to be the only exegete (a Biblical specialist) on the whole committee. Teaching Elders on the committee included William S. Barker, II, C. John Collins, J. Ligon Duncan, III, Howard Griffith, W. Duncan Rankin, Morton H. Smith, and William H. Smith. Ruling elders for the committee consisted of only three scientists: Dr. Mark Wardell, Dr. John Dishman, and Dr. Stuart Patterson. Dr. Wardell received his medical degree from the Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis. Dr. Dishman held a physics PhD and was a retired physicist from the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Dr. Stuart Patterson, an adamant Young-Earth Creationist, served as academic dean, dean of faculty, chairman of the Department of Chemistry and professor of chemistry at Furman University. Dr. Patterson had retired in 1988 after 34 years, and his list of accolades included being a NASA project scientist and the author of the textbook

312 http://johndishman.com/retirement/
Collins stressed that external scientific creationism movements had "no specific influence on what they did in the committee as a whole, but it influenced the way that individual members thought. [There was] no pandering to those groups in the committee". At least one of the study committee members was strongly influenced by Ken Ham and Answers in Genesis, and another member was sympathetic to them. Dr. Patterson was “very frank” about his attachments to Answers in Genesis. The other two scientist were much more sympathetic to either Hugh Ross’ Reasons to Believe or else the Discovery Institute (which Collins himself had been in contact with). Clearly, there was adequate ideological representation from the relevant anti-Darwinistic organizations to help decide which direction the denomination would take into the 21st century.

Collins commended Duncan for having committee members talk about who they were and why they thought they were on the committee at the first meeting, in a sort of meet and greet. Many of the members were not familiar with each other face to face at this point in the process. Collins recalled having met Ligon Duncan
in London while they were in the United Kingdom together during their respective PhD studies (Duncan was a recent graduate of Covenant Seminary at the time).

Collins knew Dr. Morton Smith because of his prominence within the PCA, and he was slightly familiar with Dr. Will Barker. Dr. Dishman’s son came to Covenant Seminary, so Collins knew the family. Collins commented that with such a diverse group of thinkers, “we had a lot of work to do to let ourselves let our hair down. Sam’s goal was that we would not be opponents to one another”.

Kennedy Smartt very wisely charged us at our very first meeting, and we really needed that. [He said] You guys have to do a service to the church with this study committee report. I think Sam took that to heart and tried to get us to talk about where we were coming from, what were our influences and so forth.

The committee aimed to produce a statement that everyone involved could sign on to. They recognized that there were concerns raised by different groups, and they wanted to speak to those concerns and try to give some advice as to how people could move forward and reconcile those concerns. While almost everyone on the committee had a point of view, Collins claims, “for the most part, we were thinking about the bigger picture of how our church was going to survive into the 21st century and so forth”.

The denomination’s national relevance in a new century was not exactly how Duncan himself saw the function of the committee. Duncan saw the task of the

committee as one “to present the strengths and weaknesses of the various views on the creation days in relatively easy language in order for the people within the denomination to have a reference tool to go to”.\textsuperscript{323} There was an incredible diversity of views, from the analogical day view of Collins (a modification of his previous anthropomorphic day view) to the literal twenty-four hour day view of Duncan, and congregants had a right to know in explicitly clear language what the different views causing so much contention actually were. The committee decided that they needed to have a description of the views that were held by members of the committee - letting the advocates of those views give the description for a fair hearing. After hearing the views, they would discuss the various strengths and weaknesses. Frame suggested that Machen’s children have often “gone to great lengths to read their opponents’ words and motivations in the worst possible sense (often worse than possible) and to present their own ideas as virtually perfect: rightly motivated and leaving no room for doubt”.\textsuperscript{324} Despite this recurrent tendency, Duncan was proud of the way business was handled throughout. “We were all very well behaved. Everyone got the floor to say what they wanted to say, how they wanted to say it”.\textsuperscript{325}

The Report of the Creation Study Committee began with an introductory statement, boasting of the “profound unity”\textsuperscript{326} among committee members as to the issues “of vital importance to our Reformed testimony”.\textsuperscript{327} The points unanimously
agreed upon included the coherent authorship of Moses, the historicity of the Genesis account, creation *ex nihilo*, the special creation of Adam and Eve (not products of evolution from lower life forms), and a historical fall of man that brought sin and misery. Next came a background to the current discussion, which the committee admitted is “a humble one”. In fact, the issue of the duration or extent of the creation days was never addressed at any ecclesiastical council; nor did it ever become a part of any ecumenical creeds. Nevertheless, they stressed that the truth claims of historic Christianity and modern secularism, which uses a naturalistic view of evolution, were at odds. “The doctrine of creation undergirds all truth”. The report then unfolded the history of the discussion, ranging from the ancients to the Reformers and into the present day. An insightful comment was made by the ancient church father Jerome, “the Rabbis prohibited anyone under thirty from expounding this chapter”, due to its difficulty of interpretation. Nineteenth-century Calvinists who were worried that non-literal readings would “destroy all confidence in the volume of inspiration” were the first to view the interpretation of this passage as one of serious import.

While Sam Duncan sought to present the report as a reference tool for people within the denomination to go to and have the strengths and weaknesses of the views presented, Collins kept returning to the theme of national relevance and 21st century survival with the report. Along the way of discussing the report, Ligon

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328 Creation Study Committee Report (2)
329 Creation Study Committee Report (2)
330 Creation Study Committee Report (4)
331 Creation Study Committee Report (6)
Duncan and Will Barker discussed questions pertaining to the history of the issue of creation days within Presbyterianism, within American Presbyterian, the PCA and also within the RCPES. Duncan Rankin had looked at documents coming out of the conversations between the initial PCA (1973) and the RCPES (which joined the PCA in 1982) and made connections between the denominational mergers and the issue of creation. Rankin was of the perspective of there being only one confessional view, the calendar day reading of Genesis. Despite holding to this viewpoint, he made two revelations that shed much light. “First of all, the discussion of the Creation Days was not a part of the discussion between the PCA and RCPES. Secondly, the RCPES in joining the PCA was not being asked to become Southern Presbyterians”.

Collins stressed that regarding the creation days “there is a difference between Thornwell/Dabney on one side and your Princeton Guys on the other side”. He interpreted this merger as the PCA attempting to recapture some of the idea of a national Presbyterian church and therefore not a specifically regional church. “It was Duncan [Rankin] who made that clear to us, and that was very, very helpful because the RCPES had already crossed that bridge [had their discussions [on the creation days] back in the 1960s]. A lot of this stuff just came out as we met”.

The report notes that there was a diversity of opinion on the nature of the creation days at the founding of the PCA in 1973, and even greater diversity with the reception of the RCPES in 1982, but it was never a controversial issue. Reasons for the current tensions were enumerated as follows. Certain Presbyterian elders were

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pushing an emphasis on the 24-hour Day view “as a test of orthodoxy”; the report also mentioned the circulation of a home-schooling curriculum that came “from a young-earth creationist perspective, with a polemic against ‘non-literal views’”.

Collin spoke of a strong homeschooling and Christian school contingent in the PCA. “Most homeschoolers get their material from people like Answers in Genesis or Jay Wile, those sorts of things. Some of them would be horrified to think there would even be a discussion. Others would really welcome a discussion, and some are asking ‘why do we even care?’” Additional reasons for the flare up of the controversy included fear that non-literal interpretations would “undercut the inspiration and authority of Scripture”, licensure and ordination examinations that have “provoked adverse reactions”, and “higher expectations” in these examinations, along with more “wide-ranging questioning in presbyteries”.

The report then gave a brief section of definitions, followed by a description of the main interpretations of Genesis 1-3 and the Creation Days. The task of the committee was very specific in its examination of the length and extent of the Creation Days. Duncan stressed that the age of the earth is an entirely different question than the length of the days and maintains that the two cannot be meshed together. Even committee member Morton Smith allowed for the age of the earth to be between 10,000 to 100,000 years old. Despite this distinction and narrowing

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335 Creation Study Committee Report (7)
337 Creation Study Committee Report (7-8)
of task, it is obvious that the numerous issues of origins cannot be completely separated. Boasting a PhD in lexicography, Dr. Collins thought it sensible that the committee clarify the different meanings of potentially ambiguous words in a definitions section. “We had individual parties who were tasked to write these various sections – they were then shredded by the whole committee (which went through everything line by line)”.\(^{340}\)

The committee agreed on creation ex-nihilo and was uniform in its opposition to the theistic evolution, defined in its most precise sense as God simply designing “a world which has within itself all the capacities to develop life and its diversity”,\(^{341}\) which they decided has no basis at all. Nobody in the group, not even the scientists were “sympathetic to a purely naturalistic type of evolution”, despite a variety of perspectives on evolution being held by the committee.\(^{342}\) Of the several different definitions of evolution, only this one was deemed problematic, and the others were left open to discussion. A purely natural process from the beginning to the end was condemned, but while open to discussion, the other versions of evolutionary thought were grouped into a much broader category of “change through time”.\(^{343}\) Collins accuses young-earth creationists of not making clear distinctions for the various definitions of evolution. “[It was a] great achievement to establish more than one definition of this word. Other definitions are open for discussion”.\(^{344}\) Also contained in the definitions section was a proposed designation

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\(^{341}\) Creation Study Committee Report (12)
\(^{343}\) Creation Study Committee Report (p. 46)
of science as “disciplines that study features of the world around us, looking for regularities as well as attempting to account for causal relations. In the causal chains we allow all relevant factors (including supernatural ones) to be considered”.

After the definitions section, the various interpretations of the creation days were presented. Each interpretation was followed by a section of objections. The first interpretation presented was the Calendar-Day interpretation, which espouses that the meaning of the six days in which God created everything out of nothing were six solar days. The holders of this view reminded the reader “this has been the most commonly held understanding of this account in both Jewish and Christian history”. They also warned that shying away from this view was “opening the door to the undermining of the credibility of [the] gospel message”, and that “a theology wed to the science of one age is a widow in the next”. Finally, they drew historical connections to the Southern Presbyterians (Dabney, Thornwell, Giardeau) who resisted the broadening of the church on this point, as well as resistance to the action of the 1969 PCUS General Assembly to allow for theistic evolution views to be held.

In the objections portion of the Calendar-Day interpretation, the authors made it clear “that special revelation must govern our understanding of general

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345 Creation Study Committee Report (12)
346 Creation Study Committee Report (14)
347 Creation Study Committee Report (14, 17)
348 Creation Study Committee Report (17)
revelation”, giving preference to the Bible over the current body of scientific knowledge.\textsuperscript{349}

The second interpretation was the Day-Age Interpretation, which holds that the six days were “periods of indefinite length and not necessarily of 24 hours duration”.\textsuperscript{350} The fact that this viewpoint “accommodates the preponderance of inference from present day scientific interpretation from general revelation, in particular with data from astrophysics, geology, and the fossil record” placed the Day-Age Interpretation at odds with Calendar-Day.\textsuperscript{351} The third interpretation was the Framework Interpretation, which sees the creation week as “a poetic figure and that several pictures of creation history are set within six work-day frames not chronologically but topically”.\textsuperscript{352} As this interpretation strays away from a chronological succession and a historical succession of time, it becomes the least defensible position of the four within the parameters set by the Creation Study Committee. The final view, and the one held by Collins, was the Analogical Days Interpretation. This view stresses the analogous nature (not the identical nature) of the days of Genesis to the workdays of man, “structured for the purpose of setting a pattern for our own rhythm of rest and work”.\textsuperscript{353} Like the Day-Age view, the Analogical Days view sees the days as “successive periods of unspecified length”, and views the length of time for the creation week as “irrelevant to the communicative purpose of the account”.\textsuperscript{354} All of the four views had to wrestle with

\textsuperscript{349} Creation Study Committee Report (19)
\textsuperscript{350} Creation Study Committee Report (121)
\textsuperscript{351} Creation Study Committee Report (25)
\textsuperscript{352} Creation Study Committee Report (26)
\textsuperscript{353} Creation Study Committee Report (29)
\textsuperscript{354} Creation Study Committee Report (30); also see John Collins work
issues of the original intent of Moses to his Israelite audience, and whether or not a largely illiterate audience would be able to grapple with and understand complex issues of science and hermeneutics given the respective positions being espoused and defended.

Several “fringe” interpretations were next explained, though not given serious consideration, by the committee report. Despite much support for a literal reading of the Genesis account leading up to the formation of the committee, Duncan does not believe that the members of the committee could have gotten a majority for the view; although, he believes that serious study of the passage precludes all but the calendar day interpretation. “My opinion was the more you looked at it and studied it, the more you would tend to come down on the literal twenty-four hour side. I suspect that we could have gotten a bare majority at best for the literal twenty-four hour view. Even if that had been the committee recommendation, I doubt whether it would have been approved [by the General Assembly]”.355

Duncan can be viewed as representative of those in the committee holding to the Calendar Day View. He sees no contradiction between being a convicted twenty-four hour creationist and being scientifically minded. "My particular view is that it fits in pretty well [with science]. If science says the Earth is billions of years old, that doesn’t defeat the concept, idea, and teaching of who created it”.356 Duncan maintains that the earth could have been created with billions of years of age, and he points out that carbon dating is proving to be less and less reliable. His

epistemology stresses that science is a fluid, moving thing as different ideas are discovered, proven and disproven. Duncan is not conflicted in his belief of a literal six-day creation. Especially compelling for him is the Biblical account supporting a literal reading. “To get to all those other ones, you have to do some pretty good mental gymnastics to get there. Twenty-four hour is the easy read version”. 357 Like many scientific creationists, Duncan believes in microevolution with no macroevolution; a fossil record that might have been created with the appearance of age; and a universal Noachian flood. Striking continuity with the beliefs of John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris is apparent.

Collins disagrees: “I don’t think that all four of those views are equally viable options scientifically or exegetically. The different views have different approaches to the sciences”. 358 According to Collins, the Calendar Day View attempts to dictate to the sciences how the theory should look. The Day Age View tries to coordinate reading the Bible with the sciences. “In my view, that’s not really doing the right thing for the science or for the Bible”. 359 For Collins, the Framework view and the Analogical Day view are better exegetically and they also recognize where the Bible is concerned to speak and where it leaves human beings free to explore. Collins recalls as a joke in the study committee that through the exploration of these ideas, it sorted out that people came in as representatives of those four views, but they ended up mostly going with either the Calendar Day View or with the Analogical Day View. “We thought that was ironic, it’s kind of like a survival of the fittest sort of

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thing”.\footnote{Collins, Jack. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi October 23, 2015} Collins thinks that trend is indicative of “the way it will eventually play out in the PCA. Those are the two views that are out there and they represent very different stances toward the Bible and towards the sciences”.\footnote{Collins, Jack. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi October 23, 2015} He predicts both views will stand the test of time in the PCA.

The next section of the report wrestled with the divisive issue of the original intent of the Westminster Assembly. The report noted that the interpretation of the phrase “in the space of six days” had “received more attention in the last three years than in the previous three-hundred-fifty”.\footnote{Creation Study Committee Report (34)} Three interpretations were given for the original intent. The first interpretation was that the Assembly actually meant six literal calendar days. The next interpretation was that the evidence was not strong enough “to conclude that the Assembly wished to exclude any view other than the instantaneous view of Augustine”.\footnote{Creation Study Committee Report (35)} The final interpretation was that the Assembly simply wished to express whatever Scripture itself means when using the phrase “in six days”.\footnote{Exodus 20:11 NKJV} After explaining each of the three interpretations of intent, the report gave its final advice and counsel to the General Assembly. Unable to reach unanimity, the committee recognized “that good men will differ on some other matters of interpretation of the creation account” and encouraged the church to “recognize honest differences”.\footnote{Creation Study Committee Report (39)} The committee asserted “a naturalistic worldview

\footnote{Collins, Jack. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi October 23, 2015}
\footnote{Collins, Jack. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi October 23, 2015}
\footnote{Creation Study Committee Report (34)}
\footnote{Creation Study Committee Report (35)}
\footnote{Exodus 20:11 NKJV}
\footnote{Creation Study Committee Report (39)}
and true Christian faith are impossible to reconcile, and [we] gladly take our stand with Biblical supernaturalism”.  

After gathering their conclusions, the committee made a significant caveat to their presentation that would send the 28th General Assembly into frenzy. Part of their report (before certain rule changes came into effect) included an adoption of a special rule under Robert’s Rules of Order. The Creation Committee Report could be voted up or down, but it could not be amended. Duncan explained that the committee members were fearful of a long, dragged out fight on the floor of the General Assembly. They were trying to avoid such a fight by the presentation of this special rule. The final proposal of the Creation Study Committee report was that the report “be distributed to all sessions and presbyteries of the PCA and made available for others who wish to enjoy it”; that “the Assembly declare its sense that in order to permit careful and prayerful contemplation of this matter, no further action of any kind with respect to this report be taken by the General Assembly for a period of at least two years”; and that “this study committee be dismissed with thanks”.  

At the 28th General Assembly, the committee members took their time and presented the different views so that those attending could get a clear understanding of what each of the views represented. Interestingly, the adoption of the special rule was debated for an hour and fifteen minutes while the actual report

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366 Creation Study Committee Report (39)
369 Creation Study Committee Report (40)
lasted only an hour. After the presentation of the report, a strange union formed whenever the voting took place. “The committees recommendation was defeated because of this unholy alliance (the more broadly minded folks on the left and the more narrow thinking folks on the right). They banded together unknowingly and voted down the committee recommendation to study for a year”.370 The report actually foresaw this happening, by predicting “advocacy for change in the PCA in both broader and narrower directions”.371 Consequently, the committee’s recommendation was defeated and there was no more special rule in effect, and so it became “live and on the floor again”.372

David Hall, pastor of Midway Presbyterian Church, was the first to reach the microphone in the race to the speaking stand that ensued, and he motioned that the General Assembly adopt the twenty-four hour view as the exclusive, acceptable view.373 The motion was defeated, and in fact was not even particularly close to passing.374 Frank Barker, pastor of the Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham and one of the founders of the PCA, made the motion that eventually carried. He motioned that any of the four views espoused by the Creation Study Committee Report be deemed acceptable. The amendment that he proposed was to replace the recommendation to study for two years without any further action on the part of the General Assembly with the following: “that since historically in Reformed theology there has been a diversity of views of the creation days among

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371 Study Committee Report (8)
highly respected theologians, and since the PCA has from its inception allowed a
diversity, that the Assembly affirm that such diversity as covered in this report is
acceptable as long as the full historicity of the creation account is accepted".375
The General Assembly approved this motion by a clear majority, albeit not an
overwhelming one.376 “That’s how we got the mess that we got now”, lamented
Duncan of the General Assembly decision.377

Collins agreed that Frank Barker’s motion was not at all what the Creation
Study Committee members had in mind. “The motion that Frank Barker presented
did not represent the unanimous view of the study committee [which was to simply
commend the report to study by the local congregations]”.378 He continued by
saying, “I don’t think everybody on the study committee actually supported Frank
Barker’s motion. Barker wanted to go further than simple commendation, "because
the committee had done its job and particularly articulated four main views, he
wanted the General Assembly to say so long as a candidate comes to a presbytery
holding one of these four views, he’s not going to be considered outside of our
bounds so long as he can affirm certain things about Genesis as history and Adam
and Eve".379 This motion came from the floor and not from the committee, and it
passed. “By that time, it was an every man vote his own conscience kind of thing”.380
Collins recalled a sizeable minority voting against the motion, and many of these
dissenters registered and signed their names to a protest. The next morning they

375 Creation Study Committee Report (40)
tried to pass a move to reconsider, the very first thing before the assembly hall was filled, which was unsuccessful. “That’s parliamentary procedure; it was legitimate to do that but it was a little bit dodgy because you’re taking advantage of the fact that people aren’t there yet”.\textsuperscript{381} This move to make the General Assembly reconsider was unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{382}

Collins attributes the “pretty raucous General Assembly in 2000” to the issue being treated as “make or break back in the 90s”.\textsuperscript{383} At successive General Assemblies there were efforts to reverse the decision of the 2000 General Assembly, which were soundly defeated by very large margins (3:1 or more).\textsuperscript{384} Collins recalls, “it was portrayed as a make or break issue in the 90s, but the way it was resolved in the General Assembly in 2000, it sort of receded to the background”.\textsuperscript{385} Calling the decision a resolution, however, is far from accurate. The 2000 General Assembly proclamation that a candidate for licensure in the PCA holding one of the four views espoused by the Report of the Creation Study Committee be counted as acceptable does not actually have any binding, legal clout. “The General Assembly cannot force the individual presbyteries to abide by that, so there are actually presbyteries that don’t abide by that and they actually will not permit someone to work in their bounds who don’t adhere to a Young-Earth Creationists view”.\textsuperscript{386} In the Concurring Opinion of the New Jersey Case 97-5 at the 26\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly it was said that “if

\textsuperscript{382} Minutes of the Twenty Eighth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (213)
those who hold that the “24 hour day” view is the only acceptable view for the PCA want to establish that as the official standard for the PCA, the proper approach would be through the formal amendment process in the *BCO 29*. Sam Duncan, legal expert for Presbyterian law, commented: “Saying the four views are acceptable doesn’t mean they are acceptable – without either amending the Book of Church Order or the Confession of Faith, that doesn’t bind any presbytery or any session”. No presbytery or session is bound by the decision of the General Assembly; in fact, the General Assembly decision serves only as pastoral advice and not as law. “You can’t use a position paper adopted by the General Assembly as law. Can’t try someone or hold someone up to the Book of Church Order or Confession of Faith”. Collins referred to the decision as “more of a moral authority than an actual legally binding kind of authority”.

Since the ruling of the General Assembly, the issue has mostly been put to rest in the PCA from an official standpoint. This brought some peace to the denomination, but there are presbyteries that ignore the advice of the General Assembly outright. Westminster Presbytery in Tennessee has the position that if a pastor seeking ordination does not adhere to the twenty-four hour view, then he will not be accepted. Collins comments, “they have been very public and very

387 Minutes of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1998) (p. 113)
explicit about that”. Mississippi-Valley Presbytery also adopted this position at their June 1998 presbytery meeting. Fearing that “the very integrity of Scripture is put in jeopardy by any view that differs from that plainly taught in Scripture”, teaching elder Jack Scott made a motion that those holding to a different view than the literal six day creationism “ought not to be approved to hold the office of teaching or ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in America”. This motion was approved with only four dissenting votes.

Even in Mississippi-Valley Presbytery, exceptions abound. Upon seeking a transfer of ordination, Pastor Darwin Jordan was approved to serve in Mississippi-Valley Presbytery at Highlands Presbyterian Church despite holding views of the Creation Days at odds with the twenty-four hour view. Furthermore, he was approved for ordination as the very next order of business after adopting the literal view caveat to the Mississippi-Valley Presbytery standing rules. Duncan explained that the presbytery made this exception because Darwin Jordan was an intimate of pastors within the presbytery. “This was a mixed theological statement of saying we aren’t going to take any non-twenty-four hour folks but we are going to take Darwin Jordan because we know him”. At the October 1998 presbytery meeting of the Mississippi-Valley Presbytery, Jack Scott’s motion was rescinded.

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393 Minutes of Mississippi-Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (June 19, 1998) (Appendix F)
394 Minutes of Mississippi-Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (June 19, 1998) (26.1012)
395 Minutes of Mississippi-Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (June 19, 1998) (26.1018)
397 Minutes of Mississippi-Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (October 20, 1998) (26.1038)
Two pastors who held non-literal views of the creation days, Ken Campbell and Bill Hogan, were approved for transfer at this meeting immediately following the decision to rescind Jack Scott’s motion.398

Grace Presbytery, from which the conflict over Jeremy Jones ignited, never took an official position one way or another. Even so, Grace Presbytery has not accepted a single non-twenty-four hour preacher for ordination or transfer since the time of the General Assembly ruling. Two small exceptions can be found here with Pastors Sean Lucas and Ralph Davis. Lucas, the pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, recanted his formerly held twenty-four hour views at a May 2015 Presbytery meeting and now has a modified view of Jack Collins’ analogical days view.399 Ralph Davis, former pastor at Woodlands Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, was accepted for transfer after presenting a satisfactory conviction for holding a non-twenty-four hour view.400 Duncan explained that certain degrees of flexibility exist for pastors who can defend their view from Scriptural text and the Confession of Faith. Ralph Davis is a preeminent Old Testament Scholar from Reformed Theological Seminary. “There’s no uncertainty [about Grace Presbytery’s exclusive commitment to the Calendar Day View], but

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398 Minutes of Mississippi-Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (October 20, 1998) (26.1046)
399 Minutes of Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (Volume XLIII) (pg. 59)
400 Minutes of Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (Volume XXX) (pg. 75-77)
there is a certain degree of flexibility because he can explain his view and he can do it very well”.401

It should be noted that while the Creation Study Committee was still at work, two efforts were made to restrict the acceptable views of the Creation Days within Grace Presbytery. At an April Session meeting of the McDonald Presbyterian Church, a “Declaration” was adopted that gave zero tolerance to “any teaching elder seeking admittance to Grace Presbytery, or any other man seeking to be licensed or to become a candidate for ministry under care of Grace Presbytery” who held to a non-literal interpretation of the Creation Days.402 The Declaration further made clear that “any view which departs from the confessional doctrine of creation in six 24 hour days strikes at the fundamentals of the system of doctrine set forth in Holy Scriptures”.403 Grace Presbytery dissented to have the “Declaration” of the McDonald Presbytery sent to all the other Sessions, but another attempt was soon made at narrowing the definition by another session in the presbytery.404 The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodville, Mississippi, drafted an overture in June of 1999 that they wanted sent to the General Assembly. The overture resolved to affirm that God created “in the space of six, consecutive, ordinary days” and declared “the Presbytery of Grace will consider any view contrary to this one to be an exception to the fundamentals of our system of

402 Called Meeting of the Session of McDonald Presbyterian Church on April 9, 1999
403 Called Meeting of the Session of McDonald Presbyterian Church on April 9, 1999
404 Minutes of Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (Volume XXVII) (p. 100-102)
The overture specifically called out the gap theory, day age theory, and the poetic and framework hypothesis as warranting an exception (at the time of this overture’s draft, the four “acceptable views” of the committee report had not yet been presented to the denomination). The overture concluded by threatening, “anyone who refuses to submit to the position of the Presbytery in this matter will be subject to discipline for failure to adhere to the fourth ordination vow (BCO 20-5)”.

The motion to send this overture to the General Assembly was defeated, and no further action was taken on restricting the acceptable views of the creation days by this presbytery.

Collins commented on the subjectivity of decisions on this matter since the 2000 General Assembly. “Depending on who attends a particular presbytery meeting, it might or might not become an issue”. The General Assembly made its pronouncements and reaffirmed its pronouncements in the following couple of years, but that does not bind the presbyteries in terms of what they are going to do. The presbyteries do not have total control, however. A presbytery that decides not to ordain a candidate can be complained against, with the decision being appealed to the Standing Judicial Committee. The Standing Judicial Committee may or may not appeal to the General Assembly decisions as settling the issue, “you just don’t know how people are going to treat precedence and so forth”. Collins made it clear that it is not correct to say that there is an official PCA position on the subject, “what is
correct is to say that most people in the PCA figure that we shouldn’t be fighting about this”.\textsuperscript{409} Collins is unsure whether the lack of an official denominational position is a strength or weakness.

The vote taken in the General Assembly ended all official congregational study and consideration of the issue. Duncan believes that congregants did not care one way or another. Rather, conservative elders were driven by a desire to come up with a test of orthodoxy to stop the influences of the non-literal views. “This was motivated by a desire... a test of orthodoxy to stop those three lines of the non-literal views”.\textsuperscript{410} Duncan is confident that the denomination has experienced such an ideological shift since the ruling that even a one-third vote in favor of a denominational adoption of the twenty-four hour view could not be mustered on the floor of the General Assembly now.\textsuperscript{411} Ironically enough, the motivation behind all of this discussion to begin with was a test of orthodoxy within the denomination. The very presbyteries that presented overtures to the General Assembly to form a committee on this issue intended for the result to be a conclusive decision to accept the twenty-four hour view as the denomination’s preferred stance. In a sort of backfire, the overtures only led to an expansion of the acceptable views.

As for the future of the denomination on the issue of the Creation Days, Duncan does not believe there will be imminent turmoil. The congregation “is not divided on the issue, it just isn’t an issue anymore”.\textsuperscript{412} More than anything, the

\textsuperscript{410} Duncan, Sam. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi November 6, 2015.
\textsuperscript{411} Duncan, Sam. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi November 6, 2015.
\textsuperscript{412} Duncan, Sam. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oxford, Mississippi November 6, 2015.
whole saga was a failure for those pleading for a more narrow view. Like Collins, Duncan does agree that a controversy is brewing over the horizon on the historicity of Adam and Eve, but the Creation Days argument has, at least for now, been concluded. Despite hearing many reports that the Creation Days argument will not be reopened, Collins gestures, “I think [the conservative elders] would like to, but maybe that’s just my opinion. I think they realize that they aren’t going to get anywhere if they do”.413 While this particular issue may or may not come back, the questions going forward will be ones “of human origins and so forth”.414

As mentioned earlier, definitions are intertwined throughout this discussion, and the Creation Study Committee even “laid down some boundaries for that discussion [the one of human origins], though a lot of people don’t really pay attention to what we said”.415 Collins realizes that all serious Presbyterians have affirmed the miraculous nature of the creation of Adam and Eve, though the materials involved in their creation and the duration of the process are subject to debate. “Benjamin Warfield was very explicit on that, and so was J. Greshman Machen. They were willing to allow for intermediate steps (animals and pre-human hominids) but they insisted that it was still a miraculous process”.416 Collins reasoned that the committee members did not want to write a report that would put these thinkers outside of the pale, and some of the historians on the committee who were not sympathetic to Warfield’s view still did not want to have him excluded.

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from the perspective of orthodoxy. Simply affirming “there’s no natural path to
to human kind, that allows then the view of Warfield as within the pale”.\(^{417}\) This
particular issue was not voted on in the 2000 General Assembly, but it was
appreciated as guidance given to the PCA, and it is contained in the study committee
report. Collins affirms “there’s no natural path from animal to human being, that’s
the operative part. Whatever might be the material component, there is some room
for discussion there”.\(^{418}\) He thinks that this issue will take increased prominence in
the coming years. “That is probably going to come back, there have been efforts to
make it an issue in the last several years”.\(^{419}\) Presbyteries have sent overtures to the
General Assembly, and they have been turned down every time. Clearly, there is a
desire to bring the entire issue of origins back to the national denominational stage.
Whether or not it will be granted an audience is yet to be seen.

What Collins does foresee for the denomination is a need to relate to the rest
of the world in an intelligent, rational, and thoughtful way. While “there are lots of
people for whom these are not major issues”, for some, the very credibility of the
denomination is at stake.\(^{420}\) Collins sees the PCA sociologically as being better
educated, whiter, and of higher income than the rest of the American culture. “For
better of worse, that’s just us”.\(^{421}\) He sees in this a burden to discuss these issues
intelligently within this sociologic demographic or else “we lose credibility, or we
lose our capacity to minister to people who are in that particular bracket”.\(^{422}\) As

such, Collins has made a concerted effort on his part to engage the culture through publication. He has published four major works on the issues of supernaturalism, literary analysis of Genesis 1-4, the faith/science conflict, and the historicity of Adam and Eve. Reviews of these works have branded him everything from “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” to a “savior”. Collins presented ideas in these works that would certainly not be endorsed by those holding to a Calendar Day View of the Creation Days, but they have gained traction with the more scientifically minded members of the denomination.

Although official denominational discussion of the creation days had ceased, tensions between those holding to a literal view of Genesis and those who thought that a literal view could not be reconciled with science burst forth once again at the 40th General Assembly; however, this time those holding to non-literal views were on the offensive. At the 40th General Assembly, held in Louisville, Kentucky, in June 2012, two geologists, Dr. Gregg Davidson and Dr. Ken Wolgemuth, presented a seminar entitled “The PCA Creation Study Committee a Dozen Years Later: What Does Science Say Now?”, which purposed to “provide an update on the scientific evidence for an ancient earth using examples non-scientists can easily

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This seminar raised concern online among blogs and Facebook posts, as both presenters were a part of Solid Rock Lectures, which is a group that hosts workshops on reconciling evolution and an old earth with the Bible. Dr. Gregg Davidson, chair and professor of geology and geological engineering at the University of Mississippi and a faithful member of Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Oxford, MS, contended, “most pastors and theologians... rely on information from young earth organizations that do not adequately or accurately reflect conventional scientific understanding”. Bloggers raised concern over the seminar due to a perception that Old Earth Creationism was going to be presented as more scientifically credible than Young Earth Creationism. Rachel Miller, posting in PCA News, was indignant:

> What’s interesting about this seminar is that while the PCA Creation Study Report does not take a position on the age of the earth, the speakers at this seminar do. The implication from the summary is that the science is settled, and therefore, we need to accept that Young Earth Creationism is not a viable position. According to the summary,

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not only is YEC bad science, it also reflects badly on Christ as the author of truth. This is a very disturbing statement.\textsuperscript{432}

A seminar description blatantly asked whether “our members are inadequately prepared to wrestle with challenges to their faith when encountering the actual scientific evidence.”\textsuperscript{433} Critics of the seminar alleged “this seminar is now questioning the credibility of Young Earth Creationism by asserting it does not have the scientific evidence to back it up”\textsuperscript{434}

Conservatives in the denomination were on high alert for this sort of notion after two overtures were introduced by Rocky Mountain Presbytery and Savannah River Presbytery to the General Assembly to “reaffirm the confessional position on the historicity of Adam”.\textsuperscript{434} These overtures sought to reaffirm that Adam and Eve were created “without any natural animal parentage of any kind, out of matter previously created” and they appeal to the 2000 PCA Creation Study Committee Report which affirmed the “special creation of Adam and Eve as actual human beings... (not the products of evolution from lower life forms)”.\textsuperscript{435} Those objecting to


the seminar wondered whether it contradicted the already established Creation Study Committee Report’s position, although the authors of the seminar pointed out that “the report encouraged the PCA to consider what additional scientific understanding might develop in the future to assist in answering the question of age”. In the final analysis, those hosting the seminar made a strong statement that “the seminar will explicitly acknowledge the authority and preeminence of scripture over natural evidence, while also recognizing that God’s natural creation can sometimes aid in choosing between plausible biblical interpretations”.

In what was dubbed as “the young-earth follow up” to the seminar given by Dr. Davidson, a seminar entitled “Astronomy Reveals Creation” was given by Dr. Jason Lisle of the Institute of Creation Research (ICR) at the 2013 General Assembly in Greenville, South Carolina. Dr. Joel Duff, Professor of Biology at The University of Akron and member of Faith Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Akron, reflected on the state of the PCA coming out of these seminars in a 2013 article. He admitted, “the PCA is clearly divided on this issue”. From conversations with pastors and elders to attending talks, conferences and blog chat room discussions, he surmised that “there is a fairly even split between committed young earth and old earth proponents in

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the PCA”. He does not believe that this split is an even split; rather, “there is a strong core of committed young-earth-only proponents and a similar core of those convinced that the Bible does not speak to the age of the earth and accept the consensus of science supports an old earth”. These core constituencies might represent 20-40% of the PCA leadership, while the remaining 60-80% “are undecided, noncommittal or at least non-vocal on this issue for a variety of reasons and where they fall on the creationism landscape of positions is much harder to gauge”.

To offer a comprehensive picture of pastors within the denomination, he then divided the pastors into a possibility of five categories. In the first category were pastors who are committed to a young earth interpretation as the best and only valid interpretation of the Bible; these pastors were likely to be very vocal in the church and denomination as a whole. Next were those committed to a young earth interpretation, but not very vocal as they either at least acknowledge the possibility of valid alternative views or feel inadequately knowledgeable in science and literary analysis to vocalize their views. The third pastoral positions were those who accept young earth creationism as a default position but suppress serious

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doubts due to conflicting physical and/or Scriptural evidence to support an alternate view. These pastors do not vocalize themselves, but would lean towards young earth when pushed on the issue. Fourth are those pastors who accept the old earth view and have serious doubts about the plausibility of a young earth interpretation but are not vocal because they either struggle with old earth implications or serve a congregation with strong young earth views. Fifth and finally are those who accept an old earth and are convinced that the Bible supports their conclusions. These pastors view creation science as adverse to the advancement of the church going forward into a world of increasing scientific reliability. Duff suggests that categories one and five “are the vocal minorities that set the tenor of the debate in the PCA”, while the majority of the PCA finds themselves in categories three or four.\textsuperscript{442} Duff does not believe that these pastors are able “to fully articulate a Biblical theology that allows for an old earth but they also understand that the young earth position is untenable scientifically and is theologically unsound”.\textsuperscript{443} In conclusion, a majority of the PCA pastorate is predicted to stay on the sidelines of


the debate because “the political and personal cost of becoming vocal is too great” for a pastor who is not strongly convicted one way or another.444

The seminars of the 2012 and 2013 General Assemblies showed clearly that the issue of the creation days, as well as the issues of human origins and the age of the earth, have not been decided conclusively within the denomination. So long as the parameters of the 2000 Creation Study Committee Report are upheld, it is unlikely that the denomination will ever take a stance on them. The failure of the 2000 General Assembly to establish a denominational stance on the length and extent of the creation days opened up the door to a broad range of interpretations concerning the relationship between science and religion, as well as the epistemological validity of various sources of truth. The 1973 split from the PCUS continued the tradition of division rather than unity when the church began to liberalize; however, the proper interpretation of Genesis could not be established as a true test of conservative orthodoxy. The PCA, a subscriptionists denomination, could not decide which issues truly warrant division. For the time being,

Presbyterians have been granted flexibility to examine this issue for themselves and hold to their ensuing convictions.
CONCLUSION

American Christians divided in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy over issues of Biblical interpretation. While all Fundamentalists upheld the Bible as being true and the inspired Word of God, not all Fundamentalists interpreted the creation account of Genesis as being a literal, historical account. Throughout the 20th century, a variety of non-literal views such as the gap theory, day-age theory, and progressive creationism were held by fundamentalists. With the advent of John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, scientific creationism became wildly popular among literal young-earth creationists, but it lost traction after being discounted by legal experts in the 1980s as pseudo-scientific. The Intelligent Design community emerged as young-earth creationists fervor subsided from the popular sphere in the 80s. The goal of this group was to encourage the teaching of design in public schools as an alternative to naturalistic evolution; however, the identity of the designer was not explicitly Judeo-Christian. From the late 1980s to present, the scientific creationism movement has reemerged with Ken Ham and Answers in Genesis, the
clear successor to the legacy left by Henry Morris and the Institute of Creation Research.

The PCA formed as a denomination, splitting from the PCUS in 1973, at a moment in history when anti-Darwinism in America was formulating its own identity. Both Christians holding to literal and non-literal views of the Genesis creation account offered strong opposition to Darwinistic evolution, but the two camps came into conflict in the PCA. While the two groups could have operated as allies to push back against naturalism in America, conservative elders in the PCA regarded those not holding to views identical to their own as being dangerous to the preservation of conservatism within the denomination. The more conservative elders of the denomination saw those holding non-literal views as compromising the source of ultimate truth – looking to the natural world rather than to the words of the Creator of the natural world. This set a dangerous precedent that conservative elders were not willing to compromise on, and the push to have one denominational view reflected how apprehensive these elders were about allowing the natural world to dictate interpretation of Scripture.

This particular controversy was likely not unique to the PCA, but it did manifest itself in peculiar ways within the denomination. The joining and receiving of the RCPES in 1982 moved the PCA from a regional manifestation to a national one, bringing in elements unfamiliar to the comfortable Southern identity that the PCA had established. The addition of Covenant Theological Seminary as the national seminary of the PCA only furthered the mistrust of those in the PCA who held twenty-four hour views. Seminary professors teaching non-literal views of Genesis
were given the stamp of legitimacy by belonging to the only official seminary of the denomination, and conservative elders who held to literal views felt pressure to push back and attempt to impose their convictions on the entire denomination.

Finally, being bound to the Westminster Standards added another dimension to the controversy. Various attempts were made to interpret what the Westminster Divines meant by “in the space of six days”, but it was incredibly difficult to reach consensus on the intent of the authors who wrote these six words hundreds of years ago in a completely different environment from the present day. The Westminster Divines wrote long before Darwinism was even introduced; attempts to impress the context of today on the setting of the past is a tricky venture. Whether or not non-literal views are an exception to the Standards is still open for debate, and whether or not exceptions should be taught or preached from the pulpit is an entirely different issue.

The PCA Creation Days Controversy offered an apt view into the ongoing conflict between fundamentalist religion and empirical science. By redefining science to include not just natural processes, but also a supernatural creator of the natural processes, many Christian scientists see a future harmony between the two. Other fundamentalist Christians mistrust science when it seems to be in conflict with their personal interpretation of the Bible, the source of ultimate truth for them. The ongoing conflict may never cease for them without either a reinterpretation of the sacred text in the light of plain science, or the scientific evidence in conflict with the passages of Scripture being definitively refuted. A trend is emerging in which more and more congregants and pastors within the PCA are reinterpreting Genesis
in light of the scientific evidence, but so long as a vocal minority exists, the struggle between those holding to literal and non-literal views may never cease.
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