

# HOT TOPICS IN THE PCA: CREATION VIEWS

## INTRO: HOW DOES THE PCA HANDLE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES?

All TEs and REs within the PCA must vow that they believe, "...the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice...", and also vow to, "...sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures..." However, at times controversies spring up over teachings that are the result of differences in the interpretation Scripture or the Standards, or over teachings on issues that are not addressed directly by either. An overarching principle for how to handle such differences was written into the preliminary principles of our BCO:

*"While ... it is necessary to make effective provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ. In all these it is the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other."*

When issues of a significant nature threaten to disrupt either the purity or unity of the church, our denomination will usually form a committee to diligently study the matter, draw some boundaries around acceptable views (biblical views that do not strike at the vitals or our system of doctrine in the Standards), and then recommend guidelines for Presbyteries, churches, and Elders to use in addressing the issue. These are called *study reports*.

One such report was given to the 28<sup>th</sup> GA to address the controversies over interpretations of the six days of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2. In this 91-page report, REs and TEs determined that among the many interpretations of God's act of Creation, there are four main views that are legitimate interpretations of Scripture and do not strike at the vitals of our system of doctrine, barring that a historical Adam and Eve are accepted, *creatio ex nihilo* is protected, and the historicity of the Creation account is held.

TRADITIONAL VIEW

DAY-AGE VIEW

FRAMEWORK VIEW

ANALOGICAL DAY VIEW

(You can view or download the report here: <http://www.pcahistory.org/creation/report.pdf>)

## GENERAL REVELATION AND SPECIAL REVELATION: (BY LIZZY SCHOTT)

*Why Christians should study science:*

*For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20 (NIV)*

*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28 (NIV)*

**You can't have dominion and rule over what you don't understand:** God has given us the ability to study His creation and we need to cherish and take advantage of this gift. The study of science gives us insight into who He is and it allows us to have dominion over creation and use it for the purpose of serving other people. Many scientists throughout history were motivated by these very ideas. Knowing God, having dominion, and serving others has been a great impetus for many scientific discoveries.

As Christians, *we must look at the scriptures first and then consider what science has to offer.* Scripture is truth and inerrant. Science is fallible and is performed by fallen imperfect humans. Special Revelation, God's word and general revelation, the universe are two things we must consider carefully and in that order

## I. THE TRADITIONAL VIEW: (BY LIZZY SCHOTT)

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says: *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

- We have a natural God-given desire to understand our past and our future, yet God has placed it beyond our grasp.
- No one observed the beginning except the Trinity. This is why we must observe caution when we discuss with our brothers and sisters in Christ the creation of the world.

Genesis 1 is a beautiful description of the beginning of the world. I teach it to my students every year. I teach the 24 hour day view. *“And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.”* (Genesis 1:5) Basing my observations on this truth, I conclude that it is a 24 hour day.

- The physical evidence of this world is that our days are 24 hours long. We have never seen anything different.
- The third day, God created plants. Vegetation requires specific hours of sunlight and night to grow and to produce fruit and seed.
- God created a mature earth. The trees were bearing fruit, the waters were teeming with living creatures, the birds were flying in the air, the creatures were roaming the earth, and Adam and Eve were mature adults. This can explain why much of earth seems extremely old.

## II. THE DAY-AGE VIEW:

Held by Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, this view holds that the six days should be understood as periods of an indefinite length of time. This understanding of the word “day” is closer to the sense we find in Isaiah 11:10-11. It is often assumed that the Day-Age view came about as a result of the naturalistic teachings of the modern age, namely the evolutionary teachings of Charles Darwin. However, this is not the case since, “...a view open to the possibility of creative days of unspecified length was held by prominent and influential church fathers, some of whom lived long before Charles Darwin.”<sup>1</sup>

## III. THE FRAMEWORK VIEW:

Held by Meredith G. Kline and Mark D. Futato, the Framework View has many variations. The basic idea is that the week described in Genesis 1 is meant to be understood as a poetical device to discuss the creative acts of God topically. “Moses used the metaphor of a week to narrate God’s acts of creation. Thus God’s supernatural creative words or fiats are real and historical, but the exact timing is left unspecified.”<sup>2</sup>

## IV. ANALOGICAL DAY VIEW:

Holds first of all that Genesis 1:1-2 is a description of the *creatio ex nihilo* (created out of nothing) event that occurs before and creates a background for the six “days” of creation. Secondly, this view holds that God’s work days are, “...are analogous, and not necessarily identical, to our work days, structured for the purpose of setting a pattern for our own rhythm of rest and work...The six ‘days’ represent periods of God’s historical supernatural activity in preparing and populating the earth as a place for humans to live, love, work, and worship... These days are ‘broadly consecutive’: that is, they are taken as successive periods of unspecified length, but one allows for the possibility that parts of the days may overlap, or that there might be logical rather than chronological criteria for grouping some events in a particular ‘day.’”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Creation Study Committee Report*, p. 38 (p. 2338 in minutes of the 28<sup>th</sup> GA)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42/2342

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48-9/2348-9