

Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?

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PREFACE

"I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

This is first in the Christian creed.

It is very simple: the Christian knows God as Creator and, therefore the truth about the origin of the world and himself by faith -- by faith *only*. Implied is that this knowledge of God as Creator is derived from Scripture, especially from the outstanding revelation of God as Creator in Genesis 1 and 2. For faith looks to, and is informed by, the inspired Word of God.

Knowledge of God as Creator is not only first. It is also fundamental. It is fundamental to our knowledge of God as Redeemer and, therefore, to knowledge of our redemption. Upon both of these articles, faith in God as Creator and faith in God as Redeemer, depends the third: "I believe in the Holy Ghost." Where the doubt of unbelief concerning the Creator is entertained, trust in the redemption of the cross and hope of the resurrection of the body are a lost cause.

This is the issue in the present controversy over the historicity of Genesis 1-11 in reputedly orthodox churches and seminaries. Rightly, the controversy centers on the days of Genesis 1 and 2.

In a few years, the churches that tolerate the question, "Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?" as a serious question (to be answered, of course, by "science") will be struggling with the question, "Luke 1 and 2: Myth or History?" Soon thereafter, I Corinthians 15 will be a problem.

Will Reformed and Presbyterian churches confess the first article of the Christian faith in the teeth of the scientism, evolutionism, higher criticism of the Bible, and sheer ridicule of faith of our day?

This is the real question.

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Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?

Everything about the topic of this polemical essay is wrong. There is absolutely no reason to set Genesis 1 - 11 off from the rest of Genesis, the rest of the Old Testament, and the rest of the Bible as a special, indeed dubious, kind of writing. There is no question whether Genesis 1-11 is historical. There may be no question about the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11. Merely to allow for the possibility that Genesis 1-11 is mythical is unbelief. Seriously to pose the question about Genesis 1-11, "Myth or History?" is to do exactly what Eve did when she entertained the speaking serpent's opening question, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). Tolerance of doubt concerning the truthfulness of God's Word is revolt against Him and apostasy from Him.

Nevertheless, the topic is forced upon us by the controversy of the present day. And it serves well to sharpen the issue: Genesis 1 - 11 is either myth or history. That section of Scripture is not, and cannot be, a third thing: mythical history, or historical myth.

The topic is not seriously intended, as though it were an open question to the writer, and may be an open question to the reader, whether Genesis 1-11 is myth or history. Genesis 1-11 is history, not myth. This must be the presupposition, proposition, and conclusion of this article. Genesis 1-11 demands it.

It is shameful that the topic is necessary in the sphere of Reformed churches. Has it really come to this in the Reformed churches, that the historicity of Genesis 1-11 must be defended? One can reply, correctly, that this is also the case in all the other churches, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, the Reformed believer so feels the shame of it that also the Reformed churches have proved vulnerable to the assault on Genesis 1 - 11 that he has no joy in publishing an article that makes this known. His spirit is rather that of David in II Samuel 1:19, 20: "How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." He experiences the sting of the apostolic rebuke in Hebrews 5:12: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God."

Humiliating though the topic is, the issue must be confronted: the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is widely and increasingly denied, in evangelical and Reformed circles; and the historicity of the opening chapters of the Bible is of fundamental importance.

In this issue, the gospel itself is at stake among us. If we agree that Genesis 1-11 is myth, the divinity of Scripture--its "God-breathedness," as II Timothy 3:16 puts it--is denied, and thus is lost Scripture's authority, reliability, clarity, sufficiency, and unity. If Genesis 1 - 11 is myth, the message of Scripture is abandoned, for Genesis 1 - 11 is the foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the source of the gospel of grace. Martin Luther is our teacher here. Of the early chapters of Genesis, he said: "certainly the foundation of the whole of Scripture."

The force then of the sorry, embarrassing topic of this piece is, "What are we to make of the foundation of the whole of Scripture? myth? or history?"

Myth?

The foundation of the whole of Scripture and, therefore, also of all that the whole Scripture teaches is a myth, the Christian church is being told today, by her own ministers, theologians, and scholars. A myth is a story that explains an important aspect of human life and experience. Often the story is of a theological, spiritual, and religious nature. But a myth is a story that never happened. The storyteller casts the myth in the form of events, events that occurred on earth among men. Usually these events involved the gods and their relationships with men and women. But these mythical events have no reality in actual fact; they are unhistorical. If read or listened to for entertainment, the myth is fictitious. If taught as the factual explanation of a certain aspect of human life, the myth is a lie.

C.F. Nosgen gives this definition of "myth": "Any unhistorical tale, however it may have arisen, in which a religious society finds a constituent part of its sacred foundations, because an absolute expression of its institutions, experiences, and ideas, is a myth." [1](#)

Heathen religions abound in myths. The Greek myth of Pandora's box explains evil in the world as the result of a woman's opening a box contrary to the instruction of the gods. The Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish* explains creation from the killing and dividing of a great monster, Tiamat.

Scripture speaks of myths. In the Greek of the New Testament, Scripture speaks of myths explicitly: the Greek word is *muthos*, "myth." The King James Version uniformly translates this Greek word as "fables." But Scripture denies that the biblical message is based on, or derived from, myths: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables (Greek: *muthos*), when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (II Pet. 1:16). It warns the saints, particularly ministers, against myths: "Neither give heed to fables (Greek: *muthos*)" (I Tim. 1:4). Nevertheless, Scripture prophesies that in the last days, under the influence of unsound teachers--"mythologists," we may call them--professing Christians will turn from the truth to myths: "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (Greek: *muthos*)" (II Tim. 4:4).

This prophecy is now fulfilled in evangelical and Reformed churches in that men and women hold Genesis 1-11 for myth. They have turned from Genesis 1-11 as truth to Genesis 1-11 as myth. This is widespread. This prevails. Otherwise, we would not be forced to the shameful extremity of defending the historical reality of the events recorded in Genesis 1 - 11.

Many Reformed people in North America learned that Genesis 1 - 11 is regarded as a myth, in reputable and influential Reformed circles, with the publication of the book, *The Fourth Day*, in 1986. [2](#) Since the author of the book was then a professor at Calvin College, the book and resulting controversy brought to light that the view of Genesis 1 - 11 as myth is held, taught, and tolerated at Calvin College.

Four years later, in 1990, a similar work came out of Calvin College. This was titled, *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*. [3](#) In a chapter entitled, "What Says the Scripture?" John H. Stek, at that time a professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, boldly asserted that Genesis 1 draws on heathen, Egyptian myths; is non-historical; is a "metaphorical narration"; and is, in short, a "storied rather than a historiographical account of creation."

A third installment of Calvin College's ongoing denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 followed in 1995. In his book, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, professor of geology Davis A. Young rejected the historicity of the account of the flood in Genesis 6-9. On the basis mainly of geology, Young declared that "there is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that human or animal populations were ever disrupted by a catastrophic global flood." The account of the flood in Genesis is Scripture's exaggerated--*enormously* exaggerated--description of some local flood or other once upon a time in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers: "The flood account uses hyperbolic language to describe an event that devastated or disrupted Mesopotamian civilization--that is to say, the whole world of the Semites." [4](#)

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the mythologizing of Genesis 1 - 11 goes on only at the college of Howard Van Till and Davis Young and at the seminary of John Stek. It goes on almost everywhere in evangelical, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches. Rare is the church, seminary, or college where it is not found and tolerated, if not approved. Among the theologians, scholars, and teachers, it is the prevailing view. This means that in a very short time it will be the prevailing view of the people, if it is not already.

One strategic center for teaching the myth is the Christian school, not only the Christian colleges, but also the Christian grade schools and high schools. The Christian schools in North America are full of the teaching that Genesis 1-11 is myth.

Christian schools!

To be sure, the term "myth" is seldom used in Reformed and evangelical circles. Those who are, in fact, teaching that Genesis 1 - 11 is myth will usually disavow "myth" as the proper description of that part of Holy Scripture. There is good reason for this. "Myth" has unsavory connotations. The Bible expressly denounces myths. Only the most radical (and candid!) of liberal theologians--the Rudolph Bultmanns--boldly call the Bible stories in Genesis 1-11 "myths." Hence, the evangelical and the Reformed mythologians are careful to use other terms. However just as a rose by any other name smells sweet, so a myth by any other name still stinks.

We ignore the liberals like Hermann Gunkel, who called Genesis 1-11 "legend," and the neo-orthodox like Karl Barth, who called the passage "saga." Our concern is the extent to which Genesis 1-11 is regarded as myth in reputedly conservative circles. In *The Fourth Day*, Howard Van Till described the opening chapters of Genesis as "primal, or primeval history." The committee of the Christian Reformed Church that advised synod on the views of Van Till and his colleagues referred to Genesis 1-11 as "stylized, literary, or symbolic stories." [5](#)

The Dutch Reformed scientist and author Jan Lever had earlier written two books that were translated into English in which he attacked the Reformed confession that Genesis 1-11 is historical. In his *Where are We Headed? A Christian Perspective on Evolution*, he vehemently denied that Genesis 1-11 is "an account of historical events.... Anyone who reads the Bible with common sense can reach the conclusion that a literal reading of the Genesis account is wrong." Rather, the opening chapters of the Bible are a "confession about God." [6](#)

A recent book by notable evangelical theologians and other scholars, *The Genesis Debate*, has a number of these men insisting that Genesis 1-11 is unhistorical, indeed allegorical. One scholar is bold to state an implication of this view of Genesis 1-11 that fairly bristles with doctrinal implications, namely, that it is absurd to think that the human race descended from two (married) ancestors. Nevertheless, so the editor informs us, this scholar, like all the others, is "committed to the full inspiration and authority of Scripture." [7](#)

Another prominent evangelical, Charles E. Hummel, in an InterVarsity publication, *The Galileo Connection*, contends that the first eleven chapters of Genesis must be seen as a "literary genre"; they are a "semipoetic narrative cast in a historico-artistic framework." Genesis 1-11 is not a "cosmogony," but a "confession of faith." [8](#)

The Fuller Seminary theologian Paul K. Jewett prefers the designations "primal history" and "theologized history." Authoritative science has enabled us moderns to recognize the "childlike limitations of the understanding" of those who wrote the first eleven chapters of the Bible. Theirs was a "prescientific simplicity" when they told the story of "God's making the world 'in the space of six days.'" [9](#)

Bruce Waltke, who was professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary at the time, wrote in *Christianity Today* that we must not read Genesis 1:1-2:3 as historical. Rather, we must take "an artistic-literary approach." He quoted Henri Blocher approvingly: the passage is "an artistic arrangement ... not to be taken literally." Waltke concluded that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is a "creation story in *torah* ('instruction'), which is a majestic, artistic achievement, employing anthropomorphic language." [10](#)

To refer to no others, in his book, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, John Frame, at the time professor of theology at Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California, wrote that he is open to the possibility of interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 "figuratively" because of the findings of geologists that the earth is very old. [11](#)

All of these men studiously avoid the use of the word "myth," although a couple of them give the game away by their description of the kind of stories they think to find in Genesis 1- 11. Having denied that Genesis gives us "a picture of reality," Lever goes on to affirm that Genesis "does provide us with the fundamentals for a *life and world view*, a religious perspective on the nature of this reality, its finitude and its dependence upon God in becoming and in being." [12](#) This is the textbook definition of myth.

Similarly, Bruce Waltke explains his own figurative interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 by quoting H. J. Sorenson in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*:

The basic purpose is to instruct men on the ultimate realities that have an immediate bearing on daily life and on how to engage vitally in these realities to live successfully. It contains "truths to live by" rather than "theology to speculate on." [13](#)

This is the classic myth.

Avoidance of the term "myth" is of no significance. What is important is that the events recorded in Genesis 1 - 11 never really happened, *never really happened as Genesis 1-11 records them as happening*. Genesis 1-11 is not history, but myth. This world never did come into existence by the Word of God calling each creature in the space of six days, and then in the *order* set forth in Genesis 1. The human race never did originate from a man, Adam, who was formed by the hand of God from the dust, and from a woman, Eve, built by the hand of God from a rib of the man as we read in Genesis 2. Sin and death never did enter the world by the man's eating a piece of forbidden fruit at the instigation of his wife and by the temptation of a speaking serpent as Genesis 3 tells us. There never was the development of agriculture, herding, music, and metallurgy as Genesis 4 reveals. There never was a universal flood as taught in Genesis 6-8. There never was a Tower of Babel occasioning the dividing of the nations by confounding of the language as set forth in Genesis 11.

Genesis 1-11: Myth!

This is the prevailing opinion in evangelical, Reformed, and Presbyterian seminaries, schools, publishing houses, and churches at the beginning of the 21st century.

Framework Hypothesis

Myth is also the implication of the "framework-hypothesis." This is an explanation of the six days of Genesis 1 and of the seventh day of Genesis 2:1-3. The theory is occasioned by doubt concerning the literality of the account in Genesis 1:1-2:3 because of the loud testimony of modern scientists that the universe is billions of years old and that its present form is due to evolution.

The framework hypothesis denies that Genesis 1:1-2:3 makes known what actually took place in the beginning. Rather, the very human, but inspired author told a story whose point is that God created the world in some unknown way and over the span of unknown time. (In fact, the defenders of the framework hypothesis will be found holding that God created the world exactly as evolutionary science decrees: by evolutionary process over billions of years.) The storyteller of Genesis, so runs the hypothesis, hung his story on the framework (utterly fictitious!) of six days of creation and one day of rest. There is nothing factual about the days with their evening and morning, including the seventh day: nothing factual about the order of the days; nothing factual about the individual acts of creation on each day, or about any of the details whatsoever. Presumably, the unreality of the passage would extend also to God's trinitarian conversation

within Himself before the creation of man in Genesis 1:26.

This is how one of the leading proponents of the theory, who also did much to popularize it among conservative Reformed people both in the Netherlands and in North America, described it.

In Genesis 1 the inspired author offers us a story of creation. It is not his intent, however, to present an exact report of what happened at creation. By speaking of the eightfold work of God he impresses the reader with the fact that all that exists has been created by God. This eightfold work he places in a framework: he distributes it over six days, to which he adds a seventh day as the day of rest. In this manner he gives expression to the fact that the work of creation is complete; also that at the conclusion of His work God can rest, take delight in the result; and also ... that in celebrating the Sabbath man must be God's imitator. The manner in which the works of creation have been distributed over six days is not arbitrary. [14](#)

The name by which this understanding of the foundational chapters of the Bible calls itself is itself the refutation of the theory: "framework *hypothesis*." The faith of the church may not, and does not, rest upon a "hypothesis." The church's faith must be absolutely certain knowledge that has clear, infallible, divine revelation as its object and that receives Genesis 1:1-2:3 for what it itself and all the rest of Scripture claim that it is: history.

The rejection by the framework-hypothesis of the historicity of Genesis 1:1-2:3 implies the mythical character of the more detailed description of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:4ff., the mythical character of the account of the fall in Genesis 3, and the mythical character of the rest of Genesis 1 - 11, which depends upon Genesis 1-3. For Genesis 1:1-2:3 includes the account of God's creation of a first man and a first woman in His own image. If this account is not historical, neither is the tightly linked account of the fall of these two fabulous persons.

Ridderbos himself acknowledged that the framework-hypothesis implies death in God's world long before, and altogether apart from, any possible "fall" of humans, which according to Genesis 3:17, 18 and Romans 8:19-22 is the cause of death in the creation. Ridderbos also admitted that the framework-hypothesis opens up the church to Jan Lever's teachings of man's biological descent from the beasts. [15](#)

Fundamental to the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11 is the reality of the days of Genesis 1:1-2:3, each consisting of one evening and one morning; the factuality of their order, as of the acts, or rest, of God on each of them; and the literality of the record of them.

Scripture

What explains the view of the opening chapters of Scripture as mythical?

This view has not been the tradition of the church for some 1700 years after the apostles. All freely acknowledge that the tradition of the church has been to take Genesis 1-11 as historical. Much less is this view the tradition of the Reformation. Luther is representative of the tradition of

the Reformation in his lectures on Genesis. Referring to Eve's temptation by the serpent, Luther wrote:

Through Moses [the Holy Spirit] does not give us foolish allegories; but He teaches us about most important events, which involve God, sinful man, and Satan, the originator of sin. Let us, therefore, establish in the first place that the serpent is a real serpent, but one that has been entered and taken over by Satan, who is speaking through the serpent. [16](#)

A little later in his commentary, reflecting on the first three chapters, Luther wrote: "We have treated all these facts in their historical meaning, which is their real and true one." [17](#) "Nobody," he added, "can fail to see that Moses does not intend to present allegories, but simply to write the history of the primitive world." [18](#)

Neither is the view of Genesis 1 - 11 as myth due to exegesis of the chapters themselves, or to exegesis of the New Testament passages that refer to Genesis 1 - 11. The most liberal of the critics of Genesis 1 - 11, including Julius Wellhausen and Gerhard von Rad, acknowledged that Genesis 1-11 purports to be history and science. The writer thought that he was giving a cosmogony and intended to give a history. Wellhausen wrote:

Yet for all this the aim of the narrator is not mainly a religious one. Had he only meant to say that God made the world out of nothing, and made it good, he could have said so in simpler words, and at the same time more distinctly. There is no doubt that he means to describe the actual course of the genesis of the world, and to be true to nature in doing so; he means to give a cosmogonic theory. Whoever denies this confounds two different things--the value of history for us, and the aim of the writer. While our religious views are or seem to be in conformity with his, we have other ideas about the beginning of the world, because we have other ideas about the world itself, and see in the heavens no vault, in the stars no lamps, nor in the earth the foundation of the universe. But this must not prevent us from recognizing what the theoretical aim of the writer of Gen. 1 really was. He seeks to deduce things as they are from each other: he asks how they are likely to have issued at first from the primal matter, and the world he has before his eyes in doing this is not a mythical world but the present and ordinary one. [19](#)

Although von Rad excluded Genesis 1:1-2:4a from this analysis, he judged concerning the rest of Genesis 1 - 11 that

with the Jahwist it would be misdirected theological rigorism not to recognize that what he planned was, as far as might be with the means and possibilities of his time, a real and complete primeval history of mankind. No doubt, he presented this span of history from the point of view of the relationship of man to God; but in the endeavor he also unquestionably wanted to give his contemporaries concrete knowledge of the earliest development of man's civilization, and so this aspect too of J's primeval history has to be taken in earnest. [20](#)

Is there anyone who dares to deny that Christ and His apostles regarded the persons and events recorded in Genesis 1 -11 as historical, and taught the New Testament church so to regard them, in Matthew 19:3-9; John 8:44; Matthew 24:37-41; Romans 5:12-21; I Corinthians 11:7-12; I Timothy 2:12-15; II Peter 3:5. 6: Acts 17:26, and other places? No one derives

the conception of Genesis 1 - 11 as myth from sound exegesis of these New Testament passages. Indeed, the recognition of Genesis 1-11 as historical by Christ and the apostles in New Testament Scripture is an extreme embarrassment for the evangelical and Reformed mythologians.

There is not the slightest opening in the confessions of the Reformation--*binding* documents for all Reformed and Presbyterian theologians-- for taking Genesis 1-11 as myth. On the basis of Genesis 1-3, in Articles 12-17, the Belgic Confession teaches creation, the creation of man out of the dust, and the fall of man by means of the devil speaking through the serpent as history. The Heidelberg Catechism does the same in Lord's Days 3 and 4. The Westminster Confession of Faith explicitly requires that the days of Genesis 1 be understood as historical reality: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ... 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" (4.1).

Why then have evangelical and Reformed men come to question the historicity of Genesis 1-11?

This has been possible because of the doctrine of Scripture that has gained entrance into the churches. Scripture is regarded as a human book formed by a historical process. In Genesis 1 - 11 Scripture is a weak, fallible word of man on origins. John Romer is probably a little strong for some evangelical and Reformed defenders of a figurative interpretation of Genesis 1 -11, but he does accurately indicate what is going on in these circles as regards their doctrine of Scripture. In a semi-popular work on Scripture titled *Testament*, Romer states that the book of Genesis introduces us to the "world of myth." "Myth," he describes as "a sacred tale ... carefully designed [to] deal with the deepest issues of the day." How this has come about in the Bible, Romer explains this way:

This whole process began when the sagas of Mesopotamia were carefully re-examined by the authors of Genesis and the thoughts and structures of that most ancient story were turned to the purposes of Israel and their most singular and solitary God. [21](#)

Second, and no less significant, is the desire of evangelical and Reformed scholars to accommodate the church's thinking to the thinking of the world, the desire to make Christianity conform to the culture. This runs deep and strong in contemporary Protestant theology. The churches have abandoned the antithesis: the absolute spiritual separation between the world of the ungodly and the holy people of God, between the mind of the enemies of God and the mind of Christ in His friends.

One aspect of this suicidal mania is the conviction that to be respectable, to be attractive even, to educated modern man, the churches must adapt their thinking, their confession, and their Scriptures to the most recent scientific theory. They call the latest scientific theory "general revelation." Since the reigning theory is Darwinian evolution, Genesis 1 - 11 must dance to the tune played by that infidel scientist and his atheistic theory.

The Roman Catholic writer, Zachary Hayes, is refreshingly honest as to the reason why both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches now regard Genesis 1-11 as mythical. "The flat (*sic*), historical interpretation of *Genesis* is gone from virtually all theological presentations outside strictly fundamentalist (*sic*) circles.... The account is largely fictional in character and contains many symbolic and mythical elements...." The cause of the churches' new view of the opening chapters of the Bible is not exegesis of Scripture: "It would be quite incomplete to try to account for these changes solely in terms of the internal development of biblical exegesis." Rather, the cause is modern scientific theory, particularly Darwinian evolution: "The familiar theory, which was laden with inadequacies from the start, has become almost incomprehensible for a Christian who views the origins of the human race in terms of some form of evolution." Hayes gives fair warning: "One cannot open up the possibility of holding some form of evolution without opening a Pandora's box. Those who open that box must be willing to assume responsibility for dealing with the kinds of problems which emerge in many areas of theology." [22](#)

Many evangelical and Reformed scholars and churches are less candid in their explanations, or less developed in their thinking but they all indicate that their revised view of Genesis is due to the pressure of modern science, that is, the theory of evolution. The Christian Reformed "Committee on Creation and Science" consigned all of Genesis 1 - 11 to the realm of the unhistorical. The passage is a "special kind of historiography"; it gives us "primeval history." The reason for this analysis of the passage was "the impact of general revelation upon our understanding of special revelation." "General revelation" is modern evolutionary scientific theory. [23](#) N. H. Ridderbos indicated the underlying reason for his framework-hypothesis concerning Genesis 1 and 2 when he argued that "on any other view ... there arise grave difficulties with respect to natural science. [24](#)

What the cowardly churches are doing was perfectly symbolized by one of the most ironic incidents in church history. Upon the death of Charles Darwin, the Church of England buried that atheist, who did as much to destroy the church of Jesus Christ as any man in the modern era, with full honors in Westminster Abbey, with old, admitted reprobate Thomas Huxley carrying the casket. This really happened.

None of this implies that the mythologians do not take Genesis 1-11 very seriously and that they do not find much fine, spiritual meaning in this unhistorical section of Scripture.

On the contrary!

The story of creation brings out Israel's dependence on Jahweh, Israel's rejection of the heathen deifying of the creation, and Israel's confession that their God is God alone. The story of the fall is Israel's recognition that man is inherently sinful and needs redemption.

But none of this fine, spiritual and helpful application of Genesis 1-11 carries any weight, for it all rests on ... *myth*. It is all *man's* explanation of *man's* fictitious account of things. It all lacks ... well, *reality*. It is not *sound doctrine*. It is not *truth*.

I need to pay as much attention to Genesis 1 - 11, if it is myth, as I do to the story of Pandora's box, or to the myth of Marduk slaying and cutting up the monster Tiamat, or to the fairy tale of "Little Red Riding Hood." When the preacher who takes Genesis 3 as myth tells me that I need a redeemer in view of man's fallenness, I have but one response: "*Did* man really fall just as recorded in Genesis 3?" If not, I need no redeemer; rather, I need to evolve higher.

When the theologian who explains Genesis 2 as a myth calls me to live in one-flesh fidelity with my wife (and I notice that as the churches increasingly accept Genesis 1-11 as myth, they decreasingly call me to live in one-flesh fidelity with my wife), I have this question: "Is Genesis 2 a factual account of a historical institution of marriage by the Creator Himself?" If not, I am not bound by any law of faithfulness in marriage. I may live just as I please in marriage, or outside of marriage.

The child of God must have *history* in Genesis 1-11. Christianity must have history there, history that is clearly and reliably set down by divine inspiration.

History

The foundation of the entire Scripture (such was Luther's description of Genesis 1 - 11) is history. The events recorded there *happened*, in and with time. They happened *as is recorded*. Only if they happened *as Scripture records them as happening* are the events historical. The subtle mythologists, aware of how much is at stake here, assure us that they maintain the "historicity" of the events in Genesis 1-11. What they mean is that the myths found on the opening pages of Scripture have a certain rootage in things that did really happen in the dim and distant past. What these things may have been, how they actually happened, and in what way they are related to the mythical representations of them in Genesis 1-11, however, no one knows.

The highly reputed evangelical Henri Blocher is representative. In his exposition of the opening chapters of the Bible, with regard particularly to the account of the fall in Genesis 3, Blocher strongly affirms the importance of "the historicity of the content of Genesis 3." Such is the importance of the historicity of Genesis 3, according to Blocher, that "along with ethical monotheism and the doctrine of sin . . . nothing less than the gospel is at stake." The unwary Christian and the trusting church suppose that Blocher is teaching that Genesis 3 is history. They are deceived. Blocher denies the reality of the two trees, the reality of a speaking serpent, and the reality of the creation of a woman--Eve-- from a rib of a man--Adam. Blocher subtly distinguishes between "a historical account of the fall" (which, according to him, Genesis 3 is *not*) and "the account of a historical fall" (which, according to him, it *is*). Although Genesis 3 is "the account of a historical fall," the chapter is not historical. It is mythical. [25](#)

Genesis 3 is historical inasmuch as, and only inasmuch as, it is not only the account of a historical fall but also a historical account of the fall. In Genesis 1-11 the Holy Spirit describes events as they happened. Genesis 1-11 is reality.

But the reality of Genesis 1-11 is far more than that the events merely took place. They took place as acts of the triune, living God. which He did before His own face, according to His counsel. His purpose with them was to give Jesus Christ the preeminence in all things (Col. 1:13-20). *This* is the historicity of Genesis 1-11. *This* is its reality, its truth. And all this history was written down by Moses, who wrote not one word of his own private interpretation or by his own will, but who wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet. 1:20, 21).

Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not excluded from the inspired account of historical events. As a historical Genesis 1-11 is fundamental to the rest of Scripture, a historical Genesis 1:1-2:3 is fundamental to the rest of Genesis 1-11. And the content of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is the "days"--six days of divine creation, each consisting of one evening and one morning, and one day of divine rest. If the days of Genesis 1 and 2, their order, and the speech and acts of God on the days are not historical, that is, if the events of Genesis 1 and 2 did not happen as Genesis 1 and 2 record them as happening, nothing in Genesis 1-11 is historical. The issue in the controversy, "Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?" is the historicity of Genesis 1:1-2:3, that is, real days of one evening and one morning, in the order given, with God's doing on each of them what the passage says He did.

Because Genesis 1-11 is history, the passage has meaning for mankind, especially the believing church. What a superstructure of meaning is reared up on, and supported by, the foundation of the history of Genesis 1 - 11. Genesis 1 - 11 sets forth the origin of all things: the universe, including time and space; man: marriage and the family; the basic ordering of man's life in a week of six days of work and one day of rest; sin; the curse and death, not only for the human race, but also for the brute creation; the gospel and the Savior who is promised by the gospel; the antithesis between godly and ungodly; and the nations.

The origin of Israelis also to be found in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Israel's origin in Scripture is not in Genesis 12 in the call of Abram. Rather, it occurs in Genesis 9:26 in the blessing of Shem.

All of this solid reality of origins fades into a mist of fantasy if Genesis 1 - 11 is mythical.

Not only is Genesis 1 - 11 the all-important account of the origin of all things, but this passage is also the foundation of all Christian doctrines and ethics. It is the foundation of all the great doctrines of the faith: creation, fall, and redemption; man as the image of God; original sin and total depravity; atonement and. thus. the satisfying of the justice of a righteous God; and salvation by a substitute--a federal head, just as Adam was a federal head.

Upon Genesis 1-11 depends also the doctrine of an eschatological destruction of the world, out of which will come a new world of righteousness. The one historical evidence that the believer can appeal to against the scoffers who challenge his hope of an end of the world at Christ's coming is the flood (II Pet. 3:1-7).

If Genesis 1-11 is not history, all these doctrines are lost.

The figurative interpretations in evangelical and Reformed churches of the opening chapters of Genesis are presently serving the theory of theistic evolution. If theistic evolution is the real

explanation of the origin of our world, death has been in the world from the very beginning as a natural part of the process of evolution and man has been morally weak and sinful from his appearance from the primates. Since theistic evolution is the means that God used to create the world and man, God Himself is responsible for death in the world and for man's sinfulness. There is then no such thing as original sin, particularly original guilt that is imputed to every child of a real Adam, who, being sinless, disobeyed a command about a piece of fruit. And if there is no original sin, indeed no sin at all, there is not, and need not be, a Redeemer, who delivers by becoming sin for sinners.

Just as all doctrine is lost, if Genesis 1 - 11 is a myth, so also are lost all the ethical teachings of the Christian religion. Genesis 1-11 is the foundation of the Christian life. It is the foundation of the calling to love, fear, obey, and serve God our Creator and Savior. This is the primary duty of our life. And this is the primary cause of the attack on the doctrines of creation and the fall by the theory of evolution, which attack is accommodated by reducing the opening chapters of the Bible to myth. Darwinian evolution is not physical science, not even mistaken physical science. It is spiritual revolution against the sovereign Creator, before whom men and women must bow and to whom they are responsible.

Genesis 1 - 11 is the foundation of the calling to love the neighbor, for the passage teaches that the neighbor is created and put next to us by God.

It is the foundation of the calling ordinarily to marry and then to live faithfully with the one woman or the one man for life. At the beginning of the 21st century in depraved Western society, it is necessary to specify that Genesis 1-11 is the foundation of the calling to marry someone *of the opposite sex*.

The opening chapters of Genesis are the foundation of the order in the home that consists of the willing headship of the husband and father and of the equally willing submission of the wife and mother.

Genesis 1-11 is the foundation of work--six days of work, as it is the foundation of the rest of the weekly Sabbath.

Third, the importance of Genesis 1 - 11 as historical truth is this, that on the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11 depends our knowledge of God. Upon Genesis 1-11 depends our knowledge of God as Creator, as covenant Friend, as Judge, and as Savior. "In the beginning, God!" To transform Genesis 1-11 into myth is to make atheists out of us. This is what has actually happened in churches where Genesis 1-11 came to be regarded as mythical. Before a church succumbs to the thinking that Genesis 1-11 is myth, believers in this church should do themselves and their children a favor and examine the churches that have already yielded to the mythologians--the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*: GKN), the Presbyterian Church (USA), and others. They are full of people who no longer believe in the Christian God and are ready, therefore, to worship the idols.

Charles Darwin himself is an example. Doubt about the historicity of the opening chapters of the Bible made an atheist out of him. Warfield gives the chilling account of Darwin's religious development in his essay on the *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*.

As he [Darwin] wrought out his theory of evolution, he gave up his Christian faith--nay, ... his doctrine of evolution directly expelled his Christian belief. How it operated in so doing is not difficult dimly to trace. He was thoroughly persuaded (like Mr. Huxley) that, in its plain meaning, Genesis teaches creation by immediate, separate, and sudden fiats of God for each several species. And as he more and more convinced himself that species, on the contrary, originated according to natural law, and through a long course of gradual modification, he felt ever more and more that Genesis "must go." But Genesis is an integral part of the Old Testament, and with the truth and authority of the Old Testament the truth and authority of Christianity itself is inseparably bound up. Thus, the doctrine of evolution once heartily adopted by him gradually undermined his faith, until he cast off the whole of Christianity as an unproved delusion.... Here is the root of the whole matter. His doctrine of evolution had antiquated for him the Old Testament record; but Christianity is too intimately connected with the Old Testament to stand as divine if the Old Testament be fabulous. [26](#)

The secular thinker, John Herman Randall, Jr., has warned the church that the truth of a Creator God is ruled out by evolutionary science:

The very form of nineteenth-century evolutionary science has made that idea [namely, an "external Creator"] all but impossible and substituted for it the notion of a God as immanent, as a soul or spirit dwelling within the universe and developing it through long ages. [27](#)

If Genesis 1-11 is myth, atheism is warranted. On the day that I am convinced that Genesis 1-11 is mere myth, because God Himself convinces me through evolutionary science (I write nonsense), on that day I will renounce Christianity and Christianity's God. And if at the end of the day I must stand before God to give account of my apostasy, I will defend my renunciation of Christianity with a defense that He Himself will not be able to gainsay. "You yourself," I will say, "made the Christian faith and the knowledge of yourself depend upon Genesis 1 - 11, but this worthless "Scripture" was only a myth. I put no stock in myth, and no self-respecting God, worthy of my time and worship, should have put any stock in it either."

But this is foolish talk. Genesis 1-11 is history. And the true church has always proclaimed it as history.

The reason why the true church and the genuine believer have always received Genesis 1-11 as history is not extra-biblical evidences that prove, or are thought to prove, the historicity of the biblical record. Extra-biblical evidences for the truth of creation as taught in Genesis 1 and 2 mean as little to the church as someone's finding a piece of wood on Mt. Ararat would mean

for the church's belief of the biblical account of the flood. The church's faith concerning Genesis 1-11 does not rest at all on anything outside Genesis 1 - 11 and outside the rest of Scripture. Just for this reason, nothing, absolutely nothing, can shake the church's faith concerning the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11.

I have to smile when the evangelical and Reformed mythologians pile up their impressive findings and authorities, to convince us that Genesis 1-11 is myth, or primeval history, or literary genre, or some other euphemism meaning unhistorical. The mythologians do not understand. If an angel from heaven appeared to tell us that Genesis 1 - 11 is myth, not only would we not believe him, but we would also curse him as a devil and deceiver (Gal. 1:8, 9).

Believers receive Genesis 1 - 11 as historical because Genesis 1 - 11, the Word of God, claims to be historical. Read it! Believers receive Genesis 1 - 11 as historical because it is the testimony of Jesus Christ and the apostles that the Old Testament passage is history. Hebrews 11:3 testifies to the historicity of the account of creation. Matthew 19:3ff. testifies to the historicity of the entire account of Adam and Eve. Romans 5:12ff. testifies to the historicity of the record of the fall. I Peter 3:20 testifies to the historicity of the Genesis flood. Acts 17:26 testifies to the historicity of the account of Babel. And believers receive Genesis 1 - 11 as historical because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our heart that the testimony of God the Holy Spirit on the pages of Holy Scripture is true, whereas every man is a liar.

But how can anyone maintain that Genesis 1-11 is history, it will be asked, in the face of the contradiction of this by general revelation, by "Science," and by virtually all the scholars within the churches as without.

First, the Reformed believer permits nothing to set aside, or overrule, the teaching of Scripture. Is not the great Reformation-principle just this: "Scripture alone"? With specific reference to God's revelation of Himself in creation and history, general revelation does not control Scripture. Rather, the believer receives and interprets general revelation in the light of Scripture. The notion that the revelation of Scripture on origins in Genesis 1-11 is quite obscure so that it must be enhanced and corrected by the brighter light of general revelation is folly on the very face of it. As regards origins, Scripture is perfectly clear. It could not be clearer. In comparison with general revelation, as regards the truth of creation, God "makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word" (Belgic Confession, Art. 2).

In addition, the content of general revelation regarding creation is limited. General revelation makes known only that God made the world. It testifies to the Creator (Rom. 1:1 8ff.). Scripture reveals far more. Scripture reveals *how* the Creator brought the universe into existence.

Second, the Reformed believer is not awed by "Science." As regards genuine science--the investigation into and knowledge of some aspect of creation in submission to the Word of God--the Reformed faith is no enemy of science; nor is science an enemy of the Reformed faith. There is even a good case to be made, that the Christian faith, especially through the Protestant Reformation, gave birth to modern science. But the Reformed believer is well aware, or should be, that "Science," that is, autonomous man's sovereign reason and research, is one of modern man's favorite gods. In maintaining the authority of God's Word in Genesis 1-

11 and in confessing the wonder of biblical creation, the Reformed believer is obeying the first commandment: Thou shalt have no other gods before me, specifically the god, "Science."

Besides, the Reformed believer does not confuse modern evolutionary scientific theory with science. Modern evolutionary scientific theory is sheer nonsense. It is unproved, unprovable foolishness. The theory was proposed, not because it was proved, but because unbelieving scientists found the alternative--creation--repugnant. The philosopher, Fichte, expressed the real reason for the adoption of evolution as the explanation of origins. Creation, he said, is the basic error of all thinking and of all religion, because creation confronts man with a sovereign God. [28](#)

Darwin himself freely admitted the lack of evidence for the notion that is basic to his evolutionary theory, namely, the development of one species from another by "intermediate links." In *The Origin of Species*, he wrote:

Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely-graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory. [29](#)

In his ecstatic welcome of Darwinian evolution, the Anglican clergyman Charles Kingsley, managed to combine all of these errors--honoring general revelation above Scripture, worshipping "Science," and confusing the latest theory of a scientist with science. "Science is the Voice of God--her facts, His words--to which we must each and all reply, 'Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'" [30](#)

Third. science cannot possibly get at the events recorded in Genesis 1 - 11, to analyze, judge, and confirm them. Creation itself was a wonder. As a wonder it is as little accessible to the scientist's tools of investigation as is the resurrection of Jesus. The wonder is known only by faith, which humbly and thankfully receives God's Word about the wonder.

In addition, between God's work of creation, as described in Genesis 1 and 2, and present-day science lie two barriers that scientific effort cannot penetrate: the fall with the attending curse on all creation and the flood which destroyed the world that then was, bringing about an entirely new form of the world (Gen. 3:17, 18; II Pet. 3:6). No scientific instrument can reach back beyond the flood. The world before the flood cannot even be known by any scientific theory, since scientific theories work on the basis of the principle of uniformitarianism. But as the apostle declares in II Peter 3:1-7, it is not true that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." In the flood--the real, historical flood of Genesis 6-8, not the pitiful, mythical puddle of a local flood in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers [31](#) -- the watery "world that then was perished"; out of the flood came the present fiery world. The only knowledge that anyone has, or can have, of the world before the flood is that given by God Himself in Genesis.

Fourth, the opinions of the scholars, particularly the theologians. that Genesis 1 - 11 is myth, mean nothing to the Reformed Christian. At the Reformation, virtually all the scholars opposed the Reformation and its gospel. Learning and scholarship were the enemy. For the most part, it

is the same today. This is not a reflection on learning and scholarship, but on the vainglorious, treacherous, cowardly men and women who use these good gifts of God to criticize His Word, deny His wonderful works, and wreak havoc on His church.

Recently, A. M. Lindeboom has written a book on the spiritual destruction of the once glorious Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). These churches have fallen away from Christ. They believe nothing of the gospel. They practice every corruption, no matter how vile. This awful--and rapid--apostasy began with an arrogant intellectualism that challenged the authority of Scripture. The challenge began at the opening chapters of Genesis. The reason? "The doctrine of evolution, which is taught in schools and universities everywhere in the world as an established fact." The title of Lindeboom's book is *De theologen gingen voorop--The Theologians Led the Way*. [32](#)

Fifth, the believer who reads Genesis 1 - 11 as history cannot be moved by ridicule. There is such ridicule. Nor does it come only from "liberal" quarters. "Do you still believe such absurdities as creation in six real days, God's forming a man out of real dust by His own hand, God's forming a woman out of a real rib of the man, and a speaking serpent?" "Fundamentalist!"

This cannot move the believer, because by the grace of God he has already believed a far more impossible impossibility and a much more ridiculous absurdity: the incarnation of God by a virgin birth, in order to redeem sinners by a cross. What is creation in six real days, forming a woman from a rib, and a speaking serpent in comparison with this? The Christian glories in the absurdities of the faith. If he does not, with Tertullian, quite believe *because* the truth is absurd, the absurdity of the truth certainly poses no problem to his faith. Does not the Word itself tell him that God's wisdom is foolishness to the ungodly world and to the mind of the natural man? (I Cor. 1:18-31; 2:14) With Abraham and Mary, the Christian believes the impossible, because his God--the God of Christianity--does the impossible.

This brings us to the heart of the issue, "Genesis 1 - 11: Myth or History?" namely, Jesus Christ.

Christ

Out of a mythical Genesis 1-11 comes a mythical Christ.

This is necessarily so. First, the thinking that sets Genesis aside as a human word must also set aside the gospels as a human word. Second, if there never was a historical fall from the sinless height of a historical creation of a historical Adam, there is no need for a historical Jesus. Third, the Bible itself makes Jesus analogous to, and dependent upon, Adam (Rom. 5:12ff.). No Adam, no Christ! Fourth, Jesus Christ comes out of the womb of the promise of Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." But to whom did Jehovah God speak the words in which this promise--this "mother-promise"--is found? To the speaking serpent! Deny the historicity of Genesis 3, deny the historicity of the speaking serpent, and you annihilate the promise whence Jesus the Christ has come. No speaking serpent, no Savior!

A mythical Genesis 1 - 11 means a mythical Christ. But a mythical Christ did not die for our sins. A mythical Christ cannot forgive us our very real sins. A mythical Christ will not go with us through the valley of the shadow of death. A mythical Christ will not raise our body from the grave. Only the historical Christ did and will do these things.

The historical Christ makes a historical Genesis 1 - 11 the foundation of Himself and His work. His coming is by promise made to Adam and Eve in a garden in Eden in view of their disobedience to God's command concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He came to redeem men and women originally made by God in God's own image from the sin and death of the fall. As Adam's disobedience, so Christ's obedience (Rom. 5:12ff.). As Adam's plunging all into death, so Christ's making alive (I Cor. 15:21, 22).

The historicity of Genesis 1 - 11 is the foundation of Jesus Christ in another way. Christ was God's goal, or purpose, in creating the world, as well as in God's providential government of the course of the creation thereafter.

By him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (Col. 1:16-20).

Creation was for Christ. Every event in Genesis 1-11 happened for the sake of Christ. The end that the beginning of Genesis 1:1 and all that follows in Genesis 1-11 look to is the new world of Revelation 21 and 22, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and renewed by His Spirit. Upon the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11 depends the reality of the coming Day of Christ, our hope.

Compromise

There may be no compromise with the denial of the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11. But the evolutionary theory of origins necessarily involves the dismissal of the opening chapters as non-historical. Among many others, David Lack, himself an ardent proponent of Darwinian evolution, has stated this bluntly:

While Darwinism was widely supposed to contradict the accuracy of the Bible. what it actually challenges is the literal rendering of the first three chapters of Genesis, and if these are properly to be regarded as allegorical, no conflict need arise. [33](#)

There may be no compromise, therefore, with the evolutionary theory of origins. None.

Benjamin B. Warfield's surrender of the historicity of the biblical account of creation to Darwinian evolutionary theory was shameful. Warfield made epochs of the days of Genesis 1, allowed for what today is known as the theistic evolution of all the forms and species other than man, and found acceptable the biological development of man from the apes *as regards the body*. So far would Warfield go with Darwin. Only the soul of man could not have derived from the beasts. This, God had to slip into brutish Adam as a kind of aboriginal *deus ex machina*.

If under the directing hand of God a human body is formed at a leap by propagation from brutish parents, it would be quite consonant with the fitness of things that it should be provided by His creative energy with a truly human soul. [34](#)

As regards the biblical account of the creation of Eve, which cannot be harmonized with theistic evolutionary theory and which is virtually impervious to exegetical manipulation, Warfield, though he recognized the difficulty, suggested that the creation of Eve from a rib of Adam could somehow be explained away so as to allow for the evolutionary development also of the body of the woman.

I am free to say, for myself, that I do not think that there is any general statement in the Bible or any part of the account of creation, either as given in Genesis 1 and 2 or elsewhere alluded to, that need be opposed to evolution. The sole passage which appears to bar the way is the very detailed account of the creation of Eve. It is possible that this may be held to be a miracle (as Dr. Woodrow holds), or else that the narrative may be held to be partial and taken like the very partial descriptions of the formation of the individual in Job and the Psalms, that is, it teaches only the general fact that Eve came of Adam's flesh and bone. [35](#)

At the end of his consideration of the life of Charles Darwin, self-confessed unbeliever and enemy of the Christian faith, Warfield could write: "We stand at the deathbed of a man whom, in common with all the world, we most deeply honor." [36](#)

Warfield refused to oppose the evolutionary theory of origins with its concomitant reduction of the opening chapters of Genesis to myth. Instead, he approved it. Thus, Warfield contributed greatly to the destruction of his Presbyterian Church as a Christian body. Warfield's error is now doing grave damage to conservative evangelical, Reformed, and Presbyterian churches on a wide front. In almost all the conservative churches and seminaries, the theologians are appealing to the great Princetonian in defense of their own acceptance of evolution and rejection of the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2. [37](#)

This appeal to Warfield is not without its value. It indicates how far those who make the appeal have gone in their own thinking and how far they are willing to have their churches go. Usually these theologians are quite reticent about their own views, contenting themselves with striking out against the "fundamentalism" and "anti-intellectualism" of those who insist on a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2 as history. By appealing to Warfield, these men show, at the very least, that they are open to epochs of millions of years, theistic evolution as the explanation

of all the forms and species other than man, the biological descent of man from the beasts as regards his body, and even "Adam's" begetting of "Eve's" body from a primate. How such thinking answers the question, "Genesis 1 - 11: Myth or History?" is plain to all.

What explains the vulnerability of Warfield and other otherwise orthodox men of his day to the pressures of evolutionary scientific theory? The explanation is fourfold. First, the assault on the doctrine of creation and on the inspiration of Genesis 1 - 11 by the enemy of the Christian faith and its God in these last days is powerful and crafty.

Second, Warfield was mistaken in his thinking about general revelation. He supposed that general revelation and Scripture are two equal authorities for Christians. Indeed, in practice Scripture must give way to general revelation. Warfield then naively identified the latest scientific theory with general revelation. Worse still, Warfield thought that God's revelation of Himself in creation to unbelievers, for example, Charles Darwin, resulted in right knowledge of God as Creator, so that the Christian church is required to yield to Darwin's proclamation of the truth of God. Darwin is virtually a herald of God in the world! Warfield confused general revelation with natural theology. [38](#)

Third, Warfield was not sufficiently impressed with the total depravity of the mind, or reason, of the ungodly. This is also a fundamental error in Warfield's apologetics. Ungodly scientists, for example, Charles Darwin and Thomas ("Dr. Beelzebub") Huxley, do not think neutrally, much less favorably, about God and His Word on the basis of raw data. They theorize in enmity against God and His Word. Their scientific theories are the weapons of their warfare against the church.

Fourth, Warfield's attitude toward the culture of the world of the ungodly, especially the culture of the universities, learning, and science, was not antithetical. It was not the attitude of spiritual separation and warfare. Relations between the Presbyterian Church and its colleges, on the one hand, and the surrounding culture, on the other hand, were friendly. The world would bless the church through its learning, and the church would Christianize the world with its theology. No doubt, the theory of common grace helped to frame this attitude. [39](#)

Whatever the reasons, by his concessions and compromise, Warfield sold out the historicity of Genesis 1-11.

There may be no compromise with Darwinian, or any other, evolutionary theory of origins. History has abundantly proved the truth of Darwin's own confidence, that the slightest concession to his theory invariably will result in complete surrender.

It early became a maxim with Darwin that those who went a little way toward his doctrine would eventually go much farther, and that those who went a great way, would eventually become converts. [40](#)

On the contrary, faithful churches, with their seminaries, must nail their colors to the mast on this issue. The Protestant Reformed Churches require all candidates for the ministry to believe

from the heart and to confess the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11, particularly the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2, that is, the seven days of creation and rest. The ministerial candidates must promise that they will not tolerate but oppose every form of the lie of the mythical nature of the opening chapters of the Bible. All members of the churches are required to believe the historicity of Genesis 1-11.

"Suffer the Little Children"

To us, the issue, "Genesis 1 - 11: Myth or History?" is not intellectual and academic.

In the Protestant Reformed Churches, the covenant children begin their catechism instruction at the age of five or six. These are the questions and answers that they learn in the first lessons of the first book:

"Who is your Creator? God."

"Did God create all things? Yes, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

"How do we know about this creation? God tells us about it in His Word, the Bible."

"Who are our first parents? Adam and Eve."

"How did Satan come to Eve? He used the serpent to talk to Eve."

"What did God promise? A Savior, to save us from our sin."

We want these little children to go to heaven. If they come to doubt all these answers as myth, they will go to hell as unbelievers. Whoever is responsible--parent, preacher, schoolteacher, theologian, or synod--it were better for them that a millstone were hanged about their neck and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea.

These little ones, who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, must believe a historical Genesis 1-11.

And the theologians are called, and privileged, to lead the way.

Endnotes:

1. C. F. Vosgen, cited in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. ed. Gerhard Kittel, vol.4, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, p.765. For a forthright acknowledgment that "myth" is, in fact, man's own creation of history, see W. Taylor Stevenson, *History as Myth: The Import for Contemporary Theology*, New York: Seabury Press, 1969.

2. Howard J. Van Till, *The Fourth Day: What the Bible and the Heavens are Telling Us about the Creation*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
3. *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till, Robert E. Snow, John H. Stek, Davis A. Young, Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
4. Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood. A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. The book was reviewed in the November, 1995 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. The quotations are found on pages 311, 312 of the book.
5. "Report 28: Committee on Creation and Science," in *Christian Reformed Church in North America: Agenda for Synod 1991*, Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church, 1991, pp.367-433.
6. Jan Lever, *Where are We Headed? A Christian Perspective on Evolution*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970, pp.25, 27. See also Jan Lever, *Creation and Evolution*, Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, distributed by Kregel's, 1958.
7. *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald Youngblood. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990. H. Wade Seaford, Jr. scoffs at the descent of the race from two parents on p. 163. Youngblood praises Seaford's commitment to the inspiration of Scripture on p. viii.
8. Charles E. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection: Resolving Conflicts between Science & the Bible*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986. See particularly pp. 214, 217.
9. Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation, and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, pp.16, 478-484.
10. Bruce Waltke, "The First Seven Days: What is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?" *Christianity Today*, April 12, 1988, pp.42-46.
11. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, Phillipsburg New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987, pp. 314, 3 5. Frame calls this figurative interpretation a "revised exegesis."
12. Lever, *Where are We Headed?*, p.23.
13. Waltke, "The First Seven Days," p.46.
14. N. H. Ridderbos, *Is There a Conflict between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957, p.45.
15. *Ibid.*, pp.70, 71. To his credit, Ridderbos did not try to hide these implications of the framework-hypothesis. Neither did he minimize the importance of them. He spoke of "two profound problems."

16. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol.1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958, p.185.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

18. *Ibid.*, p.237.

19. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973, p.298.

20. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol.1, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, pp.158, 159.

21. John Romer, *Testament*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988, pp.33. 39.

22. Zachary Hayes, *What are They Saying about Creation?*, New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

23. "Report 28," pp. 379-384.

24. Ridderbos, p.46.

25. Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, tr. David G. Preston (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984), pp.156-170. As evidence that the explanation of the opening chapters of Genesis as non-historical necessarily involves the denial of the fundamental Christian doctrine of original sin, Blocher's next book did this very thing: it denied original sin both as regards original guilt and as regards inherited corruption from our first parents. See Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

26. Benjamin B. Warfield, "Charles Darwin's Religious Life: A Sketch in Spiritual Biography," in *Studies in Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp.549, 550. Warfield knew. This makes all the more inexcusable Warfield's grievous compromise of the Christian doctrine of creation in the interests of accommodating Darwinian evolution and, with this, his mythologizing of Genesis 1 and 2. This article on Darwin's religious life is included in the recent volume of selected writings by Warfield on evolutionary science, *Evolution, Science, and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). The editors, Mark A. Noll and David N. Livingstone, intend that the book defend and promote theistic evolution and a "non-literal interpretation of the early Genesis narratives" among evangelicals, Reformed, and Presbyterians.

27. John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind. A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1940), p.276.

28. See Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation, & Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p.439.

29. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1958), p.287.

30. Cited in David Lack, *Evolutionary Theory and Christian Belief: The Unresolved Conflict* (London: Methuen, 1957), p.68.

31. For the denial of the historicity of the account of the flood in Genesis 6-9, see Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). The book indicates how deeply into Genesis 1-11 the myth has penetrated in confessionally Reformed churches and colleges today.

32. A. M. Lindeboom, *De theologen gingen voorop: Eenvoudig Verhaal van de Ontmanteling van de Gereformeerde Kerken* (Kampen: Kok, 1987). The quotation is from page 20, which is part of the chapter titled, "In the Grasp of Modern Science." The titles of the opening chapters of the book and their sequence tell the tale: "The Arising of Intellectualism"; "In the Grasp of Modern Science"; "Criticism of Scripture Begins" [with Genesis 1]; "Criticism of Scripture Continues"; "Concerted Advance" [upon all of Genesis 1-11]. The next chapter has the title, "The Son of God." It details the attack of the Dutch theologians in the GKN upon the Godhead, work, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ. "*De theologen gingen voorop!*" On the spiritual condition of the GKN, in addition to Lindeboom's book, see the GKN theologian H. M. Kuitert, *Do You Understand What You Read? On Understanding and Interpreting the Bible*, tr. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) and *I Have My Doubts: How to Become a Christian without being a Fundamentalist*, tr. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1993).

33. Lack. *Evolutionary Theory*, p.34. Lack, of course, is urging Christians to give up the view that these chapters are literally true" for the view required by evolutionary science, namely, that they are "allegorical." Lack is honest.

34. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Critical Reviews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p.138. Warfield is reviewing James Orr's *God's Image in Man*.

35. Benjamin B. Warfield, "Evolution or Development," in *Evolution, Scripture, and Science: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark A. Noll & David N. Livingstone (Grand Rapids: Baker, 20(X)), p.130

36. Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, p.580.

37. Instances of this widespread appeal include David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) and Noll & Livingstone, editors, *Evolution, Scripture, and Science*.

38. Rom. 1:1 8ff. teaches that the ungodly, including ungodly scientists (probably ungodly scientists *especially*), immediately hold under the knowledge of God that they have from creation, changing the truth of God, for instance, the truth of God as Creator, into a lie. This is all that they can do as totally depraved sinners. God's sole purpose with general revelation for the ungodly is to render them without excuse. David Livingstone traces the surprising readiness

of evangelicals to accept evolution to "the longstanding Puritan assurance that God had revealed himself both in the book of Scripture and in the book of Nature" (*Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, p. 169).

39. In his book, *Darwin on Trial*, Phillip E. Johnson notes that the early supporters of Darwin's theory of evolution "included not just persons we would think of as religious liberals, but conservative Evangelicals such as Princeton Theological Seminary Professor Benjamin Warfield." Johnson offers two reasons for this support: "(1) religious intellectuals were determined not to repeat the scandal of the Galileo persecution; and (2) with the aid of a little self-deception, Darwinism could be interpreted as 'creation wholesale' by a progress-minded Deity acting through rationally accessible secondary causes." See Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p.188.

40. William Irvine, *Apes, Angels, & Victorians: The Story of Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution* (New York: Time, 1963), p.174.