

THE DAYS OF GENESIS SECOND ARTICLE

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IV. The Fourth Commandment and the Scheme Six Plus One

The fourth commandment actually refutes the non-chronological interpretation of Genesis one. It is to the credit of Professor Ridderbos that he recognizes the difficulty and endeavors to provide an explanation.⁷² He candidly states that we do not know what led the Israelite to work six days and to rest a seventh, other than the influence of God's providence. Hence, the author of Genesis one could present his material in such a way as to give the impression that God worked six days and rested one day.

The "rest" of God, argues Ridderbos correctly, is to be regarded as creation's climax, and this rest was expressed by mentioning the seventh day. Man, according to the fourth commandment, is to work as God worked. He is not, however, to be a slave to his work, but, as God rested, so man at the proper time is to lay aside his work for rest. His work, like that of God, is to have the glory of God as its goal. The numbers of Genesis one, therefore, it is reasoned, have symbolic values.⁷³

⁷² *Quarterly*, p. 227.

⁷³ *Conflict*, p. 41. H. J. Nieboer (*Lucerna*, p. 645), in speaking of the problem, remarks, "het ligt echter voor de hand aan to nemen, dat voor ons als westerse mensen--met lineaal, weegschaal en chronometer--zich hier een probleem voordoet, dat voor de gelovige Israëliet, wiens cultus vol was van symbolische transposities, helemaal niet bestond". A position that requires this type of defense must be weak indeed. Ezekiel had a measuring rod (Ezekiel 40:3); Amos knew what a plumbline was (Amos 7:7); the ark was constructed according to certain measurements, so also were the tabernacle and temple. And as for the matter of weights we may note Deuteronomy 25:13-16. Nor should we forget Ahaz' sundial (Isaiah 38:8).

It should be noted that the seventh day is to be interpreted as similar

In accordance with his decree--for Ridderbos rightly desires to retain the idea that the Sabbath ordinance is rooted in creation--God designated the seventh day as a day of rest, and so the number seven became a sacred number, "the number of the completed cycle", and this pattern is presupposed in the ten commandments.

There are, however, serious difficulties in any attempt to square a non-chronological scheme of the days of Genesis with the fourth commandment. One must agree, whatever position he is defending, that, irrespective of their length, the periods mentioned in Genesis one may legitimately be designated by the Hebrew word יוֹם (day). The fundamental question is whether or not Genesis one presents a succession of six days followed by a seventh. According to Exodus 20 such is the case. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work", is the divine command, and the reason given for obedience thereto is rooted in God's creative work, "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth". Man, therefore, according to the Ten Commandments, is to work for six consecutive days, inasmuch as God worked for six consecutive days.

The whole structure of the week is rooted and grounded in the fact that God worked for six consecutive days and rested a seventh. For this reason we are commanded to remember (זָכוֹר) the Sabbath day. Man is to "remember" the Sabbath day, for God has instituted it. There would be no point in the command, "Remember the Sabbath day", if God had not instituted the day. The human week derives validity and significance from the creative week. Indeed, the very Hebrew word for week (שִׁבּוּעַ) means "that which is divided into seven", "a besevened thing".⁷⁴ The fourth commandment

in nature to the preceding six days. There is no Scriptural warrant whatever (certainly not Hebrews 4:3-5) for the idea that this seventh day is eternal. Visee (*op. cit.*, p. 640) is on good ground when he writes "En al evenmin laat zich als tegenargument (*i. e.*, against the position that the days were solar days) aanvoeren, dat de zevende dag, nog zou voortduren. De Zevende dag van Genesis 2:2 en 3 is kennelijk een dag in de bekende zin geweest, de dag, die God de HEERE als de dag, waarop Hij zelf gerust heeft (perfectum), voor zijn schepsel gezegend heeft."

⁷⁴ שִׁבּוּעַ -- lit., a heptad. The form appears to be a Qal passive participle, at least in passages such as Gen. 29:27, 28; Lev. 12:5; Jer. 5:24. On the

constitutes a decisive argument against any non-chronological scheme of the six days of Genesis one. And a non-chronological scheme destroys the reason for observance of a six-day week followed by a seventh day of rest.

The scheme of six days followed by a seventh is also deeply embedded in the literature of the ancient near east.

In Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic, for example, we read (lines 127-130),

Six days and six (nights)

Did the wind blow, the rain, the tempest and the flood
overwhelmed the land.

When the seventh day came, the tempest, the flood
Which had battled like an army, subsided in its on-
slaught.⁷⁵

The reference is to the six days of the downpour of the flood, days which are followed by a seventh. The meaning of course is that for a space of six days the winds blew and the rain fell. Certainly there would be no warrant for interpreting the phrase "six days" otherwise. Yet, inasmuch as it is used in precisely the same manner, if in the Gilgamesh epic the phrase "six days" means six consecutive days, why does it not have the same meaning in Exodus 20?

Again, in Tablet XI (lines 142-146) we read,

Mount Nisir held fast the ship and did not allow it to
move,

One day, a second day did the Mount Nisir hold the
ship firm.

A third day, a fourth day did the Mount Nisir hold the
ship firm.

other hand, in certain instances the word is written with a naturally long a, e. g., Dan. 9:24; Num. 28:26; Dan. 10:2, 3; Ex. 34:22.

⁷⁵ The text is found in R. Campbell Thompson: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Oxford, 1930. The comment of Bohl (*Het Gilgamesj-Epos Nationaal Heldendicht van Babylone*, 1952, Amsterdam, p. 81) is interesting. "Na een week (aanmerkelijk eerder dan volgens het bijbelse verhaal) houdt de vloed op." How else can the words of the text be understood? "Na een week" is the natural understanding that one would receive from the cuneiform text.

When the seventh day came,
I sent forth a dove and dismissed her.⁷⁶

Here the idea of succession is made very clear. The pattern is six successive days followed by a seventh. A similar pattern is given in the description of the loaves which the wife of Utnapishtim bakes for him.

His first loaf of bread was completely dried,
the second --- the third --- moist; the fourth white ---
the fifth moldy; the sixth just baked ---
the seventh - - - the man awoke (tablet XI, lines
215-218).⁷⁷

Here six distinct loaves are mentioned, and at the mention of the seventh, after the six have been described, Utnapishtim touches the man, and he awakes. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the order of the description of the loaves chronology is present.

In the Babylonian Creation Account (Enuma Elish) we read in the fifth tablet (lines 16, 17),

Thou shalt shine with horns to make known six days;
On the seventh day with (hal)f a tiara⁷⁸

Here the shining forth is to occupy the space of six days, and the seventh day which follows is climactic.

The same scheme of six days followed by a seventh is also found in the literature of Ugarit.⁷⁹ The following examples will suffice:

Go a day, and a second, a third, a fourth day,
a fifth, a sixth day, with the sun,
On the seventh day, then thou shalt arrive at Udm.
(Keret I iii, lines 2-4).

⁷⁶ Note the emphasis that is placed on the seventh day. "VII-a uma (ma) i-na ka-sa-a-di" (tablet XI, line 145). The same phrase i-na ka-sa-a-di is also used in line 129.

⁷⁷ Here again the seventh day is climactic.

⁷⁸ The text is given in L. King: *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, 2 vols., 1902. Cf. also A. Heidel: *The Babylonian Genesis*, Chicago, 1951, which gives an excellent translation and commentary.

⁷⁹ The texts will be found in Cyrus H. Gordon: *Ugaritic Handbook*, Rome, 1955, and in G. R. Driver: *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Edinburgh, 1956.

- - - - -remain quiet a day, and a second,
 a third, a fourth day, a fifth,
 a sixth day, thine arrow do not send
 to the town, the stones of thy hand
 in succession cast. And behold, the sun
 On the seventh day, etc.

(Keret I iii, lines 10-15).

Behold! a day and a second he fed
 the Kathirat, and gave drink to the shining daughters
 of the moon; a third, a fourth day, - - -
 - - - a fifth
 a sixth day - - - -
 Behold! on the seventh day - - - .

(Aqhat II ii, lines 32-39).

Behold! - - - - - day, and a second, did devour
 the fire - - - in the houses, the flames
 in the palace, a third, a fourth day,
 did the fire devour in the houses
 a fifth, a sixth day did devour
 fire in the houses, flames
 in the midst of the palaces. Behold!
 on the seventh day there was extinguished the fire.

(Baal II vi, lines 24-32).

From the evidence just adduced it is clear that in the ancient near eastern world there was recognized a scheme of six successive days or items followed by a climactic seventh. In its best known form this scheme appears in the ordinary week. That man thus began to distinguish the days did not derive from chance. It was rooted in the very creation. Men are to remember the Sabbath day for that was the day on which God rested from his labors. In adopting a six-day week climaxed by a seventh day of rest, mankind was obedient to its Creator, who also had worked for six days and rested on the seventh.

V. The Nature and Structure of Genesis One

Genesis one is a document *sui generis*; its like or equal is not to be found anywhere in the literature of antiquity.⁸⁰ And the reason for this is obvious. Genesis one is a divine revelation to man concerning the creation of heaven and earth. It does not contain the cosmology of the Hebrews or of Moses. Whatever that cosmology may have been, we do not know. Had they not been the recipients of special revelation their cosmology probably would have been somewhat similar to that of the Babylonians. There is no reason to believe that their ideas as to the origin of the heavens and earth would have been more "advanced" than those of their neighbors. Israel, however, was favored of God in that he gave to her a revelation concerning the creation of heaven and earth,⁸¹ and Genesis one is that revelation.

Genesis one is written in exalted, semi-poetical language; nevertheless, it is not poetry. For one thing the characteristics

⁸⁰ For this reason we cannot properly speak of the literary genre of Genesis one. It is not a cosmogony, as though it were simply one among many. In the nature of the case a true cosmogony must be a divine revelation. The so-called "cosmogonies" of the various peoples of antiquity are in reality deformations of the originally revealed truth of creation. There is only one genuine cosmogony, namely, Genesis one, and this account alone gives reliable information as to the origin of the earth. Nor is Genesis one an epic of creation, for an epic is actually a narrative poem that centers about the exploits of some hero. Whether in writing Genesis one Moses by divine inspiration was led to express the truth in a literary form, which by its use of recurring phrases and small compact units, was similar to literary forms of Canaan is difficult to determine. Gray, for example (*The Legacy of Canaan*, Leiden, 1957, p. 213), remarks that there are no exact replicas of the Canaanite literary types in the Old Testament although he does think that some of the main features and much of the imagery familiar in the Canaanite myth are found in the myth of the conflict of Cosmos and Chaos which, according to Gray, was adopted by the Hebrews. With this latter thought we cannot agree, for we do not believe that there is evidence extant to support the view that the Hebrews ever adopted any myth of the conflict of Cosmos and Chaos. The basic reason why Moses used the device of six days was that creation occurred in six days.

⁸¹ This conclusion follows inasmuch as Genesis one is a part of the holy Scriptures. *In Thy Word Is Truth* (Grand Rapids, 1957) I have set forth the reasons why I believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

of Hebrew poetry are lacking, and in particular there is an absence of parallelism. It is true that there is a division into paragraphs, but to label these strophes does not render the account poetic. The Bible does contain poetic statements of creation, namely, Job 38:8-11 and Psalm 104:5-9. Ridderbos aptly points out that if one will read Genesis 1:6-8; Job 38:8-11 and Psalm 104:5-9 in succession he will feel the difference between the Genesis account and the poetic accounts.⁸² The latter two passages are poetic for they contain parallelism, and it is this feature which is lacking in the first chapter of the Bible.

Genesis one is the prelude to a severely historical book, a book so strongly historical that it may be labeled genealogical. Indeed, the first chapter stands in an intimate relationship with what follows. By its usage of the phrase **הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ** Genesis 2:4a connects the prelude (Gen. 1:1-2:3) with the genealogical section of the book. It is an intimate relationship, for chapters two and three clearly presuppose the contents of chapter one. This is seen among other things in the usage of the phrase **יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים** which is intended to identify **יְהוָה**, with the **אֱלֹהִים** of chapter one.⁸³ Furthermore, chapter two assumes the creation of the earth, the heaven and the sea, the account of which is given in chapter one.

The chapter is thus seen to constitute an integral part of the entire book and is to be regarded as sober history. By this we mean that it recounts what actually transpired. It is reliable and trustworthy, for it is the special revelation of God. If this involves conflicts with what scientists assert, we cannot escape difficulties by denying the historical character of

⁸² *Conflict*, p. 36. The following quotation from Visee (*op. cit.*, p. 636) makes an interesting point. "In Genesis 2 komt wel een dichterlijk gedeelte voor. Reeds B. Wielenga heeft er op gewezen dat we in Adams bruidegomslied to doen hebben met het eerste lied. Maar juist dit om z'n poetische vorm in deze prozaische omgeving terstond opvallende lied accentueert destemeer het niet-poetisch karakter der eerste hoofdstukken." The reference is to Wielenga's book, *De Bijbel als boek van schoonheid*, Kampen, 1925, pp. 237, 238, a work which I have not seen.

⁸³ For examples of double names of deity in the ancient near east see the informative article of K. A. Kitchen: "Egypt and the Bible: Some Recent Advances", in *Faith and Thought*, Vol. 91, Nos. 2 and 3 (Winter 1959, Summer 1960), pp. 189, 190.

Genesis. We cannot agree, for example, with Vawter, when he writes, "It is therefore apparent that we should not be seeking a concord between the poetry of Genesis and the scientifically established data on the development of the universe".⁸⁴ To dismiss Genesis one as poetry, and it is Genesis one of which Vawter is speaking, is to refuse to face the facts.

At the same time, although Genesis one is an historical account, it is clear, as has often been pointed out, that Moses does employ a certain framework for the presentation of his material. This may be described by the terms fiat and fulfillment,⁸⁵ and the scheme may be represented as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. The divine speech | "And God said" |
| 2. The fiat | "Let there be" |
| 3. The fulfillment | "And there was" or
"and it was so" |
| 4. The judgment | "And God saw that it was good" |
| 5. Conclusion | "And there was evening
and there was morning" |

A careful study of Genesis one, however, will show that this arrangement is not consistently carried through for each of the days. Indeed, even the mere fiat-fulfillment is not con-

⁸⁴ *A Pathway Through Genesis*, New York, 1956, p. 48. Nor is it consistent to regard the entire chapter as a figurative scheme and yet hold that it teaches that God is the creator of all. For if we interpret the greater part of the chapter as not corresponding to what actually happened (and how can the non-chronological view escape this?) by what warrant may we say that Genesis 1:1 corresponds to what did happen? We have not then derived the doctrine of creation from this chapter by exegesis, but have simply assumed it in an a priori fashion. For the so-called "framework" hypothesis demands inconsistency of its adherents. It tells them that they themselves may choose what in Genesis one corresponds to reality. Surely such an hypothesis cannot be regarded as exegetically well grounded. Visee (*op. cit.*, p. 639) is to the point when he writes, "En niets geeft ons het recht allerlei zakelijke en feitelijke gegevens uit Genesis 1 to elimineren en het geheel to verschraken tot de hoofdsom, 'dat alles van God is.' "

⁸⁵ Oswald T. Allis: "Old Testament Emphases and Modern Thought", in *Princeton Theological Review*, Vol. XXIII (July 1925), p. 443. Kramer points out (*op. cit.*, p. 9) that the fiats of Genesis one have a parallel in the words of Enki, "Let him bring up the water, etc.". He also calls attention to the repetitions in lines 42-52 (cf. Gen. 1:11) and lines 53-64 (Gen. 1:12) and to the phrase "and it was indeed so" (hur he-na-nam-ma) as a correspondence to וַיְהִי־כֵן .

sistently maintained. Nor can we agree with Deimel that the writer has consistently employed seven different literary elements (the sacred number).⁸⁶ These are said to be (1) God said; (2) the fiat; (3) the fulfillment; (4) description of the particular act of creation; (5) God's naming or blessing; (6) the divine satisfaction and (7) the conclusion. These seven literary elements are thought to interlock in the following fashion.

I	7	6	IV
II	6	6	V
III	5	5	VI
	6	7	

But is this arrangement actually found in Genesis? In the opinion of the writer of this article these literary elements are more accurately enumerated as follows:

I 7 II 8 III 7, 6 IV 9 V 7 VI 5, 10

Thus, on the second day there is actually a double fiat, "let there be an expanse ... and let it be dividing". In response to this there is also a double fulfillment, "and God made ... and he divided". On the fifth day, to which the literary elements of the second day are supposed to correspond we find also a double fiat, "let the waters swarm ... let the birds fly". Corresponding to this, however, although three objects of his creative activity are mentioned, there is but one fulfillment, "and God created". Here, therefore, there is no perfect correspondence of form with the description of the second day.

Again, it is very questionable whether a true correspondence of form can be shown to exist between the third and the sixth days. With respect to the first work of the third day there are actually seven elements, for there is a double fiat, "let

⁸⁶ Anton Deimel: *Enuma Elis and Hexaemeron*, Rom, 1934, p. 80. "In dem obigen Schema entsprechen sich das 1. and 8. Werk in bezug auf die Zahl der Formeln, 2. and 5. in bezug auf *Zahl* and *Reihenfolge* der Formeln, 2. and 6., 3. and 7. in bezug auf die Zahl der Formeln" (p. 81).

the waters be gathered ... and let the dry land be seen". At this point, however, no fulfillment of these fiats is mentioned, but merely the statement, "and it was so". With respect to the first work of the sixth day, however, there are but five literary elements. There is but one fiat, "let the earth send forth", and this is followed by the statement, "and it was so". Then comes the actual fulfillment in the words, "And God made, etc.". This is quite different from the arrangement of the first work of the third day.

As to the second work of the third day there are six elements; one fiat ("let the earth send forth grass" etc.) followed by the words, "and it was so", and then the fulfillment, "And the earth sent forth grass" etc. Very different in arrangement, however, is the second work of the sixth day. True enough, there are here six elements, but they include a double fiat, followed by the fulfillment, "and God created", and a command of God. This is entirely different in arrangement from the second work of the third day. Furthermore, there is added to the second work of the sixth day an additional "and God said", and this is followed by an "and it was so", and the summary statement, "and God saw everything that he had made" etc., and then the conclusion in which the evening and morning are mentioned.

From this brief analysis, it is evident that we cannot find the exact correspondences which Deimel believes exist in the first chapter of Genesis. It is perhaps accurate to say that the account of creation is told in terms of fiat and fulfillment, although not even this arrangement is carried through consistently. Hence, it would seem that the primary interest of the writer was not a schematic classification or arrangement of material. His primary concern was to relate how God created the heaven and the earth. There is enough in the way of repetitive statement and schematic arrangement to arrest the attention, and when it has arrested the attention, it has fulfilled its function. The arrangement of the material serves the purpose merely of impressing upon the reader's mind the significance of the content.

VI. Survey of Genesis One: The First Day

What follows is merely a sketch of the contents of Genesis one, which seeks to point out the progress and development that characterize the chapter. It in no sense pretends to be a full scale commentary. The presence of this chronological succession of events constitutes one of the strongest arguments against any non-chronological view of the days.

Although the beginning of the first day is not mentioned in Genesis one, it would seem from Exodus 20:11 that it began with the absolute creation, the very beginning. After the statement of creation in verse one, the first divine act mentioned is the command, "let there be light". The conditions existing at the time when this command was uttered were those set forth in the second verse of the chapter. Against the dark background described in verse two the light shone forth. As a result of God's speaking, the light sprang into existence. This light is not an emanation from God, nor is it an attribute, but is the result of God's creative Word.

It must be noted that Genesis one teaches the creation of light before the sun, nor is this to be regarded as an accident. Even if the chapter be considered a mere human composition, we may be sure that its author knew well enough that the light of the present-day world comes from the sun. This representation was intentional. And it is well to note that Enuma Elish has the same order. Here also light comes before the sun. Not until the fifth tablet do we meet with a statement of the making of the heavenly bodies. In this respect therefore, namely, relating the production of the heavenly bodies after the existence of light, the Enuma Elish is in agreement with Genesis. When Apsu wishes to revolt, light is already present, for he says: "Their way has become grievous to me. By day I cannot rest, by night I cannot sleep" (1:37, 38). Heidel also points out that there was a radiance or dazzling aureole about Apsu (1:68), "He carried off his splendor and put it on himself".⁸⁷ And Marduk him-

⁸⁷ Cf. Heidel; *op. cit.*, p. 101. The light, according to Genesis, does not spring from water, nor is it the result of divine action upon the inert mass of *tehom* (Albright: "Contributions to Biblical Archaeology And Philology", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 43, p. 368). According to Genesis, light is the result of the creative Word alone. Nor can we say that in

self was a solar deity, "Son of the sun-god, the sun god of the gods" (1:102). In Enuma Elish light is really an attribute of the gods; in Genesis it is the creation of God. That such an order should be present in Enuma Elish is what might be expected, for this document represents the garbled version of the truth that finally trickled down to the Babylonians.

Is Genesis, however, correct in its teaching that light was created before the sun? Leupold well remarks, "But it ill behooves man to speak an apodictic word at this point and to claim that light apart from the sun is unthinkable. Why should it be? If scientists now often regard light as merely enveloping the sun but not as an intrinsic part of it, why could it not have existed by itself without being localized in any heavenly body?"⁸⁸ In an area so filled with mystery and about which we know so little, who can dare to assert that Moses is in error in declaring that light was created before the sun? Can one prove that the presence of light demands a light-bearer? What about the lightning flash? May there not have been rays of original light? We do not know; what can be said with assurance is that at this point Genesis makes no statement that scientists can disprove.

Perhaps one reason why Genesis mentions light before the sun is to disabuse our minds of the idea that light is dependent upon the sun and to cause us to turn our eyes to God as its creator. "Therefore the Lord", says Calvin, "by the very order of the creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon".⁸⁹ There is also a second reason for this order of statement. The light is necessary for all that follows, and Moses places emphasis upon, the light, mentioning it as the specific object of God's approval. Elsewhere we have only

throwing off the mythical point of view and adopting a cosmogony in which water was the primal element, Thales, founder of the Ionian school of philosophy, showed that he was influenced by a common milieu which also had influenced the writer of Genesis one.

88 H. C. Leupold: *Exposition of Genesis*, Columbus, 1942, p. 52. Cf. also the interesting remark of U. Cassuto (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part I, Jerusalem, 1953, p. 14), במציאות האור הם לפני יצירת המאורות אין כמובן, שום קושי שְהרי כל בן אדם יודע שיש אור גם בלי מאורות: אור הברקים למשל.

⁸⁹ John Calvin: *Commentaries on The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, translated by John King, Edinburgh, M.DCCC.XLVII, Vol. I, p. 76.

the general phrase without a specific object, "and God saw that it was good". Only in verse thirty-one is an object again introduced after the verb "saw." Thus:

verse 4 וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי טוֹב

verse 31 וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד

A contrast is thus shown to be present. The first work is pronounced good, and the completed creation likewise. Nor is it accidental that the light is seen to be good. The light is the necessary condition for the existence of all the works that follow in so far as these have respect to the earth. For life on earth light is necessary, and hence the creation of light is first mentioned.⁹⁰

The division between light and darkness as well as their naming is the work of God. When the light was removed by the appearance of darkness, it was evening, and the coming of light brought morning, the completion of a day. The days therefore, are to be reckoned from morning to morning,⁹¹ and the commencement of the first day, we believe, was at the very beginning.⁹²

⁹⁰ "Endlich ist -list, besonders vor der Trennung von חָשֶׁךְ die allge-
meinste, den Umfang des gesamten Chaos erfüllende Schopfung, die darum
geziemend am Anfang des Schopfungswerks steht" (Procksch; *op. cit.*,
p. 427). "das Licht ist Grundbedingg. aller Ordng. u. alles Lebens"
(Strack: *op. cit.*, p. 1). "ohne Licht kein Leben and keine Ordnung"
(Gunkel: *op. cit.*, p. 103).

⁹¹ "Mit der Reihenfolge Abend-Morgen wird ganz klar gesagt, Bass der
Tag mit dem Morgen beginnt" (Rabast: *op. cit.*, p. 48). When, however,
Rabast goes on to say, "Es heisst ja nicht, es war Abend, sondern es wurde
Abend. Der Abend ist also der Abschluss des Tages" (*op. cit.*, p. 48), he
apparently limits day to the period of light in distinction from the darkness.
But the six days of creation are not thus limited by the text. Procksch is
quite dogmatic (*op. cit.*, p. 427), "Die Anschauung des ersten Tages ist
also vom irdischen, 24 stundigen Tag eines Aquinoktiums hergenommen,
wegen v. 11-13 wohl des Frühlingsaquinoktiums, am Morgen beginnend,
am Morgen schliessend".

⁹² Cf. Keil (*op. cit.*, p. 51), "The first evening was not the gloom, which
possibly preceded the full burst of light as it came forth from the primary
darkness, and intervened between the darkness and full, broad daylight.
It was not till after the light had been created, and the separation of the
light from the darkness had taken place, that evening came, and after the
evening the morning; and this coming of evening (lit., the obscure) and
morning (the breaking) formed one, or the first, day. It follows from this

The Second Day

In the work of day one the emphasis falls upon the light, but in day two the earth is the center of attention.⁹³ Indeed, the purpose of the second day's work is to separate the earth from all that is beyond it. This is done by means of the firmament which divides the waters above it, i. e., beyond it, from those which are beneath it, i. e., those which adhere to the earth.⁹⁴

The order of Genesis, namely, the creation of the firmament after the light, is also paralleled in Enuma Elish. When Ti'amat is slain, Marduk split her open, and half of her he used to form the sky or firmament. Then he fixed the crossbar and posted guards that the waters in that part of her body which was used to form the sky should not escape. Crass as is this mythology it nevertheless reflects, albeit in a greatly mutilated form, the originally revealed truth that the firmament was made after the light and before the appearance of dry land.⁹⁵

From this point on, the chapter concerns itself with the

that the days of creation are not reckoned from evening to evening, but from morning to morning."

⁹³ "Eigentlich beginnt die Erschaffung der Welt erst mit der Feste (Vers 6); die Erschaffung des Lichts ist vielmehr Vorbedingung des Erschaffens der Welt" (Claus Westermann: *Der Schöpfungsbericht vom Anfang der Bibel*, Stuttgart, 1960, p. 17). This emphasis seems to be more accurate than that of Gunkel (*op. cit.*, p. 104) who labels the work of the second day "Schöpfung des Himmels".

⁹⁴ רָקִיעַ, i. e., that which is hammered, beaten out. Cf. Isa. 42:5; Ps. 136:6 and the Phoenician y-1)-in "plating" (Cooke: *North Semitic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1903, p. 75). Note also the LXX שְׁרָיִתִים and Vulgate *firmamentum*, which are satisfactory renderings. I am unable to accept the opinion that the waters above the expanse refer to the clouds, for this position does not do justice to the language of the text which states that these waters are *above* the expanse.

⁹⁵ The account of the making of the "firmament" is found on Tablet IV, lines 137-139, which may be rendered,

He split her open like an oyster? (nu-nu mas-di-e)
 into two parts,
 Half of her he set up, and the sky (sa-ma-ma)
 he made as a covering,
 He made fast the par-ku (crossbar? bolt?)
 and watchmen he stationed.

waters under the expanse. In the nature of the case the creation of the firmament must have preceded the division between land and earthbound waters; it could not possibly have followed it. The work of day two, therefore, has to be chronologically previous to that of day three.

The Third Day

Light has been created in order that the dry land may be adorned with verdure, and the firmament has been made that the waters underneath it may be gathered into one place. A twofold fiat introduces the work. First, the water under heaven is to be gathered into one place, and secondly, the dry land is to appear, and the fulfillment is simply stated by the words "and it was so". The magnitude of the work to be accomplished baffles the imagination and yet, in the simple words, "and it was so", the accomplishment is recorded. Nothing is said about means or method of accomplishment that we may concentrate in wonder and adoration upon him who alone can perform such a marvel. "Me will ye not fear, saith the LORD, or from before me will ye not writhe, I who have placed the sand as a boundary to the sea, an eternal statute, nor will it pass over it" (Jer. 5:22a).

If process is here involved, Scripture does not mention that fact; the entire stress appears to be upon the directness with which the task was accomplished. At the same time, it could well be that in this work of division there were tremendous upheavals, so that the mountains were formed and the processes of erosion set in motion.

The land is named, and from this point on the word indicates the dry land in distinction from the ocean. Likewise, the collection of the waters God called "seas", the word being plural in order to indicate the extensive and vast surface covered by water.

All has been preparatory for the second work of the third day, the covering of the land with foliage. With his word God empowers the earth to bring forth plants, and with this fact a certain progress in the order of statement may be noted. Up to this point all had been produced by God's creative word, and all that was produced was inorganic; light, firmament,

gathering of waters, dry land. With God's command to the earth, however, there comes into existence objects that are organic, and yet do not move about.

The language of verse eleven is closely guarded, for it precludes the idea that life can originate apart from God or that the earth of itself can produce life. The earth upon which man is to live is one that is hospitable to him, providing him with seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees, but it is only the creative command of God which makes this possible. In vegetation there is distinction, as in the entire creation, so that all man's needs will be met. This distinction together with the idea of propagation according to its kind,⁹⁶ supports the idea of order in the entire creation and yet at the same time emphasizes the individuality of each plant.⁹⁷

Lastly, it must be stressed that the plants and trees did

⁹⁶ The word רָקִיעַ in verse eleven, whatever its etymology, is a general term and is not the equivalent of our "species", as this word is technically employed. It does not rule out the production of freaks or the possibility of hybrids. It means merely that the producer will beget what is essentially the same as itself. Hence, this term clearly rules out the possibility of one "kind" reproducing anything that is essentially different from itself.

It is perhaps impossible to state precisely what range is included by the term רָקִיעַ . For that reason, it is wiser to speak in broad terms. The term would exclude the idea that man could have evolved from lower forms of life, from that which was not man. It would also exclude the idea that animal life came from plant life or that a fish might ever change into something essentially different from itself. Hence, caution must be exercised by those who classify animal and plant life. The following statement, appearing in *Bezinning, loc. cit.*, p. 19, by J. Veldkamp, is untenable as well as incautious, "Evolutie is een vaststaand feit. Niet alleen de evolutie in de soorten (sprekende voorbeelden zijn de ontwikkelingsreeken van zoogdieren, zoals paard, neushoorn en olifant), maar ook tussen de soorten (overgangen van vis naar amfibie, van amfibie naar reptiel, van reptiel naar vogel en zoogdier)". For one thing to describe the *ontwikkelingsreeken* in the kinds, the term evolution is inaccurate. Nothing has developed in a manner that was not essentially according to its kind. Great caution must be exercised in describing the so-called changes within kinds. The last part of Veldkamp's statement cannot be defended.

⁹⁷ "Es handelt sich hier lediglich um eine Einteilung der Pflanzen, die schon die praktische Verwertbarkeit für Mensch and Tier anzeigt; and these praktische Einteilung hat zu jeder Zeit ihre Bedeutung" (Rabast, *op. cit.*, p. 51). It should be noted also that the difference among the "kinds" of plants was original; they did not all "descend" from a common ancestor.

not have nor did they need the light of the sun. That this is a scientifically accurate description cannot be questioned,⁹⁸ but Calvin's beautiful statement probably brings out the basic reason, "in order that we might learn to refer all things to him, he did not then make use of the sun or moon" (*op. cit.*, in loc.). That the earth constantly produces for the benefit of man is not to be ascribed to "nature" but goes back to the creative Word of God.⁹⁹

The Fourth Day

If it be raised as an objection to the accuracy of the Genesis narrative that it is geocentric, the answer must be that it is geocentric only in so far as the earth is made the center of the writer's attention.¹⁰⁰ Even though we are dealing with a divine revelation, nevertheless the human author was a holy man who spake from God (II Pet. 1:21), and he wrote from the standpoint of an earth dweller. The most advanced astronomer of our day will speak of the sunrise and the sunset and of sending up a rocket. Such language is geocentric, but it is not in error. Genesis one also speaks from the standpoint of the earth dweller, and in that respect may be labeled geocentric, but none of its statements is contrary to fact. It does not claim that the earth is the physical center of the universe.

By means of the work of the third day the earth was prepared to receive its inhabitants. Before they are placed upon the earth, however, the present arrangement of the universe must be constituted. For the regulation of earth's days and

⁹⁸ "Durch bestimmte Experimente weiss man ferner, dass sogar die Pflanzen nicht vom Sonnenlicht abhängig sein müssen, so sehr sie es auch heute sind" (Rabast, *op. cit.*, p. 69).

⁹⁹ There is no evidence to support the contention of von Rad (*op. cit.*, p. 53) that the earth is called to maternal participation in the act of creation, or that ancient thoughts about a "mother earth" are prominent here. Nor is Gunkel (*op. cit.*, p. 104) correct in saying, "Zu Grunde liegt die Naturbeobachtung von der Fruchtbarkeit des Bodens, wenn er im Frühling soeben austrocknet".

¹⁰⁰ "It is not reflection on the Genesis account to say that it is geocentric. It is geocentric, because the earth is the abode of man and the scene of his redemption, the story of which is told in the Bible" (Allis: *God Spoke By Moses*, Philadelphia, 1951, p. 12).

seasons, there must now be light from a specific source which will rule the day and the night.

Hence, the sun and moon are made, a truth which is reflected even in Enuma Elish. In the Babylonian document, however, the order is reversed, namely, stars, moon and sun. In the ancient oriental religions, the stars were considered to be divinities, and possibly for that reason appear first in Enuma Elish. In Genesis, however, mention of the stars appears almost as an afterthought. This is intentional, for while it brings the stars into the picture, it does so in such a way that they are not made prominent.¹⁰¹ Emphasis is placed, not upon the stars, but upon God, their maker.

Marduk, in the epic, entrusts night to the moon, and what is said of the moon calls to mind the more beautiful biblical statement, "the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen. 1:16). The existence of the sun, however, is assumed in the Babylonian document, and there is no express mention of its formation.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Von Rad's comment (*op. cit.*, p. 43) is quite penetrating. "Vielleicht hangt mit dieser Betonung ihrer Kreaturlichkeit die merkwurdige Trennung von Lichtschopfung and Erschaffung der Gestirne zusammen. Die Gestirne sind in keiner Weise lichtschopferisch, sondern durchaus nur Zwischentrager eines Lichtes, das auch ohne sie and vor ihnen da war."

¹⁰² "Im babylonischen Schopfungsbericht ist die Erschaffung der Gestirne das erste Werk Marduks nach dem Drachenkampf." "Aber die Ahnlichkeit des Wortlauts der beiden Satze (i. e., Gen. 1:16 and Enuma Elish V. 12) macht hier den tiefen Abstand nur noch deutlicher. Der Mondgott Sin ist in Babylon einer der Hauptgotter; er war von uberragender Bedeutung in ganz friiher and dann wieder in ganz spater Zeit; aber von ihm kann gesagt werden; dass er von einem anderen Gott geschaffen and in sein Herrschaftsamt eingesetzt ist!" (Westermann: *op. cit.*, p. 20). We may render Tablet V:1-4 as follows:

He erected stations for the great gods
 The stars (kakkabani) their likenesses, the signs of the zodiac
 (lu-ma-si) he set up
 He fixed the year (satta), the signs he designed
 For twelve months (arhe) he set three stars each.

The creation of the moon is related in V:12 ff.:

The moon (^{il} Nannar-ru) he caused to shine forth, the night he
 entrusted (to her)
 He set her as an ornament (su-uk-nat) of the night unto the setting
 (i. e., the determining) of the days (a-na ud-du-u u-me).

Very different, however, is the narrative of Genesis. Here the sun is first mentioned, for the sun rules the day upon earth, and man, who is to rule the earth, needs the sunlight first and foremost. For the night time the lesser light-bearer is to rule. Of yet less importance for man are the stars, and hence they are mentioned last.

That the heavenly bodies are made on the fourth day and that the earth had received light from a source other than the sun is not a naive conception, but is a plain and sober statement of the truth.¹⁰³ It should be noted, however, that the work of, the fourth day is not a *creatio ex nihilo*, but simply a making of the heavenly bodies. The material from which the sun, moon and stars were made was created, i. e., brought into existence, at the absolute beginning. On the fourth day God made of this primary material the sun and moon and stars, so that we may correctly assert that the creation of these heavenly bodies was completed on this day. In similar vein we may also say that on the third day the creation of our globe was completed, although the primal material of the globe was first brought into existence at the absolute beginning. If we were to employ the language of day four with respect to the first work of day three we might then say that although the earth (i. e., in its original form) was created in the beginning, nevertheless, on day three God made the earth. Inasmuch as this is so, the formation of the heavenly bodies may be presumed to have proceeded side by

Monthly without ceasing with a tiara go forth (u-sir)
At the beginning of the month, (the time of) shining forth over
the lands

With horns shalt thou shine for the determining of six days

On the seventh day (i-na um 7-kam) with half a crown.

¹⁰³ "Nun ist darüber schon genug gespottet worden, dass hier das Licht vor den Himmelskörpern geschaffen wird. Naturwissenschaftlich ist dies heute kein Problem mehr, denn der Begriff Urstrahlung' besagt genau dasselbe." "Auch wird uns hier keine kindlich naive Auffassung vorgeführt, denn zur Zeit der Aufzeichnung der Genesis wusste wohl auch der Dummste schon, dass das Tageslicht mit der Sonne zusammenhangt" (Rabast: *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 48). And again, "Das Lachen darüber, dass es schon Licht vor der Erschaffung der Sonne gegeben haben muss, gehört einer vergangenen Zeit an, and eine solche Tatsache ist der modernen kosmischen Physik mit ihrer Urstrahlung` kein Problem mehr" (*idem*, p. 69).

side with that of the earth, and on day four their formation as sun, moon and stars was completed. The reason why Genesis says nothing about the step by step development of the heavenly bodies is that its purpose is to concentrate upon the formation of this earth.

The origin of heaven and earth, however, was simultaneous, but the present arrangement of the universe was not constituted until the fourth day. The establishment of this arrangement is expressed by the verb ׁוַיִּשְׂרָא , but we are not told how God "gave" or "set" these light-bearers in the firmament. What is of importance is to note that the universe is not an accidental arrangement, but was constituted in orderly fashion by God.

Day four and day one do not present two aspects of the same subject. Indeed, the differences between the two days are quite radical. On day one light is created (ׁוַיִּשְׂרָא) on day four God makes light-bearers. No function is assigned to the light of day one, but several functions to the light-bearers. God himself divides the light which he has created from the darkness;¹⁰⁴ the light-bearers are to divide between the light and the darkness. It is important to note this function. The light and the darkness between which the light-bearers are to make a division are already present. They have manifested themselves in the evening and morning which closed each day. How a division was hitherto made between them we are not told; it is merely stated that God divided between them (1:4). From the fourth day on, however, the division between them is to be made by light-bearers.¹⁰⁵ This

¹⁰⁴ "The creation of light, however, was no annihilation of darkness, no transformation of the dark material of the world into pure light, but a separation of the light from the primary matter, a separation which established and determined that interchange of light and darkness, which produces the distinction between day and night" (Keil: *op. cit.*, p. 50). "Die Scheidung (i. e., between light and darkness) ist raumlich, indem die Lichtmasse and die Finsternismasse je eine Hälfte des Chaos einnehmen, zugleich aber zeitlich indem Tag and Nacht entsteht" (Procksch: *op. cit.*, p. 427).

¹⁰⁵ ׁוַיִּשְׂרָא luminary. Von Rad (*op. cit.*, p. 42) thinks that the expression is intended to be prosaic and degrading (prosaisch and degradierend), and that these objects purposely are not named "sun" and "moon" in order to remove every tempting connection (in Umgehung jeder Versuchlichkeit). The words Shemesh and Yareach were of course names of divinities.

one consideration in itself is sufficient to refute the idea that days one and four present two aspects of the same subject. The light-bearers are made for the purpose of dividing between already existing light and darkness. Day four, we may assert with all confidence, presupposes the existence of the light which was created in day one and the darkness which was mentioned in verse two.

The Fifth Day

With the fifth day progress in the writer's mode of statement is apparent. There are now to be produced those creatures which are animate and which move about. Moses uses the verb **בָּרָא** to designate the creation of three varieties of creatures, namely, the great sea monsters, every living thing that moves about and every winged fowl.¹⁰⁶ Upon all of these a blessing is pronounced, and the content of that blessing is given. By means of the work of the first four days the earth is now prepared to receive life.

It goes without saying that day five does not form an adequate parallel to day two. The sea creatures of day five belong, not to the waters of day two but to the seas of the first work of day three. The seas were formed in day three; the primal waters, however, are mentioned as existing in verse two. Furthermore, the realm in which the birds are to rule is not the firmament but the earth, which also was made in day three.

¹⁰⁶ "Mit Nachdruck wird der Begriff **בָּרָא** v. 21 (cf. v. 27) dafür gebraucht wie v. 1, weil das Leben gegenüber der leblosen Schöpfung etwas spezifisch Neues ist, aus ihren Stoffen and Kräften unableitbar" (Procksch: *op. cit.*, p. 430). There is no evidence to support Procksch's statement, "der Begriff **בָּרָא** entspricht der Theologie von P, der Begriff wsm einer altertumlichen, von P wohl übernommenen Naturphilosophie, nach der, Mutter Erde' alles Lebendige auf ihr gebiert (cf. *ψ* 139, 15)" (*op. cit.*, p. 431). Aalders is in accord with the total scriptural emphasis when he writes, "Het spreekt vanzelf dat we hier evenmin als bij de plantenwereld to denken hebben aan een vermogen dat in de aarde zelf gelegen was ... door den Goddelijke wil kwamen de dieren uit de aarde voort" (*op. cit.*, p. 93).

The Sixth Day

As on the third so on the sixth day two works are mentioned. On the third day the earth had brought forth plants and on the sixth it is to bring forth the animals. Instead, however, of a statement that the earth did bring forth the animals, we are told that God made them (verse 25). It may be that this manner of statement is deliberately chosen to refute the concept of a mother earth, for in many of the cosmogonies of antiquity it is the earth which of herself produces the animals. Here the emphasis is upon the fact that God made the animals.

At the same time at this point (verse 25) Moses uses **הַשֵּׁשִׁי** and not **בְּרָא**. With **בְּרָא** (in verse 21) there had followed an accompanying blessing (verse 22), and likewise in the second work of the sixth day a blessing accompanies **בְּרָא**. Here there is no blessing, and hence; **הַשֵּׁשִׁי** is used. The blessing of the sixth day is not appended to each individual work but only to the second, the creation of man who is to rule over the animals. Hence, it may not be amiss to claim that indirectly, at least, the animals are blessed, even though no express blessing is pronounced over them.

That the creation of man is the crowning work of the narrative and presupposes what has previously been narrated, hardly needs to be mentioned. The second work of the sixth day presupposes the first, and both presuppose the work of the fifth day. Were this not so, the command to rule over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air (verse 28) would be meaningless.

That man is not merely one of the animals is also emphasized by the fact that God engages in deliberation with himself concerning the creation of man.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, man is created in the image of God, and upon him a divine blessing is pronounced in which his position as ruler over all things is set forth. The chapter then closes with a pronouncement as to

¹⁰⁷ "Aber ebenso klar ist auch, dass der Mensch grundsätzlich von alien Tieren verschieden ist. Das wird sogar schon rein formal deutlich gemacht: Einerseits wechselt noch einmal das Metrum in den Gottessprüchen." "Andererseits findet sich bei der Erschaffung des Menschen eine besondere feierliche Einleitung" (Rabast: *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 58).

the nature of all that God had made, namely, that it was very good.

It is this remarkable fact of progression, both in method of statement and in actual content, which proves that the days of Genesis are to be understood as following one another chronologically.¹⁰⁸ When to this there is added the plain chronological indications, day one, day two, etc., climaxing in *the* sixth day (note that the definite article appears only with the sixth day) all support for a non-chronological view is removed.

In this connection the question must be raised, "If a non-chronological view of the days be admitted, what is the purpose of mentioning six days?" For, once we reject the chronological sequence which Genesis gives, we are brought to the point where we can really say very little about the content of Genesis one. It is impossible to hold that there are two trios of days, each paralleling the other. Day four, as has already been pointed out, speaks of God's placing the light-bearers in the firmament. The firmament, however, had been made on the second day. If the fourth and the first days are two aspects of the same thing, then the second day also (which speaks of the firmament) must precede days one and four. If this procedure be allowed, with its wholesale disregard of grammar, why may we not be consistent and equate all four of these days with the first verse of Genesis? There is no defense against such a procedure, if once we abandon the clear language of the text. In all seriousness it must be asked, Can we believe that the first chapter of Genesis intends to teach that day two preceded days one and four? To ask that question is to answer it.¹⁰⁹

There is, of course, a purpose in the mention of the six days. It is to emphasize the great contrast between the unformed universe of verse two and the completed world of

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Young: "Genesis One And Natural Science", in *Torch and Trumpet*, Vol. VII, No. 4 (September 1957), pp. 16 f.

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that if the "framework" hypothesis were applied to the narratives of the virgin birth or the resurrection or Romans 5:12 ff., it could as effectively serve to minimize the importance of the content of those passages as it now does the content of the first chapter of Genesis.

verse thirty-one.¹¹⁰ Step by step in majestic grandeur God worked to transform the unformed earth into a world upon which man might dwell and which man might rule for God's glory. How noble and beautiful is this purpose, a purpose which is obscured and even obliterated when once we deny that the six days are to be taken in sequence. If Moses had intended to teach a non-chronological view of the days, it is indeed strange that he went out of his way, as it were, to emphasize chronology and sequence. We may recall the thought of Aalders that in the first chapter of Genesis there is not a hint that the days are to be taken as a mere form or manner of representation. In other words, if Moses intended to teach something like the so-called "framework theory" of the days, why did he not give at least some indication that such was his intention? This question demands an answer.

VII. The Real Problem in Genesis One

It is questionable whether serious exegesis of Genesis one would in itself lead anyone to adopt a non-chronological view of the days for the simple reason that everything in the text militates against it. Other considerations, it would seem, really wield a controlling influence. As it stands Genesis might be thought to conflict with "science". Can Genesis therefore be taken at face value?¹¹¹ This type of approach, however, as we have been seeking to point out, must be rejected. One who reads the Gospels will receive the impression that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ actually emerged from the tomb and that he rose from the dead. But will not this first-hand impression cause needless stumbling-blocks in the path of faith? If we wish to rescue thoughtful people from a materialistic conception of life will not our purpose be harmed by an insistence upon miracle? As a recent writer has said, "The school of opinion that insists upon a physical resurrection will not satisfy a scientifically penetrating mind".¹¹²

¹¹⁰ At least in a formal sense von Rad acknowledges this. "Wir sehen hier, das theologische Denken von 1. Mos. 1 bewegt sich nicht so zwischen der Polarität: Nichts-Geschaffenes als vielmehr zwischen der Polarität: Chaos-Kosmos" (*op. cit.*, p. 39).

¹¹¹ *Conflict*, p. 29.

¹¹² Cf. the letter of Robert Ericson in *Christianity Today*, Vol. VI, No. 1, (Oct. 13, 1961), p. 44.

Dare we reason in this way? If we do, we shall soon abandon Christianity entirely, for Christianity is a supernatural religion of redemption, one of its chief glories being its miracles. And this brings us to the heart of the matter. In the study of Genesis one our chief concern must not be to adopt an interpretation that is necessarily satisfying to the "scientifically penetrating mind". Nor is our principal purpose to endeavor to make the chapter harmonize with what "science" teaches. Our principal task, in so far as we are able, is to get at the meaning which the writer sought to convey.

Why is it so difficult to do this with the first chapter of the Bible? The answer, we believe, is that although men pay lip service to the doctrine of creation, in reality they find it a very difficult doctrine to accept. It is easy to behold the wonders of the present universe and to come to the conclusion that things have always been as they are now. To take but one example, the light of the stars, we are told, travelling at the rate of about 186,000 miles per second, in some instances takes years to reach this earth. Hence, men conclude it would have been impossible for the days of Genesis to have been ordinary days of twenty-four hours each.¹¹³

In other words in employing an argument such as this, we are measuring creation by what we now know, and whether we wish or not, are limiting the power of God. Why could not God in the twinkling of an eye have formed the stars so that their light could be seen from earth? We cannot limit the creative power of God by what we today have learned from his providential working.

Those catechisms and creeds which have made a distinction between God's work of creation and his work of providence have exhibited a deep and correct insight into the teaching of Scripture.¹¹⁴ Creation and providence are to be distinguished,

¹¹³ Allis goes to the heart of the matter when he says "We need to remember, however, that limitless time is a poor substitute for that Omnipotence which can dispense with time. The reason the account of creation given here is so simple and so impressive is that it speaks in terms of the creative acts of an omnipotent God, and not in terms of *limitless* space and *infinite* time and *endless* process" (*God Spake By Moses*, p. 11). Cf. also Allis' excellent article, "The Time Element in Genesis 1 and 2" in *Torch and Trumpet*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (July-August, 1958), pp. 16-19.

¹¹⁴ Thus, the Westminster Confession of Faith devotes a chapter to the

and it is not our prerogative, in the name of science, to place limits upon God's creative power. In a helpful article on "The Old Testament and Archaeology", William F. Albright wisely comments respecting the first chapter of Genesis, "In fact, modern scientific cosmogonies show such a disconcerting tendency to be short lived that it may be seriously doubted whether science has yet caught up with the Biblical story".¹¹⁵

If the church fathers had insisted that Genesis one conform to the "science" of their day, how tragic the result would have been. Had Luther done the same thing, the result would have been no better. And we must be cautious not to reject Scripture merely because at some points it may appear not to harmonize with what some modern scientists teach. Of one thing we may be sure; the statements of Genesis and the facts of nature are in perfect harmony.

The Bible does not state how old the earth is, and the question of the age of the earth is not the heart of the issue.¹¹⁶ What is the heart of the issue is whether God truly created or whether we, merely upon the basis of our observations of the universe, can place limits upon the manner in which God worked.

Although the Bible does not state the age of the earth, it does clearly teach that the world was created by the Word of God. The fiat was followed by the repetitive fulfillment. God spake, and his Word accomplished his will. It was a

work of creation (chapter IV) and one to that of providence (chapter V). The same distinction appears in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Questions 15-17 of the Larger Catechism deal with creation and questions 18-20 with providence. The Shorter Catechism devotes two questions (9, 10) to the work of creation and two (11, 12) to that of providence.

¹¹⁵ ed. Alleman and Flack: *Old Testament Commentary*, Philadelphia, 1948, p. 135.

¹¹⁶ "Scientists, who speak in terms of light years, and add cipher to cipher in estimating the time of the beginning of things, ridicule the idea of twenty-four-hour days. But when they multiply thousands to millions and millions to billions and billions to trillions, figures practically cease to have any meaning, and they expose their own ignorance. From the standpoint of those who believe in a God who is omnipotent, and who recognize that time and space are finite and created 'things', this adding on of ciphers is absurd. It is a distinct feature of the miracles of the Bible that they are limited neither by time nor space" (Allis: *God Spake By Moses*, pp. 10 f.).

powerful word that brought his desires to pass. "For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9); "by the word of God the heavens were of old" (II Pet. 3:5); "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3).¹¹⁷

Before the majestic declarations of Scripture we can but bow in humble reverence. How meager is our knowledge; how great our ignorance! Dare we therefore assert that only in such and such a manner the Creator could have worked? Are we really in possession of such knowledge that we can thus circumscribe him? Of course there is much in the first chapter of Genesis that we cannot understand. There is, however, one thing that, by the grace of the Creator, we may do. We may earnestly seek to think the thoughts of God after him as they are revealed in the mighty first chapter of the Bible. We can cease being rationalists and become believers. In the face of all the strident claims to the contrary we can believe, and we need never be ashamed to believe that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is" (Ex. 20:11a).

VIII. Conclusion

From the preceding examination of Genesis one there are certain conclusions which may be drawn.

1. The pattern laid down in Genesis 1:1-2:3 is that of six days followed by a seventh.
2. The six days are to be understood in a chronological sense, that is, one day following another in succession. This fact is emphasized in that the days are designated, one, two, three, etc.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ It must be noted, however, that process is not necessarily ruled out by the fiats. In the second work of the third day, for example, there could very well have been process. We cannot state to what extent process may have been present. Cf. Allis in *Torch and Trumpet*, vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 18.

¹¹⁸ There is no exegetical warrant to support the position (*Lucerna*, p. 645) expressed by H. Nieboer; "Gods scheppingsdagen (werkdagen of ook dagwerken) zijn steeds present en actueel (aldus dr. J. H. Diemer). De dagen-van-God zijn aspecten van zijn werkzaamheid, voorheen en

3. The length of the days is not stated. What is important is that each of the days is a period of time which may legitimately be denominated יום ("day").

4. The first three days were not solar days such as we now have, inasmuch as the sun, moon and stars had not yet been made.

5. The beginning of the first day is not indicated, although, from Exodus 20:11, we may warrantably assume that it began at the absolute beginning, Genesis 1:1.

6. The Hebrew word יום is used in two different senses in Genesis 1:5. In the one instance it denotes the light in distinction from the darkness; in the other it includes both evening and morning. In Genesis 2:4b the word is employed in yet another sense, "in the day of the LORD God's making".

7. If the word "day" is employed figuratively, i. e., to denote a period of time longer than twenty-four hours, so also may the terms "evening" and "morning", inasmuch as they are component elements of the day, be employed figuratively.¹¹⁹ It goes without saying that an historical narrative may contain figurative elements. Their presence, however, can only be determined by means of exegesis.

8. Although the account of creation is told in terms of fiat and fulfillment, this does not necessarily exclude all process. In the second work of the third day, for example,

thans. Deze dagen zijn niet met menselijke tijdsmaatstaf to meten, evenmin als bijvoorbeeld bet duizendjarig rijk.' Wie dus vraagt naar de tijdsduur van bijvoorbeeld de scheppingsdagen voor de vierde dag en daarna, maakt vanuit dit standpunt gezien dezelfde fout als degene die na een uiteenzetting, in de eerste plaats dit, in de tweede plaats dat, vraagt naar de geografische bepaling en de afmetingen van die plaatsen; of na een betoog in verschillende stappen, naar de lengte in centimeters van die stappen."

¹¹⁹ "Man hat dafr auf des **עַרְבַּ בֹּקֶר** ויהי ערב ויהי בקר berufen (vgl. **עַרְבַּ בֹּקֶר** Dan. 8, 14 Abend=Morgen=Tag), aber verlieren denn these Tage die Wahrheit ihres Wesens, wenn der Wechsel von Licht and Dunkel, nach welchem sich ihr Anfang and Ende bestimmt, nach anderen als irdischen zeitlangen gemessen ist and nach andern Gesetzen, als den nun innerhalb unseres Sonnensystems naturgemassen, erfolgt?" (Delitzsch: *Commentar uber die Genesis*, Leipzig, 1860, p. 101). "but if day is used figuratively, evening and morning must likewise be" (John D. Davis: *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*, London, 1894, p. 17).

the language suggests that the vegetation came forth from the earth as it does today. This point, however, cannot be pressed.

9. The purpose of the six days is to show how God, step by step, changed the uninhabitable and unformed earth of verse two into the well ordered world of verse thirty-one.¹²⁰

10. The purpose of the first section of Genesis (1:1-2:3) is to exalt the eternal God as the alone Creator of heaven and earth, who in infinite wisdom and by the Word of his power brought the earth into existence and adorned and prepared it for man's habitancy. The section also prepares for the second portion of Genesis, the Generations, which deals with man's habitancy of God's world.

11. Genesis one is not poetry or saga or myth, but straightforward, trustworthy history, and, inasmuch as it is a divine revelation, accurately records those matters of which it speaks. That Genesis one is historical may be seen from these considerations. 1) It sustains an intimate relationship with the remainder of the book. The remainder of the book (i. e., The Generations) presupposes the Creation Account, and the Creation Account prepares for what follows. The two portions of Genesis are integral parts of the book and complement one another. 2) The characteristics of Hebrew poetry are lacking. There are poetic accounts of the creation and these form a striking contrast to Genesis one. 3) The New Testament regards certain events mentioned in Genesis one as actually having taken place. We may safely allow the New Testament to be our interpreter of this mighty first chapter of the Bible.

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¹²⁰ One fact which Visee insists must be maintained in the study of Genesis one is "dat er ook een bepaalde volgorde was in dat werk Gods van ,lager' tot ,hoger', van minder' tot meer' samengesteld, waarbij elk volgend geschapene het eerder geschapene vooronderstelde" (*Lucerna*, p. 639).

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