

## THE DAYS OF GENESIS

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"WE do not read in the Gospel", declared Augustine, "that the Lord said, 'I send to you the Paraclete who will teach you about the course of the sun and the moon'; for he wanted to make Christians, not mathematicians".<sup>1</sup> Commenting on these words, Bavinck remarked that when the Scripture, as a book of religion, comes into contact with other sciences and sheds its light upon them, it does not then suddenly cease to be God's Word but continues to be such. Furthermore, he added, "when it speaks about the origin of heaven and earth, it presents no saga or myth or poetical fantasy but even then, according to its clear intention, presents history, which deserves faith and trust. And for that reason, Christian theology, with but few exceptions, has held fast to the literal, historical view of the account of creation."<sup>2</sup>

It is of course true that the Bible is not a textbook of science, but all too often, it would seem, this fact is made a pretext for treating lightly the content of Genesis one. Inasmuch as the Bible is the Word of God, whenever it speaks on any subject, whatever that subject may be, it is accurate in what it says. The Bible may not have been given to teach science as such, but it does teach about the origin of all things, a ques-

1 "Non legitur in Evangelio Dominum dixisse: Mitto vobis Paracletum qui vos doceat de cursu solis et lunae. Christianos enim facere volebat, non mathematicos" ("De Actis Cum Felice Manichaeo", *Patrologia Latina*, XLII, col. 525, caput X).

2 "Maar als de Schrift dan toch van haar standpunt uit, juist als boek der religie, met andere wetenschappen in aanraking komt en ook daarover haar licht laat schijnen, dan houdt ze niet eensklaps op Gods Woord to zijn maar blijft dat. Ook als ze over de wording van hemel en aarde spreekt, geeft ze geen sage of mythe of dichterlijke phantasie, maar ook dan geeft zij naar hare duidelijke bedoeling historie, die geloof en vertrouwen verdient. En daarom hield de Christelijke theologie dan ook, op slechts enkele uitzonderingen na, aan de letterlijke, historische opvatting van het scheppingsverhull vast" (Herman Bavinck: *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Tweede Deel, Kampen, 1928, p. 458).

tion upon which many scientists apparently have little to say. At the present day Bavinck's remarks are particularly in order, for recently there has appeared a recrudescence of the so-called "framework" hypothesis of the days of Genesis, an hypothesis which in the opinion of the writer of this article treats the content of Genesis one too lightly and which, at least according to some of its advocates, seems to rescue the Bible from the position of being in conflict with the data of modern science.<sup>3</sup> The theory has found advocacy recently both by Roman Catholics and by evangelical Protestants.<sup>4</sup> It is the purpose of the present article to discuss this hypothesis as it has been presented by some of its most able exponents.

### I. Professor Noordtzij and the "Framework" Hypothesis

In 1924 Professor Arie Noordtzij of the University of Utrecht published a work whose title may be translated, *God's Word and the Testimony of the Ages*.<sup>5</sup> It is in many

3 Strack, for example (*Die Genesis*, 1905, p. 9), wrote, "sie (i. e., what Strack calls "die ideale Auffassung") hat den grossen Vorteil, dass sie bei dem Ver. nicht naturwissenschaftliche Kenntnisse voraussetzt, die er aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach so wenig wie irgendeiner seiner Zeitgenossen gehabt hat, and indem sie der Bibel wie der Naturwissenschaft volles Recht lasst in Bezug auf das jeder eigentümliche Gebiet, hat sie doch keinen Konflikt zwischen beiden zur Folge". Professor N. H. Ridderbos, who has written one of the fullest recent discussions of the "framework" hypothesis entitles the English translation of his work, *Is There a Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?*, Grand Rapids, 1957. The original work bears the title, *Beschouwingen over Genesis I*, Assen.

4 See J. O. Morgan: *Moses and Myth*, London, 1932; N. H. Ridderbos: op. cit.; Meredith G. Kline: "Because It Had Not Rained", *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (May 1958), pp. 146-157; Bernard Ramm: *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Grand Rapids, 1954, which gives a useful summary of various views (see pp. 222-229).

5 A. Noordtzij: *Gods Woord en der Eeuwen Getuigenis. Het Oude Testament in het Licht der Oostersche Opgravingen*, Kampen, 1924. In "Vragen Rondom Genesis en de Naturwetenschappen", *Bezinning*, 17e Jaargang, 1962, No. 1, pp. 21 ff., attention is called to the position of Noordtzij. The position is described as figurative (figuurlijke), and is opposed by adducing the following considerations. 1.) The clear distinction between Genesis 1 on the one hand and Genesis 2 and 3 in itself is not sufficient ground for assuming that one section is to be taken literally, the other not. 2.) Did the writer of this part of Genesis really desire to make a hard and

respects a remarkable book and contains a useful discussion of the relationship between the Old Testament and archaeological discoveries. Noordtzij has some interesting things to say about the days of Genesis. The Holy Scripture, so he tells us, always places the creation in the light of the central fact of redemption, Christ Jesus.<sup>6</sup> When we examine the first chapter of Genesis in the light of other parts of Scripture, it becomes clear that the intention is not to give a survey of the process of creation, but to permit us to see the creative activity of God in the light of his saving acts, and so, in its structure, the chapter allows its full light to fall upon man, the crown of the creative work.<sup>7</sup>

Inasmuch as the heaven is of a higher order than the earth it is not subject to a development as is the earth.<sup>8</sup> It rather possesses its own character and is not to be placed on the same plane as the earth. The order of visible things is bound up with space and time, but not that of invisible things. Nor does the Scripture teach a creation *ex nihilo*, but one out of God's will.<sup>9</sup>

That the six days do not have to do with the course of a natural process may be seen, thinks Noordtzij, from the

fast distinction between the creation account and what follows? The objection is summarized: "Sammenvattend zou men kunnen zeggen, dat het argument: de schepping is iets totaal anders dan het begin der menschengeschiedenis en daarom kan men Genesis 1 anders opvatten dan Genesis 2 en 3, minder sterk is dan het lijkt" (pp. 23 f.).

<sup>6</sup> "Der H. S. stelt het feit der schepping steeds in het licht van het centrale heilsfeit der verlossing, die in Christus Jezus is, hetzij Hij in het Oude Verbond profetisch wordt aangekondigd, hetzij die verlossing als uitgangspunt voor de eschatologische ontwikkeling wordt gegrepen" (*op. cit.*, p. 77).

<sup>7</sup> "Zoo dikwijls men echter Gen. 1 beschouwt in het licht van de andere gedeelten der H. S., wordt het duidelijk, dat hier niet de bedoeling voorzit om ons een overzicht te geven van het scheppingsproces, maar om ons de scheppende werkzaamheid Gods to doen zien in het licht zijner heilsgedachten, waarom het dan ook door zijn structuur het voile licht doet vallen op den mensch, die als de kroon is van het scheppingswerk" (*op. cit.*, pp. 77 f.).

<sup>8</sup> "Maar nu is de hemel, wijl van een andere en hoogere orde dan deze aarde, niet aan ontwikkeling onderworpen gelijk deze aarde" (*op. cit.*, p. 78).

<sup>9</sup> "De H. S. leert ons dan ook niet een „scheppen uit niets" maar een scheppen uit een kracht: de wil Gods (*Openb.* 4:11)" (*op. cit.*, p. 79).

manner in which the writer groups his material. We are given two trios which exhibit a pronounced parallelism, all of which has the purpose of bringing to the fore the preeminent glory of man, who actually reaches his destiny in the sabbath, for the sabbath is the point in which the creative work of God culminates and to which it attains.<sup>10</sup> The six days show that the process of origins is to be seen in the light of the highest and last creation of this visible world, namely, man, and with man the entire cosmos is placed in the light of the seventh day and so in the light of dedication to God himself.<sup>11</sup> What is significant is not the concept "day", taken by itself, but rather the concept of "six plus one".

Inasmuch as the writer speaks of evenings and mornings previous to the heavenly bodies of the fourth day, continues Noordtzijs, it is clear that he uses the terms "days" and "nights" as a framework (kader). Such a division of time is a projection not given to show us the account of creation in its natural historical course, but, as elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures, to exhibit the majesty of the creation in the light of the great saving purpose of God.<sup>12</sup> The writer takes his

<sup>10</sup> "De schepping is aangelegd op het groote, geestelijke goed, dat zich in de sabbatsgedachte belichaamt. Daarom en daarom alleen is er in Gen. 1 van 6 dagen sprake, waarop de sabbat volgt als de dag bij uitnemendheid, wijl het Gods dag is" (*op. cit.*, p. 81).

<sup>11</sup> "dat Genesis 1 het wordingsproces ziet in het licht van het hoogste en laatste schepsel dezer zichtbare wereld: den mensch, en dat met then mensch heel de kosmos gesteld wordt in het licht van den 7den dag en dus in het licht van de wijding aan God zelven" (*op. cit.*, p. 79). Even if the entire emphasis, however, were to fall upon the seventh day, it would not follow that the six days did not correspond to reality. On the contrary, the reality of the sabbath as a creation ordinance is grounded upon the reality of the six days' work. If the seventh day does not correspond to reality, the basis for observance of the sabbath is removed. Note the connection in Exodus 20:8 ff., "Remember the day of the Sabbath to keep it holy," "and he rested on the seventh day."

It should further be noted that the phrase **יום השבת** is not used in Genesis 1:1-2:3, nor is there anything in the text which shows that the six days are mentioned merely for the sake of emphasizing the concept of the sabbath. Man, it is well to remember, was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man (*cf.* Mk. 2:27). Genesis 1:1-2:3 says nothing about man's relation to the sabbath. Man was not created for the sabbath, but to rule the earth.

<sup>12</sup> "De tijdsindeeling is een projectie, gebezigd *niet* om ons het scheppingsverhaal in zijn natuurhistorisch verloop te tekenen maar om evenals elders

expressions from the full and rich daily life of his people, for the Holy Spirit always speaks the words of God in human language. Why then, we may ask, are the six days mentioned? The answer, according to Noordtzij, is that they are only mentioned to prepare us for the seventh day.

In reply to this interpretation, the late Professor G. C. Aalders of the Free University of Amsterdam had some cogent remarks to make. Desirous as he was of being completely fair to Noordtzij, Aalders nevertheless declared that he was compelled to understand Noordtzij as holding that as far as the days of Genesis are concerned, there was no reality with respect to the divine creative activity.<sup>13</sup> Aalders then adduced two considerations which must guide every serious interpreter of the first chapter of Genesis. (1) In the text of Genesis itself, he affirmed, there is not a single allusion to suggest that the days are to be regarded as a form or mere manner of representation and hence of no significance for the essential knowledge of the divine creative activity. (2) In Exodus 20:11 the activity of God is presented to man as a pattern, and this fact presupposes that there was a reality in the activity of God which man is to follow. How could man be held accountable for working six days if God himself had not actually worked for six days?<sup>14</sup> To the best of the present writer's knowledge no one has ever answered these two considerations of Aalders.

in de H.S. ons de heerlijkheid der schepselen te teekenen in het licht van het groote heilsdoel Gods" (*op. cit.*, p. 80).

<sup>13</sup> "Wij kunnen dit niet anders verstaan dat ook naar het oordeel van Noordtzij aan de „dagen" geen realiteit in betrekking tot de Goddelijke scheppingswerkzaamheid toekomt" (G. Ch. Aalders: *De Goddelijke Openbaring in de eerste drie Hoofdstukken van Genesis*, Kampen, 1932, p. 233).

<sup>14</sup> "1°, dat de tekst van Gen. 1 zelf geen enkele aanwijzing bevat, dat de dagen slechts als een vorm of voorstellingswijze zouden bedoeld zijn en derhalve voor de wezenlijke kennis van de Goddelijke scheppingswerkzaamheid geen waarde zouden hebben: en 2° dat in Ex. 20:11 het doen Gods aan den mensch tot voorbeeld wordt gesteld; en dit veronderstelt zeer zeker, dat in dat doen Gods een realiteit is geweest, welke door den mensch hun worden nagevolgd. Hoe zou den mensch kunnen worden voorgehouden dat hij na zes dagen arbeiden op den zevenden dag moet rusten, omdat God in zes dagen alle dingen geschapen heeft en rustte op den zevenden dag, indien aan die zes scheppingsdagen in het Goddelijk scheppingswerk geen enkele realiteit beantwoordde?" (*op. cit.*, p. 232).

## II. *Preliminary Remarks About Genesis One*

Before we attempt to evaluate the arguments employed in defense of a non-chronological view of the days of Genesis one, it is necessary to delineate briefly what we believe to be the nature of the Bible's first chapter. We may begin by asking whether Genesis one is a special revelation from God in the sense that it is a communication of information to man from God concerning the subjects of which it treats. This question has been answered in the negative by John L. McKenzie, S.J. in a recent article. "It is not a tenable view that God in revealing Himself also revealed directly and in detail the truth about such things as creation and the fall of man; the very presence of so many mythical elements in their traditions is enough to eliminate such a view".<sup>15</sup> If, however, this view of special revelation cannot be held, what alternative does Professor McKenzie offer? The alternative, it would seem, is to look upon Genesis one as in reality a human composition, although McKenzie does not use just these terms. According to him Genesis one is a retreatment of a known myth, in which the writer has radically excised the mythical elements and has "written an explicit polemic against the creation myth". The polytheism, theogony, theomachy and the "creative combat" are removed so that now the act of creation is "achieved in entire tranquility".<sup>16</sup>

What then are we to call the first chapter of Genesis after these various pagan elements have been excised? It is not history for "it is impossible to suppose that he (i. e., the Hebrew) had historical knowledge of either of these events" (i. e., either of the creation or the deluge).<sup>17</sup> Nor can Genesis one really be called a theological reconstruction or interpretation.<sup>18</sup> What then is this first chapter of Genesis? Actually

<sup>15</sup> John L. McKenzie, S.J.: "Myth and the Old Testament", in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, July 1959, p. 281.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 277. This position is widely held; cf. Young, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2", *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. XXIII, May 1961, pp. 151-178, where references to relevant literature will be found.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>18</sup> But cf. Gerhard von Rad: *Das erste Buch Mose, Genesis Kapitel 1-25*, 18, 1953, p. 36, "es (i. e., the creation account) ist Lehre, die in langsamsten,

it is a story which the Hebrews told in place of the story which it displaced. It is not, however, a single story, but rather represents a multiple approach, and each of its images has value as an intuition of creation's reality. These images are symbolic representations of a reality which otherwise would not be known or expressed. The knowledge of God the Hebrews possessed through the revelation of himself, and in their handling of the creation account they sought to remove everything that was out of accord with their conception of God. They did possess a knowledge of God but, even so, the unknown remained unknown and mysterious. In speaking of the unknown, therefore, all the Hebrews could do was "to represent through symbolic forms the action of the unknown reality which they perceived mystically, not mythically, through His revelation of Himself".<sup>19</sup>

McKenzie's rejection of the view that Genesis one is a special revelation from the one living and true God is somewhat facile. He brings only one argument against that position, namely, the assumption that there are mythological elements in the first chapter of the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere we have sought to demonstrate the untenability of the view that there are mythical elements in the first chapter of the Bible.<sup>21</sup>

If, however, one rejects the position that Genesis one is a special revelation of God, as Professor McKenzie does, a number of pertinent questions remain unanswered. For one thing, why cannot God have revealed to man the so-called area of the unknown? Why, in other words, can God not have told man in simple language just what God did in creating the heaven and the earth?<sup>22</sup> What warrant is there for the

jahrhundertlangem Wachstum sich behutsam angereichert hat". Despite this sentence, it is not clear that the positions of von Rad and McKenzie are essentially different.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>20</sup> K. Popma: "Enkele voorstellen betreffende de exegese van Genesis 1-3", in *Lucerna*, 30 Jaargang, no. 2, p. 632, speaks of this as exegesis "die haar naam niet meer waard is; t.w. diverse opvattingen van sage, mythe, e.d."

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Young: *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> In *Bezzing*, *loc. cit.*, p. 23, the wholesome remark is made, "welke daad Gods, op welk moment in de menselijke historie, is niet to wonderlijk

assumption that the unknown could only be represented through symbolic forms? Furthermore, if the Hebrews were guided in their handling of the creation by the conceptions of God which they held, whence did they obtain those conceptions? Were they communicated in words from God himself, as when he said, "Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45b), or did they adopt them as a result of their reaction to events in the world which they thought represented the acting of God in power? How could the Hebrews know that the conceptions of God which they possessed actually corresponded to reality?

McKenzie's article shows what difficulties arise when one rejects the historic position of the Christian Church, and indeed of the Bible itself, that Scripture, in the orthodox sense, is the Word of God and a revelation from him. As soon as one makes the assumption that Genesis one is really the work of man, he is hard pressed to discover the lessons that the chapter can teach. If the work is of human origination, how can it have a theological message or be regarded in any sense as the Word of God?

The position adopted in this article is that the events recorded in the first chapter of the Bible actually took place. They were historical events, and Genesis one, therefore, is to be regarded as historical. In employing the word "historical", we are rejecting the definition which would limit the word to that which man can know through scientific investigation alone.<sup>23</sup> We are using the word rather as including all

om haar enigmatische letterlijk in onze taal to beschrijven? Is de vleeswording des Woords, is de bekering van ons hart minder wonderlijk dan de schepping van hemel en aarde?" Those who reject the historic Christian position that Scripture is a special revelation from God and yet still wish to regard the Scripture as the Word of God have no adequate criterion by which to judge the nature of Scripture. Thus, Ralph H. Elliott, *The Message of Genesis*, Nashville, 1961, p. 13, remarks that creation was event, and that it was up to succeeding generations to translate this event into meaning "as they analyzed the event and as they comprehended God". But how can one be sure that they analyzed the event correctly or that they comprehended God correctly unless God himself told them how to do this?

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e. g., W. F. Albright: *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. New York, 1957, p. 399, and a discussion of this view in Young: *Thy Word Is Truth*, Grand Rapids, 1957, pp. 245 ff.



which has transpired. Our knowledge of the events of creation we receive through the inscripturated revelation of God. The defense of this position will be made as the argument progresses. At this point, however, it may be well to note that the New Testament looks upon certain events of the creative week as genuinely historical. The creation itself is attributed to the Word of God (Hebrews 11:3), and Peter refers to the emerging of the earth as something that had actually taken place (II Peter 3:5b).<sup>24</sup> There is no question in Paul's mind about the historicity of God's first fiat (II Corinthians 4:6). According to Paul, the same God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has also shined in the hearts of believers. Hebrews 6:7<sup>25</sup> seems to reflect upon the bringing forth of herbs on the third day, and Acts 17:24 to the work of filling the earth with its inhabitants. Likewise I Corinthians 11:7 asserts that man is the image of God, and his creation is specifically mentioned in Matthew 19:4.

It is furthermore necessary to say a word about the relationship between Scripture and science. For one thing it is difficult to escape the impression that some of those who espouse a non-chronological view of the days of Genesis are moved by a desire to escape the difficulties which exist between Genesis and the so-called "findings" of science.<sup>26</sup> That such difficulties

<sup>24</sup> Commenting on II Peter 3:5b, Bigg, (*The International Critical Commentary*, New York, 1922, p. 293) remarks, "Ἐξ may be taken to denote the emerging of the earth from the waters (Gen. i.9) in which it had lain buried, and the majority of commentators appear to adopt this explanation". Bigg, himself, however, thinks that the reference is to the material from which the earth was made. In this interpretation we think that Bigg is mistaken. What is clear, however, is that Peter is referring to the event in Genesis, as something that actually occurred. In I Peter the event which he describes as γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος συνεστῶσα was just as historical as that which he relates in the words δι' ὧν ὁ τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο.

<sup>25</sup> James Moffatt (*The International Critical Commentary*, New York, 1924, p. 81) thinks that Hebrews 6:7 contains reminiscences of the words of Genesis 1:12.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Morgan: op. cit., pp. 17-46. The chronological order of Genesis is thought to be practically the reverse of that of geology (p. 36). Morgan mentions four attempts to "effect a conciliation between the postulates of the natural sciences and the Mosaic cosmogony" (p. 36). One of these is described as ingenious, "but it must inevitably prove unacceptable to the scientist" (p. 37). The Idealist theory in its various forms is said to

do exist cannot be denied, and their presence is a concern to every devout and thoughtful student of the Bible.<sup>27</sup> It is for this reason that one must do full justice both to Scripture and to science.

Recently there has been making its appearance in some evangelical circles the view that God has, in effect, given one revelation in the Bible and another in nature. Each of these in its own sphere is thought to be authoritative. It is the work of the theologian to interpret Scripture and of the scientist to interpret nature. "Whenever", as Dr. John Whitcomb describes it, "there is apparent conflict between the conclusions of the scientist and the conclusions of the theologian, especially with regard to such problems as the origin of the universe, solar system, earth, animal life, and man; the effects of the Edenic curse; and the magnitude and effects of the Noahic Deluge, the theologian must rethink his interpretation of the Scriptures at these points in such a way as to bring it into harmony with the general consensus of scientific opinion on these matters, since the Bible is not a textbook on science, and these problems overlap the territory in which science alone must give us the detailed and authoritative answers".<sup>28</sup> It would be difficult to state this approach more concisely and accurately. One manifestation thereof maybe found in a recent issue of *Beinning*, in which the entire number is de-

be more satisfactory, and Lattey's view (i. e., a form of the non-chronological hypothesis) is described as "eminently satisfying" (p. 39).

<sup>27</sup> It certainly cannot be expected of any mere man that he possess sufficient knowledge to state accurately the full relationship between Genesis and the study of God's created phenomena, let alone that he be expected to resolve whatever difficulties may appear. A truly humble student will acknowledge his ignorance and will make it his aim to be faithful to the holy and infallible words of Scripture. Marty of the alleged difficulties, such as the creation of light before the sun, are really not basic difficulties at all, for there are at hand reasonable explanations thereof. And let it be remembered that scientists often adduce as "facts" that which, as a result of further research, turns out not to be fact at all. The treatment of this question in *Beinning* (loc. cit., especially pp. 16 ff.) is in many respects unsatisfactory and disappointing.

<sup>28</sup> John C. Whitcomb, Jr.: *Biblical Inerrancy and the Double Revelation Theory*, Presidential Address given at the Seventh General Meeting of the Midwestern Section of the Evangelical Theological Society, May 4, 1962, Moody Bible Institute.

voted to the subject, "Questions Concerning Genesis and the Sciences".<sup>29</sup> In the introduction to this work we are told that a conflict between Genesis and science can only be avoided when we maintain that the Bible is not a textbook of science but "salvation-history", and that the writers of the Bible spoke with the language and in the pictures of their time.<sup>30</sup>

What strikes one immediately upon reading such a statement is the low estimate of the Bible which it entails. Whenever "science" and the Bible are in conflict, it is always the Bible that, in one manner or another, must give way. We are not told that "science" should correct its answers in the light of Scripture. Always it is the other way round. Yet this is really surprising, for the answers which scientists have provided have frequently changed with the passing of time. The "authoritative" answers of pre-Copernican scientists are no longer acceptable; nor, for that matter, are many of the views of twenty-five years ago.

To enter into a full critique of this thoroughly unscriptural and, therefore, untenable position, would be out of place in the present article.<sup>31</sup> There is, however, one consideration that must be noted, namely, that the approach which we are now engaged in discussing is one which leaves out of account the noetic effects of sin. It is true that the heavens declare the glory of God, but the eyes of man's understanding, blinded by sin, do not read the heavens aright. The noetic effects of sin lead to anti-theistic presuppositions and inclinations. We must remember that much that is presented as scientific fact

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-57.

<sup>30</sup> "Een conflict tussen Genesis en wetenschap kan natuurlijk in ieder geval worden vermeden wanneer men vasthoudt dat de Bijbel geen handboek is voot natuurwetenschap, maar Heilshistorie, en dat volgens het woord van Calvijn, God in de H. Schrift tot ons spreekt als een moeder tot haar kinderen" (*op. cit.*, p. 2). Cf. Herman Ridderbos' discussion, "Belangrijke publikatie" in *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, Zeventiende Jaargang, Nr. 40, p. 314, and the valuable remarks of Visee, in *Lucerna*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 638-639. Particularly timely is his comment, "De Schrift verhaalt ons heilsfeiten, maar deze waarheid houdt ook in dat we hier met feiten to doen hebben" (p. 639).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Cornelius Van Til: *The Defense of the Faith*, Phila., 1955. Visee (*op. cit.*, p. 641) rightly applies the old and pertinent rule, "Lees wat er staat, en versta wat ge leest".

is written from a standpoint that is hostile to supernatural Christianity.

In the nature of the case God's revelation does not conflict with itself. His revelation in nature and that in Scripture are in perfect accord. Man, however, is a rational creature, and needs a revelation in words that he may properly understand himself and his relation to the world in which he lives. Even in his unfallen state, God gave to Adam a word-revelation, for by his very constitution as an intellectual being, man must have such. The word-revelation, therefore, must interpret revelation in nature. Fallen man must read general revelation in the light of Scripture, else he will go basically astray. Of course the Bible is not a textbook of science, but the Bible is necessary properly to understand the purpose of science. Perhaps one may say that it is a textbook of the philosophy of science. And on whatever subject the Bible speaks, whether it be creation, the making of the sun, the fall, the flood, man's redemption, it is authoritative and true. We are to think God's thoughts after him, and his thoughts are expressed in the words of Scripture. When these thoughts have to do with the origin of man, we are to think them also. They alone must be our guide. "Therefore", says Calvin, "while it becomes man seriously to employ his eyes in considering the works of God, since a place has been assigned him in this most glorious theatre that he may be a spectator of them, his special duty is to give ear to the Word, that he may the better profit".<sup>32</sup> And what Calvin so beautifully states, God himself had already made known to us through the Psalmist, "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Psalm 119:130).

By way of summary we may state the three basic considerations which will undergird the position adopted in this article.

1. Genesis one is a special revelation from God.
2. Genesis one is historical; it relates matters which actually occurred.
3. In the nature of the case, general revelation is to be interpreted by special revelation, nature by Scripture, "science" by the Bible.

<sup>32</sup> *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Grand Rapids, 1953, I:vi:2, p. 66, translated by Henry Beveridge.

### III. *Evaluation of Arguments used to Defend the "Framework" Hypothesis*

#### 1. The Use of Anthropomorphic Language

In defense of the non-chronological hypothesis it is argued that God speaks anthropomorphically. "Is ... the author not under the necessity", asks Professor N. H. Ridderbos, "of employing such a method, because this is the only way to speak about something that is really beyond all human thoughts and words?"<sup>33</sup> And again, "Does the author mean to say that God completed creation in six days, or does he make use of an anthropomorphic mode of presentation?"<sup>34</sup>

If we understand this argument correctly, it is that the mention of six days is merely an anthropomorphic way of speaking. We are not to interpret it, as did Luther and Calvin, to mean that God actually created in six days, but merely to regard it as an anthropomorphic mode of speech. Genesis 2:7, for example, speaks of God forming the body of man of dust from the ground, but this does not mean that God acted as a potter, nor does Genesis 3:21 in stating that God clothed Adam and his wife mean to say that God acted as a "maker of fur-clothes". Again, when we are told that God rested (Genesis 2:2) are we to infer that "God had to exert Himself to create the world?"<sup>35</sup>

It is of course true that the term "anthropomorphism" has often been employed with reference to such phrases as "the mouth of the Lord", "and God said", "and God saw", and other similar expressions.<sup>36</sup> It is certainly true that God did not

<sup>33</sup> "The Meaning of Genesis I", in *Free University Quarterly*, Vol. IV, 1955/1957, p. 222 (hereafter abbreviated *Quarterly*).

<sup>34</sup> *Is There A Conflict Between Genesis I And Natural Science?*, p. 30 (hereafter abbreviated *Conflict*). Ridderbos gives three examples of "anthropomorphisms".

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> A series of penetrating articles on the question of anthropomorphism by G. Visee appeared in *De Reformatie* (28e Jaargang, Nos. 34-43, 1953) under the title "Over het anthropomorphe spreken Gods in de heilige Schrift". He concludes that to talk of an "anthropomorphic" revelation in the usual sense of the word is not justifiable, and that it is better not to use the term. In *Lucerna* (*loc. cit.*, pp. 636 f.) he writes, "Ik ontken en bestrijd heel de idee van een „anthropomorphe" openbaring. God heeft

speak with physical organs of speech nor did he utter words in the Hebrew language. Are we, however, for that reason, to come to the conclusion that the language is merely figurative and does not designate a specific divine activity or reality?

If we were so to conclude we would not be doing justice to the Scriptures. The phrases which have just been quoted are not devoid of significance and meaning. Rather, the statement, "and God said", to take one example, represents a genuine activity upon the part of God, a true and effectual speaking which accomplishes his will.<sup>37</sup> There are at least two reasons which substantiate this conclusion. In the first place genuine content is attributed to God's speaking, namely, the words, "Let there be light". This is strengthened by the remarkable usage which Paul makes of the passage in II Corinthians 4:6a.<sup>38</sup> In the second place, that which God speaks brings his will to pass. It is powerful and efficacious. "For he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:9); "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3a). These passages teach that the Word of God is efficacious.<sup>39</sup>

van het begin der wereld aan in mensentaal gesproken en gezegd wat Hij to zeggen had in de taal, welker vorming hij blijkens Genesis 2:19 opzettelijk aan de mens had overgelaten".

<sup>37</sup> With respect to the words "and God saw", Keil comments that it "is not an anthropomorphism at variance with enlightened thoughts of God; for man's seeing has its type in God's, and God's seeing is not a mere expression of delight of the eye or of pleasure in His work, but is of the deepest significance to every created thing, being the seal of the perfection which God has impressed. upon it, and by which its continuance before God and through God is determined" (Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, 1949, Vol. I, p. 50).

<sup>38</sup> According to Paul, the content of God's speaking (ὁ εἰπών) is found in the words ἐκ σκοτῶν φῶς λάμψει. In this remarkable utterance Paul also emphasizes the distinction between light and darkness. Perhaps a reflection of the truth that God spoke is found on the Shabaka stone, in which Atum's coming into being is attributed to the heart and tongue of Ptah. Cf. James Pritchard: *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Princeton, 1950, p. 5a.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. also Deut. 8:3; I Kg. 8:56; Ps. 105:8; 119:50; 147:15; Isa. 45:23; 55:11 ff.; Matt. 24:35; Lk. 4:32; 24:19; Heb. 4:12; I Pet. 1:23; II Pet. 3:5. In these passages it is well to note the connection between word and deed. The word is powerful and accomplishes the purpose for which it was spoken. It is also necessary, however, to note that there is no power re-

Hence, whatever be the term that we employ to characterize such a phrase as "and God said", we must insist that the phrase represents an effectual divine activity which may very properly be denominated "speaking".<sup>40</sup>

It is necessary, however, to examine the extent of "anthropomorphism" in the passages adduced by Professor Ridderbos. If the term "anthropomorphic" may legitimately be used at all, we would say that whereas it might apply to some elements of Genesis 2:7, it does not include all of them. In other words, if anthropomorphism is present, it is not present in each element of the verse. The words "and God breathed" may be termed anthropomorphic,<sup>41</sup> but that is the extent to which the term may be employed. The man was real, the dust was real, the ground was real as was also the breath of life. To these elements of the verse the term "anthropomorphism" cannot legitimately be applied. Nor can everything in Genesis 3:21 be labeled with the term "anthropomorphic". We need but think, for example, of the man and the woman and the coats of skin.

What, then, shall we say about the representation of the first chapter of Genesis that God created the heaven and

siding in the word conceived as an independent entity divorced from God. God's Word is powerful because God himself gives power to it, and brings to pass what he has promised. If the same "Word" were spoken by anyone other than God, it would not accomplish what it does when spoken by him.

<sup>40</sup> At the same time we cannot state specifically what this speaking of God is. There is an infinite difference between God's speaking and man's. Although both may legitimately be designated "speaking", yet they cannot be identified, for man as a finite being speaks as a creature; the speaking of God on the other hand is that of an infinite being.

<sup>41</sup> The phrase "and God formed" is not merely figurative and devoid of meaning. Although with physical hands God did not form the body of Adam, nevertheless, God did produce Adam's body from the dust in such a way that his action may accurately be designated a "forming". Even the words "and God breathed" indicate a definite action on God's part. The divine breathing was not accomplished by means of physical, material organs. It was a divine, not a human, breathing. Although the term "anthropomorphic" may be applied to the phrase "and God breathed", nevertheless, the phrase is not empty of content. This is true, even though one cannot state precisely what the divine breathing was. Cf. Visee, *op. cit.*, pp. 636 f.

the earth in six days? Is this anthropomorphic language? We would answer this question in the negative, for the word anthropomorphic, if it is a legitimate word at all, can be applied to God alone and cannot properly be used of the six days. In speaking of six days Moses may conceivably have been employing figurative, literal, or poetical language, but it was not anthropomorphic. Hence, we do not believe that it is accurate to speak of the six days as an anthropomorphic mode of expression.

From the presence of "anthropomorphic" words or expressions in Genesis one, it does not follow that the mention of the days is anthropomorphic nor does it follow that the days are to be understood in a topical or non-chronological order rather than chronologically. If the days are to be interpreted non-chronologically, the evidence for this must be something other than the presence of anthropomorphisms in the first chapter of Genesis. The occurrence of anthropomorphic language in Genesis one in itself, if such language really does occur, sheds no light one way or another upon the question whether the days are to be understood topically or chronologically. For that matter even the presence of figurative language or of a schematic arrangement, taken by themselves, would not warrant the conclusion that the days were not chronological.

## 2. The Appeal to Genesis 2:5

One of the strongest arguments in favor of a nonchronological order of the days is thought to be found in an appeal to Genesis 2:5.<sup>42</sup> The presupposition of this verse, it is held, is that during the period of creation divine providence was in operation "through processes which any reader would recognize as normal in the natural world of his day".<sup>43</sup> If in Genesis 2:5 ff. there is embedded the principle that God's providence during the creation period operated in the same manner as it does at the present time, then the view that the days of Genesis one were twenty-four hours in length would

<sup>42</sup> Kline: *op. cit.*, pp. 146-157.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 150.



scarcely be tenable. For, to take an example, if the third day began with an earth covered with water and then in the course of that day dry land emerged, the evaporation would have to take place at such a rate of speed that it would not be the normal ordinary working of divine providence. Even if the days be regarded as longer than twenty-four hours, so the argument runs, difficulty appears, for then we must hold that there was vegetation without the sun.

The question to be considered is whether upon the basis of Genesis 2:5 we are justified in believing that the method in which divine providence operated during the creation period was the same as that in effect at present. To answer this question it is necessary to consider briefly the relation of Genesis 1 and 2. In the first place Genesis two is not, nor does it profess to be, a second account of creation.<sup>44</sup> Although it does mention creative acts, it is a sequel to the creation narrative of Genesis one and a preparation for the history of the fall contained in chapter 3. This is proved by the phrase "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 2:4a).

To understand the significance of this phrase we must note the word **תולדות** in which is obviously derived from **יָלַד**, "to bear", and in the Hiph'il stem with which it is related, the meaning is "to beget". The **תולדות** therefore are "those things which are begotten", and Genesis 2:4a should then be translated literally, "These are the things begotten of heaven and earth". The section of Genesis beginning with 2:4 is an

<sup>44</sup> This statement is made in the light of the constant affirmations to the contrary. Thus, Ralph H. Elliott: *op. cit.*, p. 28 speaks of "The First or Priestly Account of Creation (1:1 to 2:4a)" and "The Second Creation Account (2:4b-25)" (p. 41). Perhaps it is an encouraging sign that von Rad labels 2:4b-25 "Die jahwistische Geschichte von Paradies" (*Das erste Buch Mose*, Gottingen, 1953, p. 58). The English translation renders "The Yahwistic Story of Paradise" (*Genesis*, Philadelphia, MCMLXI, translated by John H. Marks, p. 71). On the other hand the following comment of von Rad is very disappointing, "Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen, von denen unser jahwistischer Schöpfungsbericht ausgeht, sind also sehr verschieden von denen, die uns bei P. begegnet sind und müssen aus einem ganz anderen Überlieferungskreis stammen" (*op. cit.*, p. 61). Once, however, we abandon the untenable documentary hypothesis and recognize the true nature of Genesis, we can understand the proper relationship between the first and second chapters.

account of those things which are begotten of heaven and earth. This is not to say that it is silent on the subject of the heaven and earth themselves, but it is not an account of their origin.<sup>45</sup> It deals rather with what was begotten of them, namely, man, whose body is of the earth and whose soul is of heavenly origin, inbreathed by God himself.<sup>46</sup>

It is necessary to examine more closely the usage of this phrase in Genesis. Genesis is divided into two great sections I. The Creation of Heaven and Earth, and II. The Generations. The second section is again subdivided into ten sections each being introduced with the word **תֹּלְדוֹתָם**. In each case this word indicates the result or product, that which is produced. With the genitive, however, in this case "the heavens and the earth", Moses refers to a point of beginning.<sup>47</sup> In Genesis 11:27, for example, we read, "these are the generations of Terah". This does not mean that we are now introduced to an account of Terah ; rather, the account of Terah is completed. There may, indeed, be certain statements about Terah to follow, but the section before us is concerned with an account of those begotten of Terah, in this case, Abraham.

Genesis 2:4 in effect declares that the account of the creation

<sup>45</sup> Skinner (The International Critical Commentary, *Genesis*, New York, 1925, p. 40) states that it is doubtful whether the word *ni-i5in* can bear the meaning "origin". Driver (*The Book of Genesis*, London, 1926, p. 19) asserts that "generations" is applied metaphorically to "heaven and earth" and denotes the things which "might be regarded metaphorically as proceeding from them, . . . i. e., just the contents of ch. 1". Such, however, is not the force of the phrase.

It is practically an axiom of modern negative criticism that 2:4a belongs to the so-called P document. What follows, however, is said to be JE. Hence, it is claimed, 2:4a cannot be a superscription to 2:4b ff. Von Rad (op. cit., p. 49) candidly acknowledges this. But why may not Moses have employed previously existing documents and himself have united them by means of the phrase **תֹּלְדוֹתָם אֱלֹהִים**? Is there any reason why 2:4a cannot serve as a superscription to the second section of Genesis? Why in the interests of a supposed diversity of documents destroy a fundamental unity as clear-cut and beautiful as that which underlies the structure of Genesis?

<sup>46</sup> Cf. William Henry Green: *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, New York, 1895, pp. 7-20.

<sup>47</sup> This phrase has been most competently discussed in recent times by B. Holwerda: *Dictaten*, Deel I, *Historia Revelationis Veteris Testamenti*, Eerste Aflevering, Kampen, 1954, pp. 9-17.

of heaven and earth is completed, and that the author is now going to focus his attention upon what was begotten of heaven and earth, namely, man. It is in the light of this fact that Genesis 2:5 is to be understood. The primary reference of this verse is to man, not to the creation, and the purpose of chapter 2 is to manifest the goodness of God in giving to man a paradise for his earthly dwelling. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). Although the earth is the Lord's and although he might cause man to dwell on it where he would, nevertheless he prepared a wondrous garden for his guest. To emphasize the beauty of the garden, but above all the goodness of God, a contrast is introduced. Man is to dwell as God's guest not in a waterless waste, but in a planted garden. The waterless ground of Genesis 2:5 stands in contrast to the well-watered Paradise which is to be man's earthly home.<sup>48</sup>

Two reasons are given why plants had not yet grown. On the one hand it had not rained, and on the other there was no man to till the ground. The garden cannot be planted until the ground has been watered, nor can it be tended until man is on hand. Both of these reasons, therefore, look forward to man's home, the garden, and to the one who is to inhabit that garden. At this point, however, an exegetical question arises. Does Genesis 2:5 intend to state that the entire earth was barren, or is its purpose rather to show that in contrast to a waterless waste, the abode of man was to be a garden? Perhaps this question cannot be settled entirely, and it is the part of wisdom not to be dogmatic, although the latter alternative has much to commend it.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The theme of refreshing waters is carried throughout Scripture. In particular we may note Exodus 17:6; Ps. 65:9; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 12:3; 32:2; Jn. 4:10 ff., 7:38; Rev. 21:6; 22:1, 17. Visee makes a pertinent comment (loc. cit., p. 638), "Genoemde gegevens weerspreken elke gedachte als zou het in deze hoofdstukken verhaalde passen in een, primitief milieu, een door de cultuur nog niet opgelegd en onontslaten gebied". T. C. Mitchell ("Archaeology and Genesis I-XI", *Faith and Thought*, Vol. 91, No. 1, Summer 1959, pp. 28-49) gives an interesting discussion of this question.

<sup>49</sup> Some commentators assume that the reference is to the entire earth. Procksch, however (*Die Genesis ubersetzt and erklart*, Leipzig, 1913, p. 21), states that "das Weltbild ist hier dem Steppenlande entnommen".  $\text{הָאָרֶץ}$ , is "not 'the widespread plain of the earth, the broad expanse of land,'

Whichever of these positions we adopt, we may note that the fulfillment of at least one of the two requirements necessary for plant growth could have been accomplished by ordinary providence. If, as is sometimes held, the watering of the ground was the work of subterranean waters,<sup>50</sup> did they water

but a field of arable land, soil fit for cultivation which forms only a part of the 'earth' or 'ground.'" "The creation of the plants is not alluded to here at all, but simply the planting of the garden in Eden" (Keil: *op. cit.*, p. 77). "All the faces of the ground" is also said to be a phrase which "ist auch hier nicht die gesamte Erdfläche (YAK), sondern nur das anbaufähige Erdreich" (Procksch: *op. cit.*, p. 22).

<sup>50</sup> The various interpretations of  $\text{h}$  may be found in Kline: *op. cit.*, p. 150. König (Die Genesis eingeleitet, übersetzt und erklärt, Göttersloh, 1925, pp. 198-200) is one of the strongest defenders of the view that  $\text{h}$  means mist (Dunst), for he thinks that the rising of a mist is a natural preparation for rainfall. "Denn selbstverständlich ist gemeint, dass der aufsteigende Wasserdunst sich wieder als Regen gesenkt habe" (p. 199). König thinks that it is a wrong method to derive the meaning of a Hebrew word directly from the Babylonian. *edu*, therefore, is not to determine the meaning of  $\text{h}$ . Aalders (*op. cit.*, p. 114) also adopts this position. He asserts that the mist (damp) arose from the earth, which could hardly be said of a flood. In Job 36:27 the meaning "flood" is thought not to be suitable. In the formation of the rain clouds, says Aalders, despite the difficulties of Job 36:27, "mist" is understandable, but not "flood".

It should be noted, however, that none of the ancient versions rendered this word as "mist". Thus, LXX,  $\pi\eta\gamma\eta$ ; Aquila,  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\beta\lambda\upsilon\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ ; Vulgate, fons; Syriac XXXXX. What really rules out the rendering "rain" or "mist" is the verb  $\text{h}$ . The causing of the earth to drink is the work of the  $\text{h}$  which arises from the ground. Obviously, a mist which arises may moisten the ground, but how can it, inasmuch as it comes up from the earth, cause the earth to drink? The translation "mist" must be abandoned. Albright's suggestion ("The Predeuteronomian Primeval", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 58, 1939, p. 102) that the word  $\text{h}$  be traced to the Id, the subterranean source of fresh water, has much to commend it. All mythological or polytheistic associations, however, are completely missing in Genesis 2:5. In support of Albright's position appeal may be made to Samuel N. Kramer: *Enki and Ninhursag*, New Haven, 1945, p. 13, lines 45, 46, "mouth whence issues the water of the earth, bring thee sweet water from the earth". Even if we adopt the view that  $\text{h}$  means "mist" or "cloud" and that the reference is to a mist which arises from the ground and returns to water it in the form of rain, that does not prove that ordinary providential activity prevailed on the third day. On the third day there were two works, and both were creative works, namely:

1. FIAT - FULFILLMENT (Gathering of the waters into one place and appearance of the dry land).

2. FIAT - FULFILLMENT (Earth sending forth grass, etc.).

If Genesis 2:6 is to be fitted in here, it obviously must fall between the

the entire surface of the globe? If they did, then such a work, while not the method that God today employs to water the whole earth, nevertheless may have been a providential work. To water the ground, therefore, may have been accomplished by a *modus operandi* similar to that by which God today works in his providential activity. Nevertheless, it was a unique act, and one never to be repeated. If it was a providential work, it was unique and distinct, for God has never again watered the entire earth in this manner. If, on the other hand, the אֲדָמָה here has a somewhat restricted sense, as is probably the case, then we certainly cannot in any sense appeal to this verse for help in the interpretation of Genesis one, for in this case the verse merely emphasizes that the paradise was planted in what once was wasteland.<sup>51</sup>

In the second place, the fulfillment of the need for man to cultivate the garden was not met by means of ordinary providential working. To meet this need there was special supernatural activity, namely, the divine forming and the divine inbreathing.<sup>52</sup>

What relationship, then, does Genesis 2:5ff. sustain to the third day of creation mentioned in Genesis one? If Genesis

first and second fiat. Activity by means of "fiat" creation however, is not the *modus operandi* of divine providence. If, therefore, divine providential activity was introduced after the accomplishment of the first fiat, it was interrupted again by the second fiat and its fulfillment. Even, therefore, if Genesis 2:5 ff. could be made to show that divine providence was present during the third day, what is stated of the third day in Genesis 1 makes it clear that divine providence did not prevail during the third day.

<sup>51</sup> It is well to note the distinction between אֲדָמָה and אֶרֶץ which is found in this section. Whereas אֶרֶץ refers to the earth generally, אֲדָמָה is the ground upon which man dwells. The אֲדָמָה is more restricted in reference than אֶרֶץ, and it is also that ground which produces the sustenance that will sustain the life of אָדָם and which אָדָם must cultivate. Procksch comments, "אָדָם und אֲדָמָה sind aufeinander angewiesen, der Mensch ist dem Wesen nach Bauer" (op. cit., p. 22), but such a conclusion does not necessarily follow.

<sup>52</sup> In the following comment Gunkel presses the language of Scripture in an unwarrantable manner: "Diese Zeit weiss noch nichts von dem Supernaturalismus der späteren Epoche, sondern sie erzählt unbefangen, dass „Gott Jahve" seine Geschöpfe „formte", d.h. sie mit seinen eigenen Minder bildete, wie der Topfer den Ton knetet" (Die Urgeschichte and die Patriarchen, Gottingen, 1921 (Die Schriften des Alten Testaments, 1/1, p. 55)).

2:5 has reference to the entire globe, it applies to the third day and merely describes the "dry land" of the third day. But if that be the case, the verse does not show that the present *modus operandi* of divine providence, while it may have been present, necessarily prevailed on the third day. At the most it teaches that God watered the ground by means of an **אֵל** that kept rising from the earth.<sup>53</sup> If, on the other hand, Genesis 2:5ff. simply describes the preparation of the garden of Eden, it may not be applicable at all to the third day, but may rather be fitted into the sixth day. While there are difficulties in the interpretation of the verse, it is clear that it cannot be used to establish the thesis that the present *modus operandi* of divine providence prevailed during the third day. At most it shows that such a mode may have been present.

The appeal to Genesis 2:5a, it must be remembered, to establish the thesis that during the days of creation the *modus operandi* of divine providence was the same as is at present in effect, can only have validity if it proves that there was no supernatural intrusion such as might be found, for example, in the working of miracles. But such supernatural intrusion was certainly present in the creation of man (Gen. 2:7). And the only works ascribed to the third day are creative works, not those of ordinary divine providence. Indeed, on no viewpoint can it be established that ordinary providential working *prevailed* on the third day. The only works assigned to this day were the result of special, divine, creative fiats. If ordinary providence existed during the third day, it was

<sup>53</sup> The force of **אֵל** must be noted. Delitzsch takes it as indicating a single action "normirt durch den historischen Zusammenh. in Imperfectbe- deutung" (*Commentar uber die Genesis*, Leipzig, 1860, p. 140). Tuch, however (*Commentar uber die Genesis*, Halle, 1871, p. 52) takes the verb as in verse 10, and Isa. 6:4 "von der werdenden, allmalig erst geschehenden Handlung". The latter is a more accurate representation of the Hebrew. Driver believes that the imperfect has frequentative force, "used to go up" (*A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, Oxford, MDCCCXCII, p. 128). Gesenius, Kautzsch, Cowley state that the imperfect here expresses an action which continued throughout a longer or shorter period, "a mist went up, continually" (Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford, 1910, p. 314). William Henry Green (*A Grammar of the Hebrew Language*, New York, 1891, p. 313) also renders used to go up, "not only at the moment of time previously referred to but from that time onward".

interrupted at two points by divine fiats. Even apart from any consideration of Genesis 2:5, therefore, it cannot be held that the present *modus operandi* of divine providence prevailed on the third day, nor does the appeal to Genesis 2:5 prove such a thing. On the contrary, all that is stated of the third day (Gen. 1:9-15) shows that the works of that day were creative works and not those of ordinary providence. An appeal to Genesis 2:5 therefore does not support the position that the days are to be taken in a non-chronological manner.<sup>54</sup>

### 3. The Schematic Nature of Genesis One

A further argument adduced to support the non-chronological view is found in the claim that Genesis one is schematic in nature. Thus, the author is said to divide the vegetable world into two groups, plants which give seed by means of the fruits and plants which give seed in a more direct way. In verses 24ff. something of the same nature is said to be found.<sup>55</sup>

It may very well be that the author of Genesis one has arranged his material in a schematic manner. On this particular question we shall have more to say when presenting a positive interpretation of the chapter. At this point, however, one or two remarks will suffice. In the first place, from the fact that some of the material in Genesis one is given in schematic form, it does not necessarily follow that what is stated is to be dismissed as figurative or as not describing what actually occurred. Sometimes a schematic arrangement may serve the purpose of emphasis. Whether the language is figurative or symbolical, however, must be determined upon exegetical grounds. Secondly, a schematic disposition of the material in Genesis one does not prove, nor does it even

<sup>54</sup> Even if **טַל** referred to evaporation (and as shown in note 31 this is not possible) it is difficult to understand how it could have provided rainfall sufficient for the entire earth. And if the reference is local, how can evaporation have arisen from a land in which there had been no rain or dew, and how on this interpretation can Genesis 2:5 be fitted into the third day of Genesis 1? These considerations support the view that the **טַל** designates subterranean waters, waters which may have entered the earth when the division between seas and dry land was made.

<sup>55</sup> *Quarterly*, p. 223.

suggest, that the days are to be taken in a non-chronological sense. There appears to be a certain schematization, for example, in the genealogies of Matthew one, but it does not follow that the names of the genealogies are to be understood in a non-chronological sense, or that Matthew teaches that the generations from Abraham to David parallel, or were contemporary with, those from David to the Babylonian captivity and that these in turn are parallel to the generations from the Babylonian captivity to Christ.<sup>56</sup> Matthew, in other words, even though he has adopted a certain schematic arrangement, namely, fourteen generations to each group, is not presenting three different aspects of the same thing. He is not saying the same thing in three different ways. He has a schematic arrangement, but that does not mean that he has thrown chronology to the winds. Why, then, must we conclude that, merely because of a schematic arrangement, Moses has disposed of chronology?

#### 4. Is the First-Hand Impression of Genesis One Correct?

In defense of the non-chronological view of the days it is asserted, and rightly, that Genesis one is not the product of a naive writer.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, so it is argued, if we read Genesis "without prepossession or suspicion" we receive the impression that the author meant to teach a creation in six ordinary days and, more than that, to teach that the earth was created before the sun, moon and stars. This impression, apparently, is to be considered naive. "Is it good", asks Ridderbos, "to read Genesis one thus simply, '*avec des yeux ingenus*'?"<sup>58</sup> It is, of course, true that the first-hand impression that comes to us upon reading certain passages of the Bible may not be the correct one. Further reflection may lead to a re-evaluation of our first-hand impression and to the adoption of a different interpretation. But if we label a first-hand

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Matthew 1:1-17. Verse 17 gives a summary comment. It would certainly be unwarranted to conclude that, merely because of the schematic arrangement in Matthew, the names were to be interpreted figuratively or symbolically.

<sup>57</sup> *Conflict*, p. 29.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.



impression naive, we cannot do so merely upon the basis of our own independent and "autonomous" opinion as to what is naive. Only exegesis can tell us whether a certain impression is or is not naive. We ourselves, upon the basis of our subjective judgment, are not warranted in making such a pronouncement. If the first-hand impression that any Scripture makes upon us is naive, it is Scripture alone that can enable us so to judge, and not we ourselves apart from the Scripture.

If we understand it correctly, the argument now before us is that the *prima facie* impression which we receive from Genesis one is naive, and not to be accepted.<sup>59</sup> This consideration raises the question why it is naive to believe that God created all things in six ordinary days or that the earth was created before the sun? This line of argumentation would prove too much, for it could be applied to other passages of Scripture as well. One who reads the Gospels, for example, is likely to receive the impression that they teach that Jesus rose from the dead. But can we in this day of science seriously be expected to believe that such an event really took place? At the same time, the Gospels can hardly be called the products of naive writers. Are we, therefore, able to understand the writers' meaning at first glance? Do the writers really intend to teach that Jesus rose from the dead or may they not be employing this particular manner of statement to express some great truth?

Only solid exegesis can lead to the true understanding of Scripture. If, in any instance, what appears to be the *prima*

<sup>59</sup> At this point Ridderbos quotes the well-known statement of von Rad, a statement which he thinks "is of importance here" (*Conflict*, p. 29), namely, " `It is doctrine which has been cautiously enriched in a process of very slow, century-long growth' " ("es ist Lehre, die in langsamstem, jahrhundertelangem Wachstum sich behutsam angereichert hat" (von Rad, *op. cit.*, p. 36). In the sense intended by von Rad, however, this statement cannot be accepted, for there is no evidence to support it. If Moses had before him written documents which he employed in compiling Genesis 1, these documents simply reflected an original revelation concerning the creation. When Moses as an inspired penman wrote, he was superintended by God's Spirit, so that he wrote precisely what God wished him to write. The form and content of Genesis 1 were the work of Moses writing under the inspiration of God's Spirit, and the words of Genesis 1 are God-breathed words (cf. II Tim. 3:16).

*facie* meaning is not the true one, it is exegesis alone, and not our independent judgment that the apparent *prima facie* meaning is naive, that will bring us to the truth.

#### 5. The Author of Genesis had a Sublime Concept of God

Somewhat similar is the argument that inasmuch as the author has such a sublime concept of God, we cannot believe that he meant to say that God used a day for each of his great works.<sup>60</sup> The same objection must be raised against this type of reasoning as was urged against the idea that some of the representations in Genesis one are naive. It is not the prerogative of the exegete on his own to determine what a sublime conception of God is.

It might also be remarked in this connection that if the idea of creation in six days really does detract from a sublime concept of God, the author of Genesis was certainly ill-advised in using it. If the author really possessed this sublime concept, why did he employ a scheme which would detract from that concept? Would it not have been better if he had simply told us the truth about creation in a straightforward manner, rather than used a scheme which presents a way of creation inconsistent with a sublime concept of God?

#### 6. Parallelism of the Days

In favor of a non-chronological order of the days, it is also argued that there exists a certain parallelism between the first three and the last three days. Thus, it is held, the six days are divided into two groups of three each. The parallelism is thought to be seen in the light of the first day and the light-bearers of the fourth.<sup>61</sup> Again, on the second day the firmament is created which divides the waters above and below it, and on the fifth day the waters are filled with living creatures. On the third day dry land appears, and on the sixth the inhabitants of earth are created.

<sup>60</sup> *Conflict*, p. 31. "Are we really to take literally the representation that for every great work (or two works) of creation He used a day?"

<sup>61</sup> *Quarterly*, p. 223.

Assuming that such parallelism actually exists, at best it proves that days four, five and six parallel days one, two and three. Even on this construction, however, a certain amount of chronology is retained. Days two-five must follow days one-four, and days three-six must follow days two-five. Hence, even here there would be chronological order, namely, days one-four, two-five, three-six.

As soon as one examines the text carefully, however, it becomes apparent that such a simple arrangement is not actually present. We may note that the light-bearers of the fourth day are placed in the firmament of heaven (1:14, 17). The firmament, however, was made on the second day (1:6, 7). Inasmuch as the fourth day is said to parallel the first, it follows that the work of the second day (making the firmament) must precede that of the first and fourth days (i. e., placing the light-bearers in the firmament). If the first and fourth days are really parallel in the sense that they present two aspects of the same thing, and if part of the work of the fourth day is the placing of the luminaries in the firmament, it follows that the firmament must be present to receive the luminaries. The firmament therefore, existed not only before the fourth day, but, inasmuch as it is a parallel to the fourth, before the first day also. This is an impossible conclusion, for verse three is connected with verse two grammatically, in that the three circumstantial clauses of verse two modify the main verb of verse three. At the same time by its use of the introductory words *וַיִּבְרָא*, verse two clearly introduces the detailed account of which a general statement is given in verse one. Verse two is the beginning of the section or unit, the first action of which is expressed by the main verb of verse three.<sup>62</sup> To hold that days two-five precede days one-four is simply to abandon all grammatical considerations.

Furthermore, if day five is a parallel to day two, and day two is earlier than days one-four Genesis one is practically reduced to nonsense. On the fifth day the birds fly in the open firmament of heaven, and the fish fill the seas. This may cause no difficulty as far as the fish are concerned, but

<sup>62</sup> Cf. "The Relation of the First Verse of Genesis One to Verses Two and Three", *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (May 1959), pp. 133-146.

light has not yet been created, and light is a prerequisite for the life of birds. A further difficulty also emerges. The fish are to swim in the seas (אֲרָצוֹת), but the seas were not formed until the third day. Day five, it must be noted, does not refer to the primeval ocean, but to the seas. From these brief considerations it is apparent that we cannot regard Genesis one as containing two groups of three days, each day of one group being a genuine parallel to the corresponding day of the other set.

It is now in place to ask in how far there actually does exist parallelism between two groups of three days each. That there is a certain amount of parallelism cannot be denied. The light of day one and the light-bearers of day four may be said to sustain a relationship to one another, but they are not identical. They are not two aspects of the same thing. The light of day one is called "day" (יֹמִים) and the heavenly bodies of day four are made to rule the day. That which rules (the heavenly bodies) and that which is ruled (the day) are not the same. In the very nature of the case they must be distinguished. The production of each is introduced by the short אֵינִי ("let there be"). At this point, however, the correspondence ceases.

Even though there may be a certain parallelism between the mention of light on day one and the light-bearers of day four, it is but a parallelism in that light and light-bearers bear a relationship one to another. What is stated about the light and the light-bearers, however, is quite different. The creation of light is the result of God's fiat. God himself then divides between the light and the darkness. On the fourth day God makes the light-bearers. Unlike the light of day one, they do not spring into existence at his creative word. It must also be noted that the functions of the light and those of the light-bearers are not parallel. In fact, no function whatever is given for the light of day one.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, the light-bearers of day four are brought into existence for the purpose of serving a world in which dry land and seas have been separated, a world on which plant and animal life

<sup>63</sup> It is true that God calls the light "day", but no statement of function is made such as is found in connection with the sun and moon.

can exist. The division between light and darkness which God made on day one was at a time when the world was covered with water, and there was no firmament.<sup>64</sup> The light-bearers, on the other hand, were placed in the firmament of heaven, a firmament that was brought into existence only on the second day. It is obvious, then, that the work of day one and that of day four are two distinct and different works. They do not parallel one another, other than that light characterizes one day and light-bearers the other.

Do the second and fifth days parallel one another? On day two there is a twofold fiat ("let there be a firmament ... and let it divide") and the fulfillment consists of two acts of God ("God made ... divided"), followed by a further act ("God called"). On the fifth day there is also a twofold fiat ("let the waters bring forth ... and the fowl let it fly") and then comes a fulfillment consisting of a threefold creative act of God ("God created ... great whales. .. every living thing ... every winged fowl") and this is followed by two additional acts of God ("God saw ... God blessed"). As far as form is concerned, the parallelism is by no means exact.

Nor is there exact parallelism in content. The swarming waters and their inhabitants which were created in the fifth day are not to be identified with the primeval waters of day two. Rather, it is expressly stated that the fish are to fill the waters in the seas (verse 22), and the seas were brought into existence on the third day.<sup>65</sup> For that matter, if a mere parallel with water is sought, we may note that "the waters" and the "abyss" are mentioned in verse two also.

The birds are created that they may fly above the earth upon the faces of the expanse of heaven (verse 20). Is this a parallel to the work of day two? Actually the only parallel consists in the mention of the word "firmament". Now, it is true that the birds fly in the firmament, but they also belong

<sup>64</sup> Although it is not explicitly stated in verse 2 that the earth was covered with water, this seems to be implied, and the fiat of verse 9 shows that such was the case. Cf. "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2", *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2 (May 1961), p. 171.

<sup>65</sup> Ridderbos says that this must not be given much weight (Conflict, p. 35). It is sufficiently weighty, however, to show that the alleged parallelism between days two and five is an illusion.

to the earth. They are created first of all to fly above the earth (עַל הָאָרֶץ) and are commanded to multiply in the earth (וַהֲעוֹף יִרְבַּ בְּאֶרֶץ). The sphere in which the birds are to live is explicitly said to be the earth, not the firmament; and the earth, capable of sustaining bird life, did not appear until the third day. In the light of these emphases it is difficult to understand how a parallel between days two and five is present.

Let us briefly examine the relationship between the third and sixth days. There are three fiats on the third day (waters ... dry land ... earth). The first two are followed by a threefold act of God ("God called ... called he ... God saw") and the third fiat is followed by a twofold act ("the earth brought forth ... God saw"). On the sixth day, following the fiat and fulfillment with respect to the living creatures, a unique method of statement is introduced, which has no parallel in the description of the third day. Indeed, it is difficult to discover any parallel of thought with the third day. At best it may be said that the dry land of day three is the sphere in which man and the animals live. This, however, is a parallelism which applies only to a part of the third day.

A word must be said about the view that days one, two and three present the realm and days four, five and six the ruler in that realm, and that therefore there are two parallel trios of days.<sup>66</sup> With respect to days one and three we may remark that light is not the sphere in which the light-bearers rule. The sphere of the primitive light, however, is the day. "God called the light day." On day four the sphere in which the light-bearers rule is the day and night to give light upon the earth. It is true that they are placed in the expanse of heaven, but this is in order that they may give light upon the earth. The sphere of the sea creatures of day five is not the firmament of day two but the seas (verse 22) of the earth, and the sphere in which the birds rule is also the earth (verse 22).

<sup>66</sup> This view was set forth by V. Zapletal: *Der Schöpfungsbericht*, Freiburg, 1902. Zapletal rejects what he calls the scholastic distinction of "opus distinctio et opus ornatus", a distinction which, he claims, is influenced by the Vulgate translation of 2:1 "et omnis ornatus eorum". Instead, he would emphasize the Hebrew אָרֶץ and speak of "die Schöpfung der Heere (sabha)" and "die Schöpfung der Regionen, der Kampfplatze dieser Heere," i. e., "productio regionum et exercituum" (p. 72).

The same is true of the land animals and man; the spheres in which they rule is not merely the dry land of day three, but the entire earth, including the fish of the sea, which God has prepared for them. The matter may be set forth in tabular form as follows:

|          | RULER         | REALM         |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| day four | light-bearers | the earth     |
| day five | sea creatures | seas of earth |
|          | winged fowl   | earth         |
| day six  | land animals  | earth         |
|          | man           | earth         |

Thus, the view that days one, two and three present the realm and days four, five and six the ruler in that realm, is contrary to the explicit statements of Genesis.

### 7. The Historiography of Genesis One

The historiography of the Bible, it is said, is not quite the same as modern historiography.<sup>67</sup> Genesis one is thought to contain a peculiar sort of history, for man is not present to play a role alongside of God. Often, it is argued, the biblical writers group their facts together in an artificial manner and deviate from a chronological order, without any indication of the fact being given. Indeed, without warning, the biblical writer may deviate from a chronological order and arrange his material artificially.

Ridderbos has aptly called attention, for example, to Genesis two as a passage in which a certain schematic arrangement is present and he rightly points out that Genesis two is an

<sup>67</sup> *Quarterly*, p. 225; *Conflict*, p. 30. Visee (*op. cit.*, p. 636) does not wish to apply the word "history" to Genesis 1, inasmuch as he thinks it is not a suitable word to use ("niet juist"). Nevertheless, his comments are true to Scripture. He regards Genesis 1 as a factual account of what actually took place, but withholds from it the term "history" because it is not an eyewitness account or the fruit of historical investigation. There can be no serious objection to this position, although we prefer to apply the term history to all that has happened, even though our knowledge thereof should come to us through special divine revelation (e. g., Genesis 1) instead of by historical investigation.

We do not see what is gained, however, by labelling Genesis 1, *Verbondsgeschiedenis* (Popma, *op. cit.*, p. 622). Genesis 1 is the divine revelation of the creation. That point must be insisted upon.

introduction to the account of the fall of man.<sup>68</sup> Genesis two may well serve as an example of a passage of Scripture in which chronological considerations are not paramount. This will be apparent if we simply list certain matters mentioned in the chapter.

1. God formed man (verse 7).
2. God planted a garden (verse 8a).
3. God placed the man in the garden (verse 8b).
4. God caused the trees to grow (verse 9a).
5. God placed the man in the garden (verse 15a).

It is obvious that a chronological order is not intended here. How many times did God place man in the garden? What did God do with man before he placed him in the garden? How many times did God plant the garden, or did God first plant a garden and then later plant the trees? Clearly enough Moses here has some purpose other than that of chronology in mind.

In chapter two events are narrated from the standpoint of emphasis, in preparation for the account of the fall.<sup>69</sup> Looked at from this viewpoint, the chapter is remarkably rich in meaning. First of all we may note that it is not a duplicate or second account of creation. Hence, we should not make the mistake of trying to force its "order of events" into harmony with the order of events given in chapter one. The section begins by giving us a barren earth, for there had been no rain and there was no man to till the ground. God, however, did not desire man to dwell in a barren earth but in a garden, for man was to be God's guest on this earth. Hence, God will prepare a dwelling place for him. First the ground is watered and then man is created. For man the garden is made, God's garden, and man is placed therein. The garden, however, is a place of exquisite beauty, and trees are made to grow therein. Thus we are prepared for the prohibition not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Further information about the location of the garden and its well-watered character is then given, that we may learn that its trees will truly thrive. There, in a place of great charm, man is placed as God's servant to work the

<sup>68</sup> *Op. Cit.*, pp. 26 f.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. W. H. Green: *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, New York, 1895, pp. 7-36, for an excellent discussion of the nature of Genesis 2.



garden. The garden is not Adam's but God's, and God alone may prescribe the manner in which Adam is to live therein. Adam is forbidden to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When this important matter is disposed of, Moses then introduces a question that has to do with man's relation to his environment. His relation to God, however, must first be made clear (verses 16, 17) and then that to his environment. He is not to live alone, but is to have the animals as his helpers. Yet they are not sufficient to correspond to him; only the woman can be such a help. Her creation is then related, and Adam recognizes her who was to show herself a hindrance as a help that is essentially one with himself. One final point must be mentioned to prepare for the account of the fall. Adam and Eve were naked, yet not ashamed. They were good, and no evil was found in them.

What Moses does in Genesis two is truly remarkable. He emphasizes just those points which need to be stressed, in order that the reader may be properly prepared to understand the account of the fall.<sup>70</sup> Are we, however, warranted in assuming that, inasmuch as the material in Genesis two is arranged in a non-chronological manner, the same is likely to be true of Genesis one? It is true that in Genesis one man is not present until the sixth day, but is this sufficient warrant for claiming that the days are to be taken in a non-chronological manner?

In the very nature of the case Genesis one is *sui generis*. Its content could have been known only by special communication from God. Obviously, it is not a history of mankind, but it is the divine revelation of the creation of heaven and earth and of man, and it is to be interpreted only upon the basis of serious exegesis. The fact that Genesis two discusses its subject in a partly non-chronological manner really has

<sup>70</sup> "This phenomenon (i. e., that in prophetic and apocalyptic writings "events are telescoped, grouped, and arranged in a given manner") should make us hospitable toward the idea that in Genesis 1, which treats not the distant future but the unimaginable distant past, we should encounter the same sort of thing" (*Conflict*, p. 39). But Genesis 1 is *sui generis*; it is to be interpreted only on its own merits, and only by means of a serious attempt to ascertain the meaning of the author.

little bearing upon how Genesis one is to be interpreted. Genesis one must be interpreted upon its own merit.

### 8. Analogy of Other Passages

This same consideration must be emphasized in answer to the appeal made to other passages of Scripture. Thus, it is pointed out that certain visions of John, although they are heptadic in structure, nevertheless, do not exhibit a strictly chronological sequence. Whether they exhibit a chronological sequence or not may sometimes be difficult to determine, but it is really an irrelevant consideration, for even if all the events in Revelation were narrated without regard for chronological considerations, that fact in itself would not prove that the first chapter of Genesis was to be so interpreted. Although the book of Revelation is identified as containing words of prophecy, it nevertheless is an apocalypse in the sense that Daniel also is an apocalypse. Together with the book of Daniel it forms a unique literary genre which is not matched or equalled by the non-canonical apocalypses. It is not always to be interpreted in the same manner as writing which is truly historical. If, therefore, there are passages in Revelation which are to be interpreted in a non-chronological manner, this in itself is really an irrelevant consideration. It has nothing to do with the manner in which the historical writing of Genesis one is to be interpreted. If Revelation is to be a guide for the interpretation of Genesis one, then it must be shown that Genesis one is of the same literary genre as Revelation. This, we believe, cannot be successfully done.

In this connection it may be remarked that appeal to other passages of Scripture in which a non-chronological order of statement is found is really beside the point. No one denies that there are such passages. What must be denied is the idea that the presence of such passages somehow supports the view that Genesis one is to be interpreted non-chronologically.<sup>71</sup> (to be concluded)

<sup>71</sup> The following passages are generally adduced in this connection, Gen. 2; II Kg. 23:4-10; Ps. 78:44 ff.; Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:13, 16-30; Matt. 13:53-58. Cf. *Conflict*, pp. 37f.

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