

## A FRESH LOOK AT TWO GENESIS CREATION ACCOUNTS: CONTRADICTIONS?

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One would be exegetically blind to not see differences between the first (Gen 1:1–2:4a) and the second (Gen 2:4b-25) Genesis creation accounts.<sup>1</sup> The majority of scholars stress discrepancies between them because they assume there are two different authors or sources with several redactors involved in putting these texts together. They claim that the first creation story was composed by the “Priestly” (P) writer, the second by the “Jahvist,” (J), and later an unknown redactor or redactors put them together.<sup>2</sup> Richard E. Friedman states: “In many ways they duplicate each other, and on several points they contradict each other.”<sup>3</sup> Are these two creation narratives really contradictory? Do they stand in opposition to each other?

<sup>1</sup>The first creation account is found in Gen 1:1–2:4a, and the second account is in Gen 2:4b-25.

Bible scholars are divided over whether Gen 2:4a belongs to the first creation story or whether it is an introductory formula to the second account. Among those exegetes who take the first creation story as Gen 1:1–Gen 2:4a are Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 78, 178, 197; Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series, 5 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1978), 59, 78-79; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, 3d ed., AB 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 3-13. Those who see Gen 2:4a as an introductory formula to the second account include Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC, 1 (Waco: Word, 1987), 5, 36, 49; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 150-153; John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 35-36, 39-41, 65, 163; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 14-17; Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 79, 83-84. For discussions for and against these positions, see Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnus Press, 1961), 1:96-100; Hamilton, 150-153; and Wenham, 5-10. The arguments in this article about the function of the first and the second creation accounts do not depend on either position. I concur with Cassuto that it may well be that Gen 2:4a belongs to both stories as a transitional statement.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion on the authorship of Gen 1–2, see Richard E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 50-246; John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 47-65; Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and expanded (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 89-147; Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 7-28; Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 159-185; Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis: Eight Lectures*, intro. Joshua A. Berman (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961).

<sup>3</sup>Friedman, 50.

In this article, we will examine twelve differences between the two creation accounts that point to a complementary relationship between them, followed by theological-exegetical responses to objections to understanding the Genesis creation accounts as being complementary in nature.

*An Examination of the Differences and Contrasts  
between the Genesis Creation Accounts*

In this section, we will explore twelve differences or contrasts between the two creation accounts of Genesis that appear to point toward a complementary relationship rather than toward different authors or sources.

### 1. Number of Creation Days

The first narrative describes seven days of creative activity. However, the second account focuses on only one day of activity out of seven—the sixth one—because it begins with the creation of man (2:7) and culminates with the creation of woman and the institution of marriage (2:22-25). These activities correspond with God's actions performed on the sixth day in Gen 1:26-28.

### 2. Names of God

The first story consistently uses the Hebrew term *Elohim* as the name of God. This term refers to a transcendent, mighty, sovereign, and universal God of all humanity.<sup>4</sup> The second account employs the proper name for God, the holy Tetragrammaton *YHWH*, which points to a personal, immanent, close, and covenant God of his people.<sup>5</sup> Umberto Cassuto convincingly argues that the use of these two different divine names in the biblical creation accounts is theologically deliberate and not evidence for two different authors or literary sources. He notes that “One thing appears to me to be beyond doubt, that the variations in the choice of the Divine Names did not come about accidentally but by design.”<sup>6</sup> To demonstrate that *Elohim* and *YHWH* are the same God, the author of the second account always speaks of God as *YHWH Elohim*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The term God (*Elohim*) is used thirty-five times in the first account: 1:1, 2, 3, 4 (twice), 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (twice), 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21 (twice), 22, 24, 25 (twice), 26, 27 (twice), 28 (twice), 29, 31; 2:2, 3 (twice).

<sup>5</sup>For the different nuances of these two divine names, see esp. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, 30-33.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>7</sup>The designation *YHWH Elohim* is used eleven times in the second creation narrative: Gen 2:4b, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22.

### 3. Manner of Creation

In the first narrative, God creates by his Word and from a distance. The phrase *wayyo'mer Elohim* (“and God said”) is repeated ten times for emphasis (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29; cf. Ps 33:6, 9: “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm”). The Hebrew verb *bārā'* (“created”) is employed three times in Gen 1:27, and the cohortative form of the verb *āsāh* (“let us make”) is used in Gen 1:26 in order to describe God’s creative activity in relationship to humans. On the other hand, the second story depicts God’s personal involvement in creating humans by taking the ground, forming Adam (word *yāšar* [“form,” “shape”] is used),<sup>8</sup> and giving him life by “kissing” him (Gen 2:7, 21-22). The Hebrew word *bānāh* (“build,” Gen 2:22) is used for creating a woman, God’s final masterpiece, thus pointing to him as an architect.

### 4. Meaning of the Word “Day”

Genesis 1 uses the term *yôm* (“day”)<sup>9</sup> to designate the literal twenty-four-hour periods of time that mark the days of creation (see discussion below). The second account uses the idiomatic expression *byôm* (lit. “in a day”), which means “when” (Gen 2:4, 17).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Elsewhere in the Bible, the term *yōšer* (participial form of the root *yāšar*) describes a potter making clay vessels (see Jer 18:1-6). Thus the creation story points to God as a potter. The Hebrew word *yāšar* is also mentioned for God’s forming specific animals and birds that he brought to Adam for naming (Gen 2:19).

<sup>9</sup>In the first biblical creation account, the noun *yôm* is mentioned in relationship to each of the seven days of the creation week, and this term is consistently used in the singular with numerals, but without the definite article, preposition, suffix, or comparative particle—Gen 1:5b, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:3. This word is mentioned once in each day of creation and is always situated at the very end of each described day of creation (with the exception of the seventh day, which is mentioned three times for emphasis).

Gen 2:2 utilizes the expression *bayôm* (“in the day”) twice, pointing particularly to the seventh-day Sabbath, when God’s creation activity was culminated and finished on that day.

The expression *hayôm* (“the day”) is used twice (Gen 1:14, 16) and has a different meaning. This expression stresses the fact that God appointed the sun and moon to divide between the day (a bright part of the day with sunlight; cf. Gen 1:5a) and the night (a dark part of the day governed by the moon). In this context, another occurrence of *bayôm* (used also in Gen 2:2, and thus altogether three times in the first account) appears in the phrase these lights should “rule over the day and over the night” (Gen 1:18).

The word “day” occurs once in the plural form, together with the conjunction “and” and the preposition *lamed* “for” in the form of *uleyāmim* (“and for days,” Gen 1:14), i.e., the sun and moon divide time into seasons, days, and years.

<sup>10</sup>See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68. “When God finished creating the heavens and

## 5. “Good” Versus “Not Good”

The first narrative states six times that everything God created was good (*tôb*; Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Finally, when God completed all his physical creative activities, he proclaimed that everything was “very good” (*tôb me’od*; Gen 1:31). This sevenfold repetition is in tension with God’s statement in the second narrative that “It is not good for the man to be alone” (2:18).<sup>11</sup>

## 6. Absence of the Garden of Eden

The first account does not mention “the garden of Eden” (*gan-b’eden*), while the story of the second account revolves around and in it (see esp. Gen 2:8-22).

## 7. Merism of the Heaven and Earth

The first account begins with the profound proclamation: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1) and concludes with “these are the genealogies of the heavens and the earth” (Gen 2:4a). This literary structure contains the merism “the heavens and the earth,” which points in its specific context to the general understanding that God is the Creator of everything—the whole universe.<sup>12</sup> Between this *inclusio*, the author describes what was created in the different habitats of Earth, with the stress lying on the Earth and its surroundings.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, the second account’s emphasis is on the events related to the Earth, as demonstrated in its introductory phrase “earth and heavens” (Gen 2:4b) that are a reverse order of the opening words of Gen 1:1, and on the creation of Adam, the Garden of Eden, and his wife.<sup>14</sup>

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earth, there was not yet . . .” (Gen 2:4b-5). The same is true of God’s categorical statement: “When you will eat from the forbidden fruit, you will surely die” (Gen 2:17). See also, e.g., Gen 3:5; 5:1-2; 21:8; 30:33; 35:3; Exod 6:28; 10:28.

<sup>11</sup>It is true that the Hebrew adjective “good” (*tôb*) describes the fruit of the trees and gold (Gen 2:9, 12), and it is also employed in the specific phrase about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (*tôb wārā’*; Gen 2:9, 17).

<sup>12</sup>See Jiří Moskala, “Interpretation of *b’rešit* in the Context of Genesis 1:1-3,” *AUSS* 49 (2011): 42, n. 28. The phrase “thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array” (Gen 2:1) appears right after the six days of physical creation and acknowledges that God tangibly created everything needed for life on Earth. However, until that point a crucial thing was missing, the spiritual dimension—putting humans into relationship with God. Only after this preliminary conclusion (2:1), the value of the Sabbath is presented (2:2-3). In this way, the creation story is made theocentric (for details, see my article “The Sabbath in the First Creation Account,” *JATS* 13/1 [2002]: 55-66).

<sup>13</sup>On the three habitats, see Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *JATS* 14/1 (2003): 34-36.

<sup>14</sup>Consider the following vocabulary and phrases used in the Genesis creation

## 8. Not Yet

According to the first account, everything was very good (Gen 1:31), meaning that there was no sin in the new creation. This is eloquently accentuated and explicitly elaborated in the introduction to the second narrative. Because sin was absent and evil had not yet marred the perfect world when God created the earth and the heavens, four things were not yet present (Gen 2:4b-5):<sup>15</sup> (1) the shrub of the field (*šab hassādeh*), (2) the plant of the field (*‘eseb hassādeh*), (3) rain (*bimtir*), and (4) the cultivation of the ground (*la’abod ‘et-hā’adāmāh*). This description is given in anticipation of Genesis 3, where the story of the original sin is recounted, and when mistrust and the disobedience of the first couple will bring a change for the worse to everything.<sup>16</sup> The consequences of sin will be dramatic: the shrub of the field will appear because the ground was cursed, and thorns and thistles will be produced. As a result, humans will need to work in their fields and cultivate the land to have a crop. By sweat and painful labor, they will toil for their food (Gen 3:17-19).

## 9. Details in the Creation of Adam and Eve

The first account stresses that humans, both man and woman, were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27).<sup>17</sup> The second narrative provides details

accounts (without paying close attention to whether the definite article or preposition are employed or not) in order to see this emphasis: “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1; 2:4a); “the heavens and the earth and all their hosts [with all their vast array]” (Gen 2:1); “the earth and the heavens” (Gen 2:4b); “the heavens” (*šamayim*; Gen 1:8, 9, 14, 15, 17, 20); “the sky” (*nāqā’*; Gen 1:6, 7 [3x], 8, 14, 15, 17, 20); “the beasts of the earth” (*ḥayyat hā’āreš*; Gen 1:24, 25, 30); “the birds of the heavens” (*‘ōp haššamayim*; Gen 1:26, 28, 30; 2:19, 20); “the earth” (*‘ereš*; Gen 1:2, 10, 11 [twice], 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, 26 [twice], 28 [twice], 29, 30; 2:5 [twice], 6, 11, 12, 13); “the ground” (*‘adāmāb*; Gen 1:25; 2:5, 6, 7, 9, 19); “the dry land” (*yabbāšāb*; Gen 1:9, 10); “water” (*mayim*; Gen 1:2, 6 [3x], 7 [twice], 9, 10, 20, 21, 22); “sea” (*yammim*; Gen 1:10, 22); “the river” (*nāhār*; 2:10, 13, 14 [twice]); “the garden” (*gan*; Gen 2:8-10, 15, 16).

<sup>15</sup>Jacques B. Doukhan, “When Death Was Not Yet: The Testimony of Biblical Creation” (unpublished paper, Andrews University, 2010); Randall Younker, “Genesis 2: A Second Creation Account?” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, ed. John T. Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 69-78.

<sup>16</sup>About the close relationship between Genesis 2 and 3, see Roberto Ouro, “The Garden of Eden Account: The Chiasmic Structure of Genesis 2–3,” *AUSS* 40 (2002): 219-243. See also Roberto Ouro, “Linguistic and Thematic Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 3,” *JATS* 13/1 (2002): 44-54.

<sup>17</sup>To be created in God’s image does not mean that humans were created as junior or “small” gods, but that (1) humans can relate to God as a person and communicate with him; (2) man and woman should rule over God’s creation as his representatives, exercise a delegated authority, and are responsible to him; (3) humans should reflect his character as human beings and should cultivate loving and kind-hearted relationships together as

regarding the creation of man (Gen 2:7) and woman (Gen 2:22-23) to demonstrate that the two beings belong together. God made them through his direct intervention. The creation of woman is stated for several reasons: (a) to underscore Adam's need of a partner; (b) to emphasize that a wife is God's gift; (c) to demonstrate that the wife is equal to the man; and (d) to underscore the institution of marriage. These details present God as the one who created marriage for humans and who wants them to be happy by bringing two individuals together to become one.

#### 10. First Commandments

The first narrative includes several imperatives that humans need to exercise: to "be fruitful" "multiply," and "fill" the earth, and to "subdue" and "rule over" it (Gen 1:28), while the second account mentions another two of God's commands<sup>18</sup> in relationship to eating from the trees in the Garden of Eden (2:16-17). God provided vegetarian food for humans (as well as for animals), commands freedom to enjoy it, but at the same time gives one limitation in order to maintain their sense of humanness, fragility, and dependence: they should not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

#### 11. A Different Sequence of Themes

The first narrative presents three topics, which God himself mentions in his speeches to the first couple—sex (1:28a), work (1:28b), and food (1:29)—so that humans will know the proper usage of human mundane activities. The second account also deals with these themes, but in a different order: work (2:15), food (Gen 2:16-17), and the intimate relationship between husband and wife (2:24).<sup>19</sup>

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living beings; (4) humans are created as unique persons with unique faculties and abilities as God is also unique, so they need to cultivate this individual uniqueness in order to be a blessing to each other in order to bring an irreplaceable personal contribution.

For discussion about what it means to have the image of God, see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29-32; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983-1985), 495-517; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 423-425; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 442-450; Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 35-36; D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynBul* 19 (1968): 53-103; and Richard Rice, *The Reign of God* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1985), 110-118.

<sup>18</sup>It is noteworthy to observe that the root *šāwāh* is used here for the first time in the Hebrew Bible. It is the Hebrew root from which "commandment" is derived.

<sup>19</sup>It is significant to note that according to Matt 19:4-5, the statement of Gen 2:24 is directly assigned to God himself by Jesus.

## 12. The Purpose of Each Account

Each account has a specific purpose in view. The first narrative culminates with the seventh-day Sabbath, which puts God's presence into human life and establishes humans' dependency upon him. This theocentric account institutes a vertical relationship between God and people, which both parties could cultivate to maintain happiness, and, specifically for the man and woman, to sustain their humanity and ability to grow into the fullness of their potential. This existential dimension is complemented in the second story by putting humans into relationship to one another, namely, by establishing a horizontal relationship between the husband and wife from which springs all other relationships among people.<sup>20</sup>

The Genesis literary structures support this conclusion. After the magnificent and unparalleled introduction in Gen 1:1-2, the first narrative continues with two clusters of three days (formation on days one to three and filling on days four to six). After the prepared space was inhabited, the seventh-day Sabbath brings the whole narrative to a climax by putting humanity into relationship with God. The progressive literary structure of the second account in seven sections is as follows:<sup>21</sup>

Introduction (2:4b-6)

1. Formation of Man (2:7)
2. Planting a Garden of Eden, Plants, Four Rivers, the Task (2:8-15)
3. The Lord's First Two Commandments (2:16-17)
4. God's Plan to make a Companion for Adam (2:18)
5. Naming of Animals and Birds (2:19-20)
6. Creation of Woman (2:21-22)
7. Institution of Marriage (2:23-24)

Epilogue (2:25).

It becomes evident that the Sabbath (the climax of the first account) and marriage (the apex of the second narrative) are the summits of these

<sup>20</sup>One can summarize both biblical accounts of creation with the word "relationship." The purpose of the first narrative (Gen 1:1–2:4a) is about establishing a relationship between God and humans, and the second account (Gen 2:4b-25) is about building a relationship in the most essential human bond, marriage. These two relationships, vertical and horizontal, are complementary and must always come in the described ordered sequence so that life can be meaningful, beautiful, and happy. First comes a cultivation of a loving relationship with God, then with our marriage partner, and finally with others. The closer we are to God, the closer we should be to our spouses and to others. Only God can provide all the resources for life so we can be a contribution and blessing to each other. We were created in total dependency upon God; therefore, only from him can we receive all we need for building deep and lasting relationships.

<sup>21</sup>This structure is built on the pertinent study of Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story*, 44-52, 78-79.

two literary structures and provide a purpose for the author.<sup>22</sup> From the very beginning of this revelation, God is presented as the living one who creates life and as the God of relationships because the essence of life is relationship.

#### Preliminary Conclusion

The two stories are in parallel. The differences between the accounts, if studied in their particular contexts, do not contradict each other, but are complementary.<sup>23</sup> Each account presents a view from its specific angle (Genesis 1 is universal, while Genesis 2 is immanent and personal); together they paint a magnificent picture of the creation, with both accounts describing the same reality. The second account adds more details that enrich the first account. Thus the narratives belong together, were written purposely from the theological perspective, and have nothing to do with two or more authors/redactors or sources. The plain reading of the Genesis creation text is transparent and its purpose clear: to inform the reader about what really happened at the beginning of and during the creation week.

#### *Answering Theological and Exegetical Objections to a Complementary View of the Genesis Creation Accounts*

Some arguments against the complementary view argued for in this article call for close scrutiny.<sup>24</sup> The most surprising element in this debate is the

<sup>22</sup>From the Garden of Eden until today, we have two precious God-given gifts: the Sabbath and marriage. These two vital institutions remind us of life before sin. Humans should remember their roots because without this past there is no meaningful present or future.

<sup>23</sup>This complementarity is self-explanatory; e.g., it is true that the first creation account pinpoints the power of God's word, which created things, but it is never stated that God created humans by his command. The author explains that God first spoke about his intention to create humanity, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26a), and then he "created" humans in his image (Gen 1:27). The second narrative, then, gives the details of the whole stunning creation process by underscoring that this was done by God's personal involvement (Gen 2:7, 21-22). Thus these two stories do not contradict each other, but bring unique perspectives to the creation scene, bring it to life, and help the reader to better understand God's transcendence and immanence in order to feel God's closeness to humanity.

<sup>24</sup>When I studied at Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty (today Charles University) in Prague more than thirty years ago, some of my Protestant friends and professors, such as Milan Opocensky and Miloslav Bic, supported a more metaphorical approach to Genesis 1-2. They spoke about contradictions between them and on this basis they were defending theistic evolution.

Today a few Seventh-day Adventist theologians follow a similar approach, which demands one to read the Genesis creation story in a nonliteral way. Representative



strong language that some theologians use in arguments employed against the complimentary view of Genesis 1–2. For them, such explanation is not only unacceptable, it is impossible. Guy, for example, claims that such a literal reading “seems not merely a misunderstanding but a distortion, trivialization, and abuse of the text.”<sup>25</sup> To deduce from the Genesis creation narratives that life on earth is a recent phenomenon and that God created “by fiat, over a period of six twenty-four-hour, contiguous days . . . is not merely unwarranted but actually refuted by Scriptural evidence.”<sup>26</sup> It is important, then, to ask what biblical evidence is used in support of positions such as Guy’s? What theological and exegetical arguments are used to prove his point? What matters hermeneutically is, first, the intent of the biblical author and, second, the text, whose meaning and interpretation must be determined by its own context. We shall now briefly examine some of the objections to the complementary-account view.<sup>27</sup>

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examples include articles by Fritz Guy, “The Purpose and Function of Scripture: Preface to a Theology of Creation,” in *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives*, ed. Brian S. Bull, Fritz Guy, and Ervin Taylor (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today, 2006), 86-101; and Dalton D. Baldwin, “Creation and Time: A Biblical Reflection,” in *ibid.*, 35-51.

Usually when there is an attempt to harmonize recent evolutionary scientific theories with Genesis 1–2, the biblical narratives suffer. They are stripped of their strength, intention, and detail.

<sup>25</sup>Guy, 93.

<sup>26</sup>Guy, 87. This reasoning opens the way for theistic evolution, for a harmonization of the biblical view of creation (as interpreted by those scholars) with modern science, which maintains that life on Earth needs to be dated to millions of years old. In such harmonization, the biblical text loses and is exegetically and theologically twisted in such a way that the modern scientific view wins the ground. The biblical text is spiritualized and emptied of its intended meaning.

<sup>27</sup>One can drive on this road of supposed contradictions only by accepting some or all of the following critical presuppositions and methodology (1) working with the Documentary Hypothesis; (2) approaching Genesis 1–2 from the perspective of the poetical text of Psalm 104; (3) imposing on the Genesis creation story the perspective of modern science; (4) interpreting the biblical creation story from the cultural perspective provided by the extrabiblical material; (5) not differentiating between the uniqueness of the creation week and the ongoing creation, between macrocreation and microcreation; (6) accepting a historical-critical reconstruction of biblical history and the origin of the biblical books; (7) assuming that the author of Genesis 1 uses correct cosmogony (theology of the origin of the cosmos), but builds it on the common ancient Near Eastern cosmology. For examples and details of these critical presuppositions and methodology, see Baldwin, 35-51; Guy, 86-101; Larry G. Herr, “Genesis One in Historical-Critical Perspective,” *Spectrum* 13/2 (1982): 51-62. For a scientific explanation of the origin of life without the acceptance of an evolutionary paradigm or the above-mentioned interpretative models, see Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design*, 2d ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews

### 1. The Story of Creation as Theology

The first objection against the literal and complementary understanding of the Genesis creation accounts is the claim that the biblical creation narratives must be read as “spiritual,” “metaphorical,” and “theological” text, rather than as a historical narrative with a description of factual events.<sup>28</sup> The problem does not lie in the fact that Genesis 1–2 is a theological text. Of course, the creation narrative is theological, and one should not be surprised by it. It boldly proclaims that the living God is the Creator of life and everything around us. Its monotheistic interpretation, with its emphasis on the material world that was created as very good, is unprecedented and unique among the ancient Near Eastern literature. What is at stake is the nature of that theology. Is this creation theology rooted in history, and does it reflect the facts of life, or is it only a kerygmatic proclamation, a faith reflection that has very little to do with the reality of what actually happened in a factual account of the creation?

Theologians who consider these texts as a purely theological statement deny the historicity of these accounts. According to them, there was not a literal seven-day creation week during which God created life on Earth.<sup>29</sup> However, to separate theology and history reveals a narrow understanding of theology, because biblical faith is always rooted in time and space. All of God’s salvific events are historical. In biblical theology, there is no discrepancy between faith, message, theology, and history. Genesis 1–2 is theology *par excellence*, in which time and space play a crucial role.

That the author of the biblical creation narratives writes from the theological point of view can be supported by the fact that he engages in a polemic with mythological stories of his time.<sup>30</sup> Thus this antimythological account reflects not only his knowledge of those extrabiblical creation epics, but also proves that he is free to make his own unique contribution as it was revealed to him (Deut 29:29; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 11:3). The author is writing from a specific standpoint, emphasizing antimythological points in order to clarify the true origin of the world.<sup>31</sup>

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University Press, 2009); Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998).

<sup>28</sup>Baldwin, 36, 40, 49; Guy, 94-95, 97-98.

<sup>29</sup>Baldwin, 36, 42; Guy, 87.

<sup>30</sup>See esp. Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EvQ* 46 (1974): 81-102.

<sup>31</sup>In the process of presenting truth, philosophical and hermeneutical presuppositions play a crucial role by functioning as glasses through which we interpret the biblical text and how we approach Scripture itself. Often the real problem is not unbelief, but the hermeneutics of those who interpret the biblical message. Especially significant is the problem of understanding history.

How often I heard during my studies at the Protestant faculty in Prague: “What is important is the message, not history”! However, separating faith and history appears to lead to a tacit neodocetism, neognosticism, or neoplatonism.<sup>32</sup> Consider how Jesus and Paul took the Genesis creation story historically at face value (Matt 19:4; 1 Cor 15:47-49). Historical fact and theological message belong inseparably together because salvation history is real history. The message of Jesus’ resurrection is crucial, and this historical fact is our only hope for eternal life (John 20:27-29; 1 Cor 15:12-20; Gal 4:4; 1 John 4:1-3). Discrepancy or tension between faith and history is foreign to the biblical Hebrew thinking. It is thus important for biblical theology to be based upon true historical facts. Just as ideas, theology, and message are important, so is history. Theology and history, faith and the reality of life are not in contradiction; they fit together, are complementary, and do not stand against each other. Dissecting the text in order to separate theology and reality is artificial, because for the ancient readers the text formed a unity.

## 2. Creation Account as Worship?

The second objection against the complementary interpretation of the Genesis creation stories is the identification of its literary genre<sup>33</sup> as worship. It is claimed that these texts must be “experienced as worship.”<sup>34</sup> Are the creation accounts worship text, or do they only lead to worship? Undoubtedly, knowing God as our Creator should lead to an adoration of him who is worthy of our praises (see, e.g., Pss 8:1-9; 19:1-4; 104:1-3, 31-35; Isa 40:28; Jer 10:6-13; and Rev 4:11). Claus Westermann argues that “the real goal” of the biblical creation stories is “the praise of the Creator”;<sup>35</sup> however, this does not mean that this text can be identified as worship.

<sup>32</sup>To attempt to find a historical core in the biblical narratives and reject the rest is like removing the layers of an onion in order to get to the core, but after taking off all the layers there is no core because an onion is composed only of various layers. To build our theology only on kerygma or faith and without reference to physical life and history, leaves theology and the philosophy of life without a core. This neoplatonic understanding of the biblical reality considers only spiritual things and ideas as good. While the spiritual message is important, so is history.

<sup>33</sup>The identification of a particular text with the literary genre is crucial for interpretation. Specific rules of interpreting are associated with different genres. Prophecy, parables, poetry, genealogy, narrative, hymn, prayer, lamentation must each be interpreted according to their individual genre in order to do proper justice to the studied text. It means that the reader must take seriously the literary genre in which the text is written and interpret it accordingly.

<sup>34</sup>Guy, 93. Marty E. Stevens identifies Genesis 1 as “a liturgy of praise” (*Theological Themes of the Old Testament* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010], 2).

<sup>35</sup>Claus Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 37. Westermann accurately observes that the biblical message about the Creator

The immediate context of the biblical creation narratives points explicitly to their literary genre as genealogy (Gen 2:4), rather than to their being mythology, poetry, prediction, metaphor, parable, worship, or hymn/liturgical. Genealogy is a historical account with obvious literal meanings: water is water, vegetation is vegetation, animals are animals, humans are humans, and days are days. Genealogy has literary patterns and repetitions, and this does not make it less historical and factual. Only three parts of the creation text of Genesis 1–2 are written in poetry (Gen 1:27; 2:2–3; 2:23).<sup>36</sup> This observation is even more important when one discovers that the literary structure of the whole book of Genesis can be divided into ten genealogies,<sup>37</sup> which provides a hermeneutical clue for reading the creation accounts as historical narrative that are written primarily in prose.<sup>38</sup>

is almost always in the context of praise. An exception is Genesis 1–2, in which praises should be presupposed and anticipated because one cannot understand God as the Creator without admiring and praising him.

<sup>36</sup>Only three passages of Genesis 1–2 are actually written in poetry. This choice is deliberate and intentional, highlighting the crucial points of the creation story: (1) Gen 1:27—creation of humans in the image of God; (2) Gen 2:2–3—creation of the Sabbath, which was the establishment of the vertical relationship between God and humanity; and (3) Gen 2:23—expression of Adam’s joy after God brought the woman to him, which was the establishment of horizontal relationship.

<sup>37</sup>See Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Genesis Creation Story: Text, Issues, and Truth,” *Origins* 55 (2004): 17–18.

The Hebrew word *tôledôt* (“genealogy”) is from the root *yâlad*. There are ten genealogies given in Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1 [repeated in 10:32]; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 [repeated in 36:9]; and 37:2). In the genre of genealogy, the most important pieces of a chain are usually the first and last elements. The last segment of the genealogy connects the whole unit with the following or another one. Genealogy is a factual, historical narrative of the family chain.

If the genealogies of Adam, Noah, Abraham (Terah), Isaac, and Jacob are literal and these persons are historical characters, it means that the author intended to interpret the genealogy of the heavens and the Earth in the same way. One needs to be consistent in the interpretation of the biblical text.

About the uniqueness of the Genesis genealogies, see esp. Richard S. Hess, “The Genealogies of Genesis 1–11 and Comparative Literature,” in *I Studied Inscriptions Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 58–72; Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Backgrounds,” *AUSS* 16 (1978): 361–374.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Kaiser speaks about “historical narrative prose” (“The Literary Form of Genesis 1–11,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne [Waco: Word, 1970], 48–65); John Sailhamer argues that the biblical creation account is a “historical narrative” and needs to be viewed as “mega-history,” noting that “I maintain that the Genesis narratives are to be understood literally and realistically. ‘Mega-history’ is the notion that God has revealed a history of creation in literal and realistic narratives” (*Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account*

### 3. Creation and the Light of the First Day

The third and most notoriously repeated argument points to a seeming contradiction within the first narrative regarding the events of the first and the fourth days of creation. The sequence of days was counted from the beginning of the creation week (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2-3), and the phrase “and there was evening, and there was morning” (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) was applied to each of the first six days.<sup>39</sup> However, if the definition of day includes the Earth’s relationship to the sun, moon, and stars, what was the light of the first day if these heavenly bodies were created only on the fourth day? In addition, if plants were created on the third day, how could they survive without the sunshine?

The solution for many is that Genesis 1 is not meant to be read literally. We do not know exactly when our solar system was created. It could be during the initial creation of Gen 1:1 or on the first day of the creation week. This apparent discrepancy or even contradiction has led Bible scholars to propose several solutions to this puzzling phenomenon of the creation process. Among all the suggested interpretations, two are worthy of closer consideration:

The first view states that God’s presence was the light of the first day. In Psalm 104, which is a poetic hymn describing each of the seven days of creation in the same sequence as Genesis 1, the light of the first day is associated with the glory of God, who wrapped himself “with light as with a cloak” (v. 2). The Lord is the light (Pss 27:1; 118:27; Isa 16:19; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5); therefore, his presence brings light; the light comes forth from God. Similarly, God’s presence was the source of light during the exodus from Egypt (Exod 13:21), as well as during the Red Sea experience, in which the Lord was a light to Israel and darkness to the Egyptian army at the same time (Exod 14:19-20).<sup>40</sup>

The second view says that on the first day of creation, God created the solar system (this would explain the evening-morning cycle from the first day), but that the sun was not yet put to its intended purpose in relationship to the Earth. This would mean that on the fourth day God did not create the

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[Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996], 245).

<sup>39</sup>The author of the Genesis creation account wrote from an earthly (not from a cosmic) viewpoint. William Shea rightly asserts: “The Creation acts were revealed and recorded as if they had passed before an observer positioned upon the earth, not outside of its system. That point of view makes some elements in the narrative more understandable” (“Creation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000], 420).

<sup>40</sup>The idea of light having existence independent of the sun is attested in Rev 21:23 and 22:5, where God himself is the light. Ancient rabbinic sources also mentioned that the light of the first creation day was the splendor of the divine presence. Although according to the biblical view, the sun is a source of physical light, God is the ultimate source of light (Isa 60:19-20).

sun and moon, but rather appointed them to govern the day and the night, to separate light from darkness, and to mark seasons, days, and years (Gen 1:14, 18). Thus the sun and moon were in existence from day one, but visible on the surface of the Earth only on and after the fourth day. It may be that the water above the earth (mentioned on the second day of creation, v. 7) or heavy clouds (Job 38:9) could have covered our planet, which prevented the sun from being seen on the Earth.<sup>41</sup> On the fourth day, the watery envelope or cloud cover would have disappeared.

According to the second view, careful analysis of the biblical text indicates that God did not create the sun and moon on the fourth day, but that he only appointed them to their specific tasks. Also Gen 1:14 can be translated as a purpose clause: “Let the lights . . . be (appointed) to separate the day from the night.” This translation assumes that the luminaries were already in the firmament. It is important to note that the statement in Gen 1:16 that God made two lights may be rendered as “had made,”<sup>42</sup> implying that they were created before the fourth day. According to Hebrew grammar, such a translation is a legitimate possibility.<sup>43</sup>

There is a plausible possibility of combining the two proposed solutions because they could be complementary. God’s presence may have been the principal source of light for the first three days, but this light could also have included light from the sun (the solar system being here from the first day). However, from the fourth day on the focus was directed on light coming forth from the astronomical bodies as we know them today.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Roth, 316-318. See also Frank Lewis Marsh, *Studies in Creationism* (Washington, DC: Review and Harold, 1950), 210-218.

<sup>42</sup>Hebrew does not have six forms of the past tense as we have in English. The Hebrew language expresses the past by accomplished action. It means that the translators need to choose according to the context how to interpret and render into English this accomplished action by deciding whether to use simple past, past continuous, present perfect, present perfect continuous, pluperfect (past perfect), or past perfect continuous.

<sup>43</sup>See *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. Emil Kautsch and A. E. Cowley, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 348. Sailhamer, 132-134.

<sup>44</sup>On the basis of syntax, we can conclude that God did not create the stars on the fourth day. The words “He made” and “also” in “He made the stars also” were supplied by the translators; they are not in the Hebrew text. V. 16 can be translated as follows: “And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night with the stars” (Colin L. House, “Some Notes on Translating in Genesis 1:16,” *AUSS* 25 [1987]: 247). Thus the starry heaven could have been created long before the creation week. According to Job 38:7, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” at the creation of the Earth. If “the morning stars” here represent angels and are understood as a personification of the starry heavens, then this text would support the existence of the angels and stars prior to the creation week.

#### 4. The Lack of Rain and Cultivation

The fourth argument elaborates on the fact that there is a natural explanation for the absence of grass and shrubs: the lack of rain and cultivation (Gen 2:5). This seems like a contradiction to the creation of vegetation on day three, which Genesis 1 places before the creation of humans. Guy thus argues that “if a literal reading of the first representation [Gen 1] is presupposed, so that land and vegetation emerged (day 3) only seventy-two hours (more or less) before the creation of humanity (day 6), and if the second representation [Gen 2] is also read literally, the result is incoherent.”<sup>45</sup>

First, Gen 2:5-6 states that “no shrub of the field [grass is not mentioned] had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground [note that the text does not speak simply about the existence of humans but about their specific activity, which was not yet needed], but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.”

Four things were not present before sin: thorny plants, agriculture, irrigation/cultivation, and rain. “Each of these things was introduced as a direct result of the entrance of sin.”<sup>46</sup> This passage, then, serves as an introductory or transitional text that anticipates Genesis 3 (chaps. 1–3 form a literary unit). Randall Younker correctly explains that Gen 2:4b-6 is “a bridge between the perfect Creation of chapter 1 and the introduction of sin into the world in chapter 3.”<sup>47</sup> Seen from this perspective, there is no contradiction between the two creation narratives.

#### 5. The Sequence of Things Created are in Contradiction

The fifth and principal argument strongly asserts that the sequence of events on the sixth day as portrayed in the second creation account, if taken literally, contradicts the first creation story. The sequence of events according to Genesis 2 is as follows, while a comparison with Genesis 1 is in parentheses:

1. Man (formed on the sixth day)
2. Vegetation (appeared on the third day)
3. Animals (made on the sixth day) and birds (made on the fifth day)
4. Woman (created on the sixth day)

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For the relationship between light(s) and time, see H. Ross Cole, “Genesis1:14—Translation Note,” *AUSS* 45 (2007): 63-67.

<sup>45</sup>Guy, 95.

<sup>46</sup>Randall W. Younker, *God's Creation: Exploring the Genesis Story* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999), 50-58.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

Friedman argues that the two accounts contradict each other even though they describe the same event, because they present what happened in a different order: “In the first version, God creates plants first, then animals, then man and woman. In the second version, God creates *man* first. Next, he creates plants. Then, so that the man should not be alone, God creates animals. And last, after the man does not find a satisfactory mate among the animals, God creates woman.”<sup>48</sup> Thus the result is evident: if seen from this perspective, there is a contradiction between the two accounts, because vegetation was created on the third day, birds on the fifth, and animals on the sixth.

Two issues are involved: the creation of vegetation and the formation of animals and birds. A closer look at the text suggests an alternative interpretation: “Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . . The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Gen 2:8-9, 15).

The text speaks about God’s planting of the Garden of Eden for humans, where he created a variety of beautiful trees, including two special trees in the middle of the Garden—the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This act of creating a special place for the first humans is not in contradiction with Genesis 1 because God’s two different activities are described. Genesis 1 addresses the creation of all plants in general, whereas Genesis 2 covers a specific creation, namely, the Garden of Eden with fruit trees. It means God made an orchard for humans with ready-to-eat fruit. This is additional information to what God did according to Genesis 1.

The second issue, the formation of birds and animals, leads to the question: Did God create birds and animals on the fifth and six days, respectively, as in Genesis 1, or did he make them after the creation of Adam, as it is suggested by a quick reading of Genesis 2? Again, two different actions of God are described in the two narratives. In Gen 2:18-21,

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

<sup>48</sup>Friedman, 51. The same is argued by Guy, 94, and Baldwin, 46.



There are two possible explanations for this phenomenon: The first, which is less likely, puts the past tense of the sentence, “The Lord God formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air,” into the pluperfect,<sup>49</sup> which would mean that God “had formed” animals and birds already, but now he brings some of them to Adam to name.<sup>50</sup>

Another explanation is given by Cassuto, who suggests that here one encounters God’s special creation made for this unique occasion in the life of Adam. It means that the LORD God, in addition to his previous creation of animals and birds, formed some new creatures and brought them to Adam in order to be named. This specific action was done in order to create in Adam feelings of need for a partner.<sup>51</sup> Cassuto states:

Had the meaning, therefore, been that the Lord God created them then, they should have been referred to in unmistakable terms. . . . Hence it seems that in the passage *before us* [verses 19–20] . . . we must understand the creation of the beasts and the flying creatures in a similar sense to that of the growing of the trees in v. 9, to wit, that of all the species of beasts and flying creatures that had already been created and had spread over the face of the earth and the firmament of the heavens, the Lord God now formed particular specimens for the purpose of presenting them all before man in the midst of the Garden.<sup>52</sup>

Verses 19-20 are, then, an insertion into the story for the purpose of explaining why it was not good for Adam to be alone. This intermission had a specific purpose to create in Adam a need for a companion for life. God first expressed his desire to create a companion for Adam. After God’s statement, one would expect that immediate action would be taken, but the reader needs to wait until v. 21 to witness the continuation of the story. In between, Adam names animals and birds to find out that he has no “helper suitable to him.” This phrase forms an *inclusio* for that insertion (vv. 18 and 20 end with the same thought that no suitable help was there for Adam). Verse 21 is a natural fulfillment of v. 18. Verse 21 describes the result. Thus

<sup>49</sup>See n. 42 above.

<sup>50</sup>The meaning of the word “all” (*kol*) can vary according to its context: either in the sense of totality or partiality. See Jiří Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 4 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000), 240, 249.

<sup>51</sup>See Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 128-133.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 129. Doukhan rightly underscores, in regard to the problem of the apparent chronological discrepancies between the first and the second creation narratives, that “it is resolved as soon as” we realize that in Genesis 2 “the perspective is essentially anthropocentric: everything is there in connection with mankind” (for details, see Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story*, 174).

v. 18 speaks about God's decision to make a partner for Adam, and v. 21 describes how he did it.

### 6. The Days of Creation

The sixth objection argues for the symbolic nonliteral days of creation in the first narrative. Were the creation days intended by the author to be twenty-four-hour or indefinite periods of time?

There are several good reasons for understanding the creation days to be identical to our week as we know it. The pentagonal evidence associated with the term "day" in Genesis 1 (singular in form; always connected with a numeral; standing as a plain noun without a preposition or any other kind of constructions; preceded by the temporal phrase; and tied with the divine rest) points unequivocally to one conclusion: the author of the book of Genesis intended to say that the "day" of the creation week is a regular day consisting of a twenty-four-hour period and cannot be interpreted figuratively.

On literary, syntactical, phraseological, intertextual, exegetical, and contextual grounds, one can confidently state that the creation week (the only time-cycle that is not derived from the natural astronomical phenomena) must be understood as consisting of seven literal, historical, factual, consecutive, and contiguous days. The author's purpose was to provide an account of what actually happened during the creation week of divine activity. According to Marcus Dods, if the word "day" in Genesis 1 does not refer to a regular day, "the interpretation of Scripture is hopeless."<sup>53</sup> A brief examination of the grounds for interpretation offers the following results:

a. *Literary genre.* The immediate context of the first story points explicitly to its literary genre as genealogy, i.e., a historical account (see above).

b. *Syntax.* The noun "day" (used 2,304 times in the Hebrew Bible) consistently occurs in the creation week in the singular.<sup>54</sup> Other characteristics of the word "day" in the first account include: it never occurs together with a preposition, suffix, comparative particle, or in a construct state, but always as a plain noun. Further, each day of creation is always accompanied by a numeral. Each time the Bible uses the noun "day" in combination with a numeral (used 150 times in the Hebrew Bible), it consistently refers to a regular twenty-four-

<sup>53</sup>Marcus Dods, *Genesis*, Expositor's Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:4. For a detailed study on this topic, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?" in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, ed. John T. Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 48-68; Walter M. Booth, "Days of Genesis 1: Literal or Nonliteral?" *JATS* 14/1 (2003): 101-120.

<sup>54</sup>For details, see n. 9 above.

hour day.<sup>55</sup> Finally, when the word “day” is used in a numbered series, it always refers to a normal day (see Num 7:10-83; 29:1-35).

c. *Phraseology.* The unique phrase “and there was evening, and there was morning” always precedes a particular day of creation (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), thereby providing a temporal boundary that implies the existence of a day consisting of a twenty-four-hour period.

d. *Intertextuality.* Other scriptural texts also interpret the seven days of creation in a literal way. Two classic Sabbath passages about divine rest powerfully testify to this effect by giving an example for humans to emulate: “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day” (Exod 20:11); and “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested” (Exod 31:17).

e. *Witness of biblical scholarship.* Gerhard von Rad stresses that “The seven days are unquestionably to be understood as actual days and a unique, unrepeatable lapse of time in the world.”<sup>56</sup> Terence Fretheim agrees, noting: “Other possibilities for understanding *day* (symbolic; sequential but not consecutive; liturgical) are less likely. Efforts to understand *day* in terms of, say, evolutionary periods, betray too much of an interest in harmonization.”<sup>57</sup> Gordon Wenham concurs: “There can be little doubt that here ‘day’ has its basic sense of a 24-hour period.”<sup>58</sup> James Barr aptly states: “So far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that writer(s) of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that . . . creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup>The unsurprising exception to this rule is “days” mentioned in the apocalyptic literary genre, namely Zech 14:7 and Dan 12:11-12. The Genesis creation narratives, however, have nothing predictive in their content.

<sup>56</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 65.

<sup>57</sup>Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 62.

<sup>58</sup>Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 19. For a different view, see John H. Walton, who argues only for the functional usage of the creation days in Genesis 1 (*The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2009], 54-71). However, function is always intimately connected with reality—they are inseparable, as the function of a car is closely linked with the car itself.

<sup>59</sup>From James Barr’s personal letter to David C. K. Watson (23 April 1984), published in the *Newsletter* of the Creation Science Association of Ontario, 3/4 (1990/91). This is also confirmed by lexicographers, see, e.g., Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston: Brill, 2001); David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997).

## 7. Death before Sin?

The seventh objection has to do with the existence of death before the fall into sin (Genesis 3). This approach has to admit by default that death already existed before the fall. Richard Rice tries to smooth this *scandalon* by making a distinction between natural and moral evil.<sup>60</sup>

However, according to the Genesis creation accounts, there is no room for death as all stress is on the creation of life and death is neither presupposed nor implied. On the contrary, the author underlines that the created world was originally “good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and “very good” (1:31), and creation was “not yet” affected by sin or death (2:5-6). Death will come into the picture only in Genesis 3 in relationship to the fall of Adam and Eve. The presence of death before the fall paints a distorted picture of God and twists his loving character. Such a God who would use death, predation, and cruelty in the evolutionary process would not deserve one’s admiration, but rather would tend to create atheists and agnostics. This fall described in Genesis 3, and not God, is the actual cause of death, predation, cruelty, and the evil we experience in today’s world.

*Final Conclusion*

Good theology must be built on solid exegesis. None of the seven scrutinized arguments used against the literal reading of the Genesis creation accounts has a satisfying theological-exegetical or hermeneutical strength or logic. Those who argue for a nonliteral reading of the text impose a superficial reading on it that is foreign to its intended meaning. There is a better and more consistent way to interpret the suggested theological-exegetical “problems” than by placing these two narratives in opposition to each other.<sup>61</sup> The stories are

<sup>60</sup>See Richard Rice, “Creation, Evolution, and Evil,” in *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives*, ed. Brian Bull, Fritz Guy, and Ervin Taylor (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundation, 2006), 10-22. See also Ervin Taylor, “Death Before Sin?—Yes,” *Adventist Today* 18/4 (2010): 10-13. On the opposite view, see Younker, *God’s Creation*, 68-75; Jacques B. Doukhan, “Where Did Death Come From? A Study of the Genesis Creation Story,” *Adventist Perspectives* 4/1 (1990): 16-18; idem, “When Death Was Not Yet”; J. David Newman, “Death Before Sin?—No,” *Adventist Today* 18/4 (2010): 7-9; Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” 38-43. For a view that the Earth was not in a negative condition of “chaos” when it was in a state of *tohu* (“unformed”) and *bohu* (“unfilled”) according to Gen 1:2, see Roberto Ouro, “The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic? Part I,” *AUSS* 36 (1998): 259-276; idem, “The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic? Part II,” *AUSS* 37 (1999): 39-53; idem, “The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic? Part III,” *AUSS* 38 (2000): 59-67; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 140-144.

<sup>61</sup>It seems that some scholars underestimate the sense for unity in the ancient world. Why would the final redactor of the Pentateuch be so naive as to put together two contradictory narratives?

different, but they are not contradictory; they are written from two different, but complementary and unified, perspectives.

These two portrayals of the creative acts of God are parallel to one another, thereby reflecting one of the fundamental features of the Hebrew language.<sup>62</sup> Thus chapters 1 and 2 do not present identical pictures of the original creation week, but instead reflect on the same series of events. Even though the author of the accounts writes from two different perspectives and underscores different aspects, he wants to convey a close relationship between them.<sup>63</sup> There is, then, nothing in these biblical stories that would urge the reader to perceive them as being simply metaphorical, symbolic, or spiritual in nature and as having inner discrepancies and incompatibilities. Theology and the reality of the creation event relate together in the mind of the author.

<sup>62</sup>The parallel nature of the two narratives seems to go beyond the usual verse or section parallelism. On Hebrew parallelism, see N. H. Ridderbos and H. M. Wolf, "Poetry, Hebrew," *ISBE*, 3:892-897; Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, rev. and expanded (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

<sup>63</sup>A close parallel between the first and second accounts was convincingly demonstrated by Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story*, 77-78; William H. Shea, "The Unity of the Creation Account," *Origins* 5 (1978): 9-38; idem, "Literary Structural Parallels Between Genesis 1 and 2," *Origins* 16 (1989): 49-68.