

Everything Created by God

Genesis 1

Introduction

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

It is with this statement that the Bible begins.

The first chapter is the announcement *that* and *how* God has brought forth everything. The Bible does not start with the beginning of the history of mankind, or of mankind-after-the-flood, or of Israel, but it reaches back to the time before any course of history. One might speak of a pre-history, since Genesis 1 also is written in narrative style.

If we compare the history of mankind which is enacted upon earth with a great building, we might call the work of creation the laying of the foundation, which belongs to the building and yet is distinct from it.

In this way the Bible wishes to show us God as the Creator *and* also as Maintainer and Ruler of all that exists; to instruct us about His work of creation *and* His work of history.

It is remarkable that this is not preceded in the Bible by a brief explanation or declaration that God exists and Who He is, but that the Bible immediately begins telling of His works. Yet it can be no different. For, the work itself speaks of His existence. God has, as it were, set up a mirror in His works of creation, wherein He shows Himself in His eternal power and divinity, so that since creation men perceive these with their mind and no one has an excuse if he does not glory and thank God (Romans 1:20).

The story of Genesis 1 is therefore of fundamental importance. It is the foundation for all following revelation. It is no less self-revelation of God than whatever other part of the Scriptures. In it He reveals Himself to us as the Creator who has brought forth everything with wisdom, orderly and purposefully, since it was His sovereign will (cf. Revelation 4:11); we learn from it that everything is therefore His legitimate possession (cf. Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 24:1, 2); that everything finds its purpose in Him (Proverbs 16:4, Romans 11:36), and is created to His glory: for who is there among His creatures for whose glory God could have done it all? (cf. Psalm 104:31) And so we know immediately that we also, as creatures, are called to His service and honour.

The Story of Creation

It commences with the announcement that God created the heavens and the earth. Heaven is God's habitation and He populated it with angels (Job 38:6, 7). The earth was intended to be the dwelling place for men. Heaven and earth together formed the universe. When the Bible calls this the beginning, then it means the beginning of time, which was given immediately with the work of creation.

Verse 2 tells about the appearance of the earth. It was completely void and formless, a flood in darkness. We will have to think here of a sort of fluid or semi-fluid mass, without ordered form, without separation and definiteness, a watery but vital material which contained everything, as it is indicated in 2 Peter 3:5 where it is stated that there was an earth "...formed out of water and by means of water"; just as the origin of human life is in the darkness of secrecy.

And over this the Spirit of God moved back and forth (cf. Deuteronomy 32:11 where the same word occurs). The meaning of this is that the Spirit upon God's calling would bring the embryo of the earth to light, and give it shape to be an ornament in the universe. It speaks therefore of His preserving care and thus also of His love for that which is created. The world is brought forth through God's loving will, in order that His love might be revealed to it.

How the earth was prepared to serve as habitation for man, we read in verse 3 and following. There we continually read: “and God said.” This was the creative calling of what had not existed previously (Psalm 33:6, Hebrews 11:3). It happened through the Son, Who is called the Word (John 1:3).

On the *first* day God created the light; He called for rays of light to appear; He turned on, as it were, a lamp for the world. Why? Is not for Him the darkness as the light? (Psalm 139:12). Yet He did not want to do His works of creation in darkness, in order to teach us that all His works are never anything else than works of light, public, good, and a reason for joy. Although there were no people to witness His works of creation, let us not forget that His glory was sung in heaven (Job 38:6, 7).

God also separated light and darkness. He interjected the evening and morning in which the change of light and darkness takes place. And God called the light day and the darkness He called night. This does not only indicate mere name-giving, but it also states that what is named serves its purpose: the light of the day is given us for our labour, for all activity and for the continuance of life; in the darkness of night labour ceases; life is laid still to rest. God instructs us by His action that we pay attention to the regularity in creation as much as is possible for us in a world such as it has become (cf. John 11:9, 10; and the deep meaning in John 12:35, 36; 1 Thessalonians 5:5, 6; cf. however, also John 3:2a; 2 Thessalonians 3:8b; and others). Life in our hectic times is very different from the more peaceful way of those who live closer to nature.

Then there was evening (indicating that a day had preceded) and morning (indicating that a new day would dawn). The regularity is determined by light: day precedes. The day and night which have passed are now together called “day”: it was the first day. The word “day” is therefore used in a twofold sense: as a period of light and as one of twenty-four hours. From this first period of light the Bible now begins to count the days. Even though the creation of heaven and earth (verse 1) preceded it, this does not give us the right to assume that that was a time of billions of years, in which the earth was evolving by cooling off from a blazing mass with fiery storms. In fact, Scripture states that the earth was separated from the water (cf. 2 Peter 3:5). And after all, one cannot say that heaven with its angels in

a similar manner came forth through evolution! That which is written in verses 1 and 2 we will also have to see as enclosed within the six-day period of creation (cf. Exodus 20:11), although it is not *added* with the days in which God prepared the empty and formless earth and filled it with creatures. It falls outside the set rhythm of time. Otherwise the first day would be calculated from the darkness of verse 2, which must be distinguished from the darkness of the night. For it was the darkness of the void and of nothing; it was uncreated (cf. the darkness of the universe wherein is neither night nor day). The darkness of night is created by God even as the light of day (Isaiah 45:7).

On the *second* day God created the firmament, which He *also* called heaven, and He made a separation between the waters-below and the waters-above.

On the *third* day He formed the dryland, which was *also* called earth, and He separated land and water. Furthermore, He clothed the earth with the wealth of the many varieties of plants, all kinds of growth and trees, which received the ability of reproducing themselves.

On the *fourth* day God created the sun, moon, and stars. What must not escape our attention first of all is that these were *set* (verse 17) in the firmament, the visible heaven. Scripture does not distinguish between the heaven of clouds and that of stars. The fact that God created the lights and set them in the firmament indicates that they did not exist previously. Furthermore, we have to pay attention to the fact that, since they are counted as part of the firmament, they *belong to this earth*. Indeed their function is with regard to the earth: to give light (which they do only to the earth; the space of the universe has been shown to stay dark); they make possible to distinguish times; they serve as signs (designating place and direction, and in connection with the progress of the kingdom of God, Joshua 10:12, Isaiah 38:8, Matthew 2:2; 24:29, Revelation 6:12, 13; 8:12). In themselves they have no purpose. Their significance is only in relationship to the earth, without which they would not exist. Although the earth is as nothing compared to the great light-giving heavenly bodies, yet the electing God has here again chosen the weak and ignoble that in it He might glorify Himself in His creatures.

On the *fifth* day God created all that swarms in the water and lives in the air, fishes which He made to come forth swimming out of the water, and birds which appeared at the call of His word, flying and fluttering in the air. And in blessing He spoke His word, which as a power gave them the ability to multiply.

And on the *sixth* day, He caused cattle, creeping things and wild animals to come forth out of the earth. And last of all He created man — male and female (see next outline).

It is said of all those animals that they were created after their *kind*, which points, of course, to the mutual differences in the nature of those five groups of animals, and not to the many varieties and subdivisions in which scientists list them.

And in this manner heaven and earth were finished with all that filled them. And God saw down with love and pleasure on all that was created, and behold, it was all very good, beautiful, perfect, answering its purpose.

Creation, not Evolution

Evolution indicates the development of that which exists out of primeval matter by the activation of natural forces.

Around this idea a broad science has developed especially during the last century.

The *pre-history* of this science could be said to have begun around 1500, when *Leonardo da Vinci* rediscovered a number of objects which later received the name *fossils*. That word literally means: that which has been dug up. Fossils are remnants of animals and plants which have turned to stone. The fossils found by da Vinci were of shells, which had ended up in mountainous country instead of in low coastal areas. Before this time fossils had also been found, but people could not explain them and they had at times been called “freaks of nature.” But da Vinci was, rightly, of the opinion that they were petrified remnants of organic beings, in his case, of sea animals. The reason for their being found in mountain

country was, in his opinion, that the bottom of the sea had been lifted up by a catastrophic happening (seaquake) to form a mountain on which the receding waters left shells. Since 1500, numerous fossils of various large and small animals have been found, skulls, teeth, complete or partial skeletons, many deep below the surface, between rocks, in mines and marble pits.

From the research into fossils people later turned to the investigation of the position of the *layers of the earth*, and an attempt was made to set up a chronological sequence in which these had originated through volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, and whereby the animals whose fossils were found had perished. It was discovered that there is constant movement in the earth. An attempt was also made to make a classification of the kinds of mountains in the sequence of their origin. And in this way the idea arose that *the earth's crust originated during a lengthy process*.

Around 1800 there was a controversy among the researchers which lasted many years, concerning the question how the earth looked inside. Some believed that there was a fixed nucleus, around which the waters flowed. Others were of the opinion that the earth was actually a ball of fire, a flaming mass of rocks and metals around which a crust had been formed. The latter opinion prevailed.

What is generally believed today concerning the origin of the earth and its inhabitants we can summarize in a few words as follows: Originally there was to have been a haze or dust-cloud (arising from the sun) which condensed into a mass of fire, around which, by cooling and congelation, a layer of rock was formed, and so subsequently the entire earth's crust. From the still lukewarm earth proceeded the first forms of organic life, out of which the plants and animals developed; out of the ape family of the chimpanzees originated, via transitional forms at different places and times, the first primitive men. Racial distinctions are sometimes explained with reference to differences in ape-like ancestors. The evolution theory is therefore also applied to the origin of the human race and in this way also to its further developments. Do we not speak of primitive peoples who have stayed behind in the process of development, and even of primitive religions, which have not yet reached the level of the higher

religions? This is done, and it would be good if we did not follow this usage thoughtlessly. An essential difference between Christianized and heathen people is by many no longer recognized today, no more than that between true and false religion. Everything is regarded more as a phase in the development of lower to higher. And it is also believed that after many billions of years everything will return to the original state through fiery heat, after which the drama will begin anew. Earlier evolutionists still believed in a personal God, Who created the beginnings of existence. For many only matter and force exist, eternal matter, eternal force, and an eternal process of generation and degeneration. Or they believe that everything itself is God, the eternally changing God.

It is not difficult to see how thoroughly this theory of evolution denies God and His work. The questions that can be asked are many. For example: How can organic life originate from inorganic (dead) matter? How can a human being with his thinking and willing spirit come forth from an animal which only lives instinctively? How is it possible to explain out of material things faith in the existence of God, knowledge of morality, language, science, and art? How is it possible that an orderly and purposeful world arose out of matter and force without a personal God Who made it all? Can a building without a builder arise by itself out of a pile of stones by means of wind and rainwater? And who can prove the eternity of matter and force, and, if they are not eternal, where do they come from?

Appeal is made to the discovery of tens of thousands of fossils in different layers of the earth, to the freakish forms of rocks and mountains, to the determining of the age of rocks by means of radio-activity, and to much more, by means of which it appeared possible to reconstruct in broad outlines the forming of the earth's crust and to make calculations about the duration of its existence, whereby suggestions are made that it has lasted for millions and even billions of years. And it seems as if the science which has been established has proven itself as untouchable.

It makes its influence felt also in *Christian* circles, although here people hold fast to the belief that the beginnings of all things, or organic life and of man, were created, and although they also hold on to the belief

in the providence of God, Who guided this whole development. It is attempted, therefore, to reconcile Genesis 1 with the evolution theory, to find an agreement between Scripture and science. However, this is done at the expense of Genesis 1, whereat many attempts at explanation have been directed, for example, that the days were scenes which were shown to Moses in a vision, or that they are points of view from which we have to regard the developments, or that we are dealing with ancient oriental methods of representation, etc. The basic error here is the attempt to explain Scripture in the light of science, for the *Scriptures actually explain themselves*. It is true that the discoveries in the earth cannot be denied, but the explanation of the origin and of the manner of existence and the order of origin, belongs to the Scriptures. For God Himself spoke about them. And one may not try out *how* His Word *can* be explained, but we have to search how the Scriptures themselves explain everything. “First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20, 21). This applies also to Genesis 1 where Moses, as mouth of God, spoke (wrote) through the Holy Spirit. As soon as we subject the Scriptures to our explanations, which we derive from what we ourselves discovered, or from our philosophic thinking, we leave the path which God Himself points out.

We take therefore our stand in the Scriptures in which God Himself speaks concerning the origin of all things.

And then we may point to the following:

1. The explicit text of *Genesis 1*.
2. *Hebrews 11:3*, “By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.” Here it is clearly proclaimed that there is no eternal matter. God created out of nothing (Lord’s Day 9, Heidelberg Catechism). It is true that this expression is not found here, nor, indeed, anywhere else in the Scriptures. Also in the time of the New Testament, in the Greco-Roman heathen world, there was talk of creation out of nothing, through the working of divine power, but this “nothing” was understood

to be a kind of original matter. Hebrews 11:3 says it differently, namely, that whatever is visible did not arise from that which can be observed (which can appear before us). This excludes all misunderstanding as if that “nothing” were something observable. There is also no evolution or development, for God called everything into being by His Word. This applies to the world as it originated and existed and continues to exist, and to the many different creatures. Organic life did not come forth out of the earth by itself, as lumps of dead matter, but He called forth the *living*, and that life is His work of creation.

By this creative calling, He has “framed” everything, which, according to the original text, also indicates the preparation and ordering of all things. It is clear that Hebrews 11:3 gives an explanation of Genesis 1. And that has to be believed on the basis of God’s own Word, which He has given us.

3. But what then about those discoveries and determinations of age and those indications that there must have been organic life already during the further formation of the earth? Does not everything point to an activity within the earth with volcanic eruptions and earthquakes and the pushing off of new layers of earth and much more, from which the process of formation can at least be approached? What is lacking, however, is that the flood, which was a world judgment, is not taken into account. *Genesis 7:11* states that all the fountains of the great deep were broken up and that all the windows of heaven were opened. The word “deep” is the same as in Genesis 1:2 in the Hebrew text. *2 Peter 3:3* states in this connection that the world (the cosmos, i.e., all of the then existing world) perished by the waters wherein and whereof the earth existed, so that the judgment of the flood “tore the whole world apart, as it were, and turned it upside down” (S. Greijdanus, *Korte Verklaring*). The heavens and the earth as they were formerly, no longer exist. It has changed. We live on an earth which has been laid waste, traces of which are evident everywhere, in the broken-up mountains, the sunken lands, the crevices, rocks which have been swept along by the whirling waters shifted earth layers and fossils that are scattered everywhere. The present structure of the earth does not show how it was made, but how terrible the complete destruction has been. Do not think too lightly of the pressure of the water which rose above the highest mountains, the

dashing of the waves and the enormous whirlpools. If a flood today causes already such destruction and changes by submerged areas, how must it then have been in the days of the flood! This may not explain everything but it is a factor which must certainly be considered.

4. The Scriptures teach that God created everything by His calling Word in a *completed condition*.

Psalm 33:6-9 speaks of the heavens with all the starry host, as well as of the seas and clouds: “*For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth.*”

In Psalm 148:2-5, the angels, sun, moon, stars, and clouds are called to praise the LORD, “*for He commanded and they were created.*”

It is also stated that He caused the sea to break forth out of the womb of the earth with wild force, whereby we can probably refer to Genesis 1:2 or perhaps, also to Genesis 1:8, 9 (Job 38:8).

It is clear that the Scriptures in these places take as their starting point the literal meaning of the texts of Genesis 1, which mention works of creation within a short span of time, always bounded by the morning and the evening of a day. In any case this language of the Scriptures does not tolerate the speaking of at least 1800 million years since *that* period in the development of the earth’s crust which it is believed can be approximately determined, not counting the billions since the first origins. It is also clear from Genesis 1 that plants, animals, and the first two human beings came forth out of God’s hand, complete and mature. First came the plant and not the seed, first the animal and not the embryo, and the people whom He created have had no youth. We must also note that when Adam awoke out of his deep sleep, after God had broken out a rib from which He formed woman, no weeks were necessary for the healing of the wound, for before the evening of that day, God solemnized the marriage (Genesis 1:27, 31).

It all happened *in six days*. We may not meddle with that. And although the word “day” has, as in our language, also in the Scriptures more than

one meaning (such as the period of light, twenty-four hours, and metaphorically in expressions as: the evil day, the summer day, etc.), yet it is clear that Genesis 1 speaks of days which are bounded by morning and evening (Genesis 1:5a) *and* with the addition of the night (Genesis 1:5b and others), just as Exodus 20:11 also speaks of six days. To speak of long periods of time is to reason away the simple facts of the Bible for the sake of the evolution theory.

It has been established that there is activity within the earth; some generally known examples are: power of growth, volcanic movements, aging of rocks, shifting of coastal dunes. And it has been assumed that this activity in a constant tempo has always existed; calculations are built on it and in this way it is attempted to discover the origins. However, the Scriptures show that the beginning was a completed six-day creation, and they leave no room for a *search* for the beginning, but take as their starting point the God-given beginning. And who can prove that originally there was *no* salt sea water, *no* gas-containing rock, *no* coal with laminations? *How* God created everything like this has only one answer in the Scriptures: “He commanded and it stood fast.” Why like this? But who can fathom God’s wisdom?

The evolution doctrine which has as its starting point matter and force, demands a faith which opposes faith in Scriptures. It is false prophecy. And this judgment will not be removed by wrapping the doctrine in Christian attire. The searching of God’s deeds may not lead to conclusions which contradict Scriptures. What we learn from the Bible is the greatness of God, His warning judgment (the flood), and the aging of temporary things. “Of old Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They will perish, but Thou dost endure; they will all wear out like a garment. Thou changes” them like raiment, and they pass away; but Thou art the same, and Thy years have no end” (Psalm 102 25-27).

Questions

1. Is the separation of heaven and earth a result of sin?
2. Is heaven also subject to the change of the time?

3. Of what are light and darkness in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 a metaphor?
4. How should we consider night-work in connection with the purpose of day and night?
5. Does Psalm 115:16 contrast the earth and heaven of Genesis 1:1 or those of Genesis 1:8?
6. May we attempt to penetrate into space?
7. Is it possible that there are people on another planet?
8. Do the heavenly bodies have significance also for the new earth?
9. Can the fall into sin among the angels in heaven have occurred already before the end of the sixth day?
10. Why is it useful to know in what order God created, and that He created man last of all?
11. Why do we call the doctrine of evolution a false prophecy?
12. If God allowed everything to develop, can we then speak of a work of creation, or should it be called a work of providence? What is the difference between the two?
13. Are we restricted only to Genesis 1 for the knowledge of God's work in creation, or does Scripture speak about it also in other places?
14. Is it possible and necessary that we explain everything scientifically?
15. Why does the small earth have such great significance?