

CHAPTER 5

CREATION

5.0 How old is the earth?

You almost get used to those big figures. Nowadays, it is just taken for granted that the earth is millions of years old. It is presented as a fact: scientific principles have been applied to calculate the figures. Can we ignore them?

There are enough Christians (and Jews as well) who continue to hold onto the assumption that the earth is approximately six thousand years old. Their calculations are based on biblical information. Using genealogies, ages and calendars they arrive at a total figure of some six thousand years. (According to the Jewish calendar it is now around 5700...) In itself, it is already a precarious undertaking to use the Bible for an exact calculation. God's Word is not meant for that (see 2.7). You will never be able to make it watertight, as generations are regularly skipped over in the lists of names. So the earth has very likely existed for longer than 6,000 years - possibly quite a bit longer. It is an interesting fact that the cave paintings, e.g., have been estimated to be 10,000-30,000 years old. This is still far removed from a million, however.

5.1 Belief versus belief

The calculation that adds up to millions of years is, of course, based on something. In short, it is the result of the following methods of calculation:

- One well-known theory (of (astro) physiological origin) is that of the 'big bang'. This is about mass resulting from energy, the expansion of the universe and the age of the earth. The explosion would have taken place in one particular spot; after which the material fragmented in all directions at a certain speed.
- A different theory (of geological origin) draws conclusions from research done on the earth's strata and the shifting of continents. Earth-layers have been discovered containing fossils (remains of decayed plant and animal matter) which,

measured by the level of radio-activity present, would have to be much older than thousands of years.

- And last but not least, the evolution theory (of biological origin). This concerns the origination of species. One can observe development within existing species. A species of today shows changes when compared with the same species a thousand years ago, e.g. by adaptation to the environment. Darwin's evolution theory (1859) takes the line that plants, animals and humans came into being via a long process of mutation (changes) and natural selection. Higher forms of life developed from the lower forms, either via a big bang, or via a random process of rise and fall, in which the strongest always prevailed.

Scientific research takes its starting point in observations, from which it tries to draw logical conclusions. This can certainly serve a purpose, be meaningful and valuable within its own (scientific) framework. But these theories do not take a personal Creator, Who created all, as a starting point. They presume that an accidental process resulted in the origination of the world – including everything and everyone on it. The large figures (re the earth's age) are based on a theory of fantasy: life came into being 'by accident' through a combination of factors. I call that a belief, because it is impossible to prove.

Quite the opposite is the belief in God the Creator. In Genesis 1 He introduces Himself as the God who stands at the very beginning. **In the beginning He created the heavens and the earth.** Heavens and earth, those two words state that He created the whole cosmos! So He definitely did not start with an earth that already existed, be it without form and void. He started by creating this primeval mass. After that, He indeed began to separate elements and to make order out of the chaos, so that the earth became habitable. It is completely unthinkable that some 'primeval cell' would have come into being spontaneously. For such a cell contains life and has an extremely complex structure. Life did not spring from chaos and accident, but from God Himself, Who is the Source of life.

5.2 Believing upon His Word

Nobody can prove it, nobody was there. How God did it exactly is beyond our imagination. It is a question of belief - that Genesis 1 is historical Scripture. This history was not narrated in order to answer all the scientific questions - geological,

Genesis 2:3

geographic, cosmological, etc. - which arise. Useful as it may be in its own right, scientifically acquired knowledge has its own value. But the biblical facts are just not suited for combination with scientific research.

To give one example: how could there be light when the celestial lights were only made on the fourth day? Did the light come from a source other than the sun? What composed the light of the first three days? But the question of light being possible without a source does not even enter the writer's mind. Within the narration it all makes sense. You are first told how God created light; if you want to make something, you need light. When light is separated from darkness, you have the alternation of night and day. Because nothing has yet been told about the firmament, nothing can yet be told about the creation of the lights in that heavenly dome.

It was never the intention of the author of Genesis 1 to produce a scientifically justifiable description of creation – even if this were possible in such a small compass of time (cf. John 21:25) - but rather to convince people that God is the Creator. The point is whether we accept what we read at the beginning of Genesis as a true account of God's creative activity. It is therefore not worded in the scientific language of the twenty-first century, but in the wording of an Israelite of the author's times. The language of observation is used. Genesis 1 was written for people whose feet were firmly planted on the ground and who, with the naked eye, saw exactly what we see today.

5.3 No world-view

It is often presented to us that the early Israelites had a certain image of the world. That world-view would be as follows: the flat earth is like a round disc, resting upon pillars which stand in the water under the earth; the earth is canopied by a massive dome also resting on pillars; this dome being pervious to water, so that rain and other precipitation can seep through from the heavenly storage vaults above. Under the water beneath the earth is the underworld. God's palace is situated higher than the waters above the dome.

It is true that these kinds of images can be found in the Bible, but the intention was never to present a fully defined world-view, which could be judged by present-day science. The writers of the Bible use illustrative language, which expressed their

observations and views. You would not judge poetic images scientifically, would you!? Just as today you would not correct the language when we say that the sun comes up and goes down!

The Bible does not present a world-view, only a world-philosophy, in which we receive an answer as to Whom the world owes its existence. God Himself could be met in the magnitudes of the universe, the heavenly dome, the unshakeable surface of the heaven to which one looked up. By creating this firmament or canopy, God proves that He controls the waterworks, so to speak, shows the light-bearers their place, and ensures that this solid construction continues to exist.

5.4 Imagine...

The evolution theory assumes much, but has never been scientifically proven. Many pieces of evidence are missing, such as the missing link in the transition from ape to man. And there is a lot more that can enfeeble this hypothesis of a proven evolution theory.

If you believe in evolution, you would presume that, over time, the whole domain of flora and fauna would have originated from that one original primeval cell. That is not the case, however. The transitions between the animal species specifically, are missing. Animal species like fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and thousands of other kinds are suddenly present in the earth-layers, without any evidence of the transitions. Even if an animal came into being through the process of evolution, how can you explain the fact that there are males and females simultaneously? And how is it possible that those plants that are absolutely necessary for the survival of an animal, came to development at the right moment? How come there is suddenly exactly the right amount of sunlight for plants to grow?

But the point we want to make is that evolution requires just as much faith as the fact that God is the Creator. Imagine if a scientist had been allowed to examine the trees on the third day of creation (even if that day had been longer than 24 hours). How old would he estimate these trees to be, examining the number of rings in the trunk? How would he determine the age of the mountains that had just been created? How old would man be when he suddenly stands before you as an adult human being on the sixth day? A certain age was

also created into the process by God. He created the earth completely, with all the trimmings. Of course, there is also development. (That is not the same as evolution. Evolution: a fish becomes an elephant; development: a wolf becomes a dog.) This development should be seen as a creation process planned by God. It concerns developments governed by Him within His own creation. An evolutionist, however, cannot and will not reckon with direct Divine intervention. That is the fundamental difference.

5.5 Creating

Creating can only be done by God, so the verb ‘to create’ is used exclusively for God. Creating presumes that something is made out of nothing. That determines the eternal distinction between the Creator and man as creature. Man makes something from what is at hand. With God it comes from His own hand. Incidentally, we must not see God’s work of creation as wizardry where, as if by magic, a world is called into existence. It took God all the mornings and afternoons, so to speak, of the creation-days. They were full workdays for God, which were satisfactorily completed by the seventh day. This week was unique in history. Other places also refer to the work of God’s hands. **When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers...** It comes from His hands. And in metaphorical language: **Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand...? God stretched out the heavens like a curtain,** and measured heaven with a span of His hand (the distance between the thumb and little finger).

Psalm 8:3

Psalm 19:1

Isaiah 40:12 ff.

Psalm 104:2

5.6 Through the Word

God created all things *through the Word*. He called everything into being out of nothing. ‘**And God said...**’ is a constant refrain in Genesis 1. He begins by speaking. His Word is creative. The Word also expresses what God had in mind to create. The Word names the things according to their nature and specific qualities. All animals and plants were created according to their nature. Everything that has been called to life is also borne by that Word. Consider the truce that exists between the sea and the land. If God were to recall His word, the earth would again be surrounded and flooded by water from above and below.

Psalm 33:6

Genesis 1: 11-12

Hebrews 1:3

Job 38:11

2 Peter 3:5-7

Genesis 1:6; 6:17

5.7 Divine co-operation

Always read Genesis 1 in the light of John 1. The similarities are not coincidental. **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** With the Word we must think of the Son of God, who had not yet become man.

That the Holy Spirit plays part in creation is immediately made clear in Genesis 1:2. The earth was without form and void, an unfruitful and inhabitable place. There is no light: darkness lay over the face of the waters that covered the earth. This bleak, dreary state does not have the last word. God's breath, God's Spirit is going to concern Itself with the world. Now, *that* sounds promising! For in Exodus 31:3 God's Spirit is connected with creative activity, and the breath of God in Psalm 104:30 is God's creative presence: **You send forth your Spirit, they are created.** The Spirit is the breath of life, Which makes creatures come alive and stay alive. The Spirit guarantees growing-power, but it is also the Spirit Who fathoms all the depths and measures the widths of the firmament.

Psalm 139:7ff.

Take time to read Isaiah 40:12-26 and Job 38-41 to yourself so that you can observe the greatness of the Creator compared with the created. Let yourself be impressed by His wisdom as opposed to our limited knowledge.

Proverbs 8

5.8 Where, or with Whom do you begin?

Ultimately, the question is: where, or with Whom do you begin? You can take your starting-point in the world as it now exists, and reason backwards to a primeval mass, a chaos from which life was developed. You can begin with what you observe: apes show strong similarity to man, therefore an ape must be a primitive form of man. To reach this conclusion you have to assume a great deal and take many developments, which cannot be proved, for granted (like the many links that are still missing). Or, alternatively, you do not begin here below, with what you see, but you begin from above, with what is revealed to you, with a personal Creator. That is beginning where God begins, He who calls Himself the beginning and the end. In the beginning God created...the beginning without end.

Every day in His Word

1. Genesis 1: 1-25 (created beginning)
2. John 1: 1-10 (spoken beginning)
3. Psalm 19: 1-7 (language without words)
4. Job 38: 1-14 (angels rejoice at the beginning)
5. Proverbs 8: 22-31 (Wisdom can be a witness)
6. Isaiah 40:12-18 (who is like the Creator?)
7. Jeremiah 10:10-16 (the only true God)

Questions

1. Try to define in your own words the meaning of 'creation' and 'evolution'.
2. Is it possible to combine creation and evolution in some way, or are they mutually exclusive?
3. Could Genesis 1 be compatible with an earth that is millions of years old?
4. Can you really call the adherence to the evolution theory a belief? Name some weaknesses in the evolution faith.
5. Does the creation story in Genesis 1 give you enough foothold to believe in the Creator?
6. Is it important to know how long the days of creation lasted?
7. What is the meaning of 'creation through the Word' (cf. Genesis 1; John 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 3:5-7)?
8. What does it mean that the Lord created a complete creation? Do you think it is possible that there are extra-terrestrial beings on other planets?
9. Do you think man, in the future, will ever be able to create 'something' out of 'nothing'? In other words: bring dead material to life?

CHAPTER 6

IMAGE OF GOD

6.0 View of mankind

What is your view of mankind? Is it positive? Do you have great expectations of people? Is it negative, expecting people to be a disappointment? Or is it a bit of both, positive and negative? How do you look at man? Whoever believes in evolution recognises ‘the beast’ in us! The urge to survive, that every human possesses, would then be owing to the predatory instincts of his animal ancestors. That strong will to survive on the one hand, and the dominance of the fittest on the other. It could, supposedly, all be traced back to our animal beginnings in prehistoric times. According to evolutionists, this negative element has always been inherent to the evolution theory, and was never any different. Whether or not that negative can ever be conquered by the positive, depends on your view of mankind.

6.1 Originally good

Speaking of views on mankind, the Bible presents a very different view. In the beginning, that view was *exclusively* positive. The Bible does not paint a primitive picture of man. Adam and Eve are not introduced as a pair of simple and naive beings, and they are certainly not presented as a superior animal species with predatory instincts. Originally, man was created completely good, even perfect, exactly as God wanted him to be. There was nothing to find fault with, nothing wrong with them. They had no negative side whatsoever. When God introduces Adam to Eve he therefore calls her perfect, a fine specimen!

Genesis 1:31

Genesis 2:23

6.2 After God’s image

Animals are created according to their nature; man is created after the image of God. Man received an exceptionally high position: **almost divine**. As Psalm 8:5 says: **You made us a little lower than You yourself...** (Contemporary English

Version). Man received a *status aparte*: holy. This position is emphasised by the wording ‘made in God’s image’. Does man originally resemble God? Is God not highly unique? With whom could you compare Him? And yet, God wished to portray Himself in a certain way through the creation of man. God created a person, a *somebody* alongside Himself! The ability to think, feel, want, speak, answer, choose, love, be creative, is all part of being a person. God made man in such a way that he resembled Him in these things. Originally, he was equipped with a bright mind, a sensitive feeling, a pure will and a clear conscience. It is in this being human that man resembles God, as opposed to all the other creatures. Compared with the rest of creation, man’s personality is unique. To this exceptional position belongs a task: *to fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion over all creatures*. By caring for God’s creation as His representatives on earth, man is an image of God.

Genesis 1: 21, 26

Genesis 1: 26-28

6.3 Responsible position

Adam’s task to name the animals is a beautiful example of how man is the image of God. In the Bible, when you name someone you show that you have authority over him/her.

2 Kings 24:17

Adam’s naming of the animals proves that man has received sovereign power in the animal kingdom. God does not suggest how the animals should be named; Adam can choose the names himself. God trusts this to him to such an extent that he approves of it in advance. *To give a name* sounds like a simple task, but it requires the necessary insight and discernment. You have to distinguish the animals one from the other, to recognise what is peculiar to each. On top of that, you have to name them – that requires a special skill. You need ears, eyes, a heart, intelligence and hands in order to name those animals carefully. Man was equipped with all those gifts by the Creator. God gave him trust and responsibility, along with room for his own insight. In this way he differs from every other creature.

Genesis 2:19

6.4 Under God

God sought a partner in man. Someone He could spend time with. Someone who would return His love. Someone who could honour Him for His work. Not a pre-programmed robot, but a man made of flesh and blood, with a will of his own, with feeling and intelligence. God is not a puppeteer Who sees man as puppets whose strings can be pulled. As if he wants to determine and control every word, every action, every