

**CHRISTIAN CREATION THEORIES ROOTED IN THE GENESIS ACCOUNT AND  
THEIR UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS.**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this mini-thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This mini-thesis is dedicated to the following people for their inspiration, love and support:

- Lynn Janse van Rensburg (wife);
- Herman and Lisa Janse van Rensburg (parents);
- Ds Helgard Janse van Rensburg (grandfather);
- Prof J C De Villiers (friend and mentor);
- Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study is to provide the reader with a holistic theological understanding of the current popular Christian creation theories. This was done through identifying, analysing, and comparing the key teachings of these theories against a biblical exegesis of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.

This study reveals how each theory operates from a defensive and subjective historical context in which the various proponents find justification for their specific perspectives. It further illustrates how specific theological principles form part of the meta-theoretical frameworks that support the different theories. From discussing these frameworks it becomes clear how different opinions about the theological principles of general- versus special revelation and physical- versus spiritual death result in tension between the various theories.

Furthermore, this study argues that the creation account formed part of a literal-historical worldview in ancient Israelite society, but conservatively concludes that the current debate regarding the author intended historical timeframe and literary genre of the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 is inconclusive. Despite this conclusion, it indicates that modern day Christians can have a degree of certainty as to the theological intended meaning of the text.

The study concludes with a discussion on some of the main assumptions of the different theories, illustrating how all of the theories face theological difficulties.

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## Chapter 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Problem

Christians believe that everything was created by the God of the Christian Bible. This belief is not disputed within Christian Theology and therefore there is no credible disagreement about the understanding of Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (NLT). The disagreement stems from Genesis 1:2 and onward, which concerns ‘how’ God created, including the time period or time frames of creation.

The disagreement has resulted in many different theological theories of creation, respectively supported by a variety of ‘evidence’ and underlying assumptions from many academic disciplines, which saw the establishment of several influential organisations that side themselves with very specific theological teachings and presuppositions, promoting their theory as the ‘one’ being more extensively supported by the ‘evidence’.

Many of these organisations are well supported by several academics, theologians and scientists. Some of these organisations include Young Earth proponents such as: Creation Ministries International ([www.creation.com](http://www.creation.com)) and Answers in Genesis ([www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)); Old Earth proponents such as: Reasons to Believe



([www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org)) and Answers in Creation ([www.answersincreation.org](http://www.answersincreation.org)). Adding to these are organisations that take an apparent objective role, stating that they have no official stance on which theory is more accurate and therefore attempts to educate people as to the different existing theories. Examples of these organisations are: The American Scientific Affiliation ([www.asa3.org](http://www.asa3.org)) and Probe Ministries ([www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)).

These organisations and other independent writers have been responsible for constantly adding and modifying the different core theories of Christian creation based on new developments and research findings. The details or specifics of these different theories are extremely dynamic in nature and continues to change due to the large amount of research that bares influence on them. This makes categorising the various different theories very challenging seeing that there could exist small variants or differences of opinion about smaller details within the same core theory. For this reason it is more sensible to categorise the theories based on their basic core components and not to diversify a categorising structure to the extent that it provides different categories for all the smaller varieties.

Some writers have attempted to categorise the various theories. Earlier attempts created three categories of theories as described by Bohlin and Milne (1998) and more recently by Koperski (2006) seen below:

1. Recent or Literal Creation Theories also known as Young Earth Creation
2. Progressive Creationism Theories also known as Old Earth Creation
3. Theistic Evolution Theories or Evolutionary Creation

More recent attempts at categorising the different theories have reduced the structure to two main categories, with subdivisions under the Old Earth Creation category as seen below:

1. Young Earth Creationism (proponents include Sarfati and Wieland)
2. Old Earth Creationism (proponents include David Block and John Ross)
  - 2.1 Day-Age Theories (proponents include John Ross)

- 2.1.1 Progressive Creation (proponents include Tooley and Deem)
- 2.1.2 Theistic Evolution (proponents include Norman Hughes)
- 2.2 Gap Theory (proponents include Thomas Chalmers)

The existence of these different theories results in many theological, philosophical, historical and scientific challenges for the everyday Christian layman in forming a healthy Christian worldview. This is especially relevant in forming an understanding of the creation of the universe and the origins of life in a world where secular views and opinions are becoming more and more prominent and influential.

## **1.2 The Research Problem**

Genesis is the obvious starting point for Christians attempting to find a biblically sound, Christian worldview. However, the different conflicting interpretations of Genesis and their underlying assumptions, has the potential to adversely affect the faith of Christian individuals on this journey. The different creation theories are very interesting and even spiritually enriching to the Christian academic, but could appear very confusing and possibly destructive to the faithful Christian journey of non-academic Christian layman.

Therefore, then main aim of this research paper is to establish a holistic, theologically contextual understanding of the currently popular Christian creation theories that are rooted in the biblical creation account of Genesis 1:1 – 2: 3 by comparing the key teachings of these theories; by analysing their respective relationships with the written account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3; and by identifying the respective foundational assumptions on which these theories are grounded, in hope that it will assist Christians to understand and gain insight into the existence of the various different theories and their underlying assumptions.

In order to address the above mentioned main problem statement this paper will address the following three key questions.

- a) What are the views of the currently popular Christian theories of the creation account that's based on Genesis 1:1 – 2:3?
- b) How do these theories relate to the actual written account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3?
- c) What are the main underlying assumptions of these theories?

### **1.3 Delimitations**

As with all research studies, this paper is confined to a specific scope, outlined in the main problem statement above. But for the sake of clarity it is emphasised that this study's primary focus is the current popular Christian theories of creation, their different interpretations of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 and their underlying assumptions.

For a creation theory to have been considered 'Christian' in this research paper, its foundational point of departure must have been in line with the creation of the universe by the Christian God, Yahweh, as stated in Genesis 1:1. Although the influences or certain aspects of alternative (non-Christian) theories such as Atheistic Evolution will be discussed where applicable, these theories are not discussed in depth or on their own merit seeing that this falls outside of the scope of this research paper.

Furthermore, this study was conducted within a theological context. Christian Creationist theories normally cover two broad academic fields. The first being Theological and the second being a variety of Natural Scientific fields. This research paper acknowledges the influence and role of these Natural Scientific fields in the formation and dynamic nature of the different theories, but focuses mainly on the Theological field of each theory in terms of discussion, comparison and assumption analysis.

## **1.4 Presuppositions**

This thesis is written from the epistemological view that all knowledge and theories are influenced by a priori assumptions. In other words, all the views of origin and creation that are discussed in this research paper have a priori assumptions and axioms on which they rely as the foundations for their specific view. This approach is validated by Dr Jonathan Sarfati (2011): “All philosophical systems start with axioms (presuppositions), or non-provable propositions accepted as true, and deduce theorems from them”. This presupposition that all theories are supported by underlying assumptions is a key element of this research paper and has special relevance to the third key question as stated above.

Furthermore, in the interest of transparency and objectivity, it should be noted that the researcher himself is a supporter of the Young Earth Creationist theory. However, the researcher acknowledges the existence of the other theories of creation as well as their valuable relevance and contribution to the body of creationist knowledge. In light of this declaration the researcher emphasises that the purpose of this paper is not about staking claim on the authority of any one interpretation but to provide a comparative study of the different theories which will assist the ‘regular’ or ‘normal’ Christian individual to understand the different Christian theories within a theological context. Additionally, the researcher makes a conscious and consistent effort to remain objective during this paper, while relying heavily on the critique of his supervisor in order to ensure that this research paper is as objective as possible.

## **1.5 Design and Methodology**

Due to the conceptual and literary nature of the problem, the research was conducted using a Biblical Studies approach that was biblically-based and theologically-grounded contextual. The main problem statement was addressed through a comparative conceptual, literary and exegetical treatment of the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.

Firstly, this paper describes the currently popular theories on Christian creationism. This is done through a comprehensive, but selective literature review that compares the different theories of creation and analyses their similarities and differences. The required data is gathered from both online and physical theological publications. Due to the enormous amount of existing research and material that's available on the different theories, the literature review is selective in nature and focuses on recognised authors to represent the various different views.

Secondly, this paper compares the various theories against the findings of the researcher's biblical exegesis of the creation account in Genesis. The biblical exegesis employs English sources that enable the researcher to take advantage of the insight gained from Hebrew studies, such as commentaries, dictionaries and biblical encyclopedias. The biblical exegesis focuses firstly on conducting a structural analysis of the text to determine the style and genre of the text, and secondly it focuses on conducting a lexical analysis to determine the meaning of disputable words such as the word 'day'.

Thirdly, the theories are analysed to determine their underlying assumptions and axioms. The analysis identifies the presuppositions on which the different theories rely by breaking down the theories into their smaller logical components and then critically compares it to the insight gained from the biblical exegesis. The aim is to identify where the different theories are relying on assumptions versus evidence to support their respective claims.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In concluding this introductory chapter we now know that four main currently popular Christian creation theories exist. This creates difficulties in formulating a healthy Christian worldview. The next chapter compares these different popular Christian creation theories by extracting the core theological elements of each theory from

existing literature to develop an understanding of the basic elements of each theory as well as how the theories are similar and/or different in nature.

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## Chapter 2

# 2. CURRENT POPULAR THEORIES OF CHRISTIAN CREATION

(Literature Review)

### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comparative literary overview of the current popular theories of Christian creation. Although this is a seemingly simplistic task, it is not without challenges.

Firstly, different perspectives on how God created the heavens and the earth led to the conception of several Christian creation theories throughout history. What is evident is that the details of these theories are dynamic in nature and therefore prone to continuous change as our understanding of scripture and the natural world develops.

Secondly, the proponents of the different theories are not always in agreement and therefore we find differences of opinion within the same theory. For this reason certain active organisations have been selected to represent the various core theories, with references to additional sources that support their views. The organisations that represent the different theories in this research paper are:

Creation Ministry International (Young Earth Creation); Reasons to Believe (Progressive Creation); BioLogos (Theistic Evolution) and Christian Geology Ministry (Gap Theory).

Thirdly, much of the literature is written in an argumentative “he said, she said” style and therefore it’s often difficult to form a holistic picture of the various arguments, particular when it comes to the finer details. To provide an analogy, it’s like acting as a facilitator in a very emotional and opinionated argument between several parties, without having all parties present at the same time. The facilitator is forced to listen to the stories of the different sides independently of each other and then have to find the way forward amongst the various accusations, name calling and questionable assumptions of the different parties.

To make sense of this debate, this chapter has purposely been structured to discuss each theory under the following headings:

1. Subjective Context
2. Theological Principles (Meta-theoretical Framework)
3. Main views (Theological)

A brief look at the subjective context of each theory has significant value for understanding and gaining further insight into the reasons, motives and assumptions of each theory. This will have particular value when analysing the different assumptions of each theory later in this thesis.

The meta-theoretical framework in which each theory operates is essential for understanding the different perspectives on Genesis. What will become clear is that much of the debate and arguments originate from the meta-theoretical framework in which the different theories operate.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the following four popular Christian creation theories are discussed: Young Earth Creation, Progressive Creation, Theistic Evolution and the Gap Theory.



## 2.2 Young Earth Creation

### 2.2.1 Subjective Context

Young Earth Creation (YEC) proponents such as Creation Ministries International promote themselves as holding the same original interpretation of the Genesis creation week as the Israelites, and most Christian people throughout history.

They explain that YEC was originally expounded in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century by Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) who proposed a literal-historical reading and interpretation of Genesis concerning the origins of the universe. Archbishop James Ussher, born in 1581 Dublin-Ireland, originally promoted the idea that the date for creation (Genesis 1) should be set at 23 October 4004 B.C in addition to establishing dates for the whole Bible.

Archbishop James Ussher promoted this timeframe since the 1650's and was based on the premise that the Bible is the only reliable witness of chronological information. The death of Nebuchadnezzar is used as one of the major anchor points in determining the chronology. Using the Jewish tradition of starting their new year in autumn, Ussher concluded that God started His work (creation) on a Sunday after the autumnal equinox. Furthermore, he arrived at the year 4004 B.C through calculating genealogies in Genesis 5, Genesis 11 and a few other passages (Larry Pierce 2005). Creation Ministries International published a proposed young earth timeline based on Archbishop James Ussher's chronology which has been included at the end of this thesis as Annexure A.

Batten, Catchpoole, Sarfati and Wieland (2009:32-35) states that in the past most of the Western World considered the YEC interpretation of Genesis to be an accurate explanation of the origins of the universe and of life on Earth. To support this view, they refer to writings of early church fathers such as Basil the Great, and church reformers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther.

According to YEC, this global position started to change with a growing philosophical and scientific trend that relied on studying the natural world through observation to understand and make sense of our origins and history. As part of this growing scientific trend came influential writers such as Charles Darwin who published his book on evolution titled, the *Origins of Species* in 1859.

YEC proponents state that Darwin was influenced by the work of Sir Charles Lyell, a deist Unitarian-Geologist, who emphasised that the geological evidence on earth point towards a planet that is millions of years old (Statham 2009). Influenced by the writings of Lyell, Darwin studied biology and fossils and interpreted the natural observable evidence into a millions of year's framework as required by his notion of common ancestry of species. The publishing of his book played one of the most influential roles, up to that point in history, in advancing the growing philosophical trend of an old earth view of creation.

YEC proponents believe that the theory of evolution created a direct contradiction between the view of 'science' on the one hand and the view of Genesis concerning the origins of man and the creation of earth on the other (Manthei 2011). Initially, the church publicly and strongly criticised the theory of evolution, but as time passed and the church realised that it was not able to compete on a logical scientific level with evolution scientist, many Theologians identified a need for reconciliation and therefore attempted to reconcile the theory of evolution with the creation account in Genesis (Batten and others 2009:32-41). YEC advocates believe this led to reconciliation theories such as the Gap Theory and Day-Age Theories. The intention behind these reconciliation theories was to find a way to fit the creation week of Genesis into the 'new' framework of millions of years as described by the 'scientific' theory of Evolution.

Proponents of YEC are sometimes branded as conservatives or fundamentalists by critics and are accused of being ignorant to the scientific method and scientific findings. YEC proponents disagree with this stereotype and rely on scripture and competing interpretations of scientific data and findings to substantiate their young earth theological perspectives.

It is within the above context that YEC proponents such as Creation Ministries International see themselves as having to re-educate Christian believers in promoting a literal-historical accuracy and reliability of the Genesis account of creation in order to re-establish the accountability, validity and principle of inerrancy in the Bible.

### 2.2.2 Theological Principles

Young Earth Creation theory promote an inerrant, supreme scriptural revelation and redemptive perspective of the creation account in Genesis by a good, all powerful and loving God as fundamental underlying meta-theoretical theological principles.

Firstly, the **Goodness of God** is an essential underlying principle to the Young Earth Creation theory. According to this principle, God is an all-powerful, holy and loving God who won't lie or deceive as deduced from scripture such as 1 Samuel 2:2. Included in this principle is the belief that a loving God does not create or condone, pain suffering and death. Pain, suffering and death were the result of Adam (human) sin.

Secondly, the YEC view of **Biblical Inerrancy** argues that the Bible and all scripture therein is the true revelation of God to mankind and was communicated to people by the Holy Spirit through miraculous or spiritual revelation deduced from scripture such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The Bible is totally coherent and inerrant and does not contradict itself (Gerstner 2011). Where it appears as if contradictions exist, the reader has not yet discovered the correct intended meaning and therefore is interpreting it incorrectly.

Thirdly, the YEC view of **Supreme Scriptural Revelation** argues that the focus for understanding the creation of the universe should be on scripture as the supreme trustworthy revelation of God and not the created world. Although scientific study of the natural world has its purpose and significance, science should be led by scripture and not the other way around. This view argues that the 'original' creation was different to our current observable world which is corrupted with disease and death

that came with the curse after Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. YEC theory proposes that the curse brought about physical and biological changes to creation. An example of this is the belief that before the fall, all creatures were vegetarian based on Genesis 1:29-30.

This principle is fundamental to the YEC doctrine, seeing that it establishes the Bible as the supreme revelation of God, trumping modern science in contradictory situations because the fall changed the conditions of the original creation. Therefore modern science is seen as being able to observe the current cursed, fallen and corrupt creation which cannot be trusted to give a reliable revelation of a holy and good God (Batten and others 2009:30). In other words, to YEC proponents only scripture carries the uncompromised, trustworthy revelation of God and therefore it will not accept scientific conclusions that do not fit within a young earth framework of the Genesis creation account.

Lastly, YEC theorists believe in the principle of **God's Redemptive Purpose**. This principle proposes that God has a holistic plan (since the beginning of creation) to restore and save the world as deduced from verses such as 1 John 2:2 and John 1:12-13.

### 2.2.3 Main Views

In light of the above meta-theoretical theological principles, Young Earth proponents interpret the creation week narrative to be a literal-historical account which suggests a young earth, brought about by miraculous creative acts over 6 literal 24 hour days. This view was originally expounded by Archbishop James Ussher and dates the recent creation to 4004 B.C.

The view of a literal-historical account of Genesis as oppose to a mythological or metaphorical account is multifaceted:

Firstly, the YEC theory argues that everyday Israelites and New Testament figures such as Jesus and Paul interpreted the Genesis account as factual history. Amongst

others, reference is made to scripture such as Mark 10:6 where Jesus talks about the creation of man and women, and Acts 17:24-31 where Paul talks about the history of the world and man to support this view (Grigg 2011). It appears to YEC advocates that Jesus and Paul referred to the creation account as factual history.

YEC proponents argue that if Genesis is not actual history then it would mean that the Gospels are incorrect in tracing Jesus genealogy to Adam (Luke 3), and that God deliberately deceived his people, which is not reconcilable with a coherent Biblical revelation and the character of a good and loving God and with the principle of biblical inerrancy. Therefore, YEC proponents, see other interpretations of Genesis as undermining faith in the rest of the Bible (Batten and others 2009:29-32).

Secondly, YEC theory uses the principle of God's redemptive purpose and argues that Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:21-22) would have been unnecessary if Adam did not historically eat from the forbidden fruit. Jesus is regarded as the second or last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-47) and saved the world by becoming the perfect sacrifice and paying for the sins of mankind caused by the original Adam. The YEC theory argues that if the Genesis account is not an accurate historical account, then Adam and Eve did not really exist, nor eat from the forbidden fruit, and therefore Jesus' sacrifice would have been unnecessary (Batten and others 2009:29).

Thirdly, to defend the timeframe of 6, 24 hour days for the miraculous creative acts by God, YEC proponents argue that the word "day" or "yom" in Hebrew found in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 cannot mean anything but a 24 hour day. The argument upholds that the repetitive use of the phrase "it was morning and it was evening" within the text illustrates that the author meant a 24 hour period. Additionally, "yom" is compared to other scriptures such as Numbers 7:12-78 where "yom" clearly refers to a 24 hour period.

Fourthly, to defend the type of creation as miraculous or divine as oppose to evolutionary concepts over millions of years, YEC proponents invoke the goodness of God principle. According to their view, death could not have existed before the fall,

seeing that it would imply that God created death. To YEC advocates, death, pain and suffering are not in harmony with this principle.

Lastly, according to YEC theory the original creation was described by God as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). From this it’s deduced that death was not originally part of God’s plan. However, God created Adam and Eve with free will and the ability to choose to love Him. To test this choice, God created a tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden and instructed Adam and Eve not to eat from it. Satan, in the form of a snake, deceived them in Genesis 3:1-7 after which creation was cursed in Genesis 3:14-19. This curse is interpreted by YEC proponents to have been over the entire creation as deduced from Romans 8:18-25 and not just mankind.

YEC theory contains additional elements which fall outside of the scope of this thesis, but for the sake of thoroughness it is worthwhile just mentioning them here to provide a holistic picture of the whole theory. These elements are: The Flood of Noah and the narrative of the Tower of Babel. Both these events are considered literal-historical events like the creation account. Additionally, YEC proponents believe that the Flood was global and not just localised to the Middle-East. The global flood is used within this theory to explain fossils, continental shifts and other geological changes that occurred during the earth’s history.

## **2.3 Progressive Creation**

### 2.3.1 Subjective Context

Progressive Creation (PC) proponents such as Reasons to Believe, see themselves as somewhere between conservative and liberalist creationists. They uphold a view that promotes the authority of scripture as God’s spoken revelation to mankind, but believe that God reveals Himself in an equal and trustworthy fashion through the created world and thus scripture and science cannot contradict each other.

Hugh Ross (1991:142-144) argues that within the historical context, Archbishop James Ussher's young earth dating of the creation of the world cemented the 4004 B.C. creation date in the minds of numerous English-speaking Protestants. Furthermore, PC proponents argue that the inclusion of James Ussher's timeline and dates within the margin of the King James Bible during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Dennis 2006) gave an additional sense of authority to a young earth perspective. This timeframe only started to be significantly questioned and critically evaluated about two centuries after it became popular as a result of developments in philosophical and scientific trends.

Ross believes that the scientific critique against the young earth, 4004 B.C. timeframe, led to the establishment of Christian fundamentalism which started gaining momentum after: "two laymen, Milton and Lyman Stewart, sponsored the printing and distribution of twelve small books entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth* (1909 – 1915)" (Ross 1991:142). This was followed by the establishment of the World's Christian Fundamentalism Association in 1919 which identified Darwinism as a terrible evil that needed to be opposed.

PC proponents view this as the start of the "war" between Religion and Science in which Christian Fundamentalist did not welcome any change in the interpretation of Genesis and the understanding of creation to make sense of newly discovered scientific data. Strong criticism arose from those who held to a six 24 hour days creation week (i.e. Young Earth Creationists) to those who attempted to interpret the Genesis creation week using an old earth perspective.

PC proponents are often accused by YEC proponents of being led by science to the detriment of scripture and the reliability of the Word of God. PC proponents respond to this by stating that the amount of scientific data indicating an old earth is too much to ignore and that Christians must understand that God progressively reveals Himself through both scripture and His creation and therefore these two can't be in contradiction with each other.

It's within this context that PC advocates see themselves as having to liberate Christians through teaching them that scripture is not in contradiction with science

and that scripture must be reinterpreted based on our new scientific understanding of the age of the world.

### 2.3.2 Theological Principles

Progressive Creation theory promote an inerrant, progressive dual-revelation and historical-metaphorical perspective of the creation account in Genesis by a good, all powerful and loving God as strong underlying meta-theoretical theological principles.

Firstly, the **Goodness of God** is an equally essential part of PC theory as it is to YEC theory, but PC proponents argue that the same principle for scripture needs to apply for the created world as well. This means that PC theory argues that because God is holy and does not lie or deceive in scripture, He will not create a physical world that provides incorrect or deceptive scientific data as well. To support this view that the goodness of God principle should be applicable to the created world as well, PC advocates point to scripture such as:

Psalms 19:1-4 “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun” (NIV).

Romans 1:19-20 “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (NIV).

Colossians 1:23 “if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant” (NIV).



Secondly, the PC view of **Biblical Inerrancy** also argues that Scripture is a true revelation of God to mankind and holistically cohesive and inerrant in its entirety. Therefore, in its basic application there is no dispute about this meta-theoretical principle between YEC and PC proponents.

Thirdly, the PC view of **Dual-Revelation Theology** argues that the physically created world is as much a trustworthy revelation of God as Scripture. These dual revelations of God (Scripture and Creation or Special and General Revelation) must therefore be interpreted together and the one cannot contradict the other. If there is conflict then the evidence from both revelations needs to be critically evaluated to attempt to understand the truth (Zweerink 2010). As mentioned earlier, PC proponents draw on relevant scripture in Psalms, Romans and Colossians amongst others to support this view that creation itself is a trustworthy revelation of God.

Fourthly, PC proponents are broadly in agreement with YEC proponents regarding the principle of **God's Redemptive Purpose** through Jesus Christ. However, as will be seen later, PC proponents argue for a spiritual redemption, rather than a physical redemption.

Lastly, linked to the principle of dual-revelation is the concept of **Progressive Revelation**. PC proponents argue that God's word is totally inerrant but because of human limitations, the Holy Spirit is only able to reveal to us the correct or complete interpretation as our knowledge and understanding gradually or progressively increases (Robinson 2003). This concept is put forward as an explanation why people in the past have according to PC proponents wrongly understood the meaning of the Genesis creation account.

### 2.3.3 Main Views

In light of the above meta-theoretical theological principles, Progressive Creation proponents interpret the creation week narrative to be a historical-metaphorical account which suggests an old earth, brought about by an initial miraculous creative act in Genesis 1:1 billions of years ago and sustained by continuous miraculous

creative acts. This view dates creation of the universe to about 14 billion years ago. Reasons to Believe published a proposed creation timeline using the creation week narrative and a 14 billion years' timeframe. This has been included at the end of this chapter as Annexure B.

The view of a historical-metaphorical account of Genesis, as oppose to a historical-literal or mythological consists of the following progressive creation views:

Firstly, Progressive Creationists believe that historically God created the cosmos and the earth. They interpret the sequence of events or creative acts of God to have taken place in the literal order as written in Genesis 1, but on the other hand, they believe the details of the events of the creation week to be metaphorical in some aspects because the word 'day' is interpreted as eras or long (indefinite) periods of time and not a 24 hour period (Report of the Creation Study Committee: 2000). To harmonize this view with main stream scientific views, they put forward that the creation days are actual overlapping eras of time. This can be seen in the progressive creation chart, Annexure B, at the end of this chapter. It should be noted, that PC theorists understand the limitations and short comings of this current model and do not propose it as a completed model.

Additionally, two minor variants on the day-age view regarding the length of days exist. Although not as influential as the one mentioned above, for the sake of thoroughness its worth mentioning them here. The first is the view that Genesis was written from a man's perspective as seen from the earth while it was being prepared or created. In other words, it's not a view from space but a view from the earth. This argument is sometimes put forward to defend astronomical or physical problems with the order of creation as challenged by the Big Bang theory. The second variation is that the days were not overlapping but purely sequential long indefinite days. The principle of Progressive Revelation is used to defend the shortcomings in the PC model.

PC proponents such as Hugh Ross argues that a belief in long days or periods of time is not a recent phenomenon brought about by Darwinism. He defends this point by referring to the writings of early Church Fathers and Biblical Scholars such as

Josephus, Basil and Augustine (Ross 1991:141). It is interesting to note that Young Earth Creation proponents interpret the writings of Basil the Great to indicate that he believed in a young earth, and PC proponents interpret his writings to indicate that he believed in an old earth. Conservatively, we may therefore conclude that on this point the writings of Basil the Great are inconclusive.

PC proponents do not provide much evidence from the writings of New Testament authors about the general belief in an old earth. They do argue that Hebrews 11:12 and supporting Old Testament verses refer to the children of God to be equal to the amount of stars or grains of sand. Comparing this number to modern day astronomical knowledge they mathematically work out the age of the earth to be very old. One should however ask the question, if this was understood in this way by the ancient Israelites. Supporting scripture from the Old Testament are sometimes provided for the theory of PC such as Habakkuk 3:6 which refer to the mountains as being ancient.

PC theory is named after the type of creation or rather the method God used to create the universe. As oppose to a short time span or “instant” creation, Progressive Creation calls for the understanding that God created “progressively” over a long period of time. PC proponents believe that God initially set all the laws of creation (such as gravity) in motion, and periodically as the conditions became favorable miraculously created new “kinds” of animals and eventually human kind. This took place over billions of years.

PC proponents emphasise that God exists outside of time or at least operates in two or more dimensions of time. Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 is referenced for this point which speaks of time as being irrelevant to God (Deem 2007). In other words, PC theory promotes a combination of both miraculous and natural creation. The biggest difference between PC theory as compared to Theistic Evolution is probably seen in this point, because PC proponents would argue that the existence of humankind is from a Godly, miraculous intervention, as oppose to Theistic Evolution who would contribute mankind as evolving from primates.

PC proponents believe that the Hebrew word 'Yom' meaning 'Day' must not be interpreted as a literal 24 hour day but as an unspecified long period of time (Deem 2007). To support this interpretation Progressive Creationists like Tooley (2011) look at scripture which describes God's relation to time, such as: Psalms 90:4 "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." (NIV).

Other Progressive Creationist like Deem (2008) also focus on verses that indicate that the word 'Yom' is often used within scripture to mean an unspecified or long period of time and not a literal 24 hour day, such as: Genesis 2:4 "This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens..." (KJV)

Genesis 2:16-17 "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" (KJV).

Based on these verses, PC theory argues for an unspecified, long period of time for the creation days. According to the PC model (Annexure B at the end of this thesis), the 'days' of creation are not equal in their amount of time. This can be seen from the model, day one is roughly estimated to present 1.5 billion years and day five is estimated to represent less than 0.5 billion years.

PC proponents work within the theological framework of God's redemptive purpose through Jesus Christ. However, their interpretation of the principle is distinctly different from that of YEC theory. PC theory promotes that Jesus is the second or final Adam that redeems mankind from the fall. However, Ross (1991:154) points out that in the Progressive Creationist interpretation of the fall, Adam died a spiritual death and not a physical death. After Adam sinned, he remained alive even though in Genesis 2:17 God says: "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die". This points out that on the day of sinning he would die. Therefore PC proponents hold to the view of spiritual death and not physical death. For this reason, PC proponents advocate that the necessity for Jesus' death and resurrection was to redeem mankind from its spiritual death and not its physical death.

To complete the holistic view of PC theory it can be noted that a major point of contestation between YEC and PC is the Flood of Noah. Tooley (2011) wrote that Progressive Creationists interpret the Flood of Noah to be a localised flood and not a global flood as is the view of Young Earth Creationists. This perspective is similar to mainstream scientific ideas. Furthermore, the narrative of the Tower of Babel and the creation of different languages are considered to be a metaphorical narrative, seeing that the PC framework dictates that languages developed progressively in line with mainstream scientific thinking.

### **2.4 Theistic Evolution**

#### **2.4.1 Subjective Context**

Theistic Evolution (TE) proponents such as BioLogos see themselves as a liberalist creationist movement. Currently, TE is a very dynamic theory that ascribes the style and genre of the creation account to mythology. They argue that available scientific data is not compatible with a historical or literal interpretation of creation and therefore the creation account should not be understood as a literal-historical narrative.

Kenton Sparks (2011) explains the motivation behind TE theory: “I write for Evangelicals who either believe or suspect that our tradition has painted itself into an intellectual corner. The Church has been down this road before. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries it mistakenly criticised Copernicus and Galileo because their scientific views were deemed ‘unbiblical.’ And just as the evidence finally came crashing down on Church dogma in those days, so in ours, the facts are stacking up quickly against fundamentalist beliefs in “creation science” and in the kind of “biblical inerrancy” that supports it”.

TE theory promotes a very liberal view of Christian creationism that is largely still in the process of being refined. Proponents of this view are often openly in disagreement with each other about the details of this theory. One main point of

debate is the initial involvement of God in starting creation and to what extent His involvement continues today. TE proponents such as BioLogos are of the opinion that these internal debates contribute to the principles of good science, and argue that these debates will lead to greater and better understanding of the creative acts and character of God.

BioLogos clarifies that TE theory is distinctly different to secular views such as deism and should not be linked to the historical context or origin of such views. The difference is that TE believes that God is or was actively involved, initially, currently-partially or currently-totally in creating the universe, whereas deism refers to a non-active creator (How is BioLogos Different 2011).

Furthermore, Theistic Evolution should also not be confused with Intelligent Design. In general, Intelligent Design is a concept or principle that associates the creation of the universe to a super-natural deity, as oppose to random chance. TE theory proponents specifically argue for the creation of the universe by the God of the Christian Bible.

TE proponents are often accused by other Christian creationist proponents that they undermine the authority of scripture by viewing the creation week as mythology. TE proponents respond to this by pointing to the large volume of scientific data in seeming contradiction with a literal or historical reading of the creation narrative in Genesis.

#### 2.4.2 Theological Principles

Due to the many differences of opinion amongst Theistic Evolution proponents, it's difficult to clearly identify which meta-theoretical theological principles they collectively prescribe to. At the moment the consensus seems to be that TE proponents hold to a degree of biblical authority, dual-revelation and a mythological perspective of the creation account in which God used the process of evolution to create life on earth as oppose to miraculous or divine creation.

Firstly, within the Theistic Evolution Interpretation of the creation account we find different camps of thought regarding the **Accuracy of Scripture**. Some proponents side with the fundamental principle of inerrancy of scripture but due to their perspective on the evolutionary process see the creation week in Genesis as a myth rather than a literal or historical account of creation.

Other proponents interpret the Bible from a humanistic perspective which calls into question the accuracy of scripture due to the natural possibility of human error. They claim that people are sinful beings and their abilities are not perfect, therefore the Bible will contain contradictions, misinterpretations, and other faults due to human error in writing down the Word of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit (Sparks 2011). For this reason we may conservatively conclude that TE proponents hold to an **inspired and authoritative view of Scripture**, as stated in the BioLogos Forum and American Scientific Affiliation 'statement of faith'.

Secondly, TE **Dual-Revelation Theology** argues a similar principle to that of PC proponents which believes God reveals himself through two distinct revelations, namely the Word of God (Scripture), and the Works of God (Creation). Our understanding of creation must therefore be a compatible perspective of the two revelations. This view is clearly indicated in the report of the second BioLogos Foundations Theology of Celebration Workshop in 2010 (Theology of Celebration Workshop in 2010).

Thirdly, the principles of **Progressive Revelation**, or theological evolution, the **Goodness of God** and **God's Redemptive Purpose** to some extent feature in the thinking of TE theory. It's difficult to determine the 'weight' and influence of these principles, due to the diverse views and opinions which are part of the growing nature of this theory.

Lastly, Science, especially what is known as Historical Science, has played a prominent role in the origins and construction of TE theory and thus it operates within a framework of **mainstream scientific principles**. In general it appears that TE proponents rely substantially on scientific thinking to construct their Christian worldview.

### 2.4.3 Main Views

In light of the above mentioned theological principles, TE theory interprets the creation account in Genesis 1 as a mythological narrative with the following main views.

Supporters of Theistic Evolution hold to what is known as a “Theology of Creation” or creation **mythology approach**. Bohlin and Milne (1998) wrote: “[Theistic Evolutionists] suggest that the Genesis narrative was designed to show the Israelites that there is one God and He has created everything, including those things which the surrounding nations worshipped as gods. In essence, Genesis chapter one is religious and theological, not historical and scientific”.

This means that they do not consider the creation week in Genesis to be a historical or literal event but a theological message which teaches values such as, that God is the supreme creator, mans role on earth and the holiness of the Sabbath or seventh day (Bohlin and Milne 1998). Because TE proponents regard the creation week in Genesis as allegory (i.e. metaphorical) it allows them to use data and evidence from scientific discoveries of the natural world to construct their worldview of creation.

In response to other theories that provide the views of biblical authors, early church fathers and reformers as evidence for a more historical view of the creation account, TE theory proposes a solution which consists of the principles of progressive revelation and dual-revelation. Therefore, TE proponents suggest that the above mentioned writers operated within a ‘scientifically incorrect’ worldview of their own or of the time. Therefore, their view cannot be used to construct a worldview that opposes scientific findings.

In TE theory, the age of the earth, type of creation and days of creation are determined purely through scientific study. Based on TE theory’s scientific foundations, the universe was created by God about 14 billion years ago. It appears that for the most part, TE proponents believe in the active involvement of God within



his creation, but the extent of his involvement remains an issue of debate amongst TE proponents. Furthermore, TE proponents employ other theories such as the Big Bang and Evolution to explain the type of creation that occurred. According to this interpretive framework, God initially created the first atomic mass and the laws of nature. This initial act set everything in place that was needed for the Big Bang to occur and evolutionary principles to commence over 14 billion years. Through these processes humankind eventually evolved as intelligent beings.

Theologically, TE proponents explain the link between Jesus' sacrifice and death not to an historical Adam, but to all mankind (humankind). TE proponents argue that the meaning of Adam in Genesis should be understood to refer to mankind in general and not to an historical human being. Alexander and Baker (2003:18) do point out that the name "Adam" is used in four different ways throughout scripture. Adam could refer to a generic term for humankind, a personal name, a term for the male gender or a place name. They argue that the use of the term Adam in Genesis 1:26-27, when God created Adam on the sixth day, refers to a collective meaning for humankind.

Others have also suggested that Adam is the representative of Israel only, and not of all humanity (Enns 2010). The redemptive purpose of Christ is therefore seen as necessary due to the sin of all mankind and not one original sin by one historical man.

To complete the holistic understanding of the Theistic Evolution theory, we find that its supporters will reject claims that the Flood of Noah was a global event, and if it occurred at all, it would be considered as a localised flood. Furthermore, the same mythological perception of the creation account is attributed to the narrative of the Tower of Babel and the creation of different languages.

## 2.5 Gap Theory

### 2.5.1 Subjective Context

The Gap Theory (GT), also known as the Ruin-Reconstruction Interpretation, is mostly attributed to the work of Thomas Chalmers from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Christian Geology Ministry 2011) but GT advocates state that this theory has existed long before Thomas Chalmers preaching caused it to become widely popular.

Proponents of the GT see themselves as advocating an old earth view that is faithful to the original King James Version of the Bible which predates the scientific and philosophical trends commonly associated with evolution and Darwinism. GT proponents take issue with other modern translations of the Bible, particularly because this theory is based on very specific scriptural verses which have been altered in more recent biblical translations.

According to Christian Geology Ministry (2011) the Gap Theory was part of the early Christian fundamentalist movement in the early 20th century, which was preceded by thousands of years of belief in general young earth creation dogma. Progressive revelations lead to the dogma of a young earth being questioned, even before the theory of evolution became popular.

The theory proposes a 'gap' of time of billions of years between Genesis 1:1 (original creation) and Genesis 1:2 (reconstructed creation) and promote an old earth historical framework in line with modern mainstream scientific beliefs.

The Gap Theory is often accused by YEC proponents to be a reconciliation theory which originated after 'science' convinced theologians that Genesis can't be an accurate literal-historical account of a recent creation. GT proponents such as Christian Geology Ministry (2011) responds to this by stating that this view is not accurate and makes the claim that the 'gap' has always been there since Moses

penned it in scripture, but that the Holy Spirit has only been able to open people's eyes to this 'gap' after our knowledge of geology and earth's history have increased.

GT advocates often criticise YEC proponents for advocating an archaic traditional view of scripture that is closed to modern scientific findings, which according to them harms the integrity and believability of scripture.

### 2.5.2 Theological Principles

The Gap Theory promotes a biblical inerrant, progressive revelation, higher scriptural authority and redemptive purpose perspective of the creation account in Genesis by an all powerful and loving creator God.

Firstly, the GT uphold the **Goodness of God** principle similarly to YEC and PC proponents.

Secondly, Gap theorists also hold to the **Biblical Inerrancy** of Scripture, and hold to the claim that this theory is scripturally faithful when all 66 books of the Bible is coherently interpreted and understood (Christian Geology Ministry 2011).

Thirdly, important to this view is the principle of **Progressive Revelation** that teaches that God continuously reveals more about Himself to mankind as our understanding of scripture and the natural world increases. Christian Geology Ministry (2011) wrote the following on this issue:

"The Bible will ALWAYS have an answer, although we may not immediately see it. For example, it was not until a few centuries ago that the Geological sciences had progressed to the point where the previously-accepted 6,000 year age of the Earth, which was dogma in both the institutions of Church and science, began to be questioned by what was observed in the geological record. Some theologians of the day who were honest enough to realise the truth of those emerging observations and were steadfast, faithful, and committed to defending the Scriptures, were inspired to observe the possibility of a time "Gap" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 in the Creation

narrative. That "Gap" had always been there - ever since the day Moses penned the book - but not many eyes were open to seeing or understanding it until the times was right. It was already there when the Scottish theologian, Thomas Chalmers, first noticed and began to preach it in the early 19th century”.

GT proponents state that every specific detail is not always provided in scripture, such as with Genesis 1:1 (original creation), but promote that a holistic interpretation of scripture leads to understanding these ‘gaps’. Therefore, Gap theorists believe that especially in Genesis there are missing or omitted historical details within scripture, specifically between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 (Christian Geology Ministry 2011).

Fourthly, GT proponents believe that there is no contradiction between modern scientific data and the Gap Theory, but seems to hold **Scripture in Higher Authority** than the natural world or general revelation (Christian Geology Ministry 2011). GT advocates believe that science without a fundamental underlying assumption for the existence and creative power of God is doomed for failure, but hold to the view that both scripture and scientific evidence from the natural world are valuable for understanding God and His creation.

Lastly, GT proponents hold to a holistic view of **God’s Redemptive purpose**. The death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is believed to be connected to a literal and historical Adam who existed on the second or reconstructed earth (creation).

### 2.5.3 Main Views

Based on the above theological principles, GT theory similarly to YEC theory interprets the creation account to be a liter-historical account of creation with the following main views:

GT proponents advocate a **literal-historical interpretation** of Genesis but at the same time accommodate an old earth or billions of years timeframe for creation due to their belief in the “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. According to GT

proponents the reconstructed (second) creation was a historic divine restoration as written in Genesis 1:2 and onwards. According to the Gap Theory, modern scientific data point to the first or original created earth and not the second or restored earth. In other words, geological data, fossils etc. are from the previous world or first creation and not from the current one.

GT proponents agree with mainstream scientific data that creation is billions of years old. The GT allows for such an interpretation due to the interpreted “gap” between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2. Richard Niessen (2011:1) summarises the main points of the Gap Theory as follows:

“Genesis 1:1 records the special creation of the original heavens and Earth, billions of years ago. Upon that Earth lived the various species of prehistoric animals and prehistoric man. During that time Lucifer’s rebellion in heaven took place (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:1-16; Rev. 12:7-9). Lucifer and his fallen angels (currently called Satan, and demons, respectively) were cast down to earth, corrupted the original inhabitants of the Earth, and provoked a worldwide judgment known as “Lucifer’s Flood,” from which there were no survivors. Thus the Earth became without form and void (Gen. 1:2) and remained in this desolate condition for billions of years. Genesis 1:3 then records the REIT creation of the Earth, the biosphere, and man as we know them today. Thus it is also called the ruin-reconstruction theory.”(Niessen 2011:1)

What makes the Gap Theory unique when compared to the other views described above is that it promotes the idea of the creation or restoration of a ‘second’ earth after the first earth was destroyed when Satan rebelled during the ‘gap’ period. As evidence, supporters rely on verses found in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Revelations as mentioned above. In both ‘creations’ God created miraculously, and not through evolutionary means. After the first miraculous or initial creation, it was destroyed by Satan and his fallen angels. Eventually, following billions of years, God miraculously reconstructed or restored creation in six 24 hour days.

To support the Gap theology, proponents argue that the word “was” in Genesis 1:2 “And the earth was without form, and void” must be translated as “became” instead. This is then interpreted to indicate that the earth was changed or altered after its

initial creation in Genesis 1:1. This issue is vital to the Gap Theory. GT proponents have often criticised other translations for not recognising this mistake.

Because GT proponents essentially believe in an historical Adam who was created fairly recently by God on the 'second' earth, they believe the fall to have been a literal-historical event. Sin entered with Adam into the 'second' world, and thus Jesus redeemed creation by being the perfect sacrifice through His genealogical connection to Adam.

To conclude the Gap Theories holistic view, it appears that Gap proponents are 'forced' to accept a localised flood, in the narrative of Noah as oppose to a global flood. The reason being that GT proponents attribute the geological and fossil records discovered by scientist, to the flood in Genesis or Lucifer's Flood which destroyed the entire earth and therefore created the fossil record (Ham 1980).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In concluding this chapter on the literature review of the current popular Christian creation theories, it would be good to summarise the differences and similarities of these theories:

### 2.6.1 Similarities:

- The different theories seem to be in agreement that the majority of people in the past (Israelites – Jews – Christians) held to a 6, 24 hour day, creation.
- The basic application of biblical inerrancy of scripture is a common view amongst the proponents of the different Christian creation theories, with the exception of certain proponents of TE theory.
- God's redemptive purpose is a common theme in all the theories. The debate however involves spiritual versus physical redemption.

- With the exception of the YEC theory, all three of the other Old Earth theories have an overall timeframe for the age of the earth that is in line with the modern scientific suggested age of the earth.
- With the exception of the YEC theory, all three of the other theories accommodated physical death before the fall.
- With the exception of the YEC theory, all three of the other theories believe the Flood of Noah to be a local event.

### 2.6.2 Differences:

- Each theory operates from a different subjective historical perspective, which provides the context and motivation for promoting their theory as the correct interpretation of the creation account.
- PC and GT proponents do not agree with the labeling of their theories as reconciliation theories.
- The theories take different approaches to the authority of scripture or special revelation versus general revelation.
- YEC and GT allocate a literal-historical genre to the creation account which differs from PC's historical-metaphorical and TE's mythological views.
- The meaning of the word 'day' is a key factor that separates YEC and PC views on creation.
- The translation of the word 'was' to 'became' is a key difference between the GT and the other theories.

### 2.6.3 Closing Remarks:

What is evident from the above literature review is that the subjective context of each theory seems to reveal that there is an element of perceived victimisation which provides part of the motivation and drive for the development and promotion of each theory. Proponents see themselves as duty-bound to protect Christian thoughts and views regarding creation. This in turn defends the integrity and believability of the Bible as seen by the various theories.

In closing it must be stated that all the different views of Christian creation discussed in this thesis deserves praise for their contributions to the existing body of knowledge. A comparative, summary table of the main elements of each of these theories has been created and included at the end of this thesis as Annexure C for reference and comparative purposes.

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## Chapter 3

### 3. THE TEXT, THE THEORIES AND THEIR CONNECTIONS

(Biblical Exegesis)

#### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to gain insight into the meaning of the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 through an exegetical treatment of the relevant scriptures. In turn, the findings will assist in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the different theories of Christian creation. For the sake of clarity and transparency, the following points must be noted when reading this chapter:

Firstly, the biblical exegesis that follows relies heavily on the use of English sources such as commentaries, dictionaries and biblical encyclopedias. The authors of these sources operate within a meta-theoretical and theoretical framework of their own.

Secondly, the exegetical process in this chapter operates within a biblical canonical context as described by Vyhmeister as quoted in the South African Theological Seminary RES5150 (2011:109): “It assumes the authority and unity of Scripture and seeks to ascertain the meaning of the Bible, both for its original readers or hearers and for my life today”.

To ensure the steady and logical flow of this chapter it has purposely been structured using the following headings:

1. The Different Translations of the Creation Account
2. The Canonical Context of the Creation Account
3. The Literary Context of the Creation Account
4. Key Words in the Creation Account
5. The Original Theological Meaning of the Creation Account
6. Creation Account Summary and Commentary

### **3.2 The Different Translations of the Creation Account**

Modern English translations such as the New International Version (NIV), American Standard Version (ASV) and English Standard Version (ESV) fall short of precisely capturing semantic nuances and other written accomplishments such as structure and text flow due to the differences between the languages. The style and method of translation is focused on today's reader, rather than remaining absolutely true to the Hebrew text. The assumption is that today's reader is far less capable to read and comprehend; therefore English simplicity and readability are the focus areas of translations. Alter (1996:xii) refers to this as "explaining the Bible instead of representing it in another language" which results in the loss of information.

This is a strategic decision from the translators, and should not take away any of the praise due to them for their dedicated and hard work. However, when conducting exegetical research, specifically lexical studies, from the English translations it's better to work with English translations that are as close to the Hebrew text as possible. In my opinion, the King James Version (KJV) and more recently Robert Alter's translation (RAT) of Genesis are such attempts. However we must realise that an understanding of ancient Hebrew cannot be replaced by even the best English translation due to this possible loss of information.

To illustrate by way of example, one of the most prolific and noticeable differences in the structure and flow of the text can be seen when comparing the use of the word 'and' at the start of verses (sentences) in RAT and the KJV with other more popular

translations such as the NIV, the ASV and the ESV. As Robert Alter explains, it is a Hebrew common convention to start sentences with the 'vav' or 'and', but this is not considered good sentence construction in modern English. Therefore, the more popular translations often leave out the 'and' at the start of verses (sentences). The exclusion of the word 'and' slows down the tempo of the text and therefore the reader might be forgiven to assume a 'slower' speed of creation. When reading the King James or Robert Alter's versions, one gets the sense of one thing happening after the other in quick succession.

A table comparing the different English translations of the creation account mentioned above has been added at the back of this thesis for easy reference. Additionally, certain words and phrases have been highlighted in various colours to illustrate rhetorical features discussed later on in this chapter.

### **3.3 The Canonical Context of the Creation Account**

#### 3.3.1 The Geographical location of Genesis

Genesis 1 – 11 is geographically situated in Mesopotamia, today known as Iraq. This geographical area is supported by the mention of two well known rivers in Scripture namely the Tigris and the Euphrates (Genesis 2:14). Additionally, from scripture, we also know that Noah's Ark came to rest on the mountain of Ararat. Furthermore, the mention of Nimrod in Genesis 10:10 and the geographical location of the Tower of Babel is evidence for Genesis and the ancient Israelites originating within the Mesopotamian region.

The remaining parts of Genesis are characterised by the influence of other nations on the ancient Israelites. We know that Abraham ventured to Canaan where the ancient Israelites situated themselves in the southern regions including Hebron and Beersheba. There were also occasional ventures to areas such as Egypt. By the end of Genesis, the Israelites relocated to Egypt during the time of Joseph.

### 3.3.2 The Author(s) and Audience of the Creation Account

The early church believed that the Pentateuch (including Genesis 1:1-2:3) was authored by Moses, who wrote down the Word of God which he received through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This view, originated during a time period in which a spiritual worldview or divine meta-theoretical framework dominated theological and philosophical thinking. During modern times, this view has come under attack from source critics who attribute the writing of the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3 to part of what is known as the Priestly document. The Priestly (P) document is believed to be one of at least five different sources responsible for compiling the Pentateuch. The other four sources are the Deuteronomist (D), the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E) and Redactors (R) or compilers (Speiser 1964).

Source critics argue that the Priestly document was composed by an unknown Israelite Priest during the Babylonian exile period (Cotter 2003:7). This suggests that the Genesis creation account was compiled during or soon after the exile period to combat the effects of Babylonian religions views on the worldview and religious beliefs of the Israelites. It is believed that the Babylonian creation myth or at least the written account predates the creation account of Genesis. Therefore, the influences from the Babylonian creation myth lead to the Priestly source writing the creation account in Genesis most probably to combat and challenge these Babylonian myths.

Recently, some Theologians are attempting to reclaim the authorship of Moses for the Pentateuch, but argue that Moses might have used some sources for reference purposes to compile the Pentateuch. Additionally, Joshua is attributed with some verses such as Deuteronomy 34 which records Moses' death (Grigg 2011).

Taking the view of Source Critics into account we may conservatively conclude that Moses "was considered responsible for the shape and content of Genesis" (Walton 2009:3) but was not the sole author of Genesis and the Pentateuch.

The different opinions regarding the authorship of the creation account creates challenges for our perceived historical context or setting of the author(s) as well as the intended audience. In other words, if the creation account was authored by Moses we are looking at a timeframe of probably the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium B.C. which is the period when the Israelites were wondering through the wilderness. But, if it was written during the exile period we are probably looking at the mid 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium B.C.

Due to these different opinions about the authorship of Genesis “it’s not possible at this time to put Gen 1-11 into a specific place in the historical record.”(Walton 2009:4). Therefore, a brief overview of the holistic time period covered in Genesis is necessary for understanding the historical context. This sentiment is supported by Alexander and Baker (2003:156) wrote that “The theological message of the Bible was communicated to people who lived in the ancient Near Eastern world. If we desire to understand the theological message of the text, we will benefit by positioning it within the worldview of the ancient world rather than simply applying our own cultural perspectives”.

Thus considering the above, its more crucial to understand how ancient cultures differed from our modern culture in general, than to be pre-occupied with a specific period such as the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. (Moses) or the mid 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. (exile period). This will broaden our insight and understanding of the original author(s) intended meaning and the worldview of the audience being addressed in the message of the creation account (Walton 2009:2-3).

### 3.3.3 The Historical and Religious Context of Genesis

Generally speaking major sources are in agreement that two ancient cultures, namely: the Mesopotamians (Sumerians and Babylonians) and Egyptians enjoyed close contact with the ancient Israelites and the early patriarchs.

The Sumerians are the earliest civilisation of which we have evidence in the historical record. They occupied and controlled Southern Mesopotamia for more than

500 years from 2900 – 2350 B.C. Most historians credit the development of mathematics, astronomy, law, medicine and the first signs of urbanisation to the Sumerians. Evidence of these developments was found at a number of their main cities, namely Eridu, Uruk and Ur (Walton 2009:4). The Sumerians were no longer in 'control' of the ancient Near East when the first Israelite patriarch, Abraham, was called by God to leave his home for the promised land, but due to their cultural contributions and reign for over 500 years, their influence continued in the region.

The Sumerian reign was followed by what is known as the Dynasty of Akkad which lasted for about 150 years. The Akkad Dynasty was eventually replaced by a 'barbaric' people known as the Gutians and after this; little is known for about 100 years, with at least 20 different Gutian kings succeeding one another. Eventually the city of Ur (under king Ur-Nammu), took back control of southern Mesopotamia but its reign was not as wide-ranging as before, during the Akkad Dynasty.

After a considerably long period of peace (almost fifty years) the city of Ur was eventually overthrown by the Amorites in the late twenty-first century. What is significant about the fifty years of peace is that it allowed for the practice and development of music, literature and sportsmanship. These 'leisure' activities do not normally develop during times of war and struggle.

Eventually, the city of Ur was conquered by the Elamites and for about 200 years (2000 to 1800 B.C.) control was localised to city-states. This includes cities such as Mari, Larsa, Assur and more relevant the city of Babylon. The city of Babylon under kingship of Hammurabi eventually took control of the region and established the first Babylonian Dynasty. Most of the narratives in Genesis 12 - 50 occur during this Babylonian period which stretched from 2000 B.C to 1600 B.C (Walton 2009:5).

The first rulers of the Babylonian period were the Amorites under Hammurabi who introduced a succession of sophisticated laws. The Amorite reign was overthrown by the Hittites in 1595 and they were eventually invaded by the Kassites.

Walton (2009:4) explains that it's within this historical context that the Israelite patriarchs appear on the scene. However, it is unclear from where Abraham is

originally from. Some estimate that Abraham was from the city of Ur and traveled to Haran at the time of king Ur-Nammu, but this is not clear and several other possibilities for Abraham's origin can be argued as well.

Alexander and Baker argue that "nowhere in the ancient Near East did people think of creation primarily in terms of making things. It is only our post-Enlightenment, Western way of thinking that focuses so steadfastly and exclusively on physical structure and formational history." (2003:161). It appears that for the ancients, creation was rather concerned with bringing order from chaos than necessarily bringing something new into physical existence.

This was the case in the Babylonian creation myth. Marduk, the patron god of Babylon, restored order to the universe by killing the god Tiamat who rebelled and caused the initial chaos. Marduk then created the earth and the sky by dividing the body of Tiamat into two halves. Marduk then continues to create dwelling places for the other gods which corresponds with celestial objects, which sets in motion the seasons, and annual natural cycles. This is followed by Marduk deciding to create mankind, but realising he required blood and bones to do so, Marduk used the blood and bones from the corpse of Kingu to fashion mankind to serve the gods. After the creation of mankind, the gods celebrated with a banquet (Bratcher 2011).

History scholars point out the similarities between the Babylonian creation myth and the creation account in Genesis. Robinson (2011) says that liberal theologians believe the Babylonian creation myth to predate the Genesis account, and therefore conclude that the Genesis account was inspired by the Babylonian myth.

The second major culture who had contact with the ancient Israelites was the Egyptians. "Roughly concurrent to the Early Dynastic Period in Mesopotamia was the formative Old Kingdom in Egypt that permanently shaped Egypt both politically and culturally." Walton (2009:6). A 'dark period' ensued and peace was only restored during its Twelfth Dynasty. It was during this period that Egypt developed trade relationships with Syro-Palestine and Walton states that it is probably during this time period when the initial ancient Israelite patriarchs made contact with the Egyptians. During the Thirteenth Dynasty, a group known as the Hyksos eventually

gained power in Egypt and remained in power till about the mid-sixteenth century. It appears that it is soon after this period that Moses delivered the Israelites out of Egypt.

The Egyptians had their own gods and religious believes which they derived from observing the natural world. Originally, animal forms were associated with the appearance of the gods, but this gradually changed to include human attributes. As Casson (1969:71-80) explains, during history the Egyptian gods underwent a metamorphosis as the people of Egypt became more sophisticated. Initially the Gods took animal forms (zoomorphic) based on the Egyptians observation of their natural world, but as the Egyptians started to appreciate the talents and capabilities of the human being, the existing gods were given human attributes (anthropomorphic). Eventually, new gods that were introduced had full human appearances.

Furthermore, Egyptian religion was characterised by a diversity of gods. “From the beginning of their religious life to the end, the Egyptians had an abundance of gods. This was because their land always consisted basically of a conglomeration of small agricultural communities.” (Casson 1969:72). Due to this fragmented state of Egyptian society, each locality had its own gods which for the most part they maintained after being united under the reign of the pharaohs. They found interesting ways of amalgamating and joining some of the gods into families. This fragmented religious state resulted in the origins of several Egyptians creation myths, but through the ages two popular creation myths emerged, namely the creation myth of Atum and of Khepri.

In general, Egyptians seem to draw their worldview of creation from the natural cycles of the Nile River’s annual flooding. Egyptians thought of the creation of the heavens and the earth as being made out of watery chaos or Nu. Each part of nature was associated with a specific god, such as the sun (Ra), air (Shu), sky (Nut), earth (Geb) etc. The god Khnum was associated with the creation of living creatures using his “potter’s wheel”. Remarkably the creation process goes into much anatomic detail as seen from inscriptions in the Esna Temple (Aldokkan 2011). The most prominent similarity between the Egyptian general view of creation and Genesis is the concept of water. This will become clear later on in this chapter.



### 3.3.4 The Canonical Placement of Genesis and the Creation Week

“As the first book of the OT [Old Testament], Genesis provides the foundation for the Pentateuch and for the rest of Scripture” Marshall and others (1996:350). We find several main ideas originating within the creation account. The main idea which is not contested amongst Christian Theologians is the fact that God (Yahweh) created the heavens and the earth as written in Genesis 1:1. Several other theological ideas and concepts are introduced within the creation account, namely:

1. The character and nature of God
2. The purpose of creation
3. The relationship between humankind and God
4. The relationship between humankind and the rest of creation
5. The relationship between men and women
6. Etc.

The introduction of these theological ideas in the creation account within Genesis as the first book of the Bible creates a framework and foundation for a holistic understanding of theological principles and concepts in the rest of scripture. If we follow the principle of scriptural integrity and inerrancy as mentioned within the introduction of this chapter we realise that these theological ideas influence our interpretive framework and understanding for the rest of scripture.

This makes the creation account extremely influential, and depending on one's view of it, will greatly influence one's interpretation and faithful understanding for the rest of scripture. Thus the importance of Genesis and the creation account cannot be understated as the first book of the Bible and the opening narrative of scripture.

### 3.4 The Literary Context of the Creation Account

#### 3.4.1 The Genre of the Creation Account in Genesis

The debate around the classification of the creation week to a specific genre is an ongoing one amongst biblical scholars, with no signs of coming to a conclusion in the near future. The main issue here is that many people seem to believe that the classification of Genesis to a specific genre will seal their case for a specific interpretation of the creation week. That being said, I agree with Walton (2009:7) where she wrote that “literary genres have rules and conventions by which they operate. Communication is jeopardised if we do not understand the parameters of the genre of the literature we are reading.” Furthermore, she explains that “the reason why genre categories work is that they represent a consensus of expectation among the readers.” (Walton 2009:7).

The problem is that the four different theories of Christian creation attribute different genres to the creation account. There seems to be evidence and defensible academic reasoning for classifying the creation account as history, poetry, fiction, mythology and/or theological (religious) text.

Young Earth Creationists, Batten and others (2009:36-52) argue that a historical perspective and reading of the text in Genesis 1 – 11 is the correct perspective and they point to such characteristics of the text as the: Grammatical forms, text structure, verb forms and the use of the word ‘and’ when starting sentences. The latter observation is also made in the Genesis Commentary of Robert Alter (1996:xvi-xxii) in his critique of biblical translations.

Reventlow and Hoffman (2002:1-53) argues for a poetic reading of Genesis 1 and focuses their argument on the prosody characteristics, form and priestly affiliation of the text. This is supported by the Genesis Commentary of Arnold (2009:29), which states that Genesis 1 might even have been originally based on a poem and he describes the style of the text as: “lilting and graceful rhythm”.

Cotter (2003: 3-23) argues that Genesis 1 is neither history nor poetry but an unusual story or narrative and substantiates his view by analysing the plot, tension and sequence of events within the text. Referring to the Pentateuch holistically, Speiser affirms this view by saying that the “outstanding feature of this part of the Bible is its narrative content, and it is surely to its narrative material that the Pentateuch owes its universal appeal” (Speiser 1964:xviii).

Another possibility is that Genesis 1 is a myth as pointed out by Alexander and Baker (2003:166). Such a conclusion is the results of comparative studies between the Israelite creation ‘myth’ and other ancient Near Eastern ‘myths’ and worldviews found in Babylon and Egypt.

Lastly, it is arguable that the creation account is to be understood as an ethical and religious text. This is pointed out by Marshall, Packer and Wiseman (1996:239) in the New Bible Dictionary “This [biblical account of creation] must not be confused or identified with any scientific theory of origins. The purpose of the biblical doctrine, in contrast to that of scientific investigation, is ethical and religious”.

The problem when dealing with genres is that they are not easy to define and their parameters may even overlap. Walton refers to this problem when talking about the concept of mythology. She says that it is more fruitful to talk about the function of mythology rather than to argue for a formal definition of the genre due to the variety of opinions that exist on this issue. “The mythology of the ancient world encapsulated contemporary thinking about how the world worked and how it came to work that way. It features the gods prominently because the ancients found the answers to their questions about the world in the divine realm. If we describe mythology functionally in this way, we can conclude that our modern mythology is what we call science. That is our cultures way of encapsulating how the world works and how it came to work that way” (Walton 2009:9).

Walton continues to explain that our modern day worldview is based on a naturalistic, scientific orientation as oppose to the divine orientation of the ancients. Therefore, she argues that “Genesis function[ed] in Israelite society the same way

that science functions in our culture and the same way that mythology functioned in the rest of the ancient world.” (Walton 2009:9).

However, at the end of her discussion on the creation account in Genesis, it becomes evidently clear that she prefers the allocation of genre for the creation account to that of mythology. One could most probably speculate that Walton would therefore argue for a Theistic Evolution theory on creation. She concludes that ‘the seven-day creation account culminating in the divine rest should be understood as somehow parallel to the building of a temple for divine rest. This course of analogy and logic results in the understanding that Genesis 1 is framed in terms of the creation of a cosmic temple in which Yahweh takes up his repose. The seven days are comparable to seven-day temple dedications at the end of which deity takes up his rest in the temple.’ (Walton 2009:23).

Nevertheless, based on Walton’s method of reasoning comparing the functionality of mythology to modern day science, we can argue that the genre of the creation account is not the main issue, but rather how it functioned in the worldview of the ancient Israelites. Even if the creation narrative is to be considered as mythology, fiction, religious text, history or poetry, the ancient Israelites would have interpreted it as part of their worldview and therefore in some sense would have regarded it as fact. Compare this view to modern day atheists who believe in the ‘mythology’ of evolution. They understand evolution to be a theory, but believe in it as if it is fact. Without it they cannot conceptualise a holistic worldview. Such an argument can therefore reasonably be made for the creation narrative in Genesis. The ancient Israelites could have understood that the creation narrative was essentially a ‘theory’ but would have believed in it as fact.

#### 3.4.2 The Literary Structure and Flow of the Text

According to the New Bible Dictionary, it’s commonly agreed that the book of Genesis exists out of two parts of unequal size: The first part explains the primeval history and the second part records the ancestral history of Israel. (Marshall, Millard,

Packer and Wiseman 1996:350). Therefore, the creation account is contained in what is known as the primeval history.

Beyond this basic structure, the text (Genesis) seems to resist further structural analysis. Marshall and others (1996:352-353) explain that “the book can be read as a coherent whole, with detailed correspondences between its parts, but in the main this is achieved through a detailed study of its plot development and repeated themes and motifs rather than through occasional parallel or concentric structures that might occur...”. Furthermore, “...the scholarly consensus that the book’s central core is found in its divine promises and blessings is undoubtedly correct”.

Walton (2009), and Alexander and Baker (2003) also point to the source critical view of multiple authors of Genesis. According to them, this resulted in the structure of Genesis to be very fragmented and thus being the subject of little academic discussion. Additionally, they agree with Marshall and his co-writers that the coherence and theological teaching of the book is attributed to its overarching plot.

This leads us to ask the question: What is the plot of the creation account? Again Marshall and others (1996:353) explain that “the main issues that will dominate the plot of the primeval history are summarised in Genesis 1:28, with the divine blessings and commands concerning human multiplication, subjugation of the earth and dominion over the animals“. The plot of the creation week therefore indicates the worldview of the ancient Israelites concerning humankind’s relationship with the earth (nature), and humankind’s relationship with God, the Creator.

Although outside of the scope of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, it is important to understand that the book of Genesis continues to develop this relationship, God – humankind – Nature, which ultimately results in a paradoxical tension. Genesis “... produce(s) a significant theological paradox regarding the relationship between divine sovereignty and human free will... (and) affirms the necessity of holding both in a theological tension.” (Marshall and others 1996:357). It is within this tension, that the ancient Israelites came to understand their mysterious world, which included the love, grace and mercy of an almighty creative God, yet contained suffering and death as a result of human free will.

### 3.4.3 The Rhetoric Features of the Text

Five main rhetoric or repeated features are easily identifiable within the creation week narrative. They are: the use of the word 'and' at the start of sentences; the repeated phrase 'and it was evening and it was morning, (next) day'; the repeated phrases 'And God said... and God made'; the expression 'that it was good'; and finally the emphasis of completion 'so it was'.

The phrase that signifies the end of each creative section in the Genesis creation account is written as "And it was evening and it was morning, 'next' day", with 'next' being substituted each time with a chronological number providing sequential order such as first, second, third etc. This is repeated six times, with no such conclusion mentioned for the seventh day after God completed his work.

This phrase is significant for two reasons. Firstly, Young Earth Creationist believe this repeated phrase clearly indicates that the days of creation was 24 hour days, and secondly, Old Earth Creationist point to the lack of it at the end of the seventh day to suggest that the seventh day may be a longer period of time than just 24 hours.

Batten and others (2009:39) indicate that every time the words evening and morning is used elsewhere in the bible it is interpreted as ordinary days: "'Evening' and 'morning' are used together without 'day' 38 times outside Genesis 1 and it always indicates an ordinary day. 'Evening' or 'morning' are used 23 times each with 'day' outside Genesis 1 and it always means an ordinary day. And 'night' is used with 'day' 52 times and it always indicates an ordinary day

Old earth creationists such as Hugh Ross (1991:148-149) concludes that the seventh day has or had not yet ended at the time of the creation account being written. Ross quotes Hebrews 4 and Psalm 95 where it talks about the 'rest of God' which people must attempt to enter into. Concluding that the seventh day, thus might

have been a longer period of time than 24 hours he argues that the parallelism with the other six days suggest that they are therefore also longer than 24 hours.

However, in my opinion this does not make logical sense. The writer of the creation account clearly left out this phrase from the seventh day to signify that the seventh or Sabbath day was different than just an ordinary day. Possibly, an argument can be made for the seventh day being more than 24 hours, but I would suggest that the author rather intended that the reader would understand that the seventh day was special because God ordained it as holy. The focus therefore is the holiness of the Sabbath day and not necessarily to indicate that it was different in time span from the other days.

The second rhetoric feature in the creation account is the use of the word 'and' or the 'vav' at the start of Hebrew sentences which played an important role in how the Hebrew writers understood the order and chain of events. Unfortunately, modern day translators have opted in many cases to reduce or remove the pronunciations of the word 'and' at the start of sentences. This "... ignores the fact that parataxis is the essential literary vehicle of biblical narrative: it is the way the ancient Hebrew writers saw the world, linked events in it, artfully ordered it, and narrated it, and one gets a very different world if their syntax is jettisoned." ( Alter 1996:xvii)

As can be seen by referring to Annexure D at the back of this thesis, Robert Alter's translation indicates that practically every verse starts with the word 'and'. This provides the reader with a sense of speed, order and connectivity of the events. When reading the other translations provided, the lack of the word 'and' becomes evident, especially when reading the creation account aloud. Each 'and' at the start of the sentences have been highlighted in yellow within Annexure D, which provides a clearer visual presentation of the use and effect of the 'vav' or 'and' in the Hebrew writing.

The third rhetoric feature is the phrase "that it was good" which appears a total of seven times in the creation account. Thus, seven times God evaluates his creation as good. This could possibly be a reference to the number seven which in the Hebrew numeric system was allocated as the godly number, thus emphasising that

the entire creative work of God was Godly and therefore perfect. But, more importantly the emphasis of this phrase clearly indicates God's satisfaction of His creation as being good. On the last instance, God concludes it as "very good". Each phrase has been highlighted in green in the comparative table, Annexure D, at the end of this thesis for easy reference.

The fourth often repeated phrase in the creation account is "And so it was". This appears six times and normally after a sentence which started with "And God said...". This seems to illustrate the supremacy of God. God speaks and it happens. God speaks and nature responds according to the will of God. This emphasises that God is the sovereign lord over creation.

The fifth rhetorical feature is not as clearly identifiable as the ones mentioned above, but provides insight into the creative acts of God. God seems to firstly speak something into existence such as "Let there be light" then continues to assign a name or function to the new existing creation such as "God called the light Day". This pattern seems to be repeated several times. Another example is God creating the 'vault', and then later assigns the name or function 'heaven' to it. This indicates that the creation account in Genesis is clearly different from Babylonian and Egyptian creation myths, seeing that Genesis is not only concerned with assigning function to existing material objects (for the creation of order), but is concerned with the physical creation (speaking into being) of matter and material objects, after which functions are assigned.

### **3.5 The Meaning of Key Words in the Text: a Lexical Analysis**

This section is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is an area of heavily contested debate surrounding the different theories of creation. Secondly, and the reason for the first, it is this section that is very influential in how one will interpret the genre of the creation narrative. That being said, this section is also widely open to abuse using predetermined assumptions or frameworks to support one's own predetermined conclusions.



### 3.5.1 The meaning of the word 'yom'

The interpretation of the word 'yom' or 'day' is highly disputed and is of specific importance for those theories that support a literal-historic interpretation of Genesis. Basically, two different views exist. Either, the word 'day' means a 24 hour day (Young Earth Creation) or it means an unspecified period of time (Old Earth Creation).

According to Batten and others (2009:39) the word 'day' in Genesis 1 when compared to the word 'day' in other parts of scripture with the same characteristics always mean a 24 hour day. The counter argument focuses on definitions, context, grammar and other relevant passages to indicate the word 'day' should rather be interpreted as long periods of time as mentioned by Ross (1991:146-154).

Neyman (2005) illustrates that the Hebrew language is not as diverse as modern day English. The English dictionary exists of about five hundred thousand (500 000) words as compared to the ancient Hebrew dictionary that contains only about eight thousand seven hundred (8700) words. This means that several possible English words could exist for one Hebrew word. The word 'yom' or 'day' is such a word. Thus, without a context, the word 'day' has various possible meanings or possibilities of translation in scripture. These include: time, year, age, always, season, chronicles, continually, ever and evermore. The problem with providing the context for the creation account is that researcher subjectivity ultimately creeps into the contextualisation and influences the genre and worldview allocation of the creation week.

In other words, there are good linguistic and theological arguments for the interpretation of the word 'day' to represent whatever time period you want it to represent based on the predetermined framework from which the theologian or researcher operates. For this reason it is problematic to use the word 'day' to argue for either a young earth or old earth perspective of the creation account.

### 3.5.2 The meaning of the word 'Hayah' (Became vs. Was)

Some, particularly Gap Theory proponents, argue that the word 'was' or 'hayah' in Genesis 1:1 should be translated to 'became' instead. The argument is academically sound when we compare this verse to other verses that include the word 'hayah'. For examples, scripture where the word 'hayah' is translated to mean 'became' includes:

- Genesis 2:7 "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became (hayah) a living being" (NIV).
- Genesis 19:26 "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became (hayah) a pillar of salt" (NIV).
- Genesis 20:12 "Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became (hayah) my wife." (NIV).
- Genesis 21:20 "God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became (hayah) an archer." (NIV).

On the other hand, we also find other verses in the Bible where 'hayah' is translated to 'was'. Examples where the word 'hayah' is translated in the Bible to 'was' includes:

- Genesis 4:2 "And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was (hayah) a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." (KJV).
- Genesis 29:17 "Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was (hayah) beautiful" (NIV).

Without going into further technical detail we see that the translation of the word 'hayah' is depended on the context of the verse and therefore, for us to translate 'hayah' to 'became' in Genesis 1:1 we need to assume a Gap theory perspective of an original creation. Certainly there is no other grounds within the creation account of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 that suggests a pre-existing creation necessitating that 'became' is the correct translation for 'hayah' before the phrase without form and void or welter and waste as translated by Robert Alter.

### 3.6 The Original Meaning of the Text

Good biblical interpretation scholars acknowledge the existence of at least three different dimensions of scripture, namely: theological, historical and literary. These dimensions often overlap and are therefore difficult to separate resulting in different opinions and views. The theological dimension or basic theological meaning of the creation account in Genesis is not really debated amongst the various theories of Christian creation. It is the historical and literary dimensions which are heavily debated, and all sorts of literary and historical evidence are called upon to support the different views as seen in the preceding parts of this research paper.

In light of the diverse existing evidence, it is extremely problematic to determine the original historical and literary meaning of the creation account that will be convincing to the various strands of scholarly thought. The difficulty with determining the correct historical facts about the author, genre and the meaning of key words is due to the variety of evidence and scholarly opinions that exist on these topics. This unfortunately means that we are forced to conclude that the debate, opinions and evidence about the original author intended historical and literary meaning is currently inconclusive. However, we are able to explain the theological meaning of the creation account and the perceived audience understanding and interpretation of the creation account.

From the structural analysis we saw that Genesis is divided into two main literary and historical structural components namely primeval and ancestral histories respectively in Genesis 1:1 – 11:26 and Genesis 11:27 – 50:26. The primeval history reveals a universal preoccupation to establish God as the Creator, and then continues to explain how the world came to be and why and how it functions in a specific way. The primeval history starts with the creation account and concludes with the origin of various languages, resulting in the scattering of people around the earth. From the overarching plot we can thus conclude that the creation account provides the theological basis for understanding the character and nature of God, the purpose of creation, and the relationship between God, mankind and nature.

Furthermore, we can conservatively concluded that the creation account formed part of the general worldview of the ancient Israelites, irrespective of the original author intended literary and historical meaning or genre allocation of the text. This is done by looking at the function of the creation account within the ancient Israelite society as deduced from the writings of Walton discussed earlier in this chapter. In other words, despite the original author intended meaning, the Genesis creation account functioned in the Israelite society like science functions in our world today. Therefore, the creation account was most likely assumed to be a true theological, historical and literary representation of the past by the ancient Israelites.

### **3.7 Genesis 1 Summary and Commentary**

This section provides a quick summary of the events in the creation account of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 followed by a verse by verse theological commentary of the first five (5) verses of the creation account.

#### 3.7.1 Summary

Genesis 1 opens with a prelude to creation which sets the scene for the rest of the creative acts. This is followed by “ten divine commands [which] result in eight acts of creation spread over six days, so that there is a correspondence between days one to three and days four to six” (Wenham, Motyer, Carson and France 1994:59). “On the first three days God makes the scenery and sets the staging; on days 4 to 6, the living actors are put in their proper places” (Farmer 1998:362).

- The introduction or prelude to creation establishes the existence of an almighty monotheistic God, who exists outside of this world, and outside of time.
- Day one starts with the creation of light, despite the fact that God only creates the celestial bodies or agents of light on day four.

- Day two establishes the ordering (separation) of water and air, seeing that the creation of water seems to be part of the prelude.
- Day three establishes the land and seas by separation of the waters, both being created during the prelude. Also during day three, vegetation is created after the dry land was arranged.
- Day four results in the creation of the sun, moon and stars and thus the first initial elements for 'timing' and 'mechanics' needed in how we observe our world today.
- Day five results in the population of the water and sky with the creation of fish and birds.
- Day six populates the land with the creation of animals and climaxes in the creation of mankind.
- Day seven signifies the end of God's creative work by rest.
- The creation account concludes with God blessing the Sabbath day, setting an example of the relationship between work and rest for mankind.

### 3.7.2 Commentary

Due to spatial constraints it will suffice for the purpose of this chapter to provide a verse by verse exegetical commentary on only the first five verses of Genesis 1 as translated by Robert Alter.

#### 3.7.2.1 Genesis 1:1a "When God began to" (RAT)

Robert Alter translates Genesis 1:1a differently to other popular translations such as the KJV, NIV, ASV and ESV. Instead of reading "In the beginning" as with these popular translations; Robert Alter translates it as "When God began to". This alludes to a pre-existing condition which was favourable for the creation of the earth.

According to Walton the word 'beginning' (as translated in the other versions) refers to "a preliminary period of time rather than the first in a series of events" (Walton 2009:10). This is distinctly different in comparison to Egyptian creation mythology

where it appears that “beginning” refers to the start of a period rather than a preliminary period of time before creation.

According to the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture “It appears, indeed, that even before the world an order of things existed of which our mind can form an idea but of which we can say nothing... the world was preceded by a condition of things suitable for the exercise of supernatural powers, outstripping the limits of time, eternal and infinite” (Louth 2001:2). The Oxford Bible Commentary agrees, saying that Genesis 1:1 starts with “the activity of God even before the universe come into existence” (Barton and Muddiman 2000:40).

Furthermore, the Global Bible Commentary refers to this as a state of being or process, rather than a specific point in time (Patte 2004:6). The Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry states very simply that Genesis 1:1 refers to God existing “before all time and all worlds” (Church 1960:1). In other words, we understand that God existed before the creation of time, and in fact God Himself is the creator of time.

### 3.7.2.2 Genesis 1:1b “create heaven and earth” (RAT)

The word “create” in Genesis 1:1 has an ancient connotation of giving something a function and not necessarily bringing it into existence as it is in our modern day cultural perspective (Walton 2009:11). Therefore, something only existed after it received a purpose or a name. Alexander and Baker (2003:156) explain that ancient traditions normally start with a condition “devoid of order, function or purpose”. However, as seen from the fifth rhetoric feature of the creation account as mentioned under item 3.4.3 above, the Genesis creation account refers to God speaking things into physical existence and not just assigning already existing things their purpose or function. As indicated, God first speaks something into being and thereafter proceeds to give it a name or function.

In other words, God clearly created (*bara*) or brought into existence, everything (heaven and earth) out of nothing. “[He] is shown to be God and Creator and to have brought all things into being out of nothing” (Louth 2001:2).

3.7.2.3 Genesis 1:2a “And the earth was welter and waste” (RAT)

This verse illustrates that God first created the necessary matter, and then continued to arrange it in a particular order. Louth (2001:5) says “The good architect lays the foundation first and afterward, when the foundation has been laid, plots the various parts of the building, one after the other, and then adds to it the ornamentation... Scripture points out that things were first created and afterward put in order”.

Additionally, Alter (1996:3) thinks that *welter and waste* (*tohu wabohu*) seems like a form of Hebrew rhyme, the second word placed as emphasis for the first. Additionally, *welter* (*tohu*) refers to a state of emptiness with an association of a desert like state. Walton (2009:11) asserts that this desert like state is a metaphor for a situation “in which positive values such as purpose and worth is lacking”.

Walton also argues that the word “formless” in Genesis 1:2 NIV has a biblical connotation to being without purpose or lacking worth (Walton 2009:11). Therefore, this term does not necessarily refer to the physical form of the earth but rather to the non-functional state of the earth. This sentiment is supported by Alexander and Baker (2003:157) who wrote that logic and lexical analysis should dictate that ‘formless and empty’ refer to the understanding that creation was void of purpose and meaning at this early stage.

Additionally contained in this verse is the Hebrew word ‘*hayah*’ (Genesis 1:2a) and is translated by all modern translations as ‘was’ and not as ‘became’ as suggested by some scholars. Even though Genesis 1:1 alludes to a pre-existing condition before creation as indicated above, its context is that of a state of preparation and not a pre-existing creation. Therefore, ‘*hayah*’ is correctly translated as ‘was’ and not as ‘became’, even though a comparison of the word ‘*hayah*’ using other scriptures indicates that the word ‘*hayah*’ can mean either ‘was’ or ‘became’. Thus the context of Genesis 1:1 determines this distinction.

3.7.2.4 Genesis 1:2b “and darkness over the deep” (RAT)

Water and darkness are two elements that consistently appear in ancient sources to indicate a primal chaotic condition (Alexander and Baker 2003:157). However, quoting Augustine, Louth (2001:5) says that the darkness is simply the absence of light, and adds that there is a difference between physical observable light (the sun) and God’s holy spiritual light. Thus darkness here probably alludes to a state devoid of order rather than a state without God, seeing that the very next section illustrates God’s breath or spirit hovering over the face of the earth.

The deep (water) refers to the primordial water which covered or was over everything in this pre-order state of the earth. Walton (2009:13) wrote that this water “was pushed out to the edges of the cosmos” as later referred to in verse 6 and verse 7 of Genesis 1. Some scholars have speculated that these waters beneath and above the vault were used to flood the earth during the flood of Noah.

3.7.2.5 Genesis 1:2c “and God’s breath hovering over the waters” (RAT)

God’s breath should be understood to mean a concept which includes a range of meanings or definitions in modern English. Robert Alter describes this term as starting with breath, ending with spirit, and covering all other concepts such as wind in between.

Hovering has connotations in Hebrew to an “eagle fluttering over its young and so might have a connotation of parturition or nurture” (Alter 1996:3). Louth (2001:6) compares this to the actions of a hen sitting on her eggs. Thus, here the presence of God hovering over the earth alludes to the preparation of the earth to be shaped and formed, to be given order and function in the verses to follow.

3.7.2.6 Genesis 1:3 “God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light” (RAT)

The phrase “let there be” in Genesis is considered by Walton (2009:16) to refer to God prescribing its function in addition to bringing it into physical existence. Adding to this, Walter and Baker (2003:158) emphasises that this is more than merely



activating something's potential and should be seen to refer to "making into" something.

In this verse the creation of light clearly illustrates that physical light (sun) is different to the appearance or phenomena of God's holy spiritual light. Church (1960:2) wrote that physical light was created for the purpose of bringing into visibility the handiwork of God to all creation. Walton (2009:16) affirms this by saying that the concept of "light" must not be confused with our modern day perspective of physical molecules, but must be understood as a phenomenon. "Here in Genesis, light is identified with the alternating periods of day and night. Since light is called 'day' and darkness is call 'night,' the text indicates that the functional focus is time". Furthermore, in Genesis the light is also seen as relieving the darkness, but still in the context of time (Alexander and Baker 2003:158).

Furthermore, this verse illustrates the authority of God. He willed, said, and instantly brought about light. There is clearly a difference between the source of this light and the light produced by the sun and the stars seeing that the latter were only created on the fourth day. The International Bible Commentary puts it this way by saying "creation opens with the affirmation that God did not have to 'make' the universe by hand as a statue is made, but 'created' (Hebrew bara) it by the unique divine power to will something and thereby achieve it" (Farmer 1998:361).

Another observation by Barton and Muddiman (2000:43) indicates that God's commands were directed at the existing (welter and waste) state of creation. Thus in His command, God gave an instruction to the existing physical matter to conform to the will of God.

3.7.2.7 Genesis 1:4 "And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness" (RAT)

This verse contains the first of seven phrases in the creation account where God evaluates His handiwork and exclaims "that it was good". This "affirms the intrinsic goodness of the creation and its Creator" (Wenham and others 1994:60).

Additionally, it's important to understand that this phrase conveys God's approval of His work, rather than an unexpected joy (Louth 2001:8).

As for the existence of darkness, God did not create the darkness, but he created a division between light and darkness. Darkness is just the absence of light. Therefore, darkness is not a created thing, but for the purpose of distinction between the created (light) and the not created (darkness), God continues to assign them names in the next verse.

*3.7.2.8 Genesis 1:5 "And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And it was evening and it was morning, first day." (RAT)*

This verse contains the first of six phrases in the creation account concluding the specific time period or completed work of creation, namely: "And it was evening and it was morning, first day". Despite the fact that different opinions exist regarding the length of time indicated by this phrase, its overarching theme results in God completing His work in six days and resting on the seventh, is clearly placed as an example for humankind to follow. In other words, people must rest one in seven days.

The timing, evening to morning, as oppose to morning to evening, also sets the clock cycle indicating that work is to be done during the day time. Furthermore, the absence of the sun, moon and stars do not mean that this first day is necessarily different or similar in time to the other days after these celestial bodies were created. However, from the parallelism between the phrases "it was evening and it was morning, X day" we may assume that they are similar in nature rather than different.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In concluding this biblical exegetical chapter it will be good to take stock of the main key items revealed by the above discussions.

3.8.1 Summary

1. Modern English Bible translations explain, rather than represent Hebrew scripture and thus are inadequate to fully understand the creation account in Genesis.
2. The creation account is geographically situated in Mesopotamia (Iraq).
3. Different opinions regarding the authorship of Genesis and the creation account exist. The two main competing views identify Moses and/or the Priestly source as possible authors.
4. Ancient cultures were more concerned with the creation of universal order than the creation of physical matter or objects.
5. The cohesive nature of Genesis and the creation account is remarkable against the background of multiple amalgamated Egyptian and Babylonian polytheistic religious traditions.
6. Genesis provides the foundation for the Pentateuch and the rest of the Bible, thus influencing our understanding of the rest of scripture.
7. The creation account contains evidence supporting all the various interpretations such as literal-historical, metaphorical, poetry and/or mythology.
8. The creation account forms part of the Primeval History.
9. Genesis overarching plot provides coherency to the entire book.
10. The lack of “evening and morning” after the seventh day indicates the special and holy nature of the day and not necessarily that it is a longer day.
11. “And” at the start of sentences provides an aspect of speed to the reading of the text.
12. “That it was good” is mentioned seven times, probably signifying the godly and perfect nature of creation before the fall.
13. The creation account is clearly preoccupied with physical creation (from nothing to matter) and not just assigning function or creating order.
14. Evidence for the word “day” is inconclusive. “Day” could mean a variety of different time periods.
15. The creation account itself provides no context for “hayah” to be translated as “became”.

16. Currently, the debate about the literary and historical dimensions of the creation account is inconclusive.
17. The main plot and theological intended meaning of the creation account can be summarised as explaining the relationship between God, mankind and creation.
18. The creation account probably functioned as a true representation of the past, despite its literary genre in the minds of the ancient Israelites.

### 3.8.2 Final Remarks

In closing it should be said that Christians can truly admire the work in Genesis. When comparing it to other creation myths we clearly see that Egyptian and Mesopotamian creation myths were authored by human beings through witnessing and observing their natural environment. The many fragmented versions of creation from these cultures serve as evidence for such a conclusion. However, the ancient Israelite creation account has a strong cohesive structure due to its overarching plot. This arguably proves that the ancient Israelite creation account is more than just a mere human inspired creation myth derived from observing the natural environment.

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## Chapter 4

### 4. THE THEORIES' UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

(Assumption Analysis)

#### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters revealed that the two most prominent differences which exist between the different theories are the issues of genre classification and time allocation in the creation account. In light of this finding, the theological principles (meta-theoretical frameworks) are discussed to determine if they dictate a specific genre classification or timeframe allocation to the creation account in Genesis.

Furthermore, this chapter builds on the discussions from the preceding chapters by highlighting some problematic assumptions of the four theories in an attempt to unveil the weaknesses or difficulties faced by the different theories. The assumptions highlighted are not to be seen as an exhaustive list, but serves as an indication of the various difficulties derived from the assumptions underlying the theories.

The discussions in this chapter clearly reveal that all the theories have difficulties in explaining certain theological issues due to their assumptions. But, before we start discussing the various theories at hand, it's important to take note of a few basic concepts of theory construction.

## 4.2 Theory Construction

Theory construction is similar to the concept of building a house. The main features such as the walls, doors, windows and roof are clearly visible, but the foundation which supports the entire house is hidden from plain sight. These foundations on which theories are built are the assumptions or presuppositions of the theories, consisting of elements which are not 'a matter of fact', but presumed. These are sometime referred to as axioms or generally accepted truths.

Three basic aspects of building such a house or theory must be kept in mind as we discuss the assumptions of the various theories, namely perspectives; probability; and circular reasoning.

Firstly, all theories are created from a researcher specific perspective. This perspective is filled with a variety of presuppositions or pre-assumptions. Vyhmeister says that "a presupposition is a basic understanding that undergirds our thinking on a given topic. Sometimes presuppositions are also called 'assumptions,' in other words, what we take for granted. Such a presupposition appears in Hebrews 11:6, 'Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists.' Attempting to approach God without believing in God's existence makes no sense!" (Vyhmeister 2001:43).

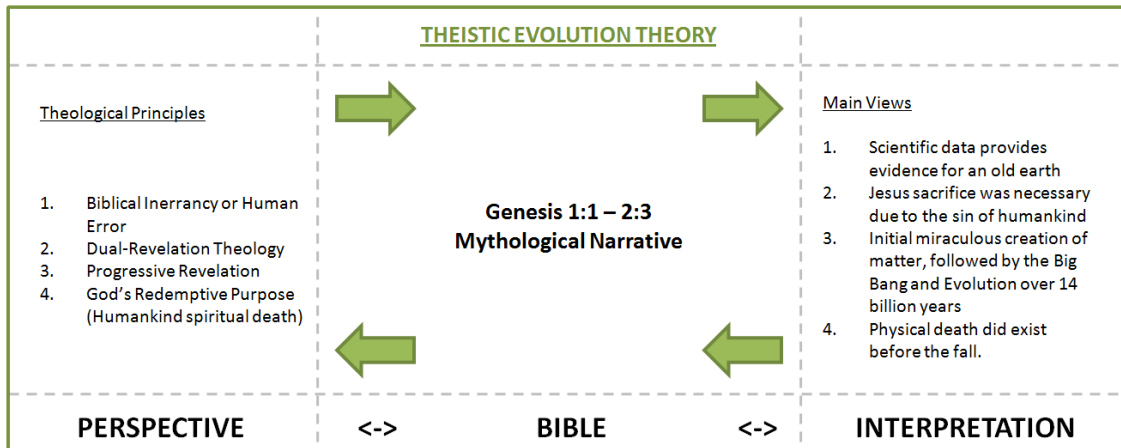
Secondly, after the initial theory is constructed (sometimes called a hypothesis), the researcher sets out to establish the probability of the theory by collecting data. In its raw form data is objective, but the interpretation of data is subjective due to the researcher's perspective. In the preceding chapters, the main perspectives of the various creation theories were exposed as the meta-theoretical frameworks or theological principles.

History 101 students are taught that there is a real difference between the past and history. The past is what actually happened and history is our interpretive understanding of the past. This understanding is influenced by a variety of assumptions in the perspective of the researcher at the time of trying to explain the past. Therefore, Historians work in a highly theoretical or presumptuous

environment. What we are attempting with explaining the creation of the universe is the same as Historians trying to explain the past. The difficulty is that we have no human eyewitness accounts. The only “witness” we have is biblical scripture and other thoughts and opinions about the beginning of the world from various other religious sources, including ‘science’. This data must therefore be interpreted by the researcher through a subjective perspective, thus resulting in different theories. Researcher subjectivity is therefore a very challenging problem, especially in trying to understand the creation of the earth as contained in Genesis.

Theory construction is also circular in nature. The researcher formulates a theory (main views) by interpreting data (biblical scripture) through a specific perspective. Additional data is continuously collected to test the theory. If the data does not fit the theory it results in the theory being adapted or abandoned, but if the data fits it is used as evidence for the probability of the theory.

During the above mentioned process, there’s a circular reinforcement that happens in the mind of the researcher. His perspective influences the interpretation of the data, and in turn the interpreted data influences the researcher’s perspective. This circular reasoning is constantly repeated. Sometimes, it becomes problematic to separate the researcher’s perspective from the theory. This concept is very important to understand seeing that it explains the dynamic nature of the four currently popular Christian creation theories. For example, the circular reasoning of the Theistic Evolution theory or Theistic Evolution perspective might look something like this:



Finally, a basic concept within the social sciences which is true of theological research as well is the concept of probability. Because theory construction is a process highly influenced by perspective and assumptions, it is in fact impossible for any theory to claim to be true, thus it's established as a theory. Theories can only claim to have a greater probability of being correct than others.

By keeping these basic concepts of theory construction in mind, we can continue to discuss the assumption difficulties of the various theories. There are some assumptions which are common to the different theories. These are discussed first, followed by a look at some of the difficulties with theory specific assumptions.

### **4.3 Common Assumptions of the various Theories**

#### **4.3.1 Biblical Inerrancy**

With the exception of some proponents holding to the theory of Theistic Evolution, the basic principle of Biblical Inerrancy is accepted by all of the theories discussed in this thesis. In its basic form, Biblical Inerrancy is the belief that the Bible is entirely inerrant and therefore do not contain any errors. Scripture referring to the holy and inspired word of God, such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17, is used to substantiate this assumption.

The opposite of such a belief is a humanistic interpretation of scripture. This assumption, as held by some TE proponent's, claims that even though the Word was Godly inspired and Godly revealed, it was communicated to, and written down by "limited" human beings. Thus, this view allows for certain biblical scripture to be viewed as 'faulty' by placing the responsibility for the mistakes on human error and not on God. The difficulty with this view is that it can erode away the authority of scripture as a whole.



The above will inevitably lead to the question: "On what basis do we accept any biblical truths if we reject certain passages?" The framework for acceptance or rejection in such a view becomes an entirely subjective matter determined by the individual's interpretive framework. Therefore, such a view becomes critical of all scripture and literally provides a very shaky theological foundation.

What we need to ask is: "Does the principle or axiom of Biblical Inerrancy dictate a specific genre allocation to the creation account?" The answer is, no. Biblical Inerrancy in itself does not dictate a literal-historical-, literal-metaphorical- or mythological perspective or any genre for that matter, due to the fact that the Bible consists out of many different books, which consists of a variety of genres emphasising the different dimensions of scripture.

Proper biblical analyses recognise that there are different dimensions or components to biblical scripture. Each passage in scripture contains at least three different dimensions, namely literary, historical and theological dimensions. For example, the book of Psalms is classified as poetry and songs, and not as a literal-historical narrative. The purpose of the book of Psalms is to reveal the authors worship and praise to God and not to convey literal history. But, just because it is classified as poetic scripture does not mean it is in anyway filled with errors.

The above paragraph indicates that the purpose of scripture 'protects' the integrity of scripture. The possible allocation of the creation account as poetry, myth or metaphor does therefore not directly contradict the principle of Biblical Inerrancy. In other words, the principle of Biblical Inerrancy could stand firm if any of the above mentioned genres are assigned to the creation account and therefore this principle in itself does not dictate the allocation of any genre to Genesis 1:1-2:3. In other words, it is a logical fallacy to claim that Biblical Inerrancy is compromised by allocating a specific genre to the creation account.

The next question we must ask is: "Does the principle of Biblical Inerrancy dictate a specific timeframe allocation to the creation account in Genesis?" The objective answer should be "not necessarily", but it does provide a good argument.

Proponents supporting a liter-historical view of the creation account argue that Jesus and New Testament authors referred to the creation account as if it was a recent event by saying that humankind (Adam) was present since the beginning of creation. Biblical scripture such as Mark 10:6 “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female’” (NIV) is used to argue this point. Emphasis is placed on the issue of time, humankind being present since the beginning.

In my opinion this is a strong argument but is not without some doubt, seeing that the aspect of time can possibly be absorbed or interpreted within old earth theories by viewing the time element ‘beginning’ against scripture explaining that our sense of time is different to that of God’s time. Examples include:

- 2 Peter 3:8-9 “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” (NIV)
- Psalms 90:4 “A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night” (NIV)

In other words, if time is irrelevant to God, it could reasonably be argued that Adam and Eve were there since the beginning as seen from God’s perspective. Therefore, the principle of Biblical Inerrancy does not necessarily dictate a specific timeframe to the creation account and could logically be defended if a recent or old age is allocated to the creation account.

### 4.3.2 Goodness of God Principle

Does the Goodness of God principle dictate a specific genre classification to the creation account?

Firstly, the Goodness of God principle is an interpretation of scripture that believes God’s character to be a loving God who only do’s good, creates good and sustains good things. This view of God creates certain theological “boundaries” or “limitations” on the actions which can be associated with God from a human perspective.

Because God hates sin and is inherently good, our perspective of Him can therefore not be associated with actions that's considered evil. Additionally, the goodness of God principle is also argued as evidence that God would not purposefully lie to, or deceive us.

Both young- and old earth creation theories use the Goodness of God principle as evidence to support their theories. Hugh Ross (1991:151) refers to verses such as Psalm 119:160, Isaiah 45:19 and Titus 1:2 which declare that God is truthful and does not mislead. This is interpreted to refer to both His words (scripture) and deeds (works) from an old earth perspective.

The main interpretive difference between young- and old earth theories of this principle is its applicability to both scripture and creation. YEC theory holds to an initial creation which was truthful in nature, but was corrupted after the fall. Therefore, the fallen creation cannot be trusted to reveal the truth about the original creation. This assumption is crucial to the debate between the theories because it essentially will lead to the acceptance or rejection of mainstream scientific opinions about the old age of the earth. This will be discussed further below when considering special creation versus general revelation.

A common identifiable sub-problem to the Goodness of God principle is that of the "appearance of age". This idea was first published by Philip Gosse in 1857 (Ross 2001:143) and promotes the theory that God possibly could have created things to appear older than what they actually are. This theory is rejected by many on a simple interpretation of the goodness of God principle, and therefore assumes that God would not have created things with an appearance of age, because He would then be deceiving us.

However, I would caution to reject the above mentioned theory for this reason alone, because a straight forward reading of scripture in Geneses 1:27-29 seems to indicate that Adam and Eve were not created as newly born babies but as adults, thus indicating that they were older than their actual biological age This must cause us to question our understanding of the goodness of God principle. Possibly, what we associated with good is not the same as what God associates with good?

Furthermore, this principle is irrelevant in deducing a specific timeframe to the creation account. God will remain good from a human perspective whether the earth is old or young, thus this principle cannot be used to dictate a timeframe allocation to creation.

### 4.3.3 Special Revelation vs. General Revelation

Each theory has a different view on the authority of scripture. Do these views dictate the respective genre classification and timeframe allocation of the creation account?

Firstly, the principle of Supreme Scriptural Revelation assumes that special revelation (through the Holy Spirit) takes supreme or absolute authority over general revelation (observation of nature). What this means is that when we read the Bible and discover scripture that seems to contradict our knowledge of the natural world, which we gathered based on observation, we should assume that our natural observations are incorrect and that the teaching of scripture should take authority on the matter at hand.

The above mentioned principle in itself is based on an assumption that our understanding and interpretation of scripture is always correct. However, from historical experience we know that human beings make terrible interpretive mistakes when it comes to the reading of scripture. We just need to look back a little more than a decade within the borders of our own country (South Africa) and see how some used Biblical scripture to support the inhumane political decisions of Apartheid and segregation. Therefore, humankind's own past experience serves as proof that we are limited in ability to understand and interpret scripture. Thus a strong argument can be made for the use of special and general revelation on equal footing. Arguably, all scriptural understanding and interpretation are subjective notions and therefore invoking the principle of Supreme Revelation could in actual fact be very hazardous. Thus, the principle of Supreme Scriptural Revelation does not necessarily dictate a literal-historical perspective of the creation account, seeing that the interpretation of the relevant scriptures is a subjective matter.

The same argument can be put forward for the principle of Dual-Revelation. This principle puts general revelation on the same footing as special revelation and assumes that we are able to accurately interpret our environment through general revelation. From past experience we are also forced to ask: "Can we trust our interpretation of general revelation without scripture or special revelation?"

Furthermore, general revelation is based on current scientific principles, such as timing and mechanics. From the biblical exegesis we know that the sun, moon and stars required for timing and mechanics were only created on day four. Thus, if one were to argue that the creation account has some historical accuracy, it would mean that timing and mechanics were only put in motion after day four. Thus the natural world at one point was not sustained by natural laws found in general revelation. If this is true, it could affirm that special revelation should take preference over general revelation.

Taking into account these aspects of special- and general revelation, it is difficult to conclude that they dictate any genre classification or timeframe allocation to the creation account on their own merit. It seems that the acceptance of Supreme Scriptural Revelation or Dual-Revelation principles is a completely subjective matter in the mind and faith of the believer due to the various assumptions that underpins this principle.

### 4.3.4 God's Redemptive Purpose

The principle of God's Redemptive Purpose provides a strong argument for a literal-historical interpretation of the creation account when combined with the principle of Supreme Scriptural Revelation. However, it provides an equally strong argument for a liter-metaphorical or mythological interpretation of the creation account when combined with the principle of Dual-Revelation.

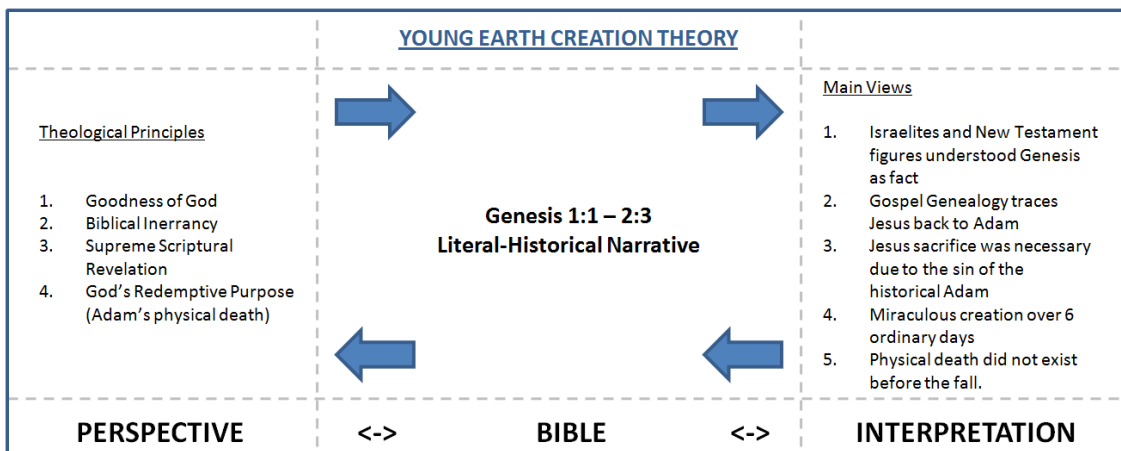
This principle states that sin entered the world through the sin of man (Adam) which resulted in the curse of creation. Mankind was saved from eternal death, brought

about by the curse, through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ whose human ancestry is traced back to Adam in the Bible. However, the question here is, did the fall cause the physical- or spiritual death (fall) of mankind? Theories that hold scripture in higher authority assume a physical death of mankind, while theories that hold to dual-revelation assume a spiritual death of mankind.

From the preceding chapters we saw that biblical scripture can be interpreted to support both these views. Thus, either option is clearly an assumption and cannot be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

#### 4.4 Difficulties with Young Earth Creation

To recap, Young Earth Creation (YEC) operates within a perspective consisting of the Goodness of God Principle, Biblical Inerrancy, Supreme Scriptural Revelation and God's Redemptive Purpose. Its main views include a Literal-Historical interpretation of the creation account, a miraculous creation during six calendar days, and the non-existence of physical death before the Fall. Thus, the proposed theory and circular reasoning of young earth proponents represent something like this:



YEC proponents emphasises that historical evidence proves that the ancient Israelites, New Testament figures (including Jesus), early church fathers, reformers

and most of the Western World believed in a recent creation and considered the creation account to be historically accurate. As seen from the preceding chapters, this thesis supports this view. However, this cannot be used to substantiate that a literal-historical interpretation is the correct view of the creation account beyond reasonable doubt.

The underlying assumption from the above is that the New Testament authors would have revealed the old age of the earth within their writings rather than have affirmed a young age framework. The fallacy in assuming this is that we might overemphasise the importance of the historical dimension of scripture over the theological dimension of scripture. In other words, the authors might have entertained a young earth view, seeing that it was the dominant view of the time, in order to get the higher priority theological message across. Imagine, if the authors advocated an old earth view, they probably would have been labeled as 'insane' by their initial audience and thus it would have negatively impacted their ministry and spreading of the gospel.

Furthermore, YEC proponents assume that God miraculously sustained creation before the creation of the sun, moon and stars which provides the mechanics and timing in nature as we observe the world today. There is currently no additional method of proving this assumption besides for the face value reading of Genesis 1 and some highly interpretive scripture in Revelations.

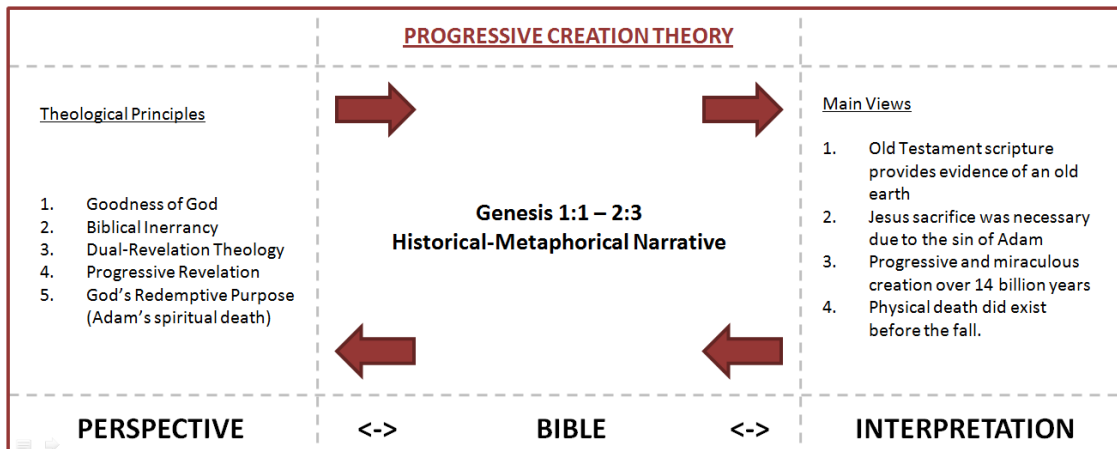
Lastly, YEC assumes that physical death, pain and suffering are bad things not to be associated with a good God. This assumption is problematic to defend against the doctrine of an all knowing omniscient God as written in verses such as Job 37:16 and Psalms 147:5. Furthermore, it is arguable that physical death and suffering may have a good purpose as pointed out by Ross (1991:174) in the following two statements:

- "God gave us physical death so that we might have the possibility of being rescued from spiritual death (Genesis 3:22-24)"
- "Suffering restrains us, keeping us from committing evil (Hebrews 12:5-13)"

Therefore, YEC clearly faces theological difficulties due to its assumptions, thus the theory in its entirety should not be just taken at face value but critically scrutinized against the theological convictions of the individual believer. For example, if the individual believer does not agree with the proposed assumption that physical death is a bad thing; the believer will have difficulty in supporting a young earth theory within their individual worldview.

#### 4.5 Difficulties with Progressive Creation

To recap, Progressive Creation (PC) operates within a perspective consisting of the Goodness of God Principle, Biblical Inerrancy, Dual-Revelation Theology, Progressive Revelation, and God's Redemptive Purpose. Its main views include a Historical-Metaphorical perspective of the creation account, a progressive and miraculous creation over 14 billion years, and the existence of physical death before the Fall. Thus, the proposed theory and circular reasoning of Progressive Creation proponents represent something like this:



Two key assumptions of Progressive Creation which are helpful to highlight is the assumption of natural mechanical processes and overlapping creation days.



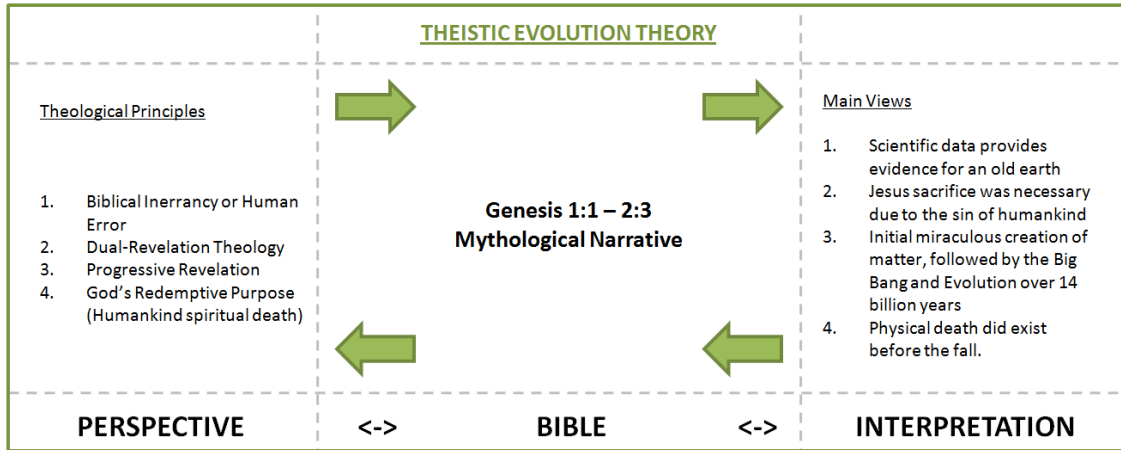
Firstly, PC assumes that creation required mechanics and timing to sustain itself since the start of the creation process. This assumption is based on the creation process, referred to by proponents as ordinary providence. This assumes a chronological evolution of creation that needed to be sustained through natural laws since the beginning. Basically, this is the opposite view to Young Earth Creation discussed above who assumes God miraculously sustained creation until at least day four with the creation of the sun, moon and stars.

Secondly, PC proponents assume overlapping days of creation, attempting to align itself with the timeframe of the theory of evolution. However, this view is problematic to reconcile with the theory of evolution, due to differences in the order of the proposed secular evolution theory and the proposed order in Genesis.

Combined with the discussion under the common assumptions, the above difficulties highlight that PC theory cannot be taken at face value to be the best theory. PC is clearly based on disputable assumptions and thus the Christian individual should critically compare the theories' assumptions with the existing theological convictions of the individual.

### **4.6 Difficulties with Theistic Evolution**

To recap, Theistic Evolution (TE) operates within a perspective consisting of different opinions regarding Biblical Inerrancy (Inerrancy or Human Error), Dual-Revelation Theology with an emphasis on Science, Progressive Revelation, and God's Redemptive Purpose. Its main views include a Mythological perspective of the creation account, an initial miraculous creation of matter followed thereafter by natural creation over 14 billion years, and the existence of physical death before the fall. Thus, the proposed theory and circular reasoning of Theistic Evolution proponents represent something like this:



Theistic Evolution operates from the basic assumption that modern mainstream scientific conclusions are accurate and therefore can be trusted to reveal information about the age of the earth. Thus an old age framework as proposed by science is used as the perspective through which the creation account in Genesis should be viewed. This is probably the biggest assumption on which this theory is build and places a tremendous amount of faith in modern day science.

The reader should understand the difference between natural scientific research and social or humanity scientific research. Science in the basic natural sense has much authority by studying the current observable world. However, once you take data from the current world and use it to make conclusions about the past it is no longer supported by hard facts but by a combination of assumptions and facts. An example of this is the scientific dating methods that assume a constant rate of decay or loss in certain elements, but in actual fact it is impossible to state with absolute certainty that in the past the rate of decay or loss of these elements were the same as the present.

The theory of evolution assumes that the current observable natural world functions the same way today as it did in the past. This is necessary to assume the constant and gradual change needed for the theory of evolution to work. However, scripturally we read of numerous changes after the fall of the 'very good' creation of God. These changes appeared to be physical changes to creation. Therefore an argument could be made for an original 'perfect' earth that physically changed due to the fall as

promoted by alternative theories. If this is true, modern scientific conclusions cannot be trusted to provide an accurate description of the past.

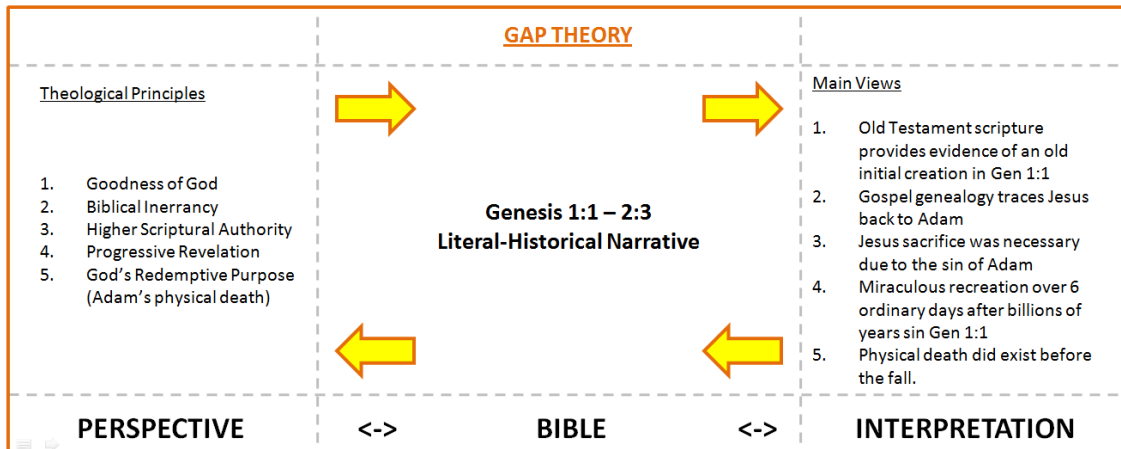
An old but still relevant philosophical approach to the search for true knowledge was argued by the well know philosopher René Descartes who lived during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He argued that true knowledge could only be gained through logical reasoning, due to the ability of our own senses to fool us. He offered basic explanations for this perspective such as when spotting a toad from afar, upon closer inspection it turned out to be a leaf. Therefore, he concluded that we cannot expect our senses to always provide us with accurate knowledge, due to this limitation that our own senses sometimes deceive us.

Based on this philosophical view one could argue that God did not create the physical world to deceive us, but it's our own limiting senses or interpretational ability that causes us to interpret information incorrectly. Now consider, at its roots the scientific method is based on observation. Thus, the scientific method itself is based on the assumption that we can acquire true knowledge from observation.

Therefore, we see that TE is based on various assumptions that need to be critically scrutinized by the individual believer against his or her own personal theological convictions before incorporating it into their worldview.

### **4.7 Difficulties with the GAP Theory**

To recap, the Gap Theory (GT) operates within a perspective consisting of the Goodness of God Principle, Biblical Inerrancy, Higher Scriptural Authority, Progressive Revelation and God's Redemptive Purpose. Its main views include a Literal-Historical perspective of what is viewed as a re-creation account, a miraculous initial creation almost 14 billion years ago which was destroyed by Lucifer's flood, followed by a six ordinary day restoration of the earth, and the existence of physical death before the Fall. Thus, the proposed theory and circular reasoning of Gap Theory proponents represent something like his:



Besides for the Gap theories obvious assumption of the gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 as pointed out in chapter three of this thesis, it has other similar assumptions contributed to YEC. This is due to the literal-historical interpretive perspective assigned to the creation account, similar to YEC.

The assumptions of physical death, seen as bad for humankind; as well as the assumption that a chronological mechanical process was not necessary for God to have created the earth is shared with YEC.

Again, the individual Christian believer should take note of these assumptions and carefully scrutinize them against his or her own theological convictions to avoid being faced with a theological intellectual dead-end.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the main assumptions of the various theories of Christian creation. This resulted in achieving two things. Firstly, it proves that all the theories have underlying assumptions on which they are built and therefore none of the theories can claim to be the absolute truth. Secondly, it provides the reader with a basic understanding of the underlying assumptions which

will assist them in deciding which theory is most compatible with the individual theological convictions of the believer.

In concluding this chapter it will be good to summarise the main findings of this chapter followed by a few final remarks.

#### 4.8.1 Summary

1. Theory construction is influenced by the researcher's perspective.
2. Biblical Inerrancy does not dictate a specific genre allocation or timeframe allocation to the creation account.
3. The Goodness of God principle does not dictate a specific genre allocation or timeframe allocation to the creation account.
4. The debate about special revelation versus general revelation is subjective in nature; both sides being build on various assumptions.
5. The debate concerning physical- versus spiritual death as part of God's Redemptive Purpose is also a subjective conviction.
6. YEC assumes that New Testament authors agreed with a young earth perspective; and assumes that God miraculously sustained the process of creation till at least day four; and assumes that physical death and suffering are bad things.
7. PC assumes that the days of creation represent overlapping time periods; and assumes that God's method of creation followed a mechanical chronological order that sustained itself through ordinary providence.
8. TE assumes that modern mainstream scientific assumptions are accurate about the past.
9. GT assumes that physical death and suffering are considered bad for humankind, and also assumes that a mechanical creative process was not necessary for God to have created the universe.

#### 4.8.2 Final Remarks

As seen from the above discussion, the two most influential theological principles in shaping the direction or perspective of the different Christian creation theories are the issues of, special revelation versus general revelation and physical death versus spiritual death as part of God's Redemptive purpose.

It is also clear from the above discussion that assumptions not only provide the foundational aspect for the various theories but effectively permeates through the strain of thought of the various theories. These assumptions are not beyond reasonable doubt and can be questioned. Therefore, all the theories have difficulties in explaining certain theological questions and thus will continue to be adapted and changed. Hopefully in the future new data and understanding will result in theological, historical and literary clarity on these assumptions and so doing will take us closer to the truth.

If a Christian believer wants to side with a specific theory, I would suggest scrutinizing the underlying assumptions of each theory against the personal theological convictions of the individual believer. This will ensure that the specific theory chosen will be the closest match to the personal theological convictions of the individual.

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## **Chapter 5**

### **5. CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The above thesis established a holistic theological contextual understanding of the currently popular Christian creation theories. Four currently popular theories were identified, namely: Young Earth Creation, Progressive Creation, Theistic Evolution, and the Gap Theory. The main principles and views of each theory were introduced through a comprehensive but selective literature review. This was followed by a biblical exegesis of the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 and lastly, the principles and views of the theories were discussed against the findings of the biblical exegesis, highlighting their presuppositions and proving the reader with an indication of the probability of each theory.

What follows are the main research findings of this thesis and the application of the creation account on modern Christianity. Additionally, a few remarks are made about possible future research opportunities followed by a brief conclusion.

#### **5.2 Research Findings**

The following seven (7) key research findings about the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 are put forward after considering the information gathered as described in the preceding chapters of this thesis:

1. The literature review revealed distinct similarities and parallels between the theological principles or meta-theoretical frameworks of the different theories. The main theological principles employed by the different theories collectively are: the Goodness of God; Biblical Inerrancy; General and Special Revelation; Progressive Revelation; and God's Redemptive Purpose. What this demonstrated is that the theories have more things in common, than differences.
2. There are two (2) prominent differences between the theological principles of the various theories which causes the main differences in the interpretive frameworks:

The first is the relationship between General and Special Revelation. Young Earth Creation and the Gap Theory elevate scripture or special revelation in higher authority than nature or general revelation, whereas Progressive Creation and Theistic Evolution put scripture and nature or special and general revelation on equal footing. This significantly influences the perspective through which the different proponents interpret modern mainstream scientific data and findings.

The second is the physical death versus spiritual death of Adam as part of God's Redemptive purpose. Young Earth Creation and the Gap Theory promote the physical death and redemption of Adam and humankind through Jesus Christ, while Progressive Creation and Theistic Evolution promote the spiritual death and redemption of 'Adam' and humankind through Jesus Christ. This difference impacts the literary genre allocation of the creation account in the different theories.

3. What is very interesting to note, is that each of the four theories operate from a historical victimisation contextual perspective. All of them seem to have the same goal, to protect and affirm the faith of Christians in the Bible. Each blames the other for discrediting faith in scripture in some way.
4. The few existing differences between the theological principles of the various theories (as just mentioned) causes them to deduce two major views of the creation account separating them from each other.



The first being the issue of genre allocation and the second being the issue of time allocation to the creation account. Young Earth Creation allocates a timeframe of about 6000 years to the origins of creation through the lenses of a literal-historical perspective of the creation account, while Progressive Creation look at the creation account through a literal-metaphorical perspective and allocates a timeframe of 14 billion years. Similarly, Theistic evolution and the Gap Theory allocate a timeframe of 14 billion years but respectively look through a mythological and literal-historical perspectives at the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.

5. The biblical exegesis revealed that the literary evidence used by the different theories to determine the genre classification of the text are inconclusive at this time and therefore concludes that the exact genre allocation for the creation account, as the author intended, is currently inconclusive.

However, this thesis argues that the creation account functioned in the worldview of the biblical audience (ancient Israelites) like science functions in our modern worldview today. Thus it is a conclusion of this thesis that despite the intended genre allocation of the author for the creation account, the ancient Israelites believed the creation account to represent a literal-historical event.

6. Even though the literary allocation and ‘historical’ nature of the author-intended meaning is inconclusive, proponents are mostly in agreement about the theological intended meaning of the creation account. From the biblical exegesis of the plot we can understand that the author intended to convey the intended relationship between God, mankind and nature within the creation account.

Additionally, Christians can understand that the divine authority of the Israelite and therefore biblical creation account is demonstrated in the overarching cohesive structure of Genesis. This becomes evident when comparing it to the creation accounts and religious fragmented and diverse views of competing ancient religions such as in the Egyptian and Babylonian religions.

7. Finally, given the variety of assumptions and inconclusiveness of large pieces of the Christian creation puzzle, none of the above theories can in fact claim to be the absolute truth. Therefore, it's the conclusion of this thesis that all four views are valuable contributions to the search for truth and knowledge in understanding exactly what the author's intention was with writing the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, and thus understanding exactly how God created the universe.

### **5.3 The Application for Modern Christians**

In chapter one of this thesis it was indicated that the existence of several popular Christian creation theories may create problems for Christians to create a healthy Christian worldview. To alleviate this possibility, it's the recommendation of this thesis that Christians should come to an understanding that the current debate concerning the literary genre and historical accuracy of the creation account is inconclusive, but certainty concerning the theological meaning of the creation account can be assured. Thus, Christians can build their faith on this solid theological foundation in anticipation for the truth about the literary and historical dimensions of the creation account to be revealed.

Furthermore, Christians can take comfort in the fact that the theological message of the biblical creation account is more than just a man made narrative. This is seen when comparing its cohesive nature against Egyptian and Babylonian religious views of more or less the same time period which are extremely diverse and thus clearly the origin of manmade ideas.

Additionally, by educating themselves about the different existing theories of Christian creation and their foundational principles, Christians will avoid falling into the trap of combining incompatible principles and views in trying to explain the creation account to others and in so doing unknowingly discrediting faith and believability in the Bible.

#### **5.4 Possible Further Research**

The inconclusive finding regarding the author intended literary genre of the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 indicate that further research needs to be done as to the literary nature of the creation account. In other words, probably the main reasons for the existence of different creation theories is that there is currently no conclusive or water tight evidence that indicate beyond any reasonable doubt the literary genre allocation of the creation account. Therefore, further research is needed regarding the literary genre allocation of the creation account.

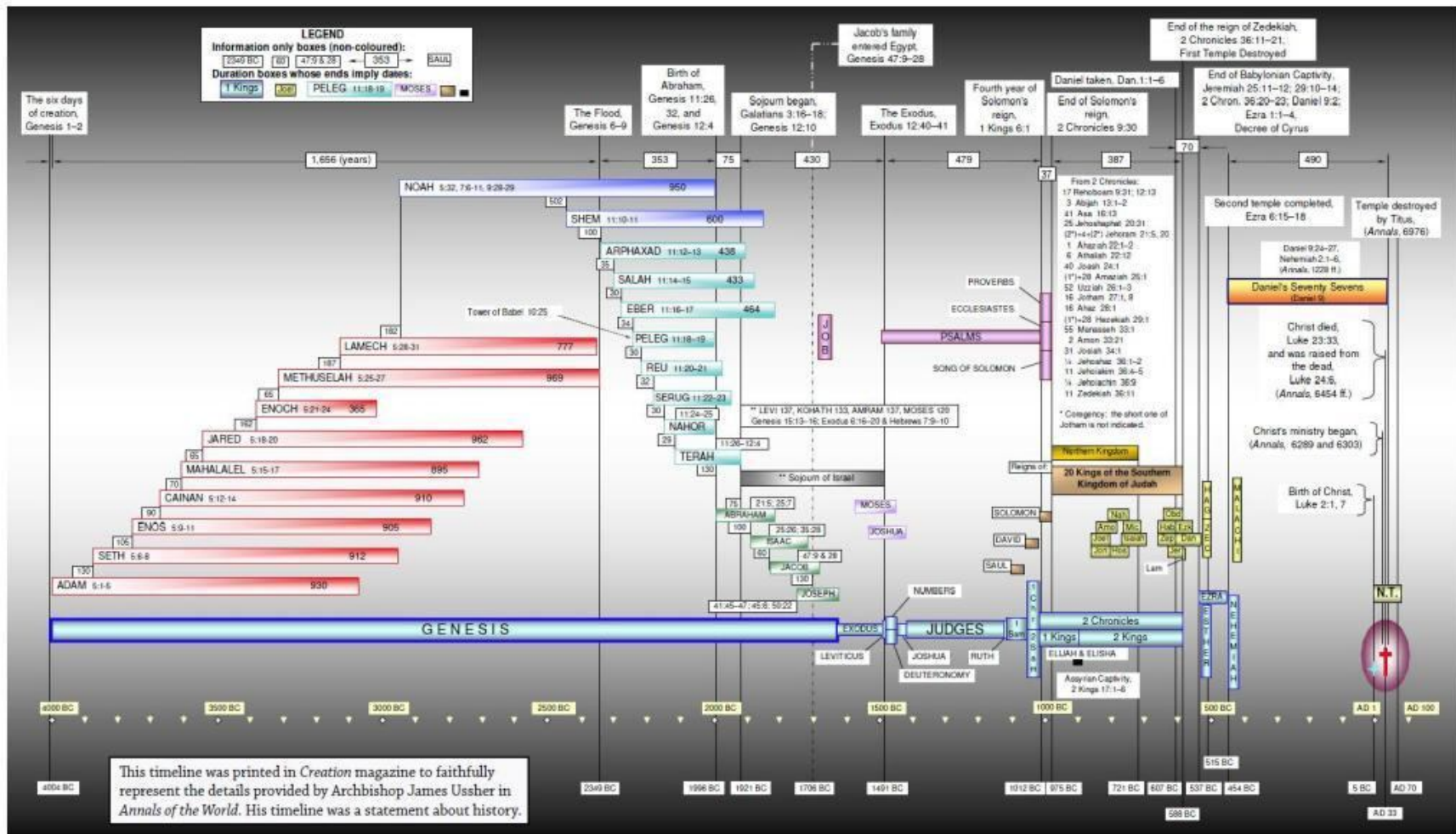
A second issue that needs further attention is the theological issue regarding physical and spiritual fall and redemption. Different camps of thought exist on this matter which provides grounds for the different theories. Therefore, there is a need to establish the nature of the fall as contained in the Genesis account. Clarity on this matter will result in greater consensus regarding the origins of the universe.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

In concluding this thesis, the researcher would like to encourage the reader to read further on the various theories. This can be done by visiting the websites of the various organisations mentioned in chapter one and chapter two, or by consulting other sources. These websites contain a wealth of information on the various popular theories. The list of 'works cited' at the end of this thesis can also be used as a starting or reference point for further reading. As Christians we have to arm ourselves with knowledge, especially in relevant and uncertain areas such as these so that we are not confused by unsound doctrine and teaching.

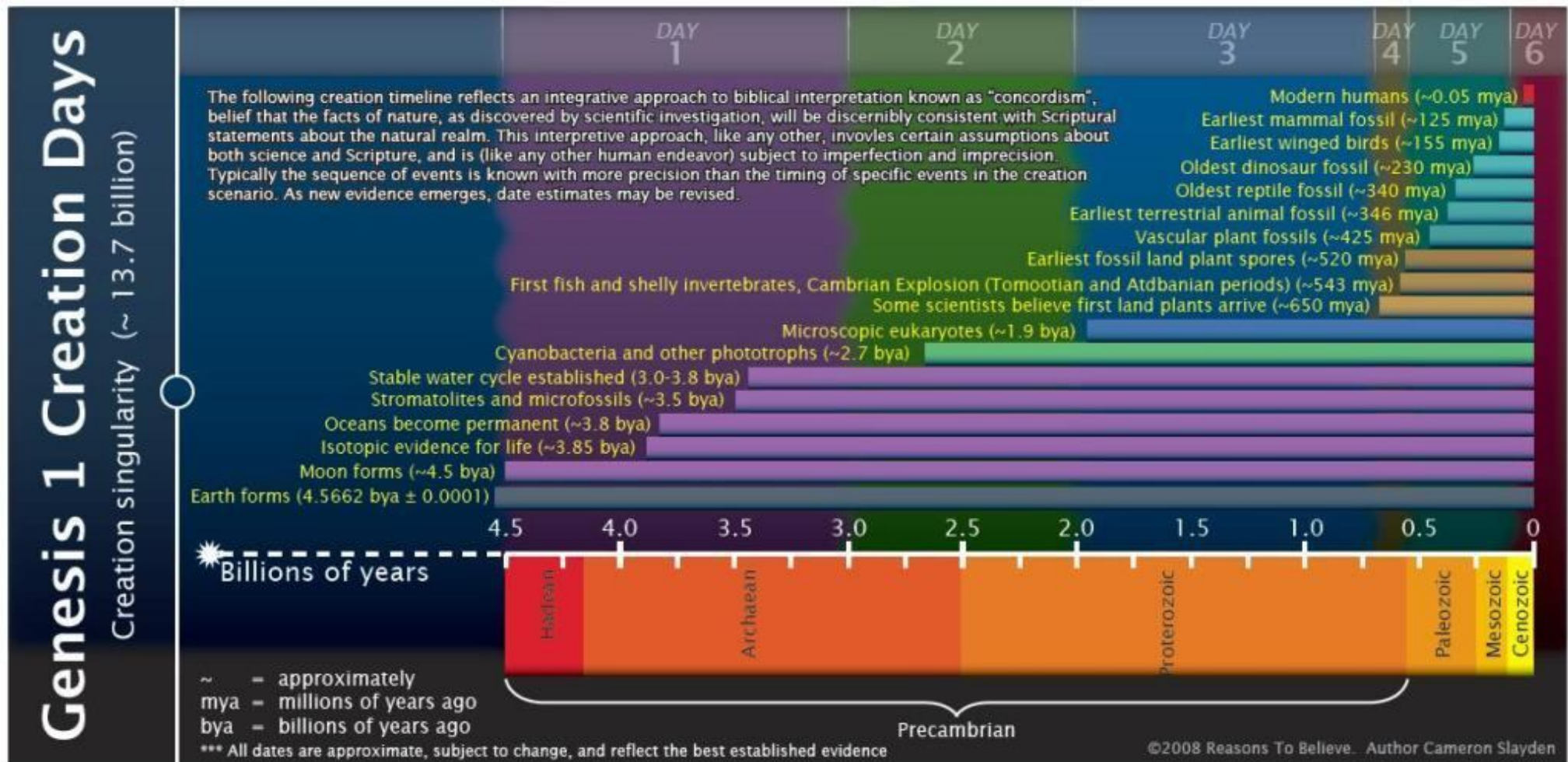
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### Annexure A: Young Earth Creation Timeline



The above chart was published by Creation Ministries International (2011) and provides a good overview of an indicative historical timeline which is the result of a historical-literal Young Earth Interpretation of Genesis:

Annexure B: Progressive Creation Days



The above chart was published by Reasons To Believe, authored by Cameron Slaydon (2008) and provides a proposed overview of an indicative creation timeline which is the result of a literal Progressive Interpretation of Genesis and its 'days' of creation:

### Annexure C: Comparative Table of the Christian Creation Theories

THEORY	Young Earth Creation	Progressive Creation	Theistic Evolution	Gap Theory
<b>Subjective Context</b>	Theory expounded by Archbishop James Ussher, mid-17th century	Archbishop James Ussher's dating methods cemented a Young Earth perspective in the minds of English-speaking Protestants	Recent liberalist theory still in the process of being refined	Attributed to the work of Thomas Chalmers in the early 19th century
	Historically, the Western World believed in Young Earth Creation		Copernicus and Galileo were criticised for having unbiblical views.	
	Early church fathers and reformers believed in Young Earth Creation (Basil the Great, John Calvin, Martin Luther)	Some early church fathers held an Old Earth Perspective (Josephus)		Gap Theory is faithful to the King James Translation of the Bible
	The rise of the Old Earth perspective (Evolution) challenged Young Earth Creation	Scientific Old Earth Perspective lead to the establishment of Young Earth Christian Fundamentalism	Old Earth perspective supported by scientific research	Progressive revelation lead to the questioning of a Young Earth perspective
	Church was ill-equipped to defend Young Earth Creation 'scientifically' which resulted in reconciliation theories	Fundamentalism labelled Darwinism as a terrible evil, which lead to the 'war between religion and science		The Gap Theory was part of the early Christian Fundamentalist movement
		Fundamentalism prohibited Young Earth supporters to interpret scientific data objectively	Church dogma and fundamentalist beliefs are putting Christianity into an intellectual corner.	Gap Theory predates the philosophical trend brought about by the Theory of Evolution

THEORY	Young Earth Creation	Progressive Creation	Theistic Evolution	Gap Theory
<b>Theological Principles</b>	Young Earth Creation Theory defends the integrity of scripture	Progressive Creation theory defends the integrity of scripture	Theistic Evolution theory defends the Gospel of Jesus Christ by objectively considering scientific findings	Gap Theory defends the integrity of scripture
	Goodness of God	Goodness of God	Mainstream scientific framework	Goodness of God
	Biblical Inerrancy	Biblical Inerrancy	Two camps: Biblical Inerrancy or Human Error	Biblical Inerrancy
	Supreme Scriptural Revelation	Dual-Revelation Theology	Dual-Revelation Theology, Science trumps Scripture regarding the physical world	Higher Scriptural Authority
<b>Main Views</b>		Progressive Revelation	Progressive Revelation	Progressive Revelation
	God's Redemptive Purpose (Adam's Physical Death)	God's Redemptive Purpose (Adam's Spiritual Death)	God's Redemptive Purpose (Humankind Spiritual Death)	God's Redemptive Purpose (Adam's Physical Death)
	Creation Account is a Literal-Historical Narrative	Creation Account is a Historical-Metaphorical Narrative	Creation Account is a Mythological Narrative	Creation Account is a Literal-Historical Narrative
	Israelites and New Testament figures understood Genesis as fact	Old Testament scripture provides evidence for an Old Earth perspective	Scientific Data provides evidence for an Old Earth Perspective	Old Testament scripture provides evidence for an Old initial or first creation in Genesis 1:1
	Gospel genealogy traces Jesus back to Adam			Gospel genealogy traces Jesus back to Adam
	Jesus sacrifice was necessary due to the sin of the historical literal Adam	Jesus sacrifice was necessary due to the sin of Adam	Jesus sacrifice was necessary due to the sin of humankind	Jesus sacrifice was necessary due to the sin of Adam

THEORY	Young Earth Creation	Progressive Creation	Theistic Evolution	Gap Theory
	Miraculous creation over 6 ordinary days	Progressive and Miraculous creation over billions of years	Initial Miraculous creation of matter, followed by the Big Bang and Natural Evolution	Miraculous restoration or second creation over 6 ordinary days
	Creation is about 6000 years old	Creation is about 14 billion years old	Creation is about 14 billion years old	Creation is about 14 billion years old
	Yom or day refers to a 24 hour time period	Yom or day refers to a long period of time	The meaning of day is irrelevant, due to Genesis being mythology	Yom or day refers to a 24 hour time period
	Physical death did not exist before the fall	Physical death did exist before the fall	Physical death did exist before the fall	Physical death did exist before the fall
	The fall (curse) resulted in physical changes to creation	The fall (curse) resulted in spiritual death for humankind		
	Flood of Noah was a global literal historic event	Flood of Noah was a local historic event	Flood of Noah was a local historic event	Flood of Noah was a local historic event
	The Tower of Babel was a literal historic event	The Tower of Babel is a metaphorical narrative	The Tower of Babel is mythology	
<b>Proponents</b>	Creation Ministries International	Reasons to Believe	BioLogos	Christian Geology Ministry
	Answers in Genesis	David Block		



## Annexure D: Comparative table of the different translations of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

King James	New International Version	American Standard Version	English Standard Version	Robert Alter Version
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>				
<b>1</b>	In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.	In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.	In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.	When God began to create heaven and earth,
<b>2</b>	And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.	Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.	The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.	And the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God's breath hovering over the waters,
<b>3</b>	And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.	And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.	And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.	God said, "Let there be light." And there was light.
<b>4</b>	And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.	God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.	And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.	And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness.
<b>5</b>	And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.	God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.	God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.	And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And it was evening and it was morning, first day.
<b>6</b>	And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.	And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water."	And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.	And God said, "Let there be a vault in the midst of the waters, and let it divide water from water."
<b>7</b>	And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.	So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.	And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so.	And God made the vault and it divided the water beneath the vault from the water above the vault, and so it was.
<b>8</b>	And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.	God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.	And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.	And God called the vault Heavens, and it was evening and it was morning, second day.
<b>9</b>	And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.	And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.	And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.	And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered in one place so that the dry land will appear," and so it was.

10	And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.	God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.	And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.	God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.	And God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of water He called Seas, and God saw that it was good.
11	And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.	Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.	And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so.	And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.	And God said, "Let the earth grow grass, plants yielding seed of each kind and trees bearing fruit of each kind, that has its seed within it." And so it was.
12	And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.	The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.	And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good.	The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.	And the earth put forth grass, plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within it of each kind, and God saw that it was good.
13	And the evening and the morning were the third day.	And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.	And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.	And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.	And it was evening and it was morning, third day.
14	And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:	And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years,	And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years:	And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,	And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and they shall be signs for the fixed times and for days and years,
15	And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.	and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so.	and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.	and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so.	And they shall be lights in the vault of the heavens to light up the earth." And so it was.
16	And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.	God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.	And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.	And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.	And God made the two great lights, the great light for dominion of day and the small light for dominion of night, and the stars.
17	And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,	God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,	And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth,	And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,	And God placed them in the vault of the heavens to light up the earth
18	And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and	to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it	and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw	to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it	and to have dominion over day and night and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it

	God saw that it was good.	was good.	that it was good.	was good.	was good.
19	And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.	And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.	And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.	And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.	And it was evening and it was morning, fourth day.
20	And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.	And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky."	And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.	And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."	And God said, "Let the water swarm with the swarm of living creatures and let fowl fly over the earth across the vault of the heavens."
21	And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.	So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.	And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good.	So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.	And God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that crawls, which the water had swarmed fourth of each kind, and the winged fowl of each kind, and God saw that it was good.
22	And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.	God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."	And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.	And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."	And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the seas and let the fowl multiply in the earth."
23	And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.	And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.	And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.	And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.	And it was evening and it was morning, fifth day.
24	And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.	And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so.	And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so.	And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.	And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of each kind, cattle and crawling things and wild beasts of each kind. And so it was."
25	And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.	God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.	And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good.	And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.	And God made wild beasts of each kind and cattle of every kind and crawling things on the ground of each kind, and God saw that it was good.
26	And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:	Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our	And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and	Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.	And God said, "Let us make a human in our image, by our

	and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.	likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."	let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.	And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."	likeness, to hold sway over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and the cattle and the wild beasts and all the crawling things that crawl upon the earth.
27	So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.	So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.	And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.	So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.	And God created the human in his image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.
28	And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.	God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."	And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.	And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."	And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it, and hold sway over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and every beast that crawls upon the earth."
29	And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.	Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.	And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food:	And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.	And God said, Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the face of all the earth and every tree that has fruit bearing seed, yours they will be for food.
30	And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.	And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.	And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so.	And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.	And to all the beasts of the earth and to all the fowl of the heavens and to all that crawls on the earth, which has breath of life within it, the green plants for food." And so it was.
31	And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.	God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.	And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.	And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.	And God saw all that He had done, and, look, it was very good. And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day.

## CHAPTER TWO

Annexure

1	Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.	Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.	And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.	Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.	Then the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their array.
2	And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.	By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.	And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.	And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.	And God completed on the seventh day from all the work He had done.
3	And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.	Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.	And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.	So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.	And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, for on it He had ceased from all His work that He had done.

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