

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies
Emphasis in Old Testament

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: CREATION OF LIGHT IN GENESIS 1: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN אור
AND קְאֵרִת

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The primary intent of this study was to ascertain the relationship between אור and קְאֵרִת. To this end, the researcher makes use of a combination of exegesis and text linguistic/pragmatic approaches. The use of such hybrid method finds its justification in the fact that the word-based or sentence-based approach that characterizes biblical studies has shown its limitations. Recent studies have revealed that text linguistics serves exegesis well, even as it offers the researcher new opportunities to analyzing and comprehending problem passages such as Genesis 1:1-2:3 at the text level.

A concise review of relevant literature has revealed that in spite of the tremendous scholarly engagement in the Genesis creation account, literary, historical, and linguistic problems still remain. Among these is the challenge of establishing a relationship between אור and קְאֵרִת. The lack of scholarly consensus seems to stem from the various schools of thought from which the text is examined. Of the eight paragraphs displayed by the linear/formal structure, four have been delved into in

order to elucidate the issues involved in the creation of light, and the interplay between אור “light” and מַאֲרֹת “lights/luminaries.”

Upon a thorough investigation into the text, a few conclusions—including the following—have emerged: (1) the light (אור) on the first day was a new divine act of creation and did not emanate from the sun nor from a non-solar astronomical object but, rather a phenomenon that resulted from a divine pronouncement; (2) the use of the surrogate verb עָשָׂה instead of בָּרָא for the creation of the luminaries implies a new divine activity on day 4; (3) the use of אור on day 1 (Gen 1: 3-5) and not מַאֲרֹת reinforces the opinion that the מַאֲרֹת were not yet created; (4) the fact that the מַאֲרֹת are to separate אור “light” from חֹשֶׁךְ “darkness,” and to divide the day (יוֹם) which equates אור from לַיְלָה “night,” indicates that אור and מַאֲרֹת are not synonymous neither should they be used interchangeably; (5) Both אור and מַאֲרֹת appear to be closely related, but this does not call for any conflation of the two terms.

The study therefore argues that אור is both temporal (daytime) and phenomenal (light), while the מַאֲרֹת are physical time markers designed to complement/enhance the phenomenon of אור “light;” (6) the origins of the universe cannot be explained without the supernatural, as science attempts to do; (7) the clash between science and Scripture is occasioned by naturalistic presuppositions undergirding evolution disguised, nowadays, as modern science.

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BETWEEN אור AND מְאֵרֶת

A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Samson D. Dakio


August 2016

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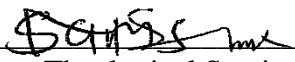
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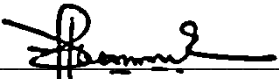
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Creation is a fundamental teaching in the Bible. Said differently, creation is the fulcrum of the Christian faith. The doctrine of divine creation forms the indispensable foundation for Christian and biblical theology.¹ Several Christian fundamental beliefs are anchored in the doctrine of divine creation.² Without creation, the Christian faith with some of its basic tenets has no *raison d'être*. Any attack on Creation puts all these biblical truths in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, the rise of the scientific era has not made things better. The picture of creation depicted by science is perceived as conflicting with Scripture. This conflict finds its justification from several standpoints: (1) Scripture does not seek to demonstrate things empirically, but presents them at face value; (2) science tends to jettison anything supernatural; (3) science seems to erect itself as a 'self-proclaimed assessor' of biblical data; and (4) biblical writers of creation accounts did write from a historical context far removed from ours. It is therefore not surprising that science disagrees with the biblical doctrine of creation at some points. Over the decades,

¹"Creation," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, ed. Don F. Neufeld, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 357.

²Ibid. For a detailed account of the significance of creation, see Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of the Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press, 2005), 84-86. It enumerates some of the implications of the doctrine of creation as follows: the antidote to idolatry, the foundation of true worship, the Sabbath as a memorial of creation, marriage, the basis for true self-worth, the basis for true fellowship, personal stewardship, responsibility for the environment, dignity of manual labor, the worth of the physical universe, the remedy for pessimism, loneliness, and meaninglessness, the holiness of God's law, and the sacredness of life.

biblical creationism has been under the attack of critical scholarship.³ Scholars from the concordist perspective, especially, have sought to harmonize the geologic record and the days of Genesis.⁴ Whereas, those from the nonconcordist perspective attempt to interpret every Bible text that appears to disagree with science metaphorically.⁵ In both cases, concordists and nonconcordists allow science to drive the interpretation of Scripture. In the process, critical scholars have succeeded in reducing the Bible to an ordinary literature book liable to inaccuracy. As a result, the historical-critical method is employed to unearth its meaning. It goes without saying that Scripture is no more regarded as the word of God, but as mere literature book containing the word of God. Its corollary is that biblical data becomes subject to error, and should be assessed in the light of modern science.

The influence of science with the historical-critical method has led to a protracted debate over the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3 (hereafter Gen 1). The controversy seems to be informed by the prevailing naturalistic theory of evolution.⁶ Among the key issues in Genesis 1 that science really disagrees with is the appearance of light before the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. Skeptics have long ridiculed the science of biblical creation over this claim. Besides, it may sound absurd to the modern reader that there was a succession of days and nights before the creation of the sun.

³See William A. Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 63-64; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 75-100.

⁴ See C. E. Hummel, "Interpreting Genesis 1," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 38 (1986): 175-186; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 56.

⁵See Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 53-54; Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 211.

⁶Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?" in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 40.

Some scholars believe that the sun with other stars is not the only way to illuminate the earth and produce day-night cycles and contend that the light of day 1 might have been a consequence of the instantaneous creation of matter.⁷ Some argue that the light of day 1 is that of the then invisible sun light on earth upon the thinning of the clouds covering the earth.⁸ In other words, it is believed that the sun was part and parcel of וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ הַשְּׁמַיִם “the heavens and the earth” created prior to the six days creation. Still, others hold that the chronology of the text suggests that God is the ultimate source of light since the sun is only later introduced as the immediate cause of light.⁹ These and variant other views include, but are not limited to the above-mentioned. It follows that a reinvestigation into the subject is in order.

Statement of the Problem

Over the decades, Genesis 1¹⁰ has drawn the attention of scholars.¹¹ However, there still remain some semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic issues to be addressed. Among the interpretive challenges of this pericope is the enigma of reconciling the existence of אֹר “light” in Genesis 1:3-5 with the creation of מְאֹרֹת “lights/luminaries” in Genesis 1:14-19. The text states that God called אֹר into being on the first day, while on the fourth day He called into being the מְאֹרֹת in the dome/firmament of the

⁷Walt Brown, *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*, 8th ed. (Phoenix, AZ: Center for Scientific Creation, 2008), 333.

⁸James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, vol.1, Genesis 1-11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982, 1998), 74-75.

⁹Bruce K. Walke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 61. See also Paul J. Kissling, “Genesis,” *The College Press NIV Commentary*, vol.1 (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2004), 100; The Andrews Study Bible comments on Genesis 1:3 stating that God Himself is the source of light on the first day, before the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day.

¹⁰Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹¹See the extensive bibliography in Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Word, 1987), xix-lii, 1-34; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 75-100.

sky to perform some functions including dividing the day from the night. Important questions arising in connection with this issue include the following: What is the semantic relationship between אור and מְאֲרֵת? Are they synonymous? Does the text suggest that the luminaries were only made visible on the fourth day or they were created on that day? If they already existed on day 1 or before, why is אור instead of מְאֲרֵת used in vv.3-5? And if they were created on day 4, what was the source of אור? How could we explain, scientifically, the existence of light before the sun or days alternate with nights, without the sun?

These questions will receive attention in this study. The study seeks to bring to bear insights from the text-linguistic/pragmatic perspective to the matter under discussion.

Purpose and Significance

In the light of the questions raised above, the study had a dual purpose. First, it attempted to comprehend the issues involved in the creation of light in Genesis 1. Second, it sought to determine the relationship between אור and מְאֲרֵת on day 1 and 4, respectively. This study finds its justification in the sense that the sequel of events in the creation account in Genesis 1 has raised pertinent questions in the mind of the modern reader. It is hoped that the current study will contribute to a fair understanding of what actually happened on days 1 and 4 at creation. It may also be a reference document that has the potential to trigger further investigations into the issue.

Methodology and Procedure

Since the 1970s, Hebrew linguists have expressed disgruntlement with the traditional word-based and sentence-based approaches to grammar along with their vague syntactic categories,¹² and have centered efforts in textlinguistics/ discourse analysis from various perspectives.¹³ This study employs two methods (exegesis and textlinguistics) that have sometimes been understood as mutually exclusive; recent studies indicate, however, that biblical linguistics serves exegesis better. Exegesis, on the one hand, may be defined as a “thorough, analytical study of a biblical passage done so as to arrive at a useful interpretation of the passage.”¹⁴ Gordon D. Fee defines it as follows:

The term exegesis is used... in a consciously limited sense to refer to the historical investigation into the meaning of the biblical text. Exegesis, therefore, answers the question, What *did* the biblical author *mean*? It has to do with both *what* he said (the content itself) and why he said it at any given point (the literary context) Furthermore, exegesis is primarily concerned with intentionality: What did the author intend his original readers to understand?¹⁵

In using the exegetical method, the study seeks to examine the literary context and the semantic analysis.

¹²Christo H. J. van der Merwe, “Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics (BHDL)*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 15.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 1. See also John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

¹⁵Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Student and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 27. Italics by author. For more on the definition of exegesis, see Stanley E. Porter, *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden, South Holland: Brill, 1997); Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998).

On the other hand, textlinguistics may be defined as the linguistic study of texts or units larger than the sentence.¹⁶ Textlinguists or discourse analysts consider the discourse or text, rather than the clause/sentence, as the appropriate linguistic entity for a synchronic analysis.¹⁷ Pragmatics is a sub-discipline of linguistics¹⁸ which arose in the late 1970s.¹⁹ According to MacDonald, pragmatics is “the study of the information transmitted by an utterance that goes beyond the information that is carried by the grammatical and lexical patterns. It concerns such information as the speaker’s beliefs, knowledge, commitments, social status, purpose for speaking, etc. In other words, pragmatics focuses on the meaning the author/speaker intends to convey. Such meaning is not solely dependent on linguistic form, since usually authors/speakers communicate more than that which is explicitly written/stated.

The paper divides into five chapters and an appendix. Chapter 1 offers the general introduction to the study by mapping out its parameters. Chapter 2 surveys the differing views on relevant issues in Genesis 1. Chapter 3 deals with the literary analysis, textlinguistics, and semantics. The literary analysis addresses the issue of structure of Genesis 1. The textlinguistic study deals with the analysis of Genesis 1:3-5 and 1:14-19 as they contribute to the current debate. The semantic analysis seeks to shed light on the lexical content of key words in the creation of light in Genesis 1.

¹⁶See Walter R. Bodine, “Introduction,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature (DABL)*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 1-18; van der Merwe, “Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar,” in *BHDL*, 138-142.

¹⁷Walter R. Bodine, “Introduction: Discourse Analysis—What It Is and What It Offers,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 1-3; Ellen van Wolde, “A Text-Semantic Study of the Hebrew Bible: Illustrated with Noah and Job,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994): 19-35.

¹⁸For more information on pragmatics within general linguistics see Laurence R. Horn and Gregory Ward, *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2005); Jacob L. Mey, *Pragmatics: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2001); Jef Verschueren, *Understanding Pragmatics* (London: Arnold, 1999).

¹⁹C. H. J. van der Merwe, “Some Recent Trends in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics: A Few Pointers towards a More Comprehensive Model of Language Use,” *Hebrew Studies* 44 (2003): 20-24.

Chapter 4 addresses the interplay between science and creation. Chapter 5 summarizes and concludes the study. The appendix offers a linguistic analysis that gives insight into the main study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The chronology of the creation of *אור* and *מְאֹרֶת* in Genesis 1 has attracted scholarly attention. Scholars, over the centuries, have attempted to address the issue that continues to baffle the mind of the Bible reader, especially of the modern reader. This chapter briefly surveys the differing scholarly views and interpretations pertaining to relevant issues on Genesis 1—especially as they contribute to establishing the relationship between *אור* and *מְאֹרֶת*.

It is often taken at face value that the church has historically interpreted Genesis 1 as a historical account of six literal days, until the rise of the naturalistic theories of Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century.¹ In other words, the historical and literal interpretation of Genesis 1 is usually believed to have made consensus in scholarship during the first eighteen centuries of the Christian era. As a result, this literal view is sometimes referred to as the “traditional” interpretation of the Genesis creation days. However, R. D. Culver points out that the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 has not been characteristic of all the great teachers of the church of the past.²

¹See Simon Turpin, “Evangelical Commentaries on the Days of Creation in Genesis One,” *Answers Research Journal* 6 (2013): 79.

²R. D. Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2006), 162.

In what follows we first look at views on the creation days throughout the history of Christianity. Then follows a survey of views on the relationship between *קְאֵרֶת* and *אֵוֶר*.

Creation Days throughout the History of Christianity

There seems to be no evidence that early church leaders intensively debated the length of creation days in Genesis 1. In fact, they seemed to have been more concerned with the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of God’s creation. Further, a huge number of their writings have been lost.³ This notwithstanding, the extant collected works may still be representative of their views.

Right at the inception of Christianity, the subject of creation was an area of concern for some eminent figures such as Philo (20 BC-AD 45), and Josephus (AD 37-100). First, Philo believed that God created everything instantaneously and that the six days involved in creation were a mere metaphor for order and completeness, as he rightly states in his own words:

He [Moses] says that in six days the world was created, not that its maker required a length of time for his work, for we must think of God as doing all things simultaneously, remembering that “all” includes with the commands which He issues the thought behind them. Six days are mentioned because for the things coming into existence there was need of order.⁴

Josephus, on the other hand, in writing a survey of the Genesis account, pointed out the need to elucidate the meaning of the expression “one day;”⁵ but he did not do so, either because he did not find this phrase easy or direct to unravel.

³Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 24.

⁴Ross, *Creation and Time*, 17.

⁵Ibid.

It is to be noted that the earliest known Christian writings on the issue of creation time frame go way back to the second century. Justin Martyr (AD 100-166) and Irenaeus (AD 130-200), for instance, leaned on Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 to argue that the creation days were each a thousand years long.⁶ Depicting the events of the sixth day of creation pertaining to the creation of humankind, Irenaeus betrays his understanding on the time frame of a creation day in his own terms:

Thus, Then, in the day they did eat, in the same did they die. ... For it is said, "There was made in the evening, and there was made in the morning one day." Now in this same day that they did eat, in that also did they die. ... On one and the same day on which they ate they also died (for it is one day of creation). ... He (Adam) did not overstep the thousand years, but died within their limit ... for since "a day of the Lord is a thousand years," he did not overstep the thousand years, but died within them.⁷

Simply put, Irenaeus believed that the life span of the man Adam could not exceed thousand years because a day in Genesis 1 stood for thousand years. In other words, to Irenaeus, the divine saying "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17) has come to pass.

It is believed that Hippolytus (AD 170-236) wrote more prolifically than others on the Genesis creation days, but most of these writings are not in existence today. This notwithstanding, it is recorded in the writings of Ambrose (AD 340-397) that Hippolytus concurred with Irenaeus to interpret the days as a thousand years each.⁸

Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-220) was on the same wave length with Philo when he contended that the Genesis creation days did not convey the idea of time

⁶Ibid., 18.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

(i.e., a literal 24-hour day), but rather they communicated the order and priority of created things.⁹

Origen (AD 185-254), father of allegorical interpretation, advocated that in dealing with certain problem passages such as Genesis 1, it is advisable to seek for a spiritual meaning, but not always a literal one.¹⁰ As a way of solving the enigma of days prior to the creation of the sun, Origen suggests that the first three days, at least, should not be taken as literal 24-hour days. Thus, he explains: “The text said that “there was evening and there was morning,” it did not say: “the first day,” but said, “one day.” It is because there was not yet time before the world existed. But time begins to exist with the following days.”¹¹

In the same vein, Origen claims that the seventh day of the creation narrative could not have been a literal 24-hour day. On the contrary, he perceived the six Genesis creation days as epitomizing the time that men work on the earth (i.e., the period of human history), whereas, the seventh day stands for the time between the creation of the world and its extinction at the Lord’s redemption day of the saints.¹²

In the twilight of the third century, Lactantius (AD 250-325) also wrote in support of Justin Martyr’s and Irenaeus’s view of creation days as representing each a thousand-year period.¹³

Of all the Church Fathers, Augustine (AD 354-430) seems to be the most prolific writer on the subject of creation days. It is postulated that Augustine believed

⁹Clement of Alexandria *The Stromata* 6.16 (trans. Salvatore R. C. Lilla, ANF, 2:512-514).

¹⁰Origen *Against Celsus* 6.60 (trans. F. Crombie, ANF, 4:600-601).

¹¹Ross, *Creation and Time*, 19.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Lactantius *The Divine Institutes* 7.14 (ANF, 7:211, trans. William Fletcher).

that God created the World in a flash of a moment.¹⁴ In his work, *City of God*, Augustine posits that “the Genesis creation day is different from the ordinary day with which we are familiar.¹⁵ It follows that Augustine understood the evenings and the mornings of the Genesis creation in a metaphorical sense. He argues that the evening of each creation day referred to the occasion when the angels gazed down on the created things upon contemplating the creator, while the morning pointed to the occasion where they awoke from their knowledge of the created things to praise the creator.¹⁶ Because of the lack of the expression “evening and morning” on the seventh day, Augustine claims that God sanctified it making it an epoch extending onward into eternity.¹⁷

Basil (330-379), a bishop of Caesarea, produced nine homilies on the first chapter of Genesis in which he points out the difficulty of knowing the date for the creation of the universe. In reference to the first Genesis creation day, Basil queries, “Why does Scripture say ‘one day’ not ‘the first day’?” He then proceeds to answer the question in his own words: “The beginning of time is called “one day” rather than “the first day,” it is because Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity. It was, in reality, fit and natural to call “one” the day whose character is to be one wholly separated and isolated from all the others.”¹⁸ In short, Basil did not show much interest in expatiating on the timing of creation; however, he did not treat all the six Genesis creation days on equal footing.

¹⁴Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figurative ‘Periods/EPOCHS’ of Time?” *Origins* 21 (1994): 6–7.

¹⁵Ross, *Creation and Time*, 20.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 21.

Ambrose (AD 340-397), a bishop of Milan, happens to be the early church leader often cited as advocating the interpretation of the six Genesis creation days as a 144-hour period. His support for a literal Genesis creation days may be taken from his own writings as follows:

Scripture established a law that twenty-four hours, including both day and night, should be given the name of day only, as if one were to say the length of one day is twenty-four hours in extent. . . . The nights in this reckoning are considered to be component parts of the days that are counted. Therefore, just as there is a single revolution of time, so there is but one day.¹⁹

The above quote does corroborate that Ambrose, to some extent, advocated for a literal understanding of the word ‘day’ in Genesis 1. This notwithstanding, at the reminiscence of Genesis 2:4 where the Hebrew word יָמֵי is employed to represent the whole week of creation, Ambrose concedes that יָמֵי may possibly refer to an era or epoch.²⁰

Informed by the above, it sounds erroneous to suggest that only since the publication of Charles Darwin’s evolutionary work on the *Origin of Species* (1859), have interpreters transposed the Genesis creation “days” into metaphorical periods of time. Actually, earlier extra-biblical considerations led previous scholars and commentators to depart from the literal meaning of creation “days.” In fact, as early as the second and third centuries, Origen, one of the Church Fathers from Alexandria, known for his keen interest for the allegorical method of interpretation,²¹ has received the credit for being the first to have understood the creation “days” in an allegorical and metaphorical way.²² In the same vein, Augustine (AD 354-430) agrees with

¹⁹Ibid., 22.

²⁰Ibid., 42-43.

²¹Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1866, 1961), 187-203.

²²Karlfried Froehlich, trans./ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 63.

Origen when he argues that the “days” of creation should be viewed allegorically rather than literally.²³

It is noteworthy that neither Origen nor Augustine was led by evolutionary thinking, but rather by nonbiblical, pagan modes of thinking. In other words, the two Church Fathers were influenced by philosophical ideas anchored in the concept of timelessness of God.²⁴ Most Medieval (AD 600–1517) theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury (AD 1033–1109), until later years, followed Augustine. They viewed creation as instantaneous, and the six days as a literary framework. In other words, the medieval church continued to believe that creation was sudden, not gradual, and occurred less than 6,000 years in the past.²⁵ Bede (AD 673–735) moderated Augustine’s view when he postulated that creation had occurred instantaneously but was formed over six 24-hour days. Some scholars such as Andrew of St. Victor (AD 1110–1175) jettisoned Augustine’s view and interpreted Genesis 1 literally.²⁶

The Reformation may rightly be viewed as a reaction to some of the anti-biblical practices of the medieval church. Reformers of the sixteenth century insisted that the single, true sense of Scripture is the literal sense, the plain meaning of the text. Hence, the Bible was approached in its literal and grammatical sense.²⁷

Reformers believed and upheld the *sola scriptura* principle. In other words, they

²³Augustine *The City of God* 11.4.6 (LVL, 2: 7, trans. Marcus Dods).

²⁴On the issue of timelessness of God, see Fernando Canale, *The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology: A Hermeneutical Study of the Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005), 87-109, especially p. 93.

²⁵See James R. Mook, “The Early Church on Creation,” 2007, accessed March 7, 2016, <https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/church/the-early-church-on-creation/>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 128-129; Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 9-32.

restored the authority and supremacy of Scripture. Nothing external was supposed to be superimposed upon Scripture which is its own interpreter. It is therefore in this perspective that Martin Luther argued for the literal interpretation of the creation account. He states, “We assert that Moses spoke in the literal sense, not allegorically or figuratively, i.e., that the world, with all its creatures, was created within six days, as the words read.”²⁸ This literal and grammatical interpretation known as the historical-grammatical method, remained the norm for biblical interpretation until the nineteenth century.

Before the age of enlightenment, Scripture was taken at face value, to a great extent, in many circles in Christendom. Scripture had the final say in matters of faith, practice, and science. However, the rise of evolutionary theories has changed the status quo. Many scholars have come to frown on certain assertions made by the Bible, especially those pertaining to science.²⁹ It is in this perspective that some argue that the creation account in Genesis 1 does not claim that God created the world in six days, but he rather revealed and explained in six literal days what he had already done over a long period of time. Among the proponents of such theory is the Scottish geologist Hugh Miller who made the concept prominent during the nineteenth century.³⁰ Some scholars have observed that “the days of revelation theory,” also called the “vision theory,” leans, to a great extent, on the misunderstanding of the

²⁸Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5, Luther's Works* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1958), 1:5.

²⁹ See Les Woodson, *The Beginning: A Study of Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1974), 15; James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, vol.1, Genesis 1: 1-11: 32 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 64.

³⁰Francis Haber, *The Age of the World: Moses to Darwin* (Baltimore, MD: Hopkins University Press, 1959), 236-237.

word ‘made,’ in Exod 20:11,³¹ for which P. J. Wiseman claims the meaning of ‘showed’.³²

Other theories include the “Day-age,” and the “Gap” theory. Three of them have a common denominator; that is, they assume that something like evolution took place over billions of years. The “day-age” theory sees a parallelism with Genesis 1, but ignores the time-frame. Whereas, the “gap” theory accepts the time-frame but inserts either evolution or a reconstruction of the earth before or after Genesis 1:1.³³

One of the major challenges that confront biblical creationism is the concordist approach adopted by some scholars. Concordist scholars attempt to harmonize the Biblical data with the findings of science. John C. L. Gibson, for example, contends that Genesis 1 should be taken as a metaphor,³⁴ or parable,³⁵ and not as a straightforward record of events of creation. In his 1981 Genesis Commentary he puts it in his own words:

If we understand ‘day’ as equivalent to ‘epoch’ or ‘era,’ we can bring the sequence of creation in the chapter into relationship with the accounts of modern evolutionary theory, and so go some way towards recovering the Bible’s reputation in our scientific age. . . . In so far this argument begins with an attempt to go beyond the literal meaning and to take the week assigned to creation as a parable of a much longer period, it is to be commended.³⁶

³¹Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and a Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Intervarsity, 1967), 54.

³²P. J. Wiseman, *Clues to Creation in Genesis*, ed. Donald J. Wiseman (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1977), 132-133.

³³See Hercules B. Cemitara and Gerardus D. Bouw, “The Gap Theories of Creation,” accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.geocentricity.com/Ba1/No117/gap.html>.

³⁴John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis: The Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Saint Andrew Press, 1981), 56.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 55.

³⁶*Ibid.*

In other words, Gibson goes by the saying that ‘the end justifies the means’. His sole objective is to bring the Bible to agree with science. In the same vein, the commentator Hansjörg Bräumer posited that:

The creation ‘day’ which is described to contain ‘morning and evening’ [*sic*] is not a unit of time which can be determined with a watch. It is a divine day in which a thousand years are equal to but yesterday [Ps 90:4, margin]. Day one in creation is a divine day. It cannot be an earthly day since the temporal measure, the sun, is still missing. It will, therefore, do no harm to the creation account to understand creation in rhythms of millions of years.³⁷

This assertion of Bräumer betrays his worldview so far as creation is concerned. It seems to be an aberration to speak of a literal 24-hour day prior to the creation of the sun which he terms ‘temporal measure’. Hence he qualifies the first day of creation as divine, paving the way for all kinds of naturalistic interpretation of creation days.

D. Stuart Briscoe, an American progressive creationist, argues that “it will not be unreasonable to believe that ‘day’ (Hebrew *yôm*), which can be translated quite literally as ‘period,’ refers not to literal days but to eras and ages in which God’s progressive work was being accomplished.”³⁸

As stated earlier, the abovementioned views stem from the concordist standpoint, whereby every effort is made to marry biblical data pertaining to origins with scientific facts.

On the other hand however, some scholars prefer to let Scripture speak for itself. Nonconcordist scholars believe that any scientific data in Scripture should be taken at face value. It is in this perspective that Gerhard von Rad posits that the seven days of creation are unquestionably to be construed as actual days and as a unique,

³⁷Hansjörg Bräumer, *Das Erste Buch Mose*. Wuppertaler Studienbibel, Kapitel 1-11 (Wuppertal, Germany: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1983), 44.

³⁸D. Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis: The Communicator’s Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 37.

unrepeatable lapse of time in the world.³⁹ Gordon Wenham states that “there can be a little doubt that here ‘day’ has its basic sense of a 24-hour period.”⁴⁰ James Barr points out that the creation “days” were six literal days comprising a 144-hour period.⁴¹ Hermann Gunkel, contends that the ‘days’ are of course days and nothing else.⁴² Victor P. Hamilton with other broad concordist neo-Evangelical scholars holds that “whoever wrote Genesis 1 believed he was talking about literal days.”⁴³ Some grammarians point out that “the cardinal “one” (אֶחָד or אֶחָת) may function as an ordinal when denoting the first of a small list of items: וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד.”⁴⁴ It follows that the expression “one day” is best translated “first day.”

In spite of the divergence of views on the understanding of the creation “days,” Scripture maintains its own integrity. In fact, Scripture can hardly accommodate every interpretation that science, sociology, history, or any other disciplines postulate. Consequently, no discipline should erect itself as the benchmark to which Scripture must be measured. We now turn to scholarly views on אֹר and מְאֹרָת.

The Creation of Light (אֹר) on Day 1

The issue of the source of light on the first day and the timing of the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day is a theological conundrum. In other words,

³⁹Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972), 65.

⁴⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 10.

⁴¹James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1978), 40-43.

⁴²Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis Übersetzt und Erklärt* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1901), 97.

⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 53.

⁴⁴Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35.

establishing the relationship between אור and מְאֹרֶת is a demanding enterprise to undertake. Though early church leaders did not show much interest in this specific subject, it has nonetheless become a matter crucial to faith. The origin of light on the first day of creation remains enigmatic to biblical commentators. Many are the hypothetic answers that have been proposed; a brief list of such is provided here.

Maurice Bucaille argues that it is illogical to mention the result (i.e., light) on the first day, when the cause of the light (i.e., sun) was created three days later.⁴⁵

Bruce K. Walke opines that the chronology of the text suggests that God is the ultimate source of light since the sun is only later introduced as the immediate cause of light.⁴⁶

Walt Brown leans on the premise that the sun with other stars is not the only way to illuminate the earth and produce day-night cycles, to contend that the light of day 1 may have been a consequence of the instantaneous creation of matter.⁴⁷ Hugh Ross states categorically that light was not created on the first day, but ‘in the beginning.’⁴⁸ According to James Montgomery Boice, the light of the first day emanated from the sun which was covered by clouds. Boice insinuates that the sun had been shining all this while, but its light could not penetrate the surface of the earth until the clouds were thinned enough. Hence Boice posits that God’s statement ‘let there be light’ in Genesis 1:3 refers to the appearance of the then invisible sun light on

⁴⁵Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur’an, and Science* (New Dehli, India: Adam Publishers and Distributers, n. d.), 45.

⁴⁶Walke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 61. See also Kissling, “Genesis,” 1:100.

⁴⁷Brown, *In the Beginning*, 333.

⁴⁸Ross, *Creation and Time*, 149; See also Josiah Hopkins, *Talks on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Barstow, CA: Country Church of Hollywood, 1937), 13, 21. Hopkins argues that the word in the original does not mean “to create,” but simply means that light “appeared,” or “became visible.” To him, the sun and the moon were created in the time of the first verse, when the heaven and the earth were brought into being.

earth upon the thinning of the clouds covering the earth.⁴⁹ C. John Collins believes that the clause ‘let there be light’ should be construed as summoning the light for the first day because, according to him, the volitional form ‘let there be’ does not of itself require the sense of coming into existence (cf. Ps 33: 22).⁵⁰

John Sailhamer posits:

Verse 3 has often been taken to mean that God created light before he had created the sun, since here he said, “Let there be light,” but not until v.16 does the narrative speak of God making the sun. It should be noted, however, that the sun, moon, and stars are all to be included in the usual meaning of the phrase “heavens and the earth” (haššamayim weha’areš), and thus according to the present account of these celestial bodies were all created in v.1.⁵¹

E. Basil Redlich observes, however, that it was not difficult for a Hebrew to think of light as existing apart from the sun, moon, and stars; God could produce light from friction.⁵² He adds that to the Priestly writer, light and darkness, day and night, morning and evening were all possible before the heavenly luminaries were called to existence.⁵³ John H. Walton argues that Genesis 1:3 should be read ‘Let there be a

⁴⁹Boice, *Genesis*, 64.

⁵⁰C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 57. See also Hopkins, *Talks on the Book of Genesis*, 13.

⁵¹John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

⁵²Some have called this light cosmic light, since God did not call the sun into being until the fourth day. See Manford George Gutzke, *Plain Talk on Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 20.

⁵³E. Basil Redlich, *The Early Traditions of Genesis* (Bristol, London: Bristol Typesetting, 1980), 56.

period of light,' to insinuate that God actually created daytime on the first day.⁵⁴

According to Nahum M. Sarna, the source of this supernal, nonsolar light of creation became a subject of rabbinic and mystical speculation. It ensues that this light was viewed as the effulgent splendor of the Divine Presence.⁵⁵ Howard F. Vos states that "God spoke light into existence."⁵⁶ Les Woodson believes that the light of the first day was a resultant of the luminous glow emitted by the sun's rays. Woodson seems to suggest that the creation of the sun occurred on the first day, but because of the heavy gases and the impenetrable haze, the source of light was unseen.⁵⁷ John Calvin argues that God holds in his hands the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon.⁵⁸ George Henderson is not puzzled about the existence of light before the appointment of the sun since recent studies in science discovered that there

⁵⁴John H. Walton, "Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after Chaoskampf," *Calvin Theological Journal* 43 (2008): 59; See also idem, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 55. Here Walton states that the author intends for us to understand the word "light" to mean a period of light. He reasons that since "day" is a period of light, and "day" is the name given, we conclude that we are dealing with a rhetorical device called metonymy in which a noun can reasonably be extended to a related concept; John Skinner, *Genesis, Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 19. Skinner points out that the thought of light as the first creation, naturally suggested by the phenomenon of dawn, appears in several cosmogonies; but is not expressed in any known form of the Babylonian legend.

⁵⁵Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 5; See also Edward J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964), 95. Young however, while affirming that the light on the first day came from a source different from the sun, fail to indicate the source of that light; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1978), 44. Cassuto believes that God caused light to shine upon the earth from some other source without recourse to the sun, at least during the first three days of creation; Leon J. Wood, *Genesis: A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 24; Donald E. Gowan, *From Eden to Babel: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 21.

⁵⁶Howard F. Vos, *Genesis* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1982), 14. See also Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 55; Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1: 1-2: 4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Bristol, England: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1997; reprint, Fearn Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 1999), 85.

⁵⁷Woodson, *The Beginning*, 15.

⁵⁸John Calvin, *Genesis*, trans. and ed. John King, Two volumes in One (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), 76.

are several kinds of light than solar light; and that it was perfectly in agreement with the facts of nature now fully known, that there could be light even before the sun was appointed as a luminous bearer of light for the solar system.⁵⁹

From the foregoing review, three major views may be noted: (1) that the light on the first day of creation emanated from God, the Creator; (2) that the light came from the then invisible sun, which was made visible on the fourth day when God cleared the clouds covering it; (3) that the light emanated from a nonsolar object.

The Creation of Lights (מְאֹרֹת) on Day 4

Some have assumed that the events of days 1 and 4 are identical in nature. This amalgamation is probably due to the fact that both deal with the common issue of light. Ironically, the creation of the sun, moon, and stars is described at much greater length than anything save the creation of man. The description is also quite repetitive. The fullness of the description suggests that the creation of the heavenly bodies held a special significance for the author.⁶⁰

Sherrill G. Stevens posits that light was the first element created; so as the source of the earth's light, the sun, must have been created at that time (i.e., on day 1). Only as the atmosphere began to clear and as moisture evaporated into it did the sun appear, along with the moon and the stars.⁶¹

Sailhamer compares the syntax of v. 14 with that of the creation of the expanse in v. 6, and contends that the two verses have a quite different sense. The syntax of

⁵⁹George Henderson, *Studies in Genesis* (Edinburgh, Scotland: B. McCall Barbour, 1971), 15, 16.

⁶⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 21.

⁶¹Sherrill G. Stevens, *Genesis*, Layman's Bible Book Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978), 15. See also Woodson, *The Beginning*, 18.

v.6, he argues, suggests that when God said, “Let there be an expanse,” he was, in fact, creating an expanse where there was none previously. This is how he puts it:

In v.14 God does not say “Let there be lights . . . to separate,” as if there were no lights before this command and afterward the lights were created. Rather, the Hebrew text reads, “And God said, Let the lights in the expanse of the sky separate.” In other words, unlike the syntax of v.6, in v.14 God’s command assumes that the lights were already in the expanse and that in response to his command they were given a purpose, to separate the day from the night and to mark seasons, days and years.⁶²

However, a close look at the syntax of both passages in question shows that there is no difference whatsoever. This makes Sailhamer argument debatable. In fact, the volitional command given in v. 6 is the same in v. 14.

R. E. Harlow points out that the Hebrew word $\pi\psi\upsilon$ does not mean to create but to establish. Hence, he contends that on the fourth day the thick clouds broke up and all the stars, sun and moon could be seen on the earth.⁶³ Simply put, Harlow believes that the luminaries were not created on the fourth day.

Redlich suggests that the creation of the luminaries on the fourth day is a creation by divine fiat in order to serve the purpose of dividing the day from the night and of being signs, and of giving light upon the earth.⁶⁴ Young categorically asserts that “the heavenly bodies are made on the fourth day and that the earth had received light from a source other than the sun is not a naïve conception, but is a plain and sober statement of the truth.”⁶⁵ Commenting on the fourth day, Boice states that the

⁶²Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 34.

⁶³R. E. Harlow, *Start of the Race: Studies in Genesis* (Scarborough, Ontario: Everyday, 1968), 8.

⁶⁴Redlich, *The Early Traditions of Genesis*, 59-60; See Sarna, *Genesis*, 7; Wood, *The Beginning*, 25.

⁶⁵Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 95. Andrew S. Kulikovsky states, “To affirm that light was created prior to the luminaries is as biblically reasonable as believing that God miraculously separated the Red Sea for the Israelites to march through on dry ground, that Christ was born of a virgin, or that he was raised from the dead (“A Critique of the Literary Framework View of the Days of Creation,” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 37 (2001): 240).

heavenly bodies which God created in the initial creative work in Genesis 1:1, were made visible when the skies were cleared sufficiently.⁶⁶ Hugh Ross states clearly that the lights were created ‘in the beginning.’⁶⁷ In the same vein, Hopkins states that the lights had been in existence ever the first verse of Genesis, which dates back into the womb of eternity when God created the stars.”⁶⁸ Young argues that it would be fair to say that the creation of the luminaries was completed on the fourth day. This is because the material from which the sun, moon, and stars were made was created at the absolute beginning (Gen 1:1).⁶⁹

Three main opinions may be fetched out from the above: (a) that the luminaries were created ‘in the beginning’; (b) that they were created on the first day; or (c) that they were created on the fourth day.

The relationship between light and luminaries, and even the activities of days 1 and 4 have been viewed differently. The lack of scholarly consensus on the subject warrants a further investigation.

The Relationship between אור and מְאֹרֹת

In this section, we shall seek to establish the right relationship between light and the luminaries of days 1 and 4 as well as the possibility of the existence of light without the sun as the text itself suggests.

⁶⁶James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982, 1998), 74-75.

⁶⁷Ross, *Creation and Time*, 149.

⁶⁸Hopkins, *Talks on the Book of Genesis*, 21. It is believed that our sun is only one of the millions of stars in the cosmic universe. See also Boice, *Genesis 1: 1-11: 32*, 65.

⁶⁹Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 95. See Vos, *Genesis*, 15. He leans on the fact that the word for “create” *bara*’ used earlier in the chapter does not occur in v. 16; to infer that the luminaries might have been created at earlier stages of creation in Gen 1:1.

The relationship between אור on day 1 and מְאֲרֵת on day 4 remains an enigma to unfold. It is worth noting that this particular subject was not of interest to the Church Fathers. It is believed that the light of the day is considered to be separate from the light of the sun everywhere in the OT.⁷⁰ Young states that “while, God did not assign an explicit function to the light created on day 1 as he did for the luminaries created on day 4.”⁷¹ Said differently, the אור “light” on day 1 is called יום “day” while the מְאֲרֵת “heavenly bodies” of day 4 are made to rule the day. Wayne Grudem argues that “the connection between day 1 and day 4 is not as precise as advocates would insist.”⁷² Robert V. McCabe posits that though “light is generally connected to luminaries, it may also exist independently from them, as is the case with the physical phenomena of lightning.”⁷³ Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline point out that both days 1 and 4 do not only address the same topics of light/darkness and day/night, but also make use of an identical language of separation (Gen 1:4, 14, 18).⁷⁴ It is in this perspective that Irons with Kline conclude that “the divine purposes in creating the light on day 1 and the luminaries on day 4 are identical.”⁷⁵ This notwithstanding, the two days are different from each other, contrary to the theories

⁷⁰Sverre Aalen, “אור,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:152.

⁷¹Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 96.

⁷²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 302.

⁷³Robert V. McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Account. Part 1,” *DBSJ* 10 (2005): 45.

⁷⁴Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, “The Framework View,” in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux, 2001), 228, n. 1.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 229.

propounded by the framework view's proponents.⁷⁶ In fact, Genesis 1 does not specifically state that God's purposes for creating אור on day 1 and קארית on day 4 are identical. Therefore, there seems to be is no biblical reason, whatsoever, for equating days 1 and 4, as the framework hypothesis seems to suggest.

The foregoing survey reveals a variety of scholarly views on Genesis 1:3-5, 14-19. The diversity of the scholarly views on the text seems to stem from the plurality of standpoints from which the text is examined. For instance, those who opine that the light of the first day emanated from the sun believe so because they can hardly comprehend the possibility to have the following: (1) the existence of light before the sun, the source of light; (2) the alternation of days and nights before the sun; (3) the creation of vegetation before the sun. In any case, the study would soon show that light and light-bearers bear a relationship one to another.

⁷⁶Framework view asserts that Days 1 and 4 of the Genesis creation account are equal or identical. This is also referred to as "Replacement mechanism." For more on this, see Irons with Kline, "The Framework View," especially pp. 228-229.

CHAPTER 3

LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Genesis 1 is the first and one of the most significant pericopes in the Bible. This passage has drawn the attention of scholars throughout history. Volumes of work have been produced. In spite of this, a lot of problem areas still remain to be explored. This chapter attempts to blend two complementary methods (i.e., exegesis and textlinguistics) in order to elucidate, in one way or the other, some of these problematic areas. These areas are of literary and linguistic nature. The literary aspect focuses on pericope delimitation, structure, and analysis of text type (genre); while the linguistic aspect deals with translation, textlinguistic analysis and lexical- semantics.

Literary Analysis

Genesis is known as a book of origins, dividing clearly into two major parts: the origins of the world and its peoples and problems (chaps 1-11) and the origin of Israel through God's covenantal promises made and fulfilled (chaps 12-50). Reading a passage in its literary context is attempting to comprehend how it relates to what surrounds it.¹ In other words, a literary context concerns itself with the particular way an author or editor has put a passage within a given piece of literature. Genesis 1, therefore, falls within the first section that deals with the origins of the world. The placement of the creation story at this point is very significant and far from fortuitous. In fact, without creation, the rest of Scripture becomes baseless and meaningless. In

¹Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 94. See also Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 54.

other words, Genesis 1 is the foundation of the whole Bible. This section begins by establishing and translating the text.

Delimitation and Translation

Some, on the one hand, contend that the unit ends at v.4a.² Proponents of such view are perhaps influenced by the source-critical understanding of the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. Furthermore, the linguistic similarities between 1:1 and 2:4a may account for this division. This may imply that 1:1 and 2:4a form an inclusio that demarcates the first pericope. Some still contend that 2:4 should not be divided into two but that the whole verse forms part of the first pericope (i.e., 1:1-2:4).³

Scholars are divided on the delimitation of the first pericope of Scripture. Some hold that the first literary unit ranges from Genesis 1:1-2:3.⁴ In fact, it is postulated that the *toledot* formula in Genesis (e.g., 2:4a being the first occurrence) uniformly introduces rather than concludes a section (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2).⁵

²John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, International Critical Commentary (ICC), 2d ed. (Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1930), 40; John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 39; Vos, *Genesis*, 10; Woodson, *The Beginning*, 13; Ellen Van Wolde, "Why the Verb ברא Does not Mean 'to Create' in Genesis 1:1-2:4a," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34.1 (2009):3-23.

³Alviero Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 183-184.

⁴John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 35-41, 65, 163; Sarna, *Genesis*, 14-17; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 5-10, 36, 49.

⁵Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 40-41; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6; Sailhamer, "Genesis," 10.

Considering the foregoing, this study argues in favor of the latter view (i.e., Gen 1:1-2:3).⁶ Though the study covers the entire pericope, the main focus of the paper is on vv.3-5 and vv.14-19 of Genesis 1. This notwithstanding, the translation concerns itself with the entire pericope.

Translating Genesis 1 is not an easy task. This is so because there are several variant readings to be considered in order to ascertain the best reading among them. These are among others the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX), and other variants. The fragments of Genesis found at Qumran, Masada, Murabba'at, and Nahal Hever show only few insignificant orthographic variants with the MT text of 1:1-2:3.⁷ With regard to the harmonizing character of the LXX and the other versions, and the merely orthographical differences among the Masoretic sources, the MT remains the best text base for a linguistic analysis of 1:1-2:3. Having said that, Genesis 1 may be translated from the Hebrew Bible (*BHS* hereafter)⁸ as follows:

V. 1: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

V. 2: As for the earth, it was formless-void. Darkness was over the *deep*, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

V. 3: Then God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light.

V. 4: God saw the light; it was good. Then God separated the light from the darkness.

V. 5: God named the light 'day,' but the darkness he named 'night'. There was evening and there was morning, first day.

V. 6: Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it be a separator between waters from waters!"

⁶See Sarna, *Genesis*, 14-17; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 5-10, 36, 49; Walton, *Genesis*, 35-41, 65, 163; Daniel K. Bediako, *Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies*, PhD dissertation (Cavite, Philippines: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2009), 76; Mark Ross, "The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Did God Create in Six Days?* Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall, ed. (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian, 1999).

⁷See these variants in apparatus II in Ronald S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 116-123. See also Emanuel Tov, "The Text of the Old Testament," in *The World of the Bible: Bible Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. A. S. van der Woude, trans. Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 167.

⁸K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977).

V. 7: So God made the expanse and he separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse. And so it was.

V. 8: God named the expanse 'heavens'. There was evening and there was morning, second day.

V. 9: Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, so that the dry land may appear!" So it was.

V. 10: God named the dry land 'earth', but the gathering of the waters he named 'seas'. God saw that it was good.

V. 11: Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plant yielding seed, fruit tree bearing fruit after its kind which has seed in it upon the earth!" So it was.

V. 12: The earth brought forth vegetation: plant yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit which has seed in it after its kind. And God saw that it was good.

V. 13: There was evening and there was morning, third day.

V. 14: Then God said, "Let there be luminaries in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the days and years,

V. 15: and let them be luminaries in the expanse of the heavens to shine upon the earth!" So it was.

V. 16: God made the two great lights—the greater light for the governing of the day and the lesser light for the governing of the night—and the stars.

V. 17: God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,

V. 18: to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good.

V. 19: There was evening and there was morning, fourth day.

V. 20: Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let flying creatures/birds fly above the earth over the expanse of the heavens!"

V. 21: So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed according to their kinds, and every winged creature according to its kind. God saw that it was good.

V. 22: God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let flying creatures multiply on the earth!"

V. 23: There was evening and there was morning, fifth day.

V. 24: Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kind(s): livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds!" So it was.

V. 25: God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. God saw that it was good.

V. 26: Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, so that they may have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the flying creatures of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth!"

V. 27: So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.

V. 28: And God blessed them. God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth!"

V. 29: God also said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit (tree) yielding seed; it shall be food for you.

V. 30: But to every beast of the earth and to every flying creature of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth which has the breath of life in it, (I have given) every green plant (shall be) for food." So it was.

V. 31: God saw everything that he had made. Indeed, it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

V. 2:1: Thus, the heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed.

V. 2: By the seventh day God had completed his work which he had done. Then he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.

V. 3: God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it he rested from all his work which God had *successfully*⁹ created.

There are no significant variant readings to the two paragraphs of primary concern in this study, namely, vv. 3-5 and vv. 14-19.

Literary Text Type

Scholarly opinions are widely divided on the genre of Genesis 1. Yet, the issue of genre is essential to the interpretation of any passage. For instance, those who view Genesis 1 as a poetic text would naturally interpret it as a non-historical-chronological account of creation within six literary days.

The passage may be taken as poetry *sui juris* due to certain features as numerical structuring, repetitions, formulaic expressions (e.g., "And God said," "Let there be X," "and it was so," "and God saw that it was good,"), poetic/archaic expressions, parallelisms, alliteration, inclusio and symmetry.¹⁰ Viewed from this perspective, Genesis 1 appears to be a refined product of an artist that is not to be read

⁹The infinitive לעשות (to make) functions as an adverbial modifier which may be translated efficiently, efficaciously, successfully, or positively completed.

¹⁰See Sarna, *Genesis*, 4; Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1984), 51; John S. Kselman, "The Recovery of Poetic Segments from the Pentateuchal Priestly Source," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978): 161-173.

literally. It may therefore be fair to argue that the author's intent was not to present the creation account in Genesis 1 in a chronological order.¹¹

On the other hand, Genesis 1 may also be read as a prose/narrative for some reasons. To begin with, some commentators argue that the placement of Genesis 1 at the beginning of the book of Genesis is in line with its historical narrative implications.¹² Gerhard von Rad argues that "there is no trace of the hymnic element in the language, nor is anything said that needs to be understood symbolically or whose deeper meaning has to be deciphered."¹³ This is further supported by the flow of the account, its placement and function in the early chapters of the book, its dissimilarity with other poetic texts in OT, its less complete symmetry, lack of metrical balance, and the presence of narratological attributes.¹⁴ Considering the aforementioned characteristics, one may rightly be tempted to interpret the passage as a historical narrative text type. Gerhard F. Hasel has this to say about the genre of Genesis 1:

Based on the relationship with the remainder of Genesis (and the Bible as a whole), the creation account (Genesis 1:1-2:3), can be properly designated in its literary form. The creation account of Genesis 1 is a historical prose-record, written in rhythmic style, recording factually and accurately "what" took place in the creation of "the heavens and the earth," depicting the time "when" it

¹¹Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 50. See also Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 55-56.

¹²J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 150.

¹³von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 47-48.

¹⁴William H. Shea, "The Unity of the Creation Account," *Origins* 5 (1978): 9-38; John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 150; David P. Scaer, "The Problem of Inerrancy and Historicity in Connection with Genesis 1-3," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41 (1977): 21-25; Noel Weeks, "The Hermeneutical Problem of Genesis 1-11," *Themelios* 4 (1978): 17-19; Tremper Longman III, and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994, 2006), 54. Longman III and Dillard point out the so-called *waw* consecutive verbal form that is the basic characteristic of narrative in the Hebrew Bible, and the frequent *tôl' dô t* formulae that structure the book of Genesis in general, and conclude that the author intended the book to be read as a work of history that recounts what has taken place the far-distant past.

took place, describing the processes of "how" it was done and identifying the divine Being "who" brought it forth.¹⁵

Textlinguistic analysis has provided fresh avenues for determining the text type of a passage. Robert E. Longacre has developed a framework for text typology. He opines that three notable characteristics are to be considered in classifying text types: agent orientation, contingent temporal succession, and projection (future orientation).¹⁶ The use of such parameters has produced several major text types, namely narrative (+agent; +succession; +/-projection), procedural (-agent; +succession; +/-projection), behavioral (+agent; -succession; +/-projection), and expository (-agent; -succession; +/-projection).¹⁷ Predictive and hortatory text types are generally analogous to procedural and behavioral text types respectively.¹⁸ "The matrix text types may further be subdivided, due particularly to the presence or absence of the projection parameter."¹⁹ For instance, a narrative may either be a story/history (-projection) or a prophesy (+projection).²⁰ Besides, Longacre has worked out a number of verb clines (i.e., band scheme) that are text-type specific.²¹ It is based on this 'band' or salience scheme that Longacre proceeds to analyze the

¹⁵Hasel, "The "Days" of Creation in Genesis 1," 5-38. See also Steven Boyd, "A Proper Reading of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Thousands . . . Not Billions*, ed. D. DeYoung (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005), 157-170.

¹⁶Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed. (New York: Plenum, 1996), 9-10.

¹⁷Ibid., 10. See also Bediako, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies," 252.

¹⁸Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 59, 106.

¹⁹Bediako, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies," 253.

²⁰Robert E. Longacre and Shin Ja J. Hwang. "A Textlinguistic Approach to the Biblical Hebrew Narrative of Jonah," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 338.

²¹Bediako, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies," 255.

relative hierarchy of clauses within a given text type.²² Longacre observes that in narrative text type, for instance, foreground is signaled emically by *wayyiqtol* (preterite), background actions by perfect or noun (focus) plus perfect, background activities by participles (הנה + participle, participle, or noun + participle), and setting by descriptive structures (i.e., preterite of הנה, perfect of הנה, verbless clauses, and existential clauses).²³

Genesis 1 is replete with *wayyiqtol* clauses. Such clauses are characteristic of the historical narrative text type. Longacre states that *wayyiqtol* clauses “typically represent punctiliar sequential happenings” or express “sequentiality.”²⁴ The idea of sequentiality or temporal succession in Genesis 1 seems further suggested by the seemingly redundant reiteration of the grammatical subject אלהים. Francis I. Andersen has observed that “a seemingly redundant unnecessarily repeated subject noun serves to highlight the distinctiveness of an event, to mark that event as sequential in time more clearly.”²⁵ In relation to Genesis 1, he states that “throughout the narrative, the seemingly needless repetition of the unchanged subject (always ‘God’) marks off the distinct actions, successive in time.”²⁶

The prose particle counting method has also seemed to help identify Genesis 1 as a prose narrative. David Noel Freedman submits that “the prose particle count,

²²Robert E. Longacre, “Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 180-181; idem, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 81, 107, 121.

²³Longacre, “Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb,” 180; idem, *Joseph—A Story of Divine Providence*, 81. See also Bediako, “Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies,” 255.

²⁴Robert E. Longacre, “Building for the Worship of God: Exodus 25:1-30:10,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 22.

²⁵Francis I. Andersen, “Salience, Implicature, Ambiguity, and Redundancy in Clause-Clause Relationships in Biblical Hebrew,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 170.

²⁶Ibid.

overall, is an excellent indicator and discriminator in separating prose from poetry, and also in indicating the possible middle category, especially for the prophetic corpus.²⁷

He then gives the following prose particle count percentages and their corresponding categorization: 5% or less (poetry), 15% or more (prose), 5-10% (probably poetry), and 10-15% (likely poetic).²⁸ A rough count of these particles indicates that in Genesis 1, the direct object marker (־תָּא/תָּא) occurs twenty eight times, the relative particle (אֲשֶׁר) appears twelve times, and the consonantal article (הַ), seventy-four times. Together, these particles make up 114 of the 468 words in the pericope, representing 24.4%. Based on Freedman's definition, Genesis 1 is clearly a prose literary unit.

It may be concluded that Genesis 1 should be read as / historical narrative text type, even though it seems to lack exact parallels in the OT. Without denying some of the poetic elements present in Genesis 1, the text is best read as historical narrative text type in its own right.

Literary Context Structure

Mapping out the literary structure of a passage has a bearing on its interpretation. Douglas Stuart opines that understanding the structure of a passage is to appreciate the flow of content designed into the passage by the mind of the author, whether consciously or unconsciously.²⁹ Gorman posits that the *structure* of a passage refers to

²⁷David Noel Freedman, "Another Look at Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTSup, no. 40 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1987), 16.

²⁸Freedman, "Another Look at Hebrew Poetry," 17.

²⁹Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 50.

its parts, its main divisions.³⁰ Considering the significance of a literary structure, some have believed that discerning the structure of a text is the key to exegesis.³¹ It follows therefore that “consulting reference works to ascertain the literary structure of biblical writings is valuable.”³² This segment presents the literary context, the linear, and symmetric structures of Genesis 1.

Genesis 1: 3-5, 14-19 falls within the first pericope (Gen 1) of the Bible. Some view the unit as the majestic opening chapter of both the Hebrew and the Christian Bible.³³ It introduces the two main subjects of Holy Scripture, God the Creator and man his creature, and set the scene for the long tale of their relationship.³⁴ The structure of Genesis 1 seems to yield more insight into the current debate. This pericope may be divided into three main sections: Genesis 1:1-2; 1:3-31; 2:1-3. Genesis 1:1-2 constitutes the first section and provides antecedent information³⁵ to the reader that there was a certain prior creation. Genesis 1 3-31 presents the six days creation designed to make the uninhabitable earth (v. 2) habitable for humankind. Genesis 2:1-3 informs the reader that upon His creative work in six literal days, God ceased/rested on the seventh day.

Collins points out that the use of the perfect tense in 1:1-2 denotes an event that took place before the main storyline got underway,³⁶ while the *wayyiqtol* verb

³⁰Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 89. Italics by author.

³¹Ibid., 88.

³²Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 96.

³³Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 5.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Daniel K. Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic Function of Genesis 1:1-2 in the Creation Narrative,” *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 3 (2014): 18.

³⁶Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 55.

form functions as “the backbone or storyline tense of Biblical Hebrew narrative discourse.³⁷ It follows that, the verb forms indicate that the creation of “the heavens and the earth” was separate from, and preceded the events of the first day creation. In fact, the fronting³⁸ of the prepositional phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית (in beginning) is not fortuitous. Well understood, this prepositional phrase should best be translated as “previously.” Hence, “previously, God created the heavens and the earth.”³⁹

Much remains unknown about the content of the creation of “the heavens and the earth.” Nonetheless, some believe that the expression “the heavens and the earth” include the entire physical universe of galaxies, stars, planets, etc.⁴⁰ In the same vein, Wayne Grudem, equates them with “the entire universe” and “entire creation.”⁴¹ With such definition in mind, it would be tempting to conclude that the creation of the luminaries (sun, moon, and stars) preceded the six days creation. Moreover, some commentators contend that the symmetry suggests that 1:1-2:3 should not be taken as a chronological or literal/historical account. It is against such background that Henri Blocher argues that Genesis 1 is “an artistic arrangement, a modest example of

³⁷See Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic Function of Genesis 1: 1-2, 13.”

³⁸In verbal clauses, the clause may be split into two fields: preverbal field and main (or post verbal) field. Each of these fields has some obligatory order for the placement of components. Discourse analysts believe that a non-obligatory element in the preverbal position is said to be fronted. Marked word order/fronting has significant semantic- pragmatic functions in Textlinguistics (see Barry L. Bandstra, “Word Order and Emphasis in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Syntactic Observations on Genesis 22 from a Discourse Perspective,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 120.

³⁹The fronting of the prepositional phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית seems to be intentionally placed by the author to preclude the reader from amalgamating the initial/prior creation in Gen 1:1 with the creation of the first day in v. 3. See Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic Function of Genesis 1: 1-2,” 19.

⁴⁰See Bruce Waltke, *Creation and Chaos: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Biblical Cosmogony* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 20, 25-26. See also Young, *Studies in Genesis*, 9; John D. Currid, “An Explanation of the Egyptian Background of the Genesis Cosmogony,” *Bibhsche Zeitschrift* 35 (1991): 31.

⁴¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 273, 290-291.

anthropomorphism that is not to be taken literally. The author's intention is not to supply us with a chronology of origins."⁴²

However, the structure of the pericope will shortly prove that the above arguments seem to be shipwrecked. Several types of structure may be sketched from Genesis 1 although for the purpose of this study, only two major types would be addressed, namely, a linear/formal structure, and a symmetric/ thematic structure. Both structures seem to have the potential to throw more insight into the study.

The linear structure of Genesis 1 may yield more insight into the current debate. Genesis 1 can be outlined to highlight its formal elements. Therefore, this linear structure summarizes the divine acts of creation throughout the eight paragraphs. This structure may be presented as follows:⁴³

- Antecedent information (1:1-2)
 - Heavens and earth created (v. 1)
 - Earth uninhabitable at creation (v. 2)
- Day One (1:3-5)
 - Creation of Light
 - Light and darkness separated
- Day Two (1:6-8)
 - Creation of Firmament
 - Waters divided
- Day Three (1:9-13)
 - Waters gathered together to form seas
 - Dry land then appears
 - Plants/vegetation covers the dry land
- Day Four (1:14-19)
 - Luminaries
- Day Five (1:20-23)
 - Fish
 - Birds
 - God pronounces blessing on fish and birds
- Day Six (1:24-31)
 - Land animals

⁴²Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 50.

⁴³Cf. Redlich, *The Early Traditions of Genesis*, 50; See also J. T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 37; D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 49.

Human beings
 God blesses humans
 Plants made food for humans and other creatures
 Day Seven (2:1-3)
 Synopsis of days 1-6
 Creation completed on the sixth day
 God rests on day seven
 God blesses and sanctifies the seventh day

The linear structure showcases that Genesis 1 is logically and chronologically structured. The events follow a sequential order. Genesis 1:1-2 functions as antecedent information prompting the reader that there was a prior creation (v.1) in which waters and darkness might have been included. Verse 2 describes the initial state of the earth when it was created. Verses 3-31 describe the six days creation whereby the earth that was in the condition of *תהו ובהו* (formless and void/ pre-existent chaos/uninhabitable),⁴⁴ was made habitable for man. Said differently, v. 3 begins with the creation of life on Earth.⁴⁵ Curiously, the divine activity on each of the six days of creation begins with the *wayyiqtol* clause *וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים* “then God said.” This pattern seems to be a clear indication that God created everything by fiat command save man and woman. This may further imply that the creation of light on day 1 and the luminaries on day 4 are both *creatio ex nihilo* “creation out of nothing.” Genesis 2:1-3 appears to be a sum-up of both the creative acts of days one to six and indicates that God rested on day seven, consecutively to his undertakings throughout days one to six. If this is correct, then 2:1-3 underpins the chronological understanding of 1:1-2:3.

⁴⁴Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 58; idem, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975): 216-228; J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 70; von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 49.

⁴⁵Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 101-109; A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 89-95.

It has already been established that the linear structure threw some light on the understanding of Genesis 1. The thematic structure, on the other hand, is based on the overall symmetry (i.e., two triads of days) within Genesis 1. It is in this context that many scholars who emphasize this symmetry tend to argue that the eight creative acts in 1:1-2:3 are merely, literarily arranged in a six-day scheme, with the last three days corresponding thematically to the first three days.⁴⁶ The symmetric structure may be represented as follows:⁴⁷

[In the Beginning] Heavens and Earth (vv. 1-2)	
[Day 1] Light and separation of darkness (vv.3-5)	[Day 4] Lights (vv.14-19)
[Day 2] Sky & separation of waters (vv.6-8)	[Day 5] Fish & birds (vv.20-23)
[Day 3] Dry land & seas	[Day 6] Land animals & Human Vegetation (vv. 9-13) beings (vv. 24-31)
[Day 7] Seventh day Rest	

The above structure showcases explicitly that 1:1-2 and 2:1-3 fall outside the symmetry, insinuating that they are not part of the six days of creation. Conversely, the bi-triadic structure encapsulating day 1 through day 6 shows that the first three days have their correspondence in the last three days. In other words, God spent His time creating spaces/regions in the first three days and filled them in the last three days. Thus, it may be inferred that the *מְאֹרֹת* (containers) seem to have been created on the fourth day to be filled with the *אוֹר* (light) created on the first day. The firmament created on the second day was filled by birds and the waters with fish. The dry land created on the third day was filled with animals and human beings on the sixth day.

⁴⁶Sarna, *Genesis*, 4; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 125; Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, ICC, 9.

⁴⁷See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6; Terence E. Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol.1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 241.

In support of the foregoing, Walsh's generic symmetry may be noted. In fact, putting the mainline story (Gen 1:3-31) in perspective, Walsh presents the symmetry below that he labels 'forward symmetry':⁴⁸

- A. First day: light (1:3-5)
- B. Second day: firmament, called sky, divides the waters (1:6-8)
- C1. Third day: sea and earth (1:9-10)
- C2. Third day: plants (1:11-13)
- A'. Fourth day: lights (1:14-19)
- B'. Fifth day: fish in the waters and birds in the firmament of the sky (1:20-23)
- C1'. Sixth day: animals of the earth (1:24-25)
- C+. Sixth day: humankind (1:26-28)
- C2'. Sixth day: plants for food (1:29-31)

Walsh has pointed out that C+ (the creation of human beings) of day six lacks a balancing element in day three, hence C+ (vv. 26-28) is asymmetrical. He puts it this way:

The forward symmetry is broken by the inclusion of an extra act of creation on the sixth day, namely the creation of human kind. Since the fundamental effect of asymmetry is to call attention to the anomalous element, the creation of humankind stands out emphatically as especially important within the account of the coming-to-be of the cosmos.⁴⁹

It may be observed that days 1 and 4 display a perfect symmetry. It ensues that there should be no amalgamation between אור and מְאֹרֹת. The former has a rich semantic range: light of the day (Gen 1:4), light from a body such as the sun, lightning, or fire (Ps 78:14), daybreak (Judg 19:26) in reference to time.

God is also perceived as the אור (light) of those who are faithful to Him (Mic 7:8). The word מְאֹרֹת (lights) may not be the same as אור (light) of vv. 3-4; it may

⁴⁸Walsh, *Style and Structure*, 11.

⁴⁹Ibid., 105.

mean among others sources of light, light holders, light containers, luminaries.⁵⁰ Thus

Collins has this to say:

We also note that we need not see Genesis 1:3, “let there be light,” and 1:14, “let there be lights,” as describing the same event; the word in verse 3 is “light” (אור, *’ôr*), while that in verse 14 is “lights” (מארת, *me’ôrôt*), that is, “light-bearers.” We can take these verses as describing God calling for the “dawn” of the first day and appointing the heavenly lights to their function in service of mankind on the fourth day. God’s activity may be supernatural, but that is not the same as *creation*.⁵¹

It may therefore be in order to surmise that אור and מארת are two different things, as the textlinguistic analysis will soon show.

Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 1:3-5 and 1:14-19

It has been pointed out (see Appendix) that the creation of הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ does not designate the creation of the universe in its organized, completed state but rather pointed to its totality.⁵² In other words, הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ needed further divine work to make both הַשָּׁמַיִם and הָאָרֶץ conducive for human life. This seems to be corroborated by the author’s statement in Genesis 2:1: וַיִּכְלֹוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude.” It is noteworthy that this statement intervenes after the six-day creation (Gen 1:3-31). This is far from being the resultant of mere chance. It unmistakably betrays how logical the author was, in narrating the creation story. Having ascertained that Genesis 1:1-2 is the bedrock upon which Genesis 1:3-31 is laid (see Appendix), it goes without saying that this reinforces the hypothesis that the prior creation (1:1-2) was incomplete in the

⁵⁰“Let there be lights,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed., Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978-2002), 1:212.

⁵¹Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 58.

⁵²Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 142. However, some scholars argue that הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ include all things. See Cyrus H. Gordon, *The World of the Old Testament* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1958), 35-37.

sense that the atmosphere created initially was not readily fit for human life until the six-day creation was ended. The statement in Genesis 2:1, far from being superfluous, rather signals the completion of **הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ** in their fullness. In this section, our interest centers on the six-day creation and more precisely on the creation that took place on days 1 and 4 in Genesis 1:3-5 and 1:14-19 respectively.

As shown in the analysis of literary structure, days 1 and 4 display a perfect symmetry. In what follows, we briefly analyze Genesis 1:3-5 and 1:14-19 from the textlinguistic perspective.

This study leans on the assumption that Genesis 1:3-5 does not have a textual problem susceptible to endanger the integrity of the passage. For practical purpose, different colors have been used to delineate the clauses. It reads textually from the *BHS* as follows:

³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר
⁴ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הָאוֹר וַיִּבֶן הַחֹשֶׁךְ
⁵ וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קִרְא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד

There are ten clauses in Genesis 1:3-5. Grouped according to clause types, they are as follows: *wayyiqtol* (3a, 3c, 4a, 4c, 5a, 5c, 5d), *yiqtol* (3b), (*w^e*)-*x-qatal* (5b), *nominal/copula* (4b). The *wayyiqtol* clauses are generally used to express events that are temporally and logically sequential, as it is the case here. The *yiqtol* clause is a direct quotation introduced by the *wayyiqtol* clause. The (*w^e*)-*x-qatal* clause (5b) contrasts a contemporaneous activity with that of the *wayyiqtol* clause (5a). This notwithstanding, the shift from (*w^e*)-*x-qatal* plus simple nominal clauses in Genesis 1:2a (i.e., ... תהו וְבהוּ) to *wayyiqtol* in 1:3a (i.e., וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים) heralds a movement from antecedent information to the foreground information (i.e., the

narrative proper) introduced by וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים (3a).⁵³ Upon a close reading, it appears that all the clauses are introduced by a *wayyiqtol* clause to the exception of the following: the *yiqtol* (3b) clause וַיְהִי אֹרֶךְ which is a jussive direct quotative clause, and the (*w^e*)-*x-qatal* clause (5b) is vividly and concomitantly depicting the disparity between הָעֲשֵׂה/לְיָמָה and אֹרֶךְ/יָמִים. With this in mind, it would not be needless to state that the *wayyiqtol* pattern at the beginning of the clauses in paragraph 2 of Genesis 1 betrays the author's intent to express the temporal succession of divine creative activities. Genesis 1: 3-5 appears therefore to be a unified paragraph portrayed by the recurrence of the grammatical subject (אֱלֹהִים) and the object (אֹרֶךְ).⁵⁴

Informed by the foregoing, what relationship may we establish between Genesis 1:3-5 and 1: 1-2? It has been established (see Appendix) that Genesis 1:1 relays the grand creation story of the heavens and the earth (i.e., the universe in its totality). On the other hand, 1:2a describes the state of the earth as it had been created, while clauses 2b and 2c further describe the condition of the primeval earth. In v. 2b, the earth is portrayed as being covered with darkness. As to how long this darkness has been on the surface of the deep, is not the concern of this study. However, it is significant to point out that the presence of darkness on the proto-earth necessitated the creation of אֹרֶךְ “light” on יָמִים אֲדָמָה to alternate with the said phenomenon of

⁵³Bediako, “Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies,” 131.

⁵⁴Francis I. Andersen insightful observation in his work “Salience, Implicature, Ambiguity, and Redundancy in Clause-Clause Relationships in Biblical Hebrew,” in *BHDL*, 107, is worth noting at this point: “My hypothesis is that a seemingly redundant unnecessarily repeated subject noun serves to highlight the distinctiveness of an event, to mark that event as sequential in time more clearly, but not to the extent of giving that event episode status on the main storyline. Hebrew has special high-level transition markers for clustering events into episodes. Fronting a subject is one such device. Sequence patterns add another dimension to the repertoire of clause types.” He continues, “Just as repetition of a (redundant) subject makes successive clauses more distinctive, so ellipsis of an object expected with a transitive verb binds clauses closer together. The term *ellipsis* is not appropriate. There is nothing ‘missing’, so long as we read the two-clause complex as one coherent grammatical entity” (ibid., 109; italics original). This means that the repetition of the unchanged subject אֱלֹהִים in Gen 1 “marks off the distinct actions, successive in time. . . The thirty-one occurrences of God as the subject of a *wayyiqtol* clause mark clearly the thirty-one distinctive events in the creation story” (Ibid., 107).

darkness. This implies that the creation of light on יום אֶהָד marks a tacit beginning of time as we know it today.

The clause וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם “God called the light Day” (v.5a) equates אוֹר and יוֹם. This insinuates that אוֹר is not a tangible object of divine creation just as יוֹם is not. In the same vein, the clause וַלְחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה “and the darkness he called night” (5b) shows that חֹשֶׁךְ is equated with לַיְלָה. It follows that the two pairs יוֹם\אוֹר and חֹשֶׁךְ\לַיְלָה are respectively opposites. The clause וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶהָד “and there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (v.5c) seems to suggest that עֶרֶב plus בֹקֶר makes יוֹם. If אוֹר is equal to יוֹם and יוֹם is equal to עֶרֶב plus בֹקֶר, then אוֹר should equal עֶרֶב plus בֹקֶר. This, however, is not the case. It ensues that יוֹם in v.5a and יוֹם in v.5c are not to be construed the same way. While יוֹם in v.5a is best understood as “daytime,” or “daylight,” יוֹם in v.5c is to be viewed as a 24-hour day, covering daytime and nighttime. It goes without saying that אוֹר parallels בֹקֶר and עֶרֶב equals לַיְלָה.

Taken together, both אוֹר and בֹקֶר correspond to “daytime,” “daylight,” or “morning.” Simply put, יוֹם/אוֹר was purposely created to alternate with the already existing לַיְלָה/חֹשֶׁךְ in order to constitute a literal 24-hour solar day.

Genesis 1:14-19 is the paragraph that parallels that of 1:3-5 as displayed in the symmetric and generic structures. As established above, God created אוֹר (light) on the first day, while He created מְאֹרֹת (luminaries) on the fourth day. The relationship between אוֹר and מְאֹרֹת has occasioned a long scholarly debate. This section aims at scrutinizing this paragraph from a textlinguistic perspective. For reasons of convenience, Genesis 1:14-19 has been delineated by the means of different colors. The passage reads textually from the *BHS* as follows:

בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאוֹתוֹת¹⁴ וַיִּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל

וְלִמְוָעֲדִים וְלַיָּמִים וְשָׁנִים
 וַיְהִי־כֵן¹⁵ וַהֲיָיוּ לְמַאֲרַת בְּרַקִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֲרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת־הַמָּאֹר הַגְּדֹל לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־הַמָּאֹר
 הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים
 וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרַקִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ¹⁷
 וְלַמְשַׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב¹⁸
 וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם רִבְעִי¹⁹

A cursory look at the text above indicates that 1:14-19 is composed of at least fourteen (14) clear-cut clauses as follows: *wayyiqtol* (14a,15c,16,17a,18c,19), *yiqtol* (14b), *weqatal* (14d,15a), and *infinitival* (14c,15b,17b,18a,18b). As it has already been stated, the *wayyiqtol* clauses present foreground information (i.e., temporal sequential happenings) within the paragraph. It may be observed that *wayyiqtol* clauses pervade all verses in 1:14-19 insinuating that the creation of the luminaries (מַאֲרֹת) occurs within the context of divine sequential activities. The jussive *yiqtol* clause begins a direct quotation while the *weqatal* clauses convey the upshot of the *yiqtol* clause. The infinitival clauses usually have the vocation of relaying the purpose of a given activity or event. Hence, clauses 14c and 15b express clearly the functions of the created luminaries. Having said that, the question that remains to be answered is whether paragraph 5 maintains any correlation with paragraph 2, as the symmetric structure seems to suggest.

To begin with, it must be noted that some intertextual markers mentioned in the previous paragraphs seem to pervade the current one (i.e., paragraph 5). These markers include בְּרַקִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם (e.g., 14b, 15a, 17a) that is already mentioned in paragraph 3 (i.e., day 2). Days 3 and 4 have in common the word אָרֶץ (15b, 17b) signifying that paragraph 4 and 5 are interconnected. Days 1 and 4 have the following markers in common: אֹר (15b, 17b [used here as an infinitive verb], 18a), יוֹם (16, 18a, 19), חֹשֶׁךְ (18a), לַיְלָה (14c, 16, 18a), עֶרֶב \ בֹּקֶר (19), and the unchanged subject אֱלֹהִים (14a, 16a, 17a, 18b). It can therefore be observed that though paragraph 5 is related to

the previous paragraphs, paragraphs 2 and 5 (i.e., days 1 and 4) have more elements in common. This reinforces the perfect equilibrium existing between days 1 and 4, as displayed by the symmetries. The fact that subsequent paragraphs make reference to elements used by previous paragraphs attests of the unbending course and logical progression from day 1 through 4.

In addition, *מְאֹרֹת* is further described in v.16 as *הַמְאֹר הַגָּדוֹל* “the greater light,” *הַמְאֹר הַקָּטָן* “the lesser light”, and *הַכּוֹכָבִים* “the stars.”⁵⁵ Their functions include the following: (1) to separate the day from the night/to separate the light (*אוֹר*) from the darkness (*הַחֹשֶׁךְ*); (2) to be for signs, and for seasons and for days and for years; (3) to give light on the earth; and (4) to rule over the day and over the night.

If the aforementioned are the functions of *מְאֹרֹת*, then *אוֹר* (vv.3-5) and *מְאֹרֹת* (vv.14-19) do not have the same referent. The following arguments suffice to substantiate this claim. First, the function of *אוֹר* is not clearly stated, whereas the *מְאֹרֹת*

⁵⁵The question as to why the author did not use the specific words for sun (*שֶׁמֶשׁ*, *shemesh*) and moon (*יָרֵחַ*, *yareach*), but rather “greater light” and “lesser light” has been a bone of contention. Kissling, “Genesis,” 1:111, believes that it was probably to avoid confusion with *Shamash* the sun god and *Yarich* the moon god. The creation of the stars (*הַכּוֹכָבִים*) has long been debated alongside with that of the sun and the moon. While there is less or no contention on who created them, some are dubious whether they were created on the fourth day or on an earlier time. Astronomers have often argued on favour of the stars being older than the moon, the sun, and the earth at large. This seems to have led Colin House in translating Gen 1:16 as follows: “And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night *with* the stars.” According to House, the particle *וְ* is not to be considered as a direct object marker. He believes that the fact that the stars were mentioned specifically by their name signifies that they were created before the greater light and the smaller light. (See Colin House, “Some Notes on Translating *וְנֹאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים* in Gen 1: 16,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25/3 (1987): 241-248, italics his). This order in the creation of the luminaries (stars, sun, and moon) follows that of the *Enuma Elish* (Creation Epic). See Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 25. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, argues for the creation of the luminaries prior to the fourth day. He allegedly bases his argument on the Hebrew grammar and syntax of v.14 as compared to v.6, and conclude that a better translation of the Hebrew is, “Let the lights be to separate.” By this, Sailhamer insinuates that the luminaries were created before the fourth day, but they were assigned their purpose on that very day. This, however, is debatable in light of the same grammar and syntax as presented in the *BHS*. Based on the foregoing, and 1:16 especially, that God made the two great lights (i.e., the sun and the moon), it is likely that the stars were created at an earlier time, but were now joined by the moon to rule the night. It is therefore in order that the introduction of v.16 by the author aimed at affirming one theological point—that the stars were also made by God (see Randall W. Younker, *God’s Creation: Exploring the Genesis Story* [Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1999], 36). Ultimately, the main reason for this alleged parenthetical statement was intended to preclude the Hebrews, for whom the book was written, from yielding to the heathen practices of star-gazing and star-worship (cf. Deut 4:19).

are assigned specific functions, as stated above. Second, the *מְאֲרֹת* are to separate *יָוֹם/אֹר* from *הַשָּׁמַיִם/לְיָלֵהָ אֹר*. This requires that both *אֹר* and *מְאֲרֹת* be different from each other. Third, the fourth day seems to advance from the first in the sense that the *waw* consecutive introducing v. 14 suggests sequence and not temporal recapitulation.⁵⁶

Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. is of the same view but states it in his own words:

We are not to look at day 4 as a replacement act, but rather as an advance. It is significant that God declares the light good and not the separation of light and darkness. When we compare this with the absence of the declaration of goodness on day 2, because the work was incomplete and needed to be advanced, we see that God is signifying more to be done with respect to the separation of light and darkness.⁵⁷

Fourth, both *אֹר* and *מְאֲרֹת* give light to the earth, but while the latter are spatially localized in the dome of the sky (v. 17a), the former is not. Fifth, while *אֹר* may be construed as both phenomenal (light) and temporal (daytime), the *מְאֲרֹת* may be, at best, taken as time markers. Sixth, the two differing jussive quotative clauses *יְהִי אֹר* (1:3) and *יְהִי מְאֲרֹת* (1:14) suggest that *אֹר* and *מְאֲרֹת* are not to be conflated.

Moreover, it may be safe to say that the recurrence of preceding elements in this paragraph, the repetition of *מְאֲרֹת*, the uniqueness of the agent, and logical sequence of the unfolding narrative seem to militate not only for the homogeneity of this paragraph (vv. 14-19), but also for its plausible connection to the previous ones, especially paragraph 2.

If the above is correct, then, it would be in order to argue that the prior creation in Genesis 1:1-2 was not complete, as suggests 2:1. In other words, the luminaries— which form a great part of our solar system— were likely not created

⁵⁶Robert E. Grossmann, “The Light He Called ‘Day,’” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 3 (1987): 175.

⁵⁷Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., “From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?* eds. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 176.

before the fourth day. In light of the analysis, they are best viewed as effected objects of the sequential divine act on day 4.

If the origin of the light on day 1 still remains an enigma, it is because some have put the God-factor of creation out of the equation. God is capable of bringing light out of nothing because He alone can speak and things will appear.

Lexical- Semantic Analysis

The above section concerned itself mainly with the syntactic-pragmatic functions of relevant paragraphs and intertextual markers to our study. This segment attempts a lexical-semantic analysis of some key words that are susceptible to yielding more insight into the current debate. The study of words in the Bible is foundational to correct exegesis and crucial for viable and reliable exposition. Word study is a methodical analysis of the semantic range of a word or wording designed to arrive at its specific meaning in a given passage.⁵⁸ A word study seeks therefore to ascertain how the word or wording under scrutiny is used (1) in general, (2) in various contexts, and (3) in the passage itself.⁵⁹ It is, likely, in this perspective that Gorman states that any “word study” that overlooks the context in which the word is found, misrepresents the word’s significance.⁶⁰ This word study does not claim to be complete and exhaustive; nevertheless, it has the potential to contribute to the deliberation. It is hoped that this analysis will help clarify the relationship between אור and קְאֹרֶת. To this end, important words will be studied, namely בָּרָא, עָשָׂה, יָצַר, יוֹם, אֹר, אור,

⁵⁸Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 114.

⁵⁹Ibid. Emphasis his. For more information of the theory behind word studies, see Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

⁶⁰Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 110.

מֵאֵרֶת. Only the verbs בָּרָא and עָשָׂה have a direct bearing on the creation of אֵרֶץ and מֵאֵרֶת. The verb יָצַר does not contribute directly to the discussion, though it remains an important creation verb. There is a general presupposition that בָּרָא is used for *ex-nihilo* creation or new things which עָשָׂה is not.⁶¹ Can this be sustained in the text?

בָּרָא

The Hebrew verb בָּרָא, as a creation verb,⁶² is of profound theological significance because it seems to have only God as its subject.⁶³ The verb בָּרָא is used 48 times in the OT.⁶⁴ Out of these occurrences, בָּרָא is used five times only in Genesis 1,⁶⁵ but prolifically used in Isa 40-65. The etymology of the verb is still disputed among commentators.⁶⁶ The verb בָּרָא is universally accepted as the technical and theological creation term whenever it functions in the Qal and Niphal binyanim.⁶⁷ The

⁶¹Sarna, *Genesis*, 3; Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 6; Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 26; Harlow, *Start of the Race*, 8.

⁶²Karl Eberlein, *Gott der Schöpfer—Israels Gott: eine exegetisch-hermeneutische Studie Zur theologischen Funktion alttestamentlicher Schöpfungsaussagen* (Frankfurt: Peter Long, 1989), 75-82, mentions nine different Hebrew verbs that are used to depict creation in the OT as follows: בָּרָא, יָצַר, עָשָׂה, כּוּן, צָמַח, רָקַע, יָסַד, גָּטָה, פָּעַל, עָשָׂה.

⁶³See Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 6; Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 40; Sarna, *Genesis*, 3; Hartley, *Genesis*, 43; Gowan, *From Eden to Babel*, 18; Henderson, *Studies in Genesis*, 19; Woodson, *The Beginning*, 13; Redlich, *The Early Tradition of Genesis*, 54.

⁶⁴A Complete listing of the occurrences of בָּרָא in the OT is supplied by Ethan Theodore Mengers, "The Idea of Creation in the Old Testament," (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1957), 24, no 6. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 40, makes mention of 50 occurrences of the verb in the OT.

⁶⁵Of these occurrences three are in a single verse and refer to the creation of man (1:27), the verb is also used of the creation of the great sea monsters (1:21), and in (2:3) in reference to the creation in completion (cf. Thomas J. Finley, "Dimensions of the Hebrew Word for 'Create' (בָּרָא)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148 [October-December 1991]: 409-423). However, Henderson, *Studies in Genesis*, 19, believes that the verb is used only three times for three reasons: (1) to describe that act of God by which the material universe came into being (v.1), (2) to describe the divine power by which animal life was brought into existence (v.21), and (3) to describe the origin of man (v.27).

⁶⁶Some Hebrew lexicons provide the verbal root בָּרָא twice, I. בָּרָא "shape," "create," II. בָּרָא "be fat." See Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers* (1979), s.v. "בָּרָא."

⁶⁷See Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 6, states that in the Qal stem, בָּרָא is employed exclusively of the divine activity. See also Michael J. Guenther, "The Scriptural Doctrine on First Creation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 9 (1947): 127-146.

verb בָּרָא has come to gain so great a theological meaning that a mere mention of it is always reminiscent of the original account of creation of the universe often termed grand/prior/initial creation. Some believe that the verb בָּרָא is never used with foreign gods.⁶⁸

In an attempt to grasp the contours of this eminent creation verb, it has often been alleged that בָּרָא implies *creatio ex nihilo*.⁶⁹ Such an allegation may find its roots in the apocryphal writing of 2 Maccabees 7:28: “I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being.” The creation by divine fiat seems to give impetus to the same claim.⁷⁰ The difficulty in rendering it, is reinforced by the fact that “there is no passage in the OT that offers an explanatory gloss for *bārā*’—that is, that says “by *bārā*’ I mean X.”⁷¹ This notwithstanding, the verb בָּרָא is generally translated as “created.” In view of this lexical-semantic uncertainty, the context would be the best judge to ascertain “whether the creation of any subsequent part of the new cosmos is made from nothing or is fashioned and modeled by God from material already created.”⁷² This study aims, among others, at performing a brief word study on the verb בָּרָא in the context of some sporadic and relevant passages.

⁶⁸Paul Humbert, “Emploi et portée du Verbe *bârâ* (créer) dans l’Ancien Testament,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 6 (1947): 409-410.

⁶⁹See Sarna, *Genesis*, 3; Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 6; Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 26; Harlow, *Start of the Race*, 8. Some, however, argue that the word בָּרָא “created”, which occurs for the first time in Gen 1:1, does not denote the *creatio ex nihilo*, because the ancient Near East versions did not understand *creatio ex nihilo* to be the meaning of the word (see Bruce Waltke, *Creation and Chaos* (Portland, Oreg.: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 49. Hasel, “Recent Translations of Gen 1:1,” 159). Emphasis original.

⁷⁰Sarna, *Genesis*, 3.

⁷¹See Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 40.

⁷²Woodson, *The Beginning*, 14.

The verb בָּרָא occurs close to fifty times in the OT, as pointed out earlier. In the creation account in Genesis 1, it appears only five times alongside with other creation verbs. As a reminder, many have also suggested that the use of בָּרָא points to *creatio ex nihilo*. In other words, any time the author employs the verb בָּרָא, a creation out of nothing is in view. This section seeks to verify such assertion. To this end, we shall examine the following passages: Genesis 1:1; 1:21; 1: 27; Deut 4:32; Ps 51:10; Isa 45:12; 45:18; Jer 31:22.

Genesis 1:1 is the first occurrence of the verb בָּרָא in the Hebrew Bible. This verb is used to describe the divine action in bringing “the heavens and the earth” (i.e., the universe in its totality) into existence. The material from which the universe is made is not mentioned.⁷³ This suggests that this creation was by divine fiat and *ex nihilo*.⁷⁴

Genesis 1:21 describes the creation of the sea creatures. With v.20 in mind, it is plain that these creatures were created by the command of God, יִשְׁרְצוּ הַמַּיִם “let the waters bring forth abundantly.” Here again, the material from which these sea creatures are made is not indicated. It is therefore safe to affirm that the sea creatures were created *ex nihilo*.

Genesis 1:27 relays the creation of humanity. The verb בָּרָא occurs three times in this verse. The seemingly redundant use of בָּרָא is, perhaps, intended by the author to emphasize the fact that man came from the hands of the Creator. The material used to create humanity is not mentioned. However, Genesis 2:7 gives a hint that God made use of the עֶפֶר “dust” of the אֲדָמָה “ground” to create אָדָם “man.” This implies

⁷³Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 26, points out that בָּרָא is never followed by an accusative of material.

⁷⁴See Sarna, *Genesis*, 3, who states that the ultimate distinction would be creation *ex nihilo*, which has no human parallel and is thus beyond all human comprehension.

that humanity was not created by divine fiat. Therefore, אֵרָא cannot be construed as creation *ex nihilo*. The use of אֵרָא in this context is simply to underscore not only a new and distinctive divine creation, but also the divine origins of human beings.

Deuteronomy 4:32 falls within a literary context pertaining to Israel's apostasy. The chosen nation had broken her covenant relationship with Yahweh by worshipping other gods. Moses, the servant of the covenant keeping God addressed a cautionary message to cause them confront their evil deeds. It is in this deleterious context that Moses reminds the apostate nation of their divine origin by the use of אֵרָא. If God is their creator, then He alone deserves their worship. It ensues that the construal of אֵרָא as creation *ex nihilo* is not intended here.

In Ps 51:10 king David is pleading for a pure heart. It is believed that Ps 51 was written sometime after David's sin with Bathsheba (1 Sam 11:3, 4). This Psalm reveals, to some extent, the reason why David was "a man after God's own heart." Surely, he was not perfect, but he had a sensitivity to sin that many do not have. Knowing that his heart was not clean, David asks for a pure heart. David knew that he had no inherent righteousness. Hence, in using אֵרָא, David was requesting for something new that is not inherent in him. In sum, though אֵרָא may not denote a complete creation *ex nihilo* in this context, it does lean towards it.

Isaiah 45:12 falls within the last two divisions of the book of Isaiah (40-65) where the Sabbath is mentioned profusely. Isaiah who wrote prophetically seemed to address exilic Jews by uttering words of comfort. Prophet Isaiah attempted to assure them that since God is the creator, He is able to rescue his people from Babylonian captivity. Hence his recourse to the recurrent use of the verb אֵרָא to buttress this point. It appears that there is no other verb that could emphasize Yahweh's creatorship better than אֵרָא. God did not create humankind out of nothing (cf. Gen 2:7), as pointed

out earlier. The use of בָּרָא in this verse, therefore, is not tantamount to creation *ex nihilo*; rather, it suggests that only God can create in the sense implied by בָּרָא.

Isaiah 45:18 alludes to Genesis 1:1 which relays the grand *ex nihilo* creation of God. According to Isaiah, God בָּרָא the הַשָּׁמַיִם “the heavens,” but יָצַר “formed” הָאָרֶץ “the earth” and עָשָׂה “made” it. Why has the author chosen different verbs to convey his message? Is this choice of words significant? It is of interest to point out that both הַשָּׁמַיִם/הָאָרֶץ (Gen1:1) parallel רָקִיעַ/הַיָּבֵשָׁה (1:8,9), respectively. Differently put, רָקִיעַ/הַיָּבֵשָׁה are hyponyms for הַשָּׁמַיִם/הָאָרֶץ respectively. If the foregoing is correct, then Isaiah was addressing the creation of the Heavens and the earth, as presented in Genesis 1:1. It follows that בָּרָא is used, in this context, in its *ex nihilo* sense. Further, it may be pointed out that the use of the verbs יָצַר and עָשָׂה both apply to the habitable earth (i.e., הַיָּבֵשָׁה “the dry land”). Since God did not intend הָאָרֶץ to be uninhabited, He therefore made it habitable by creating the dry land on the third day.

Jeremiah 31:22 falls within the emblematic chapter that speaks of the new covenant. In fact, chapter 31 is sandwiched between chapters 30-31 which constitute an exposition on the future restoration of Israel and Judah. Jeremiah 1-29 presents Israel/Judah as an unfaithful wife and a shameless prostitute. But curiously, Jer 31:4, 21 allude to the same nation as “O Virgin Israel.” It ensues that Jer 30-33 is replete with statements that reverse the judgment images of 1-29. The metamorphosis from a hardened harlot to a young, pure virgin is a powerful depiction of the change that Yahweh’s salvation can effect in the human heart.⁷⁵ Yet, this transformation could not

⁷⁵See J. Daniel Hays, *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 178.

occur without divine intervention. No one by his own can return to God. It is in this context that 31:22 speaks of the new thing that God has בָּרָא “created” on the earth implying therefore that this new thing cannot be accounted for aside from divine hand. The meaning of the poel verb הִשְׁוֹבֵב “encompass,” however, seems to be uncertain. In any case, the verb בָּרָא may be construed in its *ex nihilo* sense.

In light of the above, it may be safe to affirm that of the three words (יצר, ברא, עשה) used in the creation story (Gen 1-2) to portray the act of creating, בָּרָא seems to be the most enlightening for our study. Douglas Spanner seems to corroborate this assertion in his own words:

The word ‘create’ in our English Old testaments is nearly always a translation of the Hebrew word *bārā*. This latter is not, however, the only word used in connection with the subject we are discussing. There are, in fact, two other common ones: *‘āsā*, usually rendered ‘make’ or ‘do’ but with a wide range of other meanings; and *yāšar* usually translated ‘form’ or ‘fashion’. But among these three words *bārā*’ seems to be a term of special significance. It is used only of God (as is its Greek equivalent *Ktizo* in the New Testament).⁷⁶

A full-fledged exegetical analysis on any biblical creation related topic would do well to tackle these three foremost creation verbs.

The succinct, contextual, word study of the verb בָּרָא has revealed the following: (1) that the verb usually refers to an exclusive divine activity that is new in its own right, (2) that an *ex nihilo* sense is not inherent in the verb, (3) that the creation of “the heavens and the earth” in Genesis 1:1 is to be understood in the *ex nihilo* sense of the term, (4) that the use of בָּרָא for the creation of man only stresses humankind’s divine origin, and (5) that a complete *ex nihilo* sense of the verb is not always implied.

⁷⁶Douglas C. Spanner, *Biblical Creation and the Theory of Evolution* (Exeter, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1987), 34.

It has already been established that God always functions as the subject of בָּרָא even though the *ex nihilo* sense is not *ipso facto* intended. The object of the verb בָּרָא, however, seems to be multi-faceted.⁷⁷ Sarna, for example, believes that the verb בָּרָא always points to the completed product, but never to the material of which it is made.⁷⁸ The absence of reference to material notwithstanding, does not tacitly suggest an *ex nihilo* creation; it rather indicates that בָּרָא is not always to be construed as a material activity but sometimes as functional activity. Walton summarizes the grammatical objects of the verb בָּרָא in the following categories: cosmos (10, including new cosmos), people in general (10), specific groups of people (6), specific individuals or types of individuals (5), creatures (2), phenomena (e.g., darkness) (10), components of cosmic geography (3), condition (1, pure heart). Walton further provides a comprehensive list—though not exhaustive—of the objects of בָּרָא in the table below:

⁷⁷Finley, "Dimensions of the Hebrew Word for 'Create' (בָּרָא)," states that the verb בָּרָא is applied to the creation of a nation, to righteousness, to re-generation, and to praise and joy.... Nearly two-thirds of the instances of בָּרָא refer to physical creation. . . . God's original creation encompassed all of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1).... Fully one-third of all the citations of physical creation refer to the creation of man (including Gen 1:27; 5:1-2; 6:7; Deut 4:32; Ps 89:47 [Heb. 48]; Eccl 12:1; Isa 45:12.

⁷⁸Sarna, *Genesis*, 3. See also Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 43.

Table 1. Comprehensive List of the Objects of בָּרָא

Reference	Object	Comments
Gen 1:1	Heavens and earth	
Gen 1:21	Creatures of the sea	
Gen 1:27	People	male and female
Gen 1:27 (2)	People	In his image
Gen 2:3	(none)	
Gen 2:4	Heavens and earth	
Gen 5:1	People	Likeness of God
Gen 5:2	People	male and female
Gen 5:2	People	
Gen 6:7	People	
Ex 34:10	Wonders	parallel to ‘āśâ (made/did)
Num 16:30	Something new (debatable)	earth swallowing rebels
Deut 4:32	People	
Ps 51:10	pure heart	
Ps 89:12	north and south	
Ps 89:47	people	for futility
Ps 102:18	people not yet created	to praise the Lord
Ps 104:30	Creatures	renewing the face of the earth
Ps 148:5	celestial inhabitants	to praise the Lord
Eccles 12:1	You	
	cloud of smoke	
Is 40:26	starry host	called by my name, kept track of
Is 40:28	ends of the earth	
Is 41:20	rivers flowing in desert	to meet needs of his people
Is 42:5	Heavens	Stretched out
Is 43:1	Jacob	= Israel
Is 43:7	everyone called by my name	for my glory
Is 43:15	Israel	
Is 45:7	Darkness	parallel to forming light
Is 45:7	Disaster	parallel to bring prosperity
Is 45:8	heaven and earth	to produce salvation and righteousness
Is 45:12	People	
Is 45:18	Earth	did not create it to be (tōhû)

Table 1 confirms the assumption made earlier in this study that the material of which the objects of the verb בָּרָא is not mentioned. It is worth noting that some of the objects such as “wonders” are not physical/material entities. To state that the objects of בָּרָא do not always denote a creation out of nothing does not negate the fact that

God is responsible for the existence of matter. In fact, the merism “heavens and earth” in Genesis 1:1 does include the creation of matter by divine fiat “in the beginning” (i.e., at a certain period of time prior to the six-day creation).

Taken together, the verb בָּרָא may be rightly understood as a word of profound theological significance in the sense that its occurrence always heralds a divine intervention. Simply put, בָּרָא is all about the creator God and his handiworks. The ability of God creating in the sense implied by בָּרָא paves the way for the creation of מְאֹרֶת and אֹר.

עָשָׂה

The verb עָשָׂה is one of the three major creation verbs, as pointed out earlier. עָשָׂה happens to be the most frequent verb among the three, occurring more than 2,600 times in the OT.⁷⁹ The verb עָשָׂה, unlike בָּרָא, is not restricted to God as the subject, it often has a human subject. However, when God is the subject, עָשָׂה is “the most general word used to describe his creative acts.”⁸⁰ The verb עָשָׂה is generally used to connote a rich semantic range such as “to make,” “to do,” “to prepare,” or “to create.” Because עָשָׂה is sometimes used in contexts outside of creation, it allows for more flexibility than the verb בָּרָא. It follows that its exact meaning is ascertained by the function its context assigns to it.⁸¹ Carroll Stuhlmueller simply terms it “a very general and all-purpose word.”⁸² Hamilton believes that there is something unique about God creating conveyed by בָּרָא, but there is also something similar between God

⁷⁹See Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of creation in Genesis 1,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, 48.

⁸⁰Eugene Carpenter, “עָשָׂה,” *The New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:547.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 216.

making and human making conveyed by *הָשֵׁוּ*.⁸³ It is quite insightful to note that outside of Genesis, *הָשֵׁוּ* is the most frequently used verb in the expression “maker of heaven and earth” as it may be observed in the book of Psalms.⁸⁴ The verb *הָשֵׁוּ* occurs at least ten times in Genesis 1.⁸⁵ A brief word study of selected few texts is necessary at this point.

In Genesis 1:7, the verb *הָשֵׁוּ* is employed to describe the creation of the dome/firmament. At this particular point in time, the earth (1:1) was still covered with the primeval waters. The dome appeared as a result of God separating between the waters—some above and some under. The vacuum in between was called the dome. If the foregoing is correct, then the appearing of the dome is a new divine act created out of the pre-existing waters. In this sense, the *הָשֵׁוּ* seems to function here as a surrogate for *בָּרָא*. In other words, *הָשֵׁוּ* and *בָּרָא* are used interchangeably in this context.

In Genesis 1:16, *הָשֵׁוּ* is used to depict the creation of the two great lights (i.e., the sun and the moon). This passage is one of the most debatable ones. The controversy does not hinge on *who* created these luminaries but on *when* they came into existence.⁸⁶ It is generally accepted that God brought them into existence, but some contend that these light-bearers were created either in the beginning or on the first day of the six-day creation. A fresh look at the lexical-semantic content of the verb *הָשֵׁוּ* in context is called for.

To begin with, it may be noted that the purpose of Genesis 1:16 was to underscore an important theological message—that the luminaries were not created

⁸³Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 26.

⁸⁴Pss 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; etc.

⁸⁵Gen 1:7, 11, 12, 16(2x), 25, 26; 2:2 (2x), 3.

⁸⁶Italics mine. The polarity of scholarly opinions on this issue has already been presented in the review of related literature.

prior to the fourth day. Some of the evidences are that (1) they were not in function until the fourth day; (2) in spite of its semantic flexibility, the meaning of עָשָׂה always revolves around the idea of “making” or “doing” materially or functionally; (3) the use of עָשָׂה with God as the subject to describe His activities is a well-known fact in the OT; (4) the use of עָשָׂה on the fourth day, to some extent, militates against the opinion that the light-bearers were merely given/ assigned their purpose. If that is what the author had intended, the command יהי מארת ברקיע השמים “let there be lights in the dome of the sky” would have been enough to convey such idea; (5) the fact that the two great lights were supposed to be placed in the dome/firmament of the sky which was created on the second day, logically implies that, at least, the luminaries could not have existed prior to the second day.

The syntax of the clause וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת “God made the two great lights” in Genesis 1:16 parallels that of וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַרְקִיעַ “So God made the dome” in 1:7a. Both clauses are preceded by the divine command יהי מארת “let there be lights” (v. 16) and יהי רקיע “let there be a dome” (v. 7). This syntactic parallelism strengthens the semantic content of עָשָׂה—that the making of the luminaries on the fourth day was a new and distinct divine activity. This idea seems to find internal support from the psalmist’s quote of Genesis 1:16 in Psalm 136:7-9.

Besides, what may be said about the making of the stars on the fourth day? As pointed out earlier, the *when* of the creation of the stars remains a bone of contention in biblical scholarship.⁸⁷ Informed by Colin House’s insight into the syntax of Genesis 1:16, this study suggests the following observations: (1) the direct object of the verb עָשָׂה is אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת “the two great lights” introduced by the direct object marker אֶת־;

⁸⁷See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 21; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 128; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 155.

(2) while וַיַּעַשׂ “he made” functions as the verbal antecedent of הַכּוֹכָבִים “the stars,” the conjoined particle וְאֵת is best construed as a preposition (i.e., and with); (3) by so couching v.16, the author of Genesis betrayed his interest in answering the *who* question but not the *when*. Simply put, the author was only concerned with letting his readers know who made/created the stars.

Closely related to the use of עָשָׂה in v.16, is the meaning of the *wayyiqtol* form וַיִּתֵּן. This verbal form derives from the verb נָתַן which means “to give,” “to set,” or “to appoint.” According to Genesis 1:16, God made the two great lights; then the subsequent verse states that בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים “God set them in the dome of the sky” (v.17a). This clause may equally be rendered ‘God gave/place them in the dome of the sky.’ Before God could give/set the two great lights in the dome of the sky, they had to be brought into existence. It goes without saying that v. 16 and v. 17 are logically and chronologically put. If the above is correct, then the argument that v.16 is a mere parenthetical statement does not hold water. In sum, neither עָשָׂה nor נָתַן inherently echoes a creation out of nothing; however, taken together, both verbs depict a new divine activity. This means that though the verb בָּרָא is not used, the creation of objects on day 4 is considered to be new by the author.

In fact, the paragraph recounting the creation of humans shows clearly that עָשָׂה and בָּרָא are synonymous. Genesis 1: 2 examined in connection with the subsequent verse (i.e., v. 27), seems to be eye-catching. In v. 26a, God said: נַעֲשֵׂה אָדָם “let us make humankind in our image.” The verbal form נַעֲשֵׂה “let us make” is the common plural cohortative conjugation of עָשָׂה usually understood as an appeal to the other members of the Godhead to take an active part in the creation of humankind. In the same vein, v.27a goes this way: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ “so God created humankind/Adam in his image.” It appears clearly that v.26a parallels v.27a. In v.26a,

the author employed the verb הָשִׁיב while in v.27a he chose to use the verb בָּרָא to talk about the creation of humankind. The author's choice of words, far from fortuitous, betrays his understanding of these two words, at least in the creation account in Genesis 1-2.

In short, the author used the verbs הָשִׁיב and בָּרָא interchangeably. Therefore, asserting that הָשִׁיב functions on equal footing with בָּרָא with regards to the creation of humanity is in order.

As a creation verb also, הָשִׁיב sometimes occurs in the participle to designate God as the “making one.” Carpenter sums up this idea by stating that God is the doer (עֹשֶׂה) of all things and the proper subject of this ubiquitous verb in the OT.⁸⁸

Taken together, it may be safe to concur with Hudson that in the creation account, הָשִׁיב and בָּרָא are interchangeably used to portray man, animals, land, and plant life.⁸⁹

Turning to the objects of the verb הָשִׁיב , it may be said that it takes on several different objects in the OT. In Genesis, things made include both animate and inanimate things as following: dome/firmament (1:7), the luminaries (1:16), the animals (1:25), humankind (1:26), garments (3:21), feast (19:3), food (27:31), mourning (50:10). In a nutshell, God makes (הָשִׁיב), man makes (הָשִׁיב) also; however, only God can make (הָשִׁיב) in the sense implied by בָּרָא . In other words, a human being cannot function as a surrogate subject for objects which have God as subject. In any case, it is God who makes all things and creates all things, including human beings.

⁸⁸Carpenter, “עשה,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:549.

⁸⁹Matthew Howard Hudson, “Creation Theology in Isaiah 40-66: An Expression of Confidence in the Sovereignty of God,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 13. See also Bruce Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part IV: The Theology of Genesis 1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975): 337.

As pointed out earlier, יָצַר⁹⁰ does not have a direct relevance to the current discussion; however it is known to be the best surrogate for בָּרָא.⁹¹

יום

“The literal interpretation of the creation days has come under a more threatening and increasing assault within the last 150 to 200 years.”⁹² Yet, central to the current debate is the understanding that one makes of the Hebrew term יום. The word יום occurs 2,304 times in the OT,⁹³ of which 1,452 occurrences are in the singular. The book of Genesis in particular makes use of this word 152 times of which

⁹⁰ The verb יָצַר happens to be the second most important creation verb after בָּרָא. יָצַר is being addressed here because it does not appear in the creation account of Gen 1 which constitutes the trajectory of this study. However, יָצַר occurs in the detailed creation account of humankind in Gen 2. Therefore, it is in order to elucidate the use of this important creation verb.

The verb יָצַר occurs about seventy (70) times in the OT. Out of these occurrences 23 are in the participial form. (See A. H. Konkel, “יָצַר,” *The New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2: 504-505). The author also observes that יָצַר appears in the Qal stem except for once each in the niph'al [Isa 43: 10], the pual [Ps 139:16], hoph'al [Isa 54:17]) Etymologically, the root יָצַר is mainly found in Canaanite and Akkadian languages, but in a least measure in Ugaritic. The basic meaning of the Semitic root is “shape” or “form.” The function of יָצַר is foremost to portray that which is a specific object of God’s design and care. יָצַר bears a significant import so far as the creation of humankind is concerned both in terms of their unique relation to God and God’s purposes for them. However, this sense of shaping and forming is extended as a metaphor to God’s creative works in some sporadic texts in the OT. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet employs the verb יָצַר almost exclusively to evoke the creation and election of Israel, using both meanings of formation and purpose. Some scholars have suggested that the participial form יוֹצֵר is the producer of an artefact, whether carved, cast, or chiseled. (Konkel, “יָצַר,” *NIDOTTE*, 504. See also Thomas E. McComiskey, “יָצַר,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* [Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980], 1:396) McComiskey suggests that in its secular usage the term יוֹצֵר means “potter.”) Unlike its alleged equivalent בָּרָא, God is not the only subject of יָצַר given that the latter can take on human subjects. However, when God is the subject, creation is intended. It ensues that יָצַר takes on various objects as follows: man (Gen 2:7), animals (Gen 2:19), light (Isa 45:7), the universe (Isa 45:18), destiny (2 Kgs 19:25), natural phenomenon (Amos 4:13). When יָצַר takes on human subject, the object sometimes depicts idolatry as it may be observed in Isa 44: 9. In the creation narrative in Genesis, the verb יָצַר is mostly used to portray the creation of man.

Taken together, it may be observed that the verb יָצַר is used more often than בָּרָא; nonetheless, it often stands in parallel with the latter. It is therefore safe to conclude with McComiskey that *yāṣar* is a suitable surrogate for *bara'* but not an exact synonym.

⁹¹See McComiskey, “יָצַר,” 1:396.

⁹²Robert V. McCabe, “A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week,” *DBSJ* 5 (Fall 2000): 98.

⁹³Larry A. Mitchel, however, speaks of 2241 occurrences (see *A Student’s Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984], 1).

83 occurrences are singular.⁹⁴ The noun יום as the foremost frequently used biblical expression for a unit of time is generally translated “day,” or “daylight.”⁹⁵ Robert V. McCabe states that “the semantic range of יום includes uses such as “daytime,” as opposed to nighttime, a calendrical “day” of 24 hours, a specific day, “lifespan,” “time,” “years.”⁹⁶ Some have rightly pointed out the fact that Biblical Hebrew has a very limited vocabulary—approximately 3,100 words compared to over 4,000,000 English words.⁹⁷ It follows that Biblical Hebrew lacks distinctive word for ‘a long period of time/epoch’ save the word יום.⁹⁸ There is therefore a polarization of scholarly opinions on the subject since the meaning intended by the author is open to speculation. Some argue that the use of יום should be construed literally (i.e., a 24-hour solar day), while some believe that יום is best understood figuratively (i.e., an extended period of time /epoch). Nonetheless, the figurative interpretation of the creation days representing each day as an extended period of time seems to be of recent vintage.⁹⁹

⁹⁴Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of creation in Genesis 1,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, 57.

⁹⁵P. A. Verhoef, “יום,” *The New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2:419.

⁹⁶McCabe, “A Defense of Literal Days,” 101.

⁹⁷J. Ligon Duncan III and David W. Hall, “24-Hour View,” in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux, 2001), 125.

⁹⁸Ibid., 148.

⁹⁹Robert Letham, “‘In the Space of Six Days’: The Days of Creation from Origen to the Westminster Assembly,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (Fall 1999): 151, argues that a non-literal view of Gen 1 has its roots reaching back to the third century. However, the then interpreters of the creation days had a figurative understanding of creation days that is antithetical to that of recent figurative understandings. Somehow, informed by Greek philosophy, early figurative interpreters of the creation days, such as Origen and Augustine, believed that God instantaneously created the world. In other words, none of them taught that the creation week spanned millions of years (see Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” 6–7).

Verhoef posits that, as a measurement of time, the term יום has three principal uses.¹⁰⁰ (a) First, its primary meaning is the time of daylight as distinct from the period of darkness, the night (e.g., Gen 1:5; 7:4; 8:22; 29:7; Exod 24:18; Ps 139: 12, etc.). Second, יום is also used for day in the sense of the complete cycle that includes both daytime and nighttime, as can be observed in the concluding statement “And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day” (Gen 1:5). With respect to when the day began, Verhoef argues that in the OT, the earlier practice seems to have been to consider that the day began in the morning, as Judges 19: 5-10 seems to suggest. He adds that as the importance of lunar festivals increased, it became the common practice to count the days from evening (Exod 12:18; Lev 23:32; Esth 4:16; Isa 27:3; 34:10); Third, the term יום is also employed in a variety of extended meanings—to indicate, for instance, the period of an action or state of beginning. The term is also used in a number of idiomatic expressions (e.g., Gen 18:11; Exod 13:10; Josh 13:1; Judg 11:40; 1 Kgs 1:1; Isa 27:3). The above semantic nuances, pointed out by Verhoef, underscore the elusiveness of this word. This notwithstanding, some lexical and semantic considerations of the use of יום in Genesis 1 will be in order.

To begin with, McCabe observes that יום is used 11 times in Genesis 1; 10 times in the singular and once in the plural (1:14). This single use of the plural noun, יָמִים “days,” however, does not provide any support for the use of יום as an extended period of time in the creation account. Speaking of the instances where יום may stand for a non-literal day, Hasel writes:

The extended, non-literal meanings of the term *yôm* are always found in connection with prepositions, prepositional phrases with a verb, compound constructions, formulas, technical expressions, genitive combinations, construct phrases, and the like. In other words, extended, non-literal meanings of this Hebrew term have special linguistic and contextual connections which

¹⁰⁰Verhoef, “יום,” *NIDOTTE*, 420.

indicate clearly that a non-literal meaning is intended. If such special linguistic connections are absent, the term *yôm* does not have an extended, non-literal meaning; it has its normal meaning of a literal day of 24-hours.¹⁰¹

Genesis 1:5 is referred to as the first scriptural entry for a day of 24 hours.¹⁰²

In the same vein, some see יום in the creation account of Genesis 1 as a regular day as defined by evening and morning.¹⁰³ Again, some argue that יום juxtaposed to a cardinal number requires a 24-hour-day interpretation.¹⁰⁴ Upon a full-fledged analysis of the semantic-syntactical usages of creation days in Genesis 1, Hasel concludes that only the literal meaning of יום is intended therein.¹⁰⁵ In a similar vein, Barr states that “biblical exegesis demands a literal interpretation of the creation days.”¹⁰⁶

Turning to the 10 uses of the singular “day” in Genesis 1, four of them refer to יום “day” as opposed to לַיְלָה “night,” (1:5, 14, 16, 17). The remaining six uses of יום account for the enumerated days of the creation week, the “first day,” “second day,” “third day,” etc. (1:5, 8, 13, 19, 24, 31). It goes without saying that the semantic scope of יום “day” is broad; nonetheless, the use of the singular in Genesis 1 insinuates that a literal nuance of the word is intended. Furthermore, some have argued that the

¹⁰¹Hasel, “The Days of Creation in Genesis 1,” 23-24.

¹⁰²See William H. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)* (1971), s.v. “יום”

¹⁰³Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1974), s.v. “יום.” Conversely, Opponents of literal creation days generally use the seventh day of the creation week as a justification for elongated days in Gen 1. The absence of the “evening-morning” conclusion in Gen 2:1–3, is viewed as an evidence that the seventh day of “God’s rest was and is still going on” (see R. Laird Harris, “The Length of the Creative Days in Genesis 1,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?* eds. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999, 2005), 109.

Blocher states that “this is the most simple and natural conclusion” that can be drawn from this deliberate omission (see *In the Beginning*, 56).

¹⁰⁴See Arnold and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 35. See also Harold G. Coffin with Robert H. Brown, and R. James Gibson, *Origin by Design*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 12. The use of יום in some passages such as Hosh 6:2 and Zech 14:7 seems to suggest that this assertion is to be nuanced.

¹⁰⁵Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, 57.

¹⁰⁶Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 40-43.

singular noun in the absolute state is consistently used in the OT to refer to an ordinary day, and not to an extended period of time involving more than a 24-hour day.¹⁰⁷ Taken together, any figurative/non-literal reading of יום in Genesis 1 would therefore be incongruous with the semantics of the singular word, as presented above. The significance of יום has a bearing on the discussion of אור below, even as יום and אור are equated at some point.

אור

Genesis 1: 3 records the first occurrence of the word אור usually translated as “light” by most English versions of the Bible. The enigma about this word revolves around the fact that the source of אור has not been indicated. For this reason, many questions that have been raised in connection to this issue include the following: What is the source of light that appeared on day 1 of the six-day creation? Is אור a natural phenomenon (i.e., physical light), a temporal unit (i.e., equivalent of בקר “morning/daytime”), or both?

The word אור may function both as a verb or a noun. As a verb, אור usually has a rich semantic range as follows: “be light,” “bright,” “shine,” “give light,” “kindle,” or “enlighten.” As a noun, אור may mean “light,” “daylight,” “dawn.” The word אור is cognate with the common Akkadian noun *urru* which means “day,” “light,” and the much scarce Ugaritic form *'r* meaning “be light,” “bright,” “to illumine.”¹⁰⁸

In the OT, the verb אור occurs 45 times, of which few are in the qal and niphil stems, but mostly in the hiphil taking the meaning of “to disseminate light,

¹⁰⁷See Arthur C. Custance, *Hidden Things of God's Revelation*, The Doorway Papers, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), 295.

¹⁰⁸Martin J. Selman, “אור,” *The New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1:324. See also Aalen, *TDOT*, 1:148.

illuminate.” The substantive אור, on the other hand, occurs about 150 times and carries the meaning of “brightness, brilliance, daylight.”¹⁰⁹ Having set the stage for the discussion, let us address the issue of the nature of אור on the first day.

Scripture seems to be silent on the subject, giving rise to much speculation. The literature review has shown that scholarly opinions are widely divided. As pointed out earlier, some have argued that אור on day 1 emanated from the then invisible sun likely created together with “the heavens and the earth” in Genesis 1:1. Again, some believe that אור came from a source other than the sun; while some see God Himself to be the source of that light. This debate seems to stem from the modern scientific understanding of biblical creation. In fact, it seems to be absurd to the scientific lenses of the modern reader to conceive of the existence of light prior to the creation of its source, the sun.¹¹⁰ Yet, “for a correct understanding of the OT idea of light, the distinction between light and sun is important.”¹¹¹ In the OT, “the view that the brightness of the day comes from the sun is not expressed.”¹¹² “According to some rabbinic interpreters, God created a primeval source of light that was independent of the sun.”¹¹³ In the same vein, some have contended that God created a fixed and localized light source in the heaven in reference to which the rotating earth passed through the same kind of day/night cycles as it has since the creation of the

¹⁰⁹Aalen, *TDOT*, 1:148.

¹¹⁰Framework advocates point out that there is an inconsistency for a chronological interpretation of these two days. Since God creates light on the first day and the source of light on the fourth day, the days must be identical (McCabe, “Framework Interpretation. Part 1,” 43).

¹¹¹Aalen, *TDOT*, 1:151.

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³Jack Lewis, “The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (December 1989): 449.

sun.”¹¹⁴ Since God is light, Duncan and Hall believe that He certainly could have created a non-solar source of light, prior to the creation of the sun.¹¹⁵ The answer to the question posed seems to remain a mirage.

However, some observations seem to suggest that the sun is not the source of אור on day 1. First, in OT thought, the light of the day is considered to be distinct from the light of the sun.¹¹⁶ Second, experiential observation attest of the fact that daylight did not necessarily originate from the sun since in cloudy weather, the day is still bright. Third, in the OT, אור is explicitly employed in connection with morning, dawn and day in several passages (e.g., Gen 44:3; Judg 16:2; 19:26; 1 Sam 14:36; 25:34,36; 29:10; 2 Sam 17: 22; 2 Kgs 7:9; Isa 58:8). Fourth, אור existed before the luminaries were made functional on the fourth day, whether created on that very day or prior to it. Fifth, the luminaries were later assigned the duty to give light on the earth, implying that the אור that illuminated the earth during the first three days is not from the sun.¹¹⁷

Again, the origin of light may not be ascertained separately from that of the darkness (החֹשֶׁךְ) which happens to be its counterpart. Simply put, both אור and החֹשֶׁךְ are antonymic natural phenomena and were created by God to fulfil His purposes. It is therefore in order to point out that אור—resultant of God’s pronouncement—was a natural and alternate phenomenon with החֹשֶׁךְ.¹¹⁸ If this is correct, then the light of the

¹¹⁴John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Early Earth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 31.

¹¹⁵Duncan and Hall, “24-hour View,” 52.

¹¹⁶See Aalen, “אור,” *TDOT*, 1:156

¹¹⁷According to Hamilton, the creation of light anticipates the creation of sunlight . . . What the author states is that God caused the light to shine from a source other than the sun for the first three “days” (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 121). For further support for a non-solar source of אור, see Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 145; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18; Sarna, *Genesis*, 7.

¹¹⁸Aalen, “אור,” *TDOT*, 1:156, states that the creation of light on day 1 would be nothing more than making the first morning or day bright.

sun seems to be redundant and serves the purpose of increasing warmth and the natural אור of daytime.¹¹⁹ In light of the above, should אור be construed phenomenally, temporally, or conjointly?

To answer this question, Genesis 1:3-5 must be brought to focus. A close reading of this passage reveals the following equivalent pairs: אור/יום, לילה/חשך, ערב + בקר. The foregoing suggests a dual function of אור. First, אור equates יום, representing daytime or period of light (v. 4). This further suggests that אור is hypernymous to בקר “morning,” and חשך is hypernymous to ערב. Again, ערב + בקר equates יום אחר, meaning that an alternation of a period of חשך and אור results in a literal period of 24-hour day. This implies that חשך represents nighttime while אור stands for daytime. In addition, the reference to ימים “days” and שנים “years” in v. 14 would further corroborate the assumption that the author employs the singular יום to refer to a literal day. Informed by the above, it would be fair to assert that אור functions here as a temporal unit (daytime). From the same analysis, and as pointed out earlier, אור just like its counterpart/antonym חשך may be understood as a natural phenomenon. It goes without saying that just as לילה, the period of חשך, is not determined by the moon, so also יום, the period of אור, is not determined by the sun. It may be pointed out that though אור usually stands for daytime, it seems to be used hyponymously in Genesis 1:5a for יום. Nothing however indicates that אור is a tangible and localized entity.

It is safe then to conclude that the term אור may function either temporally or phenomenally depending on the context.

¹¹⁹Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 45.

מְאֹרֹת

The Hebrew singular word מְאֹרֹת “luminary” occurs about 20 times, usually with the meaning “luminary,” and occasionally “light.”¹²⁰ It is used for light-bearers, primarily the sun, the moon, and the tabernacle lampstand. Selman believes that references to the latter are purely functional, but the sun and moon are always treated theologically.¹²¹ The sun, the moon, and the stars are not the only light-bearers in the universe but are the most important ones. In fact, “both the sun and the nocturnal luminaries are called *'orim* (Ps 136:7), or *me'orim* (Ezek 32:8), or *me'oroth* (Gen 1: 14-16) (perhaps also *oroth*, Isa 26:19).”¹²² While both sun and moon are called *me'oroth* in Genesis 1:14-16, Psalm 74: 16 seems to make separate the sun from the luminaries. In other words, only the moon is used interchangeably with מְאֹרֹת in this verse. Hence, both מְאֹרֹת and sun are described not as determinants but as attributes of day and night.¹²³ Nonetheless, the term מְאֹרֹת usually includes both sun and moon. As pointed out earlier, in OT thought, light is usually disassociated from the luminaries. This may likely be a reaction against the solar worship that was rampant in the Ancient Near East and from which the Israelites were not immune (cf. 2 Kgs 23:11; Ezek 8:16).¹²⁴

In light of Genesis 1:16-17, God made the two great lights, and then set them in the dome of the sky to perform their duties. This suggests that the luminaries are materially and spatially localized. In other words, the מְאֹרֹת are celestial bodies fixed

¹²⁰Aalen, “אֹרֹת,” *TDOT*, 1:148. Gutzke, *Genesis*, 22, states that the word light in Hebrew implies “light holders,” or “light reflectors.” He argues that as a light reflector, the sun does not originate light.

¹²¹Selman, “אֹרֹת,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:328.

¹²²Aalen, “אֹרֹת,” *TDOT*, 1:151.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 1:152.

¹²⁴Selman, “אֹרֹת,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:326.

in the firmament in order to mainly enhance the atmospheric conditions of living of humankind on planet earth.

If the foregoing is correct, then what is the lexical-semantic relationship between the terms אור and מארת?

Lexical-Semantic Relationship between אור and מארת

The various literary structures presented in this study have shown, in one way or the other, the symmetry between day 1 (Gen 1:3-5) and day 4 (1:14-19). Some are tempted to conflate these two days, as the proponents of the framework hypothesis do. The above analysis, however, seems to advice against any amalgamation of אור and מארת.

Some scholars, for instance, have come to conjecture that מארת constitute the source of אור;¹²⁵ however, Genesis 1 does not buttress this idea. In fact, the semantic analysis has revealed that the term אור may be both temporal (daylight) and phenomenal (light). It has also been pointed out that the text does not show anywhere that אור is materially and spatially located somewhere. This suggests that אור may not be equated with מארת. The following arguments seem to reinforce this understanding.

First, the מארת are presented as physical and localized entities while אור is phenomenal and temporal. The former are containers/light-bearers while the latter is both light and time itself (daytime). Second, אור seems to be created by divine fiat and assigned no specific function (see Gen 3-5), while the מארת “luminaries” are made (עשה) and placed in the expanse with specific functions to perform. According to Genesis 1:14-19, these functions, as pointed out earlier, are as follows: (a) they are “to separate” (להבדיל) היום “the day” from הלילה “the night”; (b) they are to be “for signs

¹²⁵Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 26; idem, *Genesis Unbound*, 112-113, seems to build his point upon Gen 44:3; Exod 10:23; Neh 8:3.

and for seasons and for days and years” (לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים); (c) they are “to shine upon the earth” (לְהַאֲרִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ); (d) they are “to separate” (לְהַבְדִּיל) “the light” from הַחֹשֶׁךְ “darkness”. It may be observed from the foregoing that (a) parallels (d). In other words, הַחֹשֶׁךְ/הָאֹרֶךְ is respectively hypernymous to הָאֹרֶךְ/הַחֹשֶׁךְ. For the מְאֹרֹת to separate these paired-intangible elements, and to be for signs, seasons, days, and years, suggests that the מְאֹרֹת are not only material entities but also temporal markers. Simply put, the מְאֹרֹת may not be time regulators *per se*, but they seem to be fixed there to perceptibly signal the major divisions of the day (i.e., daytime and nighttime)/years. The above seems to militate strongly against a possible amalgamation of אֹרֶךְ and מְאֹרֹת; yet, the chronology/timing of creation of the מְאֹרֹת remains a theological and scientific bone of contention. Differently stated, the controversy does not necessarily center on *who*, but on *when* the creation of the מְאֹרֹת took place. Were the מְאֹרֹת created ‘in the beginning’ (vv. 1- 2),¹²⁶ on day one (vv. 3-5),¹²⁷ or on day four (vv. 14-19)?¹²⁸

In any case, the portrayal of the functions of the מְאֹרֹת, as noted above, seems to argue against the idea that מְאֹרֹת were created on day 1 (vv. 3-5). It may be observed that the debate about the time of creation of the מְאֹרֹת stems from a scientific standpoint rather than a textual uncertainty.

Genesis 1:14-18 seems to suggest that מְאֹרֹת be treated as effected objects rather than affected objects. This is justified by the fact that they are not only

¹²⁶See Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 26-34; idem, *Genesis Unbound*, 112-113, 129-132; Walton, *Genesis*, 125.

¹²⁷See Woodson, *The Beginning*, 15.

¹²⁸See Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 153; Coffin with Brown, and Gibson, *Origin by Design*, 22.

commanded (יְהִי) in the divine speech to appear in the sky, they are also said to be made (עָשָׂה) in the action report. Moreover, *wayyiqtol* action report clauses in Genesis 1 seem to refer to things newly created, rather than already existing objects.

Conversely, already existing elements are not referred to by means of a *wayyiqtol* action report clause. This reinforces the understanding that מְאֹרֹת were likely not created prior to day 4. And as stated earlier, if מְאֹרֹת are to separate אֹר “light” from חֹשֶׁךְ “darkness,” then מְאֹרֹת is not to be equated with אֹר. Moreover, while אֹר in vv. 3-5 which is also equated with יוֹם, the greater מְאֹר does not equate יוֹם even though the former rules over the latter, any more than the lesser מְאֹר equate חֹשֶׁךְ even though it rules over it.

On the final count, it is still difficult to make a categorical statement on the relationship between אֹר and מְאֹרֹת given that the claims made in this study are mostly of semantic-syntactic nature.

In light of the above, and in spite of the limitations of this study, the researcher concludes that אֹר and מְאֹרֹת do not need to be equated, so that אֹר in vv. 3-5 is understood to have its source as the מְאֹרֹת in vv. 14-19. The narrative clearly makes a distinction between אֹר and מְאֹרֹת, even if the function given to the latter complements the phenomenon described by the former.

CHAPTER 4

CREATION AND SCIENCE

Creation is the essential event with which the history of the world and humanity begins. It is also central to the salvation story of the human race since it was shortly after creation that humankind fell into sin. Nowadays, many have come to lose confidence in the Bible on the basis of its alleged scientific inaccuracies. Their qualms revolve especially around the creation record, as it is presented in Genesis 1. Science, they believe, has demonstrated that the Genesis record is not accurate regarding origins. Hence, they argue that in order to believe in creation, one must reject established scientific findings.

Yet, the author's ultimate goal of writing the book of Genesis is not so much to give a scientific elucidation of how the world began but to exalt the magnitude and awesomeness of God as the Creator. This notwithstanding, is Scripture really antagonistic to science? The answer may not be straightforward given that the Bible does not always agree with the interpretation of scientific data.¹ But if one takes for granted that God is the ultimate author of the OT as well as the author of all law, including natural laws, then it becomes obvious that there cannot be conflict between the two. Therefore, Eugene H. Merrill advises that "one should speak in terms of a

¹Redlich, *The Early Traditions of Genesis*, 67, argues that it is impossible to harmonize the story of creation in Gen 1:1-2:4a with modern science.

“Bible-science” antithesis.”² Nonetheless, scientism³ can and does clash with Scripture.⁴ Rightly understood, the argument is between the Bible and evolution—so-called “science.” In other words, evolution claims to be science and therefore able to demonstrate its theory through empirical evidence; whereas, advocates of evolutionary theory argue that creationism is non-empirical and therefore nonscientific.⁵

Jonathan Sarfati observes that “the debate between creation and evolution is primarily a dispute between two world views, with mutually incompatible underlying assumptions.”⁶ In fact, normal/operational science deals only with repeatable and observable processes in the *present*.⁷ Merrill defines it as “a branch of study concerned with observation and classification of facts, and therefore, has to do with natural laws and processes.”⁸ Besides, evolution is a theory that assumes that things made themselves, that no divine intervention has happened, and that God has not

²Eugene H. Merrill, *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 34.

³Scientism is a term that was coined recently to denote the modern philosophy of science that is rooted in naturalism. Scientism as an expression of man’s interpretation of his environment is usually unbiblical. It may be used interchangeably with evolutionism. On the other hand, true science correctly interpreted is biblical.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Norman R. Gulley, “Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,” in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 128.

⁶Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution: A Handbook for Students, Parents, and Teachers Countering the Latest Arguments for Evolution* (Brisbane, Australia: Answers in Genesis, 1999), 15.

⁷*Ibid.*, 28. Italics his. See also Gulley, “Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,” 129.

⁸Merrill, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 34.

revealed to us knowledge about the past.⁹ This is rightly reinforced by D.M.S. Watson when he wrote that “evolution [is] a theory universally accepted not because it can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.”¹⁰ For the purpose of this study, the use of the expression ‘modern science’ is inclusive of evolution.

Creation/creationism,¹¹ on the other hand, is a supernatural process through which God brought the universe into existence, including humankind.¹² If the above is correct, then the tenets of both creation and evolution cannot be established by empirical research, but must be accepted by faith. Yet, evolution has made remarkable inroads into evangelical theology by calling into question the historicity of the Genesis account of creation.¹³ The Bible begins with an elegantly simple but profound statement that “in the beginning God created (Gen 1:1).”¹⁴ In view of the clash between Scripture and modern science, especially, on the origins of the solar system,

⁹Evolutionists are very difficult to classify; they may be Atheists, Deists, Theists or Agnostics. However they have one believe in common, that man is blood related to the lower animals. Theistic evolutionists, for instance, attempt to insert God into a theory which is distinctly opposed to divine revelation. Simply put they believe that God has created but through an evolutionary process. Atheistic evolutionists believe that the living protoplasm comes from inorganic materials merely by chance and that by similar wholly fortuitous occurrence. Deistic Evolutionists avoid the huddles of origins of materials, origin of natural forces and origin of the first living blob by assuming a God who created the materials and the forces and the first protoplasm but who then left this first life to work out its evolutionist development as best as it could in natural ways.

¹⁰D. M.S. Watson, “Adaptation,” *Nature* (1929), quoted in Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 16.

¹¹More specifically, creationism is a belief that distinct species of animals/plants were separately created. Special creation is the doctrine that each species of organism is specially created.

¹²See L. James Gibson, “What is Creation Theory?” in *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science*, eds. L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011), 26.

¹³Gulley, “Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,” 125.

¹⁴Michael Johnson states that Gen 1:1 rules out ten “isms”: Nihilism, Existentialism, Fatalism, Determinism, Materialism, Humanism, Polytheism, Pantheism, Agnosticism, and Atheism (see “The Seeds of Epistemology and Ontology in Genesis 1,” *Proceedings* 14 (1998): 9.)

this chapter aims, primarily, at presenting the dichotomic understandings of astronomy stemming from both standpoints.

Science and Astronomy

Several theories have been propounded to explain how the world and life came into existence. Most theories of origins may be categorized into either creation theories or evolution theories. This section focuses on the latter in order to ascertain how science explains the origins of the universe, and more particularly that of our solar system. To this end, the who, the when, and the how questions of origins will be addressed.

The subject of origins of the universe, including human life and the solar system, has received more attention than any other one in which information is available both from Scripture and Science.¹⁵ The question as to whether the universe was created by a supreme being or evolved naturally from simple to more complex forms of life, remains a matter crucial to faith. If God is the Creator, then life has meaning and man is accountable before Him; but if the world is the result of chance, then life is devoid of meaning, and man is accountable to no one. True science as a discipline based primarily on empirical and experimental knowledge seems to be unable to provide a basic knowledge about the originator of the universe.¹⁶ Many scientists have argued that everything in the universe, including planet earth and life on it, came about by purely natural means—that God had nothing to do with its origins.¹⁷ This worldview seems to be the resultant of the influence of modern

¹⁵Robert B. Fischer, *God Did It But How?* 2nd ed. (Ipswich, MA: ASA Press, 1997), 41.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷Randall W. Younker, “How Can We Interpret the First Chapters of Genesis,” in *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science*, eds. L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011), 69.

scientific concepts on biblical scholars since the 1800s.¹⁸ These scholars argue that since the Bible was composed prior to the advent of modern science, it is more likely that the Bible's depiction of origins is erroneous. In a nutshell, the whole universe, including our solar system has not been created by anyone, but naturally evolved through an aleatory process.

The origin of the universe remains one of the most enigmatic questions in modern science. Some of these queries involve the time of creation. Did it begin thousands years ago or billions of years ago? Did it last one week or billions of years?¹⁹ Evolution as a so-called science is not only about ape-like creatures turning into human beings. On the contrary, it is a worldview or a philosophy attempting to explain away everything by putting God out of the equation. The origin of the universe and the solar system is no exception. When was the universe and our solar system formed? The attempt to answer this question reveals a polarity of views. On the one hand, most creationists with some science training who hold to a twenty-four-hour creation day insist that the evidences for billions-of-years universe and earth are inconclusive.

¹⁸Ibid., 70. However, some scholars believe that the beginning of search for origins date back to the Greek philosophers of the sixth and fifth centuries BC (see Terence E. Fretheim and R. Clyde McCone, "Were the Days of Creation Twenty-Four Hours Long? No," in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 13).

¹⁹Mark A. Throntveit, "Are the Events in the Genesis Creation Account Set Forth in Chronological Order? No," in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 42.

Some progressive creationists²⁰ and evolutionists, on the other hand, argue for an old universe of billions-of-years.²¹ According to Nigel Calder the Universe was formed 13.5 billion years ago, the Milky Way Galaxy (i.e., our solar system) was formed 12.5 billion years ago, and the Earth was formed 4.55 billion years ago.²² But if the sun was, indeed, created on the fourth day of the six-day creation account as the text states, then this poses a serious challenge to this latter view. It is obvious that reconstructing a precise chronology of earth's history is a difficult task. Younger speaks of, at least, two hundred *different* biblical chronologies proposed by different scholars. However, all of them supported a creation date of between 6,000 and 10,000 years before present, but none was identical to the other.²³ In short, though recent finds seem to support a young universe hypothesis, evolutionists continue to hold to the contrary. Hence, the when question of the origin of the universe and the solar system is far from being settled.

The how question of the creation of the universe is as important as its when question of origins. Just as opinions are polarized so far the originator and age of the universe are concerned, the manner of its formation/creation is no exception. Modern science has jettisoned the hypothesis that the universe was created by God, as the

²⁰This theory (also called the day-age theory) is based in part on Ps 90:4 and 2 Pet 3:8 in rejecting a literal six-day creation. Accordingly, the days of creation are not to be understood as days of twenty-four hours but as ages. Traditionally, the day-age theory held that the days were equivalent to geological ages. Progressive creationism is a more serious attempt to reconcile the Bible with science. Regarding science, progressive creationism harmonizes the antiquity of the earth according to the teaching of science; at the same time, progressive creationists acknowledge the direct creation of man and general species in consideration of Genesis 1–2.

²¹Ross, *Creation and Time*, 103. See also Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 92.

²²Nigel Calder, *Magic Universe: A Grand Tour of Modern Science* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 521.

²³Younger, *God's Creation*, 40-41. Italics his.

Genesis 1 creation account stipulates. Alternatively, some naturalistic theories are put forward to explain how the universe, including our solar system, was formed. Among such hypotheses emerges that of the big bang theory. “The big bang theory about the origin and subsequent development of the universe had its origins in the 1920s and ’30s when the American astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered the so-called “red-shift”—the phenomenon of a shift toward the red end of the spectrum by light coming from distant galaxies.”²⁴ The big bang theory claims that between 10 and 20 billion years ago, the universe burst and spread out quickly from a submicroscopic "cosmic egg" containing all matter and energy to a cosmic fireball at a minimal temperature of 10 billion degrees Kelvin.²⁵ This fireball is believed to have grown into an expanding dense cloud of charged particles ejecting matter in all directions, cooling off as it emitted heat and light. But around 300,000 years after the eruption, the fireball cooled to 3000 degrees Kelvin, enabling the formation of subatomic particles, and subsequently entire atoms of gases. As time elapsed, gravity compressed the gases into galaxies, stars, planets, and the black void (dark matter) that comprise the modern universe.²⁶

Turning to our solar system, Roger Patterson presents its birth in his own words:

The naturalistic story of the solar system goes back 4.5 billion years. In this view the solar system began as a cloud of dust and gas that collapsed on itself.

²⁴Mart De Groot, “What are the Meaning and Implications of the Big Bang Theory?” in *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science*, eds. L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011), 79.

²⁵Kelvin is the temperature scale where the boiling point of water is 373.16 degrees and zero is equal to -273.16 Celsius, the measure at which molecules cease to move.

²⁶See Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Warner Books, 1978), 2-3; Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 246; Joseph A. Silk, *The Big Bang*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1989), 109-119. See also Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 91-92; Georges Comte de Buffon, *Les époques de la nature* (Paris: n.p., 1778).

A star began to form as the cloud was compressed by some unknown force. As the star spun and collected more mass, a disk of dust began to form the planets. Over millions of years the young solar system was formed. Much debris was left over from the process and is present today as asteroids and large belts and clouds of material. There was no intervention by a Creator, as the physical laws of the universe are adequate to explain everything—or so say the evolutionists.²⁷

In light of the above, the big bang appears to be a random, chance, and accidental event that seems to be diametrically opposed to the biblical portrayal of the birth of the universe. The big bang theory is actually based on a non-scientific *assumption* named the *cosmological principle*, which stipulates that an observer's view of the universe is neither contingent upon the direction in which he looks nor on his location.²⁸ The big bang theory seems to have a lot of flaws or missing links²⁹ so much so that the theory, sometimes, appears ludicrous. The following quote is apropos: “If I understand you correctly” said the student after the Professor had explained the big bang theory of the universe, “first there was nothing and then it exploded.”³⁰ This citation depicts the perplexity of the student who is not able to grasp the logic behind such a theory that attempts to obliterate God from the picture.

This notwithstanding, there are alternatives to the big bang theory that debunk the cosmological principle. Among such alternatives is the newly developed cosmology that allows for the formation of the universe in the biblical time frame.³¹ This cosmological view is rooted in Einstein's theory of general relativity. Yet, a

²⁷Roger Patterson, (2010), “Origin of the Solar System,” Chapter 3, accessed March 25, 2016, <https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/solar-system/origin-of-the-solar-system/>. See also Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 95.

²⁸Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 94-95. Italics his.

²⁹Missing links include the following: missing origin, missing fuse, missing stars formation, missing antimatter, missing time, missing mass, and missing life.

³⁰See Groot, “What are the Meaning and Implications of the Big Bang Theory?” in *Understanding Creation*, 78.

³¹Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 95.

modified view of the big bang theory posits that when the explosive event happened, it was directed by God. This is known as theistic evolution, and is an attempt to compromise the Bible with long-age evolutionary theories.³² In any case, “science alone will never have final answers regarding the true origin and purpose of the solar system.”³³ This is because retracing the origins of the Universe does not deal with experimental science performed in a laboratory. As it stands now, it will take much faith in believing what modern science teaches about origins and how the universe, including our solar system, came into existence. If the foregoing is correct, then evolution is best understood as a religion, rather than a scientific discipline.

The Bible and Astronomy

As pointed out above, the aim of modern science is to remove the God-factor from the creation/formation of the universe. But science has shown its inability to depict a full-fledged picture of the origins of the universe and our solar system inclusive. The order and design that characterize the cosmos and our solar system in particular, militate vehemently against the aleatory and cataclysmic origins depicted by the big bang theory. Such hazardous portrayal of origins seems to find itself at the antipodes of the straightforward biblical account of origins. In fact, Scripture begins with the when (in the beginning), the who (God), the how (by His word), and the what (the heavens and the earth) of creation. This section will major in the first three.

The first verse of the Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God, but rather to identify the author of creation—that God created (Gen 1:1). In fact, the

³²Donald B. DeYoung, “Was there a “Big Bang”?” Adapted from *Astronomy and the Bible: Questions and Answers*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), accessed April 18, 2016), <http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/big-bang.html>.

³³Donald B. DeYoung, “Has the Origin of the Solar System been determined?” Adapted from *Astronomy and the Bible: Questions and Answers*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), accessed April 18, 2016, <http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/solar-system-origins.html>.

Hebrew verb used in this verse to depict the creative acts of God is בָּרָא. Of all the creation verbs in the OT, בָּרָא is the most significant in the sense that it does not only have God as its unique subject, but also its use always implies a new and distinct creative act. The first occurrence of בָּרָא (1:1) with its object (the heavens and the earth) seems to suggest that בָּרָא has a *creatio ex nihilo* undertone, although this connotation is not inherent in the verb. Other OT passages throw more light on the semantic and syntactic implications of this distinctive verb which underscores the creatorship of God. Likewise, the NT endorses the doctrine of creation and portrays in more explicit terms the activeness of Jesus Christ at creation (see John 1:3; col 1:15-17; cf. Gen 1:26).

According to the same creation account in Genesis 1, God is the architect and originator of our solar system, as we know it today. Such statement is motivated by the textlinguistic/pragmatic and lexical-semantic analyses above. It was established that though the merism “the heavens and the earth” may represent the universe in its totality, Genesis 2:1 suggests that creation was not yet complete (see Appendix). This is evidenced by the six-day creation aimed at making the environment conducive for human life. It is in this perspective that the creator God engages in logical and chronological series of events destined to making the primeval earth habitable. It is within the six literal days of creation week, most likely, that our solar system was formed.

To begin with, God created אור “daytime” which marks the beginning of time as we know it today. On the second day he created the dome/firmament where He will later place the luminaries. On the third day, God created the dry land (הַיַּבֵּשָׁה) where man created on the six day is called to live. On the fourth day, God created the two

great lights/luminaries—the sun and the moon with the stars— to augment the light of the day and to illuminate the darkness of the night respectively.

All creationists, irrespective of their differences, agree on the fact that God is the creator of the universe and all that it contains (cf. Gen 2:1). The Bible is adamant that God is the author and originator of all animate and inanimate things, our solar system inclusive.³⁴

The when question of the creation of the universe is more delicate in nature due to some interpretative challenges of biblical data pertaining to origins. As a result, identifying the starting point of the universe as a whole has become enigmatic. This explains the polarization of scholarly opinions even among advocates of biblical creationism. On one side are young-earth creationists, old-earth creationists on the other. The proponents of old-earth hypothesis, mainly represented by progressive creationists hold that the earth—though formed after the sun and several other stars—is still some billions of years old, as the big bang theorists believe.³⁵ On the contrary, young-earth creationists³⁶ lean on Genesis 1 that teaches that the luminaries were formed on the fourth day and after the earth some 6,000 years ago.³⁷ One of the most famous young-earth creationists is James Ussher (1581-1656), an Anglican Archbishop. Ussher claimed that he was not only able to determine that creation

³⁴Cf. Fischer, *God Did It, But How?* 63.

³⁵See Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 92. Old-earth creationists (including theistic evolutionists) accept the secular estimate of the age of the universe (about 15 billion years) and of the earth (about 4.5 billion years).

³⁶It is, indeed, ironic that the four heroes of heliocentrism, namely, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton were all young-earth creationists (see *Ibid*, 101). It is well known, for instance, that Galileo (1564–1642) was a proponent of Copernicus’s theory that the earth revolves around the sun, not vice versa. Galileo is also considered by many to be the father of modern observable astronomy, modern physics, and ultimately the individual most responsible for the birth of modern science.

³⁷Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 92.

occurred in 4004 BC, but that Adam had been created at 9:00 A.M. on October 23 of that year.³⁸ Moreover, advocates of young-earth hypothesis point out, among others, that “the earth magnetic field has been decaying so fast that it couldn’t be more than about 10,000 years old.”³⁹ Terry Mortenson argues based on a few NT passages that Jesus was also a young-earth creationist.⁴⁰ Montenson calls this young-earth hypothesis the majority view.⁴¹ On the contrary, some still see the claim according to which the earth is only about 6,000 to 10,000 years old, as a serious attack against the Bible.⁴² This clash between old and recent creation advocates seems to find its roots in the interpretation of Genesis 1.

First, some believe that Genesis 1:1 is the foundation of an old earth hypothesis. This verse seems to refer to the creation of a certain universe prior to the six-day creation. The creation of such universe is modified by the temporal prepositional phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית “in beginning” (see Appendix). The adjunct בְּרֵאשִׁית is fronted in order to indicate that the creation of “the heavens and the earth” takes place at some undefined period of time prior to יוֹם אֶחָד “day one” or “first day” (1:5). It is

³⁸Yunker, *God’s Creation*, 37.

³⁹D. R. Humphreys, “Reversals of the Earth Magnetic Field During the Genesis Flood,” in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Creationism*, vol.2 (Pittsburgh, PA: Creation Science Fellowship, 1986), 113-126. See also J. D. Sarfati, “The Earth Magnetic Field: Evidence that the Earth is Young,” *Creation* 20, no 3 (1998): 19-21.

⁴⁰Terry Mortenson, “Jesus, Evangelical Scholars, and the Age of the Earth,” *TMSJ* 18/1 (Spring 2007): 73. But as he pointed out, some old-earth advocates who interact with these same verses contend that in them Jesus is not referring to the beginning of the whole creation but only to the beginning of the human race, which they date millions of years after the creation of the universe, earth, trilobites, dinosaurs, etc. Nonetheless, for decades, young-earth creationist writers have cited these verses in articles and books in defense of the earth being only thousands of years old, emphasizing that the statements of Jesus show that Adam could not have been created billions of years after the beginning, as all old-earth views maintain (see Carl Wieland, “The Earth: How Old Does it Look?” *Creation Ex Nihilo* 23/1 (December 2000-February 20 01):8-13; Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life, 1974), 246).

⁴¹Terry Mortenson, “Philosophical Naturalism and the Age of the Earth: Are they Related?” *TMSJ* 15/1 (Spring 2004): 73.

⁴²Rodney Whitefield, *Genesis One and the Age of the Earth: What Does the Bible Say?* (San Jose, CA: R. Whitefield, 2011), 7.

often postulated that between בְּרֵאשִׁית and יוֹם אֶקֶד sometime has elapsed—commonly referred to as Gap (whether active or passive). If between these two temporal markers, there elapsed a long period of millions or billions of years, then the earth may be *ipso facto* an old one. But the challenge is that Scripture seems to be silent on that possible gap. Hence, it is hazardous to read into the text what it does not mean. Moreover, the creation days have often been interpreted as representing ages or long periods of time each.⁴³ The study so far has disproved such allegation.

Second, some argue for a young universe on the basis that both the earth and the luminaries were created within the six literal days. The earth, as we know it today, was created on the third day, while the luminaries were created on the fourth. If the above is correct, then it makes sense to contend for a young age of our solar system. Findings obtained so far from this study militate for such conclusion.

Speaking of the process or the how of creation, Charles C. Ryrie puts it this way:

It is popular today to say that the important truth in Genesis is who created, not how He created. But even a cursory look at the section will reveal quickly how glib such a statement is. God “created,” “made,” “said,” “called,” “set,” “formed,” “caused,” “took,” “planted,” and “blessed.” His creative activity is described by these verbs. Furthermore, the section gives the order of creation, “day” by “day.” Too, it records God’s work of creation from start (1:1) to finish (2:1). In other words, the Genesis account tells us the who, the how, the order, and the completeness of the process of creation.⁴⁴

The above quote by Ryrie seems to give a full picture of how God created. It is true that God “created,” “made,” “said,” “called,” “set,” “formed,” “caused,” “took,” “planted,” and “blessed.” However, Genesis 1 and other passages from both OT and NT, suggest that God predominantly performed these actions by the word of

⁴³Gibson, *Genesis*, 56; Letham, “In the Space of Six Days,” 151.

⁴⁴Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1974, 1991), 110.

His mouth. No wonder that Allen P. Ross stated that God is the Almighty Creator in the sense that by His word, He transformed “chaos”⁴⁵ into cosmos.⁴⁶ In other words, the universe was mainly created by divine fiat. This statement does not *ipso facto* mean that God always created out of nothing. However, it suggests that God did not need ages to create the universe. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm (Ps 33:9).

It is in this manner that God seems to have created the earth on day three as Genesis 1:9 states: And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. In the same vein, He created the two great lights on day four as 1:14 states: “And God said, Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night.” According to v. 16, God made the two great lights and set them in the dome of the sky. *Prima facie*, v.16 appears to be redundant. Nonetheless, as pointed out earlier, the use of עֲשֶׂה here is interchangeable with בָּרָא and conveys a theological message that the luminaries are not deities, but mere astronomical objects designed by God to fulfill his purposes.

To sum up, it may be said that God sequentially created elements of our solar system, including אֹר and מְאֹרֶת by means of his spoken word within the creation week.

Bible and Science

The question as to whether Scripture and science conflict is a pertinent one, especially, in the context of the Genesis debate. Concomitantly, this question sounds

⁴⁵It is generally believed that the state of the earth described in Genesis 1:2 is the result of a divine judgment upon the earth at the rebellion of Satan. The divine curse has therefore caused the cataclysmic condition of the earth.

⁴⁶Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 103.

absurd given that “most branches of modern science were founded by believers in *creation*.”⁴⁷ Quoting Galileo’s statement that “The intention of the Holy Ghost is to teach us how to go to heaven, not how heaven goes,”⁴⁸ Mortenson draws two lessons:⁴⁹ (1) that the Bible teaches theology and morality, but not astronomy or science; (2) that the church will make big mistakes if it tries to tell scientists what to believe about the world.⁵⁰ In other words, what this means is that the Bible does not have the vocation to explain the origins of the universe. If this is correct, then there is incompatibility between Scripture and science. A further investigation into this subject is therefore warranted.

To begin with, it is useful to differentiate between experimental/empirical science and historical science. Sciences that are mainly *experimental* such as chemistry, physics, anatomy, and ecology involve the manipulation of physical conditions in order to isolate and identify causal factors that may explain a given event. On the other hand, sciences that are primarily *historical* such as archeology and paleontology are concerned with the study of results of some past event and attempt to explain what occurred in order to produce the observed evidence.⁵¹ All true science is

⁴⁷Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, 25. Italics his. On the list of creationist scientists see A. Lamont, *21 Great Scientists Who Believed the Bible* (Australia: Creation Science Foundation, 1995), 120-131; H. M. Morris, *Men of Science—Men of God* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1982).

⁴⁸See D. C. Goodman, ed., *Science and Religious Belief 1600-1900: A Selection of Primary Sources* (Milton Keynes, UK: The Open University Press, 1973), 34.

⁴⁹Mortenson, “Philosophical Naturalism and the Age of the Earth,” 73.

⁵⁰For more details on this complex Galileo affair, see Thomas Schirrmacher, “The Galileo Affair: History or Heroic hagiography?” *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* 14/1 (2000): 91–100; William R. Shea, “Galileo and the Church,” in *God and Nature*, eds. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986): 114–35.

⁵¹David Ekkens, “Are the Bible and Science in Conflict?” in *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science*, eds. L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011), 35. Italics mine.

in harmony with the works of God.⁵² There seems to be a significant difference between experimental and historical sciences. While empirical science is open to experimentation, historical science is not. In other words, experimental science deals with events replicable in a laboratory.

Historical science, on the other hand, is concerned with past events that cannot be tested experimentally. If there is conflict between science and Scripture in the study of origins, it is because the question of origins is a historical one. Generally speaking, there is no conflict between Scripture and experimental science.⁵³ It is, perhaps, in this context that the following words may be construed: “Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature.”⁵⁴ There are several areas of agreement between science and Scripture. The Bible is not a science book, yet it describes many phenomena that are reconcilable with scientific data. Bible authors, for example, wrote intensively on mammals, birds, plants, aspects of anatomy and physiology, human and animal behaviors. Today, scientific finds seem to have confirmed these to a great extent.⁵⁵ As pointed out earlier, a number of great scientists were believers and yet, they saw no conflict between Scripture and science. Even the renowned Galileo Galilei, who, together with Francis Bacon, advocated a separation between the book of Scripture and the book of Nature, still acknowledged that God was the author of both.⁵⁶

⁵²William H. Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12, ed. George W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 452.

⁵³See Ekkens, “Are the Bible and Science in Conflict?” 35.

⁵⁴Shea, “Creation,” 452.

⁵⁵See Ekkens, “Are the Bible and Science in Conflict?” 35.

⁵⁶See F. E. Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Turning to the question of origins, the query bounces back. Why so much tension about the subject? Ekkens observes that conflict between Scripture and science stems from several reasons including the following:⁵⁷ (1) differing philosophical understandings of the role of God in nature; (2) the difficulty of interpreting the history of the world scientifically; (3) the inability of science to explain in scientific terms what God did miraculously; and (4) the brevity and incompleteness of the biblical information about the history of nature. The reasons mentioned above are all pertinent in that they sufficiently explain the current stalemate. Further, the second and the third reasons point out clearly the limits of science in answering the question of origins.

As pointed out earlier, this question does not fall within the parameters of empirical science. It ensues that Scripture becomes the sole authority in this debate given that the finds of historical science are very subjective and based primarily on educated guesses. Besides, historical science leans on assumptions that stem from evolution—a so-called science. Evolutionary theories such as the “big bang” theory cannot be proven empirically. Evolution therefore, far from being true science, is at best, a religion; a religion whose tenets are built on a naturalistic/materialistic view of the world. It follows that Scripture remains the most trustworthy source for tracing the origins of the world since it is the product of divine revelation. Informed by the foregoing, the following quote may be noted:

We are dependent on the Bible for the knowledge of the early history of the world, of the creation of man, and of his fall. Remove the word of God, and what can we expect than to be left to fables and conjectures, and to that enfeebling of the intellect which is the sure result of entertaining error. We need the authentic history of the origin of the earth, of the fall of the covering cherub, and of the introduction of sin into our world. Without the Bible, we should be bewildered by false theories.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ekkens, “Are the Bible and Science in Conflict?” 44.

⁵⁸Shea, “Creation,” 453.

The word of God is therefore our only safeguard against these so-called scientific theories that seek to rule out God from the picture so far as the question of origins is concerned.

Turning to the thorny question of old-earth versus young-earth, the way out is not the following: (1) trying to harmonize science and Scripture at all cost; and (2) mythologizing Scripture. In other words, the origin of the earth cannot be explained without the supernatural. God did not need ages or billions of years to create, as stated earlier. This goes without saying that God used six literal days to create the earth and the other astronomical objects as the text itself indicates. The use of the singular word יום “day” in Genesis 1, as the analysis has shown, is supportive of such understanding. It ensues therefore that a young-earth hypothesis is hereby reaffirmed.

In light of the above, the researcher argues that there is no conflict between true science (i.e., experimental science) and Scripture. The clash only arises when evolution disguised as modern science claims to have all the answers to the question of origins.

Divine Power, Light, and Creation

The doctrine of divine creation underpins Christian and biblical theology. It is one of the distinctive glories of the Christian faith, and indeed of the faith of Israel from which it sprung.⁵⁹ Remove creation, and many other Christian doctrines are emptied of their substance.

Even in African traditional religion, “creation is the most widely acknowledged work of God. This concept is expressed through saying that God

⁵⁹Spanner, *Biblical Creation and the Theory of Evolution*, 42.

created all things, through giving Him the name Creator (or Moulder, or Maker), and through addressing Him in prayer and invocations as the Creator.”⁶⁰ The creatorship of God is pregnant with meaning because if God created, then man is accountable to Him, but if there is no God who has created the world then man is not accountable to God concerning any moral structure.

“Creation is a supernatural process, which means that the events and processes of creation cannot be discovered through empirical research, but must be supernaturally revealed or remain unknown.”⁶¹ As such, God’s power is manifested through His creative works. Creation starts with God who was present at the beginning of the universe. Things came into existence at His spoken utterances. The origins of the world cannot be explained by putting God’s creative power out of the equation. Those who have attempted to do so have become an easy prey to evolutionary theories. One of the most enigmatic questions to the so-called modern science pertains to the creation of light prior to that of the luminaries, as recorded in Genesis 1. This biblical truth has often been frowned upon by modern science as a scientific aberration. Science, when it jettisons the miraculous, is only rejecting something it cannot explain on the basis of known causes and effects.⁶²

As established earlier, the light on the first day did not emanate from the sun, but from God who spoke daylight, hereby referred to as light, into existence. Through divine power, “light was coming during the day as though from the sun and during the night as though from the moon and stars, even though they had not yet been

⁶⁰John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Johannesburg, South Africa: Heinemann, 1989), 39.

⁶¹Gibson, “What is Creation Theory?” 26.

⁶²Merrill, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 35.

created.”⁶³ The heavenly bodies did not come into existence accidentally—they are the objects of God’s creative power.⁶⁴ This is well captured in Isa 40:26, “Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.”

With such divine power in mind, it is not surprising that God could have created light before its alleged source, the sun. It goes without saying that the light on the first day is not from the sun, but the resultant of God’s pronouncement.

⁶³Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 65.

⁶⁴Coffin with Brown, and Gibson, *Origin by Design*, 16.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter divides into two sections. The first summarizes the study, the last spins out its conclusions. The summary of the findings is patterned after the development of the ideas and concepts in the various chapters. The conclusions are informed by the said findings.

Summary

This study employed a hybrid method encapsulating exegesis and text linguistics/pragmatics, in order to arrive at a sustainable conclusion on the subject under discussion, that is, the creation of light in Genesis 1:1-2:3. The use of such method is informed by the weaknesses of the atomistic and word-based approach that is common in traditional exegesis. Text linguistics allows the researcher to analyze issues at the sentence or text level.

The study was divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter concerned itself with the general introduction which aimed at setting the stage for the study; the problem statement introduced the subject as problematic by mapping out its enigmatic areas; the purpose and significance of the study gave a justification for the study. The methodology presented the two methods and provided definitional information about them, given that text linguistics remains a fairly known approach in biblical studies.

Chapter two embarked on a historical survey of interpretation of relevant issues to the creation of light in Genesis 1. The review has revealed that Genesis 1 is a

difficult passage to interpret. Issues discussed include the length of days, the source of light on the first day of creation, the timing of the creation of the luminaries, and the relationship between אור and מארת. It was observed that from the early church period to the present time, there has never been a consensus among interpreters pertaining to the length of days in the Genesis account. While some construe the term יום “day” literally, some, on the other hand, argue for a metaphorical interpretation. Opinions may be divided into three categories as far as the origin of light on the first day is concerned: (1) light emanated from God Himself; (2) light came from the then invisible sun; and (3) light sprung from a non-solar source. Addressing the timing of the creation of the two great lights, three major views emerged: (1) the luminaries were made “in the beginning” and then given their purpose on the fourth day; (2) they were made on the first day, then assigned their duties on the fourth day; and (3) they were made on the fourth day and then given their course of action. On the relationship between אור and מארת, it was postulated that though days 1 and 4 are parallel, they do not necessarily portray the same event.

Chapter three embarked on literary and linguistic analyses. In the first section of the chapter, the focus was to trace the literary features of the passage under study. It was pointed out that scholarly opinions are divided on the delineation of the first pericope of the Bible. Two major views have been noted as follows: (1) Genesis 1:1-2:3; (2) Genesis 1:1-2:4a. This study has preferred the former view over the latter. Genesis 1 was perceived as a difficult passage to translate because of the multiple extant variant readings. The variations from one variant reading to another tend to be more of orthographic nature. In any case, the MT has been identified as the best reading for a linguistic analysis. The identification of the genre of Genesis 1 is crucial to its interpretation. Yet, the issue does not make consensus among scholars. Some

have viewed the pericope as a poem due to the presence of certain poetic features. Conversely, based on some identifiable literary elements such as prose particles, some have argued that Genesis 1 is a prose account. In light of recent knowledge in text linguistics, Genesis 1 is best construed as a historical narrative text type. This implies that the events described in Genesis 1 are to be taken as factual. Several types of structure are identifiable in Genesis 1. Only three of them have been addressed as follows: the linear/formal structure, the thematic/symmetric structure, and the generic structure. The importance of addressing the issue of structure cannot be overemphasized, because of its potential to yielding more insight into the creation debate. The linear structure has displayed both the eight paragraphs and the logical succession of the divine creative activities. The symmetric structure, on the other hand, has shown that paragraphs 1 (1:1-2) and 8 (2:1-3) lie outside the symmetry insinuating that events in both paragraphs are not part of the six-day creative activities. Further, this structure has showcased the two-triad of days; the first triad presenting the regions created on day one-three, which were filled by the second triad encapsulating day four-six. In a similar vein, the generic structure reinforced the perfect symmetry existing between days 1 and 4.

The second section of the chapter including the appendix has revealed that in spite of the superfluity of exegetical studies on Genesis 1, several problem areas still remain; hence, the recourse to text linguistics with pragmatics as an approach to understanding the creation account. These new approaches enable the researcher to tackle issues at the text level. Genesis 1:1-2 is the fulcrum of the Christian faith notwithstanding its interpretative challenges. Understanding the first verse as a protasis insinuates that God had raw materials at His disposal; however, reading it as an independent clause leaves open the possibility that God created *ex-nihilo*. The

syntax of 1:1-2 has shown that both verses are closely related. This statement is corroborated by the fact that while v. 1 presents the initial/grand creation, v. 2 describes the original condition of the earth as it was created by God. In addition, the six-day creation (1:3-31) would not have made sense had it not been for the information provided by v. 2. The author's intent was to preclude any eventual conflation of בְּרֵאשִׁית and יוֹם אֶהְיֶה which marks the beginning of the six-day creation. The phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית functions here as an adverbial modifier aiming at drawing the reader's mind back to a prior creation. In other words, Genesis 1:1-2 functions therefore as antecedent information pointing to a previous act of creation modified by the temporal adjunct בְּרֵאשִׁית, and thus constitutes a key to unfolding the subsequent narrative of the six-day creation (vv. 3-31).

Text linguists have argued that a shift from *we-x-qatal* to *wayyiqtol* clause is significant in textlinguistics studies and pragmatics. It is an established fact that in narrative texts, as in Genesis 1, *wayyiqtol* clauses present the narrative foreground information (i.e., main storyline) in the form of sequential happenings, while other clause types relay background information. Genesis 1:3-5 is said to be a cohesive paragraph that is closely related to 1:1-2. Genesis 1:14-19 parallels 1:3-5, as it is well portrayed by the symmetric structure. Simply put, days 1 and 4 display a perfect symmetry. This has ineluctably led to long debate over the relationship between אֹר and קְאֵרִת. Paragraph analysis of Genesis 1: 3-5 and 1:14-19 has ascertained their logical relationship with 1:1-2. The terms אֹר and קְאֵרִת however do not have the same referent even though they seem to be closely related at some point. Genesis 2:1-3 serves a dual function. First, 2:1 summarizes the creation account by pointing out its completion. Second, 2:2-3 marks the beginning of Sabbath observance as an established institution.

The last part of the chapter concerned itself with a lexical-semantic analysis and has yielded a few results. First, the word בָּרָא is a significant creation verb since it has only God as its subject. The analysis of בָּרָא in contexts has, however, shown that the idea of creation *ex nihilo* is usually read into the verb. Of all the three major creation verbs (i.e., בָּרָא, יָצַר, עָשָׂה), בָּרָא is the most important. Its use always points to a new divine creation; yet, the materials of which the objects of בָּרָא are made are never indicated. The verb עָשָׂה is the third most important creation verb in the OT but the second most used verb with reference to divine creation in Genesis 1. The subjects of עָשָׂה are not restricted to God, but any time God is the subject, creation in the sense implied by בָּרָא is intended. In Genesis 1, the fact that עָשָׂה is used in parallel to בָּרָא suggests that the author used them interchangeably. The verb יָצַר is the second most important creation verb in the OT, but it is third with regards to the creation account in Genesis 1-2. It is used in connection with the creation of humankind, and it happens to be the best surrogate for בָּרָא since it often stands in parallel with the latter. Human beings may also function as subjects of יָצַר, but when God is its subject, a new creation in the sense implied by בָּרָא is called for.

One of the keys to this study is the understanding of the word יוֹם. The extent of scholarly engagement aimed at unearthing the meaning and length of the creation days in Genesis 1 attests to the elusiveness of the word. The noun יוֹם has a rich semantic content connoting among others, “daylight,” “24-hour day,” “epoch or extended period of time.” This study, however, argues for a literal understanding of the noun יוֹם in Genesis 1.

The succinct analysis of אוֹר has revealed that the word is both phenomenal (light) and temporal (daytime). As a phenomenon, אוֹר does not necessarily emanate from the sun. In fact, arguments raised in this study militate against a solar origin of

אור on the first three days in Genesis 1. Though the origin of אור is still hotly debated, it is here argued that divine fiat creation of אור on the first day was an initiation of an opposite phenomenon to חֲשֶׁךְ in order to establish night-time and daytime without the aid of the sun.

The מְאֹרֹת are light-bearers and seem not to be phenomenal. In fact, unlike אור, the מְאֹרֹת are spatially and materially localized. But in light of their assigned functions, it is argued that the מְאֹרֹת without being necessarily phenomenon, are observable time markers. Putting in perspective the duties ascribed to the luminaries, it becomes evident that the מְאֹרֹת were more likely created on the fourth day.

Finally, the terms אור and מְאֹרֹת are not to be employed interchangeably for the sake of the line of reasoning presented in this study. Both אור and מְאֹרֹת happen to be closely related, but this does not call for any conflation of the two terms. The study does not claim to conclusively settle the debate, but it does argue that אור and מְאֹרֹת do not have the same referent.

Chapter four attempted to show the interplay between science and biblical Creation, especially, in matters of origins of the universe and our solar system in particular. As part of the theories advocated by modern science to answer the question of origins, emerges the big bang theory. This theory claims that the universe, including our solar system, evolved through a natural process of about 10 to 20 billions of years ago. Conversely, scripture presents God as the originator of the universe which He created mainly by divine fiat a little more than 6,000 years ago. Progressive creationists however argue for an older universe based, perhaps, on Genesis 1:1-2, and also the use of the word יום “day” which they believe stands for long period of time or a geological age. The study has also ascertained that true science (i.e., empirical science) does not conflict with Scripture. The prevailing

tension on the question of origins is therefore opposing Scripture and evolution masqueraded as modern science.

Finally, the creation of the universe and more precisely the creation of light before that of the light-bearers is the hallmark of divine power which undergirds the existence of the world.

Conclusions

On account of the analyses of the text, several conclusions may be drawn with regards to the creation of light in Genesis 1 and the relationship between אור and מארת. Even though this hybrid method has enabled the researcher to arrive at findings that shed more light on the problem areas showcased in the first chapter, this study, nonetheless, does not aver that its conclusions are absolute. These conclusions include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The creation of light (אור) on the first day was a distinctive act of creation.

This implies that the said light did not emanate from the sun nor from a non-solar astronomical object but, rather a phenomenon that resulted from a divine pronouncement. This light is best understood as “daytime,” an antagonistic natural phenomenon to חשך “darkness,” both of which combine to constitute a 24-hour literal day. Further, the first alternation of אור with חשך in 1:3-5 marks the beginning of time as we count it today.

2. The verb ברא and its surrogates יצר and עשה are used interchangeably in the Genesis creation account to describe a new and distinct creative act of God—not necessarily to herald a creation out of nothing. This implies that while עשה instead of ברא is used for the creation of the luminaries, the divine activity on day 4 is a new creation. This further means that אור and מארת were neither

created “in the beginning” nor on “day 1.” This is buttressed by the fact that אור instead of מְאֹרֹת is referred to in vv.3-5.

3. The luminaries (מְאֹרֹת) were created on the fourth day and then placed in the firmament created on the second day to perform their assigned duties. This indicates that God did not depend on a solar light to illuminate the earth during, at least, the first three days. It also affirms the existence of nights-days cycle prior to the creation of the sun and the moon. This nights-days cycle was initiated by the creation of אור on day 1.
4. Since the מְאֹרֹת are to separate אור “light” from חֹשֶׁךְ “darkness,” it ensues that מְאֹרֹת is not to be equated with אור. While אור in vv. 3-5 is equated with יום at some point, the greater מְאֹרֹת does not equate יום even though the former rules over the latter. Likewise, the lesser מְאֹרֹת does not equate חֹשֶׁךְ even though it rules over it. Furthermore, the מְאֹרֹת are to divide the day (יום) (which equates אור) from לַיְלָה “night,” insinuating that אור and מְאֹרֹת may not be synonymous or interchangeable terms.
5. Both אור and מְאֹרֹת appear to be closely related, but this does not call for any conflation of the two terms. The study therefore argues that אור is both temporal (daytime) and phenomenal (light), while the מְאֹרֹת are physical markers of time designed to complement/enhance the phenomenon of אור “light.”
6. Science has often frowned upon the chronology of biblical creation on the grounds that there should be luminaries before there is light with alternation of nights and days. This is hardly explicable scientifically because science does not give room for the supernatural/miraculous. Yet, the origins of the universe cannot be explained without it.

7. The conflict between science and Scripture is effected by evolutionary presuppositions undergirding what is known, nowadays, as modern science. True science is hardly at odds with Scripture.

APPENDIX

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

A plethora of exegetical studies have been done on Genesis 1 (Gen 1); yet, several problem areas still remain. This goes without saying that the atomistic nature of the scholarly engagement, in one way or the other, has shown its limits. As stated in chapter 1, “Since the 1970s, Hebrew linguists have expressed discontentment with the traditional word-based and sentence-based approaches to grammar along with their vague syntactic categories,¹ and have centered efforts in text linguistics and/or discourse analysis from various perspectives.”² Theophile James Meek points out that “For the correct understanding of the text nothing is so important as the correct understanding of the syntax.”³ Having said that, this study makes use of text linguistics and pragmatics in order to make up for the alleged weaknesses of the traditional word-based method (i.e., exegesis).

Primarily, pragmatics is concerned with bridging the gap between sentence meaning and author’s meaning in each communicative act, thereby making the (pragmatic) context an integral aspect of interpretation. It ensues that pragmatic analysis is not limited to the clause level; it is also done at the text level.⁴ This section therefore seeks to analyze the three main parts of Gen 1 beyond the sentence level. First, the study will ascertain the syntactical relationship between Gen 1:1 and 1:2, and the syntactic-pragmatic relation of 1:1- 2 to 1:3-2:3.

Second, the syntactic-pragmatic relation of 1: 3-5 to 1:14-19 and their relation to 1: 1-2 will be addressed. Third, the function of Gen 2: 1-3 will be elucidated with respect to 1:1-2 and 1:3-31.

The Function of Gen 1:1-2

The Bible does not begin with an attempt to prove the existence of God, but rather with a matter of fact declaration.⁵ Some scholars believe that “The Bible begins where it must—with creation.”⁶ So simple and plain this statement of creation may

¹van der Merwe, “Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar,” in *BHDL*, 15.

²Ibid.

³Theophile James Meek, “The Syntax of the Sentence in Hebrew,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 64, no. 1 (1945): 1.

⁴van Wolde, “A Text-Semantic Study,” 19.

⁵See Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 7.

⁶Wood, *Genesis*, 23.

appear to be⁷ has, however, been a bone of contention for several decades. Neils-Erik Andreasen seems to confirm that statement when he conceded that the wording of Gen 1:1 is a plain statement that even a child can easily understand, and yet “the object of interpretative disagreement.”⁸

This controversy seems to stem from the atomistic nature of Biblical Studies. Hence, the need for revisiting the passage from a text linguistic perspective. Some of the essential questions that come in mind in connection with this theological stalemate are as follows: Is Gen 1:1 an independent clause or a dependent clause? What is the syntactic relationship of v. 1 to v. 2? How does the w^a+x+qatal clause beginning v. 2 (. . . וְהָאֲרֶץ הָיְתָה רֵקָה וְתוֹהוּ [and the earth was . . .]) contribute to understanding the syntactic-pragmatic relation of v. 1 to v. 2 and to v. 3?

Syntactical Relation of Gen 1:1 to 1:2

In spite of the extensive volume of work produced by biblical scholars over the past few decades, it appears that no conclusive argument on the first two verses of Gen 1 has not yet been produced.⁹ Gowan states that 1:1-2 may be translated in three possible ways as follows: (1) the traditional way, with v.1 an independent sentence; (2) taking v.1 as a dependent clause with v. 2 the independent clause: “At the beginning of God creating the heavens and the earth, the earth was waste and void. . .;” (3) taking v.1 as a dependent clause with v. 3 as an independent clause and v.2 as a parenthesis: “At the beginning of God creating the heavens and the earth—the earth being waste and void. . .—God said, ‘Let there be light.’”¹⁰

Daniel K. Bediako gives a synopsis of the major positions on 1:1-2 as follows:

v.1 serves as the title or summary of the whole chapter while v.2 describes the situation prior to creation, that is, a preexistent chaos; (2) v.1 refers to an original creation which became contaminated with evil and v.2 sets the stage for reconstruction; (3) v.1 refers to an original creation of the heavens and earth, with v. 2 describing the state of the earth as it was originally created; v. 3 begins creation of life on earth; (4) v.1 functions both as summary/superscription and original act of creation; and (5) v.1 is part of the creative work on the first day of the creation week.¹¹

Genesis 1:1 appears to be the fulcrum of the Christian faith although it has, paradoxically, occasioned a long debate in Biblical Studies. For some evangelical and conservative scholars, this passage answers some fundamental questions about the origin of the universe.¹² Such scholars see 1:1 to be an independent clause giving an

⁷Ibid.

⁸Neils-Erik Andreasen, “The Word ‘Earth’ in Genesis 1:1,” *Origins* 8 [1] (1981):3.

⁹See Gowan, *From Eden to Babel*, 17.

¹⁰Gowan, *From Eden to Babel*, 17; cf. Hartley, *Genesis*, 40-41.

¹¹Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic Function of Genesis 1:1-2,” 3-4.

¹²Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 7.

account of an absolute divine creation. On the other hand, some believe that 1:1 is best construed as a dependent clause.¹³

In any case, leaning on the MT with the LXX renderings, it would be in order to consider 1:1 as an independent clause in its own right. Having said that, the relationship between v.1 and v.2 may not be elucidated without dissecting v. 2.

Verse 2 may be split into three distinguishable circumstantial clauses as follows:¹⁴ (1) וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹם וְבִהוּ “the earth was a formless void,” (2) וְהַשָּׁד עֲלִפְנֵי תְהוֹם “and darkness covered the face of the deep,” (3) וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם “while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”

Edward J. Young, points out the function of a circumstantial clause as being descriptive of a particular condition, and therefore differs from a narrative clause which distinguishes itself by its potential to having a finite verb. A brief examination of some intertextual markers contained in these three circumstantial clauses will yield more insight into the current debate.

To begin with, in the clause וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹם וְבִהוּ “the earth was a formless void,” תְהוֹם “formless” and בִהוּ “void” are of interest. The word תְהוֹם is used ten times in the Hebrew Bible. In all these occurrences it may be rendered “formlessness,” “desolation,” “confusion,” “emptiness,” “waste,” “chaos.” G. Aalders states that the word תְהוֹם depicts the loneliness and forsakenness of the barren desert.¹⁵ According to Isa 45:18, God did not create the earth a chaos but He formed it to be inhabited. This implies that Isaiah equates an uninhabited earth with chaos. It follows that if the earth was תְהוֹם “chaos” at its creation, it is because it was not yet ready to be inhabited. If this is correct, then it may be said that v.2 set the stage for the main narrative (Gen 1: 3-31). The word בִהוּ “void” is used three times only in the Hebrew Bible and is translated similarly as “emptiness,” “waste,” “chaos.” Giere states that תְהוֹם and בִהוּ function together as a simple predicate that describes the condition of the proto-earth.¹⁶ Taken together, תְהוֹם and בִהוּ are usually syntactically juxtaposed. In 1:2 they vividly depict the original condition of the newly created earth that was uninhabitable.

The second circumstantial clause וְהַשָּׁד עֲלִפְנֵי תְהוֹם “and darkness covered the face of the deep,” attests of the formless and void state of the original earth. Some scholars contend that הַשָּׁד “darkness” and תְהוֹם “deep” are the two elements of the original chaotic earth.¹⁷ The belief has long been propounded that תְהוֹם is an implicit reference to the Babylonian Tiamat. However, Hamilton argues that a very strong linguistic argument militates against the equation of Tiamat and תְהוֹם.¹⁸ The word תְהוֹם is used to designate a natural phenomenon, with no mystical undertone.¹⁹ Meanwhile,

¹³See S. D. Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One: Intertextuality, History of Interpretation, and Genesis 1:1-5* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 21, n. 12; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 95.

¹⁴See also Kelly, *Creation and Change*, 81-85; Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 7.

¹⁵Charles G. Aalders, *Genesis*, vol. 1, Bible Student's Commentary, trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 54.

¹⁶Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 21.

¹⁷Hartley, *Genesis*, 41.

¹⁸Hamilton, *Handbook of the Pentateuch*, 26.

¹⁹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 105.

הַיָּשָׁר is integral part of the proto-earth, and is never associated with the dichotomy of good and evil in all its four occurrences; but rather to depict a contrast between light and dark, day and night (MT Gen 1:4,5,18).²⁰ תְּהוֹם is the primordial, watery abyss.²¹ Of the 36 occurrences of תְּהוֹם, 22 are singular form while 14 in the plural form.²² Besides, only two occurrences have the definite article (Isa 63:13 and Ps 106: 9), the rest appear without the definite article, suggesting the attribute of a proper noun.²³ In several occasions, תְּהוֹם is used in parallel to מַיִם "water" or יָם "sea."²⁴ Both הַיָּשָׁר and תְּהוֹם constitute the two primeval cosmic elements. Consequently, this circumstantial clause gives impetus to the first for it justifies the reason why הָאָרֶץ "the earth" created in Gen 1:1 was uninhabitable.

The third circumstantial clause וַיִּזְרַח אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם²⁵ "while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters" seems to append a divine element to the alleged original chaotic condition of the earth.²⁶ In their attempt to vindicate God in the face of such chaotic primeval earth depiction, some have come to conjecture that a great cataclysm has occurred between Gen 1:1 and 1:2.²⁷ Attributing a God-factor to the so-called catastrophic state of the original earth, seems to be an invective to those who believe that God cannot create an 'imperfect/incomplete' environment as portrayed in Gen 1:2. The most significant intertextual marker in this clause is מְרַחֵף

²⁰Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 22.

²¹Ibid., 23.

²²See Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament*, s.v. "t'hôm." Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 23, however, suggests 35 occurrences of the word.

²³Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 23.

²⁴Roberto Ouro, "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic Or Chaotic? Part II," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 37 (Spring, 1999): 47.

²⁵The word רוּחַ has a rich semantic range. It may be translated "wind," "spirit," or "breath" depending on the context. In Gen 1: 2, some evangelical and conservative choose to translate it as "spirit" while others with critical scholars claim that the word is best rendered "wind." Sarna, *Genesis*, 6, for example, states that "wind" is the most popular rendering of the word in ancient and medieval Jewish sources. It follows that rendering רוּחַ as "wind" is, to some extent, understandable given that the darkness covering the surface of the deep is a natural phenomenon just as the wind hovering over the face of the waters. This parallelism between clauses 2 and 3 of v. 2 seems to justify the translation of רוּחַ as "wind." This notwithstanding, it would be myopic to overlook the syntax of both clauses. In clause 2, הַיָּשָׁר is an absolute noun whereas in clause 3 רוּחַ is a construct noun. Such a syntactical dissonance seems to suggest that אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ is best translated as "Spirit of God." This seems to be confirmed by the function of אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ which is to hover/brood.

Further, the construct chain אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ appears in another place in the Hebrew Bible (2 Chr 24: 20) where it has the meaning of divine spirit (e.g., Gen 41:38), Spirit of God (Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 19:20,23; 2 Chr 15:1; 24:20; Ezek 11:24), or evil spirit from God (e.g., 1 Sam 16:15,16,23; 18:10).

The cognate phrase רוּחַ יְהוָה occurs twice (Judg 6: 34; 1 Sam 16: 14) where it is translated "Spirit of God." In Numbers 11:31 where it is translated "wind from the Lord," the phrase has a different syntax altogether.

²⁶See Kelly, *Creation and Change*, 83.

²⁷See Vos, *Genesis*, 11; Wood, *Genesis*, 23-24, some believe that this chaotic condition of the earth was a result of a divine judgment. However, there is no internal evidence that corroborates such assertion.

“brooding.” The brooding (מְרַחֵף) of the Spirit of God over the surface/presence of waters seems to indicate that the condition of the original earth as depicted in this passage fits in to the divine plan/design.²⁸ The participial form מְרַחֵף is a Piel stem which may be rendered “brooded” and may denote the active function of the spirit/wind. In light of Deut 32:11-14 where God is said to protect His people just as an eagle hovers (יִרְחֵף) over its young (cf. Isa 31:5; Jer 23:9), some scholars argue that the activity described by מְרַחֵף cannot be that of an impersonal phenomenon, but that of a living being who hovers like a bird over the created earth.²⁹ Leaning, perhaps, on the fact that there is no other place in the six-day creation (Gen 1:3-31) where “wind” is said to have been created, some believe that רוּחַ must mean “wind” in v.2.

However, Kenneth A. Mathews with many others opines that though the parallel nature of clauses 2 and 3 seems to suggest that רוּחַ is a natural element as is הַשָּׁמַיִם, the use of מְרַחֵף in clause 3 argues against a purely natural understanding of רוּחַ.³⁰ Brooding by the Spirit of God was necessary at this point in time because “the universe everywhere was in need of activation....”³¹ Rendering רוּחַ as “spirit” is not without challenge either, given that that spirit is nowhere alluded to in the rest of the creation account of Gen 1. In parallel to the foregoing is the issue of the referent of רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים. Those who construe רוּחַ as a natural phenomenon do not hesitate to interpret רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים as “wind of God,” without necessarily taking *Elohim* as a superlative. Conversely, taking רוּחַ as “spirit,” would imply translating רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים as “Spirit of God.” The polarization of opinions over the referent of רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים/רוּחַ is indicative of the fact that the theological muddle is far from dwindling. Fortunately, this is not the focal point of this study.

²⁸Cf. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 50, the initial creation was not perfect in the sense that it was complete, but it was perfect for that first stage of God’s six-day plan of creation.

²⁹Roberto Ouro, “The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic? Part III,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 38 (2000): 59-67. See also Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 37.

³⁰Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol.1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 126.

³¹Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 51-52; see also Vos, *Genesis*, 11.

As a way of summary, it may be said that v.1 of Gen 1 is intimately related to v.2 in the sense that v.1 informs the reader about the grand creation (i.e., the universe in its totality but not in its completeness), but v.2 discloses the original condition of the earth as it had been created in v. 1. The shift in focus from ³²הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ “the heaven and the earth” in v. 1 to הָאָרֶץ “the earth” only in v. 2 may be perceived as intentional from the part of the author whose interest is thereby betrayed. Said differently, v. 2 may not be understood without v. 1. In the same vein, the six-day creation account (vv. 3-31) would be emptied of its substance without v. 2. Verse 2 therefore serves as a bridge between the initial creation (v. 1) and the six-day creation (vv. 3-31).

Taken together, 1:1-2 depicts the picture of an incomplete prior/initial creation that would necessitate completion during the six-day creation period (1:3-31).

The Syntactic-Pragmatic Relation of 1:1-2 to 1:3-2:3

The relation of Gen 1:1-2 to the rest of the creation narrative has long driven the theological debate in Biblical Studies. Yet, no study seems to have settled the enigma. This may explain the cry of desperation expressed by Samuel D. Giere when he said, “The ambiguity of the relationship of MT Gen 1:1-2 to the subsequent verses likely will never be completely resolved as the ambiguity is inherent in the text itself.”³³ Intrinsically, the fronting of the prepositional phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית (in beginning) presents an interpretive challenge. Hitherto, scholarly opinions on the function of 1:1-2 in the creation account have been appraised by their comprehension of the adjunct בְּרֵאשִׁית. Questions of interest in connection with this subject include the following: What is the author’s intent in fronting בְּרֵאשִׁית in 1:1? What is the function of בְּרֵאשִׁית (in beginning)? What is the syntactic-pragmatic relation of 1:1-2 to 1:3-2:3?

Informed by both linear and symmetric structures, it may safely be said that 1:1-2 stands apart from the report of the six-day creation (1:3-31).³⁴ Such an observation is significant, since it has a bearing on the understanding of the function

³²Sarna, *Genesis*, 3, posits that the definite article in the Hebrew specifies the observable universe. The use here of a merism, the combination of opposites, expresses the totality of cosmic phenomena, for which there is no single word in Biblical Hebrew. In the same vein, R. K. Harrison, “Creation,” *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. M. C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 1:1022 posits that “[T]he phrase ‘heavens and earth’ is an expression known technically as *merismus*, in which antonymic pairs describe not elements, but the totality of the situation. Hence, ‘the phrase should be rendered simply ‘the cosmos,’” as understood by the author.

Conversely, Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 20, debunks this assertion in his own terms, “It has been widely held that Scripture used this phrase [*The heavens and the earth*] because classical Hebrew had no special word for what we call today ‘the universe;’ hence it was necessary to employ a circumlocution of this kind. But this is incorrect.” Cassuto then proceeds to justify his position by saying that the concept of the world was unknown to the Israelites till a late period, and then the appropriate term for it was coined. According to him, ancient Hebrew conceived God alone as a unity; what we designate ‘the universe,’ they regarded as two separate entities (cf. Ps 115: 16).

³³Giere, *A New Glimpse of Day One*, 20.

³⁴See also Hartley, *Genesis*, 41.

of 1:1-2. It ensues that some commentators view 1:1-2 as an introduction³⁵ to the whole narrative, some opine that it is a summary,³⁶ and some still argue that it presents antecedent information³⁷ (i.e., a self-contained account of an initial creation activity) to the six-day creation. Crucial to the current debate is the function of בְּרֵאשִׁית, as stated above. Differently put, this analysis seeks to explain the reason that undergirds the author's choice and use of בְּרֵאשִׁית at the preverbal field.³⁸ Does בְּרֵאשִׁית refer to a specific beginning (i.e., the beginning of 'the heavens and the earth' or the beginning of the six-day creation) or to an undefined period of time prior to any form of creation? In the attempt to answer this pertinent question, some scholars have construed בְּרֵאשִׁית as a construct noun³⁹ while some opine that it is an absolute noun.⁴⁰ Apart from Gen 1:1, the phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית in its other four occurrences (Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34) stands in a construct relationship with מְמַלְכֹת (cf. Gen 10:10). In the same vein, רֵאשִׁית occurring fifty times is often used in construct relationship with plain head nouns.

³⁵See Gerhard F. Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look," *The Bible Translator* 22 (1971):165; See also Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1967), 44.

³⁶See Andreasen, "The Word 'Earth' in Genesis 1:1," 17. See also Mark F. Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (1992):415; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975): 221; idem in "The Literary Genre of Genesis, Chapter One," *Crux* 27, no 4 (1991): 3; Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, ICC, 14; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen, 1904), 3; Brongers, Cassuto, Eichrodt, Gunkel, Procksch, Schmidt, Strack, von Rad, Westermann, and Zimmerli also hold to the summary view according to Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look," 164.

³⁷Daniel Bediako, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 as Historical Narrative Text Type," *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 1 (2011): 36.

³⁸Generally speaking, a verbal clause may be divided into two fields: preverbal field and main/postverbal field. Each of these fields has some obligatory order of constituents. Obligatory elements in the preverbal field include, for example, interrogatives, demonstrative/deictic adverbs, independent personal pronouns, certain subordinated conjunctions and discourse markers, negatives, and infinitives. In the main field, shorter constituents with deictic function tend to occupy the primary postverbal position while long constituents tend to occur at the end of the clause (see C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé, and J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3 [Sheffield: Sheffield, 1999], 340). This goes without saying that any non-obligatory constituent found in the preverbal field, as it is the case here, is not fortuitous. It likely betrays the author's interest in preferring a marked word order to an unmarked word order. The following has been considered to be the unmarked order in the main field when all the constituents are lexicalized: Subject-Object-Indirect object-Prepositional object-Other complement/adjunct+complement/ adjunct (place)-adjunct (time) (van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 340). In fact, the author was not obliged to place בְּרֵאשִׁית at the beginning of v.1 if he had no objective to achieve.

³⁹Sailhamer, "Genesis," 21; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 3.

⁴⁰Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 5. Young leans on three key points to argue for an absolute use of בְּרֵאשִׁית. (1) The Masoretes used a disjunctive accent to insinuate that the word has its own independent accent. Hence, the Masoretes evidently understood the word as absolute; (2) The ancient versions with no exception construed בְּרֵאשִׁית as absolute; (3) Neither the form of the word nor the context demands that the word בְּרֵאשִׁית be taken as a construct.

A cursory look at the syntax of Gen 1:1 shows clearly that *בְּרֵאשִׁית* is not in construct relationship with any genitive. It follows that, considering the context of vv.1-2, *בְּרֵאשִׁית* would hardly refer to a specific beginning.⁴¹

Simply put, the absence of a head noun to mark out a specific point in time seems to suggest that *בְּרֵאשִׁית* is to be construed as pointing to an undefined time prior to the six-day creation. By extension, in the absence of an obvious grammatical or syntactical evidence of an absolute beginning, the beginning of the “cosmos,” at best, may be inferred as absolute.⁴² The corollary of such statement is that there was a point in time when matter did not exist. This further suggests that, unlike matter, God alone does not have a beginning.

Informed by the foregoing, this study concurs with Bediako that Gen 1:1-2 functions as antecedent information pointing to a previous act of creation, and thus constitutes a key to understanding the subsequent narrative of the six-day creation (vv. 3-31).⁴³ To be more precise, v.1 refers to previous act of creation and v.2 portrays the primeval state of the earth as created by God. Further, v.2 sets the platform for the six-day creation (vv.3-31) which aimed at making the uninhabitable earth habitable for humanity. If the foregoing is correct, then Gen 1:1-2 may best be rendered as follows: “Previously, God created the heavens and the earth. As for the earth, it was without shape and uninhabitable....”⁴⁴

It may therefore be concluded that the main intent of the author was to preclude any amalgamation of *בְּרֵאשִׁית* (in beginning) with *יוֹם אֶחָד* (first day). In other words, “the heavens and the earth” (v. 1) were created prior to, rather than on, “the first day” (vv.3-5) of the creation week. The evidence of an initial creation prior to the six-day creation is reinforced by the presence of both darkness and waters (v. 2) prior to the existence of *אוֹר* “light” (v.3) which is the first item created during the six days of divine creation (vv.3-31).

The Function of Gen 1:3-31

The study of the syntactic-pragmatic function of Gen 1:1-2 has ascertained the following facts: (1) that 1:1-2 serves as antecedent information to the rest of the creation narrative (1:3-31). In other words, 1:1 relays a previous act of creation (the

⁴¹The perplexity of Richard M. Davidson, “In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1,” *College and University Dialogue* 6/3 (1994):11, may be noted. He opines that Gen 1:1 is an account of the absolute beginning, but quickly faces a quandary and queries himself, “When did the absolute beginning of the heavens and the earth in verse 1 occur? Was it at the commencement of the seven days of creation or sometime before?” He attempts to solve this by elucidating that “It is possible that the ‘raw materials’ of the heavens and the earth in their unformed-unfilled state were created long before the seven days of creation week. This is the ‘passive gap’ theory. It is also possible that the ‘raw materials’ described in Genesis 1:1, 2 are included in the first day of the seven-day creation week. This is called the ‘no gap’ theory.”

⁴²Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 45, however argues that the “beginning” is a way of talking about the seven-day *period* rather than a *point* in time prior to the seven days. Emphasis his.

⁴³Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic function of Gen 1: 1-2,” 18.

⁴⁴This translation is the author’s. Those who render *הָיָה* as “became” are informed by the belief that between v.1 and v.2 of Gen 1 the proto-earth underwent a catastrophe due to divine judgment resulting to the state of the earth as described in v.2.

heavens and the earth) while v.2 describes the state of the earth as it was created; (2) that the uninhabitable state of the primeval earth required a further divine intervention to make it habitable for humanity; (3) that the author's choice of the fronted prepositional phrase *בְּרֵאשִׁית* far from fortuitous, was aimed at avoiding an amalgamation between *בְּרֵאשִׁית* (v.1) and *יּוֹם אֶחָד* (v.3). In light of the above, it would be in order to state that vv.1-2 do not present mainline information. In other words, 1:1-2 serves as background information to the foreground information (1:3-31). On the rapport background vs. foreground, Daniel K. Bediako posits that it is related to sequentiality vs non-sequentiality. He adds that the foreground of a narrative is the sequential chain of completed events marked by *wayyiqtol* clauses, while its background is formed by the material that does not recount sequential happenings.⁴⁵

A. Niccacci argues that a narrative seldom begins with a perfect verb but more often begins with a *waw* consecutive plus imperfect, although many hammer the significance of the perfect plus imperfect sequence in narrative.⁴⁶ "Situations described with *wayyiqtol* are mostly temporary or logically succeeding."⁴⁷ Waltke and O'Connor add that *wayyiqtol* means logical succession where a logical entailment from a preceding situation is expressed.⁴⁸ The main concern of this section is twofold:

- (1) to examine a clausal structure of Gen 1:1-2:3; and
- (2) to analyze Gen 2:1-3 and how it relates pragmatically to the previous paragraphs.

Clausal Structure

Daniel Bediako categorizes the various clause types as *wayyiqtol*, *qatal*, *w^e-x-qatal*, *w^eqatal*, *yiqtol*, *w^eyiqtol*, *w^e-x-yiqtol*, imperative, infinitive, participial, and nominal.⁴⁹ Addressing the structure of the *wayyiqtol*, Robert D. Holmstedt states that the *wayyiqtol* form exhibits fusion of the conjunction *wa*, the prefix verb *yiqtol*, and a phonologically underspecified complementizer.⁵⁰ Gen 1 contains about ninety-six clauses, representing fourteen clause types; out of which forty-nine (51%) are

⁴⁵Daniel K. Bediako, "Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Text Linguistics/Discourse Linguistics. Part 1: A Brief Theoretical Framework," *Insight: Journal of Religious Studies* 4 (2008): 9. Emphasis mine. For more details, see Jason Shane DeRouchie, "A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5-11," (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005).

⁴⁶Alviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, JSOTSup 86 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 37.

⁴⁷Bruce K. Waltke and M. O' Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 547.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Bediako, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented-Literary Studies," 335. For details on hierarchy of clauses see Eep Talstra, "A Hierarchy of Clauses in Biblical Hebrew Narrative," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden, South Holland: Brill, 1997), 103-104. Italics mine.

⁵⁰Robert D. Holmstedt, *The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew: A Linguistic Analysis*, PhD Dissertation (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 2002), 182.

wayyiqtol (i.e., *waw*+imperfect) clauses.⁵¹ Gen 1:1-2 contains four clauses: (1) וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְּהוֹ וְבָהוּ (v. 1: clause type: *x-qatal*); (2) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ (v. 2a: clause type: *we-x-qatal*); (3) וַחֲשֹׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם (v.2b: clause type: *nominal*); and (4) וַיֹּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם (v. 2c: clause type: *participial*).

It may therefore be observed from the above that none of such clause (i.e., *wayyiqtol*) is found in Gen 1:1-2. This is not surprising knowing that in light of the linear and symmetric structures, Gen 1:1-2 lies outside the symmetry (i.e., at the periphery) insinuating that vv.1-2 are not to be construed as part of the six-day creation.

Unlike v.2 which begins with *we-x-qatal* clause type, v.3 starts with *wayyiqtol* clause type (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים “then God said”). This remarkable shift from *we-x-qatal* to *wayyiqtol* clause is significant in textlinguistics studies and pragmatics. It may further be observed that from Gen 1:3 downwards, every verse in 1:3-2:3 begins with a *wayyiqtol* verb form to the exception of vv. 18 and 30; keenly perused however, these verses seem to be assimilated by the *wayyiqtol* clauses of vv.17 and 29 respectively. It is an established fact that in narrative texts, as in Gen 1, *wayyiqtol* clauses expound the narrative foreground information (i.e., main storyline) in the form of sequential happenings, while other clause types (e.g., *x-qatal*, *we-x-qatal* clause type and descriptive clauses) present background information.⁵² The following shortened framework showcases this trend.

	בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ ¹
	וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְּהוֹ וְבָהוּ ²
	וַחֲשֹׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם
	וַיֹּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם
	וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים ³	וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים ⁶	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים ⁹
	וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים ¹⁴	וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים ²⁰	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים ²⁴
	וַיִּכְלֹו הַשָּׁמַיִם ^{2:1}

A cursory look at this framework reveals that וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים does not appear in Gen 1:1-2 and 2:1-3. This seems to give impetus to the thematic/symmetric structure that these two paragraphs are not part of the main storyline. It follows that the foreground information begins from v. 3 to v. 31 (i.e., 1:3-31).

⁵¹Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic function of Gen 1: 1-2,” 5. Waltke and O’Connor speak of 29% of the finite verbs in the Hebrew Bible as being of *wayyiqtol* form (see Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 544).

⁵²Longacre, “Building for the Worship of God,” 22; See also Bediako, “The Syntactic-Pragmatic function of Gen 1: 1-2,” 14.

The Function of Gen 2:1-3

Genesis 2:1-3 is the eighth and last paragraph of the creation narrative (Gen 1:1-2:3). Per its locus in the narrative, this paragraph may rightly be seen as the epilogue of the whole account. As pointed out earlier, Gen 2:1 seems to corroborate the idea that the creation of “the heavens and the earth” does not refer to a completed universe.⁵³ This section aims at analyzing this last paragraph in order to ascertain its relation to the previous paragraphs.

Paragraph 8 (Gen 2:1-3) Analysis

Genesis 2:1-3 may be read from the *BHS* as follows:

וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם¹
בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ² וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-
בָּרָא
אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת

Genesis 2:1-3 has been demarcated clearly into six clauses by the means of different colors. Two main clause types are identifiable as follows: *wayyiqtol* (2:1, 2:2a, 2:2b, 2:3a, 2:3b) and *xqatal* (2:3c). Generally speaking, the *wayyiqtol* clauses convey the mainline narrative in the paragraph. In this context, “וַיְכַלּוּ” “and they were completed” in Gen 2:1 as a first *wayyiqtol* clause has a summarizing function,⁵⁴ and “וַיְכַל” “and he finished” in the second clause (2:2a) connects with the first by reiterating the verb root. The same clause (i.e., וַיְכַל) also introduces the account of the seventh day. The third *wayyiqtol* clause (i.e., וַיִּשְׁבֹּת) seems to supplement the idea contained in the second clause. Just as clauses 2:2a and 2:2b, clauses 2:3a and 2:3b are also *wayyiqtol* clauses closely related semantically. This quasi-semantic parallelism seems to be buttressed by the missing noun subject (אֱלֹהִים) in 2:2b and 2:3b, insinuating that

⁵³See Younker, *God’s Creation*, 33.

⁵⁴B. W. Anderson, “A Stylistic Study of the Priestly Creation Story,” in *Canon and Authority: Assays on the Theology and Religion of the Old Testament*, eds. G. W. Coats and B. O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 159-160, argues that the creation account in Genesis is a unity that runs from Gen 1:1 through 2:3. By this Anderson acknowledges that the epilogue in 2:1-3 reverberates the superscription of 1: 1-2 and thus forms a framework that relates that end of the account to its beginning and encloses that main body of the creation story in 1:3-31.

In the same vein, Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981), 143, upon a literal translation of Gen 2:1-3, seems to concur with Anderson when he concludes: “And God completed on the seventh day His work which He had made.... We have here not only incremental repetition but, as I have tried to show through this rather literal translation, a tightly symmetrical envelope structure, the end returning to the beginning: the first line of the passage ends with God’s making or doing, as does the last, while the end of the last line, by also introducing the seemingly redundant phrase ‘God created,’ takes us all the way back to the opening of the creation story, ‘when God began to create.’ In p’s magisterial formulation, everything is ordered, set in its appointed place, and contained within a symmetrical form.

Younker, *God’s Creation*, 33, states that the idea the creation of the heavens and earth in Gen 1:1 was not complete is confirmed by Gen 2:1. He further says that 2:1 is the first explicit indication in Scripture that the creation was now finally complete. Simply put, Younker believes that the expression “heavens and earth” in 1:1 points to the universe in its *totality*, and not in its *completion*. Italics his.

these clauses do not contain actions separate from those in the respective antecedent clauses. Stated differently, the clauses וַיִּשְׁבֹּת and וַיִּקְרָא seem to supply only some insights that are not expressed by the וַיְכַל and וַיְבָרֵךְ clauses respectively. Genesis 2:1-3 has been considered the climax and grand conclusion of the first creation account.⁵⁵ However, this assertion has often been questioned on account of the missing concluding statement וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר “and there was evening and there was morning” on יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי “the seventh day.” In reaction to this, it would be needful to point out, at this juncture, that such concluding remark was not necessary given that וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר served as a transition from one creative day to another. The seventh day being the last day in the creation week, the author of the book of Genesis probably deemed such a transitional statement optional. Further, the missing וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר from Gen 1:1-2 and 2: 1-3 seems to reinforce the thematic/symmetric structure thereby separating them from the six-day sequential happenings. With the foregoing in mind, it may be safe, from a textlinguistic perspective, to ascertain not only internal cohesion within the paragraph (i.e., 2:1-3), but also its interconnection to the previous paragraphs. Such cohesiveness is evidenced by the following observations:⁵⁶ (1) the summarizing function of 2:1 with its use of וְהָאָרֶץ וְהַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאֲרָץ; (2) the repetition of אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (2:2a,2:2b,2:3c); (3) the reference to יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי (explicit or pronominalized) throughout 2:2a-3c together with the use of the article; (4) the unchanged grammatical subject (אֱלֹהִים); and (5) logical progression (e.g., each creative day, while bringing about new things, alludes to previous created ones).

Taken together, Gen 2:1 is best construed as a summary statement echoing the completion of divine creation, while the institutionalization of the seventh-day Sabbath observance may be inferred from 2:2-3.

⁵⁵Jiří Moskala, “The Sabbath in the First Creation Account,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13 (2002): 57; Sarna, *Genesis*, 14; Hamilton, *Pentateuch*, 26; Waltke, *Genesis*, 67; Matthews, *Genesis 1-11*:26, 176. However, for many readers, the creation of human beings on the sixth day is the real climax. (See R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47. For more information on the theology of the six-day creation in Gen 1, see the same source (especially pp.42-48).

⁵⁶See Bediako, “Genesis 1:1-2:3 in the Light of Textlinguistics and Text-Oriented Literary Studies,” 232.

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