

**EVANGELISM STARTS WITH  
GENESIS ONE TWO THREE**

Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible,  
*New King James Version*

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Published by: The Reformed Guardian  
PO Box 300  
Armadale, Western Australia, 6992

Printed by Pro Ecclesia Printers

**EVANGELISM STARTS WITH  
GENESIS ONE TWO THREE**

Antoon Breen

WA 2014 AD

*In memory of my father,  
Rev Christiaan Jacobus Breen  
(11 Dec 1924 – 7 Sept 2014)*

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## Introduction

The apostle Paul said to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons, to shine (not simply to be, but to shine) as lights in the world, holding up the word of life (Phil 2:14-16). Ministers and missionaries evangelise by preaching, but that does not relieve other church members from telling the Good News.

In his speech *Your Ecumenical Task* (1951) Dr K Schilder urged the young women of the church, together as League, to witness, that is:

“to fulfill the mission mandate, which makes you take the Word of God, received in one certain place, out to the whole world, saying: I have now passed on to you what I have received from the Lord.”

“Your ecumenical task,” he said to his female audience, “your first assignment is: to witness faithfully.” And this is in line with what Jesus taught us: to be a light for the world (Matt 5:14). Why? So that many more people may glorify God. That’s the aim of our life.

We confess in *The Canons of Dort*, chapter II, Art 5:

“The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination

to all peoples and to all men, to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe.”

Acts 17 teaches us 4 important lessons about how to announce the promise of the gospel and proclaim it universally and without discrimination (see the Excursus at the end of this booklet).

How do we start? Consider CARE:

Charitable observation

Assisting actions

Respectful listening

Educational speaking.

Before we speak we use our eyes, hands and ears. Before we proclaim the Gospel we *live* the Gospel. Reach out if you want to reach people.

Where do we start? Where the Bible starts for very good reasons. Read and explain Genesis 1-3. The purpose of this booklet is to offer some assistance in this. We need the knowledge of the first chapters of the Bible in order to stand in awe of God the Father and our creation, God the Son and our salvation, and God the Holy Spirit and our regeneration. And also in order to show our thankfulness for the deliverance from our misery.

Without Genesis 1 we don't understand the origin of life. Without Genesis 2 we don't understand the purpose of life. And without Genesis 3 we don't understand the restoration of life.

Creation or evolution – Gen 1 is our guide.

Child of God or slave of our work – Gen 2 is our guide.

Christ or self – Gen 3 is our guide.

The nature of this booklet brings with it that I haven't made use of notes or exact references to literature or websites. Most of the authors I refer to in the text can be found in the list of literature. Sometimes I knew the author of certain ideas I described, but not the source anymore. In those cases you find the name of the author in brackets but not in the list of literature.

In the last week of my dad's life on earth I sat next to him behind my computer to finish this booklet. Just before he passed on I told him that I would dedicate it to him out of thankfulness for his unceasing support. His smile told me that he had heard me. At this moment he enjoys the fulfilment of Gen 1-3.

Thank you very much, Aart Plug MEd, and Huib van Leeuwen MSc, for your valuable comments. And Aart, thanks again for your professional editing. Thank you, my dear Agdi, daughters and sons in law, for your vital love and care.

**Antoon Breen, 13 September 2014 AD, Western Australia**  
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## Genesis one

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Beginning of what? Not the beginning of God since He is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps 90:2). He is not only “everywhere”, but also “everywhen”. The Creator has life in Himself and “He gives to all life, breath and all things” (Acts 17:25). Only God is *from* everlasting (“eternal past”). So the beginning is the beginning of *our* history. We cannot grasp what was *before* our beginning since we are *created* and not “from everlasting”. God did not reveal to us what was before the beginning of our history, but starts with the beginning of our time. The evolution theory deals with the development of species, but God’s Word tells us about the origin of life.

The subject of the very first sentence of the Bible is *God*. Only He could “speak and it was done.” By His word the heavens were made (Ps 33:6-9). Gen 1:1 refutes *atheism*, the belief that God does not exist. Scripture simply affirms God’s existence. This verse also refutes *polytheism*, the view that there are many gods. The Hebrew word for God here (*Elohim*) is plural, but that denotes God’s majesty: In the beginning God, yes, very God, created. Compare Isaiah 45:18 where the Creator makes clear that there is no other god. The first verse of the Bible refutes *materialism*, which believes that matter is eternal and that only what you can see, matters. However, only God is eternal back in “time” and He created out of nothing. Also *pantheism* is refuted. This philosophy equates God with

the laws and forces of the universe. However, God the Creator was before creation and stands above and beyond it (C Vandam).

Our worldview does not begin with nothing, but with God, the ABC of creation: the Architect, Builder and Controller of creation. Can we prove that God exists? I mean, “Can the house prove the builder?” or in the words of Rom 9, “Can the pot call the potter to account?” If so, then the house is not a house and the pot is not a pot. In other words, “Can we elevate ourselves to eternal heights, yes, even above God, and fathom the existence of the Creator?”

Are creatures able to prove their Creator? We know better. It’s for very good reasons that *God* has given evidence of His eternal existence. And what is the evidence that God exists? Faith in the Word of God, inspired by the Spirit of God. Faith is the evidence of the things not seen (Heb 11:1). Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is (Heb 11:6). It is impossible to prove that God does *not* exist. I feel confident in my faith that God *does* exist (cf BC, Art 5).

God created, that is, He made something that didn’t exist before. God commanded: and angels, sun, moon, stars etc were created (Ps 148:1-5). On the basis of Gen 1 and 2 we confess in *The Belgic Confession*, Art 12:

“We believe that the Father through the Word, that is, through His Son, has created out of nothing heaven and earth and all creatures, when it seemed good to Him.”

*Out of nothing:* the material universe has an absolute beginning and is not self-created. Out of nothing no thing comes, unless it is created! Everything that has a beginning must have a cause greater than itself. If you see a beautiful painting in a museum your first question is not, “By what process did that painting evolve by chance?” but, “Who painted that painting?” A painting has a painter, and yes, creation has a Creator.

Laws of nature do not *explain* nature to us, but *describe* them for us. Albert Einstein didn't *invent*  $E=mc^2$ , but *discovered* it. He removed the cover over what God had created: not only the *Energy*, the *Mass* and the *Celeritas* (speed) of light, but also the law that, as far as we understand it now, energy equals the multiplication of mass and the speed of light squared.

And who created God? This question doesn't make sense for if God was created who created the Creator of God etc. Moreover, we call created gods idols (John Lennox). We believe in the Creator behind the universe who intended us to be here. Then the big question is: “*Why* are we here? What is the purpose of our existence?”

“Scientific analysis of the universe cannot give us the answer, any more than scientific analysis of Aunt Mathilda's cake could tell us why she had made it. Scientific probing of the cake may tell us that it is good for humans; even that it was highly likely to have been designed specifically with humans in mind, since it is fine-tuned to their nutritional requirements. In other words, science

may be able to point towards the conclusion that there is a purpose behind the cake; but precisely what that purpose is, science cannot tell us. It would be absurd to look for it within the cake. Only Aunt Mathilda can reveal it to us” (Lennox, p 207-208).

Indeed, the ultimate answer to the purpose of the universe has to come from outside the universe. And it came. When we consider the work of God’s fingers we cannot but confess, O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is *Your name* in all the earth, who have set *Your glory* above the heavens (Ps 8). For of God and through God and to God are all things, *to whom be glory forever*. Amen (Rom 11:36). Whatever you do, do all *to the glory of God* (1 Cor 10:31).

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev 4:11).

Regarding Mathematics, let us use the opportunity to glorify God for his wisdom and order. Once I read that the bee, for instance, stores honey in honeycombs made out of hundreds of tiny hexagons. Through differential calculus we can determine that this design is the most efficient possible – not because the bee is so good in maths ... –.

God created *the heavens and the earth*. According to some this is a ‘merism’, a statement of opposites to indicate

totality. Just as “day and night” means “all the time” so “the heavens and earth” means “the organised universe”. The next verses then tell us how everything came into being. But what if “the earth” of verse 2 refers to “the earth” in verse 1? On the first day God created the “heavens” and the “earth”, and the earth was ....

*Heavens* in verse 1 indicates the spatial framework, that is the “heaven of heavens” of Nehemiah 9:6 where we read: You have made ... the *heaven of heavens* with all their host. To me *heavens* in the very first sentence of the Bible indicates the “heaven of heavens”, including the angels. And the *earth* on this first day was without form and void, dark and full of water.

If the phrase “the heavens and the earth”, as a sort of heading, would indicate the total, why then does Exodus 20:11 speak of “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, *the sea and all that is in them*”. ‘The sea and all that is in them’ would be included in ‘heaven and earth’ if this phrase were a merism.

Regarding the angels, they are *creatures* (cf Neh 9:6; Ps 33:6; Col 1:16) and since God created everything in *six days* I suggest that the angels were created in the week of God’s creation. According to Job 38:4-7 they already existed when, on the second day, God created the foundations of the earth out of the waters. So by deduction we may conclude that the angels were created on day 1.

<sup>2</sup> *The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

“The earth was...” Some translations have “*And* the earth was ...” You can also translate: “*Now* the earth was...” The Hebrew word for ‘and’, ‘now’ and ‘then’ (*waw*) is used to indicate events happening in sequence in a historical narrative. That’s how I read it: *Now the earth was...* That’s why I think that “the earth” of verse 2 refers to “the earth” of verse 1. That means there is no indefinite time gap between verse 1 and 2 with even pre-Adamic people who would have lived between verses 1 and 2, i.e. – according to some – after the creation of heaven and earth described in verse 1 and before a supposed ruin and reconstruction of the earth described from verse 2.

On the first day of creation, when God started our history, He created the heavens, and the earth which was *without form and void*. Before everything was made very well after the six days of creation, the earth, created on the first day, was formless and empty. *After* the six creation days the earth was habitable (not without form anymore) and inhabited (not void anymore).

*And darkness was on the face of the deep.* What was formless was meant to be shaped, and what was empty was meant to be filled. The “deep” indicates a fullness of water: all waters (a flood of waters). Compare 2 Peter 3:5: “By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.”

*And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* You can just feel it: something is about to happen. “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Ps 33:6). The Hebrew word for “breath” is also used for the Spirit (cf Ps 104:30).

Gen 1:1-2 is connected with Gen 2:1-3. It started with the heavens above and the water-earth beneath. After the six creation days the heavens and the earth, *and all the host of them*, were finished.

It’s all God’s work: Gen 1:1-2.

It’s all to His glory: Gen 2:1-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.*

Then, that is, when God’s Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters on that very first day, God spoke and it was there (Ps 148). We knew something would happen. It could not end up in a dark earth of water without form and void. God created by His word.

From John 1 we learn that all things were made through the Word who became flesh, Jesus Christ (cf Col 1:16). It is the Triune God who spoke and it came to be (Ps 33). We can only stand amazed about God’s omnipotent and omniscient work of creation. *God* created, the *Spirit* was moving, and the *Word* was spoken. The Triune God is at work! Someone had seen on a bumper sticker:

“I believe in the Big Bang: God said “Light”, and *Bang*, there was light!”

For God light was not necessary, since He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16). There was divine eternal light before God made light for us here on earth in the alternation of day and night. To God darkness and light are both alike (Ps 139:12). Light for us comes from God! It's His gift.

Because God Himself is light (1 Joh 1:5) we do not need to rack our brains in order to find out how there could be light (singular) before God used the luminaries as shining lights (plural). God who has the whole universe in His hand, could He not rule it before He made the lights to rule over day and night? Compare the New Jerusalem when this city will have no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God shall illuminate it (Rev 21:23).

*<sup>4</sup> And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.*

How good, how delightful the light was; a feast for the eye! It served God's purpose and it was beneficial for the human race. And God divided the light from the darkness...: day and night would alternate. Psalm 74:16: The day is Yours, the night also is Yours. You have prepared the light and the sun. With royal majesty God *called*, appointed, day and night.

*<sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.*

Why “evening and morning”, and not “morning and evening”? And what about the word “day”? Literally we read: “And there was evening, then morning – day one.” That means: day one has passed; now we start with day 2. The one day is connected to the other. Evening: a day has passed; morning: a new day is coming. Evening came, and then morning. We read this six times, followed by the number of the day. Whenever “day” is modified by a number (and that happens more than one hundred times in the first five books of the Bible alone), it always refers to a literal day. From a purely grammatical point of view, it is therefore highly unlikely that the days of the creation week would have been anything different from what we consider a day (C Vandam).

There is no compelling reason to explain “sixth day” and “seventh day” as anything other than “sixth day” and “seventh day”. God did not need six days to create the total organised universe in the first place. So when God reveals to us that He has created everything in six days, why would we doubt it? Which words would God have used to best convey His teaching that all things were created and made in six literal days? Indeed, the actual words He used (cf H Morris).

*<sup>6</sup> Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.*

God majestically continued to call. He called the firmament *heaven* (or “heavens”, same word as in 1:1; the Hebrew does not have this word in singular). The Hebrew word for *heaven* can indicate God’s dwelling place, the celestial globe or vault of heaven, or the sky in which the birds fly. In all these cases you have to look up! If the “waters above the firmament” indicate the celestial globe, and the “waters under the firmament” indicate the “water-earth”, then the firmament itself is the sky stretched over the waters (look up, the birds are coming).

“Planet earth is uniquely designed for life; and its atmosphere and hydrosphere are the most important components of that design” (H Morris). Psalm 104:1-2:

“O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honour and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.”

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. <sup>10</sup> And God called the dry land *Earth*, and the gathering together of the waters He called *Seas*. And God saw that it was good.

The Hebrew word for *earth*

“does not only denote the entire terrestrial planet, but is also used of some of the earth’s component parts. English words like land, country, ground, and soil transfer its meaning into our language” (Strong’s Dictionary).

The Hebrew word for *sea* is plural here, meaning *ocean*.

“This word refers to the body of water as distinct from the land bodies (continents and islands) and the sky” (ibidem).

<sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. <sup>12</sup> And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> So the evening and the morning were the third day.

God called into being plants and fruit trees according to their kind. The account focuses on low and large, woody vegetation: seed-yielding plants and fruit-bearing trees which were designed for human food (1:29-30). God let the earth sprout *seed-bearing* vegetation. He not only created it, but also *sustained* it. And we read that God let the earth sprout plants and trees *according to their own kinds*, i.e. in a great variety all following God’s master design and appointed purposes.

So the third day was finished. After the first triad the earth is habitable: not without form anymore. Now the earth can be “filled”. And that is what we will see the following three days.

The verses 3-13 and 14-31 are connected. The light, from the first day, will be radiated by the luminaries on the fourth day. The sky and the waters, from the second day, will be filled with sky animals and water animals on the fifth day. And on the land, from the third day, will come land animals on the sixth day.

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; <sup>15</sup> and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. <sup>16</sup> Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

It's clear that God doesn't give us a lecture in Science, but tells us in language of observation what happened. We also use such language when we speak about a beautiful sunset, though we know that it is the earth that turns around the sun.

The Hebrew word for *lights* denotes "luminous bodies". The *firmament of the heavens* is the celestial globe. Look up ("firmament") as far as you can see ("heavens"). During Day 4 God created the heavenly bodies (stars and galaxies). God made the lights to give light *on the earth*. And on earth they help us as orientation signs: in the Netherlands the sun "goes" from the east to the west via the south, and in Australia via the north. They are for seasonal sowing and harvesting, and they will rule the calendar.

"Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above;  
join with all nature in manifold witness,  
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love."

(Hymn 66)

Sun, moon and stars are created bodies to serve man in order that man might serve God. In contrast to the pagan belief that sun, moon and stars are gods, God reveals here that He, the only God, *created* them. Instead of being afraid of them we may enjoy the light they give. Don't be afraid: the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night (Ps 121:6). They are mere creations (Kwakkel). Never forget: The LORD is your Protector. And, astrologers, don't let people believe that the stars direct their destinies. They are mere creations. Sun, moon and stars are God's good gifts.

Dr John G Hartnett who received his PhD in physics, with distinction, from the University of WA thinks that Dr Russell Humphreys's book *Starlight and Time* has broken new ground for creation researchers in the area of starlight. He says,

“What Humphreys has done is show us another parameter of something that most people view as a constant, and that is *time* itself.

Using Einstein's theory of general relativity, he has shown how time can vary depending on your position in space – it affects your viewpoint. Time is slowed by gravitational forces. A clock at sea level has been shown to run more slowly than one on top of a mountain, because the one at sea level is affected by more gravity.

This is an effect known as *time dilation*, and has been experimentally demonstrated” (*The Genesis Files*, p 86).

To dilate is: to make wider (expand).

“This very rapid acceleration of the cosmos during Day 4 of Creation Week caused earth clocks to run very slowly compared to cosmic clocks . . . This, then, provides the massive time dilation needed to allow light to travel the vast distances of the universe, even billions of light-years in a matter of days—as measured by earth clocks” (Hartnett 2007).

The reason I elaborate a bit on this is not to scientifically explain creation. That’s not necessary. When God created the stars He also created the speed of light in such a way that people within a day could see the starlight though the stars are millions of light years away. The reason I referred to the Australian Dr Hartnett is to challenge the scientific claim that the earth should be very old *because* ... and then follows the example of stars and the time it takes light to travel. The *scientist* John Hartnett offers a scientific explanation why we see starlight in a *young* universe.

<sup>20</sup> Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup> So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

God created the sea creatures and winged birds each according to its kind. He created on the same day a variety of species, created kinds. Aquatic and winged animals were created on the same day and not developed from each other over millions of years (macro-evolution). They were created with the potential to develop further in a genetic variety of forms within their created species (micro-evolution).

How come that we find the same humerus-radius-ulna construction of our arm in certain wings and fins? Isn't that evidence of an evolutionary relationship? No, for you can also reason that God knew what He did when He created a construction necessary for certain movements, whether of your arm, or certain wings and fins.

The creatures of the sea and in the air were created *at once*. Imagine what would have happened to a dolphin or a bat without a fully developed sonar system? Or, for that matter in relation to the next day, imagine what would happen to a Bombardier beetle if the explosive chemical mixture from two swivel tubes in its tail developed without the chemical inhibitor between the two tubes? The separate species were created at once, and in the same week. From the Book of Job we learn that the biggest land monster *behemoth* and the biggest sea monster *Leviathan* used to live in the same time as man (Ps 104:25,26; Job 40, 41:7ff; 18-21).

As soon as "living beings" are created, the notion of *blessing* appears. The blessing relates to the giving of new

life. The whole creation depends upon God for its continued existence. It is God who gives them their food in due season. He opens His hand and they are filled with good. He sends forth His Spirit and they are created. May the glory of the LORD endure forever. May He rejoice in His works (cf Ps 104:26-31).

*<sup>24</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

God made the living land creatures from large to small in a genetic variation within the species. Dr Walter Veith, professor at the University of Western Cape (SA), thinks that organisms were endowed with a great capacity for variation, and that we haven't begun to figure out all the mechanisms in the latent DNA. With his experience in ecological matters he was asked about a common argument raised against the teaching that death and bloodshed among animals only commenced after the fall of Adam; that is, that looking at today's world, it appears that one needs death in order to have a finely balanced food chain. He responded,

“But that's looking at what we have today, not what we had in the beginning. We only have a fraction of the flora and fauna that were there at first – the fossil record bears that out. We don't know what animals ate in the past. Tooth structure is not a good indicator. The panda bear is classified on the

basis of its tooth structure as a carnivore, but it eats bamboo” (*The Genesis Files*, p 50).

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Instead of in the third person “Let there be...” God now speaks in the first person plural “Let *Us* make...”. Very personal, very special. God will make man to be His image. Vegetation and animals were created according to their own kinds, but God created man in *His* image. He created us to mirror His glory (as His “image”) in relationship with Him (according to His “likeness”). The God of creation is the God of relation (relationship), as we will see in Gen 2.

In *The Belgic Confession*, Art 9 about Scripture’s proof of the doctrine of the divine trinity, we confess the following:

“From God’s saying, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, it appears that there are more divine persons than one; and when He says, *God* created, He indicates that there is one God. It is true, He does not say how many persons there are, but what seems to be somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New Testament.”

The unique, incomparable and almighty Triune God started His work of creation with the heavens and His angels. He completed it with His image here on earth. His image, created *according* to His likeness. Not *like* God. If

Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12 also refers to Satan, then *that* is exactly why Satan fell. He said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. ... I will be like the Most High” (Is 14:13-14). With this he tempted man in Paradise: *Be like God*. The first theory of evolution. However, we are not created *like* God, but *according* to His likeness in order to live with Him Who *made* us.

In *The Belgic Confession*, Art 14, we confess that God formed man “after His own image and likeness.” The original French version has *à son image*, i.e. “as, or, to be His image” (L Doekes, Culver). As God’s image we can reason and consider right and wrong. If we were merely the result of mindless chemical processes, how then are we to explain *logic* and *morality* which are immaterial, no part of the physical universe? Yes, there is more than the energy, space and matter of Gen 1:1. Science cannot explain things that are immaterial, such as faith, hope and love, beauty, truth and honesty, responsibility and a conscience, etc. Only the Bible explains it to us: it’s the transcendent (lit. *beyond climbing*) God Almighty, the immanent (lit. *indwelling*) God the Father who has designed all of it.

In August 2013 I attended the ACER Research Conference in Melbourne on the theme “The Science of Learning: What lessons are there for teaching?” It was about how the brain learns. The Conference brought together leading researchers in neuroscience, psychology and education. They shared with us effective teaching and learning practices in the light of current knowledge about basic

learning processes and factors that influence successful learning.

I'm thankful that I got the opportunity, before an audience of 750 or so people, to challenge one of the keynote speakers on his appeal to scientific method. I told him that I respected the call to be scientific in our approaches to linking neuroscience to education. "But earlier in your address," I continued, "you mentioned the developments that had taken place in relation to the human brain some 400 million years ago; that's not science, that's metaphysical. In this respect I would like to offer an alternative view. What if the human brain did not come about by the processes of evolution, but that it was created by a transcendent and immanent God, for the purpose that it should be used by mankind to return to Him glory and honour for His great and awesome works? I offer that as an alternative perspective".

The applause told me that there were many more who didn't bow their knees to the modern Baal.

"You are worthy, O Lord,  
to receive glory and honour and power;  
for You created all things,  
and by Your will they exist and were created."  
(Rev 4:11)

"Blessing and honour and glory and power  
be to Him who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" (Rev 5:13)

*And God said, "Let them have dominion over..."* Twice we read how man is charged with the dominion over animals (vss 26,28). And in verse 28 we read that man should subdue the earth. Both words "dominion" and "subdue" are related to a king or master. Man should control the earth and rule over the animals as God's responsible viceroys with strength and wisdom for good purposes.

As God's steward man is accountable to God. Also today. To lock up animals and feed them anything from edible plastic to manure and ground-up animals is one of the factors behind the spread of mad cow disease. Having dominion doesn't mean playing God. Dr Veith was asked if, in the light of man's dominion mandate over other creatures in Genesis, he would have problems with all forms of 'genetic engineering' in animals. He said,

"No. But I would have a major problem transplanting genes that totally changed the physiology. For example transgenic pigs, where the gene for human growth hormone is engineered into pigs. You get very large pigs, but they are also incredibly diseased – because these are not 'add-on' genes, they alter something integral to the normal developmental process of the animal" (*The Genesis Files*, p 51).

Crowned with glory and honour man has dominion over God's works (Ps 8). Royally he rules, never forgetting, however, that he has been crowned by the Creator to whom he is accountable; the Creator who also cares for livestock (Jonah 4:11). Deuteronomy 25:4 says, "You shall

not muzzle an ox while it threshes the grain.” Be kind and let the ox eat from the harvest when it works for you. Good people take care of their animals, but even the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel (cf Prov 12:10).

Let us fight against animal cruelty. Do we only talk *about* environmental stewardship, or do we actually *deal* responsibly with the environment? Do we only *talk* about responsible resource use, or do we actually *show* we are passionate about recycling, saving water, reducing waste and packaging, etc? Are we willing to support an environmental protection plan even if it means denying an opportunity to build a lucrative industrial project? In relation to energy, do we support projects that make optimal use of the power of nature from sun, water and wind? And, driving behind a sheep truck, are we more concerned about the excrement on our car than about the export inside the truck?

*<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

“God created *him*; male and female He created *them*.” Both man and woman were created to be God’s image; therefore no discrimination of women. Yes, the whole human race comes from one couple; therefore no racism. The Lord Jesus coupled this text with Gen 2:24:

“From the beginning of the creation ‘God made them male and female’. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so

then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:6-9).

In contrast to other creatures the two-ness of sexes leads in man to marriage. Notice how God created man and woman as adults. God created fully developed trees, birds and beasts; fully developed gas, oil and coal fields; and yes, fully mature man and woman at once. It is impossible to determine the age of what God created. With help of the Bible we know approximately *when* God created everything (not more than 10.000 years ago) and *how long* it took (not more than 6 days), but we cannot calculate *the age* of what He created.

<sup>28</sup> *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

We already saw that after the first three creation days the earth was habitable, not *formless* anymore. And after the next three days the earth was inhabited, not *empty* anymore. What a beautiful chronological structure in a nicely articulated historical narrative!

After the first three creation days the earth was habitable. Then God said to the very first couple, “Now you make the earth more habitable: Be My *steward* in creation.”

After the next three days the earth was inhabited. Then God said to them, “Now you inhabit the earth further: Be My *child* in the generations.”

That's what being God's image means: to live as God's steward and child. These are the two main themes in the Book of Genesis:

- a promised land for God's stewards (inheritance)
- promised generations for His children (heirs).

The *Framework Hypothesis* also highlights the beautiful literary structure of Gen 1, but for a different reason. It holds the view that the author chose the literary device or motif of seven literal days to make a theological point: the purposefulness of God in creation and the Sabbath command.

The problem with this view is that it supposes that God did things differently than what He has revealed to His servants by inspiration. However, why should we doubt what He has revealed to us for very good reasons? Is it because He knew that we couldn't fathom His work of creation anyway and that He therefore has revealed to us what we do understand? In that case I would suggest that we should not be wiser than God, but to accept His wise decision to reveal to us what is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation (cf BC, Art 2).

*<sup>29</sup> And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. <sup>30</sup> Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. <sup>31</sup> Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

The plants are destined for food to man and beast in this paradisiacal state of peace and prosperity. After the flood things changed, and God allowed man to expand their diet to include meat (Gen 9:3).

## Genesis two

<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.

The Creator perfectly executed His will. After six days of creation heaven and earth were habitable and inhabited. And all the heavenly host (angels and heavenly bodies) and earthly host (all that is on and in the earth, cf Nehemiah 9:6b) are described “as if they were an ordered array” (Collins).

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,  
the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise Him,  
for He is your health and salvation!”  
(Hymn 78).

Do you know who the author is of this beautiful hymn?

“The author would be horrified today to discover that his name has become better known in evolutionary circles than among Christians. The hymn was written by a Lutheran theologian and school rector in the late 1600s, who was gifted in poetry and hymn writing. He would often take long walks in the country near Hochdal, Germany. As he strolled, he composed hymns and sang them in praise to God. One of his favourite spots was a beautiful gorge through which the Dussel River flowed, about ten miles east of Dusseldorf. He strolled in this valley so often that it became identified with him and eventually named after

him. His name was *Joachim Neander* and the valley became known as the Neanderthal, or the Neander Valley (*tal* or *thal* in old German, means *valley*). It was out of his love for the beauty of this valley and of God's matchless creation that Joachim Neander wrote, *Praise to the LORD, the King of Creation*.

But it was also in this valley 200 years later, as limestone was being quarried for the manufacture of cement, that workmen came across some caves in the sidewall of the gorge. One of the caves contained human bones, and the first *Neanderthal Man* had been discovered, the "missing link" which seemed to prove that humans and apes have evolved from the same animal.

Professor Marvin L. Lubenow writes, "The typical Neanderthal does differ somewhat from the typical modern human. However, the two also overlap. In fact, there should never have been a question about Neanderthal's taxonomic status. When the first Neanderthal was discovered, even 'Darwin's bulldog', Thomas Huxley, recognised that Neanderthal was fully human and not an evolutionary ancestor."

Nevertheless, the idea persists that Neanderthal Man is some sort of missing link in human evolution. As Lubenow puts it, "When Joachim Neander walked in his beautiful valley so many years ago, he could not know that 200 years later his name would become world famous, not for his hymns celebrating creation, but for a concept that

he would have totally rejected, the concept of human evolution.”

(Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes, p. 159)

<sup>2</sup> *And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.* <sup>3</sup> *Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*

On the seventh day God ended His work, that means, He declared on the seventh day His work finished. God made the Sabbath holy to *celebrate* His *rest* from all the work He had done (Gen 2:3). After the fall into sin this day became the special day of *rest* and *celebration*: depend on the LORD Who has created all things (Ex 20) and, after the exodus, Who has rescued you from slavery (Deut 5).

Celebrate creation:

be My steward, not a slave of *your work*.

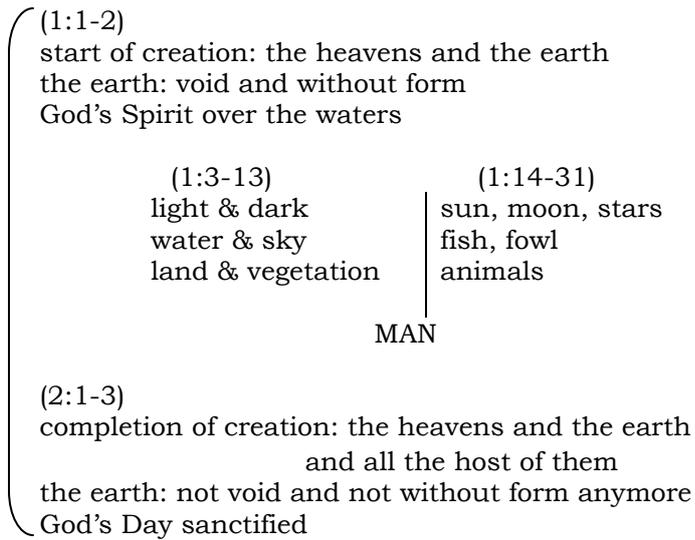
Celebrate liberation:

be My child, not *a slave* of your work.

Today the Sunday is the NT fulfilment of the OT Sabbath. Christ Himself, on the day of His resurrection, showed that first day as being the Lord's Day (Rev 1:10), the new day of holy convocation (cf John 20:19-29). The church from the beginning, comparing Scripture with Scripture, understood that the OT Sabbath became complete in the NT Sunday. They came together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7ff; 1 Cor 16:2). Literature from the first and second century (Didache, writings of Ignatius and Tertullian et al) speaks about celebrating the Sunday as the holy Lord's Day. The Sunday is a monument to the

risen Christ Who died in order to free us. Lest we forget!  
Who will destroy such a monument?

### Structure of Gen 1:1-2:3



*<sup>4</sup> This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup> before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; <sup>6</sup> but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

This part of Genesis starts with the Hebrew word for “history”: *toledoth*. This word *toledoth* signifies “what is brought into being”. With the phrase “this is the toledoth of” (ten decisive times in Genesis) the author points to the

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junction where the preceding line proceeds. Heaven and earth were created and what now follows ties in with it. In chapter 2 we look back to where it began and look ahead to what will be linked to it.

*This is the toledoth of the heavens and the earth when they were created* refers to Gen 1:1,2: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was ... etc. And *in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens* refers to Gen 1:3ff when God made a habitable and inhabited earth, and the heaven or firmament of 1:7.

*In the day...* The Hebrew word for *day* can have different meanings: daylight (from sunrise to sunset) as contrasted with night time (cf Gen 8:22), twenty-four hours (from one sunset to the next; cf Gen 39:10), or time (Gen 2:4,17). The word “day” here (without a number) means *time*. It is in this time (‘in the day that..’) that the following happened. Dr G Ch Aalders translates verses 4b-7 this way:

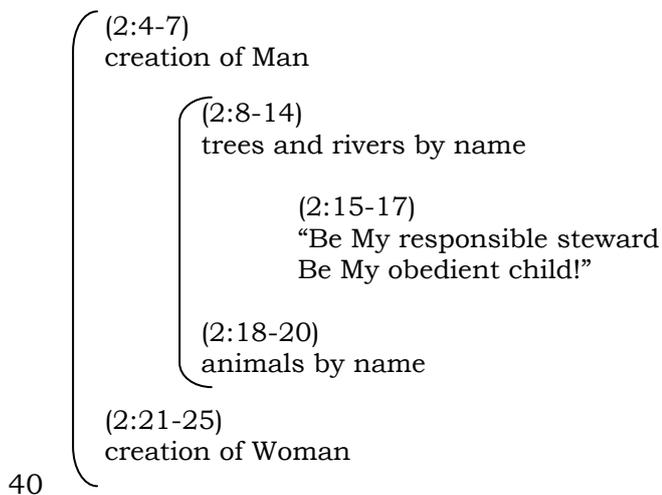
“In the time that the LORD God was making earth and heaven, together with every shrub of the field before it was on the earth, and every herb of the field before it had sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to till the ground – but mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground – then the LORD God formed man....”.

In Gen 2 the emphasis is on the creation of *man* in a Paradise full of delightful vegetation which wasn't there before God finished His creation, and which would be irrigated by Him and tilled by man.

In Gen 1 we read how God created man, male and female, to be His image. In Gen 2 we get a close-up of what actually happened on the sixth day. God formed the Adam of *adama* (the ground) which is his cradle and his home, and "kissed" life into him (cf John 20:22). Also animals breathe, but human life receives the spirit of God. Man was created to be God's image.

There is no compelling reason to consider Gen 2 a second, different creation story based on a different source than Gen 1, or even to consider Gen 2 *the* original creation story and Gen 1 non-historic poetry. In Gen 2 we get a close up of the sixth day when God created man, male and female.

#### Structure Gen 2:4-25



The first part of Gen 2: creation of man (2:4-7). The last part: creation of Wo-man (2:21-24). And in between we read how God put Adam in the Garden, made every tree *grow*, out of the ground (verse 8-14), and brought the animals He had formed out of the ground, to Adam to be named (verses 18-20).

*In the day that the LORD God made...* For the first time we read the name LORD. The name for God, in Gen 1, is *Elohim* (God). Here, in Gen 2, God revealed Himself as *Yahweh* (LORD) Elohim. The emphasis in Gen 1 is on *creation*: Elohim created humanity as male and female under His divine blessing. The emphasis in Gen 2 is on *relation*: Yahweh starts His covenant relationship with man and woman, who together will live as husband and wife.

God stood at the beginning of our life, and He will be there at the end also. His name is LORD, Yahweh: I am Who I am. Not, "I am what I was not." Nor, "I am what I shall not." His name is: I am that I am (Henry Law). In Exodus 6 the LORD explained to Moses His name *Yahweh*: I will rescue My people (heirs) and bring them to the Promised Land (inheritance). Although the LORD had already *revealed* His name centuries before Moses, it was not until the Exodus that the LORD *showed* the manifestation of His name in the deliverance of His people out of the house of bondage.

<sup>8</sup> *The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.*

The Septuagint translated the word for “garden” in *Paradise*, a word from Persian origin, meaning “an enclosed park and pleasure ground” (Waltke). There, in the East, where the sun rises, man may enjoy life together and fellowship with God in harmony and peace. The likely etymology of the word *Eden* is a Hebrew term meaning *delight*. God placed His image in a Garden of Delight, east of Palestine in Mesopotamia, and caused trees (created on the third day) to sprout, spring up in this garden: beautiful and delicious, yes, delightful.

<sup>9</sup> *And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

The two special trees reminded man to live rightly with God. Eternal life (cf 3:22) by knowing and showing what is good, i.e. perfect life in perfect obedience to God (cf verse 17) who gave life. The tree of *knowledge* asked for *discernment* God had enabled man with. After the fall we still have the ability to discern. Paul prayed that the love of the Philippians might abound more and more in all discernment in order to approve the things that really matter (Phil 1:9-10).

Solomon teaches us that *wisdom* is a tree of life to those who embrace her: happy are those who hold her tightly (Prov 3:18). And wisdom is to fear the LORD (Prov 1:7) out of thankfulness for Jesus Christ. His cross became a tree

of life (Acts 10:39-40; 1 Peter 2:24). Christ encouraged His NT church to be victorious in Him. To them He will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God (Rev 2:7; 22:2).

Who will overcome? Those who, born of God (1 John 5:4), believe that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:5). Blessed are those who do His commandments (cf *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*), that they may have the right to *the tree of life*, and may enter through the gates into the city (Rev 22:4).

The trees in Paradise symbolised life, the end (end-goal) of God's creation. Death *became* a temporary part of history after the fall, because of our deliberate disobedience. But death is not a *permanent* part of life as it is in the evolutionistic view. Death is our last enemy (1 Cor 15:26) and only God is able to turn death to our good (cf Lord's Day 9).

<sup>10</sup> Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

Though we don't know the exact location of Eden, it is clear from the narration that Paradise was a geographic place and that in the midst of the garden were visible,

tangible and smelling trees. It is important to highlight this.

In 1926 the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in Assen, the Netherlands, condemned the view of Dr JG Geelkerken who, in a sermon on 23 March 1924, left room for a non-literal explanation of the trees and the snake in Paradise without testing this “other explanation” by Scripture itself. Synod did not reject continuous scientific research, but refused to accept it as a decisive authority *up front*. We believe that Gen 2 and 3 are about normal trees in a normal garden with normal animals, unless it is proved not to be true from *Scripture itself*.

In the first chapters of the Bible we read, very concretely and very clearly, about the *history* of heaven and earth, and about the *time* when God created and what happened *next*, and about rivers called by *name*, and about the tree of life in the *midst of the garden*, and about the other tree from which they were *not allowed to eat*. Then we don't let the concreteness and clarity of this account be taken away from us by a possibility of another explanation.

That the tree of life was a *symbol* of God's promise of life doesn't yet mean that it wasn't a *real* tree. By the way, the rivers mentioned here existed *before* the flood. When Genesis was written *after* the flood the geographical situation was quite different. Why would Genesis tell us all the names if Paradise was just a symbol? Let us tell the *history* of Gen 1 and 2, the *facts* of creation by

Yahweh Elohim: the God of creation is the God of relationship.

This brings us to Psalm 46, which refers to a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High (Ps 46:4). Since Jerusalem had no river, we may think of the river in Eden, which became four streams. God was in the midst of Eden, then in the midst of His people in the Most Holy Place, and finally He will be in the midst of the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1,2). Yes, the God of the covenant is with us (Ps 46:7,11) in Jesus Christ, Immanuel: God with us (Matt 1:23). The coming Immanuel who was promised in Paradise and prefigured in all the temple sacrifices has come to redeem Paradise for us. And one day He will return to reopen the road to the Paradise river.

*<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

What a privilege to tend and guard the Garden. Life in Paradise was a permanent holiday, I mean: *holy* day. Optimal enjoyment in *dedication* to God who had created nature to be tilled and tended by His image, who in dominion should care and share: keywords of the cultural mandate.

What if there was not a forbidden tree? Then we wouldn't have all the misery today, would we? However, basically

the question is: Why didn't God create man as a robot? But we don't like such a question. God's Word reveals to us that God created man with his own responsibility. He created him to be His image with a conscience, with a mind, with the ability to say "yes" to Him from the *heart*. And also, yes, also with the ability to say "no". If *that* ability was *not* there, then man would be a robot.

In Gen 1 we read how God created man and woman to be His image: His stewards to make the earth more habitable, and His children to inhabit the earth further. In Gen 2 we read how God highlighted man's responsibility: Be My responsible stewards to tend and keep My creation, and be My responsible children in obeying My commandment. Here we see the both parts of God's covenant: a beautiful promise of life, and a serious obligation not to choose death.

*<sup>18</sup> And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." <sup>19</sup> Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.*

According to some theologians Gen 2 contradicts Gen 1. The first narrative, Gen 1, has the order of creation: trees – birds – beasts – man. But in Gen 2 they find a different order: man – trees – beasts – birds. Therefore they think of a second, different creation narrative in Gen 2 which comes from a different source than the source of Gen 1.

However, as we have seen before, from the context it is clear that we don't have a second creation narrative here, but a close-up of the sixth creation day from the perspective of Yahweh's relationship with man. With Dr Aalders we read verse 19 like this:

“For when God, the LORD, had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the air, He brought them to Adam to see what he would call them.”

The LORD God gathered beasts and birds that He had created in order that Adam would know and name them as monarch (*viceroys*). When Adam called the king of animals – let us say – *lion* and its companion *lioness* (it's likely that he called them *leeuw* and *leeuwin* 😊) he realised that there was no life partner for himself. So, giving names to the animals kindled in Adam the desire for fellowship with one comparable, corresponding, to himself.

*<sup>21</sup> And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup> Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.*

Built from his side she stands along-side him: *side-by-side*. They are soul-mates. The woman

“is not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”

(Matthew Henry)

Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies (Eph 5:28).

<sup>23</sup> *And Adam said:*

*"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man."*

The first revealed words of a human being spoken in Paradise were an ode to the woman. With Paul we say,

"In the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God" (1 Cor 11:11-12).

<sup>24</sup> *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* <sup>25</sup> *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*

"Who gave this woman to this man and this man to this woman?" God did. In the words of the Form for Marriage:

"We therefore believe that the LORD also today gives husband and wife to one another. Since they are united by His hand, nothing shall separate them in this life."

It is as with stamps. They come in different rolls like a man and a woman come from different families. When man and woman become husband and wife two stamps are glued together. Separation only causes severe damage to the stamps. Husband and wife are made for each other.

As they *were* one flesh before, so they *become* one flesh in marriage. We read that Adam called his wife *wo-man* because she was taken out of *man*, and that the man shall *cleave* to the woman because she was taken *out* of man.

*They were both naked.* Here their nakedness is an image of openness and trust. No moral weakness. No frailty. No sin, and therefore no shame. Man and woman: side by side. She's made not to be his maid, but his mate. Yes, God is great!

Only those who do not want to glorify God the Creator, but like to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever can come with a theory of evolution. They deliberately exchange the truth of God for the lie (Rom 1:25). They follow a delusion.

Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* (2007) explains the reason for his evolutionistic view when he says that he chooses to believe that there is no God and therefore chooses to believe in evolution, no matter how great the impossibility of it. For him materialism is absolute, for he doesn't want to allow a divine foot in the door. Basically he is *exalting* his own view *contrary* to the knowledge of God. That is exactly the opposite of: bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5; cf 1 Cor 1:18-2:16).

Moreover, if, according to the evolutionists, science itself is the *product* of evolution, how can it give *the truth about* evolution? (P Niemeijer).

We know that God will destroy the so-called wisdom of the so-called wise debater. It's a fool who says, "There is no God" (Ps 14:1). One day the atheists, who didn't believe in God, will find out that God doesn't believe in atheists (cf John Blanchard 2000). Not God, but Nietzsche is dead!

## Genesis three

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

The Hebrew word for "cunning" can have a pejorative meaning, but not necessarily: see Proverbs 12:16,23; 13:16; 14:15,18; 22:3; 27:12, where the NKJV translates this word with "prudent". The snake was obviously very clever: we don't get the impression that Eve was shocked or frightened when this animal started to *speak*. That *Satan* was behind the temptation in Paradise we clearly know from Revelation 12:9 where he is characterised as "that serpent of old" (cf Rom 16:20). It is Satan, using the snake, who deceived Eve by his craftiness (2 Cor 11:3).

But how could there be a devil in God's good creation in the first place? We confess in *The Belgic Confession*, Art 12:

"God also created the angels good, to be His messengers and to serve His elect (Ps 103:20, 21; Mt 4:11; Heb 1:14). Some of these have fallen from the exalted position in which God created them into everlasting perdition (Jn 8:44; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6) but the others have by the grace of God remained steadfast and continued in their first state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and of all that is good (Gen 3:1-5; 1

Pet 5:8). With all their might, they lie in wait like murderers to ruin the church and all its members and to destroy everything by their wicked devices (Eph 6:12; Rev 12:4, 13-17; Rev 20:7-9)."

And that's what Satan did: he lay in wait like a murderer.

*<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

The mouthpiece of Satan did not start with a blatant lie, but asked a question containing a lie: "Did God really say not to eat from every tree?" As if God would have said that. Satan wanted God's words to appear harsh. Then the woman explained that there was only one forbidden tree, which they were not allowed even to touch (that's not what we read in 2:17; probably Adam told her this, so that she would absolutely stay away from this tree). To eat from that tree meant death.

But Satan contradicts God's words: "You will not surely die." We know that after the woman had eaten from the fruit she didn't fall dead to the ground. In that sense Satan was right. But this half-truth was a complete lie, for in Gen 5 the death-knell doesn't stop sounding. Satan continued: "If you eat you will be like God (what a lie!) knowing good and evil" (yes, after the fall they suddenly would know, i.e. experience what evil is).

Satan's tactic was clear: he started with a suggestive question and then he cast doubt on God's good words and His good intentions tempting the woman to leave her

position at the side of God and at the side of her husband. To leave her position at the side of God: to desire to be like God instead of being His image *according* to His likeness. To leave her position at the side of her husband: to desire to take the lead over her husband instead of standing *along-side* him.

<sup>6</sup> *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

“She also gave to her husband with her.” *With her*: Adam was present when the serpentine deceiver seduced his wife, but he didn’t interfere! He didn’t protest against the liar and he, as “the firstborn”, didn’t protect his wife against the liar. He didn’t take the lead in chasing away the evil one. Sometimes I think that the Lord appointed the man head so that he is not allowed to walk away from his final responsibility. One day God will ask the husband, “What have you done with My image, your wife?”

Created to be God’s image, man’s will could conform to the will of God in every respect. BC, Art 14:

“But, when man was in this high position, he did not appreciate it nor did he value his excellency. He gave ear to the words of the devil and wilfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse (Gen 3:16-19; Rom 5:12). For he transgressed the commandment of life which he had received; by his sin he broke away from God, who was his true life; he corrupted his whole

nature. By all this he made himself liable to physical and spiritual death (Gen 2:17; Eph 2:1; Eph 4:18).”

Yes, man wilfully subjected himself to sin. But an often-asked question is, “Did God decree Adam’s fall?”

Let’s imagine for a moment that the answer is *Yes*. After all, God is almighty and unless the sovereign, almighty God decided that Adam should fall, it could not happen. So, God decided that He would lead man into Satan’s temptation and that then man would listen to the devil and would disobey God.

However, we also know that God made man to be His image, that is to be His *responsible* children and stewards who could obey Him from the heart. Man is distinguished from all other creatures in having a conscience. He had the possibility to obey God and to disobey God. Without that possibility man would be a robot. Imagine that God decreed that man fall into sin, then man would *not* have the possibility to obey God. Moreover, how could my God and Father decide my fall, yes, even decide to send people into eternal condemnation because of that? The *Yes*-answer doesn’t make sense.

Then, let’s imagine for a moment that the answer to our question is *No*. After all, how could the loving Father possibly set a trap for His child? So, God did not decree to man’s fall.

However, then there are at least three questions to answer.

1) If *God* did not decree that Adam would fall into sin, who or what did? Did others decide to things outside of God's plan?

2) If God decided that Adam would *not* fall, who or what overruled His sovereign plan? Did others do something God didn't want?

3) If God did not *decree* to man's fall, what then did He do? Did He hand over His power to others?

We all know the answers: of course not. The fall did not happen outside of God's control. Nothing happens without God's direction. Also the *No*-answer doesn't make sense.

Is it possible that there are questions we cannot answer with *Yes* or *No*? Especially when those questions relate to eternity? I mean "eternity" before creation? We are not eternal "back in time". We cannot make the jump to what was eternally before us. We are mere creatures who did not exist before we were conceived. Yes, we may live with God in eternity now and in the future. That makes us eternal from now on. But yet, we will never be as eternal as the Triune God is eternal. He has no beginning. He was there "an eternity" before He created us. Does this make your mind spin and your head swim?

This is what we confess in *The Belgic Confession*, Art 13:

"And as to God's actions surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire farther than our capacity allows us. But with the greatest humility and reverence we adore the just

judgments of God, which are hidden from us, and we content ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, who have only to learn those things which He teaches us in His Word, without transgressing these limits.”

What *does* God teach us in His Word in relation to His decrees? In the same Art 13, we confess two things:

- ✚ God so rules and governs all things that in this world nothing happens without His direction.
  - Ephesians 1:11-12: In Christ we have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of God *who works all things according to the counsel of His will*, in order that we might be for the praise of His glory.
  
- ✚ Yet God is not the Author of sins which are committed nor can He be charged with them.
  - James 1:13-14: Let no one being tempted say, ‘I am tempted from God.’ For God is not tempted by evils, and *He tempts no one*. But each one is tempted by his own evil desires.

Based on this we can say that God did not tempt or coerce Adam to fall, but that Adam used his “ability to sin and not to sin” wrongly. Instead of obeying God from the heart he deliberately disobeyed God. He acted willingly with no violence being done to his will. At the same time, Adam’s fall did not happen outside of God’s sovereign plan.

Did God decree that man fall into sin, yes or no? My answer is:

God's decree was not to *make* Adam fall, but to *allow* him to fall. Unless God *permitted* sin, it could not have happened.

Having said this, my mind still boggles. I have to accept that I cannot make the jump to God's eternity and His eternal counsel from before the creation. Mind you, no creature can dwell in that "eternity outside of time" with his mind. How can people, whose thinking is bounded in time, even start to think that they possibly can capture the decisions of God in *eternity*, with *human* concepts of chronology and *human* concepts of causal reasoning?

Let us be content with what is revealed in Scripture. Be thankful that God has revealed Himself to us – creatures who cannot make that jump to His "eternal" eternity –, as the *covenant* God. That is as *Yahweh*, the God who is with us here and now in Jesus Christ, Immanuel. That's what we can understand and that's what gives us peace.

God's *covenant* is His relationship with His child in this time and age, and comes to us with beautiful promises and serious commands to repent and believe (CD II,5).

God's *election* is His decree from eternity, and it serves as our comfort that salvation does not depend on our choice (CD I,7). We simply have to leave it here.

*<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

*<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

*Their eyes were opened.* And what did they see? They didn't dare to look each other in the face, let alone to appear openly before God. The knowledge got through that they had lost their state of innocence. They realised to their shame that they couldn't appear before the LORD as they were created.

“It does not say that they were now ashamed before each other; we should not relate this to the sexual aspect; consciousness of guilt brings the dislike of openly appearing before someone else. An arrested criminal avoids publicity and attempts to hide from the photographer. And so the first human couple picked fig leaves, which cling together easily because of a stickiness in the stems, and by this means they made a covering” (I de Wolff).

Their eyes were opened but they couldn't bear the light of day anymore. They had lost their excellent gifts and, blaming God and each other, they now were lost.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

<sup>11</sup> And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

<sup>12</sup> Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

<sup>13</sup> And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent:

*"Because you have done this,  
you are cursed more than all cattle,  
and more than every beast of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and you shall eat dust  
all the days of your life.*

"Where are you?" God had created Adam first, as head (cf 1 Cor 11:2ff), with the final responsibility, and now Adam had to give account to his Master.

Also for today God decided, for His good reasons, that some men should be called for the final responsibility of the government of His church, the power station of His kingdom (BC, Art 30 on the basis of 1 Tim 2 and 3). He deploys the gifts of men and women differently; not because they have different gifts or differ in value, but because He wants them to use their gifts in the church in different offices and in different ways.

<sup>15</sup> *And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise His heel."*

Here we are in the centre of Gen 3:

(3:1-5)  
in the Garden of Eden  
"Eat, then you know good and evil"

(3:6-13)  
they ate (disobedience), knew they were naked,  
blamed each other

(3:14-15)  
enmity between two seeds,  
promise of the Seed

(3:16-21)  
curse because of eating applied to both,  
God clothed them

(3:22-24)  
now they know good and evil  
out of the Garden of Eden

Rescue in Christ! *The Belgic Confession*, Art 17:

"We believe that, when He saw that man had thus plunged himself into physical and spiritual death and made himself completely miserable, our gracious God in His marvellous wisdom and goodness set out to seek man when he trembling fled from Him. He comforted him with the promise that He would give him *His Son, born of woman*

(Gal 4:4), to crush the head of the serpent and to make man blessed.”

Therefore we give all the glory to God and rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified. His obedience is ours when we believe in Him. *The Belgic Confession*, Art 23:

“This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities and to give us confidence in drawing near to God, freeing our conscience of fear, terror, and dread, so that we do not follow the example of our first father, Adam, who trembling tried to hide and covered himself with fig leaves. For indeed, if we had to appear before God, relying – be it ever so little – on ourselves or some other creature, (woe be to us!) we would be consumed. Therefore everyone must say with David, O LORD, *do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before You* (Ps 143:2).”

What actually is the message of the first Gospel? God took the woman out of Satan’s camp (enmity between “you and the woman”) so that her Great Son (the Child of the woman, Rev 12:5,13) could come and would take away all His own out of Satan’s camp (enmity between “your seed and her Seed”). Satan has hindered Christ severely on His way (“bruise His heel”), but Christ has deprived Satan of his headship (“bruise your head”). Because of the fall into sin, all mankind became Satan’s seed, but Christ redeemed all of His own from Satan with His precious

blood. And throughout history we see how many come to Christ.

The promise of Gen 3:15 is *terrific* for those who belong to Christ. In Him they are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37). The promise is *terrible* for those who want to stay with Satan. By setting enmity, God made room for Christ to come. And followers of Christ should fight the battle against the seducer by doing what they can to take away his followers from behind him. They do so by the power of God's Spirit and Word.

Followers of Christ trust and obey Him out of thankfulness for His redemption. Reformed education, for example, is covenantal education that maintains the enmity of Gen 3:15. Therefore Reformed students should be taught how to fight against the fallen world in the armour of the Spirit, and how to be a light for the fallen world with the oil of the Spirit. They should be taught not to desert and to urge others to convert. To be dedicated (as priests) fighting knights (as kings) and lighting lights (as prophets).

<sup>16</sup> *To the woman He said:*

*"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;  
in pain you shall bring forth children;  
your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you."*

<sup>17</sup> *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':*

*"Cursed is the ground for your sake;*

*in toil you shall eat of it  
all the days of your life.*

<sup>18</sup> *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,  
and you shall eat the herb of the field.*

<sup>19</sup> *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for dust you are,  
and to dust you shall return.”*

The pain of bringing forth children, and the fact that her husband will take the leadership will not prevent the woman to direct her desire to him, and to conceive children. God's image had received the beautiful task to make the earth more habitable as His stewards and to further inhabit the earth as His children. Now after the fall they hear: in toil and in the sweat of your face you will make the earth habitable. In pain you shall bring forth inhabitants.

But Gen 3:15 stands out: *the* Seed of the woman will come to our rescue so that it is still possible to be God's stewards and children: in Jesus Christ, God's stewards on earth managing the property of God Almighty; and God's children in the generations, reflecting the love of God the Father.

Adam was formed from the ground (Hebrew: *adama*) and could live from the ground. After the fall he ate of the ground in toil till he would return to the ground. But there was hope! One day the Seed of the woman would take away the curse of the grave so that on the last day

the graves will be opened, and those who have died in the Lord will live forever in the new Paradise.

“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Cor 15:47). As through one man’s unrighteous acts judgement came to all Adam’s children, even so through one Man’s righteous acts grace came to all Christ’s children (cf Rom 5:18). They are being transformed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18), who is *the* Image of God (2 Cor 4:4).

<sup>20</sup> *And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*

The first revealed words of Adam in Paradise were an ode to his wife. Later on he blamed her. But now he showed true leadership in calling his wife *Eve*, mother of all living. Her name *Wo-man* pointed to her origin: out of man. Her name *Eve* will point to her destiny: mother of all living. There is salvation for Eve in her Great Descent to Whom she, child-bearing, could work, and for Whom women, if it is God’s will, may still bring forth covenant children into His world (cf 1 Tim 2:15).

<sup>21</sup> *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

It was the LORD Himself who clothed Adam and Eve with more durable garments necessary for outside Paradise where His children would continue to carry out their cultural mandate. However, not in an eternal Paradise anymore, but on a temporal earth to which they shall

return when they die. But one day the risen Christ will return and will herald eternal life on the renewed heaven and earth.

*<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— <sup>23</sup> therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.*

“The man has become like one of Us.” Not: “like God”, but “like one of (or: from) Us”, that is, in autonomy. Man became law himself in emancipation from God and he judged concerning good and evil at his own discretion (Aalders). Then God executed His sentence with which He had confronted man before: “In the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall surely die.” Therefore no entrance to the tree of *life*. Only in Christ, who paid on the tree of life outside the old Jerusalem, will there be entrance to the tree of life in the New Jerusalem. Then there shall be no more curse.

*<sup>24</sup> So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Paradise lost – Paradise regained. Access to the tree of life was closed after the fall into sin of our first ancestors. From now on they could only receive eternal life in the coming Seed of Eve, the mother of all living. Cherubim, who had remained faithful as opposed to Satan, guarded the Holy Garden: no access to the tree of life in Paradise.

Centuries later cherubim covered the Most Holy Place: only access to *the* Tree of Life in the blood of Jesus Christ. Rev 22:1-7:

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Then he said to me, ‘These words *are* faithful and true.’ And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ‘Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.’”

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**Paul in Athens – Acts 17:16-34**

As I said in the Introduction, Acts 17 teaches us 4 important lessons about how to announce the promise of the gospel and proclaim it universally and without discrimination to all peoples and all man (CD,II,5).

*Lesson 1: Know the worldview of the people*

The first lesson is that we should know and recognize the philosophy of unbelievers. Only then we can analyse and assess their worldview. The first thing we ought to do is to stand next to them. That's what Paul did. He starts with their frame of reference. He had seen the altar to the unknown god(s) and he had obviously read their philosophers.

Then Paul begins with the statement that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Both the Epicureans and Stoics of verse 18 would agree with him. According to the Epicureans God is far away: of course He does not dwell in the temple *next door*. According to the Stoics God was an impersonal omnipresent power or world-soul. Of course He does not *dwell* in a temple. Paul caught immediately the attention of both groups who had brought him up to the court of the Areopagus.

Then Paul quotes at least two of their ancient poets. In a sermon to the Jews in Acts 13 he had started with their Book, the OT. Here he starts with the Greek literature. He quotes Epimenides, an ancient poet who had written: “In him we live” (verse 28). Paul also quotes Aratus, another ancient authority, who had said, “We are also his offspring.” And again, the Athenian philosophers would agree. The impersonal Zeus – the quotations refer to him – is their head-god. But then Paul *corrects* their ideology.

### *Lesson 2: Confront the people with the Bible*

Paul *corrects* the Athenian ideology. That is the second lesson. Paul *starts* with their context, but he does not *accommodate* to their context. He does not compromise saying, “OK, you believe in Zeus, I believe in the Triune God, but, hey, we both worship God: you call him Zeus, I call him God.” No, Paul doesn’t do that. He confronts his opponents with the Bible and starts with the first ten words of the Bible: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It is God who gave life. He created man.

So, when you say *we are his offspring* (He created us) you should acknowledge that He is above His creation, Stoics. And when you say *we are his offspring* (we belong to Him) you should acknowledge that he cares for you, Epicureans. Do you understand this? Yes? Then you also understand that the way you use the saying of your poets is wrong.

*Lesson 3: Challenge the people's worldview in the light of the Bible*

Don't be scared to boldly tell the truth. I say *boldly*, not rudely. We should reason, not ridicule; insist, not insult. We will win the person, not our point. Then ask, "Which worldview makes sense if we are God's offspring, as you said it yourself? That we are made in God's image, or that gods are made of gold, silver and stone?"

With this Paul challenges the Athenians with all their idols. The word Paul uses here in verse 16 for idols (*eidoolon*) means: silhouettes, illusions. How could man be God's offspring (quote from Aratus) if gods are made by man? They are illusions. How could we live in God (quote from Epimenides) if we have to make God alive in temples (verses 24-27 and 28-29)?

Then Paul challenges the Stoics and the Epicureans. "Which worldview makes sense if we are God's offspring, as you said it yourself? That God is the Creator or that creation is God, Stoics (verse 27a)? That He cares for us or that He is far from us, Epicureans (verse 27b)?"

The aim of life for the Stoics was to live in complete harmony with nature, depending on philosophically calm (that is stoic) reason. In a pantheistic way they believed that God is in everything. No need to be afraid of Him. He *serves* mankind. But in the centre of his sermon Paul explains how God can *not* be spread out over His own creation. He has created man so that they should seek the

Lord (verse 27a). In Him we live. We can only live because of Him, not as a piece of Him. He is a personal God you can seek, Stoics. We are His offspring; trust and obey Him.

And what about the Epicureans? Their aim of life was to live in freedom from pain and passion. They denied every divine intervention; God is far away from man. No need to be afraid of God. But in the centre of his sermon Paul explains how God is *not* far from us (verse 27b). In Him we live. We can only live because of Him. He is with us, not far away, Epicureans. We are his offspring; trust and obey Him.

#### *Lesson 4: Command them to repent and believe*

What is next? What you do with the message. The fourth lesson we learn from Paul's sermon is that the information of the message should be given for the transformation of the heart. Again *The Canons of Dort*, II,5: The promise of the gospel ought to be announced and proclaimed *together with the command to repent and believe*. The *command*: that's not a soft invitation but a serious command.

To repent from what? To believe in Whom? The message since Pentecost is clear. To repent from worshipping creatures rather than the Creator. To repent from your sins and believe in the God who has revealed Himself as the God of life. As His image, stewards and children, we

should trust and obey Him. God had made man (the first Adam) alive in order that man should seek and serve Him (verses 26-27). God had also made *the Man* (the last Adam) alive in order that man should seek and serve Him; and live (Is 55:6; Amos 5:4).

The sovereign Creator sets the rules. Paul appeals here to the Highest Authority. One day *the Man He* had ordained will judge the world in righteousness. He had ordained the last Adam to judge the world one day. Athenians, it is only when you repent and believe that you do not need to be afraid of God. Athenians, it's not too late to repent. But, do you know what? He can come soon for He is alive. Do you know how powerful He is? *The Man* rose from the dead.

The last words of the sermon will hang in the Greek air for a while. Resurrection of the body? That's touching on a sore spot. That was the main reason why the Athenians had brought Paul to the Hill of Ares. He had preached *Jesus and the resurrection* to them (verse 18).

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Especially when you realise that a few centuries earlier, in the same city, Socrates was sentenced to drink the poisoned cup, because he had introduced new gods. Paul was not afraid, for the gospel of life in the risen Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek (Rom 1:16). That's what we read in verse 17: Paul reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers.

And what were the responses? Some mocked. Others wanted to come back to it. Some joined Paul and believed.

Today it's not different. We also can expect one of those responses. But that will not stop us to proclaim the promise of the Gospel with the command to repent and believe in Him who *rose* from the dead and will come to *judge* the living and the dead.

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