

Regeneration: The Hope of Creation

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1. Joyful expectation	2
2. The 'doctrine of the restitution'	4
3. The generations of the heavens and the earth	12
4. Leaven	19
5. The seed of regeneration	24
6. The first and the second	29
7. The heavens and the earth	34
8. The new creation	38

1. Joyful expectation

I do not know about you, but when I get hold of a new book, I always skim the first and last pages. Then I know two things. First of all, I know roughly what the story is about, in the second place I know if it has a good outcome. If I know in advance that the story has no 'happy ending', I will not even start reading it. That is because I do not like the unsatisfactory feeling I get when it ends tragically with the main character of the story. This may well be a bad habit of mine, but I comfort myself with the thought that many others do exactly the same. Anyway, it works. Indeed, reading the first and last pages generally gives a global but superficial view of the contents of a book. And even 'The Book of Books' forms no exception. The first pages of the Bible, well known as they are, tell us about the way in which the world, as we know it, has come about. And immediately we are faced with the most complicated problems. We read how the world goes from bad to worse. How it degenerates, instead of evolving. And we anxiously wonder how this will end. But when our curiosity wins, and we turn to the last chapters impatiently, we can ease a sigh of relief. For against all human expectations, the Scriptures do have a happy ending! For there we read about the coming about of a new heaven and a new earth to replace the old heaven and earth, which have been put away forever. At the last moment, the old creation appears to be replaced by a new one. By "[...] new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3 : 13)

When we must summarize the contents of the Scriptures, we can say that the Bible tells the story of 'how the old creation became a new creation'. Some decades ago this would have been a very suitable title for a book, by the way. The Word of God tells us the history of a creation that fell into sin, that eventually, through the reconciling work of Christ, will be replaced by a new, perfect and sinless world, where God is "all and in all." (1 Corinthians 15 : 28) However, this brief summary of the contents of the Bible can serve very well as a definition of the concept of 'regeneration'. Regeneration is, after all, God's method of creating a new creation from an old creation. If this is also the general content of the Bible, we must conclude that the main subject of Scripture is nothing but regeneration.

First of all, as we have seen, regeneration was applicable to the Lord Jesus Himself. Indeed, regeneration is essentially equal to 'resurrection to life'. And the fact that

the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected to life is the basic truth of Christianity. He was the first one to lay down His body and life, which He had received by birth, in order to receive a completely new life through resurrection. And thus, He indeed became the firstborn of a new creation. He was the first one to be regenerated. Secondly, regeneration was applied to all who have come to believe since the resurrection (or regeneration) of Christ. For not only His death, but also the Lord's resurrection was in our place, so that of the believer it can be said that he died, was buried and resurrected together with Christ. (See Romans 6 : 3-5)

In addition, when the Lord Himself speaks of "You who have followed Me in the regeneration," (Matthew 19 : 28) it appears that regeneration is primarily applicable to Himself, and subsequently to all believers. Not only Christ, but also those who followed Him are a new creation in Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 5 : 17) For a new creation is that which is born by regeneration. Thirdly, regeneration appeared to be applicable to Israel. Israel, once born out of Egypt, will also, as a nation, be regenerated, when she comes to believe, as a nation. Israel will rise from the tomb of the peoples, because by faith she will receive new life from Christ. This shows that regeneration is not only applicable to individuals, but also to a nation.

This brings us back to the first and last pages of the Bible. We have found that not only a part, but the whole creation will ultimately make place for a new one. Not only Christ, not only the believers, not only Israel, but also the earth and the heavens themselves will be changed. And of course, the concept of regeneration should also be applicable to this. The coming of a new heaven and a new earth is the result of regeneration. And as the aforementioned applications are the result of Christ's resurrection, this is also the case with the regeneration of the creation. The 'happy ending' of the Scriptures is the result of Christ's reconciliation and is based on His victory over death. All this gives a great deep meaning to the words of the apostle Paul:

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. [...] And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” (1 Corinthians 15 : 13-18)

For without the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection of Christ would have been impossible. And without the resurrection of Christ, regeneration would have been impossible. And without regeneration, no new creation can come about. Then there would be no 'happy ending' for you and me and this world. But that happy ending is there. And that is why the history of creation, as the Scriptures tell us, is the history of a pregnancy. It is the history of the suffering of this world and of everything in it, because this world is pregnant. For the world we live in, the creation as we know it, fulfils the role of the mother, from whom new life will shortly proceed. The new life of which God Himself is the father and begetter.

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope [...]” (Romans 8 : 22-24)

2. The 'doctrine of the restitution'

In connection with the salvation of a sinner, we have seen that regeneration finds its necessity in natural birth. For through his descent from Adam, the natural man is a sinner 'from the mother's womb'. He is infected with sin. And therefore, Scripture teaches "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom." (1 Corinthians 15 : 50) Therefore, the birth of man must take place again, as it were, so that he becomes a new and sinless creation in Christ. Of course, this same principle applied to the Lord Jesus Himself, who was "made [...] to be sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5 : 21) He bore our sins on the cross of Calvary and laid them down in death, after which He rose from the dead 'without sin' as 'the head of a new creation'. This principle also applies to Israel as a nation. Even Israel was born with what we might call a 'hereditary taint'. We have seen how the 'Egyptian descent' has always played an important role in the history of Israel. How Israel longed to go back to Egypt and sought support there against her enemies. Just as natural man relies on his own origin and on the flesh ('the flesh-pots of Egypt'). Both Israel and natural man have always sought to establish their own righteousness. (Romans 10 : 3) But the born man is not capable of any good. (Romans 3 : 10-18) And apparently, Israel was not either. And therefore,

she too must be regenerated by faith. Her descent must also be changed, as it were. And as it is with man and with Israel, so it is with the world as a whole. The need for regeneration is based on its origin. For in any case, if the original 'birth' of the world had been perfect, whence the need for regeneration? Something that is good has no need to be made again, has it? The question now is: What is wrong with the origin of our world?

When we limit ourselves to the Biblical account of the creation, we run into a popular and deep-rooted misunderstanding that can boast on a long past. This misunderstanding initially originated from a compromise between Divine revelation and the legends of heathen cosmogony, but is truly without any Biblical foundation. True believers do not have much difficulty with the first verse of the Bible. After all, it says clear enough:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1 : 1)

But 'modern' man, who is always interested in the technical side of the matter, wants to know how God realized that creation. And as the Scriptures simply give no account of this, because it is of no importance at all for us, through the ages man has put to work his own imagination, so as to fill up the supposed void in the Word of God. The results of this can be easily found, for instance, in the old mythological literature. The classic poet Hesiod tells us that what first existed was: 'Chaos'. According to etymology, that is the 'silent and empty fertile soil for created matter'. But soon the word lost its precise meaning and was used for the raw and shapeless matter, from which the heavens and the earth were supposed to have been created. Ovid describes it as follows:

“Nature appeared the same throughout the whole world: what we call chaos: a raw confused mass, nothing but inert matter, badly combined discordant atoms of things, confused in the one place.” (Metamorphoses 1 : 6-7).

In his "Fasti" he lets Janus, whom he identifies with 'Chaos', speak as follows:

“The ancients called me Chaos (since I am of the first world): Note the long ages past of which I shall tell. The clear air, and the three other elements, fire, water,

earth, were heaped together as one. When, through the discord of its components, the mass dissolved, and scattered to new regions, flame found the heights: air took a lower place, while earth and sea sank to the furthest depth. Then I, who was a shapeless mass, a ball, took on the appearance, and noble limbs of a god.” (Fasti 1 : 103-112)

According to these cosmogonies of Greece and Rome, the universe thus originated from chaos. Uranus was considered to have been the first god, but he was expelled by his son Chronos or Saturn, who later received the same treatment by his son Zeus or Jupiter. Chaos was what first existed and thereafter the series of transient gods arose. This teaching, old and widespread as it already was in the days of our Lord, is not Biblical, and has no foundation at all in the Scriptures. Yet it influenced both real and false Christians in their interpretation of the first chapter of the Bible. For they believe that the first verse represents the creation of a formless mass of elements, from which then heaven and earth would be formed during the six days. According to this known vision, the second verse would then give a description of this formless mass before God formed it further. Unfortunately, their opinion lives on, until today, although it is certainly not supported by the Bible, as we shall now see very briefly. We are interested in the next passage:

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” (Genesis 1 : 2, AKJV)

The Hebrew text follows here, for the sake of clearness:

“VE-HA-ERETS HAYTAH TOHU VA-BOHU VE-CHO-SHEK AL-PENEI TEHOM.””

We will start at the beginning. The word 'VE' or 'VA' is virtually the only conjunction in Hebrew and is commonly translated with 'and', but also often with 'but', as it is the case in, for example, Genesis 2 : 17 and 3 : 3. This obviously depends on the context in which it is used. According to the Hebrew language and most other languages (also English), the conjunction 'and' or 'but' proves that the preceding verse (Genesis 1 : 1) cannot be a summary of what follows, but must be an account of an event in a series that has already begun. If the first verse were

merely a summary of that which follows, the second verse would in fact be the beginning of the history and would therefore surely not begin with a conjunction. But as verse 2, like all other verses in this chapter, nevertheless begins with a conjunction, it describes something that took place after verse 1, hence after the creation of the heavens and the earth. The translators apparently also understood that 'VE' often means 'after' or 'afterwards', and because that did not agree with the prevailing conceptions, they 'translated' this word by way of exception with 'now'. By doing so, the conjunction in the Hebrew original text has disappeared and has been replaced by an absolutely meaningless expression. But just as verse 3 begins with 'VE' and in this way is the continuation of verse 2, verse 2 begins with 'VE' and is in this way the continuation of verse 1. It must be clear that, with the exception of the first verse, all verses in this chapter begin with this little word, and therefore follow each other in a normal chronological way. I cannot think of any reason why Genesis 1 : 2 should be the only exception to this rule in all the Scriptures. The conclusion is that this verse cannot possibly be a description of the original situation of heaven and earth as God created them. God did not create the world without form and void, but it became this way later on.

The word 'HA-ERETS' simply means 'the earth'. Although verse 1 speaks of both the heavens and the earth, verse 2 still exclusively speaks about the earth. But what happened to the earth after God had created it in verse 1? Our translation says that the earth was "without form and void." The word 'HAYTAH', here translated with 'was', is a conjugation of the word for 'to be'. But precisely for that reason it can be used in the meaning of 'to become' or 'to be made'. In this chapter alone it has this meaning about twenty times. And sometimes it is indeed translated that way. Besides, in our western languages the verbs 'to be' and 'to become' are also often synonymous. Also here the correct translation should become clear from the context. Merely the use of the word 'VE' at the beginning of this verse proves that the circumstances of Genesis 1 : 2 cannot be the circumstances immediately after the creation itself, but became that way later on. The context shows therefore, that 'HAYTAH' should be translated with 'became'. Because of the contrast between verses 1 and 2 we should not translate 'VE' with 'and', but with 'but', so that the first part of this verse should be: "But the earth became [...]."

Those who are somewhat educated in the Hebrew language, often object to translating 'haytah' with 'became' instead of 'was'. This objection however, has no valid linguistic ground. First, knowledge of the Hebrew language has its origin and basis in the Hebrew Old Testament. In other words, our knowledge of Hebrew is derived from the Bible. Therefore, it is wrong if we make our knowledge of the Bible dependent on our knowledge of the Hebrew language. For then the situation is turned around. Thus, when the context shows that 'haytah' should be translated with 'became', we may be forced to adjust our knowledge of Hebrew grammar. A Dutch authority in the field of Hebrew language, who I made aware of the objections that are brought up against a translation with 'became' in this verse, was quick in his answer. He said that the (linguistical) protest against this translation finds its source in an 'outdated grammar'. This outdated grammar is based on the idea that in the Bible 'haytah' is translated six out of ten times with 'was' or another conjugation of 'to be'; that being the majority of all the occurrences it must therefore be the right translation. This 'outdated' grammar rule however, does not tell us what we should do with the four out of ten other occurrences. These other occurrences, however, teach us that the translation with 'became' or another conjugation of 'to become', really is justified and does occur in the Scriptures. Besides, I have my doubts about the accuracy of the counting.

When we simply read further from Genesis 1 : 2, we find 'haytah' again in Genesis 3 : 20, where we read: "Eve [...] was the mother of all living." Here 'haytah' is translated with 'was'. But clearly that is wrong. At the time of which this verse speaks, Eve was still childless and thus not a mother of all living. A child can see that here 'haytah' should have been translated with 'became' or 'would become'. After that we find 'haytah' in Genesis 9 : 13 and 16, where it is stated that the rainbow 'shall be' a sign. A translation with 'shall become' is very possible and even emphasizes the fact that we are dealing here with a promise for the future. Subsequently, the same goes for Genesis 17 : 13: "My covenant shall be in your flesh." 'Haytah' can just as easily be translated here with 'shall become' instead of 'shall be'. After that we find the expression in Genesis 17 : 16, where it is translated with 'shall be'. Sarah shall be a mother of nations. Then we arrive at Genesis 29 : 17 where we read: "Rachel was beautiful [...]." Here it could just as easily be translated with 'had become'. In Genesis 38 : 21 and 22 it is translated with 'was' because it is better English, but also here it could have been translated with 'became'. The

last time we find the word in Genesis, is in chapter 47 : 26, and there it is indeed translated with 'became': "[...] except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's". [AKJV]

This summary could of course be continued in the remaining books of the Bible. But what matters is that 'haytah' can be construed as a conjugation of the verb 'to become' in all occurrences here in Genesis. A translation with 'was' would therefore be considered an exception to the rule. So, we see that there are no grammatical objections at all to a translation with 'became', simply because such a translation is very common in Scripture. Apart from all this, it goes without saying that the translation with 'was' does not really change the meaning. For the context shows that the earth was not created formless and void, and so must have become this way later. Hence the translation of 'haytah' is rather insignificant. The customary battle is therefore not linguistical, but theological. For linguistically there is no problem at all.

The phrase 'TOHU VA-BOHU' is translated as 'without form and void'. However, this is not the exact meaning of the Hebrew words, but an illustration of the 'Chaos myth'. Linguists give 'ruin', 'destruction' or 'depopulation' as accurate meaning of the noun 'TOHU', that was translated as 'without form'. The second word means 'emptiness' or 'that which is empty'. Only in two other Scriptures are these words used together and in both cases the phrase is used to describe the destruction that was caused by the outpouring of God's wrath. After a terrible description of the fall of Edom on the 'day of indignation', in Isaiah we find the expression:

“And He shall stretch out over it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.” (Isaiah 34 : 11)

Here the Hebrew words for 'confusion' and 'emptiness' are the same as those which are used in Genesis 1 : 2. It means that, just as the architect accurately uses measuring instruments to construct the building, God will construct the ruin. The meaning of the words is very obvious in this verse. 'Confusion' and 'emptiness' are the result of a judgment of God. Additionally, it is not a formless chaos, but an accurately built ruin. The second Scripture is even clearer. In the description of

the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem the prophet Jeremiah compares this with the destructed world of Genesis 1 : 2, when he cries out:

“I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the Lord, by His fierce anger.” (Jeremiah 4 : 23-26)

Here we see that the word 'TOHU' means 'that which is destructed and depopulated', and 'BOHU' 'that which is empty', also referring to the disappearance of all life ("I beheld, and indeed there was no man.") And here, too, the formlessness and emptiness is caused by "the presence of the LORD, by His fierce anger." It was a judgment of God on a sinful city and a sinful land. Should any more evidence be necessary to prove that our verse is not a description of a chaotic mass which was initially created by God only to be formed later on, we find that directly and positively in Isaiah 45 : 18.

“For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the Lord, and there is no other.’” (Isaiah 45 : 18)

It says that God did not create the earth as 'a TOHU' (translated with 'in vain'). That word can therefore never be used to describe the original situation of the earth, despite the correct meaning of the term. Incidentally, this verse also refers in connection with the 'TOHU' to the disappearance of all life.

The following words of Genesis 1 : 2 are, according to the translation: "[...] and darkness was [...]." In Hebrew, it only says: 'VE-CHO-SHEK', which can be translated as: "[...] and darkness [...]." The word 'was' is simply not found here at all in the original Hebrew text and I see absolutely no need to insert it in the translation. Clearly three different nouns are used here successively, to describe the situation

in which the earth had ended up: "But the earth became without form and void and darkness [...]." Then the words 'AL-PENEI TEHOM' follow. 'AL' is translated with 'on the' and 'TEHOM' with 'deep'. The word 'PENEI' is translated with 'face', which is the usual translation in the Bible. The actual meaning is, in fact, much broader: It does not only refer to the outside of the human head, but to all outward and recognizable things. It is therefore synonymous with 'appearance'. The prefix 'AL' means 'on' or 'because of'. Also in our language 'on' and 'because of' are each other's equivalents. For if we translate with: "But the earth became desolation and emptiness and darkness on the appearance of the deep," it becomes clear that there is a causal connection between the appearance or effect of the deep and the resulting situation on earth. This causal connection is usually expressed in English as 'because of' or 'on account of'. Here 'AL' should therefore be translated with 'because of'. In the Scriptures 'the deep' indicates the realm of the dead (hell or hades) in general, but specifically the residence of fallen angels and evil spirits ruled by satan. See for example Luke 8 : 31; Revelations 9 : 11; 17 : 8 and 20 : 1-3. Therefore, the correct translation of the first part of Genesis 1 : 2, in my opinion, is as follows:

“But the earth became desolation and emptiness and darkness because of the appearance of the deep.”

Although this translation comes fully for my accountability, this perception of creation as such, is quite common within dispensationalism. Indeed, it is the result of the literal interpretation of not only this one verse, but of many other Scriptures, some of which we will consider later. In scientific circles, this view is known as 'the doctrine of restitution', about which the well-known Bible teacher Erich Sauer wrote:

“According to this view Satan’s downfall took place between Genesis 1 : 1 and Genesis 1 : 2. The world that had originally been made perfect by God became a desolation and emptiness through the destructive force of the wicked one and the following Divine judgement. The works of the six days were therefore not the true creation of the world itself, but a work of restoration, of restitution.” (From: The King of the Earth)

For this reason, we prefer to talk about 'days of recreation'. In addition, during the six days, the word 'create' ('bara') is only used in connection with the creation of the animals and man on the fifth and sixth day. Incidentally, this 'doctrine of restitution' is by no means a modern or recent doctrine. Famous church fathers like Justin Martyr, Basil and Origen have defended this doctrine in black and white. In addition, we find people like Augustine and, for example, King Edgar of England, who embedded it in his royal laws as early as approximately 1000 AD. And what to think about a Biblical poem from the seventh century, in which the English poet Caedmon declared his belief in this truth? It is remarkable, however, that although in our days there is again a renewed interest in Biblical creationism, for some reason the doctrine of restitution is suppressed from publicity, while it sure is well known. But throughout the ages that is what always happened with Biblical truths. Fortunately, this truth is not dependent on the authority of any human being, but on the authority of the Word of God itself. Which should be enough for us.

3. The generations of the heavens and the earth

Perhaps you have to get used to the thought, but in the entire book of Genesis there is only one verse that speaks about the creation of heaven and earth. That is the very first verse. What is mentioned thereafter no longer deals with the creation of heaven and earth, but with the preparation of the earth, after the destruction of verse 2. Absolutely nowhere in the Scriptures can we find even the slightest ground for the conception that God created heaven and earth in the famous six days. On the contrary, this work of creation preceded the six days. We can only guess as to how much time elapsed between the 'prehistoric creation' of verse 1 and the destructive judgment of verse 2. However, that it must have been a considerable period of time, is definitely confirmed by the Scriptures. For, when speaking of the scoffers of the last days, the apostle Peter says:

“For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3 : 5-7)

The phrase "flooded with water" does not necessarily refer to the flood in the days of Noah, but to another 'big flood'. That indeed another flood is meant here, simply appears from the verse itself. First of all, it must be noted that Peter does not say that the earth (in his days) was about 4000 years old. On the contrary, the normal meaning of verse 5 is that, according to Peter, the earth is much older than the scoffers claim. And just like in our days, the scoffers of those days ascribed a date to creation that lies thousands of years further back than Adam's days. (For example, consider the historical length of the lists of the Egyptian kings, of which the influence can even be perceived in the Septuagint). However, according to Peter, Scripture teaches that the world is even older than the scoffers of his days held possible. Yet they did not want to know. They were 'willfully' ignorant of this. And so far, there has been no change to date.

Secondly, we must note that in verse 6 Peter claims that a 'great flood' destroyed the world of that time. He does not talk about mankind or the earth, but about the world. After that, in verse 7, he states what he means by 'the world': the heavens and the earth. Peter thus says that a great flood once destroyed the heavens and the earth. One must read very superficially to consider this to be the flood of Noah. No matter how we think about Noah's flood, in any case it is true that neither mankind, nor the earth, nor the heavens, were destroyed then. For nowhere does the Bible teach us that today we are dealing with a humanity other than Adam's. And nowhere do we find anything about new heavens or a new earth, that would have been created after the flood of Noah. The world as we know it, is still the same as Adam's. Of course, since the well-known flood of Noah, something has changed, but we cannot say that the world as such is destroyed or renewed.

Thirdly, we must note that Peter says in verse 7 that the world, as it exists since this flood he mentioned, will perish by fire in 'the Day of Judgment'. That this refers to "the Last Day", in which "the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat," is apparent from the subsequent verses. This is really about the ultimate destruction and disappearance of the present world. And indeed, after that, Peter expects "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3 : 10-13) Here the apostle makes a comparison between the judgment of the Last Day and a judgment that must have taken place in the past. He says that the scoffers of his days do not believe in the earlier judgment of the great

flood and therefore not in the future judgment by fire. So, he truly has in mind the total destruction of the world. And that just did not happen in Noah's days. And then we are not even considering that the notion of an earlier judgment of the earth by water used to be common knowledge, particularly in the Greek world of those days. Mythology is full of it. Also, Noah and his ark are known in the legends of almost all peoples of the earth. But even Peter's scoffers knew perfectly well, that such a flood of the whole earth was not the same as the destruction of the world. In addition, Noah and his team of eight certainly did not get to live on a new earth. It was the same world as before the flood. Many people perished, but not humanity as such, let alone the earth and heavens. The only remaining question is which flood Peter did refer to. The flood that caused a long existing world to perish. The answer is now obvious. It is the flood of Genesis 1 : 2. The portrayal of the world in that verse corresponds exactly to Peter's words.

It was a desolate, empty and dark world, of which the earth was under water. The aforementioned 'deep' is identical to the waters, the seas; furthermore, the waters are mentioned emphatically. We thus see that the original creation was destroyed by means of water. And when thereupon the work of restoration - restitution - begins, we are confronted with an earth "standing out of water and in the water." And that is exactly what the apostle literally says. Usually, the history of the six days causes a lot of complicated problems. But is there any real problem left, after this discussion of the first two verses? The usual question about the origin of the light of the first day, has now become quite naive. For it is stated that on the first day light could not have been created, as the light comes from the sun, and the sun was not created until the fourth day. However, this question that is rather conspicuous at first sight, can easily be answered with two counter-questions: Where does it say that God created light on the first day; and where does it say that God created the sun on the fourth day? Where does it say this, in the Bible? Nowhere. It cannot say this, because it is not true. The light was of course created as a part of the original creation in verse 1. What happened on the first day was that on God's command the light appeared again, after it had disappeared during the judgment of verse 2. At least that is what it says. There is absolutely no mention of creation at all. God simply says: Let there be light, and there was light. Where did it come from? Just from the sun. For that the sun would not have been created until the fourth day, is not found in the Scriptures either. The work of the fourth day has a certain resemblance to that of the first. On the

first day, atmospheric conditions were altered in such a way, that the light of the sun, which could not penetrate to the earth until that moment, became visible on the earth again. The sun was not seen until the fourth day. Then the clouds disappeared, so that not only the light, but also the sun itself became visible on earth again. Most days of the year illustrate the obviousness of this process. In our English climate, there is light every day, but the sun often takes more than three days to appear.

So, on the first day nothing was created. For that is not what it says. Besides, the Hebrew word for 'to create' ('bara') is not used at all. On the second day, we see something similar. God made a firmament to "divide the waters from the waters." However, the coming about of the firmament is not indicated as a creative act. Again, the word 'to create' is not used here, but the word 'to make' (Hebrew: 'asah'), which has the meaning of 'to prepare'. On the third day, dry land appears from the water. This dry land was not created, but emerged from the waters. For 'to create' is making something out of nothing; and this land came from something, namely the waters. "And the earth brought forth," is subsequently said of this day. Not "and God created," but "and the earth brought forth." For all the "grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself" were not brought forth from nothing, but from the earth. So the seed, from which all this plant life came, was still in the earth. This seed was a remnant of the prehistoric creation. And therefore it was not created again.

On the fourth day God made the sun, moon and stars. But also here not the word 'bara' is used, but 'asah'. For these celestial bodies, as part of the heaven from the first verse, were already created 'of old'. Here they were thus 'prepared', made ready. They had to be made visible to be "for signs and seasons, and for days and years." On the fifth day it becomes a bit more complicated. The initial announcement reads: "Let the waters bring forth [...]," [AKJV] but what happened is twofold:

“And God created great whales and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly [...].” (Genesis 1 : 21, AKJV)

As on the third day the earth brought forth, the sea brought forth on the fifth day. That was what God said had to happen. And so it happened: The waters brought forth. But of what the waters brought forth, in this same verse it is said

that it was created by God: "And God created [...] which the waters brought forth abundantly." [AKJV] As so often, we should not wonder now which of the two statements is correct, but why they are both correct. But before we answer this question we will first go on to the sixth day.

On the sixth day, the purpose of God is: "Let Us make man." The word 'to create' is not yet used here, but again the same 'to make' ('asah') in the sense of 'to prepare'. It is not making something out of nothing, but making something out of something. In the next chapter it says what man was made of:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground [...]" (Genesis 2 : 7)

Again, the word 'to create' is not used, but 'to shape' (Hebrew: 'yatsar'), that is 'to mould into a form'. The point is, that of man it is said that he is made of the dust of the earth. Thus, from existing matter. And that is precisely the scope of the work of the fifth day. The waters brought forth. The fish were thus made from already existing matter. Something was made out of something. And to the extent that animals and men were made from existing matter, there is no 'creation', but shaping or forming. Now, however, the question remains how it is possible that there is mention of 'creation' on the fifth day and also on the sixth day, because it says:

"So God created man in His own image [...]" (Genesis 1 : 27)

The answer is twofold. Firstly, it must be said that 'creation' relates to an original creation. The use of this word in connection with the work of the fifth and sixth day thus implies that it involved an original creation. The creatures of these days, the animals and man, were thus original and therefore no continuation of something that had previously existed. For the expression "without form and void" in verse 2 indicates the disappearance of all life. Thus, the life of the animals and man could not have been the continuation of an already existing life and is therefore the result of a direct act of creation. But for their bodies the substance of the old earth was indeed used as raw material. Secondly, it must be noted that the creatures of the fifth and sixth day have a special kind of life that distinguishes

them from the work of the first four days. After all, both animals and man are said to be 'souls'. Unfortunately, we cannot discuss here in detail what a soul exactly is. But we must mention here the most important aspect of a soul. This can be found in the words:

“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 soul.”
(Genesis 2 : 7, AKJV)

Clearly, this verse gives the complete picture of the generation of man. And this generation has two different aspects. The first phase of this process was the formation of a body from the ground. This was making something out of something, and therefore still no creation. But man was not yet complete. For the next phase was the breathing of 'the spirit of life' (for it should be translated this way) into the previously formed body. The result of this second phase was not the arising of a body, but the transformation of that body to soul. The conclusion is obvious: A soul is a body formed from the earth, into which 'the spirit of life' is breathed. What that 'spirit of life' exactly is, does not really matter here. The point is that 'spirit' and 'life' are synonymous in the Scriptures, and that a living soul is only created, because God brings spirit (namely life) from the outside into a dead body. Life as such does not come from the visible, material world, but from the invisible. From the mouth of God Himself. Exactly as we find it elsewhere in Scripture repeatedly. We therefore see that the works of the fifth and sixth day were 'formations', which were brought forth from the waters and from the dust of the earth. But in addition, they were original creations, because the lives of these souls did not originate from already existing earthly life, but from the mouth of God Himself. For in this manner "man became a living soul." In summary, we can now state that all works of the six days were brought forth from the old, physical world 'of old'. The only consideration we must make, is that the work of the fifth and sixth day, namely the generation of animals and man, was at the same time an original creation. Only on these two days there is 'creating' ('bara') besides 'forming' ('asah'). And it concerns the coming of new life from God into an otherwise lifeless, old, earthly matter. That the work of the six days has nothing to do with the original creation of the world as such, does therefore not only show from the preceding first two verses of Genesis, but also from the description of those days

itself. This whole week was a week of activity of God in a judged and destructed world. It was a work of restoration. It was the restitution of a fallen world. It was the birth of the world, as we know it. And that is what it says:

“These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created [...]” (Genesis 2 : 4, AKJV)

Also this controversial verse confirms all the foregoing. The word 'generations' (Hebrew: 'toledoth') is sometimes also translated with 'history', 'genesis' or even 'genealogical register'. For the true meaning is difficult to express in English. It is something like 'generation history'. It indicates the arising of something, but also a certain period of time. It points to a development process, as a genealogical register is a 'development process'. And therefore, it can be conceived as a birth, for a 'birth' in Biblical sense also includes the entire pregnancy period. It is therefore the total generation process. The fact that there is such a generation process in the six days is clear. But why the addition "when they were created"? For that creation did not happen during the six days? Again, the answer is not difficult. The expression "when they were created" is the translation of 'behibaram'. Literally, it means as much as 'in connection with their creation'. It merely expresses that there is a connection between the work of the six days and the creation "in the beginning". The present verse looks back, as it were, after seven days, and says: This is the generation history of heaven and earth, and hereby points towards the past week. And then it says: "in connection with their creation", looking even further back. For it refers to the very first verse of Genesis. That is the literal meaning of this verse. It is there to conclude the seven days and, in a retrospective view, first describes the work of the past week and then the previous work of "the beginning". For the connection between the work of the six days and the work of creation is that the work of the six days was only possible, because earlier, much earlier, a heaven and earth were already created.

In short: First there was the original creation of Genesis 1 : 1. Then follow the seven days of restoration, because the Creator is concerned with the meanwhile fallen creation. The work of this week is called: "the generations of the heavens and the earth," for a generation comes from something that was previously already there.

4. Leaven

There is no doubt that Scripture teaches that the regeneration of man is necessary because of the imperfectness of natural birth. Because of the natural birth and descent from the sinner Adam, man is already a sinner from the mother's womb, regardless of whether he himself has already consciously sinned. We have seen that man does not become a sinner by sinning, but that he sins because he is a sinner. He cannot help himself. He was born as a sinner. And therefore, he must be born again. Moreover, when the Scripture teaches that the whole creation, namely heaven and earth, will be regenerated, it must be clear that there was something wrong with the birth of this world. First of all, the original creation of heaven and earth was perfect. God simply does not create imperfect things. We have already seen that this is no contradiction. Indeed, the original creation is mentioned in Genesis 1 : 1 and we have no reason to doubt the perfection of that creation. Or we should doubt the perfection of God. But creation and birth are not the same. We find the creation of the world in the first verse of the Bible; we then find the birth in the work of the six days. The difference between the two is not that difficult. Creation is usually defined as 'making something out of nothing'. A better definition, however, is 'making visible things from invisible things'. The original creation found her origin in the invisible things:

“[...] so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” (Hebrews 11 : 3)

But birth is a different matter. For with birth, visible things are produced from visible things. And that is what happened during the six days. The waters and the earth brought forth. So, not creation, but birth. Another feature of birth is that that which is born actually comes from two things. After all, a birth knows both a male and a female origin. Taking the Biblical view, it must be clear that the life that is born, initially comes from the man. This life that originates from the man is placed into the woman, who develops it further. The second and final phase is the appearance of the new life from the woman. But although in what we call a 'birth', only the woman has an active and 'visible' role; that which is born indeed originates from the 'invisible' man. This whole process of reproduction falls under the Scriptural meaning of the word 'birth'. The point is now, that a birth has a

male as well as a female origin, or, if you will, an 'invisible' and a 'visible' origin. This dual origin is of course not reflected in the creation of the first verse of the Bible, because that was not a birth. But we do find it in the work of the six days. The male origin of the works of these days is of course God Himself. The speaking of God was the reason for the appearance of the light, the expanse, the dry land, the plant world, the celestial bodies, the animals and man. But there is also a female, visible origin. For all these works indeed came forth from the empty and dark 'mother earth'. Here we find the so often repeated Biblical type of the barren woman, who, through a miracle of God, nevertheless brings forth. Maybe we have become used to the idea that this type of the barren woman relates to the natural, sinful man, who, by a miracle of God, nevertheless bears fruit with eternal value. In that case, it is only a small step from the natural man to the whole old nature, the entire old creation. For indeed, this desolate, empty and dark world bore fruit again by a miracle of God. That is the work of the six days. It was the birth of the heavens and the earth, as we now know them. It is our present world with its dual origin.

Now, we must realize that at this point there is no regeneration yet, but generation (or birth). For the creation of the first verse was not a birth. Therefore, the work of the six days was not the second birth, but the first. And something was wrong with this first birth, so that regeneration was necessary. I think it is evident what was wrong with this first birth. Of course, we have no problem with the 'male' origin. But we do with the female one. For in this case the woman is the world of Genesis 1 : 2. The earth, that had become "without form, and void; and darkness because of the appearing of the deep." It was a world fallen into sin, that was destructed and emptied and furthermore still in the power of satan. For as far as that is concerned, nowhere we read that something was changed. And just like the position of man is determined by his origin from a fallen Adam, the position of this present world was determined by its origin from a fallen creation. As man is hereditarily tainted by his birth, the present world is hereditarily tainted by its birth. And that is what the Scripture teaches explicitly. This Biblical way of thinking is easiest to follow based on the person Adam. Adam, as a fruit of the work of the sixth day, as well as the works of all the other days, originated from this fallen world. What applied to Adam, of course, also applies to the work of all previous days. About Adam we read that he gets the following three assignments:

1. To subdue the earth and to have dominion over it (Genesis 1 : 28)
2. To tend the Garden of Eden and to keep it (Genesis 2 : 15)
3. Not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on penalty of death. (Genesis 2 : 17)

It is of utmost importance to distinguish against what background our natural ancestor was placed here. As mentioned, the decor is not a complete creation, on which Adam was placed as an ornament, as a supreme decoration. To the extent that he was or wore 'the crown of creation', that crown was not a decorative ornament, but a heavy burden. Adam was God's bridgehead on an earth hostile towards God. He was placed by God in an old creation, which had been refurbished by Him, but is still in the power of satan until today. This is the logical consequence of the doctrine of restitution: The idea that the fall of satan and his empire, including the earth, took place in Genesis 1 : 2, and that the seven days were in fact days of restoration.

Only against this background can Adam's triple assignment be explained. When God tells him that he must first subdue the earth and then have dominion over it, this implies, as one only subdues enemies, that the earth was essentially hostile towards God and the latest work of His hands. When so far we simply believe the Bible as the Word of God, it should not surprise us when a little further we read that there is a tree on this God-hostile earth that does not meet God's requirements. For the tree was brought forth by the earth. At least that is what Genesis 1 : 12 says. The complex questions and even more complex theories about the origin of this tree (God or satan), about the so-called test-commandment and God's right to expose man to such a temptation, are mainly the result of not reading well or not believing what God reveals to us. Adam had the task of subduing a hostile world and to have dominion over it in the name of God. He was commanded to wage war. The way in which that battle was to be fought is described in more detail:

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” (Genesis 2 : 15)

God did not place Adam just anywhere, but He placed him in a garden which He Himself, according to the eighth verse, had planted, with the instruction to tend

that garden. Adam had to expand the garden, make it bigger. This corresponds strikingly with the before-mentioned assignment to subdue the earth. He had to make a garden of the earth. Evidently this means that the earth was not a garden, but had yet to become one. In addition, this extended garden was to be kept by Adam. Firstly, this means that the beauty of the garden was to be maintained at the original and thus Divine level. Secondly, since a special person had to be appointed for care and for keeping, this means that the garden had a natural tendency to grow rank. Thirdly, the task of keeping indicates the presence of a mighty enemy. In short: It was not as beautiful and peaceful and sunny as it is presented sometimes. For, above all, we should realize that this threefold assignment was already given to Adam before his fall. The situation depicted here is the situation before the fall of man. But Adam failed. He, too, was deceived by satan, "the god of this age." (2 Corinthians 4 : 4) He became a sinner, unable to do anything good (Romans 3 : 10-18), thereby dragging all his descendants along in his fall. The man Adam, and in him humanity, sinned and thus missed his original purpose, namely to subdue the hostile earth in the name of God. The most obvious question is now: Why did Adam fail? Of course, this question should be answered from Scripture itself and beyond the numerous human philosophies. The question why Adam failed was essentially answered by the apostle Paul when he says:

“The first man was of the earth, made of dust [...].” (1 Corinthians 15 : 47)

Of course this is a reference to Genesis:

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground [...].” (Genesis 2 : 7)

A Jewish tradition indicates that the Hebrew word, translated in this last verse with 'earth' or 'ground', is spelled as A-D-M-H, while Adam is spelled as A-D-M. The word for 'ground', by the addition of the letter 'H', is actually the feminine form of the word 'Adam', that is often translated with 'man'. ADaM was thus created from ADaMaH. The old earth, fallen under the dominion of satan, supplied the matter from which Adam was formed, and thus fulfilled its role as 'mother earth'. The first man (Adam) was of the earth (adamah), made of dust. And because he was 'born' or 'formed' of dust, the substance which is under the

dominion of satan, the serpent, he returned under the dominion of satan. For that is what it says explicitly:

“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.” (Genesis 3 : 19)

Now the Bible undeniably states that death is the result of sin. Yet in two statements this verse teaches that the death of man is the result of his origin:

1. He returns to the ground, for he was taken out of it.
2. He returns to dust, for he is dust.

It is remarkable that this verse does not speak at all of sin as a cause of death. And again, we should not wonder which of the two views is right, but why they are both right. Why man died because of his origin as well as his sin. For both are purely Biblical. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that if sin truly is the cause of death, sin in man originates in his earthly and material descent. In other words, when the Bible gives both the earthly descent and sin as a cause of death, sin must be caused by the earthly descent. Or even simpler: The material origin caused sin and sin caused death. For as all men are sinners because they were born or formed from their sinful parents, Adam became a sinner because he was born or formed from the dust of the earth.

This truth alone could be argued as indisputable proof of the doctrine of restitution. For here the proof is provided that the earth had already fallen into the power of sin before the fall of Adam. The only earlier occasion for such a fall of creation is found in Genesis 1 : 2. An illustration of this truth is found in the well-known Biblical image of leaven. Leaven is a type of sin and false doctrine and therefore the old nature in general.

“[...] Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.” (1 Corinthians 5 : 6-8)

Here leaven is clearly a type of the old man, the old sinful nature. However, this does not only concern human nature, but essentially the entire old nature as such. Here a universal truth is revealed. For what is leaven? This leaven, that leavens the whole lump, is nothing but a small piece of lump from the previous day. The new lump becomes 'sour' and starts to ferment, because a small piece of lump from the previous day is mixed into it. Thus it is with the present world the Scripture speaks about. And so it is with man. Every human being is a sinner, because he has something of the previous day, the previous generation. Besides, is it not significant that all decay in the world is caused by acids and more specifically by the action of oxygen, while natural man is unable to live without oxygen?

This world is a sour - sinful - world, because it contains something from the fallen world of Genesis 1 : 2. Adam became a sinner because he was formed from the dust of a fallen creation. But the same goes for the work of the other days. The whole world, as we know it today, was born of the same 'mother earth' from which Adam was formed. Therefore, by its birth, this world is under the dominion of satan and sin, just like Adam once. And the only remedy the Scripture knows, is regeneration by the reconciling work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. The seed of regeneration

In the meantime, we have seen how the Scripture places particular emphasis on the female origin of the present world. The world, as we know and study it, was born of a fallen creation and thus lies under the curse. However, it is the Creator Himself who provides for the salvation of not only humanity, but of all creation. 'The Lamb of God' is said to take away "the sins of the world." Not only man, but the whole creation is redeemed from sin by Him. For:

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.” (2 Corinthians 5 : 19)

The Scripture puts much emphasis on the 'female' origin of the birth of the world, but as much emphasis is placed on the 'male' origin of the regeneration of the world. Again, I would like to point out that the Greek 'gennao', which is translated with 'birth', indicates the overall reproductive process. It indicates, unlike in

English, not only the female, but also the male share. In particular in connection with regeneration, the Word of God emphasises this 'male' origin. We see that for example in the words of James:

“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” (James 1 : 18)

It must be clear here that James means the 'male' part of the propagation. Not the delivery, but the begetting is discussed here. To the extent that new life is DELIVERED, it is delivered by the 'female' old nature. But the new life itself was BEGOTTEN by the 'male' seed. In Scripture, both notions are rendered by the same word. The words of the apostle Peter also confirm this truth:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” (1 Peter 1 : 3, 4)

Here, too, God Himself is referred to as the male begetter of that which is regenerated. It points to God Himself as the Creator of new life and thus emphasizes the immortality, the impeccability and incorruptibility of the new creation. The same is true in the only other text in which Peter mentions 'regeneration':

“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever [...]. But the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.” (1 Peter 1 : 23-25)

That there is a 'male' origin here, and therefore a 'begetting again', is evident because of the mentioning of the seed. The seed from which the new creation originates. And now we get to familiar area. Already in connection with personal regeneration we have seen how the new nature is brought forth by a spiritual (thus essentially invisible) seed. Peter leaves no doubt as to who or what that seed is. In the cited Scripture, he calls this seed 'the living and abiding Word of

God'. This Word of God is, of course, among other things, the Bible itself. It is also the Gospel, the good tidings of redemption through the reconciling work of Christ. Anyone who accepts this message in faith, is regenerated into a new creation in Christ. We have discussed this before. At this point, however, I am not primarily concerned with personal regeneration, but with the regeneration of the world as a whole. In this regard, one can of course not say that the world is regenerated by faith in the Gospel of Christ. How would an animal, a stone or the sea believe in a preached message? However, the Bible does not put it that way. What the Scripture teaches is that the living and abiding Word of God is 'the seed of regeneration'. The Word of God is not just the Gospel; it is not just the Bible. One cannot say of the Gospel that it will abide forever. For that would mean that there were also sinners forever, needing redemption. No, this eternally abiding Word of God is none other than Christ Himself, about whom, for example, John writes:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life [...]. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [...].” (John 1 : 1-4, 14)

This Word of God is a person. The preaching of the Word of God is therefore also the preaching of a person. It is Christ Himself. He is the one, through whom all things were made. He was "in the beginning" the Creator of heaven and earth. But He is also the Saviour of the world. He is not only the founder of the original creation, but also of the new creation. Through Him, as the Word of God, the old creation came about. That is what the apostle John explicitly states: "In the beginning was the Word." This relates to the original creation in Genesis 1 : 1. By Him, as the Word of God, the present world was generated from the fallen prehistoric creation during the seven days. Already here we see the begetting power of the Word of God. For the Word is not only 'the seed of regeneration', but also 'the seed of generation'. The work in this week indeed came about by the speaking of God. By Him, then, the new creation will also come about. For according to Peter, the 'seed of regeneration' is 'the living and abiding Word of God', and according to John, the Word of God is Christ Himself. These three major phases in the history

of the world are discussed in the correct order by the apostle Paul. These phases are successively:

1. The creation "in the beginning" by the Word;
2. The generation (birth) during the seven days by the Word;
3. The regeneration in the future by the Word.

The apostle addresses the creation according to Genesis 1 : 1 as follows:

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things [...].” (Colossians 1 : 16, 17)

The creation was brought forth by the Word, the speaking of God. Therefore, Christ is said to be the Creator of heaven and earth. For without the Word no thing was made that was made. All things are created by Him. But not just that. All things are also created 'for Him', for His sake. So the creation is there for the Creator. It is in honour of the Creator. It is there to serve Him. The fall of creation under satan's dominion was therefore primarily a loss for the Creator Himself. That is why He Himself was the one who has "come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19 : 10, Matthew 18 : 10) And "that which was lost" was not only humanity, but the whole world. The birth during the seven days is mentioned in the immediately following verse:

“[...] and in Him all things consist.” (Colossians 1 : 17)

Here the apostle has the existence in mind and not the origin. He does not speak of what happened long ago "in the beginning." On the contrary, it is about the present situation of the world. The present world also exists by the work of Christ. This verse is no repetition of the foregoing, but it mentions an independent truth. The truth that the world, as it now exists, is 'begotten' by Christ. It does not refer to the creation, like the preceding passage, but to the begetting (the birth) of the present world out of the "desolation and emptiness and darkness" of the second verse of Genesis.

The regeneration of the world is discussed immediately hereafter, when the apostle writes:

“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead [...]” (Colossians 1 : 18)

Indeed, here Paul is not yet talking about the future regeneration of the whole world. He does that in the next verse. But he is talking about that aspect of regeneration that has already been achieved. For someone who is in Christ is already a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5 : 17) These already born-again believers together form the Body of Christ, to which this verse refers. Therefore it speaks about regeneration. This also appears from the mentioning of Christ's resurrection. As we have seen before, the resurrection of Christ is the prerequisite for the regeneration of the whole creation. All things are "begotten again [...]" through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1 : 13) As stated, resurrection and regeneration are in fact identical. Therefore, in this verse, Paul uses the words 'to be begotten again' instead of 'resurrection'. Christ is the "firstborn from the dead." He is thus the firstfruit and Creator of the new creation, that is brought about by regeneration. The conclusion that Paul draws is very clear. The above verse concludes with:

“[...] that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1 : 18)

Most Bible translations here give "all things" or "everything" instead of "all." And rightly so. The apostle does not think of people here, but of things. He thinks of the three things he has listed in the previous verses. In each of these three things, Christ is the first. As "the Word" he is the first in connection with the original creation. (vs. 16) As "the Word" He was the first in connection with the birth during the week of 'restitution'. (vs. 17) As "the Word" He was the first in connection with regeneration. (vs. 18) He, the Creator of heaven and earth - Christ Jesus - is 'the seed of regeneration', the founder of the new creation through His suffering and death, but, above all, through His resurrection from the dead. Hence the contents of the next verse in the same epistle:

“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” (Colossians 1 : 20, AKJV)

Here the apostle does not only speak about the salvation of sinners. It is about "all things". About the heavens and the earth. This total creation is said to be reconciled "through the blood of His cross". The original as well as the present world were intended "for Him". They were in honour of His name. But since satan's fall the whole creation was under the dominion of satan, and served him instead of its Creator. However, by the reconciling work of Christ, the world will be regenerated "unto Him". The creation will eventually function again to the Creator's glory. The Creator who has not only created the world, but also redeems it, through regeneration, from the clutches of 'the prince of this world'.

6. The first and the second

“He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” (Hebrews 10 : 9)

In the foregoing, we spent some time on the resemblance between the birth and the regeneration of the world. In both cases Christ is called the firstfruit. In both cases He is the seed, the begetter. However, this should not prevent us from seeing the basic distinction between this birth and regeneration. For this difference is that regeneration can only follow after death. In summary, we could say that birth brings about a life before death, while regeneration produces a life after death. Between birth and regeneration is death. Elementary for regeneration is that it is a resurrection. A life that is born has death ahead of it; a life that is born again, has left death behind. Speaking about personal regeneration, Paul says:

“Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6 : 9-11)

The amazing perspective of a regenerated life is that death is no longer ahead. Death was once. Death came over the old life that was born. But by the resurrection of and with Christ, the believer has received new, imperishable, immortal, immaculate, unfading, eternal life. For this life is the life of Christ Himself, who endured and overcame death already a long time ago. It is the life that every believer has received by grace. Of course, this principle also applies in relation to the birth and regeneration of the world as such. The big difference between the two is that the world was born from the 'female', old, sinful world during the six days. Indeed, the 'male' share in this 'birth' was introduced by the living Word of God, by Christ Himself. But He was exactly the same as the Creator "in the beginning." He had not changed. He still had the same life as "in the beginning with God". And the world was also the same as in the beginning. It changed, in the sense of 'being modified'. But it was not replaced or renewed. The Creator was still the same Creator and the world was still the same world. And therefore, the work of the six days was not regeneration. For before regeneration can take place, death must occur. And death did occur. For regeneration is the result of the resurrection of Christ. Since His resurrection, regeneration became possible for creation. The 'seed of regeneration' is a seed that died first. And with that, we are back to where the Lord Himself speaks of the grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die to bear fruit. He Himself was that grain of wheat. He fell into the earth and died. He descended to "the lower parts of the earth" and then, by His resurrection, became the seed from which creation will be regenerated.

One could still wonder as to the purpose of the work of the six days. Indeed, we cannot deny that concerning the work of the six days, God Himself repeatedly testified it was good and even very good. It is a typical human question. From the Creator's point of view, the answer is obvious. After the fall of the original creation, God would have been able to not only change it into "desolation and emptiness and darkness," but also to destroy it completely and to replace it with a completely new one. However, such a destruction would at least have meant a victory for satan. God would have lost the battle. Creation would have been definitely taken away from the power of God. Fortunately, this did not happen. Instead, the Creator uses this fallen world as an organ to bring forth a new creation. This new creation will not, like the old, originate exclusively from God Himself, but from the old creation as well. Indeed, regeneration is also a birth. Also regeneration has a

dual origin. For the old fallen creation fulfils the role of the mother, from which the new life will be born. That is what Paul alludes to when he says that the whole creation suffers the pain of childbirth. (Romans 8 : 22-23) The purpose of the work of the six days was to prepare the old fallen world for its role as a mother. It was God's miracle whereby the barren 'woman' became fertile. Through the work of the six days, the sinful and barren earth became fertile again. The pregnancy then awaited the moment the real grain of wheat would fall into the earth and die, while the ultimate delivery awaits 'the Last Day'. What matters is, that through this procedure the original creation has an active role in the coming about of the new creation. The old creation was not destroyed because it had become useless by the rebellion of satan. No, the Creator used it to bring forth a new creation from it. As a result, and despite everything, the original creation still serves a purpose in God's great endeavour with the world. Here, too, all things must "work together for good." And that is what God also said about the work of the six days. It was very good, for it played an important role in the coming about of regeneration. The regeneration of the heavens and the earth.

What applied to the fallen world, in fact, also applies to fallen man. The question posed in connection with the old creation, can also be asked in connection with man. For with what purpose was Adam placed on this earth, if God knew he would fail? With what purpose did God give him the task to recapture the earth from the enemy, if it was already established that he could not do that? Well, indeed the Bible teaches us that Adam became a sinner. But did he fail? It just depends on how we interpret that. For even in this case, God reaches His purpose. As He achieved His purpose through the sinful creation, He achieves His purpose through the sinful Adam. Adam was instructed to subdue the earth and to reign over it. But it was not his only assignment. Indeed, there was another assignment that Adam already received at the beginning of his life and which he did carry out. The accomplishment of that one assignment has led to God's original plan with man yet to be fulfilled.

“And God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply [...]” (Genesis 1 : 28)

As soon as man has sinned against His Creator, God reminds Adam of this assignment (Genesis 3 : 15, 16). Immediately it speaks about the offspring that man

would bring forth, because it was the only remaining hope. For, according to this prophecy, the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. The battle would still have to be conducted, not by Adam, but by his Son and heir. Unfortunately, this truth is somewhat veiled in our Bible translations, because the phrase 'Ben ha Adam' is always translated with 'Son of man'. More correct is: 'Son of Adam'. This Son of Adam is of course no other than our Lord Jesus Christ. He was born because of the first assignment Adam received. He is Adam's heir, and therefore, according to Biblical standard, He also inherits the promises and assignments Adam received. Just think of the promises and assignments Abraham received, which more or less automatically passed on to his offspring. Being aware of His position, the Saviour therefore preferably calls Himself the 'Son of Adam' (translated with 'Son of man'). He was Adam's heir and thus had the task of subduing the world and reigning over it. Like Adam, He had the task of withdrawing this earth from the power of satan, the serpent. Therefore He is also the Prince of Peace, who will bring peace to the world. But not before the battle has been completely fought.

This relationship between Adam and Christ is explained in Romans 5 : 12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15 : 45, where the Lord is called 'the last Adam'. He is the last, because He will fulfil the Divine mission. That is all that is necessary. In verse 47, it is then explained why the first man failed and why the second man (the second Adam) succeeded:

“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.”

The sole purpose of Adam's creation was to demonstrate the complete wickedness of the old creation from which he was formed. The fall of Adam proved the need for regeneration, not only of man, but also of the whole old world. Adam failed because he was of the earth, made of dust. The second Adam succeeded because, although He was born from man, He already existed before creation; yes, even before the foundation of the world. He is the Eternal, the 'I am'. He was not of the earth, but from heaven. He is:

“[...] the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”
(Colossians 1 : 15)

“[...] and He is before all things.” (Colossians 1 : 17)

Therefore there was no 'heaven' in Him. That is also why He is the first and thus only heir of Adam. He had the oldest rights, because He was older than Adam. Although He is called 'the second man' or 'second Adam', as second, He still possesses the birthright, because He is older than the first man. So this is the most fundamental explanation of the principle so often applied in Scripture, that the second son obtains the birthright. When we now read Genesis 1 : 28 again, keeping this truth in mind, we must realize that the Lord Himself already lived for eternity, at the time Adam received his responsibilities. Already then it was established that not he, but the Lord Himself, who would appear in the world as the Son of Adam, would accomplish these tasks.

“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: [...] ‘Behold, I have come [...] to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” (Hebrews 10 : 5-9; Psalms 40 : 7, 8)

Not Adam, but the 'Son of Adam' (Son of Man) would subdue the earth and reign over it. As the second Adam, the Son of Adam fulfilled God's will. Not the first Adam, but the second. God took "away the first", that He might "establish the second." Not the first Old Testament sacrifices could take away the sins, but the last sacrifice, Christ Himself, could. Not the first man could fulfil God's will, but the second could. And likewise, the first creation will have to make place for a new creation. New heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. And likewise, our own old nature must die with Christ and be buried, in order to receive a new life in Him.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5 : 17)

Not the first birth, but the second. Not the first Adam, but the second. Not the old nature, but the new nature. Not the natural body, but the spiritual body. Not

the old Israel, but the new, believing Israel. Not the old covenant, but the new covenant. Not the birth, but regeneration. And I could go on and on like this. Not the old creation, but the new creation. But all these renewals only come and came about by Him, who gave His life in death, which is the division between the old and the new. He died for you and me and thereby generated a new creation. Have you already put your trust in Him? Have you become a new creation in Christ yet? Do you live consciously from that position?

7. The heavens and the earth

The world will be regenerated. But what is 'the world'? What will be regenerated? We often take 'the world' to be just the earth, and we therefore call other planets 'other worlds'. However, this is certainly not Biblical terminology. The apostle Peter already showed us that he defines the world as the heavens and the earth. This became evident from a comparison of 2 Peter 3 : 6 and 7. The world thus consists of "the heavens and the earth". This is of course precisely what was created according to Genesis 1 : 1. So, instead of speaking of 'the world', we may just as well speak of 'the creation'. 'Creation' is the world consisting of heavens and the earth. And indeed, Scripture speaks of a new creation, and thus of the coming of "new heavens and a new earth," for those expressions are completely identical. And also, the Scripture speaks of the reconciliation of the world, for that, too, is the same. But again, we ask ourselves the question: What is 'the world'? What are 'the heavens and the earth'? I do not intend to go deeper into a dissertation on the Biblical worldview here. Such a Biblical worldview does indeed exist, despite contrary statements, but it is not the subject here.

Indeed, the subject is that the world will be regenerated and we will have to see what that actually means. For let us not be mistaken. The world is not the same as what we call 'the universe'. The world does not include everything that exists. The world - creation - consists of 'the heavens and the earth', but there is more than the heavens and the earth. The creation will be regenerated, but what does not belong to the creation will not be regenerated. Above all, no one should get the impression that the truth about the regeneration of the creation supports the so-called doctrine of 'universalism'. The regeneration of all creation is no guarantee for the regeneration of 'all and everything'. According to Genesis 1 : 1 the creation

consists of 'heaven and earth'. Now the word 'heaven' in this verse in the original Hebrew text is not in the singular. It is not about a singular heaven. For the expression 'shamayim' that is used here, is a 'dualis', that is, a dual form. What was created was not one heaven, but a double heaven. There were two heavens. God created in the beginning "the two heavens and the earth." That is what it literally says. And when the prophet Isaiah talks about the coming of a new creation, he uses exactly the same expression:

“For behold, I create new heavens (‘shamayim’) and a new earth [...].”
(Isaiah 65 : 17)

“[...] the new heavens (‘shamayim’) and the new earth which I will make [...].” (Isaiah 66 : 22)

From the apostle Paul we know that there is yet a third heaven, where the throne of God is situated. (2 Corinthians 12 : 2 and following) Apparently this third heaven is separate from the two heavens that are part of the creation. And that is exactly what we also find in the Old Testament. Sometimes the expression "heaven of heavens" is found there, used to indicate the place where God Himself lives. (Deuteronomy 10 : 14; 1 Kings 8 : 27; 2 Kings 2 : 6; 6 : 18; Nehemiah 9 : 6) The word 'heavens' in these verses is again the same dual form 'shamayim'. Thus, the place where God lives is the heaven that is above the two heavens. And since only the two heavens are part of the creation, the heaven of the two heavens is above creation. The residence of God is not part of the created world. This place, like God Himself, existed before creation. Therefore, this third heaven is said to be "of old". (Psalms 68 : 33) It is the expression that is sometimes used for God Himself. So, in fact the Scripture knows three different heavens, of which the highest is called 'the third', which does not belong to creation. The first two do. They were both created "in the beginning". It is obvious which two heavens they are. As the third heaven is the highest, the first heaven is the lowest. It thus begins immediately above the earth, and consists of what we call 'the atmosphere'. In this atmosphere the clouds float and the birds fly, and therefore the Bible speaks of the 'clouds of heaven' and the 'birds of heaven'. The second heaven is what we call 'space'. In this second heaven are the sun, the moon and the stars. And therefore we speak of heavenly bodies and the Scripture speaks of the 'stars of the heaven'.

The third heaven belongs to the invisible things, but the first two heavens are part of the creation, and thus belong to the visible world. Because they are part of a visible world, they are also perishable.

“For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4 : 18)

Temporary things must be exchanged for eternal things. Creation must be exchanged for a new creation. And that is why indeed two new heavens will appear. From the above, it also appears that there are two reasons why the third heaven, the place where God's throne stands, will not pass and thus will not be regenerated. The first is that this place is not part of creation. The second reason is that this place belongs to the invisible things, and therefore is eternal.

When the Scriptures give us this image (because it is truly an image; reality, as stated, is not discussed here) of the earth, with above it a total of three heavens, we see that the upper 'floor' is not part of the creation, and therefore will not be regenerated. However, something similar also applies to the lowest part of this model. Until now we have not talked about it yet, but the earth is not the lowest 'floor' of the universe. For the Bible also speaks of "what is under the earth". We must keep in mind that the earth in Scripture is only the 'ground' - the land - on which we walk and live. The idea of a planet floating in space is utterly strange to the Scriptures. The earth is only the surface on which men and animals live, and that is all.

Therefore, when the Bible categorizes all existing things, it speaks of what is above the earth, what is on the earth and what is under the earth. Now it must be clear that what is under the earth is not part of the earth itself. That which is under the heaven is not part of the heaven and what is under the earth is not part of the earth. What is under the sun is not part of the sun. This is of the utmost importance, because only the earth and the two heavens above it belong to creation. So what is under the earth is beyond creation and thus will not be regenerated. This becomes even more clear when we see that according to the Scriptures, hades, the lake of fire, the hell, the tartarus, the abyss and the bot-

tomless pit are located under the earth. The differences between these places, if any, are not relevant here. What does matter is their similarity: They are all places that relate to the position of those who did not come to believe during their lives. These are the places where the sentenced will undergo their punishment. All I want to say here is that these places are located outside creation. They are in the 'outer darkness'. Neither these places, nor their final inhabitants are, or will be, part of the regeneration. For "all things" will be reconciled to God, "all things" will be regenerated, but "all things" is restricted to the creation. The Scripture leaves absolutely no doubt about this:

“That [...] He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth [...].” (Ephesians 1 : 10)

In this verse "all things" are more specifically described as "both." Thus "all things" consist of two things: that which is in the heavens and that which is on the earth. These heavens are of course the two created heavens. The third heaven does not have to be "gathered" to God, because it never deviated from God. But likewise, what is under the earth is explicitly not included in "all things". For what is under the earth is 'outside' the creation. It is the 'outer darkness' where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth [...].” (Colossians 1 : 16)

"All things" consist only of what is in the heavens and what is on earth. Thus, when "all things" are reconciled to God, it excludes those who are thrown into 'the lake of fire' on the Last Day. For this lake of fire is under the earth. Even Paul establishes that, immediately after the preceding verse:

“For it pleased the Father [...] by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” (Colossians 1 : 19, 20)

By the way, let me remind you that the things that are under the earth generally belong to the things that are unseen. Also for this reason they are not part of the

creation and are not perishable. For those who are lost, will be lost forever. However wretched the comparison may be: Just like the heaven of heavens, also that which is under the earth is part of the unseen things and is outside the creation. Therefore, both are eternal and imperishable and will not be regenerated.

8. The new creation

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” (Revelations 21 : 1)

By grace the apostle John was allowed a glimpse of the new creation. He expressly states that the creation that passed away was the first. And by now you know: not the first, but the second receives the birthright. He further states that there is no sea on the new earth. That should not surprise us. The first time we encountered the sea in Scripture was in Genesis 1 : 2. There it was the instrument of God's wrath. But on the new earth there is no place for wrath. In addition, the sea is a type of 'raging' and 'vain things plotting' nations (Psalms 2 : 1-3), which were also used as instruments of God's wrath concerning Israel and for each other. But on the new earth there will be no nations that are raging and plotting vain things. And therefore, there will be no sea anymore. At least not as we know it in our present world. It is also said of the new creation:

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” (Revelation 21 : 4, 5)

According to these words, tears, death, sorrow, crying and pain belong to the first things and will therefore disappear. For He who sits on the throne emphatically says that all things, all first things, will be made new. God takes away the first in order to state the second. For all first things are temporary, according to Paul. In view of the Scripture, the usefulness of first things is only that they allow for the coming of the second things. For the physicist, by the way, it is interesting to see that so many things in our world only exist for a short while, to make way for

something new. And hereby I do not only have in mind my milk teeth, that I had to discard from my seventh year onward. After all, our whole nature is an expression of God's way with this world. And therefore we find so many temporary forms of existence in nature. For example, I think of the frog, that begins his life as a real fish. I think of the metamorphosis of insects. I think of the caterpillar that becomes a beautiful butterfly by a miracle. As a caterpillar, connected to the earth with countless legs, he lays down his old life, to fly into heaven with a brilliant blaze of colour. It must be clear that all these creatures are a Divine illustration of God's plan with the world. For the Divine and spiritual things are understood from the visible creation. (Romans 1 : 20, 21) Let so-called physicists talk about the how and why of nature. We know better: It is all an image and type of the Creator Himself. It is the expression of God's work for the world. For also this world is a first, a temporary world. It will pass away. And all details of this world express this truth. When in the future that second, regenerated world will be achieved, it should not surprise us that in that world, there will be no longer such temporary forms of existence. There will be no more room for transitory life forms, as we know them now. And as far as there are animals or small animals now, which apparently have no other purpose than to serve as food for other animals, they will no longer be there. Therefore there will be no carnivorous animals on the new earth:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11 : 6-9)

Why should I list it all? Read for yourself the description of this new - regenerated - world on the last pages of your Bible. And if this makes you begin to long for those new heavens and earth, may I point out that we need not wait that long. For we who believe have already been regenerated into firstfruits of that new creation by God's saving grace:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ [...]”
(2 Corinthians 5 : 17, 18)

That does not wait for the future. It is the daily reality of every believer.

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Original title:

"Wedergeboorte - de hoop der schepping"

Bible Study Series 'Regeneration'

'Regeneration' is the great theme of the Bible. The Biblical message is not only that Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died for the sins of the world and thus satisfied the righteousness of God.



If one died for all, they all died. (2 Corinthians 5 : 14) And when all, whether believing or not believing, are dead, then all have perished. (1 Corinthians 15 : 18) But the story does not end at the cross! On the contrary.

According to the Bible, God's work encompasses the forming of a new creation from the old, current one. He is forming a new man from the old man, a new Israel from the old Israel, a new creation from the old one. In reference to mankind this is called, among other things, 'regeneration' or 'resurrection'. However, many other expressions are used for that same work of the Creator, who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Unfortunately, it is often thought that God, just like man, is interested in an improvement of the old. Many Biblical truths have fallen into oblivion, among which also the truth that He, the Creator, is busy bringing about a new definite humanity and world, in which regenerated believers, are already partaking. May these pages serve to remind you of this forgotten truth.