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Genesis One and the Sabbath

A Twenty-First-Century Confirmation of the Sabbath Teaching in View of the Literal/Non-Literal Discussions

BY TREVOR LLOYD

Our purpose is to inquire again into the literary genre of Genesis One and to relate this to the inviolability of the Sabbath teaching.[1] Along the way, we face a number of fundamental questions. For example, for those of us committed to the creatorship of God and the sanctity of the Sabbath, how vital is it that we maintain we are reading literal, fact-by-fact history in this chapter of beginnings? Conversely, what might be the outcome if we were to allow that the genre in this instance is non-literal? And which of these positions can be shown as affirming of the Sabbath—and which as negating?

As we will see, the field has been worked over many times and from a range of disciplines. Recognizing that the conclusions have not always been compatible, we do well to maintain a non-dogmatic and teachable spirit. Whichever position we eventually lean toward, past related efforts suggest there will remain further matters to consider. Our discussion commences with reference to some of my own background inquiries

After decades of interest in the creation chapters of the book of Genesis, I took the opportunity, including further postgraduate studies, to examine a fairly wide selection of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation accounts extant in the general period prior to and contemporaneous with the writing of Genesis. There were some surprises in store, and these related to the similarities and differences between the positions taken by the Hebrews and their polytheistic neighbors. In the present article, I have concentrated primarily on texts from Egypt—for example, as found on the walls of the chambers and corridors of the royal pyramids, on the interior surfaces of the boards of the coffins of the Egyptian nobility, and on the papyrus texts giving excerpts from the Egyptian *Book ofw the Dead*.

Genesis One in Parallel with the Contemporary Egyptian Creation Accounts

What follows is a selection from a number of items in common between the ancient Egyptian and Hebrew creation accounts.[2] These begin with the setting in which the creation takes place, go on to indicate various elements involved in the work of creation, and conclude with the taking of rest. In drawing out these parallels, it is important to note that there is no single, definitive Egyptian account of creation comparable to that given in Genesis. The Egyptian examples are available from a number of



Figure 1: *Shu, the god of air, separates the sky goddess, Nut, from the earth god, Geb.* Two ram-headed gods stand beside Shu. (Drawing by Catherine Fitzpatrick, courtesy of Canadian Museum of History).

locations up and down the Nile valley and from a variety of periods from as early as the third millennium BC. Similarly, it is not suggested that each of the given Egyptian textual items applies to all times and places or that they are in agreement in every detail.[3]

The similarities readily become apparent. For example, as for Genesis One, the religious texts of the Egyptians[4] picture creation as taking place in the context of an abyss of water. The "deep" (Heb. *tehom*) of Genesis 1:2 may be compared with the Egyptian god Re-Khopri's pronouncement in Spell 307 that he has "issued from the Abyss."[5] (More later on the contrast between the two cultures regarding the relation of God to the waters of the abyss.) As well, in common with Genesis 1:6–7, a centerpiece of the Egyptian creation schema is a firmament to keep back those same waters to allow for "a kind of 'bubble' of air and light within the otherwise unbroken infinity of dark waters."[6] A hymn in the temple of Darius El-Hibe from the Ramesside period credits Amun-Re as having "gathered together the firmament and guided the stars."[7]

In this same context, the Egyptians proposed that the god Atum, emanating from within the abyss of waters, proceeded to form lesser gods and they to form other gods.[8] Two of these, Geb, the earth god, and Nut,[9] the sky goddess, were clasped in nuptial embrace until Shu, the air god, separated them and pushed Nut up as a barrier against the waters which, for both the Egyptians and the Hebrews, remained in place above the firmament. (See Figure 1.)

Then, there is the placing of the heavenly luminaries. As noted in Genesis 1:14–16, we are told that the "greater light" and the "lesser light" were made by God and situated *within* the firmament. Similarly, the Egyptians placed the heavenly bodies within the overarching body of Nut. A good graphic representation is to be found on the ceiling of the sarcophagus room of Ramesses VI, in the Valley of the Kings. There, to one side of the ceiling, the sun

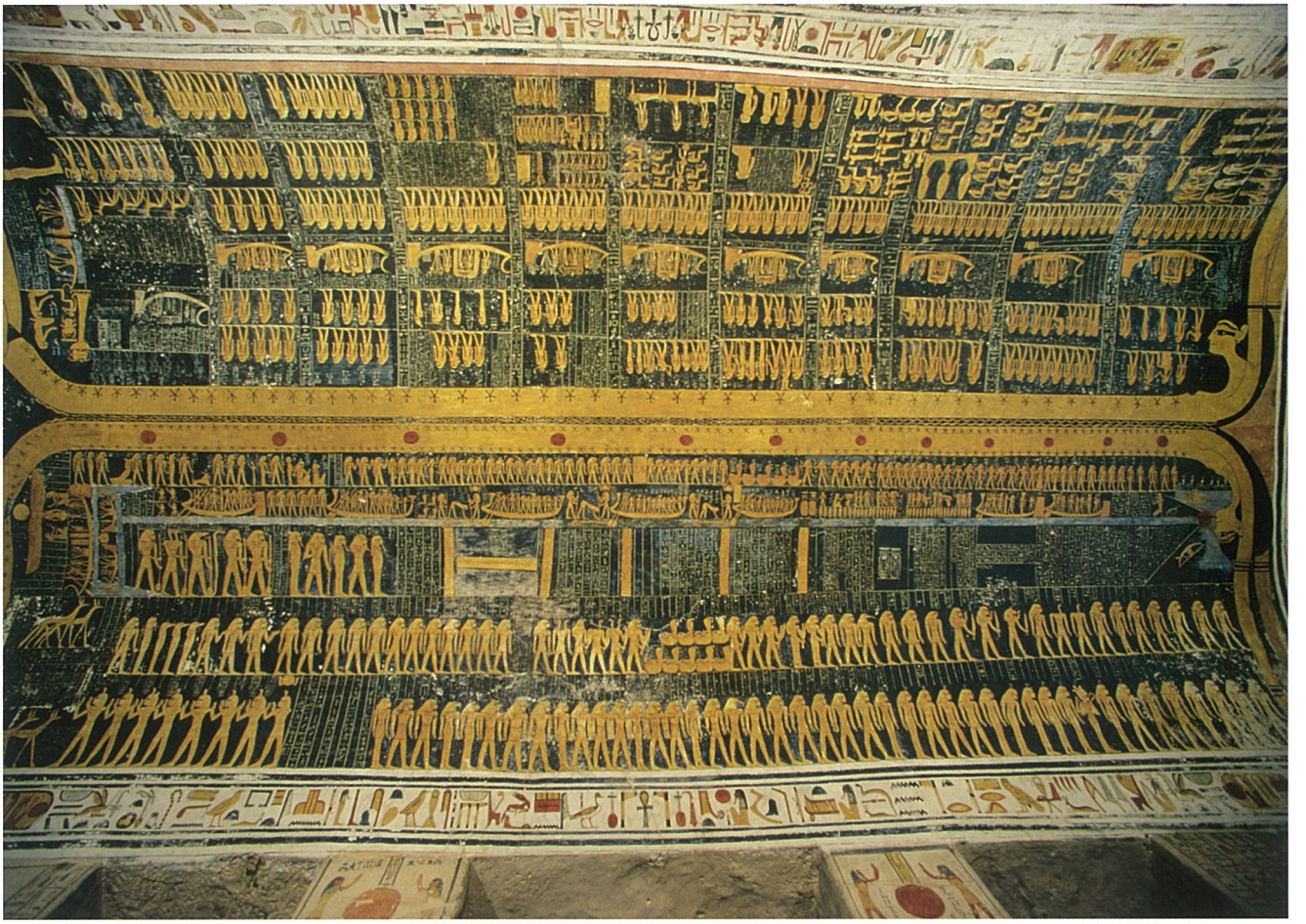


Figure 2: Egypt's Valley of the Kings: Ceiling of tomb of Ramses VI. *Sky goddess Nut surrounds the heavens, New Kingdom, Egypt* (Photo by Kenneth Garrett)

is shown as passing by day through the elongated body of Nut and, on the opposite side, the stars are pictured as making the same journey by night. (See Figure 2.)

The parallels continue with the giving of names to the elements of creation[10] and the declaring of the results as "good."[11] As well, both Genesis and the Egyptian accounts of creation refer to the modeling of humankind (see Figure 3), to the making of humanity in the image of the divine, and to the provision of the breath of life. A future king, Meri-Ka-Re, was instructed that, in the fashioning of humankind, "[the god] made the breath of life (for) their nostrils. They who have issued from his body are his images."[12] Elsewhere, it is said of the god of Memphis: "So has Ptah come to rest after his making everything and every divine speech."[13]

Hebrew Disagreement with the Contemporary Accounts

Just as significant as the parallels between the creation accounts of the Hebrews and those of Egypt, are the contrasts. Predictably, while the Egyptians referred to a multiplicity of gods, the Hebrews told of one God only, designated as "God" or as "LORD God." While the gods of the polytheists were originally immanent with (that is, *dwelling within*) the waters of the abyss, the one God of monotheism is transcendent from the material sphere and, accordingly, was shown as *moving over* the face of the waters.

Likewise, there is contrast in the way the creation of the cosmos is brought about. As already noted with the bodily separation of Geb and Nut, physical action was employed by the Egyptian god, Shu, in the setting up of earth and sky.[14] This does not take place in the Genesis One monotheistic account. The one, all-powerful God can carry out the various cosmic assignments simply by declaring that they are to be so. We are aware of course that, when the text turns from the cosmos (Genesis, Chapter One), to the creation of humankind (Genesis, Chapter Two), the LORD God personally models His first child with His hands and



Figure 3: *God Khnum and goddess Heqet*, Dendera Temple complex, Egypt (Creative Commons)

similarly opens Adam's side to create his bride—so that, for this special, intimate occasion, the LORD God has become immanent as well as transcendent.

A further critical distinction of the Genesis account is the careful staging of the work of creation into six specific days, followed not only by rest but by the declaring of the seventh day as blessed and hallowed. There is no such arrangement evident in the Egyptian accounts.

In the above context, it is relevant to note that Gerhard Hasel (former professor in the Seminary at Andrews University) has convincingly argued that Genesis One was written as a polemic against the contemporary polytheistic creation accounts.[15] Similarly, Jacques Doukhan, also of the Seminary, regards this same chapter as a polemic against both the Babylonian and Egyptian stories of creation.[16] This would require, of course, that these polytheistic accounts be written prior to the composing of Genesis One and that, in the main at least, they be suitably available for the composition of the Hebrew text.[17] With such considerations in mind, it is of interest to inquire concerning the type of writing bequeathed to us in the early chapters of Genesis.

Some Implications of Accepting Genesis One as a Literal/Historical Account of the Creation of the Cosmos

We have noted above that, in a number of instances, the Genesis creation account runs parallel with the creation accounts of Egypt. (And, in view of considerable contemporary commonality amongst the myths of the ancient Near East, the parallels range wider still.) At other times, there is an unmistakable difference between the two. On the part of the Hebrews, the differences cluster around the twin themes of monotheism, with emphasis on the distinctive qualities of God,[18] and on the Sabbath institution—themes regarding which we might have expected the two cultures to diverge. Meanwhile, the likenesses between the two cultures relate significantly to the setting up of the physical cosmos, including, as noted, the placing of the firmament with the abyss of waters above it, and the locating of the heavenly luminaries within it.

As indicated, part of our assignment is to explore the type of genre in use in Genesis One—in particular, whether it involves the literal or the non-literal. Affirmations have been made by Adventist scholars from opposite sides of the question. In a chapter titled "The Case for Biblical Literalism," soil scientist, Colin Mitchell, has

laid down that, in view of the chapter's "inseparable associations with [the] central biblical doctrines [of] the Sabbath and marriage," Genesis One must be both "historical" and "factual."[19] Alternatively, theologian/philosopher, Fritz Guy, has concluded that "a literal interpretation purporting to provide scientifically relevant information remains unwarranted, however widely it is assumed."[20]

As a lead toward assessing whether Genesis One should be regarded as literal, what follows is a preliminary exploration of the nature of three of the main features referred to above—the firmament, the waters above the firmament, and the location of the heavenly luminaries. We shall work mainly from the familiar KJV text.

For those of us committed to the creatorship of God and the sanctity of the Sabbath, how vital is it that we maintain we are reading literal, fact-by-fact history in this chapter of beginnings?

1. The firmament (*raqia'*)—Is it solid and what are the genre implications?

A good deal of passion has been expressed regarding the nature of the firmament—the arrangement set up to divide the primeval waters—the upper from the lower. In the original Hebrew, the term is *raqia'*, and it is of interest to inquire whether it should or should not be regarded as solid. What, we might ask, does the Hebrew text call for? Those banking on a literal creation account would, in a day of inter-planetary space probes, presumably hope for a non-solid *raqia'*. As part of our inquiry, it would be helpful to know whether, beyond the initial creation week or perhaps after the flood, the *raqia'* was ever said to have been dissipated. However, later mention of the firmament hardly allows such a let out. See, for example, Psalm 19:1 ("the firmament showeth his handiwork") and Daniel 12:3 ("and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament").

Until recent times, the great majority of translations of *raqia'* have had a distinctly material/solid sense. As far back as the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Hebrew Torah (third century BC), the term *steréōma* (a firm or solid structure) was chosen. The idea of solidity appeared again in the Latin Vulgate (382 AD) with *firmāmentum* (compare with *firmāre:* to make firm), and this was carried over as *firmament* into the KJV (1611), RSV (1952) and NKJV (1982). Meanwhile, NEB (1970) and NRSV (1989) settled for "dome"—calling, it may be noted, for a firm/solid structure. For their part, NIV (1978) and NASB (1995)[21] opted for "expanse," allowing for flexibility between the solid and the insubstantial—there can, it is evident, be an expanse of, say, beaten gold and, alternatively, an expanse of atmosphere.

What would have led so many of the translators to opt for terms suggesting firmness/solidity in the Greek, Latin and English translations, as corresponding to the Hebrew, *raqia'*? They may have been influenced by the use in the Hebrew scriptures of the verbal cognate, *raqa'*. Exodus 39:3, for example, uses *raqa'* in the sense of "to stamp, beat out,"[22] with reference to the making of gold thread in the Sinai wilderness for the ephod to be used by Aaron, the high priest:

> And they did beat [*raqa'*] the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work (KJV).

With the same basic idea in mind, NIV, RSV, NASB and NRSV translate *raqa'*, in the above text, as "hammered out."[23] (Interestingly, though NIV and NASB both translated *raqia'* as "expanse," as noted above, they take the sense of *raqa'* in the "beat out"/"hammer out" mode.)

Further perspectives on this discussion can be found in substantial papers by Paul Seely ("The Firmament and the Water Above")[24] and Randall Younker and Richard Davidson ("The Myth of the Solid Heavenly Dome").[25] These are noted in some detail, following.

After recognizing the major divide between biblical scholars concerning the way the Hebrews regarded the

raqia', Seely comes down decidedly on the side of a solid dome, rather than allowing that the ancient Hebrews saw it as an atmospheric expanse. To support such a claim, he foreshadows a search in both history and grammar.

As far as history is concerned, Seely claims that "all peoples in the ancient world thought of the sky as solid" and that this view pre-dated the Greeks. Such understandings he likens to the beliefs of primitive peoples of recent times, from Melanesia, North America, and South Africa, to Australia and Siberia. He knows of "no evidence that scientifically naïve people anywhere on earth believed that the firmament was just empty space or atmosphere."[26]

With an eye again to the ancient world, Seely points out that the earliest conception of the heavens held in China was of an "upside down bowl" with the sun and moon attached to it as it "rotated from left to right carrying the heavenly bodies with it." In an interesting sidelight, he tells of a fresh conception that arose in China, circa 200 AD, that was reported pejoratively by a Jesuit missionary in the sixteenth century—that the sky was not solid and that this was to be seen as "one of the absurdities of the Chinese."[27]

Both Genesis and the Egyptian accounts of creation refer to the modeling of humankind, to the making of humanity in the image of the divine, and to the provision of the breath of life.

In a reminder of what we have already noted regarding the Egyptian version of the setting up of the sky, Seely goes on to reflect on the implications of the relationship between Nut (representing the sky/firmament) and Shu (representing the air/atmosphere), pointing out that, with separate gods involved for these entities, the ancient authors of this creation account are clear that firmament and atmosphere are to be distinguished from each other and not to be equated.

Seely also argues from Heidel's translation of *Enuma Elish* (the Babylonian creation account), that, with the god Marduk's using the shell-like half of Tiamat (the water monster) to "[form] the sky as roof," the notion of solidity is coming through clearly.

From the grammatical side, Seely elaborates on the significance of the scriptural use of the verbal cognate *raqa'* (to "stamp, beat, spread out") to the noun *raqia'*, as we have seen in the foregoing.[28]

For their part, Younker and Davidson examined, both historically and textually, what the ancients understood regarding the nature of the *raqia'*. From their detailed presentation, it is evident that there was noticeable fluidity through the centuries between belief in solid and, by contrast, non-solid, heavens. They found "no evidence that the Mesopotamians ever believed in a solid heavenly vault,"[29] and go on to point out that, later, the Greeks opted for a number of concentric hard spheres, while the Hellenistic Jews, in the days of the Septuagint translation, settled, as we've noted, for the Greek term, *stereōma*, denoting a firm, solid structure.

Christians from the early Christian era to the seventeenth century, Younker and Davidson advise, were somewhat equivocal regarding the nature of the ancient Hebrew *raqia'*. In 405 AD, as we have already noted, Jerome, in the influential Vulgate version of the scriptures, used the Latin term *firmāmentum*, while others were leaning toward a fluid firmament. They state that, by the fourteenth century, biblical scholars saw the celestial spheres as solid but, by the late seventeenth century, commonly regarded them as an "expanse," and this persisted through to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the expanse was seen by some as "an atmosphere of fluid." Younker and Davidson point out that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, "critical biblical scholars" regarded the Bible as accepting both a flat earth and a solid dome, and go on to note that Adventist scholars Richard Hammill (2000), and Fritz Guy and Brian Bull (2011), had accepted a similarly "naïve Hebrew cosmology."

Younker and Davidson give a detailed word study of the use in scripture of both the noun, *raqia'*, and its cognate verb, *raqa'*. In the process, they advise that, of the seventeen occurrences of *raqia'* in the Old Testament, it is never used "in association with any metal." For its part, they indicate that *raqa'* is used twelve times in scripture and (as mentioned

above) that five of these are "explicitly associated with metal." The other associations include the (planet) earth, "the stamping of feet," the "smashing of an enemy," and, once, with the spreading out of the skies, "[s]trong as a molten mirror" (Job 37:18). (The last-mentioned they consider as "most likely" referring to clouds.) In this particular word study, they do not recognize that the basic meaning of *raqa'* ("to stamp, beat out, spread out") may be seen as primarily in association with metal, with the remaining usages employing the verb metaphorically. They do, however, caution against attempts to "derive the meaning of the nominal form *raqia'* solely from verbal forms that are related to the beating out of metal."[30]

Overall, Younker and Davidson concluded that *raqia'* refers not to a solid dome but simply to the atmosphere and that God "made the *raqia'* (the sky) and also assigned its function (to divide the upper atmospheric waters contained in clouds from the surface waters of the earth)."[31] As discussed following, such a designation for the clouds warrants further thought.

2. Are the Waters Above the Firmament [*Raqia'*] Compatible with Undisputed, Present-Day Cosmology?

As we have already observed, both the Hebrews and the Egyptians referred to an abyss of waters (the "deep," in Genesis One) that had to be divided before the work of creation could proceed. We noted, as well, that both accounts detailed the setting up of a firmament barrier that kept the separated waters in place—achieved in the accounts from Egypt by the raised body of the sky goddess, Nut, and in Genesis One by God's calling for the existence of the *raqia'*. With this in mind, it will come as no surprise to learn that, after creation, in both accounts the waters of "the deep" were still there.

To give all possible credence to the literal nature of the Hebrew account of waters both below and above the *raqia'*, we might ask if the waters below the *raqia'* could be the clouds we are familiar with from day to day? This, however, cannot be so, for, on the third day, God directed that the "waters under the heaven [that is, under the *raqia'*] be gathered together unto one place" so that the dry land appears. Then, promptly, God declares that the "gathering together of the waters" be called seas—clearly not clouds.

Very well, then, could the waters above the *raqia'* be regarded as the clouds? (As noted in the foregoing, Younker and Davidson concluded this to be the case.[32]) Again, this can hardly be so. Since the "greater light" and the "lesser light" are said to be in the *raqia'* and the upper waters to be above the *raqia'*, these waters would need to be seen as beyond the "greater light" and the "lesser light" and, hence, cannot be equated with the clouds which, we are well aware, are beneath the heavenly bodies.

It is of interest to note that the upper waters were still in place beyond the creation event—for example, at the time of the flood when "all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (Genesis 7:11). And, again, much later than the flood account, they are mentioned when the psalmist called for praise to be given to the Lord by "... you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!" (Psalm 148:4, NRSV). (NIV gives "skies" for *heavens*.)

As part of our literal/non-literal discussion, a little more should be said regarding the location of the already-mentioned "greater light" and "lesser light."

3. The Location of the Heavenly Luminaries

As we have seen, the Egyptians were in no doubt regarding the position of the sun and the stars, in particular. These were pictured as travelling through the body of the sky goddess, Nut—the sun during the day and the stars during the night. Similarly, for the Hebrews, the Genesis record is clear:

> And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; ... and it was so (Gen. 1:14,15).

Viewing this part of the Genesis creation text in the context of our present inquiry, we might ask if, under inspiration, this reference to the heavenly lights was given in an historical/literal sense as a guide to understanding the make-up of the cosmos, or if the account was given for some other purpose? (More on this later.) If we accept the predominant interpretation of the *raqia'*/firmament as a solid, overarching ceiling, then we may visualize the lights as adhering to the underside of the *raqia'*, and this is clearly incongruous with post-Copernican cosmology.

Suppose, then, we take the alternative view of the *raqia'* as "expanse," and go further and envisage an expanse of atmosphere (as noted, the interpretation given for the *raqia'*

by Younker and Davidson) with the sun and moon located within it. It is readily evident that such an arrangement has insuperable difficulties related to the depth of the atmosphere and the dimensions of the heavenly bodies. Most of the atmosphere turns out to be within 11 kilometers (6.8 miles or a mere 36,000 feet) of the earth's surface, and the outer limit of extremely rarefied air can be taken as 100 kilometers (62 miles). Such a confined space is in stark contrast to the dimensions of the moon, with a diameter of 3,500 kilometers (2,160 miles), and of the sun, with a diameter of 1.39 million kilometers (865,000 miles), and we are entertaining the possibility of locating these within an atmospheric expanse of a minuscule 100 kilometers!

A literal interpretation of Genesis One must face a further insurmountable problem related to the distance of the sun from the earth—taken to be 149.6 million kilometers. At this distance, life on Earth is finely balanced and, should it be diminished toward housing it within a literal expanse of atmosphere, life on this planet would, of course, be impossible.

As discussed above, should we wish to pursue the literal possibilities further, we are faced with the need to imagine the waters (said to be above the *raqia'*) as commencing out beyond both the moon and the sun. At the very least, it is evident that contemporary space probes know nothing of a vast body of water in such a cosmic location.

Summary of Problems with a Literal/Historical Genre

To this point, we have examined three main features of the creation account in Genesis One—the *raqia'* (variously interpreted as *firmament*, *dome*, *vault*, and *expanse*); the waters above the *raqia'*; and the location of the heavenly luminaries. In the process, we have discovered that each of these has a counterpart in the creation accounts of Egypt, and that these have been directly related, for the Egyptians, to the elevated form of the sky goddess, Nut, who stands bodily for the firmament, who personally holds back the infinite waters, and within whose body the heavenly lights move.

It is evident that the parallels and contrasts between the accounts of the two cultures are not the result of mere slavish copying. Rather, the Genesis account appears as imperturbably accepting a number of the contemporary positions in cosmology—such as the presence of an abyss of waters, the setting up of a *raqia'*/firmament to divide the waters, and the placing of the luminaries within the firmament—while deliberately countering others. For example, in the latter regard, we have found that, while the Egyptian deities are immanent with the watery abyss, Elohim (God) is transcendent from the material sphere. Then, in contrast to the physical exertions of the Egyptian gods, Elohim is able calmly to position the *raqia'* by verbal fiat and, similarly, to place the luminaries within it. In addition, the day-to-day events in Genesis One are set out in a structured fashion followed by a declaration of the seventh day as hallowed, and the Egyptian account knows nothing of such a memorable literary structure and sacred designation.

Our point of special interest has been to discover whether the cosmological features in the Genesis account can be rightly seen as fitting into a literal schema.

We have noted a problem with regard to the *raqia'*—that since ancient times the term has most commonly been given a firm/solid connotation with such designations as "firmament," "dome" and "vault." This has been given further weight by the sense of the cognate verb *raqa'* (fundamentally "to stamp, beat out"), as in Exodus 39:3, with the beating out of gold into thin plates. However, in a day of inter-planetary space probes, the notion of a literal, solid ceiling/dome over our heads is clearly to be dismissed. In view of this, some have resorted to an alternative translation: an *expanse*—that is an *atmospheric expanse*. This may appear to bypass the immediate problem; however, as noted following, the further requirements placed on the *raqia'* in Genesis One suggest that the puzzle has not yet been solved.

The *overhead waters* have also proved difficult to fit into a literal schema, and, as we have noted, they are an inescapable feature of the creation accounts of both cultures. With the *raqia'* set up "in the midst of the waters," it is to be expected that there would be a vast body of water overhead—and it did not escape the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) societies that it was always possible it might again resume its original position. If this body of water were to be regarded as historical/literal, who would have the temerity to suggest where it might be found today?

We looked as well at *the location of the heavenly luminaries*. If we are to regard the Genesis record as historical

and literal, then we are to expect the sun and moon to be either within an overarching solid structure or within an atmospheric "expanse." It is all too apparent that present-day, undisputed cosmology leaves no place for the attachment of the sun and moon (if not the stars, as well) to the underside of an over-arching dome. Then, as noted, we have found that regarding the *raqia'*/firmament as a literal expanse of atmosphere is no more manageable, in view of the impossibility of fitting a heavenly body with a diameter of 1.39 million kilometers into an atmospheric band 100 kilometers deep.

Before we look for an alternative solution to the above impasse, there are several matters that should be faced. There is the rejoinder that it is inappropriate to raise modern cosmological objections to these early creation accounts when the ancient Hebrews (and their polytheistic neighbors) knew nothing of the cosmology of our day. It is true, of course, that the Genesis account was written some thousands of years prior to our modern cosmological understandings, corroborated by rocket launches and space probes. However, we are looking into an inspired record which many have claimed is both historical and literal in every respect. Please note that an inspired non-historical/non-literal account from ancient times need not align with the unarguable facts of twenty-first century cosmology. However, on the other hand, an inspired historical/literal account can hardly be allowed the same freedom.

A centerpiece of the Egyptian creation schema was a firmament to keep back those same waters to allow for "a kind of 'bubble' of air and light within the otherwise unbroken infinity of dark waters."

In the face of what appear to be insurmountable barriers to a literal/historical reading of Genesis One, ought we to give up the Sabbath teaching as an outdated relic of a pre-scientific age? (These days, who will accept either a solid dome over the earth or an atmospheric expanse accommodating the heavenly luminaries—or a vast body of water held back above these again?) Well-meaning as proponents of a literal Genesis One genre may be, it is evident that such insistence overturns this vital doctrine by seeking to ground it upon an impossible foundation. There are many of us who will not stand back and allow this to take place. What follows is a search for an alternative interpretation that maintains total confirmation of the creatorship of God and the inviolability of the Sabbath.

In Quest of a Confirming Alternative Genre for the Genesis One Creation Account

In view of the above difficulties regarding a literal Genesis One, should we turn to the figurative—perhaps seeing it as a *parable*? It is a difficult ask. For many of us, the prime purpose of Genesis One does not appear to be like, say, the Parable of the Sower, with each element (abyss of waters, light, firmament, and so on) to be regarded figuratively and to be given an instructive counterpart. Similarly, the notion of extended *allegory* as drawn out *metaphor*, with the characters/elements symbolizing qualities from everyday life, may not fit well. Might we settle on poetry as the predominant genre of this most celebrated creation account of all time? Hebrew scholar, Jacques Doukhan, amply illustrates the advanced poetic qualities of Genesis One, meanwhile regarding its "general stylistic tone … as prosaic."[33] After indicating the difficulty of matching the creation chapters of Genesis with one of the understood literary genres, Paul Petersen concluded (as have others) that "[t]he biblical account of Creation [sic] is completely its own. Scholars speak about *sui generis*—'of its own genre'."[34]

The possible genre field may range wider still. In a discussion of "Genesis and God's Creative Activity," Fritz Guy adopted, for his present purpose, the term *representation*.[35] Placing this in tandem with the notion of *analogy*, and both within the concept of *creative story*, I have chosen to move in this direction for the present article.

Toward tackling further the literal/non-literal puzzle, here is an approach from the above angle. This involves recounting a modern-day literal/historical anecdote, containing within it two examples of non-literal/non-historical

creative story, the second intended to counter the former in a bit of friendly polemic. The anecdote comes from the early days of Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895–1960), distinguished pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1927 till his death.[36]

The youthful Donald Barnhouse had taken on the pastorate of a small Evangelical Reformed Church in the French Alps, with the added responsibility of trekking once a week to a nearby village to give Bible instruction. On each trip, he would pass a Catholic priest with similar duties, but going in the opposite direction. They soon became friends and, at times, would pause for a few minutes' chat.

On one of these occasions, Barnhouse's new friend inquired why he did not pray to the saints. In reply, Barnhouse asked why he should and this was a cue for the priest to launch into a heartfelt hypothetical:

"Here I am, shall we say, living as a humble farmer in this district far from Paris and the center of government—and I want to speak with President Poincaré in the Elyseé Palace. Is such a thing possible? Not to be daunted, I go up to Paris and find my local member and tell him what I have in mind. He considers my cause to be worthy and says: 'All right, I know the Minister for Agriculture who is a member of the cabinet'. We speak with the minister who, in his turn, says: 'I'm due to see the president this afternoon and shall request a meeting for you.'"

At this, the priest smiled with evident satisfaction that his specially composed story had made its point beyond the possibility of misunderstanding.

Barnhouse nodded and promptly went on with a counter story: "Suppose my name is not Barnhouse—but Poincaré. I am a young boy and I live in the Elyseé Palace. After breakfast one morning, my father kisses me goodbye and goes to his presidential office. Shall I, then, cross the yard to, say, the Ministry for the Interior and ask one of his secretaries to arrange for me a meeting with the minister? If I am successful, shall I then say: 'Can you help me to get an interview with the president?' No, indeed. Instead, one evening, when we are sitting alone together, would I not say: 'Daddy, there is something I want to know. Please tell me ...'?"

Barnhouse reported that his friend looked back as if thunderstruck that such implied direct access was possible to the Sovereign of the universe.

What shall our response be to the use of creatively composed stories such as these—one a polemic against the other? Shall we lay down that, for the teaching of spiritual truth, we will accept literal, historical fact or nothing—that, if even one statement in the narrative can be shown to be out of order, we'll rule out the whole account? For example, would the force and acceptability of the second creative story (the one by Barnhouse) be lost if it could be shown that the president of France at that time had a young daughter and not a young son, or that the suite of the Minister for the Interior was not across the courtyard but in an upper level of the same wing of the Elyseé Palace? I expect not.

They indicate that *raqa'* is used twelve times in scripture and (as referred to in the foregoing) that five of these are "explicitly associated with metal."

From the above, is there an overarching premise that can be carried from this modern-day account back to one from ancient times? Here is a suggestion. Suppose we allow that a non-literal, imaginative, creative story is very much in order so long as it is composed to illustrate/illuminate an unassailable, already accepted, literal truth?[37] In this event, we are to look beyond the surface of the creative story to the grand realities to which, under the promptings of God's Spirit, the story is intended to lead us.

I suggest that we go further and allow that to say a creative story is non-literal (Barnhouse was not a lad by the name of Poincaré and he did not live in the Elyseé Palace) does not mean it has no utterly literal reality behind it.[38] Indeed, there was behind/beneath his aptly composed hypothetical the blessed, literal truth of God's willingness to listen attentively to every whispered prayer throughout every passing day. Likewise, to say that the creation account in Genesis One is not literal does not mean there is nothing totally literal behind it—that is, God's creatorship expressed in the

physical, intellectual and spiritual spheres—and His going into action in ways that we could not begin to grasp unless confided to us by such means as analogical/representational creative story.

Along with the above assurance, it may be stressed that, in the rehearsing of this Barnhouse anecdote, it is not suggested that it provides total correspondence with the Genesis One account. Rather, its purpose is to illustrate several possible guidelines for recognizing, appreciating, and interpreting non-literal, sacred texts.

Several further points may be made from the Barnhouse incident. The young pastor had composed, on the spot, a telling, every-day, earthly analogy (limited though it might be) to a grand, already-existing heavenly truth. Whether the Poincaré/Elyseé Palace allusions had half, or maybe most, of their facts incorrect pales into insignificance; it is the grasping by the listener of the all-important analogy that matters. Now the underlying certainty of tender communion with our heavenly Parent may be entered into in a new and appealing way. We, too, may look up and say, "Abba, Father." So, too, along with the original hearers/readers of the Genesis creation accounts, we may discover in this inspired creation account something of the all-important transcendent and immanent qualities of the "Maker of heaven and earth."

A further correspondence may be noted. Accepting that the truth of the fellowship we may know with our heavenly Father was *illustrated by* but not *based on* the non-literal Poincaré analogy, I propose we allow that the creatorship of God is unforgettably illustrated/represented by, but not grounded on, the details we find in Genesis One.

With the above in mind, shall we quibble that there is no vast abyss of waters from which the earth and the cosmos have emerged? Recall that the polytheistic cultures of those ancient times believed their gods had been spawned *from within* this infinite "deep" of waters. By following up this concept, then critically varying from it (the Spirit of God was said to have "*moved upon the face* of the waters"), the inspired Genesis account, in a single sentence, introduced one of the most revolutionary religious truths of all time—that the one and only God is transcendent beyond, and not immanent with, the physical sphere. With that laid down and understood, belief in the polytheistic gods was to enter a phase of extinction.

Understandably, such a position requires that the making of the Genesis One account was preceded by the acceptance, in Hebrew monotheism, that God is "Maker of heaven and earth."[39] To this, shall we add that, under inspiration, as well as illustrating the already-accepted creatorship of God, Genesis One is intended to memorialize the weekly Sabbath institution?

Wanted: An Enduring Memorial to Creation

And such a memorial it has been! In terms of our present line of thought, the six-day representation of God's work of creation culminates in a seventh, "perfecting," sacred day of rest. Here is a template ideally transferable to humanity's perpetually recurring six days of labor, climaxing in a day of commemoration and worship. And let it not escape us that the One who accomplished His material creation by the close of the sixth day, in the long ago, later finished a still greater provision, this time soteriological, at the close of the sixth day of the Passion Week. Then, in both instances, came divine rest. And, on this basis, we are assured of rest for body, mind, and spirit.

Note well the efficacy of the Genesis One seventh-day memorialization by way of comparison with the fate of the broadly contemporaneous polytheistic creation account already referred to. *Enuma Elish*, composed primarily to glorify Marduk, the head of the Babylonian pantheon, recounts how, in combat with the salt-water monster, Tiamat, he launched the creation of the universe. In Babylon, at each New Year's celebration, the statue of Marduk was paraded through the streets and *Enuma Elish* "was recited [before it] in its entirety by the high priest" and, later, parts of the epic "may even have been dramatized, the king and the priests" taking the various roles.[40] Today, both *Enuma Elish* and the god Marduk are barely known outside university departments of ancient history—and this in spite of the fact that the yearly celebrations were, in their day, in the hands of a world-ranking, victor nation.[41]

Periodic religious festivals were also the standard means of commemoration in the neighboring Nile valley. For example, the ancient city of Thebes (modern-day Luxor), opposite the Valley of the Kings and the site of two of Egypt's renowned temples, staged the Opet festival annually during the Eighteenth Dynasty

(circa 1550 to 1300 BC).[42] In the second month of the Egyptian lunar year, the image of the god Amun was taken from its shrine in the temple of Karnak in the north, placed in a ceremonial barque, and carried on the shoulders of the priests (at times, transferring to a ship on the Nile) toward the temple of Luxor, two kilometers to the south. Attended by the ecstatic acclaim of the people, the accompanying rites were believed "to bring about the rejuvenation and rebirth of divine life." Such renewal extended, it was believed, to "the life of the cosmos, of the community and the individual."[43] The festival lapsed during the short-lived monotheistic (perhaps, henotheistic) venture of Akhenaten; however, it re-emerged and was celebrated for a further two and a half centuries into the Twentieth Dynasty. Abandoned later, who, today, outside Egyptology specialists, has heard of the Opet festival?

Compare with the above, the present-day global standing of the Genesis One account, with a considerable proportion of the world population aware of its existence, if not its intent. A good deal of the long-standing renown of this most famous of all narratives of cosmic/global beginnings could well be attributed to the recounting in Genesis One of six days of calm, authoritative, verbal-fiat creation, followed by a declaration of a blessed and hallowed day. Formalized later as a weekly commemoration to be observed on each succeeding Sabbath day, this institution has stood the test of multiple thousands of years, down to the present day. In God's providence, this perpetual memorial, inaugurated those millennia ago and maintained by an intermittently weakened and captive people, is observed today by practicing Jews, together with tens of millions of Bible-believing Christians, spearheaded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Doubtless there are multiple factors that led to the demise of the creation accounts of the neighboring cultures. They failed to conceive of a number of crucial qualities for their gods—related, it appears, to their disposition to "[create] their gods in the image of man," while "[in] Genesis man is created in the image of God."[44] As well, though presenting as triumphal and adopting periodic celebratory festivals, Babylon and Egypt did not achieve an enduring memorial of their contrived versions of cosmic and global beginnings. This demise, of course, should be seen in the context of the majority take-over, by something like 350 AD, of the polytheistic Roman empire by Christianity, with monotheistic creation at its masthead.[45]

We should return to the central focus of the present paper: that is, the relationship between the genre of the six-day fiat creation account and the sacred seventh day. Our intention, throughout, has been to confirm the sanctity of the seventh day, though it is in the same context as a six-day sequence containing impossible cosmological elements. The rationale for such a harmonization will need to be thoroughly convincing if we are to satisfy our generally well-informed, twenty-first century, target audience. Our approach has been to consider an alternative genre for this opening chapter of cosmic beginnings. In the face of evidently insuperable difficulties with a literal/historical Genesis One, we have turned to non-literal *creative story*.

At the same time, as detailed above, we have affirmed a number of the cardinal tenets standing behind and beneath the Genesis One account. These have included the transcendence of the divine Creator, together with His tender regard for those made in His image. Then, there is God's ability to command the natural world by divine fiat and, at His will, to call both time and space into existence. Importantly, especially for those ancient times, He has jurisdiction over various elements of nature at the heart of the polytheistic pantheon—for example, sun, moon, and denizens of the deep. And, under His authority, a day in the week may be declared as blessed and pronounced as sacred. An account that can convey such profound truths as these, is to be forever cherished, honored, and revered.

As, for the present, we draw our discussion to a close, there are several related matters that can well be kept in mind.

Some Final Considerations

In relating the Genesis One text to a present-day audience, it may be helpful to ask both *for whom* this creation account was written and *to whom* it was written. John Walton makes the point that,

> [t]he Old Testament *does* communicate to us and it was written for us, and for all humankind. But it was not written *to* us. It was written to Israel. It

is God's revelation of himself to Israel and secondarily through Israel to everyone else.[46]

There is a caution to be kept in mind when considering the message of Genesis One: to fixate on our own day may obscure the contemporary religious and social context in which these accounts were written and the monumental place they hold in the sweep of religious and salvation history. Those early millennia were all but totally given over to a pernicious polytheism, against which monotheism was fighting its way generation after generation. While the Hebrew people themselves frequently surrendered to the prevailing religious climate, it must often have appeared that monotheism was about to be snuffed out.

However, this same monotheistic creation account came through and, most critically, was there when, "in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son" for the reclamation of humankind.[47] To an important extent, the secret of the endurance of monotheism lay in its comprehensibility to the Hebrews themselves—and that would not have been possible with the Genesis One account recited and written in terms of literal twenty-first century cosmology and terminology. Following our present line of reasoning, can we go further and allow that, under inspiration, Genesis One, composed in the widely accepted/respected narrative genre, retained some of the features of the neighboring creation accounts (note the dividing of the waters and the locating of the luminaries within the firmament), the better to allow the essential monotheistic revelations to be clearly understood? (It will be recalled from the Barnhouse anecdote that, in his response to the priest, he did not compose a totally fresh scenario, but built on the already-provided, non-literal story of the priest and, we might add, achieved his purpose admirably by this means.)[48]

In the face of what appear to be insurmountable barriers to a literal/historical reading of Genesis One, ought we to give up the Sabbath teaching as an outdated relic of a pre-scientific age?

What, we might ask, were the positions of the original author and the immediate audience regarding this initial creation chapter? In this expressive narrative, encapsulating much of the community's self-understanding and values, did the inspired writer set out to put on record actual history, pure and simple? And, did the listeners/readers consider they were receiving a fact-by-fact, incident-by-incident recital?

First, note that, from culture to culture (Hebrew and other) in the second millennium BC, there was no doubt of the reality of the divine and that it was under divine jurisdiction that an earthly living environment had been brought into existence, along with humanity and other forms of life. As well, they were all clear that the most effective means for communicating that divine involvement was the narrative form, either via the spoken or the written word.

If the foregoing were not in dispute, what was the leading point of difference between the Hebrews and their polytheistic neighbors in the formation of their creation account? Uppermost for the monotheistic, Abrahamic following, it would appear, were the qualities to be ascribed to God, in contrast to those of the divinities of their neighbors. Following this line, a critical question in the mind of the Hebrew author/auditors/readers need not have been: "Am I composing/hearing/reading history—pure and simple?" Rather, it would be more like: "Is this account portraying for us and for our children the distinctive qualities of our one true God, as a foundation for the remaining values we are resolved to pass on?"

With the reality and creatorship of God beyond question, factuality and literality may hardly have been entertained by either the inspired composers or their hearers/readers.[49] What was wanted was a polemic against the contemporary polytheistic creation accounts, together with a framework that allowed for the representation of some of the eternal qualities of God as listed in the foregoing—and this in the most influential and widely accepted genre available. With these desiderata satisfied, who could complain that the narrative genre employed for Genesis One is not always congruent with undisputed,

twenty-first century cosmology? Non-literal, creative story was at its zenith. The Hebrews, their ANE neighbors, and we ourselves were/are the beneficiaries. And what may be the greatest religious revolution of all time was on its way.

A final consideration: Should we be concerned that disallowing a literal Genesis One will eject us into turbid waters involving such elements as "deep time," theistic evolution, and accounting for death prior to the fall of our first parents? Perhaps we should be so concerned. Perhaps we need not. Here is a suggestion toward clarifying the situation. While the implications of these matters may be worthy of extended study, they may not, of themselves, be necessary accompaniments of settling on a non-literal creation account. As noted earlier, to say that a given account is non-literal should not be allowed to obscure the grand, literal reality behind it. On this view, the actual/literal creation of the cosmos, including earth and life upon it, may be accomplished in all its complexity (and beyond the grasp of the best intellects down to our own day) and later, under inspiration, be recorded in an analogical/representational manner that in essentials could be grasped by both the ancients and ourselves. Under these conditions, an extended lapse of time and its feared concomitants may well not be involved.

The Seventh-day Adventist Privileged Burden

Could we focus, in closing, on a special feature of the world mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church? There is indelibly engraved into our personal and corporate psyche(s) that, of all the days in the week, God chose one as specially blessed so that its observance could be an untold blessing to the whole of humankind. Looking back over multiple thousands of years, we are heirs of one of the truly long-standing institutions given to bind humanity to the "Maker of heaven and earth." We know that, for as long as time shall last, this day is to be a memorial of both creation and redemption and that it is an invitation to cease from our own unavailing efforts and to rest in God's saving achievements—and that, having rested, we may go on to work joyfully in God's cause. We know that the Sabbath is a reminder of the holiness of God and that a sanctified day is an invitation for us to become a sanctified ("set apart") people. And, at a very practical level, we know for ourselves, as we come to the closing evening of each Sabbath, the way it readjusts our thinking for the week to come—helps us grasp that earthly time is but a precursor to the eternal, heavenly realities.

The choice is ours: We can discredit the joyful Sabbath evangel by making it dependent on impossible literal features from the cosmology of the ancient world. Or we can discover within this opening chapter of God's Word its deeper, enduring, epoch-defining revelations and convey these to a heaven-estranged, rest-denied humanity.

Endnotes

1. Throughout the present article, the expression "Genesis One" is to be taken as referring to the passage Genesis 1:1 to 2:4a.

2. Additional parallels can be found, for example, in Trevor G. Lloyd, "Creation Accounts—Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew—A Comparison," *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 36:2 (2006): 97–108. (Macquarie Ancient History Association, Macquarie University, NSW, Australia).

3. Note, as well, that much of what we are able, to this day, to read from the Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts may have been in circulation orally before it was put to writing.

4. These include the Pyramid and Coffin texts and pages from the *Book of the Dead*, all of which were seen by the Egyptians as a guide into the after-life. Papyrus Leningrad 116A, the Amduat, Hymn to the Aten, the Shabaka Stone, and Papyrus Leiden are also available.

5. Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts* (Liverpool University Press, 2004, single volume), 226, Spell 307. See, as well, R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson,1959), 25 —"The basic principle of Egyptian cosmology is the Primeval Waters. It is common to all the accounts of the origin of the universe, however much they may differ in detail."

6. James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1988), 7.

7. Boyo G. Ockinga, trans., *Ancient Egyptian Religion, Selection of Primary Documents* (North Ryde: Macquarie University, 2006), No. 44.

8. Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 178–180; and Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. John Baines (Ithaca; New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 146–148.

9. Rhymes with "fruit."

10. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, Vol. 1 (Leiden; New York; Köhln: Brill, 1997), 22.

11. Robert T. R. Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 76.

12. See James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., (Princeton University Press, 1969), 417.

13. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, Vol 1 (Leiden; New York; Köhln: Brill, 1997), 23.

14. Note, however, that not all of the Egyptian gods were confined to physical action. In *Coffin Texts*, Spell 325, we are told of Hu, "Lord of authoritative utterance" who proclaims that "what I say is good, my utterance is good, and what I say is done accordingly" (Hallo and Younger, 1997), 23.

15. See G. Hasel, "The Polemical Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46:2 (April-June1974): 81–102.

16. See Jacques Doukhan, "The Genesis Creation Story: Text, Issues, and Truth," *Origins* 55, (2004): 21, 22. (Note that Doukhan sees the purpose of the chapter as not solely polemic.)

17. For purposes of comparison, it may be noted that the Egyptian pyramid texts have been dated circa 2350 to 2150 BC and were inscribed on the walls of the chambers and corridors of the royal pyramids. The *coffin texts*, dating from circa 2050 to 1800 BC, were inked onto the inside surfaces of the boards of the coffins of community leaders. *The Book of the Dead* was in regular use from circa 1550 BC and its pages were typically copied onto papyrus and placed in the coffins of any whose relatives could afford to have them written out. Other Egyptian sources regarding creation may be taken as written as follows: *Papyrus Leningrad 1116A*, circa 1400 to 1300 BC; *Teaching for Merikare*, circa 2050 BC; *Amduat*, circa 1425 BC; *Hymns to the Aten*, circa 1340 BC. As might be expected, there is a deal of duplication amongst these and other sources, in view of their all having the one main purpose—the informing of the deceased of the means to be followed in gaining passage to the after-life.

18. See Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 50—"The [Genesis creation] text is composed as the author meditates on the finished work, so that we may understand how the creation is related to God and what is its significance for mankind."

19. Colin Mitchell, *Creationism Revisited* (Grantham, England: Autumn House Limited, 1999), 219, 220. See, as well, the position taken by the *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association and Review and Herald Publishing, 2016), 39—"Genesis grounds the creation as the historical event that introduces and generates every other event in Scripture."

20. Fritz Guy, "The Purpose and Function of Scripture: Preface to a Theology of Creation" in B. Bull, F. Guy and E. Taylor, eds, *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives* (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today, 2006), 96. See, also, Olive J. Hemmings, "*Sola Scriptura*, Truth, and the Future of Bible Interpretation," *Spectrum* 46:1 (2018): 23, note 49—"History has demonstrated that the attempt to transform the Bible into a science book will only create unbelievers, or otherwise mute conformists."

21. While the New American Standard Bible (NASB) has adopted "expanse" to translate *raqia'*, it gives as a footnote: "Or firmament."

22. Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*, 8th edition, Revised (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), 77.

23. Note, however, that, while the most common association of *raqa'* in the Hebrew scriptures is with metals (five out of twelve instances), there are other associations which may involve metaphorical use, such as the stretching/spreading out of the [planet] earth (three times), the stamping of the feet (twice), and the smashing of an enemy (once). One other instance comes from a speech by Elihu in the Book of Job (37:18), in which he asks: "Can you, like him, *spread out* the skies, unyielding as a cast mirror?" (Emphasis added here.) Note that Younker and Davidson (see following), have listed all of these instances of the use of *raqa'* and argued that "skies," in this last instance "most likely refers to the clouds." (See following, AUSS 49:1 (Andrews University Press 2011), 140.

24. Paul H. Seely, "The Firmament and the Water Above" *The Westminster Theological Journal*, 53 (1991): 227–240.

25. Randall W. Younker and Richard M. Davidson, "The Myth of the Solid Heavenly Dome: Another Look at the Hebrew *raqia'*," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 49:1 (2011): 125–147.

26. Seely, "The Firmament", 228, 231.

27. Ibid., 231, 232.

28. Ibid., 233–238.

29. In this context, however, Younker and Davidson may have overlooked the aftermath of the contest between Marduk, the Babylonian patron god, and the salt water monster, Tiamat. As pointed out by Seely (see above), Marduk's forming of the sky has a distinctly solid sense about it. One translation reads: "He split her like a shellfish into two parts:/Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky. … In [Tiamat's] belly he established the zenith./ The Moon he caused to shine, the night (to him) entrusting" (*Enuma elish*, IV:137,138; V:11,12).

30. Younker and Davidson, "The Myth,"141.

31. Ibid., 147. *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (*Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association and Review and Herald Publishing*, 2016), 56, takes a similar position—"What is created is not some kind of solid object, but the space or the atmosphere above humans where luminaries are set (Gen. 1:14–15, 17; Dan. 12:3) and birds fly (Gen. 1:20)."

32. In addition, earlier in their article (142), Younker and Davidson appear to endorse a position taken by Kenneth Mathews that "God formed an 'expanse' to create a boundary, giving structure to the upper and lower waters (1:6–7). The 'expanse' is the atmosphere that distinguishes the surface waters of the earth (i.e., 'the waters below') from the atmospheric waters or clouds (i.e., 'the waters above')."

33. See "The Genesis Creation Story: Text, Issues, and Truth," *Origins* 55 (2004): 17.

34. Paul Petersen, "The Creation Account," *South Pacific Record* 114:41 (24 October 2009): 24,25.

35. Fritz Guy, "The Purpose and Function of Scripture," 93.

36. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Timeless Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 7. (I have paraphrased the original anecdote and made some adaptations, including a transfer from first to third person and the addition of compatible conversation.)

37. Leading Christian apologist, Alister McGrath, regards *imaginary* as "having no counterpart in reality," whereas the *imaginative* is "something produced by the human mind as it tries to respond to something greater than itself, struggling to find images adequate to the reality." Along these lines, McGrath pictures one set of C. S. Lewis's highly creative and imaginative writings as a house, with each book in the set opening up a window which allows us to "see things in a new way. We can see farther than before, as the landscape opens up in front of us. And what we come to see is not an accumulation of individual facts, but the bigger picture which underlies them. When seen in this way, our imaginative experience ... enlarges our sense of reality. Living in our own world feels different afterwards." Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis: A Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), 263, 285.

38. Influential American theologian, Langdon Gilkey, developed a similar theme in *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1959), 317.

39. The title is used by Melchizedek in pronouncing the blessing given in Genesis 14:19, and by Abram in v. 22—and is evidently well familiar to both of them—for how long we do not know.

40. Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1951), 16.

41. It should be kept in mind that, as for religious practice in the Nile valley, over a period of three thousand years, with nations replacing each other, "Mesopotamian religion cannot be conceived as a unitary or even a uniform system." Ivan Hrůša, *Ancient Mesopotamian Religion: A Descriptive Introduction*, trans. from Italian by Michael Tait (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 13.

42. An outline of the Opet Festival can be found in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. For a more detailed account see John C. Darnell, "Opet Festival," *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (2010), 1–15. (Available online)

43. Claas J. Bleeker, *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 22, 23.

44. The quotes are from Alexander Heidel in referring to the gods of Babylon. He adds: "The gods were ... as good and as bad as man" and, quoting Cicero: "[the gods were] inflamed by anger and maddened by lust .... it was with the blood of such gods that man was created!" Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1951), 125,126.

45. See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), 7. Stark also examines a range of factors contributing to the near-exponential growth of Christianity in those early centuries.

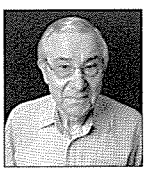
46. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 9 (emphases in original).

47. Galatians 4:4.

48. Doukhan may be more defensive than necessary regarding the effect of Babylonian/Egyptian influence on the Genesis text. He notes: "We could go on and observe many other common motifs between those texts, but it is noteworthy that the greatest concentration of parallels, whether of ideas, language, and literary patterns, occurs here in the context of the introductions. This observation should not mislead us, however. Instead of being an argument on behalf of the Babylonian/Egyptian influence on the biblical text, *thus undermining the original inspiration of the biblical text*, it is, on the contrary, a significant clue of the author's strong polemic intention against these accounts." Doukhan, "The Genesis Creation Story," 21—emphasis added here. It is well-known, for example, that Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus has been compared with the rabbinic tale of the evil tax collector, Bar Majan, and the poor student of the law, and also with the Egyptian funerary text featuring El-Azar.

49. Canadian literary historian, critic, and theorist, Herman Northrop Frye (1912–1991) made a parallel point regarding the legendary Greek poet, Homer—presumed to have been born in the period circa 1200 to 700 BC and, hence, to have been a contemporary of a generation of Hebrew authors at some time during that period. Frye writes: "In [Homer's] poetry the distinction between figured and literal language hardly exists, apart from the special rhetorical show-case of the epic simile already mentioned. ... it is not until the coming of a different conception of language that a tension arises between figurative and what is called 'literal' meaning ..." H. Northrop Fry, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Penguin Books, 1990), 23. See also H. Northrop Fry, *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays* 1974–1988, ed. Robert D. Denham (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 239.

50. As recognized at the outset of the present article, whatever position may be taken in the literal/non-literal discussions there will remain further matters to be considered. Along these lines, it is evident that confirming the Sabbath doctrine by interpreting Genesis One as non-literal, leaves important questions still to be discussed. These relate particularly to the use made of Genesis One in later passages of scripture. (Exodus 20:8–11 and 31:16, 17 come to mind.) In the process of finding relevant answers, it will be helpful to keep in mind the high status (even evidential status?) that both the Hebrews and those in the surrounding cultures gave to the narrative genre and that, in addition, the scholarly Hebrew recognises four possible meanings that passages from the Torah could be given: Peshat (literal/factual); Remaz (suggested); Derush (deeper); and Sōd (inner/allegorical); with their initial letters, PRDS, giving us the consonants of the word *Paradise*. See, for example, William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible, the Letter to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), 67f. [Note that the vowel in the fourth type of possible meaning, *Sōd*, is pronounced as a long ō.] See, as well, Fritz Guy's "The Purpose and Function of Scripture," especially 94–96.



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