

## Reaction to article in Trouw-newspaper on 'first sentence Bible'

Just imagine, you wake up in the morning and read on the front-page of a national paper: 'First sentence Bible is wrong' (see article in Trouw). Fortunately it is not so bad. Closer review shows that according to a scientist, the regular *translations* of the first sentence of the Bible are wrong. The sentence over the headline explained further: 'New interpretations of the Hebrew text Genesis torpedo God as creator'. Since God in Genesis 1:1 did not create heaven and earth, but separated them from each other. Therefore, God is not the creator of heaven and earth.

### Weak logic

That is just weak logic. It is very well possible that the writer of Genesis 1 starts with the separation of heaven and earth. Something similar happens further in the story. In a beautiful poetic performance you see that God separates things in order to create space for the (final) human life on earth. The first separation-act is then described in Genesis 1:1.

But does it say in Genesis 1:1: 'heaven and earth were already there, God did not create them'? No. But should you take it that the writer of Genesis 1 by using 'separate' did presume all this? That he presumes that God therefore did not create heaven and earth? That seems very speculative to me. I think the writer of Genesis 1 used existing material to sing his praise to God the Creator. He did so selectively. He used those elements which were useful for his story. Other elements he deliberately left out. They did not concur with his faith in God, the Lord. This is the story we got in hands and it helps us to see God as the God Who is creatively active. And that is really a revelation!

### Evolution theory

Genesis 1 is not meant to inform us of how everything precisely came into being. And it is subsequently incorrect to claim that the evolution theory invalidated Genesis 1. Such a use of the Bible, in which we should get some sort of scientific information on the process of creation, is wrong according to my opinion.

In Christian tradition God has been professed as the Creator of heaven and earth. In this the Christian tradition concurs with the Jewish and Islamic tradition. There is no second principle next to God, which is 'original' in the absolute sense. There is no dualism between an eternal good and eternal evil principle. 'From Him and through Him and to Him' are all things. Therefore you can entrust yourself completely to God.

### Psalm 33

There are other texts in the Bible that say something about the creation of heaven and earth. Psalm 33:6 says for example: 'By the word of the LORD were the heavens made'. The word 'made' (na-asu) is another word than the word in Genesis 1:1 (ba-ra). The word 'separate' is not a solution there.

The translation of the word 'ba-ra' is not just questionable since today. It is sometimes a matter of careful consideration to retrieve the meaning of the Hebrew words and sometimes there is a surprising new understanding. It is very well possible that this is the case here. Of course scientists may discuss and dispute this in all freedom.

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