

The Book of Genesis Part I – Table of Contents (tentative)

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Week 1: Why Genesis?**Text Reading: Genesis 1:1**

“In beginning, God created...”

The title of this first lesson, “Why Genesis?” will lead most readers to the fuller thought of “Why *study* the Book of Genesis?” as in, “Why did the instructor choose Genesis as his next biblical study?” But that is not the import of the question. Rather the focus of the question is captivated fully in the two-word question, “Why Genesis?” As in, *why was Genesis written?* and *Why was Genesis not only included in the canon of Scripture, but placed at the very opening of divine revelation?* There are many reasons to ask such questions; some stemming from the manner in which the Book of Genesis is treated within professing Christianity today, and others stemming from the book itself. As to the latter category, there is the manifest reality that the Book of Genesis is not an overtly *theological*, or even a *redemptive* tome. True, it is in Genesis we discover the all-important fact of mankind’s fall into sin, but the path of redemption from that sin is not clearly set forth in the ensuing chapters. Indeed, the ‘theology’ of Genesis is almost exclusively derived from reading the balance of Scripture back into this first book of the Bible.

Another feature of the book that renders such an inquiry valid is the fact that its history essentially predates the more dynamic acts of God with regard to the outworking of His redemptive plan within human history. For instance, the Dispensationalist can locate four of the seven ‘dispensation’s in this book,¹ with the entire balance of the Old Testament devoted to the fifth (the Mosaic), and most of the New Testament hinging upon the sixth (the Church Age). This is not to say that Genesis is devoid of redemptive material: there is the ‘proto-evangelium’ in 3:15, the Abrahamic call and covenant, and Israel’s prophecy with respect to the ‘sceptre’ of Judah. We will see that the first two of these examples

¹ Innocence, Conscience, Government, and Promise are all comprehended within the Book of Genesis.

are indeed paradigmatic, setting patterns that not only the rest of the Book of Genesis, but the whole of Scripture, will follow. Still, the way of redemption would have been forever shrouded in mystery if all man had to go on was the Book of Genesis.

Modern Christianity itself does not seem to know what to make of, or do with, the book. Liberals discount it as myth and legend, believing that Science has thoroughly debunked the quaint Hebrew stories found in its pages. Conservatives get their hackles up, of course, but then often turn Genesis into an academic battleground – a use for which it was never intended. The popular radio program, *Answers in Genesis*, frankly asks the wrong questions with its clear emphases on Geology and Biology, and runs the danger of obscuring the true message and import of the book. Still, neither side is entirely wrong in its approach (though both may be wrong in their conclusions), and it is as important to realize that the history of the Book of Genesis is, indeed, the *story* of a people, as it is to realize that the ‘science’ of Genesis is nowhere in contradiction with true, empirical Science today.

So Why Genesis? The title itself might give us a hint as to its purpose, except that our English is a transliteration of the Latin title, which came many centuries after the book was written and is itself not part of the text. ‘Genesis’ is the English derivative of the Latin *Liber Genesis* from Jerome’s translation of the Bible called the Vulgate. This title means simply, ‘Book of Origins,’ and as such is not a bad title for the first book of the Bible. Still, it is not appended to the text of the book, and it is somewhat misdirecting and dangerous, as it may lead the reader to believe that he or she is about to enter a Hebrew version of Ancestry.com.

The Hebrews had a simpler method of titling the books of the Bible, in many cases (Genesis included) by taking the first word of the book and setting it as the book’s title. Thus the Hebrew title for this particular book is *bere’shit*, which is the opening word in the Hebrew text. It is normally translated as “*in the*

beginning,” and the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, renders it with *en archai* – literally, in the beginning. But the article is not present in the Hebrew, and so the first word could also be translated simply, *in beginning*. It is a minor point, to be sure, but the second rendering does remove the focus from that of *time* to that of *activity*, a movement that may prove quite useful as we investigate the meaning of the rest of the book.

So, then, the Book of Genesis is a ‘book of origins,’ starting most notably with the origin of the world and of the human race. But it is not merely a genealogy, as important as those are in tracing the lineage of the Messiah. It is not a book to which we can turn once, establish the proper pedigree of Jesus Christ in His messianic person, and then depart therefrom, rarely if ever to return. Perhaps more significantly it is a ‘book of beginnings,’ yet even here there is the danger of improper emphasis. While the Book of Genesis is indeed a book of the beginnings with regard to the created cosmos, and of all living creatures culminating in Man himself, such an exegetical emphasis misses the point. We must read the next word: “In the beginning, *God...*” Too much of conservative Christian scholarship directed at Genesis fails to take its eyes off the *object* of Creation, and to redirect them to the divine *Subject*, God. God, who is without beginning, yet ‘began’ to bring about His plan of redemption, the ultimate end of which is to manifest the glory of His name throughout the universe. Thus we do not read, *In the beginning the fish were created*, or *In the beginning Man was created*, but rather, *In the beginning, God...*

This speaks volumes as to the reason for Genesis having been written, and having been preserved in Scripture for our instruction and edification. It is the *beginning* of God’s self-disclosure, and throughout its pages we read not only the history of the distant ancient world, but also the allegory of His divine glory. The book begins in the Garden of Eden, moves through the Promised Land, and ends in Egypt. The rest of the Bible begins in Egypt, moves through the Promised Land, and ends in the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New

Earth. Therefore, as any good introduction will do, the Book of Genesis encapsulates the entire movement and history not only of God's people, but of the whole of mankind, as it is then fleshed out from Exodus through to Revelation. That is *Why Genesis!*

Yet while the focus of any study of the Book of Genesis should start and stay fixed upon divine self-disclosure, this does not nullify the *history* through which God discloses Himself. The liberal commits a *non sequitur* when he concludes that, because the Book of Genesis is the story of a people written *after* the establishment of that people, it is therefore myth and legend. Their premise, however, is correct and conservatives must acknowledge this: the Book of Genesis is indeed a *metanarrative* – the grand story of a people, the nation of Israel, the people of Jehovah. A metanarrative is a 'Big Story,' and all peoples have – indeed, *need* – one to cohere their society and culture into a recognizable unit. But all metanarratives are not the same, and many are fictional works of myth and legend. One contemporary writer acknowledges the biblical metanarrative, and highlights why it is still important today,

This is where the word *metanarrative* comes into importance. At its simplest, the word represents a "Big Story," or a comprehensive explanation of many little stories. The metanarrative of the Bible is its story of the self-revelation of God to the world... This is important because postmodern people do not believe in metanarratives. They feel that there are no grand stories which give meaning to all of life and which define what is true. Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), the postmodern philosopher, said: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives."²

The metanarrative of Genesis was compiled many centuries - even millennia - and many generations after the events which it describes. So it is with all metanarratives, most of which are myth and legend. Therefore, although our faith must deny, yet our intellect must allow for the possibility that the

² Postmodern Preaching: How to Preach Christ in a Postmodern World;
<http://www.postmodernpreaching.net/the-biblical-metanarrative.html>

stories of Genesis are mythical and/or legendary. However, we must also intellectually repudiate the notion that any such post-dated history is of necessity mythical and/or legendary. Recognizing that the mini-narratives of Genesis were most likely passed from generation to generation as oral tradition does not thereby render them false or fantastic. Indeed, by acknowledging the means of transmission of all metanarratives – from oral to written – we may also discover one of those grand stories to be the purest form of the original Truth. This is what we believe the biblical narrative of Genesis to be, and our intellectual investigation serves to strengthen our faith in its veracity and divine origin.

Recent scholarship with regard to the metanarratives of the far-ancient world – that of the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians, for instance – is somewhat analogous to that of the theory of biological evolution, but with a twist. It was long taught within evolutionary schools that mankind descended from primates (though there was little agreement as to which primate was man's most direct ancestor). Then, with the discovery of DNA, this theory proved untenable and was replaced with the concept of a 'common ancestor.' Man no longer is believed to have evolved from ape, but rather both man and ape evolved from a common ancestor – no trace of whom (of course) has been found.

Biblical scholars have done this same thing with, for instance, the three Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament. It was once maintained by liberal commentators, that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were derived from the shorter Gospel of Mark. But the dissimilarities in content and order made this theory as untenable as the direct descent of man from ape. So 'Q' was invented by biblical scholars: an original proto-document (which has also never been found) from which all three synoptic Gospels were developed. It is a popular fiction that even many evangelical commentators have bought into.

When applied to the metanarrative of Genesis, the logic follows the same path, though not quite so far. It is undeniable that there were 'Creation Stories' and metanarratives written down before the Book of Genesis – the Babylonian

Enuma Elish, for instance, and the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* both date from centuries prior to Moses' compilation of Genesis. There are distinct similarities between these ancient legends and the Book of Genesis, as well as very significant differences. Liberal scholars, therefore, conclude that Genesis was derived from the earlier epic narratives, with appropriate modifications to suit the inauguration of a new people, Israel.

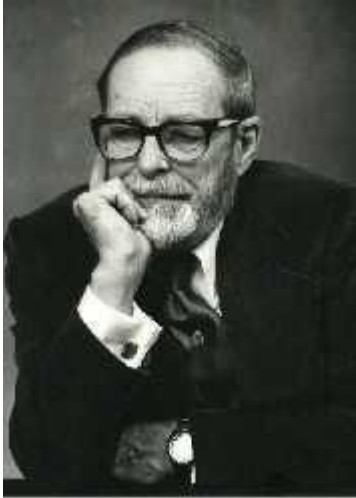
The difference between this case and that of the synoptic Gospels, however, is that modern scholarship utterly discounts the historicity of the ancient narratives while it accepts (as it must) the history of the first century AD, the venue of the Gospels. Stories of origins – especially of the ultimate origin of all things – are impossible of scientific verification and are therefore systematically relegated to myth and legend. No individual metanarrative is any 'truer' than the others; all are merely a jumbled attempt of ancient people creating their own history in order to solidify their own identity. Speaking of much of modern scholarship in regard to Genesis, Leon Kass writes,

They tend to be interested, for example, in finding cross-cultural comparisons between the biblical myths of the ancient Hebrews and the myths of *Gilgamesh* and other literary works of the ancient world, but they rarely ponder which, if any, might be closer to the truth of things.³

But therein lies the *non sequitur* – the conclusion does not logically follow upon the premises.

First of all, let us deal with the similarities among the ancient metanarratives. Whereas liberal scholars see in such similarities the falsity of all of the ancient stories – and the 'fact' that the biblical narrative must have been no more than a derivation of earlier myths – is it not also plausible that such correspondence between ancient metanarratives is proof of a central, original story? Indeed, man does not create *ex nihilo* even in his imagination. All myths

³ Kass, Leon R. *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press; 2003); 2.



Arthur Custance (1910-85)

and all legends have their origination in history; true history corrupted through generations of oral transmission. Yet corruption need not be inevitable. Christian anthropologist Arthur Custance cites numerous examples in his *Genesis and Early Man*, illustrating the remarkable consistency of oral traditions passed on through many generations by peoples not possessing a written language. Custance writes, "It is a curious thing that tradition, preserved by word of mouth where literature is not in existence, may be even more perfectly preserved, perhaps because the absence of writing makes it more necessary to exercise memory."⁴

Anthropologists have frequently noted that departures from the core history within such oral traditions are usually replaced by the fantastical, the irrational – in other words, by myth and legend. Yet the framework of the core tradition often remains remarkably similar across divergent people groups, vast expanses of geography, and wide intervals of time. Thus we find 'flood narratives' in the ancient formative stories of cultures as widely separated as the Egyptian and the Chinese, the American Indian and the Sumerian. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* clearly has a 'Noah' character (Utnapishtim), and the creation myth of the ancient Egyptians and Chinese both begin with an original Man and Woman. There are many such similarities between non-biblical ancient metanarrative stories and the biblical Book of Genesis; so many, indeed, that one must logically conclude the existence of a foundational tradition from which all were derived with greater or lesser veracity.

So the task becomes a test of historicity, rather than a blanket denial of the historical accuracy of all ancient stories. In this regard it seems reasonable – at least from a 21st Century perspective – to grade each metanarrative on the basis

⁴ Custance, Arthur C., *Genesis and Early Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; 1975); 78.

of mythical/legendary content. Which of the stories are most fantastical, least rational and which are presented in the most sober, even historical manner? One such litmus test that may be applied is the manner in which a text deals with its 'heroes.' And while the liberal scholar may see this as evidence of unimaginative Hebrew literature, it remains the case that all of the biblical heroes are presented in all of their frail and fallen humanity; as they say, 'warts and all.' None are derived from divine procreation; none are deified by acts of strength and valor in life; none are set before us in any other manner as 'from dust you have come, and to dust you shall return.' To be sure, many of these men were mighty in the faith, and their trust in their God is a recurring theme through Genesis and the whole Bible. But even this trust is frail and halting, with the great ones - Abraham and Moses for instance - falling into error, presumption, and sin. They are real people, and thus hardly the stuff of legend or myth.

Another test is that of theology proper: the doctrine of God. Almost by their very nature, myths and legends of the ancient world are polytheistic and, by extension, metaphysically chaotic. There is no *order* in the universe, only competition and war among the gods as well as among men. Here again the narrative of Genesis comes across as distinctly non-mythological. There is one God, the Creator of all things and the Ruler and Judge of that is created. The closest thing to a competitor is Satan, who is introduced to the reader as unmistakably the *creation* of the one God and who is judged and condemned by that God for his role in Man's fall. Liberals maintain that such monotheism as is reflected in the Bible was the product of societal evolution over many generations. But this assumes that development can progress from impure to pure across time, whereas all of recorded human history proves the exact opposite. Monotheism - the purer and stronger theology - was original; polytheism the corruption. "By its monotheism the Old Testament surmounted

all mythology; that is to say all the traces of dualism inherent in every mythology.”⁵ Bruce Waltke makes the point that the Book of Genesis was written, at least in part, to refute the polytheistic paganism that had been undoubtedly imbibed by the Israelites during their sojourn in Egypt. He maintains that it was against the ancient metanarrative myths that Genesis 1-11 was written ‘as a polemic.’⁶



Bruce Waltke (b. 1930)

Finally, at least for this analysis, there is the test of the text itself. It may be argued that the ancient Greeks believed in the historical veracity of their myths, and that the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, etc., did as well. But the reality of the matter is that belief in such far-fetched tales as Mount Olympus was only in proportion to the ignorance and superstition of the man. The more educated in every society recognized the irrational nature of the myths: the philosophers mocked, and the politicians manipulated, the credulity of the masses. The bottom line was that the myths were written as myths, and clearly seen to be myths by the intelligentsia of the ancient world. On the contrary, however, the Book of Genesis is written in plain, historical indicative with only the slightest traces of that which might be legendary or mythological (for instance, Genesis 6:2). Jacobs comments,

But in the narratives of Genesis and their poetic parallels in Psalm 104, which are the only passages where theological reflection about the creation is exercised, mythological elements are clearly subordinated to history, so that we are here in the presence of a history of creation, and not a myth of creation; the features characteristic of myth are absent from it.⁷

Thus the modern contention that the narratives of Genesis are ‘un-historical’ Hebrew myths simply begs the question; it assumes a conclusion to be

⁵ Jacob, Edmond; *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row; 1958); 148.

⁶ Waltke, Bruce K. *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; 2001); 23.

⁷ Jacobs; 138.

true that, in fact, still needs to be established. And only the most biased of readers will interpret Genesis as purporting to be anything other than straightforward *history*. This is not to say that further investigation will not be required with regard to the several passages within the book that contain what appears to be more fantastical content – more mythological or legendary, perhaps – but rather to acknowledge at the outset that the book does not represent itself as myth or legend, but as history. And it is merely intellectual integrity to take a book, at least initially, at face value.

So what *is* the Book of Genesis? Is it a History book? A Science book? A Theology text? The answer to each is ‘No,’ but there have been advocates of all three. The first two are especially popular among conservative evangelicals (sadly, no longer an oxymoron) today. While there are elements within Genesis that have application to the study of both disciplines – Science and History – neither of these represents the thrust of the book. There is a danger associated with misinterpreting the meaning and value of the Book of Genesis in either of these two directions. We begin with that of *History* book.

Genesis as History:

The biggest problem with viewing the Book of Genesis as a history text is the same difficulty encountered by all history texts: lack of universal interest. To this problem the pervasive teaching of Dispensationalism over the past 150 years has added the concept of the ‘Church Age’ as a portion of God’s overall plan, separate and distinct with the divine purpose for the Jewish people. Thus is we view Genesis as the foundational metanarrative for the nation of Israel – the ‘book of origins’ that gave that nation its coherence – then there is little to be gleaned from it that is of value to the believer today. “The truths to be learned from the book are not universal and enduring truths about God and man, but merely parochial and historical truths about the beliefs of the ancient children of

Israel whose book it once was.”⁸ Thus modern evangelicals pick a few choice morsels from the Book of Genesis – the Story of the Fall, the Great Flood, etc. – that seem to pertain in some way to the Christian message, and leave the rest of the book for the consequently empty ‘spiritual discipline’ of reading through the Bible.

What is insidious about this particular error is that a person can be perfectly orthodox with regard to the inerrancy of Scripture – can believe wholeheartedly in the historical integrity of the Book of Genesis – and yet miss entirely the divine teaching contained there. A lie so subtle can have but one source.

Another reason to reject the Book of Genesis as a history text (again note, without rejecting the historicity of the book) is that, as a history text it is somewhat of a failure. The history recorded is remarkable selective and narrow in focus: essentially zeroing in on one small branch of the human race, the descendants of Abraham. Whenever a book that purports to be historical focuses on only a narrow sliver of the chronology covered, there must be a reason (or an irrationality) that transcends the historical significance of the work. For instance, one certainly hopes that a biography is historical, while recognizing that the narrow focus on the subject takes the book outside the realm of *history text* and places it in a distinct genre, the *biographical history*. In a similar manner we must read the historical narratives of the Book of Genesis with an eye to the selection of material contained there, rather than trying to find a historical overview of early human civilization or even a comprehensive history of the forbears of the Hebrew nation.

The historical narratives are important because of their selection to be a part of this work, and thus it is reasonable to conclude that this anthology of stories itself tells a story – an overarching narrative that is a tapestry of the interwoven histories contained in the book. This is, by definition, an *allegory*; and

⁸ Kass; 2.

that is a not-so-subtle hint. Leon Kass writes, “But these seemingly historical stories are in fact (also and especially) vehicles for conveying the timeless psychic and social elements or principles – the *anthropological beginnings* or roots – of human life, and in all their moral ambiguity.”⁹

We will have frequent occasion to note the historical accuracy of the Genesis narratives – indeed, it has often been said that the Bible has never been proven historically inaccurate in any of its statements. But the goal is not merely to trumpet the veracity of an ancient text from which we gain no other practical benefit, but rather to piece together the narratives into the whole fabric of divine self-disclosure that is the Book of Genesis.

Genesis as Science:

The treatment of Genesis as a Science book is without a doubt a modern phenomenon with no parallels in either Jewish or ancient Christian reading of the book. It is the understandable reaction of believers to the pervasive theory, taught as scientific fact, of Evolution. Undoubtedly few if any of the modern proponents of the ‘Science of Genesis’ would assert that Science is the main



Edward J. Young (1907-68)

purpose and meaning of the Book of Genesis, yet the intense focus that has been placed on Genesis with regard to Science has had deleterious effects on the interpretation and application of the book. Still, just as with the history analysis, this is not to say that the Book of Genesis is *unscientific*, much less scientifically inaccurate. We agree with Edward Young when he states, “Although Genesis does not purport to be a textbook of science, nevertheless, when it touches upon scientific subjects, it is accurate. Science has never discovered any facts which are in

⁹ Kass; 10.

conflict with the statements of Genesis 1.”¹⁰ But what has often happened is that the Book of Genesis has ‘evolved’ from a polemic against polytheistic paganism to a polemic against atheistic Evolution. So while it is in many cases a noble and necessary effort for modern scientists who are believers, to engage the evolutionary community and teaching with truths gleaned from the Book of Genesis, there still remains the danger of diverting attention from the real purpose of the book.

Perhaps the greatest danger associated with a scientific exegesis of the Book of Genesis stems from an inadequate view of inspiration. On the one hand, inspiration teaches us that the self-revelation of God within Scripture is ‘without error.’ But on the other hand, this truth can be misconstrued as meaning ‘containing entire truth.’ When tempered with the theory of confluence – that God and man flow together in the writing of Scripture; God mediating His revelation through the instrument of man – the doctrine of inspiration allows for the realities of culture and historical context. Knowing that this statement will sound very liberal, still it must be acknowledged that divine inspiration did not make the biblical writers modern scientists. Their description of nature was according to their understanding of nature, and in many instances that understanding has proven to be faulty. This does not mean (again, a caveat!) that anything stated by the writers of Scripture is scientifically inaccurate (and one must be careful here to remember that poetry is not the same as narrative prose). But it does mean that the Book of Genesis, written 3,500 years ago, is perhaps not the best place to go to find Science.

The features and forces of nature, as they appear in Genesis, have a deeper meaning to the reader than that of scientific inquiry or law. The cosmic battle between Darkness and Light, also represented between Earth and Sea, are not presented as scientific treatises but are metaphysical metaphors that contain

¹⁰ Young, Edward J. *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; 1964); 49.

much deeper significance. To overemphasize the scientific or natural aspects of the Book of Genesis is often to miss the moral implications intended for the presence of Nature within the sacred text. In both a literal and figurative sense, it is to see only the mundane and miss the cosmic or moral.

Finally, as with the historical analysis, we must admit that the Book of Genesis – and the Bible in general – is woefully inadequate as a scientific textbook. It simply does not approach the material in anything like a modern, scientific methodology. Furthermore, with regard to the narratives of Genesis, the content of the text lacks the fundamental features of an object of scientific inquiry: susceptibility to empirical examination and the possibility of disproof. Psalm 19, it may be, instructs us to look to Nature to satisfy our scientific curiosity, knowing that even there we will find a form of divine revelation. But of the special revelation of Scripture, here we find truths upon which Nature is silent.

The Bible also recognizes the silence of the heavens and the earth regarding the human good and, therefore, emphasizes the incompetence of human reason, thinking only about nature, to find a decent and righteous way to live. These deficiencies of nature and human reason the Bible supplies by what is traditionally called revelation – a teaching for human life that, though *accessible* to human reason, is apparently not *available* to unaided human reason as it ponders the natural world.¹¹

Thus we look for more from the Book of Genesis than mere History or Science. We look for the *beginning* of the self-disclosure of the Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, and Ruler of the Cosmos. We look for the revelation of His will and purpose, especially as it pertains to Man and to Man's Home, Earth. In the narratives that are woven together within its fifty chapters, we hope to unfold the Allegory of the Divine Glory.

¹¹ Kass; 6.

Week 2: Answers in Genesis**Text Reading: Genesis 1:1***“In beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*

One of the most popular Christian ministry of the recent past is the “Answers in Genesis” apologetics resource founded by Ken Ham. The ministry’s website gives as its mission statement the following:

“Answers in Genesis is an apologetics (i.e., Christianity-defending) ministry, dedicated to enabling Christians to defend their faith and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively.”¹² The introductory material goes on to highlight the ministry’s emphasis on the Book of Genesis as “the most-attacked book of the Bible,” which

**Ken Ham (1951-)**

is probably a true statement if one limits the time frame to the past one hundred or so years. There is no doubt that the veracity of the Genesis account of Creation, and of the Flood, and of the narratives of human genealogy, has taken quite a beating as the world has increasingly imbibed an evolutionary view. But “Answers in Genesis” makes another statement on its website that betrays a particular interpretive methodology; one that is itself as modern as the attacks on Genesis itself, “The Bible—the “history book of the universe”—provides a reliable, eye-witness account of the beginning of all things, and can be trusted to tell the truth in all areas it touches on.”¹³

“The history book of the universe”? By any standard this is an overstatement, for the Bible – and especially the opening book of the Bible – leaves a great deal unsaid with regard to the ‘history of the universe.’ One might simply ask the question: ‘What of the angels?’ to highlight but one area where the Scriptures are quite silent. The size of the universe, the formation and

¹² <http://www.answersingenesis.org/about>

¹³ *Idem.*

movements of the galaxies, the natural parameters of quasars and black holes, the establishment of elliptical orbits for the planets of our own solar system, on all of these topics the Bible is silent. Undoubtedly there have been thousands of high school students over the years who would have loved to have a textbook that passed over so many things – and so many years – in so few words!

The strength of “Answers in Genesis” – and it does appear to be a strong and positive ministry to the modern Church – is that it offers a different analysis of the anthropological and geological sciences; an analysis that self-consciously accepts the testimony of Scripture with regard to the creation of all things by one, almighty God. Its weakness, however (and all institutions and ministries have weaknesses), is a common one: to overstate its own importance and to overwork the biblical testimony in support of its goals. On this last point the weakest link in AiG’s apologetical efforts – and that of many other modern Christian scientific apologetical efforts – is its reliance on the doctrine of *absolute literal* interpretation of Scripture. The mantra of today’s evangelical (or, at least, fundamentalist) church is “The Bible says what it means and means what it says.” To question the application of this statement is to run the risk of being labeled a liberal or a heretic. So here’s to running risks...

Scripture is a unique form of communication; the most unique form of communication in all of human history. Its purpose is to communicate the incomprehensible, to reveal the *Infinite* to finite minds. This it does, of necessity, using human speech and human life, at times even acknowledging the limitations of this mode of communication (*cp.* Romans 6:19). There are several, perhaps even numerous, passages of Scripture that more than hint to us that the comprehensive whole of divine reality is well beyond our intellectual grasp. A particularly powerful one is found in the reflections of Job toward the end of his ordeal, where the patriarch speaks in worshipful though unscientific terms,

*"The departed spirits tremble
 Under the waters and their inhabitants.
 "Naked is Sheol before Him,
 And Abaddon has no covering.
 "He stretches out the north over empty space
 And hangs the earth on nothing.
 "He wraps up the waters in His clouds,
 And the cloud does not burst under them.
 "He obscures the face of the full moon
 And spreads His cloud over it.
 "He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the
 waters at the boundary of light and darkness.*

*"The pillars of heaven tremble
 And are amazed at His rebuke.
 "He quieted the sea with His power,
 And by His understanding He shattered
 Rahab.
 "By His breath the heavens are cleared;
 His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.
**"Behold, these are the fringes of His
 ways; and how faint a word we hear of
 Him!
 But His mighty thunder, who can
 understand?"***

(Job 26:5-14)

We add to this the incomparable doxology from the Apostle Paul, albeit following a *historical* analysis (not a scientific one) of redemptive history in Romans 9, 10, and 11,

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

(Romans 11:33-36)

Passages, and emotions, such as these remind us to humility when we come to the Scriptures, especially when we approach the self-disclosure of God with regard to His nature and to His work. He speaks to us in our language; but our language is inherently inadequate to fully comprehend the reality of the One who speaks to us. This is not to say that 'anything goes' with respect to the exegesis and interpretation of Scripture. Quite the contrary, it warns us to be careful in our exegesis and sober in our interpretation, knowing as we do that we gaze in Scripture upon "*the fringes of His ways.*" It cautions us to be careful that we do not seek to find 'answers in Genesis' for the wrong questions, or to subject any book of the Bible to an interpretive paradigm imposed by a modern

controversy. And, while still acknowledging the *simplicity* of biblical revelation, it admonished us to avoid *simplistic* exegesis and interpretation.

If we pause to look at the contemporary debate with regard to the 'age' of the Earth and the Universe, we find that both sides - Evolutionary and Creationist - approach the issue with powerful bias, and both ignore significant empirical data. On the evolutionist's side, for instance, it has long been shown that the argument for an 'old earth' is circular - reasoning from geologic formations to fossil age and from fossil age to geologic formation - and absolutely necessitated by the incredible amounts of time 'needed' for biological evolution to take place. But ignored is the patent fact that mankind's own history traces back only around 5,000 years, and that when man does appear in the archaeological records, he does so as fully civilized - though not as technologically advanced - as modern man. Thus human civilization - a remarkable and truly incredible advancement over the next lowest stage of animal development - occupies a mere one one-ten-thousandth of a percent (0.0001%) of the alleged age of the Earth. That, and many other features of 'evolutionary' science, is pretty hard to swallow.

But on the Creationist side, the 'Young Earth' hypothesis does not necessarily follow from the first chapter of Genesis, being demanded only when one adopts a strictly literal interpretation of the word 'day' found there. While there are arguments in favor of such an interpretation, there are also valid arguments against it. And it must be granted that such an interpretation of the opening chapter of Genesis is remarkably modern in the history of the Church. Empirically, however, the Creationist view does struggle (at least in the minds of many) with the apparent age of the planet - it just *seems* older than a relatively few thousand years.

Neither of these observations is intended to summarily refute or definitively support the views of Evolution or of Creationism. They are merely offered to illustrate the hermeneutical paradigms which, in each case, largely

govern the interpretation of the data. For the evolutionist, the 'fact' of an Old Earth is read in every analysis of a fossil or a geologic stratum. For the creationist, the 'fact' of a Young Earth is the backdrop to every analysis of biblical interpretation and scientific investigation. The former does not concern us here; the latter most certainly does. Could it be that a departure from such bias may yield different, and perhaps more accurate, 'answers in Genesis'? At least it may cause us to ask different, and more appropriate, questions of the text.

Time & Eternity:

As the modern debate¹⁴ seems to center so much upon the age of the Earth, perhaps it is best to begin the exegesis of Genesis 1:1, our text, with a necessarily brief discussion of the concepts of Time and Eternity. In particular, in keeping with the introductory remarks above, it would be well to analyze whether or not we are 'asking the right questions' of Genesis with regard to these concepts. As was shown in the last lesson, the correct translation of the first word of Genesis 1:1 has a significant impact on the perspective one takes to the interpretation of the whole passage and chapter. Admittedly, modern evangelicals approach Genesis Chapter 1, and the whole Book of Genesis for that matter, under the rubric of a chronological report of historical events. Inasmuch as Genesis speaks of the events of mankind's earliest years, this is a proper approach. But when considered in light of the nature of an immutable God, to whom 'time' cannot mean what it does to man, it becomes apparent that such a chronologically-driven exegesis is inadequate.

Perhaps a better governing paradigm for the study of Creation is found in the Book of Acts, where the Apostle Paul quotes an intriguing maxim: "*In Him we live, and move, and have our being.*"¹⁵ What does this statement mean? Paul was

¹⁴ One must acknowledge that the 'debate' is quite one-sided; in general the evolutionary scientific world is not debating creationism, but merely subjecting it to scorn and ridicule. On the creationism side, frankly, there is a great deal of 'preaching to the choir.'

¹⁵ Acts 17:28

speaking to pagans at the time, not to believers, so it is evident that he was making a general statement that applies to all mankind. At the very least it means that we cannot contemplate the existence of man apart from the reality of God; the two are so inextricably interrelated that the *time* of the former cannot be divorced entirely from the *eternity* of the latter.

The biggest problem encountered when trying to establish an absolute timeline or calendar of events for Creation, is the fact that God so transcends time as to make the concept almost irrelevant (and perhaps even irreverent when spoken of in the same context as the Eternal One). Consider the Apostle Peter's response to those who were marking time with respect to the Second Coming of the Lord, "*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*"¹⁶ Notice here that the disciple who asked the Lord, "*Is now the time that You will establish Your kingdom?*" has become the Apostle who refutes the mockers for their insolence in attempting to speak of God's timing in human terms. Oscar Cullmann comments on this passage, that the Apostle,

...gives a reminder to the impatient mockers. Here again the purpose is to assert, not the timelessness of God, but rather the endless character of the time of God, which he alone can grasp and which can be expressed only by saying that for God the standards for measuring time are different.¹⁷

There are many indications in Scripture that we are always on shaky ground whenever we attempt to 'nail down' the time aspect of the divine work. Perhaps the most important and intriguing of these is the nature or attribute of the Second Person of the Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the *eternally-begotten* Son of God. This is admittedly a difficult concept for the finite mind of man to grasp, for the two words thus combined seem to be mutually exclusive. How can someone be *begotten* yet be *eternal*? But the alternative is the heresy of

¹⁶ II Peter 3:8

¹⁷ Cullman, Oscar; *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press; 1950); 69.

Arianism, that ‘there was a time when Christ was not,’ and heresy is generally where man ends up every time he tries to circumscribe the nature and work of God within the inadequate terms and parameters that God Himself provided for our understanding. Of course, the unbeliever and skeptic see these intellectual limitations as proof that Christianity is irrational (but what can you do?).

We cannot explain the eternally-begotten nature of the Son of God except by derivation. We know from Scripture that Jesus is the Son and God the Father, and we are informed explicitly that, “*Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee.*”



Karl Barth (1886-1968)

We also know that Jesus Christ is ‘fully God of fully God,’ not a subordinate god created by the Father. Therefore we must conclude (rationally) that as eternity is an essential attribute of deity, the Son must be eternally begotten. Such reasoning provides us with an excellent analogy to be applied to the ‘age’ question of the universe, as Karl Barth cogently puts it in his *Church Dogmatics*, “In contrast to everything that we know of origination and causation, creation denotes the divine action which has a real analogy, a genuine point of comparison, only in the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, and therefore only in the inner life of God Himself.”¹⁸

This is how one ought to think of time in relation to God and Eternity. Time in relation to mankind, however, occurs on our level because it was created for Man ‘in the beginning.’ Thus history does not become meaningless, and ‘time’ does not become some philosophical construct. Past, present, and future are *real* to man because they comprise that Reality signified in Genesis 1:1, “*the heavens and the earth.*” Therefore it is proper to say that Man had a beginning, for he did – and indeed, the evident unity of the human race argues from another

¹⁸ Barth, Karl; *Church Dogmatics: Volume III The Doctrine of Creation Part I* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1958); 14.

perspective that Man originated “*from one man*” and from that man came “*every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth.*”¹⁹ But when we consider ‘the beginning,’ just as when we consider the ‘eternally-begotten Son,’ we reach the limits of finite rationality and can only gaze humbly into the suprarational mind of God; we have reached the “*fringes of His ways.*”

What is the alternative? There is a subtle line here that is not easy to see, but one crosses it into the realm of error, heresy, and blasphemy. It has to do, again, with the two Realities encountered in Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” On the one hand this verse unashamedly sets forth the supreme Reality, God, as the Creator of all that is. But on the other hand there is the unmistakable Reality of a Creation – something other than God, distinct from God and yet *real*. (The Hebrew psalmist would write *Selah* here). How can there be a Reality distinct from God? Yet to deny the heavens and the earth is to both deny our own perceptions and to deny the Word of God. That the second Reality is subordinate is clearly indicated by Genesis 1:1, and fully accords with the most rigorous logic: the laws of causation convince us that nothing can be the cause of itself. Therefore Barth writes,

If the world is not created by God, it is not. If we do not recognize that it has been created by God, we do not recognize that it is. But we know that it has been created by God only on the ground of God’s self-witness and therefore in faith. Therefore we know only in faith that the world is.²⁰

So we cannot reasonably deny what our faith says is true, and our senses says is real. But here is where that subtle error creeps in: for the presence of two Realities is *Dualism*, perhaps the single most common error of false human religion and philosophy. Dualism is rationally untenable, for all dualistic models must resolve themselves somehow into a Monism, whether it be of the Spirit or of Matter. The human mind cannot abide two equal primaries (even the phrase

¹⁹ Acts 17:26

²⁰ Barth; 6.

itself - 'two equal primaries' - is ludicrous). Therefore we accept the reality of the heavens and the earth, and accept that they are distinct from God in some manner, as Barth asserts,

Whatever these two terms [heavens & earth] may denote both individually and in concert, there can be no doubt that in the sense of the biblical witness from Genesis to the Revelation of John, they denote the sum of the reality which is distinct from God.²¹

What is important at this point is that we stop short of granting 'the heavens and the earth' an independent Reality separate and opposite from God. And this is what results when man - believers, primarily - try too hard to nail down the chronology of 'the beginning.' When we do this, we cross over the line from time-as-it-to-Man, to time-as-it-is-to-God, and it is very hard to avoid error at this point. Arthur Custance provides a useful analogy as to the difference between Time and Eternity, or man's perspective of time versus God's perspective of time, and it is an analogy that will elicit memories of confusion from anyone who remembers the first time they were introduced to the concept of 'infinity.'

The really important thing to notice is that time stands in the same relation to eternity, in one sense, as a large number does to infinity. There is a sense in which infinity includes a very large number, yet it is quite fundamentally different and independent of it. And by analogy, eternity includes time and yet is fundamentally something other.²²

Man: The Cusp of Time and Eternity:

The best analogy, however, comes from the experience of that creature who stand uniquely in both worlds: time & eternity, the Divine Reality and the Reality of the Heavens and the Earth. This is Man, in whom the two Realities intersect, and who is uniquely created by God to apprehend - though perhaps

²¹ Barth; 17.

²² Custance; 39.

never fully comprehend – the difference and relationship between the two. Man is a creature of Time and Space, placing him firmly in the realm of the heavens and the earth. But he is also created in the image of God, and animated by the very breath of God, placing him in the realm of eternity in a way no other creature, including the angels, can boast. Man is the microcosm of Creation, and the unity that brings some degree of understanding to the apparent duality of the Reality of God over against the Reality of the heavens and the earth. Like the heavens and the earth Man is fixed; but like God Man is free.

This unique characteristic of Man can be seen in relationship to the two parameters in which he lives; Space and Time. In relation to Space man is fixed in place (apart from Shirley MacLaine, that is); yet he is capable of ‘seeing’ vistas far removed both from the physical world and the ‘real’ world. He has imagination, and a mind capable of creating vivid images of Space far beyond his fixed position. A similar experience belongs to Man with regard to Time, for while he is inextricably locked in the Present – and it is well beyond the scope of this study to investigate the impossibilities of time travel – Man is still able to ‘live’ in the past and in the future. Memory and Intuition, the phenomenon of *déjà vu*, and the seemingly undeniable reality of premonition and prophecy all point to the fact that Man with respect to Time, as with Space, is both *fixed* and *free*.

It is this meditation that brings us to the ‘answers’ we are to find in Genesis when we ask the right questions. When we reorient our focus away from chronology and toward theology and anthropology, we encounter in Genesis the one study that ties them all together: Christology. This is because Man in Adam, historically real and both philosophically and scientifically necessary, is also the living allegory of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ.

Week 3: Formless and Void**Text Reading: Genesis 1:2**

“Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2)

Joiachim Neander lived during a time of great theological controversy within the professing Christian Church. Born not long after the religiously-charged Thirty Years War, and immediately after the similarly fueled English Civil War, Neander’s Europe may have temporarily laid down its swords only to pick up its pens and continue the religious strife first that has proceeded unabated since the Protestant Reformation



Joiachim Neander (1650-80)

over a century before. It was also a time of great scientific developments – the era of Galileo, for instance, and of Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton – Neander was born the year of Rene Descartes’ death. The world as Neander experienced it was taking vast forward leaps, and the Church was not infrequently found trying to arrest these movements in the name of orthodox religion. Neander witnessed the effect of political, religious, or scientific bias on the formulation of sound, biblical doctrine. His words are as appropriate today as they were four hundred years ago, “a man sees some point of interpretation as a fundamental issue, and does not yield for fear that the whole body of Christian truth will be endangered.”²³

These words are nowhere more true than in the study of Genesis Chapter 1 as it has developed over the past one hundred years. Due to the necessary controversy between the creationist worldview and that of atheistic evolution, Christian scholars have occupied fortified doctrinal and interpretive positions that they cannot abandon, “for fear that the whole body of Christian truth will be

²³ Quoted by Arthur Custance in *Time and Eternity*; 104.

endangered.” Thus there has always been a ‘polemical hermeneutic’ within the Church over the ages. Interpretive views formed by this process often become tests of orthodoxy in many Christian circles, and deviation from the ‘party line’ is viewed as nascent, if not open, heresy. To prove this point, one need only contemplate the spectre of a professing Christian publically (in a conservative Church, that is) denying that the Earth is young, or that it was created in six literal, twenty-four hour days.

But the controversy between creationism and evolution has impacted the scholarship of the Church in another manner, more insidious than simply segregating camps of adherents within progressively hardening views. At this time, whenever various interpretive positions are discussed with regard to the early chapters of Genesis, it is often the case that an ‘opposing’ view is dismissed on the grounds that it is motivated by a desire to compromise with ‘old earth’ geology. Exegetical views that have appeared on and off throughout the history of the Church (and within Jewish scholarship both during and before this age) are now categorically dismissed as vain attempts to find common ground between the biblical record and the ‘findings’ of modern Science. What is lost here is that healthy and necessary debate on various interpretative positions *based on biblical merit* alone, notwithstanding any perceived or real connection with creationism or evolution.

This phenomenon appears before any reader who peruses the modern commentaries on the interpretation of Genesis 1:2, and the nature and cause of the condition of the earth prior to those momentous words, “*Let there be Light!*” Current orthodoxy within evangelical Christianity demands a literal interpretation of the words of Chapter 1 – a literal six-day Creation – and must adhere strictly to the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo* – ‘creation out of nothing.’ Any deviation from these points is considered to be a capitulation to the evolutionary view, as if the only choices available to readers of Genesis are either an earth that is 7,000 or so years old, or one that is 4.4 billion years old. An impartial (if that is

possible) exegesis of Genesis 1:2, however, will at least introduce the possibility of something in between.

This caveat, along with Neander's quote, themselves require a caveat. That is, that in the midst of theological and scientific controversy, scholars *do* sometimes develop interpretive schemes with the sole, and sometimes conscious, motivation of supporting the orthodox position. In other words, theologians can 'cook the books,' forcing the Scriptures to say what they have already concluded to be true in the realm of Science. If a Christian theologian or commentator has come to the 'understanding' that the earth is billions of years old, so long as he continues to respect the authoritative role of the Bible in his own life and that of the Church, he must concoct an exegesis of Genesis 1 that will permit such an old earth. Additionally, interpretive positions that have fallen in and out of favor over the history of the Church – debated and re-debated primarily on the basis of biblical and linguistic merit – have at times been co-opted for service either in defending a Young Earth view, or an Old Earth view. All of these machinations show up in the literature one reads in any thorough study of Genesis Chapter 1.

Yet if we cut through the haze of the Creation/Evolution debate, we discover that the passages in Genesis 1 that have long been presented to the Church as clear and unmistakably straightforward are, in fact, somewhat complex, admitting of different interpretations. The movement of the narrative from verse 1 through verse 2 and finally to the 'commencement' of Creation as we know it, in verse 3, is a case in point. Jewish scholars from antiquity, and Christian theologians from at least as far back as Origen, have noted that the language of verse 2 is disturbingly incongruous with the flow of thought from verse 1 to verse 3. To many, many scholars the condition of the 'earth' as described in verse 2 is just not the way one would expect the work of God in Creation to begin, and the terminology used there is too discordant with 'creation' to be simply and simplistically passed over.

Therefore, leaving behind for the moment the controversy of our time, we must investigate verse 2 in with a fresh approach, and, hopefully, a biblical one. Looking at various and diverse commentaries, investigating the usage of words and phrases from verse 2 as they are found elsewhere in Scripture, and tentatively digging into an aspect of the universe upon which the Bible is remarkably silent, we hope to arrive at an interpretation of Genesis 1:2 that is as free of controversial bias as possible. At that point we will return to the controversy to see if it really does have a decisive impact on the interpretation, or whether the interpretation stands on biblical merit alone.

“And the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep...”

The Greeks had a word that comprehended what they considered to be the orderly universe: the *cosmos*. This word is used in the New Testament (and the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint) to describe the sum total of what God created ‘in the beginning.’ But the description that is given in verse 2 is not that of *cosmos*, but rather that of another Greek word: *chaos*. A literal translation of this word may be rendered as ‘abyss,’ and it long ago came to signify utter confusion, disorder, and everything that is not *cosmos*. But *chaos* is just how the earth is described in verse 2, seemingly right upon the heels of God’s opening act of creation in verse 1. This alone should cause us to hesitate at quick and simplistic interpretations of the verse, and make us pause and consider the possibilities. But further than that, we have the inspired word itself informing us through the prophet Isaiah that *chaos* is not what the Lord creates,

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens,
He is God; that formed the earth and made it,
He established it, **He created it not a waste,**
He formed it to be inhabited:
I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

(Isaiah 45:18)

Remarkably, the word translated ‘waste’ in this passage is the Hebrew word *tohu* (תֹהוּ), the first word in the pairing of Genesis 1:2 translated ‘formless and void.’ The context is unmistakably ‘creation’ as in the first chapter of Genesis. Earlier in Isaiah 45 the Lord speaks in much different terms with regard to His creation, using words more consistent with what we would expect to come directly from the hand of a good God,

*Drip down, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness;
Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit,
and righteousness spring up with it.
I, the LORD, have created it.* (Isaiah 45:8)

A significant word is used here in the last clause of this verse, the very same word used in Genesis 1:1 and translated ‘created.’ It is the Hebrew word *bara* (בָּרָא), upon which many, many pages of commentary have been written. Of first note is the fact that *bara* is not the most common word in the Hebrew language used to indicate the making or fashioning of something. For instance, in Genesis 2:7, where God “formed man from the dust of the ground,” the word used is the more common *yatsar* (יָצַר), which means ‘to form or to fashion.’ *Bara* has a more specialized usage, here and elsewhere used only with reference to the completed work of God. Waltke’s comments on the verb are instructive,

The Hebrew term *bārā’*, meaning ‘to create,’ only refers to a completed act of creation (cf. Deut. 4:32; Ps. 89:12; Isa. 40:26; Amos 4:13), so it cannot mean that, in the beginning, God began the process of creating the cosmos.²⁴

Much has been said about the ‘fact’ that the Hebrew verb *bara* necessitates the concept of creation *ex nihilo*. Calvin, for instance, writes *en loco* Genesis 1:1, “he moreover teaches by the word ‘created’ that what before did not exist was now made; for he has not used the term *yatsar*, which signifies to frame or form,

²⁴ Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*; 58n.

but *bara*, which signifies to create. Therefore his meaning is, that the world was made out of nothing."²⁵

Actually, the verb does not carry that much weight and cannot be made to do so. H. C. Leupold writes, "The verb *bara'* does not of itself and absolutely preclude the use of existing material."²⁶ The concept of creation *ex nihilo*, therefore, derives more from philosophical and theological necessity – the avoidance of the dualism of Spirit/Matter – than from the etymology of one Hebrew verb. It is a statement of faith, not the result of a word study, that leads us to confess God as the Creator of all things *from nothing*. The writer of Hebrews admits as much when he opens his classic 'Hall of Faith' with reference to Creation,

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

What we can take away from this brief study of the Hebrew verb *bara* and its consistent usage both in Genesis 1:1 and Isaiah 45:8, is that when God "*created the heavens and the earth*" as recorded in verse 1, it was the completed act spoken of and not the beginning of a process. But we also learn from Isaiah 45:18 that this finished act – this *cosmos* spoken into existence by Almighty God – was not *chaos*, it was not 'a waste' (*tohu*). Yet as immediately as verse 2, that is exactly the condition we find the earth to be in. There at least appears to be a conceptual interruption between verse 1 and verse 2, before the narrative resumes the 'good' work of divine creation in verse 3. This interruption has not gone unnoticed in the history of the exposition of Genesis Chapter 1, though in more recent scholarship it has often been vehemently denied, more on polemical grounds than biblical.

²⁵ Calvin, John; *Commentary on Genesis*; 70.

²⁶ Leupold, H. C.; *Exposition of Genesis, Volume 1*; 40.

The Gap Theory

As soon as one posits an interruption between the first two verses of the opening chapter of the Bible, two questions immediately arise: ‘What happened during that interruption?’ and ‘When did the interruption occur?’ The second question is, of course, the primary point of contention among scholars, as many have enlisted the concept of a ages-long ‘gap’ between verse 1 and verse 2 to explain the apparently advanced geological age of the earth. This is known as



James Montgomery Boice
(1938-2000)

the ‘Gap Theory,’ although there is probably no one uniform representation of it, and it has been taught by biblical scholars and theologians from Origen in the 2nd Century to Donald Grey Barnhouse in the 20th. A. W. Pink held to some facets of the theory, as did Francis Shaeffer and C. S. Lewis. Barnhouse’s successor at 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, James Montgomery Boice, provides a succinct definition of the theory,

According to the gap theory, the first two verses of Genesis...appear to be continuous, but in between there is actually a long but indeterminate period in which the destruction of an original world and the unfolding of the geological ages can be located.²⁷

Arthur Custance, in his book *Without Form and Void*, traces the history of the theory – under various names, of course – back to 1st and 2nd Century Jewish writers, through the early years of the Church, the medieval Church, the Reformation and Puritan eras, 19th Century liberalism, and 20th Century fundamentalism, to the present.²⁸ He particularly notes the dramatic change in view of the 19th Century German biblical scholar Franz Delitzsch. Delitzsch acknowledged early on that there was a disconnect between verses 1 and 2 of

²⁷ Boice, James Montgomery; *Genesis: Volume 1 – Creation and Fall* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books; 1998); 56.

²⁸ Custance, Arthur C. *Without Form and Void* (Windber, PA: Classic Reprint Press; 2008); chapter 1.

Genesis Chapter 1, but denied that there was any explanation or interpretation that could be made of this fact. In his *New Commentary on Genesis*, he calls this interruption a 'derangement,' but denies that anything can be posited with regard to the meaning or the events associated with it. But upon further reflection, and continued correspondence with a German colleague, K. H. Kurtz, Delitzsch altered his view significantly. He realized that the terminology used in verse 2 to describe the condition of the earth is far from neutral, and very far from benign. In the second edition of his commentary, Delitzsch writes,

How we are to apprehend this condition, occurs to us when we reflect that *tohu* in every case, where it has not the general meaning of wasteness, of emptiness, of nothingness, betokens a condition of desolation by judgment of God and especially fiery judgment.²⁹

Delitzsch refers to a passage in Jeremiah that is nigh unto definitive with regard to the biblical meaning of *tohu wabohu*, that unique combination of terms found in Genesis 1:2. Jeremiah 4:23-26 is the only other place in the Old Testament where the phrase is repeated, and the reference is clearly back to Genesis 1:2,

*I looked on the earth, and behold, it was **formless and void**;
And to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking,
And all the hills moved to and fro.
I looked, and behold, there was no man,
And all the birds of the heavens had fled.
I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness,
And all its cities were pulled down
Before the LORD, before His fierce anger. (Jeremiah 4:23-26)*

What is most significant in regard to Delitzsch's change of heart is the fact that it took place in the 19th Century, *before* the great controversy between Creationism and Evolution erupted in the first quarter of the 20th. There is,

²⁹ Quoted by Custance, *Without Form and Void*; 40.

therefore, in Delitzsch's analysis no attempt to use the 'derangement' between verses 1 and 2 as an explanation for the origin and demise of the dinosaurs, or for the apparent age of the earth's geologic strata. Delitzsch, and many other earlier advocates of the theory, see within this interruption a tentative answer to the frequent question, 'What about the angels?' Particularly, of course, the evidence of a 'gap' between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 provides a possible answer to the question, 'When did Satan fall?'

Lucifer, Star of the Morning

One cannot read the account of Man's earliest experience, from Creation to the Fall, without wondering about the identity of the 'serpent.' We all understand it to be a representation in bodily form of Satan, the accuser of the brethren, but that does not alleviate the mystery of his origin, or of his malignant nature at a time when all of Creation was 'very good.' More broadly speaking, Satan represents the whole realm of created beings - the angels - about which we know very little, and essentially nothing in regard to their origins. In the opening verses of Genesis 3 we are presented with an intelligent, subtle, and evidently malicious being who is bent on Man's destruction. Where did he come from? How do we fit even a rudimentary doctrine of the angelic beings, and of the fall of Satan, into the narrative of Genesis chapters 1 and 2?

It will not do to simply say that the angels predate the creation 'week' recorded in the first chapter, any more than it suits the purpose for evolutionists to claim that life began in outer space. It does appear evident that Satan's fall must have occurred before Man's creation, but the 'when' and the 'why' are left shrouded in mystery. On the one hand, we cannot allow the angelic beings to be co-eternal with God - neither the text nor our theology will permit that. But on the other hand, we cannot cram the entire narrative with regard to the angels "*who kept not their first estate*" (Jude 6) into the six 'days' of Creation.

What we do read about the ‘fall’ of Satan (and we have to assume a fall since we cannot conceive of a being created by God being originally evil) is enigmatic and scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. One common thread, however, is the phenomenon of Satan being ‘cast down’ to earth...and being quite upset about it, too. A common location in Scripture viewed as the divine judgment upon Satan, is found in Isaiah 14. The immediate context and application, it must be noted, has to do with the Babylonian overlord and his grasping for lands not his own. But the language is far deeper than can be answered simply with the Babylonian king, and scholars throughout the ages – both Jewish and Christian – have recognized the *double entendre* as indicating the Lord’s righteous condemnation of Satan.

*How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
You who have weakened the nations!
“But you said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.
‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.’
“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
To the recesses of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)*

Several items to note in this passage, with reference to our study of Genesis 1, are: first, the titles given to this highly exalted being – *Star of the Morning* and *Son of the Dawn*.³⁰ Second, the punishment meted out against this powerful but wickedly ambitious being was (is?) to be “*thrust down to Sheol*.” Satan’s fall involved his ‘removal’ from heaven, or the heavens, being cast down to “the uttermost parts of the pit.” This language is very similar to the

³⁰ In Latin, the name Lucifer means ‘morning star.’

description we are given of the earth in Genesis 1:2, *“and darkness covered the face of the deep.”* The terms used to signify the depths or the pit or Sheol, are not the same between Isaiah 14 and Genesis 1, nonetheless the connection is clear enough to many scholars to lead them to conclude that Satan’s fall was from the heavens to the earth.

Another familiar passage, often interpreted as being an immediate observation rather than a prophetic vision, occurred when the disciples returned to the Lord Jesus after their mini-commission to preach the Gospel in the towns and villages of Judea. In Luke 10 we read,

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.’
(Luke 10:17-18)

It is natural to interpret Jesus’ words as being contemporaneous with the recent events that the disciples had just experience. In other words, that Satan was falling from heaven *while* the disciples were casting out demons. But the subsequent verse is probably more explanatory of Jesus’ statement than that which goes before, *“Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.”* The reason, Jesus intimates, that the disciples had this remarkable power over the demons is because they were emissaries of the One who ‘was watching Satan fall from heaven,’ indeed, the One who cast Satan from heaven. This is, at least, how the eminent Puritan Baptist John Gill interprets our Lord’s words, *“...this was no news to him, nor any surprising event, that devils should be cast out of men, and be in a state of subjection; for as he existed as the eternal Son of God before his incarnation, he was present, and saw him and his angels fall from heaven,*



John Gill (1697-1771)

from their first estate, their habitation of bliss and glory, down to hell, upon their sin and rebellion, as violently, swiftly, and suddenly, as the lightning falls from heaven to earth."³¹

Again, the important aspect of this reference to Satan's judgment and penalty is the casting down of the great deceiver from the heavens. The same theme is found in our next reference, Revelation Chapter 12.

*And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, **the serpent of old** who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; **he was thrown down to the earth**, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

(Revelation 12:7-9)

Dispensational teaching over the past century has conditioned modern believers to view this as a prophecy yet future, but the terminology is steeped in the past of original Creation. Satan is called '*the serpent of old*,' a clear allusion to Genesis 3 where it is the serpent who deceives our first mother and through her, '*deceives the whole world*.' Frankly, we are not told in Revelation 12 just *when* this angelic warfare took place, but we do know that in our current age Satan is referred to as "*the prince of the power of the air*," and "*the ruler of the world*." Those who would limit this reference in Revelation 12 to the distance future have a hard time explaining the power and authority exercised by Satan over the nations of the world since the dawn of time.

These verses are admittedly difficult of interpretation, and are written in mysterious, enigmatic terms. Yet one thing is clear; that the rebellion of Lucifer/Satan/the Serpent caused a great upheaval and conflict in the heavenlies – an angelic war pitting Satan and Michael as opposing angelic generals. Righteousness triumphed over wickedness and 'no place was found' for Satan in heaven. He and those angels who rebelled along with him were cast down to the

³¹ Gill's Commentary on the Whole Bible; *en loc*, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/luke-10-18.html>

earth, to the uttermost parts of the pit, to Sheol the netherworld. There they wreak havoc and destruction, leaving in their wake *tohu wabohu*, formlessness and emptiness. Where do we fit all of this cataclysm into the Genesis account of Creation?

Boice, himself not an advocate of the Gap Theory, does however defend the view's strongest points. Not the least of these is the capacity of this theory to explain – at least in part – the 'timing' of Satan's fall. Boice writes,

[T]here are texts that suggest, not always clearly, that there was an earlier fall of Satan, followed by a judgment on Satan and those angels (now demons) who sinned with him. Of course, the fall of Satan may have occurred without any relationship to earth. But he is called 'the prince of this world' and seems to have a special relationship to it. Is it not possible, even reasonable, that he may have ruled the world for God in an earlier period of earth's history – if there was such a period? And if this is so, couldn't a fall and judgment fit between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2? If not there, where does the fall come in? The only other option would be before creation itself, which would put the creation of Satan before anything else we know.³²

Ancient Parallels

The polemical hermeneutics of our age have often downplayed any association or similarity between the Genesis account of Creation and that of the numerous ancient cosmologies with which modern man has become familiar through archaeology. Still responding to charges first leveled by 19th Century liberals, modern evangelicals often view any discussion of the Babylonian or Sumerian or Egyptian creation myths as a compromise with the liberal devil, an acknowledgement that Moses' narrative derived not by special revelation from God, but from the oral and written traditions of man. Yet the one need not exclude the other, and similarity between all of these stories may just as well mean that there was one, pure original. As we have seen already, it is not unreasonable that one lineage of this original 'metanarrative' be kept purer than

³² Boice; 60.

the others. Nor is it unreasonable that at least one facet of divine inspiration is this very preservation of man from error.

Thus we conclude this analysis of the biblical data with regard to Genesis 1:2, and particularly in its relation to the fall of Satan, with a brief comparison is the ancient cosmological parallels. That these stories share a common ancestor is the most rational explanation for their many thematic similarities, as John Davis notes in his small treatise, *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*,

The fact is patent that these tales are outcroppings of one and the same tradition; a tradition, furthermore, which extends through many ages, and whose traces may be followed back into remote antiquity.³³

Perhaps the most common feature shared among the ancient cosmologies is that the earth as we know it – especially that which is inhabited by man – ‘began’ as a great, watery deep or abyss. The very word ‘abyss’ derives from the name of the ancient Babylonian god of the deep, Absos. In the *Enuma Elish*, the watery deep is malignant – as it is in most of the ancient stories, only more so in this one – and is named *Tiamat*. Some Hebrew scholars maintain that the word translated ‘deep’ in Genesis 1:2 – *tehem* (תְּהוֹם) – actually plural, ‘deeps’) shares common roots with the name of the pagan goddess *Tiamat*. In any event, this present world is in all cases formed from the bowels of a chaotic, watery, abyss.

Perhaps even more interesting is that the presence of this chaotic primordial deep is also in all cases *preceded* by a great conflict among the gods. Again, using the *Enuma Elishi* as the most familiar example, the malign *Tiamat* is causing great upheaval and distress among the gods. Finally the gods commission a lesser god, *Marduk*, to slay *Tiamat* and rid the heavenlies of her vile behavior. This *Marduk* does, but only after exacting a promise from the other gods that, if successful, he would be recognized as their leader. *Marduk*, of course, becomes the god of the Babylonians, to whom belongs the story of the

³³ Davis, John D. *Genesis and Semitic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; 1980); 5.

Enuma Elish. The similarity in the name 'Marduk' with the name 'Michael' (Hebrew *M'ch 'el* or מִיכָאֵל) is not drawn out by any scholars consulted for this study, so it may very well be coincidental. Still, the parallel between a great conflict between *Marduk*, a lesser god, and *Tiamat*, the mighty and malignant deep, in the *Enuma Elish*, and the battle between the archangel Michael and the Serpent of Old in the biblical account, deserves at least some consideration.

Summary

The possibility of a span of time and space located between verses 1 and 2 of the first chapter of Genesis is supportable on biblical and lexical grounds. It is not necessary to recoil from such a concept on the basis of the current controversy between Creationism and Evolutionism, at least so long as the 'Gap Theory' does not attempt to explain too much. While such an interpretation, standing as it must do on its own biblical merit, does provide some means of explaining the fall of Satan, it does nothing toward proving or disproving a 'old earth' or the fate of the dinosaurs. The 'facts' contested on these latter issues are those that derive from this side of Genesis 1:2 – the earth's strata and the fossils of extinct animals are and must be products of the six days of Creation commencing in verse 3. Thus if we do allow for a 'gap' between verses 1 and 2, we are still constrained to say that we do not know what existed prior; we can only surmise what it was that brought that existence to a condition of *tohu wabohu* – formless and void.

The *ultimate* beginnings – and even the status quo ante, before God's creative acts – are shrouded in mystery...We may be disappointed in the text's lack of clarity, but we are at the same time grateful that the account leaves mysterious what cannot help but be mysterious.³⁴

³⁴ Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*; 28-29.

Week 4: Let There Be Light!**Text Reading: Genesis 1:3**

Then God said, 'Let there be Light'; and there was Light." (Genesis 1:3)

Having investigated the incongruity of terminology in verse 2, we must confess the inability to conclude with any definiteness exactly how it came to be



that the earth was '*formless and void.*' But we cannot escape the fact that it was, and was furthermore covered in darkness, and consequently characterized as an '*abyss.*' Many scholars have sensed the '*derangement*' – as one writer graphically puts the matter – of things in verse 2. Gerhard von Rad, a 20th Century Lutheran pastor-theologian, admits, "it is hardly possible to conceive of the idea of a created chaos, for what is created is not chaotic."³⁵ Yet chaos is what we have in Genesis 1:2, though it is not to remain so. Even in the closing words of verse 2 we have the presence of One to whom chaos is inimical, and darkness unnatural: the *Spirit of God* hovering over the faces of the deep.

Commentators have debated whether the Hebrew phrase translated '*Spirit of God*' – *ruach elohim* (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) – should rather be translated '*wind of God.*' There is an interesting parallel between Genesis 1:2, with the *ruah elohim* hovering over the faces of the deep, and Genesis 8:1, where God "*sent for a wind*" to cause the waters of the Flood to subside. The phrase in the latter passage is *elohim ruach* – (אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ), the same as in Genesis 1:2 except for the reversal of the order of the words. As the word *ruach* is translated '*wind*' in Genesis 8:1, some scholars consider it an anachronistic juxtaposition of the doctrine of the Trinity to translate the same word as '*Spirit*' in Genesis 1:2. There is, however, a difference between the two passages that justifies the translations as they currently stand in our English translation.

³⁵ Von Rad, Gerhard; *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1* (New York: Harper & Row; 1962); 142.

The first consideration is, as noted, the word order. In Hebrew syntax the verb comes first in the sentence, followed by the subject and then the direct object, etc. Thus the 'actor' associated with the verbal idea is usually represented by the noun immediately following it. In Genesis 1:2, however and unusually, the verb follows the entire phrase *ruach elohim*, whereas in Genesis 8:1 the normal Hebrew syntax has the verb *yaver* - (יָצַר), to make or cause - immediately preceding its subject, *elohim*, God. This departure from normal syntax throws the *ruach elohim* into emphatic relief in 1:2, justifying the uniting of the two words into the personal 'Spirit of God.'

A second consideration is the verbal idea in each passage - Genesis 1:2 versus Genesis 8:1. In the latter passage the verb is a very generic term signifying causation - *And God caused*, or *And God made...* The placement of *ruach* after *elohim* in this post-deluge passage, along with this type of verb, supports the interpretation that God sent *a wind* (there is no possessive attached to *ruach* to make it 'His wind') *to pass over the earth*. Thus it would be unreasonable to insert the Spirit of God in Genesis 8:1, when the simply idea is that God caused a wind to blow in order to hasten the drying of the earth. In Genesis 1:2, however, the verb translated *hovering* has the sense of 'brooding' as of an eagle circling over its nest, protecting its young from predators while also searching the horizon for food. "Hovering eagle-like over the primordial abyss, the almighty Spirit prepares the earth for human habitation."³⁶

Nonetheless, we should not miss the similarity between Genesis 1:2 and 8:1, nor overlook the similarity between the conditions of the earth immediately prior to both. In the former the earth was *formless and void*, an abyss. In the latter the earth had just been inundated by the waters of a great flood; once again returned to 'the deeps.' In the latter case the situation was the direct result of divine judgment and wrath. In the former, could it not have been as well?

³⁶ Waltke; 60.

Be that as it may, we depart verse 2 with anticipation and hope, knowing that God intends to reveal His work in reversing the conditions of chaos found there. We cannot know with certainty the *origin* of the conditions found in verse 2, but we are given that verse as a backdrop to the paradigm of creation that begins in verse 3. The work of the hovering Spirit will progress in direct response and contradiction to the dire circumstances encountered in verse 2: the *darkness* will be answered with Light; the *chaos* will be brought into Order; and the *emptiness* will teem with Life. The days of Creation are thus presented in an order that follows *biblical redemptive logic* rather than geologic or biologic sequence. There are several ways that the creative acts of God, differentiated in Genesis 1 by the work of each of six days, can be organized according to evident parallelism. We will have occasion to review three such paradigms within this study, but at this point focus on only one.

Organizational Principle

Acts of Creation

Light

Day 1

Creation of Light

Separation of Light and Darkness

Naming of 'Day' and 'Night'

Order

Days 2 - 4

Separation of the 'waters from the waters'

Waters below (oceans) & Waters above (heaven)

Appearance of Dry Land and Vegetation

Creation of the Sun, Moon, & Stars

(for seasons and for days and years)

Life

Days 5 - 6

Filling the waters below with life (fishes) and the

Waters above with life (birds)

Filling the Land with Living Things

Creation of Man in the Image of God

It has often been noted that the creation of the Sun and the Moon – the instrument and reflection of Light as it most immediately pertains to the Earth – does not appear in the narrative until Day 4. This order of events serves at least several purposes with regard to God’s self-disclosure. First, it negates all pagan mythologies which place the Sun as the deified center of man’s universe, and forever condemns all who would “*worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen*”³⁷ Thus the order of Light before Sun is intentional as a refutation of the cosmological views that were current in Moses’ day, and have remained powerful throughout human history. Waltke writes,

Since the sun is only later introduced as the immediate cause of light, the chronology of the text emphasizes that God is the *ultimate* source of light. The dischronologization probably functions as a polemic against pagan religions, which worship the creation or creatures, not the Creator upon whom the creation depends.³⁸

The order of events in Genesis 1, placing the creation of Light several ‘days’ before that of the Sun and Moon, also brings into relief the utter independence of Light with regard to any vessels, instruments, intermediate sources, or reflectors of it. As we shall but briefly and superficially touch upon in this lesson, Light is a reality unto itself within the realm of nature and of Science. Modern man has had his mind desensitized to the mystery and the power of light but the great familiarity with ‘lights’ brought about by the incandescent light bulb! Ancient man had a more intimate and experiential knowledge of darkness, and to him light was as meaningful as it was mysterious. It is not to no purpose that man did tend to worship the Sun over all other aspects of Nature, as it is the source of his visible world and warmth.

This independence of Light with regard to the intermediate sources of it has an eschatological component as well. It frees the concept of Light from the

³⁷ Romans 1:25

³⁸ Waltke; 61.

bondage of the material world, and enables it to transcend the physical manifestations of it and to reach both the intellectual (*enlightened*) and the spiritual (*illuminated*) aspects of mankind. Thus it will play an integral role in the unfolding self-disclosure of God in Scripture in regard both to the true knowledge that man can have of Him, and in regard to man's salvation, sanctification, and glorification. Light will be embodied - *literally* - in the Promised One, the Lord Jesus Christ, and becomes a central defining feature of the life of those regenerated by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ Jesus.

The natural, however, precedes the spiritual according to Paul. So we begin with an investigation into Light as a natural phenomenon before moving on to the allegorical, metaphorical, and spiritual meaning of the term.

Light - the Constant Mystery:

Why did God begin with the creation of Light? The reason was most certainly not that He might be able to see what He was doing! No, the creation of Light before all else highlights the central place that this phenomenon has, and has had, not only in Nature, but also in Science, in Philosophy, in Knowledge and in Faith. The past one hundred years has seen remarkable advances in our understanding of the nature of Light, beginning with Albert Einstein's most famous of all mathematical equations, $E=mc^2$. In this equation the only constant is the letter 'c' which represents the speed of light.



Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

This equation, discovered by an unbelieving Jew (meaning that Einstein was Jewish, but did not believe in the Jewish religion; far less was he a Christian), stands as powerful proof that the vestiges of human greatness were not entirely lost in the Fall. Physicists, of course, wrestle with the significance of the relationship between Energy and Matter as it pertains to Nature, particularly with regard to the structure of the atom. But religionists may be equally in awe

over the simplicity and grandeur of this formulation, as it brings together the two aspects of Creation – the heavens and the earth – in vivid, though metaphorical, terms. The *m* component is easy: it is mass, a unit of matter and measurable directly with either a laboratory or a bathroom scale. Matter is what we see and feel and taste; it is the stuff of our perceptions and thus comprises a very comfortable realm of knowledge. Indeed, for millennia natural philosophers and modern scientists together believed that Matter accounted for all that was to be accounted.

But Energy is more difficult – a *force* rather than an *object*, measurable only indirectly as it acts upon Matter. Energy is invisible though undeniable, and once Science came to recognize its existence, new vistas of the observable universe opened up. Nevertheless Energy remains far more of a mystery to mankind than does matter, and it was an astounding insight on the part of Einstein to recognize that the two realms were not unrelated.

Metaphorically we may speak of Matter as the *earth*, and Energy as the *heavens*. Or, to put it another way, Energy represents the *spiritual* and Matter the *natural*. That which brings these two disparate realities together, illuminating the intrinsic relationship between them, is that which comes first in the order of the created universe: Light. The relative power of the spiritual over the physical has been almost universally acknowledged by philosophers and theologians from time immemorial, and it is this relative magnitude of value that is reflected in Einstein's famous equation. Energy is a much greater quantity than Matter, by a factor of the speed of light *squared* (a value of 9.0×10^{16} m/s). But, at the risk of carrying the metaphor too far, if we consider the outcome of 'spiritualizing matter' – or in the natural realm, of turning matter into energy – we realize a tremendous increase in power.

This may seem to be too much of a spiritualizing hermeneutic, drawing analogies and allusions where the Scripture is silent. That much is, indeed, true; the Bible does not speak of Light as representative of the spiritual realm, or

Matter as of the physical. But it does speak of Light as a created reality from the hand of God, and not as an eternal reality in and of itself. Now this must be understood in relationship to the created order – the *cosmos* – and not absolutely, for God Himself is Light, and He is eternal. Nevertheless, we are confronted in Genesis 1:3 with the beginning of ‘creation’ and the calling into being, Light. Rejecting as irreverent and facile the notion that God simply wanted to see what He was doing, we are consequently warranted in asking the question, “Why Light first?” It is evident by its placement at the very beginning of the divine works of Creation, the Light is preeminently the unifying principle of both Space and Time, a fact that modern Science has borne unwitting witness to in countless ways.

Light is of the essence of Space, for the relative distances of matter from matter are determined only by the transfer of light energy from one to the other. Light is not bounded by space, and transmits through space radially from whatever its source. Therefore it can be said that Light permeates Space, and that by Light man knows Space. This can be empirically verified in the depths of a cavern: where there is no light there is no perception of space. This is to say nothing of the many aspects of Light Energy that are invisible to the human eye (ultraviolet and infrared, microwave and gamma radiation, etc.) which all combine in the term Light as it is used in Genesis 1:3. It may have taken mankind 6,000 years to discover the scientific basis for the centrality of Light to the understanding of Space, but it was always so.

But Light is also of the essence of Time, for in its most fundamental sense, time is determined by the movement of light. This will become an integral part of the Creation work shortly, as God will concentrate the Light into the Sun, Moon, and constellations for the purpose of marking out days, and years, and seasons. But modern Science has confirmed the quality of Light as it pertains to Time – a relationship that is at the very heart of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. Light itself determines the Time within which it passes over any Distance, a

concept that is much easier to say than to understand. But we have a pedestrian illustration of the central position Light holds in relationship to Space and Time: scientists measure the distance between celestial objects, and between celestial objects and the Earth, in units of *light-years*, the distance traveled by light in one year.

Thus Light may reasonably be seen (no pun intended) as the unifying principle between Space and Time, is it too much of a stretch to see it occupying the same role between the Heavens and the Earth? Or, to draw out the meaning of those two terms, between the Spiritual and the Physical? We have already turned to the Apostle Paul for authority in developing a relationship between the natural and the spiritual (*cp.* I Corinthians 15:46), and have self-consciously adopted an allegorizing hermeneutic for Genesis on the basis of what Paul writes there. Still, can we find more substantial biblical grounds for interpreting Light in more than just physical, natural terms? Indeed we can.

We begin with the biblical testimony that specifies Light as an attribute of God Himself, who cannot be confused with a natural being. I John 1:5 is typical of this genre of Scripture, relating the concept of Light to the very essence of God through His self-disclosure to man in human terms, *“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”* It stands to reason, therefore, that God would begin His work of self-revelation through Creation with the ‘creation’ of Light – Light created not as it has eternally been in Him, but rather as it pertains to the Order and Life that He now brings into being. Nor should it surprise us that Light becomes again the vehicle of divine revelation as it pertains to Redemption as a corollary to Creation. Again from John’s pen we read of the Logos, the Word who precedes and initiates the Light,

*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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. **In Him was life, and the life***

*was the **Light** of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* (John 1:1-5)

We also see in this passage the triumvirate of Creative Purpose: **Order** (*all things came into being through Him*), **Life** (*In Him was Life*), and **Light** (*and the Life was the Light of men*). Light is thus used in a passage that clearly unites the God of Creation with His created order, and with the highest member of that created order, Man, through the Light. And we go from Scripture to Scripture in both the Old Testament and the New, seeing Light used metaphorically, for *purity, insight, understanding, knowledge, and wisdom*. But perhaps even more powerful than all of these, is the fact that the recreated being is not only called *the light of the world, and children of light, but Light itself*.

*Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, **but now you are Light in the Lord**; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth).* (Ephesians 5:7-9)

The Eschatology of Light:

There is much we can learn from the study of Light, and in learning about Light from modern Science, believers are grounded in the knowledge that Light came first from the hand of God, and came from the hand of God *first* in the order of Creation. Science has shown us, and is showing us, the incredible power and the fundamental centrality of Light with respect to man's knowledge of the natural universe. Scripture does the same with respect to man's knowledge of God and of himself. Jesus speaks of a man's inner light as being a reflection (again, no pun intended) of his intrinsic goodness, his true humanity...or lack thereof,

The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6:22-23)

We see again that Man is the microcosm of the created universe - uniting spirit and body, but also uniting darkness and light. It will become apparent as

we move through 'Day 1' of creation, that while God spoke Light into existence in the midst of utter darkness, He did not thereby banish darkness altogether. For purposes that will become at least partially more evident as one reads through the Bible, God allowed darkness to coexist – in a strictly controlled and not chaotic or dominant state – alongside of Light, although the two are as inimical in nature as they are in the divine essence.

Could it be that the planned coexistence of Light and Darkness in the early days of Creation foreshadowed its planned correspondent in the heart of Man? It is as if the very beginning of the ordered universe foreshadowed and inaugurated the struggle and eventual triumph of Light over Darkness, a constant theme in all of mankind's literary musings concerning the ultimate meaning of life in this world. Paul, of course, gives the most eloquent description of this conflict in his epistle to the Ephesians,

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces **of this darkness**, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:10-17)*

Of course all of this is in anticipation only as we read Genesis 1:3, except perhaps the fall of Satan and his minions which may be alluded to enigmatically in verse 2. Still, nothing has come to pass in the history of the *cosmos* apart from the predetermined and sovereign will of the Creator and Ruler of all, God. Therefore we are justified in reading the subsequent history of mankind and of the world back into Genesis 1:3-4, and seeing in the retention but control of the darkness a foreshadowing of what was to come.

But triumph belongs to the stronger principle, that which is original and not that which is privation. In other words, victory belongs to Light, and not to Darkness which is the absence of light. We understand this from personal experience, as night always gives way to day, to reappear only with the departure of the sun from the sky. Spiritually and theologically this principle is encompassed in the doctrine of the *effectual call of the Gospel*. When the Spirit, who continues to hover over the dark souls of unregenerate men, administers the Word ordained by the Father to be spoken over the hearts of the elect – *Let there be Light!* – there is born a new creation, a new heart replaces an old one, a child of Light is born, without exception. Spiritual darkness flees before the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with even greater certainty than the darkness of light flees the coming dawn. We cannot too often meditate upon the apostle's words in this regard,

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

(II Corinthians 4:6)

The ultimate triumph of this warfare, both in the lives of men and in the created order as a whole, will culminate in a reaffirmation of the independence of light to any intermediate sources or reflections of it,

*But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (**there shall be no night there**). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.*

(Revelation 21:22-26)

Amen, Lord; let it be so.

Week 5: Order from Chaos**Text Reading: Genesis 1:4 - 10**

“God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:10)

We have maintained thus far through this study of the ‘Creation Week,’ that the literary form of the narrative is at least as important as the content of the individual days’ work. The masterpiece of cosmology that is Genesis Chapter 1 becomes even more apparent when one considers the various ways that the material has been arranged, a realization that is often overlooked by an overly literal approach to the six days presented here. What the ‘days’ mean is, as we shall see, a separate question all to itself, and one that is quite possibly without an answer. But the structure of the overall passage clearly employs poetic devices common elsewhere in the Old Testament, in passages more clearly recognized as poetry than Genesis 1 has commonly been. But it will be this very literary arrangement that will signify the true meaning of the data presented: the relative importance of the various Creation days’ work. In addition, by recognizing the form of the narrative, we are much better able to see and understand the proper points of emphasis and focus intended by the Holy Spirit through the inspiration of this passage of Scripture.

In the last lesson we investigated what is perhaps the broadest categorization of the chapter – the divine answer to the *tohu vabohu* of verse 2: *Light, Order, and Life*. In this lesson we will analyze two other literary devices employed in the Creation Week narrative: (1) the common refrain device and (2) the parallelism device. Both are evident in the passage and clearly not the product of hermeneutical manufacture. For instance, we cannot escape the refrain found in verses 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25: *“and God saw that it was good.”* This refrain culminates in the crescendo of verse 31, *“And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”* In music we are trained to recognize refrains as the

separation between stanzas, with the stanzas themselves being either a variation or an advancement upon the central theme of the hymn. So it is in Hebrew poetry: each occurrence of a refrain recapitulates the overall attitude, as it were, of the poem, summarizes the reader's (or the singer's) most basic feelings with regard to what is being presented. Even one with the simplest of understanding cannot fail to grasp the central message of Psalm 136, the clearest example of the use of the refrain in Scripture,

*Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
To Him who alone does great [wonders](#),
For His lovingkindness is everlasting...* (Psalm 136:1-4)

What is interesting about the refrain in Genesis 1 is that it does not fall where one might expect it, at the close of each Day. The pattern is counterintuitive, and perhaps indicates that our normal focus on the Days is not in keeping with the intention of the author – either human or divine. Note the placement of the refrains:

<u>Refrain</u>	<u>Following</u>
<i>"and God saw that it was good" (v. 10)</i>	Creation of Light, Separation of the Waters of Heaven and the Seas, Creation of Land (in the middle of Day 3)
<i>"and God saw that it was good" (v. 12)</i>	Creation of plant life (at the end of Day 3)
<i>"and God saw that it was good" (v. 18)</i>	Creation of the heavenly bodies (at the end of Day 4)
<i>"and God saw that it was good" (v. 21)</i>	Creation of the sea creatures and the birds (toward the end of Day 5)

<i>"and God saw that it was good"</i> (v. 25)	Creation of the living creatures of the earth (during Day 6, before the creation of Man)
<i>"and behold, it was very good"</i> (v. 31)	At the end of Creation (the close of Day 6)

Here is another way of looking at it:

<u>Day</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Refrain</u>
1	Creation of Light	None
2	Creation of the firmament of heaven	None
3a	Separation & Naming of the Seas and the Dry Land	<i>"and God saw that it was good"</i>
3b	Creation of plant life upon the Earth	<i>"and God saw that it was good"</i>
4	Creation of the Sun, Moon, & Stars to determine the Divisions of Time	<i>"and God saw that it was good"</i>
5	Creation of the Sea Creatures and the Birds	<i>"and God saw that it was good"</i>
6a	Creation of the Living Creatures on the Earth	<i>"and God saw that it was good"</i>
6b	Creation of Man and the Commission of Co-regency given to Man	<i>"and behold, it was very good"</i>

This division of the material of the six days of Creation sheds light on what we might consider the content of the individual 'stanzas' rather than on the individual 'days.' For instance, Days 1 & 2 pass by without a refrain, and it is not until halfway through Day 3 that we first encounter in this common form, the approbation of the Lord with regard to the works of His hand. This does not by any means signify that the work of the first two days was not 'good.' Indeed, in a variation of the refrain (and therefore not really a refrain), God distinguishes the Light in particular as 'good,' *"and God saw that the Light was good"* (v. 3). This unique construction teaches us the seminal value of the Light, as we have already

seen (again, pardon the pun), and sets the tone of general divine approval throughout the narrative.

Clearly these references to the work being 'good' are not intended that we should think it would or could be otherwise. God is not like a human artist or craftsman, who steps back from his finished work and admires it. Nor can we entertain any thought that that which comes from the hand of a perfect and all-powerful God could be anything other than 'good.' No, the overarching theme produced by these repeated refrains is of the *fact* of the goodness of God's Creation, and the song formed along these neatly separated stanzas proclaims that fact to all mankind. Again, the analogy may be drawn with Psalm 136, where the lovingkindness of God is the fundamental fact that is intended to motivate the thanksgiving of His people. We might justifiably rearrange the stanzas of Genesis 1 to a pattern somewhat more similar to Psalm 136,

Give praise to the God who created Light

For the Light is good

Give praise to the God who separated the waters of the abyss into the heavens, the seas, and the land

For it is good

Give praise to the God who filled the earth with plants and trees

For it is good

Give praise to the God who set the instruments of Time in the sky

For it is good

Give praise to the God who filled the seas with fish and the air with birds

For it is good

Give praise to the God who filled the land with living creatures

For it is good

Give praise to the God who created Man in His own Image

For it is very good

This analysis and arrangement of the Creation Week corresponds with mankind's most common and fundamental sin, as related by the Apostle Paul in Romans Chapter 1,

*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. **For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks,** but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.* (Romans 1:20-23)

The goodness of creation is proclaimed in Genesis Chapter 1, but the *glory* of God the Creator is the central theme. Yet we see that the refrain does not follow the successive ‘evenings and mornings’ – the Days of Creation themselves. So what is the significance of these ‘days’? How are we to interpret them? This brings us to the third literary format that can be recognized in Genesis Chapter 1, that of parallelism.

Many modern evangelicals do not consider a question as to the meaning of the word ‘day’ in Genesis 1 to be within the bounds of orthodoxy, so ingrained has become the literal twenty-four hour day position within Western conservative Christianity. But there are reasons to not only question this viewpoint, but also to consider the possibility that the Hebrew *yom* (יִּוֵם) may have an indeterminate meaning as it is used to demarcate the phases of divine creation. Over the course of Jewish and Christian scholarship for the past two thousand years or so, there have been basically four interpretive paradigms used when considering the ‘length’ of a Creation Day. These four are:

1. The Literal 24-hour Day
2. The Day-Age
3. Literary Unit
4. Indeterminate Length

At first glance it may appear that the fourth option is a cop-out, but again there is significant evidence within the text to convince many scholars that the actual length of time involved in each portion of the creative work cannot be definitively determined from the words used. So, rather than try to add millions

or billions of years to a 'day,' these commentators conclude that the day-length is indeterminate. In actuality, the fourth view is essentially the logical result of the third option.

Literal Twenty-Four Hour Day:

It must be said at the outset that there is nothing in the text to preclude taking *yom* in the natural and literal sense of a 24 hour period. And upon the presupposition of Creation, there is nothing in Science to preclude this interpretation either. An all-powerful divine being could just as easily create the universe in six seconds, six minutes, or six days. That being said, however, it must also be stated that there is nothing in the text that demands a literal interpretation. Indeed, the evidence might actually weigh slightly against such a view. The determination of modern evangelicalism in favor of the literal view stems more from the contest between Creationism and Evolutionism, than it does from biblical exegetical necessity. But it is also true that other views – most particularly the 'Day-Age' view – also stem from this controversy, but rather from the standpoint of trying to accommodate the alleged 'truths' uncovered by Science. This reactionary position tended to solidify the literal day view among conservative scholars in the heyday of the debate – the late 19th and early 20th Centuries – as can be seen from the following footnote in Delitzsch' commentary on Genesis 1,

Exegesis must insist upon this (i.e., the literal interpretation), and not allow itself to alter the plain sense of the words of the Bible, from irrelevant and untimely regard to the so-called certain inductions of natural science. Irrelevant we call such considerations, as make interpretation dependent upon natural science, because the creation lies outside the limits of empirical and speculative research, and, as an act of the omnipotent God, belongs rather to the sphere of miracles and mysteries, which can only be received by faith.³⁹

³⁹ Delitzsch, F. and C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume I* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 1980); 52.

It should be noted that Delitzsch himself did not consistently adhere to the literal interpretation, though there is no evidence that he ever modified his exegesis to accommodate the theories of modern science. Indeed, because of his devotion to the written word, he was led by the text itself to hedge his interpretive bets as to the length of a Creation Day. One reference from the text is the very definition of the 'day' as it is used in Genesis 1, "*there was evening and there was morning...*" Taken with strict literalness, this phrase describes not one 24-hour period, but the transition from the end of one day (twilight) to the beginning of another (dawn). In other words, nighttime. The phrase might mean a literal day, or it might indicate "the time when the Creator brought his work (temporarily) to a close, and morning the time when the creative activity began anew."⁴⁰

Another exegetical point, again not decisive either for or against a literal interpretation, is the unique manner in which the days' numbers are given. The Hebrew text describes each successive day by using a *cardinal number* (1, 2, 3, and so forth) rather than an *ordinal number* (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and so forth). While most translations – Jewish and Christian alike – have rendered the various divisions of Creation Week as 'the first day...the second day...etc.', a more literal translation would be 'day one...day two...day three, etc.'

This certainly may seem to be splitting semantic hairs, but as there are perfectly good Hebrew ordinals that could have been used here, it is at least noteworthy that they were not. One might compare the narrative in Genesis to another sequence of days in which the expected ordinals are used, Numbers 29:17-35. It does appear that in Genesis 1, the focus moves from the *succession* of days to the individual days themselves, even as markers.

Finally, there is the often noted fact that the natural meaning of a literal day – the relationship between the Earth and the Sun – does not appear in the Creation narrative until 'Day Four.' Leon Kass writes, "our ordinarily sure sense

⁴⁰ Davis, John D. *Genesis and Semitic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; 1980); 17.

of temporality – tied to the daily ‘motions’ of the sun – is called into question by this simple fact: we have day and night and the marking of what appears to be time, on Day One, well before we have the sun, which is created only on Day Four.”⁴¹ This in itself is not decisive, for Light can exist apart from its concentration in stars or its reflection in moons. What is striking, however, is the way the formation of the Sun and Moon is described on Day Four: specifically in reference to ‘days’ as well as years,

*Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons **and for days** and years and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light **to govern the day**, and the lesser light **to govern the night**; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and **to govern the day and the night**, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.* (Genesis 1:14-19)

The combination of these lexical issues does not necessarily preclude the interpretation of *yom* in the literal and natural sense of a twenty-four hour day. Nonetheless, each point and all of them together does give justification to those who do not hold to the literal view on biblical grounds, with no prejudice toward their orthodoxy.

Day-Age View:

The last point made with reference to the literal interpretation of the word ‘day’ in Genesis 1 – the fact that the Sun and Moon were not created until the fourth day – has often been used and extended into the interpretive scheme that is most cooperative (even concessive) with the scientific theory of Evolution. That is the Day-Age View, by which each Creation Day is to be considered as an age of indeterminate but very long duration. Also mentioned in defense of this theory are the various places in Scripture where it is noted that with the Lord, “a

⁴¹ Kass; 30.

day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day." As an exegetical interpretation of the passage, this view has little merit indeed, and has almost always been viewed – by both advocates and opponents – as a compromise position between creationism and evolution. It is particularly popular among those who also hold to 'Theistic Evolution' as an explanation for the origin and development of the species. But because this is a biblical study of a book of the Bible, and because this theory has no biblical justification either lexically or theologically, we will not waste space refuting it here.

The Indeterminate Time View:

Although it was listed fourth above, as sort of the 'catch all' view, we will discuss the Indeterminate Time View here due to the fact that it still seeks to address the *length* of the Creation Day. In other words, it still emphasizes *time* in the exegesis of the text of Genesis 1. This view, of course, is an implicit denial of the first view, the Literal Day paradigm. Yet it does avoid the more obvious concessions made by the Day-Age View toward evolutionary science. This view is the logical result for one for whom the anomalies mentioned above under the 'Literal Day' view prove to decisively refute that view. Indeed, the biblical meanings available for the Hebrew word *yom* are either a literal, 24-hour day or a period of time of indeterminate length.

We have an almost immediate example of the latter usage in Genesis Chapter 2, the parallel narrative of Creation, "*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in **the day** that the LORD God made earth and heaven.*" (2:4) In this verse the entire Creation Week of the first chapter is distilled into '*the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.*' This figurative usage of *yom* in Chapter 2 is very problematic for the Literal Day View, and has not adequately been addressed by any of its proponents.

Yet we are not warranted in interpreting even a figurative day as representing billions and billions of years, either. Such vast expanse of time was,

for one thing, an entirely foreign concept to the ancient mind. The Hebrew language is, indeed, a simple language, and many words serve multiple duties. But in every instance the thought conveyed is one that is comprehensible to the reader – and a four billion year Day One would simply have been incomprehensible to the ancient Hebrews. No, *yom* might mean a time period of indeterminate length, but when it is used in that sense it always refers to a season of reasonable and comprehensible duration. Numbers 10 provides an excellent example of the Hebrew word *yom* being used to indicate a season of feasting and celebration due to what one might call ‘good fortune,’ a period that no one would naively consider to last a very long time,

Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the LORD your God. (Numbers 10:10)

Literary Unit View:

The fourth view to be analyzed here is unique in that, unlike the other three, it does not attempt to interpret the temporal content of the word ‘day’ as it is used in Genesis Chapter 1. Instead, this view recognizes the parallelism that is established by use of the word *yom* along with each numerical marker, through the ‘week’ of Creation. The correspondence between the first three ‘days’ and the last three ‘days’ is truly hard to pass over without comment:

Day 1	<i>Creation of Light</i>	<i>Formation of the Sun, Moon, & Stars</i>	Day 4
Day 2	<i>Separation of the Heavens from the Seas</i>	<i>Creation of the Fish and the Birds</i>	Day 5
Day 3	<i>Gathering of the Land & Creation of Plant Life</i>	<i>Creation of Terrestrial Creatures & Man</i>	Day 6

There is not only parallelism here, with the second half of the 'week' essentially filling up the first half, there is also a definite progression from Light to Matter to Matter-in-Motion. Even this last category is further divided into Bounded Motion (the orbit of the sun & planets), Independent Motion (that of the animals), and Rational Motion (Man). One might even reasonably say that the order of the Creation Week has more to do with the hierarchy of *being* than it does with any definite period of *time*. Leon Kass hypothesizes, "Instead, the apparently temporal order could be an image for the ontological order; the temporal sequence of comings into being could be a vivid literary vehicle for conveying the *intelligible* and *hierarchic* order of the beings that have come to be and *are*."⁴²

Once again it must be stated clearly that all of this analysis in no way *precludes* a literal interpretation of the Creation Days as twenty-four hour periods. The main point here is that *that is not the point* of Genesis Chapter 1. The point is that God created a world of order, beautiful and hierarchical order, in striking contrast to the *formlessness* and *emptiness* of verse 2. At the head of this order He will place Man, and that is where Man remains and will always remain. It is 'his place in the world,' and that, from at least the human perspective, is the meaning of Genesis Chapter 1.

⁴² Kass; 31.

Excursus - Chapter One with Form Highlights

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good;

and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night.

And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 8 God called the expanse heaven.

And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. 16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. 17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

20 Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." 21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

²³ There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. ²⁵ God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; ³⁰ and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. ³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

[Selah]

Week 6: Setting the Stage**Text Reading: Genesis 1:11 - 25**

*The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden;
and there He placed the man whom He had formed.
Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree
that is pleasing to the sight and good for food;
the tree of life also in the midst of the garden,
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
(Genesis 2:8-9)*

Hollywood is certainly not the place to go to find support for ‘biblical creationism.’ Most television and big screen productions coming out of California are filled with atheistic and evolutionary undercurrents and just dripping with modern, love-your-mother-the-Earth saccharine liberalism. But on several occasions in recent movie history, the Science Fiction genre has tipped its hat toward the Genesis account of Creation in a quite ironic manner. For instance, the 1982 Star Trek feature film, *The Wrath of Khan*, centers its plot (and one does not expect much in the way of plot from any Star Trek production) on a ‘Genesis Device’ capable of restoring the infrastructure and composition of life on a planet. Now it is safe to assume that the producers and directors of this movie are ardent believers in a very, very old Earth, and in the Darwinian evolution that formed and populated it. But there before the viewing public’s collective eye an entire planet was filled with grass and trees, fish, birds, and animals – all as the crew of the Starship Enterprise looked on from above. In movie time, the whole process took a few minutes.

Another example of this apparent hypocrisy within the Science Fiction crowd is the short-run television series *Firefly*. In this production uninhabitable planets are made suitable for human life through a process called ‘terraforming.’ Granted, most of the places resulting from this process look about as appealing as Western Oklahoma; but nonetheless this man-made methodology brings about potable water, vegetation, and the appropriate atmosphere of 79%

nitrogen and 21% oxygen in about the time it takes to build a house. Pretty impressive stuff: man going where no god has gone before, Creation essentially *ex nihilo* and in a very short period of time.

Of course one might simply say that this is entertainment, pure fiction, and should not be taken as an admission by the Hollywood crowd that near-instantaneous creation is scientifically possible. Yet it is ironic that, in the movies at least, what is denied to God is permitted to Man. Furthermore, it has often been shown that Science Fiction presages Science Fact, or at the very least Science Hope. Modern Science is vigorously pursuing man-made manipulation and even creation of Life, all the while denying with even greater vigor that the origin of Life has anything to do with 'Intelligent Design.' It is hypocrisy, to be sure, but it also betrays the underlying religion that informs all evolutionary thought and much of modern Science: atheism. The modern scientist believes ardently in *causation* and *design* and *purpose* – without which there could be no Science at all – he simply will not grant these forces to anyone other than the atheist's god: Man, and especially Scientific Man. But this has always been the primal, fallen tendency of mankind: toward some form of paganism or atheism by which the one true God and Creator of the universe is supplanted by the creature. Our understanding of the situation ought to be consistently informed by Paul's diagnosis of man vis-à-vis creation, for it has never changed,

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools... (Romans 1:21-22)

Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. (1:11)

The separation of the deeps into the atmosphere above and the seas below was for the primary purpose of exposing and preparing the land in between. For it is on the land that the main drama of creation will be played out, with Man as

both the protagonist and antagonist. Thus, while we recognize the work of the first and second (and first 'half' of the third) days to be divine counteraction of the condition of chaos found in verse 2, it also constitutes a 'setting of the stage' for what will become the drama of human history and of redemption. To borrow the phrase from the science fiction series mentioned above, the Earth was being 'terraformed.' Day 3 closes with the propagation of vegetation upon the land, and it has often been noted that this took place prior to the gathering of Light into the Sun and Moon.

Commentators have offered numerous explanations for this order, ranging from esoteric discussions on the efficacy and power of Light regardless of its means, to the theory that the subordination of the Sun and Moon in the order of creation was an implicit polemic against the prevalent sun-worship and moon-worship of the ancient world. The previous analysis of the literary format of Genesis Chapter 1 would indicate that the placement of the planting of the Earth on Day 3, with the setting of the Sun, Moon, and stars into their courses not occurring until Day 4, has as much to do with the poetic parallelism of the narrative as with anything else. Before we wax dogmatic regarding the order of events in Genesis 1, we must glance ahead to Genesis 2 where we find the story of Creation presented in quite a different manner.

The vegetation of the Earth does have a number of salient points in relation to the methodology of creation, and in relation to the discoveries of modern Science. For instance, it is here in Day 3 that we first encounter the phrase, "*after their kind.*" The word translated 'kind' in Genesis 1 is rendered by the Greek *genos* (γενος) in the Septuagint, which is the word from which we get the biological classification 'genus.' We need not suppose that Moses possessed Gregor Mendel's understanding of genetics to realize that the revelation of God through Moses would stand the test of future scientific research. Throughout the days of Creation in which the various forms of living organisms come into existence, we encounter the same phrase: "*after their kind,*" i.e., after their genus,

thus giving further order to the cosmos: living organisms do not mutate and evolve into separate and distinct genus, but reproduce 'after their kind.'

Another point to ponder from the narrative of the formation of plant life, is the age-old and somewhat tongue-in-cheek question: 'Which came first, the chicken or the egg?' The phrasing of verse 11 is interesting, in that it illustrates a slightly different method of creation from what we have seen up to this point and will see again soon. For instance, in the matter of the separation of the waters from above and below, the work is one of *primary causation*: "Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters...'" The work is done directly by command of God to the waters, as is reiterated in Psalm 104,

*The waters were standing above the mountains.
At Your rebuke they fled,
At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.* (Psalm 104:6-7)

But there are also examples of *secondary mediation* within the work of Creation, indicating that God does not always do things directly. In the case of the vegetation, the intermediary vehicle of creation is the Earth: "Then God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation...'" In the former instance, the command is from God to the waters, and the result is immediate; in the latter instance, the divine command is to the earth, with the result of plant growth coming through the interposition of the soil, as it were. This may provide a hint of an answer to the chicken-and-the-egg question, at least with regard to plant life. It is possible that the potentiality of organic plant life was latent within the land itself, and the word of 'creation' in this case is more a word of 'revivification.' This would be a reasonable conclusion if the hypothesis of a prior creation and destruction (Genesis 1:2) is accurate - whatever vegetation was on the earth at the time of God's wrath would have been rendered dormant by the punitive flood,

*You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters were standing above the mountains.* (Psalm 104:6)

Although such an interpretation is not necessary, and cannot be dogmatically maintained strictly from the text, it does help to explain the language of verse 11, and to understand perhaps how the earth functions in a mediatory role with regard to the bringing forth of vegetation upon the land. It also indicates a difference within the living world – the realm of plant life versus that of animal life – and perhaps even sheds a little light on the next question that has perplexed scholars, theologians, and philosophers for ages: Was there death before sin?

The answer to this question forces us to move ahead a bit in the narrative, and to summarize the whole spectrum of living organisms prior to encountering their individual creation. Early Darwinian evolutionists, not entirely ready to jettison the biblical account with which they were familiar from childhood, often noted the similarities between the order of ‘creation’ and that of biological evolution. First came the plants, then the fish, then the birds, then the land animals, and finally Man. But when we analyze the various levels of organic life, we soon realize that death in some form was necessary for the continuation of life as God intended it, sin notwithstanding.

It is widely held that the land animals were from the beginning herbivorous and only became carnivorous as a result of the Fall. Certainly we can imply this from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the *new earth*,

*The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and **the lion will eat straw like the ox**; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,"*
says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:25)

But this does mean that plants died, as they were the necessary food for animal life. Furthermore, in the seas where there is little plant life but abundant ‘animal’ life, it is usually assumed that the current food chain prevailed from the outset. This would mean that the great whales survived on countless tons of plankton prior to Man’s Fall as they do today. One may additionally surmise

that birds subsisted on worms and insects then as they do now. This is not absolutely necessary; God could have arranged for other means of nutrition for any and all of His creatures, but it is also not necessary to forbid the existence of death in any and all manifestations prior to Adam's sin.

It is doubtless true that the introduction of sin by Man into God's created order also introduced Death in a much more significant and comprehensive way than it could have been imagined before. We know, and shall see in Chapter 3, that death first laid hold of mankind through human sin, and that alone. But it appears also to be the case that formerly herbivorous animals were transformed into carnivorous animals, and the predator/prey relationship came to dominate the animal kingdom (as it did the human race). In consideration of this event – the Fall, that is, and the consequent reign of Death – we may offer a tentative speculation with regard to the nature of the soul. We are both warranted and required to do this when speaking of the 'animal' kingdom, for the word animal itself derives from the Latin word *animus*, which means 'soul.' The question is: 'Do all living creatures, all living organisms, have a soul?'

There are those, and will always be, who maintain that plants have souls as well as humans, and that there is no gradation within the animal kingdom with regard to 'worth' measured in terms of the possession of a soul. But our every day experience seems to indicate just such a hierarchy, and many animals seem to possess personality and character - including the apparent ability to communicate and to be trained – whereas many others do not. There are people, of course, who keep spiders as pets; but it is hard to imagine a spider fetching its owner's slippers or the evening paper. Yet that at least some animals possess souls is indicated both by their personalities and by the words of Scripture. In Genesis 1:20, the first place we encounter the 'living creatures,' the Hebrew words used are *nephesh hayah* (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה), which literally means, 'souls that live.' The phrase is used for the sea creatures and, by association in verse 20, the birds of the sky; it is used as well of the land animals in verse 24. But it may be that

there are different types of souls – souls that represent simply the presence and power of life, and souls that are capable of higher attainments in intellect, character, and maybe even purpose. Qohelet himself pondered the difference, if any, between a man and a beast,

All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?
(Ecclesiastes 3:20-21)

The Preacher does not use the word *nephesh* here, but rather *ruach* (רוּחַ), which is the word found here in Genesis 1 as *Spirit*. It can also mean breath, as it is translated in the New American Standard rendering of the passage from Ecclesiastes. But the point is not between *soul* and *spirit*, but that both man and beast are constituted of a similar phenomenon within them – something greater than the material body. The question as to the destiny of this phenomenon after death indicates that the *breath* of the beast is perhaps not so different from that of the man.

Maybe that difference lies along the path of the predator/prey paradigm that came to dominate the animal kingdom after the Fall. Could it be that those living organisms that always served as part of the food chain, even before the Fall, do not possess a soul? At least, we may say, they do not possess a soul in the same sense as do the higher animals and Man. These latter, once dwelling peacefully side-by-side, and destined to do so again, were turned in violence among themselves: predator versus prey for all of recorded time. Is it any wonder that we should find the exact same thing happening to human relationships (i.e., Cain and Abel) from the Fall until our own day?

This is not to say that all carnivorous animals possess souls, for many of them were carnivorous from the beginning. Again, it is reasonable to assume that whales always ate plankton, birds always ate worms, and spiders always ate other insects. But lions did not always eat cattle, and dogs did not always chase

cats; these any many other examples of the violence that has descended upon the living creatures of the earth, are the result of sin. Well, at least it is something to think about.

God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. (1:16)

We have already had occasion to discuss the fact that the familiar instruments of Light in the universe and in our planetary system – the Sun, Moon, and stars – arrive on the scene three days after the introduction of Light itself. From a literary standpoint, the appearance of these celestial bodies on Day 4 serves the parallelism established within the six days of Creation, and begins the second set of three days. From an apologetical perspective, one can surmise that the delay of the Sun, Moon, and stars served as a polemic against the world religions of the ancient era, in which these all played prominent and divine roles. The absence of the Sun and Moon from the New Jerusalem (which is, incidentally, essentially synonymous with the New Heavens and the New Earth), in Revelation 21, confirms our conclusion that it is the Light that is important and primary, the celestial instruments of light are both secondary and temporary.

This is review of previous material. Here, as we come to the verses that describe the formation of the heavenly vehicles of light to the world, we encounter a process that is not entirely unlike the evolutionist's 'Big Bang.' At the outset it must be stated that there is no *one* formulation of the Big Bang Theory – there are as many views as there are physicists and astronomers. But the basic gist of the theory is well known: All matter was once concentrated into a incredibly (in the true sense of being 'unbelievable') small volume and possessed near infinite density. Then – for reasons unknown and inexplicable, but 'uncaused' – this mass blew up, propelling matter radially from the point of origin (if the evolutionist happens also to be a fireman, he probably attributes the cause of it all to the electrical system...). So far so good. But now the divergent

elements of the material universe begin – again unexplained because inexplicable – to come together and to form gaseous concentrations of ever-increasing density. At some point these coagulated elements trigger a thermonuclear chain reaction and, *A Star is Born*.

Such an occurrence, although vehemently maintained as scientific truth by the vast majority of modern society, violates a fundamental principle of Science universally held because universally observed. This is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which informs us that all matter does not tend toward organization and order, but rather toward disorder. The measure of disorder in any system is called its ‘entropy,’ and this value tends toward increase (increasing disorder) while the overall energy (enthalpy) of the system tends toward decrease (less energy). Technically put, “Every process occurring in nature proceeds in the sense in which the sum of the entropies of all bodies taking part in the process is increased.”⁴³

What this means in practical terms is that a system cannot be brought to greater *order* without the input of energy to the system. Simply put, Order does not ‘just happen.’ And so the Big Bang Theory runs smack into the Second Law



Robert Jastrow (1925-2008)

of Thermodynamics, and at least a few evolutionary astronomers and astrophysicists have acknowledged the troublesome implications of this truth to their system of thought. Robert Jastrow, perhaps the most famous of NASA’s astronomers over the past generation, commented on the divergent attitudes of the theologian and the astronomer with regard to the Second Law,

Theologians generally are delighted with the proof that the universe had a beginning, but astronomers are curiously upset. It turns out that the scientist

⁴³ Definition of the Second Law given by Max Planck.

behaves the way the rest of us do when our beliefs are in conflict with the evidence.⁴⁴

Later in the same book Jastrow makes an astonishing admission for a scientist who has devoted his life to the study and propagation of evolutionary theory,

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.⁴⁵

Thus we are not surprised to find the energy of Light being gathered together into the Sun and the stars, and matter organized into planets and moons, in spite of the laws of the universe. For the text of Genesis 1 is clear, as is the evidence of our eyes: a more powerful energy was exerted to overcome the nascent chaos that was the universe before the week of Creation. The 'discoveries' of Science are not always wrong in and of themselves; where the evolutionary scientist errs is in his explanation of those discoveries.

Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." (1:20)

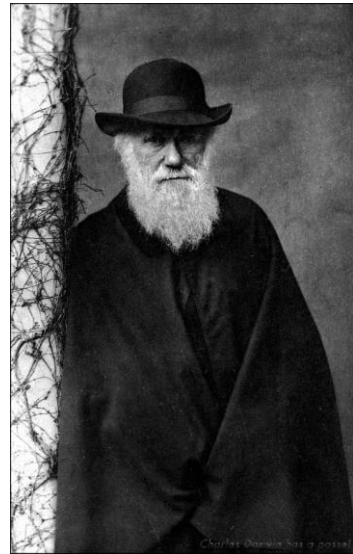
The saying attributed to Johannes Kepler, "We think God's thoughts after Him," applies as much to the unbelieving scientist as to the believing one. It is just that the latter acknowledges his debt to the divine mind and revelation; the former does not. The words of Scripture were not necessarily given with a view to modern evolutionary theory, but they certainly fit the bill nicely. For instance, on Day 5, God does not simply stock the oceans with a few trout, nor does He release a couple of turtledoves, saying, "*be fruitful and multiply.*" No, He

⁴⁴ Jastrow, Robert; *God and the Astronomers*; 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*; 116.

commands that the seas (and by association, the skies) “teem with swarms” of fishes and birds.

Now according to evolutionary theory, this was not how the earth was populated at all. Rather all living organisms slowly and incrementally evolved from lower, less complex forms of life to higher, more complex forms. The ubiquitous (at least in theory, though not in actuality) Fossil Record, according to Darwin, would show each intermediate step along the long trudge upward from one-cell paramecia to the pinnacle itself, Man. Darwin predicated the veracity of his entire theory on the Fossil Record, predicting that his views would stand or fall depending on the eventual discoveries of paleontologists long after his death. He would have been very disappointed. For the ‘fossil record’ has not turned out as he had predicted and hoped. Rather what paleontologists have discovered is the sudden appearance of many diverse life forms at the same time in geologic history. One such advent of Life is called the Cambrian Explosion.



Charles Darwin (1809-82)

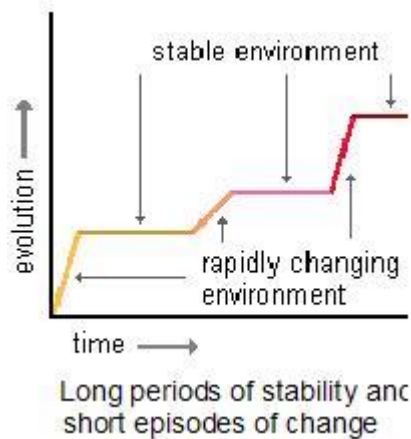
The Cambrian Explosion relates to an abrupt appearance of a wide range of organisms, mainly invertebrates, with hard (fossilizable) parts in Cambrian strata which mainstream scientists date from about 540 million years ago. They were complex, well-developed organisms with many types of differentiated cells, and it is widely conceded that evolution of these organisms from unicellular precursors within such a short period of time is highly doubtful.⁴⁶

Evolutionary scientists must acknowledge and attempt to explain the fact - at least the evidence given by the known ‘fossil record’ - that living organisms apparently did not evolve slowly and transitionally, but rather they showed up all of a sudden, rather instantaneously it would seem. This phenomenon is

⁴⁶ <http://www.allaboutscience.org/the-cambrian-explosion.htm>

called the Cambrian Explosion for the geologic layer or strata in which the numerous types of fossils have been discovered: the Cambrian, the first geologic period of the Paleozoic Era.

This discovery dealt a very serious blow to Darwinian Evolution, although it sadly did not put the evolutionary heresy to death. One inventive theory derived in the 1970s in an attempt to circumvent the obvious problems to



evolution caused by this sudden appearance of diverse life forms, is the Punctuated Equilibrium Model. Biologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould were the first notable evolutionists to propound the theory, but it has not garnered a great deal of support since their seminal paper in 1972. The basic problem

is that sudden bouts of evolution are simply not the way Evolution is supposed to work. The process of change is continuous, for all living species are supposedly 'seeking' greater reproducibility; and reproduction in any species is an on-going, continuous process. There is no evolutionary rationale for the long periods of *stasis* – static and stable eras with no discernible evolution – interrupted by relatively short, dynamic periods of massive introduction of new species. Richard Dawkins roundly rejects Punctuated Equilibrium as a viable scientific theory, and even Charles Darwin wrote in the margins of one of his books, "If species really, after catastrophes, created in showers world over, my theory false."⁴⁷ It would appear that the discovery of the Cambrian Explosion has proven Darwin's theory false.

The Cambrian explosion raises the kinds of questions that occur repeatedly regarding the fossil record. First is that major new types of organism appear

⁴⁷ Eldredge, Niles (2006) "Confessions of a Darwinist." *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 82 (Spring): 32-53; quoted at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punctuated_equilibrium#cite_note-VQR-66

suddenly and abruptly. Second, many different lines, exhibiting the same sort of significant development, arise about the same time. There exists such a radical diversity that it becomes implausible that they shared a recent common ancestor. It also seems unrealistic that the same sort of advance could have arisen independently in several lines, especially simultaneously.⁴⁸

But when we bring the discoveries of Paleontology alongside the words of Genesis 1, we find remarkable agreement: sudden appearances of living organisms of vastly diverse complexity. Days 5 and 6 may represent a period of time longer than 48 hours, but even modern Science prohibits us from interpreting them as being almost immeasurably long eras. Herein lies a powerful example of modern discovery validating biblical revelation, though the unbeliever, blind in his sin, cannot see it.

⁴⁸ <http://www.allaboutscience.org/the-cambrian-explosion.htm>

Week 7: The *Imago Dei* - the Centerpiece of Creation**Text Reading: Genesis 1:26 - 27**

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"
...God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.
(Genesis 1:26-27)*

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of the theory of Evolution is what it does to the essence and nature of Man. Evolutionists acknowledge that Man is the epitome of the evolutionary process, the apex of countless generations of arbitrary micro-molecular mutation. But for the evolutionist, if he be true to the ethical and moral implications of his creed, Man at the top of the evolutionary trek is no better than that particular brick that happens to be the last one installed, or an arbitrary rock that happens to be the last thrown on a pile and is, therefore, on top. Man is not even a capstone, needed to hold the arch together. Indeed, ecological evolutionism seems to be bent on blaming Man for all of the world's ills, positing that it may be better for the rest of the food chain if mankind were somehow removed entirely. In answer to the psalmist's heartfelt question, "*What is Man?*" the evolutionist responds, "Man is a complex organism consisting of neurochemical impulses and locomotion, without purpose or design, and without intrinsic meaning."

Many modern Christians are concerned about what effect evolutionary teaching in our schools and society will have on subsequent generations' belief in God. But this is to put the problem backwards, for Evolution *begins* in unbelief, it does not result in it. The more horrifying consideration is to contemplate what an evolutionary worldview does to man's belief in Man. For atheism does not necessarily end in anarchy, as atheists throughout history have cobbled together untenable but strongly held views concerning the intrinsic worth of Man. Renaissance humanism did, indeed, lead away from God - at least from the Church's God; but it led toward Man in all his rational and emotive and artistic

glory. “Man, the measure of all things,” was the humanist’s creed, and the consequent Enlightenment produced remarkable works of art, literature, and philosophy that forged the liberties enjoyed by much of modern mankind. God was displaced, yes; but Man still meant something to Man. What are we left with when even that is gone?

This may present the greatest challenge, and the greatest opportunity, for the teaching of Christianity in the coming decades: to restore the biblical view of Man to the forefront of theological preaching, literature, social interaction, and political exchange. “*What is Man?*” is a question that must be asked again by every generation, and the Church must be prepared to give the true answer in the face of the most virulent strain of ‘the lie’ that mankind has experienced in its history. The advantage, however, lies with the Church, not only because of the

power and the witness of the Holy Spirit, but also because of an ineradicable sense within humanity that Man is something more than a package of chemicals held together by bones, ligaments, and skin. In spite of the prevalence of evolutionary teaching, “There is, nevertheless, a generally dominant feeling or intuition that man, in one way or another, occupies a central posi-



G. C Berkouwer (1903-96)

tion in the whole of reality.”⁴⁹ Another scholar adds, “Man is the one godlike creature in all the created order. His nature is not understood if he is viewed merely as the most highly developed of the animals, with whom he shares the earth, nor is it perceived if he is seen as an infinitesimal being dwarfed by the enormous magnitude of the universe.”⁵⁰ Surely the recovery of a right view of Man ought to begin in the Church of Jesus Christ.

To be sure, the evangelical church is quite orthodox – as is the Catholic Church, for that matter – with regard to the essential nature of Man as created

⁴⁹ Berkouwer, G. C., *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 1962); 9.

⁵⁰ D. J. A. Clines; “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968); 53.

“in the image of God.” But from that point there is little further meditation on the subject. That which can be found in the Christian literature usually spends the greatest amount of ink trying to determine the *content* of the ‘image of God’ in Man – what that image consists of with regard to Man’s multifaceted nature. Little effort is expended in trying to determine the *import* of the fact that God created Man ‘in His image.’ In other words, the study of the *Imago Dei* is often very clinical, and often not very theological, and rarely if ever practical. It will be the attempt of this study to avoid the well-trodden ground of speculation, and to follow the few theologians who have recognized that the focus of the passage in hand is really not Man at all, but God. This will be to redirect our attention from *what Man is* with regard to his nature, and drive it toward the purpose *for which Man is* and has been created. Nevertheless, because of the pervasiveness of the former line of thought, it is worth at least some effort to summarize the more common interpretations of the passage and to show that, while many of them may be true, and perhaps all of them contain elements of truth, none of them can claim the mantle of being *the* meaning of the *Imago Dei*.

Most analyses of the passage begin with an investigation of the two words that are used in verse 26, translated by the New American Standard as ‘image’ and ‘likeness.’ The first word is *tselem* (“in Our image” – תְּצַלְמֵנוּ) and the second word is *d’muth* (“after Our likeness” – כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ). Two different prepositions are used, which is why the first phrase is quite properly translated as “Let us make Man *in* Our image,” and the second phrase rendered, “according to, or after, Our likeness.” The tendency in Christian literature across the centuries is to seek after the similarity between Man and God – that aspect of Man that most approximates the *image* of God – in the non-physical characteristics of humanity: *rationality*, or *spirituality*, for instance, or his *self-consciousness* and *self-determination*. Unfortunately, the first word used in verse 26 has a very strong connotation in favor of a purely physical representation of an original. *Tselem* “refers primarily to a concrete image, a definite shape,” whereas *d’muth* “is more

abstract – a resemblance, or a likeness.”⁵¹ In Old Testament as well as ancient semitic usage, *tselem* and its cognates almost always refer to physical idols or statues set up as representations of either a god or a king in god’s place.

But the Old Testament witness with regard to the One God is that He is without body, without form.

*You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom. Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, **but you saw no form** – only a voice.* (Deuteronomy 4:11-12)

Therefore theologians and commentators are presented immediately with a conundrum: terminology that is distinctly physical in its meaning, in reference to a non-physical God. The result has been that very few scholars have given much credence to any physical component to the *Imago Dei*, in spite of the strong physicality of the term, *tselem*, ‘image’ used in verse 26. This is, like so many interpretations of the *imago*, derived either theologically or philosophically, and not strictly from the text itself. For several reasons, we shall see, it is important that the purely physical aspect of the comparison between God and His image not be entirely discounted.

First, there are the many anthropomorphisms that are found in the Bible, wherein God is described as having body parts that we know He does not, in actuality, possess. He is said to have arms, feet, a mouth, eyes, ears, and hands. “Yahweh is depicted in human terms, not because He has a body like a human being, but because He is a person and is therefore naturally thought of in terms of human personality.”⁵² It is reasonable to consider and to conclude that the manner in which God made Man, whom He intended to be His confidante and colleague in the governance of Creation, would be in such a way as to make the self-disclosure of God to Man easily comprehensible to the latter. The equipping

⁵¹ Gerald Bray; “The Significance of God’s Image in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.2 (November 1991); 195.

⁵² Clines; 71.

of Man with a physical body opened up an entire array of experiences through which God could 'speak,' as it were, Man's language in the revelation of His own nature and work.

Secondly, in our exegesis of Genesis 1:26, we cannot entirely discount the later revelation of the promised Seed of Woman, the Messiah, who would be Emmanuel, God with Man in flesh residing. The incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity was in God's eternal plan and purpose before the creation of Man in God's image, and so the fullness of the self-disclosure of God through His Son Jesus Christ must have been an integral part of the connection between the image and the prototype. In other words, the first Adam was created in the image of the Last Adam who was to come, but Who was already before in eternity. Thus the physical aspects of the *Imago Dei* are not only wrapped up in the terminology employed, but are also prophetically contained in the promise of what Man would one day become in Christ Jesus, who is both True Man *and* the express image of God *par excellence*.

Finally, we must avoid the common tendency to abstract the various parts of mankind's multifaceted nature - to separate the physical from the psychical or spiritual, usually done to the elevation of the latter and denigration of the former. D. J. A. Clines calls man a 'psychosomatic unity,' and writes, "it is therefore the corporeal animated man that is the image of God. The body cannot be left out of the meaning of the image; man is a totality, and his 'solid flesh' is as much the image of God as his spiritual capacity, creativeness or personality, since none of these 'higher' aspects of the human being can exist in isolation from the body."⁵³ Biblical anthropology insists on equal dignity being paid to the physical part of man; indeed, the common distinctions and arguments among theologians and philosophers with regard to man's body, soul, and spirit are nowhere matters of concern or conflict in the holy writings. The truth of this statement is summed up in the biblical doctrine of the resurrection, which not

⁵³ Clines; 86.

surprisingly was an object of scorn and ridicule among the pagan philosophers of the era. Yet the fullness of the meaning of the *Imago Dei* comprises the resurrection no less than the creation of Man: "The doctrine of the image is thus the protological counterpart of the eschatological doctrine of the resurrection of the body."⁵⁴

Yet by reestablishing the importance of the physical element to the *Imago Dei*, we have hardly exhausted the meaning of the phrase; perhaps not even scratching the surface. This somewhat lengthy defense of the physical aspect of the image does, however, highlight the irony of most Jewish and Christian scholarship on the topic. For in the literature of the ages, with the repeated emphasis on such non-physical characteristics of humanity as have been mentioned above (to which we may include the Arminian's *free will* as being of the essence of the image), all that is said in defense of this view or that view is *beyond what is said in the text itself*. Thus men have waxed eloquent on the meaning of the image, uniting only in their avoidance of all things physical in their own interpretation of the *Imago Dei*.

For Ambrose, the soul was the image; for Athanasius, rationality, in the light of the Logos doctrine; for Augustine, under the influence of Trinitarian dogma, the image is to be seen as the triune faculties of the soul: *memoria, intellectus, amor*. For the Reformers it was the state of original righteousness enjoyed by Adam before the Fall, the 'entire excellence of human nature' including 'everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals,' which since the Fall is 'vitiating and almost destroyed, nothing remaining but a ruin, confused, mutilated, and tainted with impurity.'⁵⁵

Upon reviewing a similar catalog of opinions, Karl Barth summarizes all and sundry when he writes, "One could indeed discuss which of all these and similar explanations of the term is the most beautiful or the most deep or the most serious. One cannot, however, discuss which of them is the correct

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; 87.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; 54-55.

interpretation of Genesis 1:26."⁵⁶ That statement summarizes countless generations of interpretation with regard to the content of the *Imago Dei*. "It appears that scholarship has reached something of an impasse over the problem of the image, in that different starting-points, all of which seem to be legitimate, lead to different conclusions."⁵⁷

However, when we look strictly at the text of Genesis 1:26-27 we find an expansion of the concept of the 'image of God' that may come as close to a definition of the term as can be had. It is not, however, necessarily a very helpful one, for it simply differentiates Man (Hebrew *adam*) into male and female. Consider:

*Let Us make man in Our **image**, according to Our likeness. (v. 26)*
*God created man in His **image**,*
*In the **image** of God He created him,*
***Male and female** He created them. (v. 27)*

The poetic arrangement of the clauses, all surrounding the same creative verb *bara* that we have seen before, seems to indicate a very close connection between the 'image' and the fact that God created Man as male and female. Because of the process of creation as it is related in Genesis 2, the crafting of the man from the dust of the earth, followed some time later by the formation of the women from the side of the man, the integral unity of Man as male and female is often lost in translation. The emphasis tends to be on Adam as the first man, in spite of the fact that the generic Hebrew word for 'Man' is *Adam*, a noun rather than a name. But we must consider, as we will when we arrive there, that Chapter 2 may very well expand upon what we have learned in Chapter 1, but never contradict it. The *fundamental* statement concerning the creation of Man is in Chapter 1, and that is where we find the differentiation of male and female within the one reality, Man.

⁵⁶ Bart, *The Doctrine of Creation III.I*; 193.

⁵⁷ Clines; 61.

As noted above, this fact of the words of the passage does not immediately lead to a clearer understanding of the concept of the *Imago Dei*. How does the fact that God made Man male and female shed light on the concept of Him having made Man in His image? It seems undeniable that there is a connection, at least a lexical connection, between the 'image' and the distinction of male and female within mankind. We offer a few tentative thoughts, and a reference to the writings of the Apostle Paul, in which there are things hard to understand...

First, the creation of Man male and female as explanatory of the 'image' concept, can be seen in the inter-relational principle that we see exists within God Himself. Although it would be anachronistic to dogmatically find the fully developed doctrine of the Trinity in verse 26, yet there is irrefutable evidence of plurality within the One Godhead. There have been many attempts to explain the plural subject in verse 26, coupled with the singular form of the verb *bara*, as a vestige of ancient pagan cosmology, or as a clerical or editorial error by the writer, or as the 'royal we' or an address to the angelic court. All have failed, and even scholars little inclined to accept the divine inspiration of Scripture, or the historical veracity of the Genesis account, recognize that God here speaks of Himself in a plural manner while yet retaining the monotheistic action of creation.

One author concludes that God is addressing His own Spirit, introduced earlier in the narrative in an enigmatic but pivotal role with regard to Creation.⁵⁸ This interpretation has the advantage of staying within the text itself, and is further corroborated by what we read in Psalm 104. We know that the progressive unfolding of divine revelation sheds light upon that which has gone before. In other words, we begin with the text at hand and then move to what the Bible says elsewhere that may shed additional light upon the earlier passage. In this case we turn to the poem of Creation in Proverbs 8,

⁵⁸ Clines; 69.

*The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;
While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Nor the first dust of the world.
When He established the heavens, I was there,
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,
When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,
When He set for the sea its boundary
So that the water would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;
Then I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the world, His earth, and having my delight in the sons of men.*

(Proverbs 8:22-31)

Again, it is common among Christian commentators to see this verse as referring – correctly, of course – to Jesus as the Logos of God. Technically, however, the proverb is about Wisdom personified, and within its own context does not necessarily demand a messianic interpretation. Yet the language is unmistakable in relating a corroborative effort in Creation, between the LORD and His Wisdom. Jewish scholars had long believed, reinforced in the intertestamental period by Greek teaching, that the powerful creative Wisdom of God was none other than the Logos of God, whom we now know as the Second Person of the Triune Godhead, Jesus Christ.

But even if we hold back from this definitive identification of the Wisdom of Creation with our Lord Jesus Christ, we nonetheless see the interactive characteristic of Creation – especially with the creation of Man – in both Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8. Just as there was interactivity within the Godhead in the

ordering of Creation, so God intended there to be interactivity in the governance of Creation through Man. As we will see in Chapter 2, God planned that the male 'version' of Man would both have need and be supplied with a 'helpmeet suitable for him.' Critically, however, we learn of the essential equality of the two 'halves' of humanity in Chapter 1, before Chapter 2's description of need and solution.

Unity with differentiation, therefore, is part and parcel of the essential nature of mankind. In this Man is truly the image of God, for unity with differentiation is what we learn from Scripture as defining the interactivity of the Godhead. Paul writes in I Corinthians 11,

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ...For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

(I Corinthians 11:3; 7)

Furthermore, and remarkably, just as Man is not the image of God merely as the male sex but only in conjunction with the female - and within this truth also lies the mystery and sanctity of marriage - so also Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, is not (dare we say) true and fully Man apart from His own bride, the Church. This is another integral characteristic of Paul's teaching concerning Christ and the Church, nowhere more powerfully displayed than in his Epistle to the Ephesians,

*And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to **the church**, which is His body, **the fullness of Him who fills all in all.***

(Ephesians 1:22-23)

This passage brings us full circle, returning to Genesis 1:26-27 and the second contextual definition of the 'image of God' - that of dominion. To be sure, this aspect of the image is more one of *purpose* than of *nature*, but it is

nonetheless just as significant. It is, in fact, the very first thing the Holy Spirit says about the 'image of God,'

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (1:26)

Some scholars see in the dominical purpose of the creation of Man the essential meaning of the phrase 'image of God,' that it is less about what Man is like than about what Man is meant to be and do. The emphasis, therefore, is not so much on Man's 'godlikeness,' although that is implicit within the concept of 'image' and 'likeness,' but rather on Man's representative stature, "for the image does not primarily mean similarity, but the representation of the one who is imaged in a place where he is not."⁵⁹ And representation, while it implies authority, also entails responsibility. "The presence of the image is the presence of responsibility, which is at once the glory and the tragedy of fallen Adam."⁶⁰

This interpretation of the *Imago Dei* as being primarily if not entirely, existential rather than essential, immediately sheds light forward onto the second narrative of Creation in Genesis Chapter 2. For there we find Man alone being tasked with works – and prohibited from others – that are in direct and intimate relationship to God. Man is to represent God on earth not so much through what he is as through what he does; not so much by and through his rationality or spirituality, but rather by and through his obedience and righteousness. "Man is different. To him alone is given the privilege of fulfilling his earthly existence in relation to God, and this entails responsibility for his actions."⁶¹ Of course, the first Adam's failure in this image-bearing begins the tale of woe that is human history, while the very dignity of the image itself foreshadows the Last Adam, who will guide His life solely by His Father's will and purpose.

⁵⁹ Clines; 87.

⁶⁰ Bray; 215.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; 216.

Week 8: The *Imago Dei* - the True Image of God**Text Reading: Genesis 1:26 - 27**

*“...and have put on the new self who is being renewed
to a true knowledge according to the image of the One
who created him –
a renewal in which there is no distinction...
but Christ is all, and in all.”
(Colossians 3:10-11)*

It is the theological equivalent of the ‘chicken or the egg’ question: Did Christ assume man’s image, or was Man made in Christ’s image? There is no question among orthodox scholars, and believers in general, that Christ took upon Himself *“the form of a bond-servant; being made in the likeness of men”* (Phil. 2:7) and that Christ was *“found in the appearance as a man.”* (Phil. 2:8) And the Nicene Creed clearly states the belief of all catholic Christians, that while Jesus Christ was ‘true God from true God,’ at the same time ‘he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.’ But we also know that the redemptive plan of God, which involved the incarnation of the Christ, transcends the history of redemption in the same manner that Eternity transcends Time. In other words, the *form* that Christ took when He became a man is the very form against which the first human was patterned. It might be said, therefore, that Adam was created in the image of the preincarnate Christ, while Jesus Christ took to Himself the form of the adamic man.

Yet none of this is in the original passage with respect to Man as the *imago Dei*, Genesis 1:26-27. In the last lesson we sought to understand the meaning of the phrase from the text itself, interpreted within its own context and according to the words and syntax of its own place in Scripture. It was admitted then that the results are less than satisfying, because they are less than complete. Fortunately, the doctrine of progressive revelation – *“the unfolding of Thy word gives Light”* – allows the biblical scholar to shine the light of subsequent revelation back on passages dating from a previous redemptive era. Thus,

although it takes us of necessity away from the first chapter of Genesis, we find that we cannot possibly comprehend the meaning of the 'image of God' if we do not look to the One who was the preeminent manifestation of that image, Jesus Christ. Simply put, "In Christ man sees what manhood was meant to be."⁶²

That Jesus Christ was the supreme manifestation of the image of God is clear from so many New Testament passages, that it must certainly be beyond dispute. Even the unbeliever must acknowledge from the text of Scripture that it was the intent of the writers of the New Testament to portray Jesus as *the* image of God in the form of man. From our Lord's own mouth came the announcement to questioning Philip ('doubting' traditionally being assigned to Thomas), in this last-minute exchange before the betrayal and crucifixion,

*Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father**; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

(John 14:8-9)

Of course the *locus classicus* with regard to Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God is Hebrews 1:3, where the author spares no manner of predicate to show that there is no conceivable distinction between the manifest deity in the humanity of Christ Jesus and the Godhead itself,

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Although the terminology is different here – the author does not use the exact word 'image,' nor the phrase 'image of God,' – the meaning is very clear nonetheless. And the phrase is used elsewhere in the New Testament, so that we are left in no doubt as to the connection between the incarnate Lord and the first creation of Man *in the image of God*. For instance, the Apostle Paul speaks of Christ Jesus as the 'image of God' in his second epistle to the Corinthians,

⁶² Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 103.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(II Corinthians 4:3-4)

In Colossians, Paul speaks of Christ again in the ‘image’ terminology, but also with a direct reference to Creation, tying together both the preincarnate Christ in whose image Adam was created, and the incarnate Jesus in whom the image of God was most perfectly manifested,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

(Colossians 1:15-17)

It is not difficult, then, to establish that Jesus Christ is *the* image of God, and from this point to extrapolate back into Genesis 1:26 the concept that Adam was fashioned as much in the image of the promised Messiah as he was in the image of God. But the revelation of the Son of God as the supreme image of God also informs our understanding of ourselves not only as created in the image of God, but as the New Testament frequently teaches, as being *renewed in the image of Christ* through regeneration and sanctification. We come to understand more fully what it means to be *Man* as we come to a greater understanding of what it meant for Christ to be the *true* Man. “Hence anthropology is based on Christology, and we can only know man’s essence through the man Jesus of Nazareth.”⁶³

The overall process of the image is reversed from beginning to end. In Adam all mankind was created ‘in the image of God,’ which image was corrupted, though not destroyed, through the sin of Adam. In Christ, the second Adam, man is restored and renewed not only in the image of God as Adam

⁶³ Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*; 91.

possessed it, but more importantly into the image of God as Jesus Christ possesses it. “As the second Adam, Christ is the head of the new humanity; therefore as Adam shares the image with his descendants, so Christ shares the image with *His* descendants, namely those who are ‘in Christ.’”⁶⁴

The link between Jesus Christ as the true image of God, and the renewal of the believer into that image, forms a central plank in the theology both of regeneration and of sanctification as taught by the Apostle Paul. For instance, we read in Romans 12 of the fundamental nature of sanctification in the believer,

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:1-3)

This passage might seem out of place in a discussion of the image of God, as the phrase itself is nowhere mentioned in the opening verses of Chapter 12. But then we remember that chapters 9 – 11 of Romans are parenthetical – a rabbit trail of sorts that the apostle takes to explain the history and destiny of the physical descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel. The ‘therefore’ of Romans 12:1 actually hearkens all the way back to Chapter 8, where we find the true context and background to the admonition quoted above. Here we find the divine purpose of sanctification, of which Romans 12:1-3 is the earthly manifestation of the Spirit’s work,

*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to **the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

(Romans 8:29-30)

⁶⁴ Clines; 102.

Conformity to the image of Christ thus becomes a distinct paradigm within the anthropological teaching of Paul, reiterated in several key passages in his epistles.

*But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside **the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on **the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

(Ephesians 4:22-24)

*But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside **the old self** with its evil practices, and have put on **the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him – a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.*

(Colossians 3:8-11)

But the ultimate passage from the Pauline corpus that ties together the original creation of Man in the image of God, with the consummation of that image in Christ Jesus, is found in I Corinthians 15,

*So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. **Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.***

(I Corinthians 15:45-49)

At this point in the Pauline doctrine of sanctification/glorification we encounter the 'Now and Not Yet' of biblical redemption. The context of I Corinthians 15 is a debate that was raging in Corinth as to the reality of the resurrection; hence Paul's summary statement: "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." (I Cor. 15:19) The teaching in this passage is akin to what the Apostle John writes in regard to the future state of the believer, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we

will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." (I John 3:2) That is the glorification part of the promise of redemption, and it also involves the restoration of the believer to the truest manner of humanity, the purest image of God which is perfectly patterned in Christ Jesus.

But that is about all that we can safely say about the future state, for we are not given to know from Scripture what exactly that glorified state will be like – as John so clearly says in the verse quoted above. Yet that does not justify a ‘wait and see’ attitude toward the process as it moves along during the believer’s life, and much less a denigration of the body (flesh) as something unimportant to the believer’s final destiny. The physiological aspect of the *image* in Genesis 1:26 translates into a unified approach to sanctification in the New Testament, one that does not leave the body unaffected. Although the passage does not mention the *imago Dei* in any explicit terms, still the concept underlies and helps to illumine Paul’s teaching with regard to the body, in I Corinthians 6,

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

(I Corinthians 6:18-20)

Statements like this one are meant to combat the normal tendency in all religion, no less strong in Christianity, to emphasize the ‘spiritual’ over the physical. Our better understanding not only of the meaning of the ‘image of God’ in Genesis 1:26, but also of Jesus Christ as *the* image of God, will strengthen both our doctrine and our realization of sanctification. There is as much a physical component in the believer’s sanctification as there is a spiritual. Yet even when this component is recognized, it is almost always done so in the negative – the sanctifying work of the Spirit with regard to the body is frequently viewed as *negation* – ‘Don’t drink, don’t smoke, don’t chew...and don’t run with them that do’. And while there are plenty of passages that admonish the believer

to *put to death the deeds of the flesh*, it is also apparent that the mere negation of 'bad' behavior does not in and of itself produce sanctification.

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) – in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

(Colossians 2:20-23)

The goal of sanctification, and the reality of glorification, is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the perfect image of God. Therefore, in body as well as in spirit, true sanctification must be a *positive* restoration: not simply a negation of that which is bad, but more so the addition of that which is supremely good. This is a very important point to consider, for every attempt at sanctification that emphasizes negation leaves only a void within the heart, and that void will not be filled by the Holy Spirit but rather with pride in the form of self-righteousness. Religious man, even religious man under the auspices of biblical Judaism or Christianity, by his own efforts at sanctification merely achieves a man made in the image of Man, not of God. This was Paul's lament for his countrymen, the Jews,

*Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that **they have a zeal for God**, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and **seeking to establish their own**, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

(Romans 10:1-3)

But even when modern evangelicals realize that negation is not the key to sanctification, another vital element of the biblical teaching on the topic is often overlooked. Modern devotionals do tend to be far more positive than in the past, with more emphasis on self-image and esteem 'in Christ,' as at least the Christian self-help books try to accentuate. God's love toward the believer is emphasized,

and a great deal is said about one's relationship with God through prayer and devotional time. These things are not bad, necessarily, but they suffer from the same fault of sanctification-by-negation: they simply do not reflect the biblical teaching; they are too individualistic.

We return now to the concept discussed in the last lesson, where the 'image of God' in which Man was first created was shown to be a plurality of male and female (Genesis 1:27). Man as male is incomplete, and is not the 'image of God' unto himself; only the plurality of male and female - and particularly the union of male and female in marriage - truly represents the divine image in which humanity was created. If we extend this to the absolutely pure image of God, Jesus Christ, we can make the bold statement that the incarnate Christ is also not fully the image of God without His bride, the Church. Indeed, it would be verging on blasphemy to speak such words, if not for that passage we have already considered from Ephesians 1,

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

(Ephesians 1:22-23)

Hence the 'new man' that is the believer according to Paul in II Corinthians 5:17, is nonetheless not a solitary man before God; he is part of the Church, which alone is the 'fullness' of Christ who fills all in all. Ultimately, therefore, the sanctification of a single believer cannot occur apart from the community of believers - no man is an island unto himself; no man lives or dies to himself before God, but rather in community with fellow believers. G. C. Berkouwer expounds on this view at length, and what he has to say is worth considering.

...we do wish to emphasize the importance of the Biblical witness to Christ as the image of God and to the renewal in communion with Christ, of man, according to that image...Replacing the dissoluteness and impurity of the old man there now stands the new life, the new man, who has put away the old man and who

has learned to know Christ, has been instructed in Him and has thus 'put on the new man' in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:17-24). In this life, the image of God becomes visible. The New Testament sheds the fullness of its light on the newness of this life, and it appears that this newness does not merely refer to a new aspect in the life of an individual but that it includes and indeed brings about the community. Thus Paul calls Christ 'our peace, who hath made both one, hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...to make himself of twain, one new man, so making peace' (Eph. 2:17). So deep is this community that it does not arise from men who having individually been renewed now seek each other out; it is a peace which is proclaimed and which is *actuality* in Christ, through the Cross.⁶⁵

This does fit with Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4, where the goal of Christian maturity is clearly at the forefront of the apostle's thoughts. Notice in the midst of plurality there is the singular statement, "*to a mature man.*"

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects **into Him who is the head, even Christ**, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

(Ephesians 4:11-16)

Redemption in Christ is, for the new man, a coming home to God and to himself. Because created in the image of God, the "essential nature of man can never be without God."⁶⁶

It is not possible for man to turn away from God and still calmly retain his humanity; rather, ungodliness, since it is a renunciation of God, is also a renunciation of man's essence and nature.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Berkouwer; 98.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; 92.

⁶⁷ *Idem.*

The work of God in the redemption of a people for His own Name, is also a work of restoring that image that He willed and created to magnify His glory on earth. His progressive revelation shows that the restoration of the image, while it would culminate in the incarnation of God's Son as *the* image of God, was yet a corporate work within the overall population of humanity. There was first the lineage of Seth, then the covenant family of Abraham followed by the nation of Israel. This last was itself a macrocosm (a large cosmos, literally) of the Promised One who was to come out of Israel and was Himself the truest manifestation of Israel, Jesus Christ. With the coming of the perfect image, the Second Adam, there is no longer the foreshadowing of the promise, but now the fulfillment of it. Through Christ has come the new life, the creation of the new man - both the individual men and women and children who are by God's grace regenerated and brought by the Holy Spirit into the Church, and supremely the Church itself, *the fullness of Him who fills all in all*.

Therefore, in at least a preliminary summary of these thoughts, we can say that the restoration of the image of God in man consists of at least two vital aspects. The first is the *knowledge of God in Jesus Christ*, the second is the *community of saints, the Body and Bride of Jesus Christ*. The first is indeed individual, though it is gained in and through the second and cannot be abstracted from the community. The result of this manifestation of the *righteousness of God* is that God, not Man, is glorified. "And that is the marvelous thing; that this human light does not result in the glorifying of man, but of the Father."⁶⁸ In the union and communion of the saints in the Church, Christ the Image of God becomes all and in all, still the one who 'fills all in all,' through His Body the Church, His fullness.

It is not too much to say that the 'image of God' is one of the most important and central of the themes of biblical revelation. It transcends the covenants and the dispensations, and is integrally bound even with the

⁶⁸ Berkouwer; 102.

wonderful promise of the 'seed of woman' who would gain the victory over Satan, sin, and death. It was God's will, as revealed through Creation and recorded in Genesis 1:26, to manifest His own image *through Man*, and that is what He will do. He has done so through the incarnation of His Son, and is doing so through the regeneration of the elect into the community of the Church.

Thus the 'image of God' is not simply something about man, though it most certainly sets man apart from the rest of God's created order. Rather it says more about God and about His purpose and plan to bring all glory and honor back to where it belongs, to Himself. He has chosen to do this through an image, a likeness, a reflection and a representative. It is profoundly true, though incomplete, to say that God has done this in Jesus Christ, for Scripture testifies the divine intention to incorporate the entirety of redeemed humanity (not the entirety of humanity, please note) into that 'image' in the New Heaven and New Earth. A very large portion of that renewing of our minds, of which Paul speaks in Romans 12, is a growing understanding of the meaning and centrality of man as 'the image of God' within God's overall plan for the universe He has created. "The whole Scriptural witness makes clear that our understanding of the image of God can be sound only when in unbreakable relation to the witness regarding Jesus Christ, who is called the image of God."⁶⁹

But we must move even further than this, for the revelation of the 'image' in the individual believer and in the Church, was never meant to remain either in the believer or in the Church. The external purpose of the internal 'image' was dominion: the rule and care of God's creation, "*to rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*" (Genesis 1:26) Just as man as an individual did not utterly lose the 'image' through the Fall, so also this Creation Mandate, as it is known, was not abrogated due to the Fall. Therefore it is to the dominion aspects of the 'image of God' that we turn in our next lesson.

⁶⁹ Berkouwer; 107.

Week 9: The Creation Mandate**Text Reading: Genesis 1:28**

*“God blessed them; and God said to them,
“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.”
(Genesis 1:28)*

The classic epistemological and ontological question through the ages has been, “Who am I, and Why am I here?” This is, in many respects, the philosophical equivalent to the rhetorical query of the psalmist, “What is Man?” Christianity purports to have the answer to such questions, and strives in many different formats to convey that answer to its own adherents and to potential converts. But too often, especially within modern, Western evangelicalism, the



Jacques Ellul (1912-94)

answers fail to even consult the original blueprint from Genesis, much less to do it justice. This is hermeneutically illogical, considering the fact that Man was created *in the image of God to be the representative of God* upon the earth. Jacques Ellul, a 20th Century French scholar who should be read with some care, comments on Man’s role within Creation, “On the one hand, man represents creation before God...On the other hand, he represents God within creation – he belongs to this creation, but he carries to it a presence of God.”⁷⁰ Man’s original position vis-à-vis Creation is such that no answer to the question of purpose and destiny can be found apart from a serious consideration of Genesis chapters 1 – 3.

However, modern evangelical Christianity has been diverted from such a consideration by the teachings of Dispensationalism, which places the first chapters of the first book of the Bible into its own ‘dispensation’ – the

⁷⁰ Ellul, Jacques; “The Relationship Between Man and Creation in the Bible” *Seeds*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (January 1981); 140.

Dispensation of Innocence.⁷¹ Modern Dispensational writers do not seek answers in Genesis unless the questions have to do with Science; answers to the ‘what are we doing here, and how are we supposed to do it?’ type of questions are sought almost exclusively in the New Testament, with a supporting role played by the Proverbs. For instance, it is hard to imagine a more day-to-day, mundane and common ‘earthly’ role for every man – be he Christian or not – than economic life. Working, buying, consuming, selling – all are things that Christians do right alongside their unbelieving neighbors. Yet when Dr. Gene Getz wrote his book, *Rich in Every Way* and subtitled it *Everything God says about money and possessions*, he began in the Book of Acts! It is not that a scholar of the caliber of Dr. Getz (an adjunct professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) believes the Old Testament to have nothing whatever to say on the issue of money and possessions, it is just that Dispensationalism has taught him to ignore the teachings of the Old Testament – including Genesis – as being irrelevant to the ‘Church Age.’

Dispensationalism fits well with the individualism rampant in modern Western culture, and has further developed its own form of pietism. There are countless Christian self-help books that focus on teaching the individual believer how to achieve his or her sanctification through personal devotionals, prayer time, and ministry work. Little or nothing is said about what the believer is to do *in the world*, as it is generally believed among most conservative Christians that the world should be avoided at all costs and in all its manifestations. True, there are some younger ministries that are finally attempting to rethink (and sadly, often, reconfigure) the Gospel in orientation to the world and to the prevailing culture of our age. But by and large these groups take no more guidance or counsel from the Old Testament than do the more staid, fundamental churches of our time.

⁷¹ http://www.biblecentre.org/topics/cis_rd_2_seven_disp.htm. “The Seven Dispensations” by C. I. Schofield.

This is truly remarkable considering that what we read created in Genesis chapter 1 was pronounced by God to be 'very good.' It is even more astounding when one reads what the Bible has to say about the believer's destiny: the New Earth, which is described throughout in terms of the original creation. Yet modern believers are rarely taught that they are under any divine obligation with regard to the earth, the world in which they live, all the while unknowingly failing to fulfill – or even attempt to understand – the first commission given to Man. This commission is known in theological and anthropological circles as the Creation Mandate, and its classic expression is Genesis 1:28.

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

The Creation Mandate has two parts: the first, *reproduction* to fill the earth; the second, *dominion* to rule the earth. There is much that can be said with regard to the first, as modern Western society – including the evangelical Church – is failing with regard to this part of the mandate. But reproduction is fairly self-explanatory, whereas the dominion aspect of the Creation Mandate is fraught with difficulty in both understanding and application. The admonition to *be fruitful and multiply* makes for good sermon material; that *to subdue and rule over it* part is perhaps better study material. Thus it is to this second part of the Creation Mandate that we turn our attention in this lesson.

The first question to ask, of course, is whether the Creation Mandate itself remains valid after the Fall of Man into sin. Setting Dispensationalism aside for the time being, are we as human being still charged with the stewardship and rule of the earth in God's stead now that we have repudiated Him through unrighteousness? The answer is not immediately self-evident, for the first consequence of human sin was removal from the Garden (Genesis 3:22-24). Still there are several hints to guide us to a sound, biblical conclusion of the matter.

The first is the association of dominion with the *image of God* in which Man was created,

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; **and let them rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (1:26)*

Thus prior to any word with regard to the nature of the *imago Dei* in Man, there is this word with regard to the purpose for which Man was created. Man was to be God's *gerant*, His 'operating manager or acting partner' in Creation. Man was to act in God's stead, but also in God's presence, as the liaison between two worlds, the spiritual and the physical. "Man was to be a distinguished link in the chain of being; uniting the animal with the spiritual world, the frailty of the dust of the ground with the breath of the Almighty; and possessing that consciousness of right and wrong which should render him a proper subject of moral government."⁷² This role underlies the detailed description of man's creation found in Genesis 2,

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (2:7)

We have already established that mankind did not lose the *imago Dei* due to his fall into sin, though afterward it has become terribly marred and corrupted. In addition, human nature remains a composite of spirit and body no less descriptive of fallen Man as of created Man. Thus there is the *a priori* conclusion that Man retained both the *image* and the *dominion* aspects of his original creation even in spite of his mutilation of that image (and that dominion) through sin. This is confirmed for us in Genesis 9 through God's commission to Noah immediately after the Flood,

⁷² Fuller, Andrew; *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller; Volume III* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society; 1845); 6.

*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."
(9:1)*

These words are, of course, clearly and intentionally reminiscent of the blessing and commission of Genesis 1:28, the Creation Mandate. God therefore confirms to Noah two very important aspects of Man's nature and purpose: that he is still the bearer of God's image (9:6) and that he still retains the dominion and responsibility of stewardship over the earth (9:1). Yet both reminders contain strong indications that the world has changed horribly. The first comes within the context of murder – something that had already infected mankind but would henceforth become institutionalized among the nations. The second comes with a caveat with regard to the relationship between Man and the creation he is to rule over,

*The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.
(9:2)*

In Genesis 1:28 and following, all is harmonious and peaceful between Man and Creation. "After the separation, however, there is no more communion for man, neither with God nor with nature. Still, it is impossible for there not to be any relationship because man is in this environment; but since this environment is hostile, it is up to man to establish the organization of this relationship."⁷³ The Christian world and life view (German *weltanschauung*) cannot be complete and comprehensive without a biblical framework of understanding with regard to man's relationship to Creation. Much is made of the enmity between the seed of Woman and the seed of the serpent (3:15), as well it should; yet we should not overlook the significance of the enmity placed by the same divine curse between Man and Creation,

⁷³ Ellul; 145.

Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

(Genesis 3:17-19)

Thus the relationship between Man and Creation – since a relationship there must be – becomes one of hostility and enmity where it was supposed to be one of harmony and fruitfulness. None of this takes away the Creation Mandate, however; man is still the steward of a now recalcitrant earth. This perspective is confirmed in the same manner as we have seen with regard to the inanimate aspects of Creation, the Sun and the Moon for instance, as we consider the restoration of the relationship between Man and Creation.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

(Romans 8:19-22)

Another, though more oblique, confirmation of the continuing existence of a significant relationship between Man and Creation can be found in the Levitical statutes designed, remarkably, to *protect* the earth from man's deprivations. For instance, the Sabbatical Year was a period of rest for the land every seventh year. The harvest of the sixth year was blessed threefold so that it would suffice for its own year, the Sabbatical Year, and until the harvest of the eighth year.

The LORD then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your

vineyard. Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year.

(Leviticus 25:1-5)

The author of II Chronicles indicates that the refusal of the children of Israel to honor this command, and to give the land rest, served as the determinant factor in calculating the length of the Babylonian exile.

Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.

(II Chronicles 36:20-21)

Even in times of war the land was not to be disregarded. Consider this injunction from the Lord with respect to the investment of an enemy city:

*When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. **For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?** Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, that you may construct siegeworks against the city that is making war with you until it falls.*

(Deuteronomy 20:19-20)

The land is at a serious disadvantage vis-à-vis Man, and all of creation has been oppressed by the 'fear and terror' of Man since the Flood. But the land is not without its rights, nor without its Advocate. Again, the Dispensationalist will say that the edicts quoted above were pertinent only to the Mosaic Era. If so, then they are arbitrary and without any true meaning. But if they are tied to the Creation Mandate, and to the original pattern of that relationship of steward to property first established in Genesis 1:28, then such commandments remind us of the ongoing presence of the *imago Dei* upon the earth in all of its aspects, and of the promise of eventual restoration. God's precepts with regard to the land were for the protection and survival of the world in which man now had to struggle to make a living. It has long been recognized by wise farmers, that if the

land is depleted, there can be no harvest and, if no harvest, no living. "The peace of creation, the limits given to man so that nature can be itself, the limits imposed on man, are essential if there is to remain anything *alive*."⁷⁴

The practical side of Reformed theology is the concept of the 'Now and the Not Yet,' and its corollary, that believers ought to live the principles of the kingdom in the age in which they are providentially placed, rather than to live without regard to the world in hope of their eventual removal from it. Calvinism in at least some of its branches has ever been proactive with regard to the interrelationship between the Church – the manifestation of the kingdom in this age, though not itself the kingdom – and the world. This is a clash of cultures, of course, but such a clash as the Lord always intended should occur.

But modern evangelicalism, and modern Reformed evangelicalism (redundant, yes), have unwittingly limited the sphere of this conflict to 'spiritual' subjects – to discussions of eternal ends and the means toward those ends. The mundane topics of life have slowly and inexorably been given over to the unbelieving world, without much if any contribution from Reformed Christianity in the public forum. This is an abdication of the Creation Mandate which, if we may be so bold as to put it this way, is as grievous an error as the abdication of the 'Great Commission.' That statement may jolt one's sensibilities, but it should be remembered that the ultimate purpose of all things is not the salvation of men, but rather the glory of God. And He will be glorified as much through the proper gerancy of the earth by His people as by their articulate testimony of His majesty and grace. It is not an either/or situation; but one side of the equation has been sorely lacking for many generations.

Sphere Sovereignty:

There have been times in the Church's history when voices were raised within evangelicalism in defense of the Creation Mandate and in advocacy of its

⁷⁴ Ellul; 149 (*italics original*).

revitalization among believers. Perhaps the greatest of these voices in recent history was that of Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian, pastor, university founder and professor, and one-time Prime Minister. Kuyper developed the theory of 'Sphere Sovereignty' by which he interpreted the Bible to allocate distinct and definite arenas of authority within society: the family, the church, the state – to name but three of the more common spheres. Ultimate sovereignty and ultimate authority belongs only to God; the authority that existed within these spheres of human life was a *derived* sovereignty that could not be claimed or exercised absolutely. Kuyper further taught that the process of restoration began with the Advent, the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, and the on-going Session of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father, by which and through the Church the Cultural Mandate could be once administered.⁷⁵



Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920)

Kuyper affirmed that Christ has freed redeemed people from some of the disabilities that were due to the Fall. This enables them to investigate the powers of nature and to regain some mastery over them. In the Western world, where the influence of Christianity has been the greatest, progress of this kind has been most advanced. As believers use this ability, they implement the requirements of God's cultural mandate for them to 'fill the earth and subdue it.'⁷⁶

Kuyper taught that Christians, especially Reformed Christians because of their unique worldview, are obligated to take up the Creation (Cultural) Mandate with just as much vigor as the Great Commission. This, in his view, means a dedicated involvement by believers in every aspect of life – the arts, education, politics – and to resist the temptation to become isolated from the surrounding world. In articulating this view through his diverse venues in the

⁷⁵ 'Cultural' Mandate is essentially synonymous with the Creation Mandate. Kuyper used the former term, but also found its *locus classicus* in Genesis 1:28.

⁷⁶ M^cGoldrick, James E. *Abraham Kuyper: God's Renaissance Man* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press; 2000); 147.

pulpit, the university, and the civil government, Kuyper uttered what has become his most famous saying: "There is not one part of our world of thought that can be hermetically separated from the other parts, and there is not an inch in the entire area of our human life which Christ, who is sovereign of all, does not cry 'Mine!'"⁷⁷

Sphere Sovereignty energetically attempts to mold the prevailing culture through the influence (leaven) of Christian culture. It also bolsters Christians to their justifiable resistance to any effort of another sphere (i.e., the government) to intervene and interfere in a sphere not properly their own (i.e., the family, or education). Kuyper greatly admired the United States, where he believed these principles were most successfully practiced, but James McGoldrick shows in his biography of the great Dutch theologian, that this was a Pollyanna perspective. It was not true of America at the turn of the 20th Century, and it certainly is not true of America at the turn of the 21st. Still, the lack of any long-term successful application of a principle does not prove the principle to be false, and much of what Kuyper had to say was eminently biblical, and did proper justice to the mandate of Genesis 1:28.

Dominion Theology:



A more recent foray into the reinstatement of the Creation Mandate was spear-headed in the mid- to late-20th Century by Rousas John Rushdoony. His was a form of worldview known alternately as Dominion Theology and Christian Reconstructionism, and the essential feature of this perspective is the sovereignty of God in all aspects of a believer's life and the lordship of Christ over the entire

Rushdoony (1916-2001)
world. Rushdoony took Kuyper a step farther, insisting that The biblical laws of the Mosaic dispensation were binding on mankind at all times in and in all

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; 62.

places. His view was that of Theonomy, which seeks to influence prevailing culture through the adoption of biblical laws (and particularly biblical punishments) by secular legislatures. Some have, with justification, likened theonomy with the Islamic *sharia*.

In spite of this aberration, Rushdoony's views in general were quite orthodox and Reformed, and his influence on the evangelical community in the 20th Century quite profound. He is considered one of the philosophical fathers of the homeschooling movement in America, and much of the political activism within 21st Century evangelicalism traces its roots to his teachings and writings. Yet it remains questionable whether either Kuyper or Rushdoony were correctly interpreting and applying the Creation Mandate to the post-Fall world, and particularly to the 'Church Age.' Each view is opposed to Christians living atomized lives in the world, isolated from the prevailing culture and independent of the mandate to '*subdue the earth and rule over it.*' But Kuyper's view tended heavily toward individualism, and Rushdoony's toward political activism. Neither gave sufficient consideration to the concept of the divine covenant or to the community of God's people.

Enclave Economy: the Community of Faith:

The Creation Mandate must be taken in both halves, and the part that deals with Man's relationship to the world cannot be separated from the part that deals with Man's relationship to Man. The '*be fruitful and multiply*' is not simply a means to the end of '*subdue the earth and rule over it.*' Both are intended as the manifestation of God's will and glory through Man and Creation. Furthermore, "it is impossible to detach the relationship of man with the world from his relationship with God."⁷⁸ Neither Kuyper nor Rushdoony forgot this relationship for a moment – their philosophy and theology were deeply biblical and Reformed – but both tended to blur the line between those people in the

⁷⁸ Ellul; 153.

world who have a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ and those who do not. Not in terms of salvation, of course; neither man yielded one jot or tittle of the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Kuyper, for instance, was perhaps the most impolitic politician who ever lived, for he always maintained that there were only two types of people in the world: regenerate and unregenerate. But in application both were much inclined to adopt and participate in worldly activities for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Perhaps there is a middle ground in the implementation of the Creation Mandate, one that employs interaction with the world while avoiding involvement with the world. This, in fact, was what Israel was intended to be when she was led into the land of Canaan – a distinct people within the surrounding world, living as a people of God in the midst of the people of the world, and thus bearing witness to that world. This is typified in the Old Testament through the Garden of Eden, the family of Abraham, and the children of Israel, and even through the exiles in Babylon. Except for the first (a situation that did not last very long, unfortunately) each of these had dealings with the world around them, and not altogether hostile ones at that, and were to manifest the wisdom and glory of God through the economy of their respective communities.

Many of the Mosaic statutes handed down through the Levitical priesthood pertained to the manner in which the Israelites were to interact not only with their human neighbors, but also with the land they were graciously inheriting. The juncture of these two spheres of life is found in the *economy of the community* – the manner in which the community of God's people lives on the land and off the land. The statute concerning the Sabbatical Year are but one example; there is also the statute concerning gleanings and that of harvesting into the corners of the land. The weekly Sabbath itself was given not only for man, but also for the domesticated beasts of Israel who were to enjoy the same rest as their masters. All of these things were, indeed, a matter of obedience and faith

on the part of the Israelites; but they were also a matter of *witness* to the surrounding world.

See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

(Deuteronomy 4:5-8)

It is appropriate to say that the Creation Mandate is binding upon all mankind, but is capable of fulfillment – even in part – only by the redeemed community of God's people. In this sense it is an outward manifestation of inward regeneration – the commandment to be holy is binding upon all men, but capable of fulfillment only by those who have been graciously regenerated and filled with the Holy Spirit. This is pure Reformed theology, and when applied to the Creation Mandate it teaches us that the redeemed community is both capable and *responsible* to fulfill all of the precepts of God (leaving the debate concerning the civil and ceremonial laws for another day). Our foundation for this belief is the promise of Romans 8 as it applies to the holiness and sanctification of the believer,

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

(Romans 8:2-4)

Note that this is the same chapter where the apostle speaks of the earnest longing and the eventual redemption of creation – in his mind redeemed Man and redeemed Creation were inseparably linked. It should be so in our minds as well.

God intentionally gathers to Himself a unique (a 'peculiar') people and then leaves them within the unbelieving and often hostile world around them. The community thus formed and situated cannot overlook the intentionality of this act, and therefore seek to understand the purpose. James David Hunter, in his excellent and enlightening book *To Change the World*, notes that "The church is, first and foremost, a worshipping community whose life centers on the word of God. As such it is an *altera civitas* (lit.'a second state or city'), yet one not so clearly distinct from the rest of the world as some would have it."⁷⁹ The community cannot blend with the prevailing culture; nor can it ultimately separate and avoid that culture. It must live its life of witness in the midst of that culture. "This means that Christian communities honestly seeking to live under the Word of God will inevitably generate cultures that, to say the least, will in some sense counter or confront the values of the dominant culture."⁸⁰

The essence of this teaching is displayed most clearly in some of the ethnic communities that have emigrated to the United States over the past century and a half. At the turn of the 20th Century the Italians and the Polish, and toward the end of that century the Vietnamese and Korean communities grew significantly in various parts of America. In each case, however, the ethnic minorities banded together of necessity and of fear, to form communities whose economies flourished through mutual support and accountability. So successful were these ethnic economies, and so powerful their interaction with the prevailing culture, that economists finally took notice and began to study, tabulate, and codify the phenomenon. Now it has a name: Enclave Economics, and the observant communities are called Enclave Economies. It is a sad testimony to the biblical illiteracy and general worldliness of the American evangelical church that the implementation of the Creation Mandate (in both of its parts) has been more

⁷⁹ Hunter, James Davison; *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2010); 184.

⁸⁰ Carson, D. A. *Christ & Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 2008); 143.

effectively accomplished by unbelieving immigrant communities than it has been by the Church. It is beyond the scope of this study of Genesis to delve into the dynamics of these economies, but it is sufficient to say that their management of resources, their care for community, their reputation among those who are without, and their overall economic success are indisputable realities in the modern world of economics. Theirs is a lesson to be learned and an example to be followed. Theirs is also a source of humiliation for believers, having been put to shame by unbelieving 'aliens and sojourners' who have reacted to their situation in a more biblical (though unconscious, to be sure) manner than has the Church. In sum, "We have seen that in accordance with the economic dimensions of the creation mandate there is imposed on man the obligation to conserve, and to develop to the glory of God, the endowments of created reality over which he has been established in a relation of stewardship."⁸¹ Our response to the Creation Mandate will count among the 'deeds done in the flesh' for which all believers will give an account before the Lord.

⁸¹ Vickers, Douglas; *Economics and Man* (The Craig Press; 1976); 345.

Week 10: Remember the Sabbath**Text Reading: Genesis 2:1 - 3**

“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”
(Genesis 2:3)

What does the fundamentalist think, if anything at all, when he moves his Ten Commandments sign from his front yard in order to mow the grass on Sunday? Is it permissible for Christians to eat out at the local cafeteria after church – in order not to cook on the Sabbath – if it forces others to do the cooking for them? And what possesses a person to the vitriol exhibited by the Seventh-Day Adventist bumper stickers shown here? The message may not be clear in the photo, but it is, up close and personal: **SATURDAY IS THE SABBATH NOT SUNDAY! REPENT or Perish in Hell’s Fire!** One wonders how this person *really* feels about the Sabbath. On the one hand, the message’s tone does not differ much from that of the Old Testament prophets of Israel, for observance of the Sabbath was indeed a central tenet of the Israelitish religion and was as much a test of orthodoxy/orthopraxy as anything else one might do. But on the other hand, it is truly hard for modern evangelicals to get as fired up about the Sabbath – whether Saturday or Sunday – as these apparently homemade bumper stickers indicate.



Photo by Abe Raghieb (while driving)

Actually, such is the ambivalence concerning the Sabbath in the modern church, that many commentators do not see Genesis 2:1-3 as relating to the Jewish Sabbath of the Mosaic Era at all. They maintain, correctly, that there is no commandment or injunction to be found in the early chapters of Genesis,

whereby man was to follow God's lead by observing a seventh day rest from labor. Yet one can hardly argue with Calvin's view at this point, "For God cannot either more gently allure, or more effectually incite us to obedience, then by inviting and exhorting us to the imitation of himself."⁸² Furthermore, it can also be reasoned that at the time of the institution of the *divine* Sabbath, there would be no need for God to command its observance, since man had not yet fallen into sin and out of the grace of God. Still, it remains true that after the Fall there is no explicit admonition from God for man to 'remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.'

Perhaps the first thing to address in our study of the institution of the Sabbath is its position in our Bibles. It is common knowledge that the chapter and verse divisions of the English Bible are not inspired, and are often set in the wrong places. This is one such example. Chapter 2, as it were, must begin with verse 4 as there we find a common expression that also sets apart two other sections of Genesis that begin with the first verses of Chapters 5 and 10. The Hebrew word used, and which we shall see is a significant literary marker in Genesis, is *toledoth* (תולדות), which is translated 'generations.' Hence the first three subject markers in the Book of Genesis are:

*These are **the generations** of the heaven and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.* (2:4)

*This is the book of **the generations** of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him* (5:1)

Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth; and unto them were sons born after the flood. (10:1)

So the first three verses of our Chapter 2 really belong to Chapter 1. One need not be a Hebrew scholar, however, to realize this, for the subject matter of these verses is the *seventh day* of the Creation Week, the majority of which is the

⁸² Calvin, John; *Commentary on Genesis*; 106.

subject matter of Chapter 1. Clearly the seventh day belongs with the other six, and Genesis 2:1-3 belong with Genesis 1:1-31. “In the first six days space is subdued; on the seventh, time is sanctified.”⁸³

Another hermeneutical point to be noticed from the text is the presence of the divine blessing – the *berekah* (בְּרָכָה). Three times within the first Creation account we find the divine blessing, and ought to pause and take notice of that which God blesses. The first blessing is in verse 22, “*And God blessed them (i.e., the birds and fish), saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.’*” The second is in verse 28 – the Creation Mandate of our previous lesson – “*And God blessed them; and God said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over [it].’*” The final blessing of creation is here in verse 3 of the second chapter, “*Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it...*” These verses are significant simply, yet profoundly, because they brought forth from God a particular benediction, an explicit statement of the divine approbation in regard to the thing blessed. Two of the blessings are directed toward living things; the third directed toward a day. The first two, according to the analysis of Leon Kass, are for *life* and for *rule*; the third for *holiness*.⁸⁴

Furthermore, it is of great importance to note that only the first two are accompanied by the tradition commandment or admonition which normally accompanies, though varied in form and content, the divine blessing. Here the fish and the fowl are commanded to “*be fruitful and multiply*”; to man the additional admonition to “*subdue the earth and rule over*” the living creatures. But with the sabbatical blessing there is no additional commandment – no injunction set upon man nor beast with regard to this new, holy day. This indicates that the Sabbath is supra-religious; it transcends religion and stands apart (the meaning of the word ‘sanctify’) from the rest of Creation. Kass writes,

The seventh day and its holiness are, to begin with, beyond the human realm altogether. A major concern of the subsequent biblical teaching will be to bring

⁸³ Waltke; 67.

⁸⁴ Kass; 53.

the human into relation to the holy and the holy into everyday human life. But for now, the holy is altogether mysterious.⁸⁵

If time and space permitted, a study on the concept of the *berekah* would be most informative, and would shed a great deal of light upon the will and purpose of God revealed in the first chapter of Genesis. It is a concept that permeated the religions of the Near East, and served the ancient metaphysical thought in much the same way as 'the Force' functions in the fictional world of the Jedi knight. In Islam, *barakah* "is the beneficent force from God that flows through the physical and spiritual spheres as prosperity, protection, and happiness."⁸⁶ And while in Judaism it has become somewhat sanitized as a greeting or rote prayer,⁸⁷ in its ancient form it represented an indispensable virtue necessary for successful living. Edmond Jacob writes,

In conclusion we may say that the blessing is the power by which life is maintained and augmented. The result of the blessing is the condition defined by the word *shalom*, which suggests the idea of abundance, prosperity and peace; this state will only be fully attained in the last times, but for the righteous it can be a present reality, so true is it that there is nothing hoped for which cannot be translated immediately into actual life.⁸⁸

Thus God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, without reference to anything to be done, anything commanded, any strictures or responsibility placed on man or beast. What do we make of this fact? For one thing, it is reasonable to conclude that God blessed that which most pleased Him in Creation, and that which He intended to persevere through the vicissitudes of history and to come out on the other side in the New Heaven and New Earth. The life of all creatures, the authoritative *gerancy* of Man, and the Sabbath appear to be such abiding verities from the act of divine creation. This is, of course,

⁸⁵ *Idem*.

⁸⁶ C. Coulon, et al. *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*. Oxford Univ. Press, 1988.

⁸⁷ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/berakah>

⁸⁸ Jacob; 179-180.

confirmed many places in regard to the first two categories, and in one significant place with reference to the third.

So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11)

As with other aspects of Creation, we thus find that the concept of the Sabbath is both *protological* and *eschatological*. It points backwards, as in the Mosaic ordinance to “Remember the Sabbath day...” while also pointing forward to the very end of the present order. This fact alone argues powerfully for the abiding significance of the Sabbath in all ages and under both covenants, though the form of its observance may have altered across the course of redemptive history.

On the front side of this spectrum, the extreme ancient world of Mesopotamia, scholars and archaeologists have discovered ample evidence that some sort of seven-day cycle persisted through the history of Assyria and Babylonia long before the Hebrews entered the land of Canaan. Much of this data has been used to conclude that the Jewish Sabbath is merely a borrowing from the ancient ritual calendars of Israel’s more distant ancestors, roughly following the phases of the moon. But John Davis, in *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*, shows that there is just as much reason to believe that the Babylonians and Assyrians were themselves borrowing from an even earlier, primal institution of the ‘sabbath.’ He also points out cogently that the significance of the seventh day was far different for the ancient pagans, for whom it was a day of evil omens, than for the ancient Israelites, for whom it was a day of rest and joy.⁸⁹

Nor can it be hypothesized that the Sabbath, or the seven-day week for that matter, arose solely from the observance of the moon’s cycle through its

⁸⁹ Davis, John D. *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*; 27.

phases. The lunar month is 29.44 days which, while closely divisible by seven, is far enough off to require the shift of one day every cycle. In other words, if the Sabbath or seventh-day were strictly observant of the moon's phases, then it would iterate one additional day with each subsequent month. This month the Sabbath would be a Saturday, next month a Sunday, and so forth. Indeed, no celestial pattern is sufficient in itself to explain the measuring of time here on Earth, but the 'month' is undoubtedly the least corroborate. Although the heavenly bodies were created for the purpose of marking time (*cp.* Genesis 1:14), there is sufficient margins of error in our days, months, and years to force us to look beyond the calendar to find the meaning of the Sabbath. Davis concludes his chapter on the Sabbath with devotion,

Each recurring seventh period of time is a season of rest, liberty, and joy. What do these things mean? An origin is needed for the belief that the seventh portion of time was a season of rest and good-will to man; a heavenly example calling for imitation on earth.⁹⁰

In any discussion of the Sabbath, and in any age of faith, it is imperative that one consider long and hard upon the fact that the first Person to observe a Sabbath was God himself. It is hardly reasonable to think that the act of creation in any way exhausted the Creator, so that it was 'physically' necessary for Him to rest. Furthermore, it is evident that the parameters of the divine rest continue in only one sense: that the work of creation as described under the rubric of the first six days, has ceased. Jesus himself assures us that the divine work of Providence, and of Redemption, continues throughout time.

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."
(John 5:16-17)

⁹⁰ Davis; 35.

Thus we are presented in Genesis 2:1-3 with the spectre of an almighty God 'resting' from His labors without any mention of His desire that the act of resting (an oxymoron, yes?) be imitated or repeated within the cosmos. But this enigmatic action will become a central feature of revealed religion, and will come to typify the very hope of redeemed mankind for the future. Can it have been done to any other purpose than to foreshadow man's eternal rest through the redemption of Jesus Christ, in God? Can it have any other meaning greater than the earthly type of *shalom* to be realized in the eschatological age? And if so, how then can an observance of the Sabbath (note the use of the indefinite, rather than the definite, article here) be relegated to a particular redemptive epoch?

To be sure, the Sabbath has in addition to these metaphysical considerations, a practical benefit for both man and beast: the need for physical rest on a regular basis. In addition, there is the religious and economic benefit of reminding man that it is God who "*gives the power to make wealth*" (Deut. 8:17-18), reminding man that "*even in an abundance of possessions does not his soul consist.*" But the Sabbath is more than even the cumulative temporal, religious, and economic benefits one can enumerate (and they are legion). Delitzsch writes beautifully on this matter, in prose worthy of quoting in large measure.

God completed the creation of the world with all its inhabitants by ceasing to produce anything new, and entering into the rest of His all-sufficient eternal Being, from which He had come forth, as it were, at and in the creation of a world distinct from His own essence...As the whole earthly creation is subject to the changes of time and the law of temporal motion and development; so all creatures not only stand in need of definite recurring periods of rest, for the sake of recruiting their strength and gaining new power for further development, but they also look forward to a time when all restlessness shall give place to the blessed rest of the perfect consummation.⁹¹

One thing is certain within the biblical study of the Sabbath, that is the fact that the seventh-day rest was never intended to be a burden upon man. The

⁹¹ Delitzsch; 68-69.

blessing that God pronounced upon the day at first was to permeate its observance throughout time, whether lying under a specific commandment as in the Mosaic dispensation, or as the divine example standing for all mankind to follow. This fact is brought into stark relief within the Mosaic era, where observance of the Sabbath would become – due only to man’s sin – the odious burden it was never meant to be. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord reiterates the centrality of the Sabbath in His redemptive program, but the terminology is so utterly foreign to the concept of ‘burden’ that it is truly a wonder how any man could have incorporated that view into his sabbatical thought.

*If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your own pleasure on My holy day,
And **call the sabbath a delight**, the holy day of the LORD honorable,
And honor it, desisting from your own ways,
From seeking your own pleasure
And speaking your own word,
Then you will take delight in the LORD,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.* (Isaiah 58:13-14)

It is not surprising or mysterious that man could make of the Sabbath a religious work and a burden (nothing man does in error can every be surprising). What is astonishing is that he could convince himself that God *intended* it to be so. Even modern evangelicals view the Sabbath as a burden; why else would they avoid its observance with such vigor, assigning it to a previous dispensation, and crying ‘Grace, Grace’ along with the right to do whatever they like on God’s holy day? Once again Dispensationalism has wrought a tremendous error in perception and practice upon Christianity, and robbed believers of the greatest blessing God bestowed upon the earth.

We can summarize the temporal permanence of the Sabbath in a manner that transcends any particular period in redemptive history, and shows that the blessing of the Sabbath remains timeless throughout the passage of human and

redemptive history. First, there is the established fact that God instituted and observed the Sabbath at the very beginning, without reference to sin of any kind, and without further exhortation upon Man's participation than that which flowed from divine example. There is no explicit biblical evidence that man did follow God's example, though that should not surprise anyone considering the rapidity with which man rebelled against God. Still, there is an indication that the first family of mankind did follow a set pattern of days, and even incorporated the worship of God into that pattern. In Genesis 4, a passage most noted for the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, the opening verse states, "*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.*" (4:3) The phrase 'in process of time' is literally translated 'at the end of days.' Delitzsch believes this to signify the passing of a long duration, but it could also signify the seventh day; the end of the week of days, though no positive commandment for religious observance of the Sabbath had yet been given.

Another example of an early observance of the seventh day in terms of religious activity is found with the righteous Job, who sacrificed on behalf of his sons and daughters at the end of the children's weekly cycle of feasting and carousing.

When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually. (Job 1:5)

Still, one cannot make a dogma of an early religious and sacrificial observance of the Sabbath from these nebulous passages, neither of which has with it the direction or sanction of God. It is without argument that the first *official* institution of the Sabbath as a religious holiday (as in 'holy day') comes with the promulgation of the Mosaic Commandments to the children of Israel in the wilderness. This, however, does not warrant the conclusion that so many

make, that the Sabbath for man was an historical invention of the Mosaic era, limited thus to the nation of Israel alone. Jesus gave no such limitation upon the Sabbath when He declared "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*" It is rather more reasonable to see that the establishment of Sabbath observance (and not only the weekly Sabbath, but also the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee) was just as much a temporal manifestation of the holiness of God as was the inculcation of the moral law. The words are not easily digestible, but the thought of Leon Kass is on the mark in this regard,

Curiously, the metaphysical principle of separation (i.e., sanctification of the seventh day) will become incorporated in human affairs in the transmoral principle of holiness, for this the observance of the separated and sanctified Sabbath day is crucial, even paradigmatic.⁹²

Kass is pointing out an important characteristic of the Mosaic religion with regard to the Sabbath: that it was of the very essence of Judaism, and not some peripheral aspect of the cultus. This is significant, given the reality that most modern evangelicals view the Old Covenant as one of commandments and rules, of sacrifices and 'salvation by works' (another erroneous conclusion fostered by Dispensationalism). The Old Testament is portrayed as a litany of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not,' with little consideration of the many times the nation of Israel is chastised by the Lord through the prophets, for their negligence of the Sabbath. This is potently displayed by the behavior of the post-exilic community, which seemed to be irrevocably cured of two moral diseases: idolatry, and Sabbath breaking.

The rise of rabbinic and Pharisaical Judaism brought with it what appeared to be a permanent aversion to idolatry in any form, and a rigid, legalistic system whereby the Sabbath might not be broken either intentionally or inadvertently. The later teachings of Jesus the Messiah prove that on both

⁹² Kass; 52.

accounts the rabbis and Pharisees got it all wrong, but it is still worthy to note their recognition of the twin sins of idolatry and Sabbath-breaking. However wrong-headed and wrong-hearted they may have been, the Jews of the post-exilic era finally recognized the place of the Sabbath in God's program.

Only the doctrines of Dispensationalism could keep the Sabbath out of the current era, the 'Church Age,' as it is known within that teaching. The Sabbath itself permeates all other eras, stretching from the divine institution and observance in Genesis 2:1-3 to the 'Sabbath rest to come' spoken of in Hebrews. The evidence of the observance of a seven-day week throughout human history, as well as its lack of any celestial basis, argues powerfully that the Sabbath is somehow inculcated into the very fabric of human society. Conscious attempts to reformulate the week into ten-day periods (the Reform Calendar of the French Revolution) or five-day weeks (Soviet Russia) were conspicuous failures, with each society eventually returning to the seven-day week. Today, however, within professing Christian communities few show any inclination to 'sanctify' the Sabbath or to treat it in any way different from the other six days of the week. It is primarily the Reformed Christian community that continues to recognize the "outward and ordinary cadence of Sabbath-keeping."⁹³

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the shift in the early Church from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday, to the observance of the Lord's Day on Sunday. We are primarily concerned here with the 'What' and the 'Why' of the Sabbath here, leaving the 'How' to another study. We find the concept of the Sabbath in the primal innocence of the Cosmos and in the perfect consummation of the New Heaven and New Earth. Its temporal observance has fluctuated over time, but its enduring importance both to God and to man has remained unaltered and unalterable. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

⁹³ Hart, D. G. and John R. Muether; *With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed; 2002); 73.

Week 11: Eden: The Garden of the Lord

Text Reading: Genesis 2:4 - 17

*“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it..”
(Genesis 2:15)*

The Book of Genesis is a book with ten sub-books inside of it. Beginning in the fourth verse of our Chapter 2, the author divides the primal history of Man and of redemptive history into ten distinct eras, each organically connected to the others, but thematically separated by the same heading: *These are the generations of...* The keyword repeated in these ten pericope divisions is that which is most uniformly translated by the English “generations” – the Hebrew *toledoth* (תולדות). The word is always in the plural, and it always signifies not the origin of the progenitor of the era, but rather the history and development of the era itself. So, “*the generations of Noah*” (6:9) does not focus on Noah’s origins (that is part of the previous section) but emphasizes Noah’s character, the birth of his three sons, and the developments of God’s actions vis-à-vis mankind through the judgment of the Flood. This is the typical pattern and allows the reader an instructive, inherent outline structure to the whole book.

Genesis 2:4 – *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth...*

Genesis 5:1 – *These are the generations of Adam...*

Genesis 6:9 – *These are the generations of Noah...*

Genesis 10:1 – *These are the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth*

Genesis 11:10 – *These are the generations of Shem...*

Genesis 11:27 – *These are the generations of Terah...*

Genesis 25:12 – *These are the generations of Ishmael...*

Genesis 25:19 – *These are the generations of Isaac...*

Genesis 36:1 – *These are the generations of Esau...*

Genesis 37:2 – *These are the generations of Jacob...*

There is a pattern even within the outline, that appears when the ten headings are grouped into two sets of five. In this pattern is juxtaposed the

ongoing tension of the relationship between the world and the redeemed people of God, illustrating the principle that God is sovereign over both groups, though gracious only to the elect. Each set of five headings begins with what is essentially a 'worldly' referent, though each has an implicit reference to redemptive history as well. Consider the following table, with 'NR' meaning 'non-redemptive,' and 'R' meaning 'redemptive.'

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Referent</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Referent</u>
2:4	The story of creation, with special focus upon the Garden of Eden (NR with R)	11:27	The generations of Terah, with special focus upon the call of Abram (NR with R)
5:1	The generations of Adam (NR)	25:12	The generations of Ishmael (NR)
6:9	The generations of Noah (R)	25:19	The generations of Isaac (R)
10:1	The generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (NR)	36:1	The generations of Esau (NR)
11:10	The generations of Shem (R)	37:2	The generations of Jacob (R)

This is not to say that there were no redemptive overtones in any of the 'NR' sections. We do find the promise of the Seed of Woman, and the lineage of Seth within the narrative of the generations of Adam, and the Noaic blessing upon Shem (and Japheth) is alongside the curse pronounced upon Ham. Generally speaking, however, the 'NR' sections are overviews of the world as it is in fallen unbelief, the world as it progresses (regresses?) apart from God. Interspersed evenly within this depressing narrative arrangement, therefore, are the encouraging storied of God's redemptive interaction within human history, through the calling and separating of the lineage of the promised Seed.

Sadly, some English translations - such as the New American Standard - fail to translate *toledoth* consistently in Genesis 2:4 compared with the other nine renderings of the Hebrew word. This is to the detriment of the average reader, who thus fails to see the fourth verse of the second chapter as commencing a new

and important segment within the whole book. This fact actually ties the 'second Creation Account' - as it is widely known - less to the preceding Creation Account, and more to the balance of Genesis which follows. Thus Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 stands in even brighter contrast as the *prologue* of Genesis, itself the *prologue* of the whole Bible. This aspect of the literary structure of the Book of Genesis becomes very important when one starts to compare and contrast the 'two' Creation Accounts, Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 with Genesis 2:4-25. The evident differences in the tone and structure of these two passages has, sadly, led to wild and erroneous, and dangerously misleading, interpretive schemes.

The Documentary Hypothesis:

The most famous - to evangelicals, infamous - of these 'scholarly' attempts to explain the apparent differences (some would say, contradictions)



Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918)

between the first and second creation narratives, belongs to the 19th Century German theologian Julius Wellhausen and is known as the Documentary Hypothesis. It is somewhat remarkable that Wellhausen's theory is still called an 'Hypothesis,' for it is generally considered the orthodox interpretation of the Pentateuch - the Five Books of Moses - by biblical scholars of all different stripes, including many who claim to be evangelical. The gist of Wellhausen's treatment of the first five books of the Bible is to divide up the authorship of the whole into five different sources, none of which was Moses. The basis for the division was found in the different words and phrases that were used, and Wellhausen's perception of differences in themes and topics. He came up with four contributing classes of authors, and one 'redactor' who eventually put the whole corpus together sometime during or shortly after the Babylonian Captivity. Wellhausen's authors were the *Elohist*, the *Yahwist* (or *Jahwist*), the

Deuteronomist, and the *Priestly*. The redactor was simply an editor, or editors, who ‘smoothed’ the final product into what we have today.

In an attempt to reconcile inconsistencies in the biblical text, and refusing to accept forced explanations to harmonize them, 18th and 19th century biblical scholars using source criticism eventually arrived at the theory that the Torah was composed of selections woven together from several, at times inconsistent, sources, each originally a complete and independent document. The hypothesis developed slowly over the course of the 19th century, by the end of which it was generally agreed that there were four main sources, combined into their final form by a series of **redactors, R**. These four sources came to be known as the **Yahwist**, or Jahwist, **J** (J being the German equivalent of the English letter Y); the **Elohist**, **E**; the **Deuteronomist**, **D**, (the name comes from the Book of Deuteronomy, D's contribution to the Torah); and the **Priestly Writer**, **P**.⁹⁴

Only two of his ‘authors’ need concern us at this point – the Elohist (E) and the Yahwist (J). The sections of the Pentateuch assigned to each are done so

on the basis of the ‘name’ used for God in the respective passages. The Elohist, of course, makes use of the divine name *Elohim*, and to him is assigned Genesis Chapter 1 where God is consistently referred by that nomenclature. The Yahwist, in contrast, utilizes the more specialized divine name of *Yahweh*, (the LORD or Jehovah), or the compound *Yahweh Elohim* (the LORD God). Wellhausen

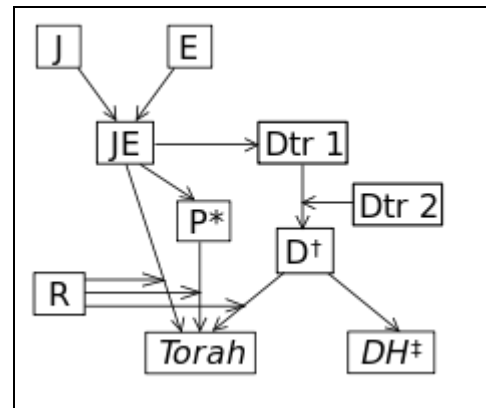


Diagram of the Documentary Hypothesis

* includes most of Leviticus

† includes most of Deuteronomy

‡ "Deuteronomic history": Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1& 2 Kings

concludes that the two sections derive from entirely independent sources, brought together and knitted into one book by the ‘redactor(s).’ As a theory, the Documentary Hypothesis fails on several accounts.

⁹⁴ http://religion.wikia.com/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis

First, the variation in usage of terms – especially the names of God – is not so cut-and-dried as Herr Wellhausen would wish. For instance, in the dialogue between the serpent and the woman God is referred to as *Elohim*. This is in itself significant, but cannot mean that a different author contributed this portion of the post-Fall narrative. Second, the theory does great violence to the freedom of word usage enjoyed by all authors, including inspired ones. If Wellhausen's theory held true in literature, it would be impossible to reasonably assign all of the Shakespearean sonnets and tragedies and comedies to the pen of the bard from Stratford-on-Avon. Variation in terminology is more convincingly seen to be due to variations in focus and theme, rather than the contribution of different authors. This, we will see, is evidently the case with regard to the various names of God – *Elohim*, *Jehovah*, and *Jehovah-Elohim* – used in the opening chapters of Genesis.

Finally, and perhaps fatally, the work of the redactor(s) is abysmal. According the Wellhausen school, post-exilic scholars, rabbis, and/or priests spent hours upon hours quilting together the various strands of history and myth from the generations of oral tradition within the Jewish nation. Frankly, if they did their job with even a modicum of competence, such apparent 'divisions' as form the foundation of the Documentary Hypothesis, would not appear at all. For instance, it was the established belief within post-exilic Judaism that the universe was created by the one, true God. If the 'redactor(s)' were intent upon producing canon that would find favor among their countrymen, would it not stand to reason that the covenant name of their God, *Jehovah*, would find its way into the Creation Account of Chapter 1? Given the evident 'choppiness' of the finished product – with apparent shifts in terminology covering large sections of the text, one must conclude that either the redactor(s) did a very poor job indeed, or there are other, more cohesive and convincing, explanations for the changes in tone and terms. In the case of the names of God, the alternative explanation is more rational by far.

Elohim and Yahweh:

The divine name *Elohim* is perhaps the most general term utilized in Scripture to signify the Almighty. According to Franz Delitzsch, the name derives from a root Hebrew word that denotes “to fear, and signifies awe, fear, then the object of fear, the highest being to be feared.”⁹⁵ Thus when the narrative is addressing general topics that pertain to the whole earth, the universe, or the world of men beyond the sphere of God’s gracious redemptive providence, the natural denomination for the Divine Being would be *Elohim*. “Elohim depicts the one true God as the infinitely great and exalted One, who created the heavens and the earth, and who preserves and governs every creature.”⁹⁶ *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah*, is well known in the Old Testament as the ‘memorial name’ of God, and signifies a much more intimate and salvific relationship. This name was revealed to Moses, who we believe to have been the author of Genesis, in an encounter with God recorded in Exodus 3.

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name [to](#) all generations. (Exodus 3:14-15)

The two names roughly delineate the dual characteristics or attributes of God as *transcendent* and *immanent* with regard to His relationship with His Creation and with Man. God as transcendent above the universe, the God of all Creation, is *Elohim*. God as involved with His handiwork, in relationship with Man, is *Yahweh* – the *covenant* name of God. Victor Hamilton distinguishes between the usage of the two names with a comment far more reasonable than anything derives from the Documentary Hypothesis: “...the first [*Elohim*]

⁹⁵ Delitzsch; *Commentary on Genesis*; 73.

⁹⁶ *Idem*.

suggesting His majesty and transcendence, the second His intimacy and involvement with His creation."⁹⁷

Still another distinction may be made between these two divine names. *Elohim* is, perhaps, the rawest form of God's self-revelation to Man: it is rooted in omnipotence and engenders fear, even terror. Many enduring misconceptions in regard to 'the God of the Old Testament' are at their foundation a failure to differentiate the characteristics of the one, true God on the basis of His self-disclosure through names. As God the Creator and Supreme Governor of the Universe, He is *Elohim*. His power is infinite and His glory awesome, though there is nothing in the name itself to suggest compassion or mercy, let alone redemption.

It is significant that we find *Elohim* used in Genesis 3:1-5, in the exchange between the serpent and the first woman, Eve. Satan intends to instill abject and distrustful fear into the mind and heart of the woman, and she responds in such a manner as to indicate that it was not going to be a difficult mission for the deceiver. The narrative starts out speaking of the serpents place among the creatures that the *LORD God* (Jehovah Elohim) had made. But then the terminology shifts dramatically:

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has **God** said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, **God** has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For **God** knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like **God**, knowing good and evil."*

(Genesis 3:1-5)

Immediately after the Fall, Adam and his wife both having taken and eaten from the forbidden tree, we find again the *LORD God* seeking out the man in the garden, in the cool of the day.

⁹⁷ Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; 1982); 21.

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the lcool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:8-9)

The name *Elohim*, therefore, represents the identity of God as known by all men. It is the same knowledge of which Paul speaks in Romans 1, which mankind has repudiated and rejected, choosing rather to worship the creature than the Creator, who is "God over all, blessed forever. Amen." *Elohim* is God in raw creative power, and in judgment as well. But, if we can say this reverently, the name *Elohim* is an incomplete revelation of the fullness of the nature of God, for there is also forgiveness and redemption with God. This is why there are so many 'names' of God given in the Bible: the infinite attributes of the Divine Being could not possibly be encapsulated into one name, no matter how exalted.

Enter *Jehovah*, or more literally, the tetragrammaton YHWH. As ancient Hebrew was a consonantal language (having no vowels), it is impossible for modern readers to know just how any word was pronounced. In the 11th Century after Christ, the Masoretic rabbis of the Dispersion, seeking to save Hebrew from becoming a dead language (a fate that befell Latin), developed a vowel system to furnish vocalization guidelines for the consonants. But before this, there is no real way of telling how any particular word was pronounced. (No doubt each word was pronounced with additional syllables in the South of Judea as compared to the North). The divine name 'Jehovah' derives from the addition of the vowel sounds of the Hebrew word *adonai*, which means 'Lord,' to the consonants of the mysterious YHWH. This results in *Y^aH^oW^aH* rendered variously as 'Yahweh,' 'Yehovah,' or 'Jehovah.' This combination of vowels and consonants from two different words also yields the typical English rendering of the divine name YHWH as 'LORD' in all capital letters, versus 'Lord' as the translation for *adonai*.

But this is all too technical, really. What we want to know is why Moses (whom we still archaically believe to be the author of Genesis) switched from *Elohim* in Chapter 1 to the predominant use of *Jehovah Elohim* in Chapter 2. The answer to this question may very well lie within another narrative, recording an event that took place many centuries after Creation and the venue of Genesis 2. This event was the revelation of God to Moses prior to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. It is where God officially revealed Himself as YHWH, declaring this to be His 'memorial name' to all generations of Israel's descendants.

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.' (Exodus 3:13-15)

Literally, the self-revealing name delivered to Moses in this passage is *Ehyeh* (אֶהְיֶה) which is the first person singular conjugation of the Hebrew verb 'to be.' Hence it is rightly translated in our English Bibles as 'I AM.' This word is, however, the root of the divine name YHWH, a name that goes deeper than the omnipotence of God to His core Being - He is the One who alone *is*. He is the fount of all being, the source of all that is good, all that is true, all that is pure. Thus He is not merely the One Creator, in opposition to the myriad of gods comprising the pagan cosmologies, He is the very source of life itself, for He alone is Life. Furthermore, as one author comments, being the source of all being, YHWH is the steadfast and unchangeable One, a source of comfort and strength for all who take refuge in Him.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Mitchell, H. G. *The World Before Abraham: According to Genesis I-XI* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company; 1901); 120.

But why did Moses shift from one name to another? It is not that God's omnipotence was to be ignored. Nor was it that His fierce holiness no longer engendered terror. It was, rather, that God desired Man to know Him more fully, and in a different perspective altogether. The shift from *Elohim* to *Jehovah* mirrors the shift in the divine self-revelation from *Creation* to *Covenant*. It is no wonder that the serpent did not pass the name *Jehovah* from his forked tongue; he would have choked on it. But the use of the combination *Jehovah Elohim* is also important, in that it prevents the misconception that there are two distinct Gods spoken of here – the God of Creation and the God of Redemption and Covenant. Moses unites the two names to insure no misunderstanding; *Jehovah*, the God of Israel, is *Elohim*, the Creator of the universe.

Of Covenants and Gardens:

This shift in perspective is intimately and inexorably tied with the narrative of the Garden of Eden. This narrative, which begins in Genesis 2:4, is not a Second Account of Creation as too many scholars have maintained. It is, therefore, not to be compared and contrasted with Chapter 1 as if two different traditional creation stories were being poorly sewn together in these opening passages of Genesis. Rather it is the case that Chapter 2 is a progression from Chapter 1, and the account of the Garden is a covenantally focused elaboration upon the account of the universe's Creation. *Elohim* is the name of God in the latter; *Jehovah* in the former.

Still, it is hard for the average reader of the first two chapters of Genesis not to stumble a little bit at the obvious dissimilarities between the two 'accounts.' Depending on his or her religious background, doubts as to the historical and authorial integrity of the two sections might also begin to fester. Sadly, in our day a biblical scholar who believes in the Mosaic authorship and inner cohesiveness of these two chapters is as archaic as a Scientist believing in divine creation at all. But a closer look at the two narratives will reveal that they

are not nearly as dissimilar as scholars have made it to be. The form is indeed different, and the apparent 'order' of events seems to be jumbled up; some would say contradictory. But there are several extremely important points that are common to both, points that cause the apparent differences to fade in significance.

First, and of greatest importance, is the fact that in both narratives all that is created – all that *is* – has come from God. True it is that God 'speaks' creation into being in Chapter 1, and 'forms' man from the dust of the earth in Chapter 2. But it is still the omnipotent God who is the Subject of the creative/formative action. There is still no eternality of Matter here, nor a cosmic conflict among greater and lesser gods, and certainly no Big Bang followed by aeons of agonizingly slow genetic mutations. There is God, who is Life; and then there is creation.

Another significant point of similarity is the central position occupied by Man. The main point of controversy between the two passages has to do with the order in which plants and man arrive on the scene. In Chapter 1 the plants are clearly ahead of the animals and of Man (though we have seen that there is the issue of poetic parallelism to account for in that chapter); here in Chapter 2 it appears that the plants must await the creation/formation of Man to till and tend the fields. Nonetheless it is still Man who is the necessary creature; it is Man who will be responsible before God to tend to the rest of creation. Later in this same 'second narrative,' we find Man naming the animals, too. Two great similarities, then: God is Creator, and Man is His Steward or Husbandman.

The order of events in Chapter 2, compared to the same in Chapter 1, is not so much a matter of contradiction as of perspective. Indeed, if the two chapters are in such grave contradiction as many scholars suppose, one must again wonder at the incompetence of the alleged 'redactor(s)' who failed to see this and to remedy it. The two chapters are obviously dealing with a common topic laid out upon different literary lines. "The order of events in chapter 1 is

chronological. The order of events in chapter 2 is logical and topical.”⁹⁹ Chapter 1 progresses in a linear fashion through the ‘days’ as markers; Chapter 2 centers around the theme of the Garden of Eden. One moves through the progressive events in the omnipotent creation of the universe by God; the other hovers around one location, where God and Man establish their intimate, covenant relationship.

It is true that the word ‘covenant’ is not used in Genesis 2, though Reformed theologians have long insisted that there is an Adamic Covenant displayed here. In large measure they are right, for a covenant is but an abiding agreement between God and Man, conditioned upon an act or acts of obedience on Man’s part, which in turn secures the covenant blessings promised by God. “When God created Adam, He entered into a covenant with Adam whereby Adam was required to obey God in order to secure God’s blessing. When Adam failed this covenant as a result of his works, he brought sin and the curse into this world.”¹⁰⁰ The condition of the Adamic Covenant is clearly stated in Chapter 2 – the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The blessings are more implicit: the continued fruitfulness of the earth, and the success of both aspects of the Creation Mandate – to procreate and to rule.

But there is another feature that is often overlooked in the Adamic Covenant, but is very present in the narrative of Genesis 2 and 3. That is the uninterrupted communion of Man with God: the naming of the animals by Man in the presence of God, the tending of the Garden in which God intimately placed Man, God’s omniscient sensitivity to Man’s ‘aloneness’ without Woman, and the ‘*walking in the cool of the day.*’ This relationship is at the very heart of the meaning of the Garden itself – a place where God and Man would commune, where, to quote somewhat anachronistically from later in the Bible, “*God will be their God, and they shall be His people.*” Bruce Waltke writes:

⁹⁹ Hamilton; 21.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/adamic-covenant/>

It represents territorial space in the created order where God invites human beings to enjoy bliss and harmony between themselves and God, one another, animals, and the land. God is uniquely present here. The Garden of Eden is a temple-garden, represented later in the tabernacle.¹⁰¹

There is in this passage a *separation* of sorts, in that God places Man in the garden, delineating that realm of earth from all others. Thus in Genesis 2 we discover the beginning of a noticeable pattern in Scripture: that God, when making a covenant with His people, is often also leading them out of one place and into another. This He does as *Jehovah Elohim* - the omnipotent God who is also the Father of His people.

Just as Jehovah revealed Himself to Abram as the God who led him out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give him the land of Canaan for a possession, and thereby described Himself as the author of all the promises which Abram received as his call, and which were renewed to him and to his descendants, Isaac and Jacob; so did He reveal Himself to Moses as the God of his fathers, to fulfill His promise to their seed, the people of Israel.¹⁰²

In these two notable cases of the establishing of a covenant - with Abraham and with Moses - the pattern is repeated as it was at the beginning. Each covenant 'partner' and representative was taken from one place and moved to another; for Abram it was from Ur to Canaan; for Moses from Egypt also to Canaan. Thus Canaan was for them the 'Garden' as Eden was for Adam. It should not surprise us, then, to hear the prophetic voice of Scripture speaking of Canaan as "*the Garden of the Lord.*"

*Indeed, the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like **Eden**, And her desert like **the garden of the Lord**; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody. (Isaiah 51:3)*

¹⁰¹ Waltke; 85.

¹⁰² Delitzsch; 75-76.

*The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the **garden of Eden**; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.*

(Ezekiel 36:34-36)

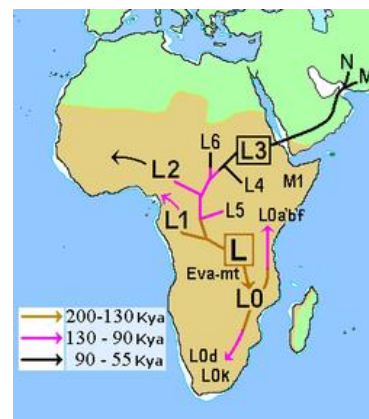
In the New Testament the 'garden' becomes 'Paradise,' though it is still the place of promise, the realm of uninterrupted communion with God. One thief on the cross at Golgotha died in peace (though not peacefully, of course) because of the Lord's words to him, "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise.*" The image, therefore, abides as much eschatological as protological: that which was in the beginning shall be restored in the end. In the meantime, though the earth is certainly no Garden of Eden, yet Man – and especially redeemed Man – is called to 'tend and to keep' it, no less in the 21st Century than at the dawn of Time.

Week 12: Eden: The Cradle of Civilization**Text Reading: Genesis 2:10 - 14**

*"Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden;
and from there it divided and became four rivers."
(Genesis 2:15)*

The latest salvo from the evolutionary community in the ongoing debate as to the origins of Mankind, has to do with the geographical point of origin for the human species. Although historians long believed that Mesopotamia – the ‘land between the rivers’ – formed the cradle of civilization, recent evolutionary hypotheses has removed that homeland to the arid deserts and savannahs of eastern Africa. This relocation has nothing to do with recent discoveries of previously unknown cities or cultures in eastern Africa – for there have been, because there are, none – but rather as a logical and predetermined conclusion from the premise of Man’s alleged genealogical descent from the apes. The new and accepted theory, that Man originated in his most primitive forms in the region of eastern Africa, is thus based not on solid archaeological evidence of human civilization, but upon the discoveries of ‘hominids’ considered to be human ancestors.

Known as the ‘Out of Africa’ theory, claims the direct ancestor of modern Man to be a hominid called *Australopithecus*, which is an impressive sounding name for basically an ape. The word means, ‘southern ape,’ and no fossil discovery of this specie has ever proven to be anything other than simian. Nonetheless, due to the preconception that



Modern Man evolved from these apes, and the discovery of ancient *Australopithecus* fossils in eastern and southern Africa, the conclusion is foregone

that Man's ultimate geographical homeland is where the southern apes once roamed.

The more prominent theory, known as the out of Africa theory, or the replacement theory, holds that humans originated in Africa exclusively and then slowly migrated to the rest of the world, probably in two separate waves, somewhere between 56,000 and 200,000 years ago. While there were other hominids on other continents, they never evolved into humans. These early hominids may have died off because they couldn't compete with the more evolved *Homo sapiens* for the resources that were available.¹⁰³

What is remarkable about the Out of Africa theory, beyond its sheer audacity in assumptions, is the fact that the *entire* human race migrated *out of Africa* before establishing any appreciable and enduring civilization. The closest thing to an ancient civilization on the African continent is that of the Egyptians, and it is almost universally held that the founders of this civilization's earliest dynasties migrated *into* Africa from Mesopotamia. An uninstructed neophyte might conclude that the lack of any discernible remains of ancient human civilization in Africa is due to the fact that there were no ancient human civilizations there in the first place. But no, we are informed by the intelligentsia that Africa is our homeland, even though we all left home before we began to build homes, cities, kingdoms, and empires.

Genesis, of course, presents a completely different picture with regard to the origins of the human family. Here we find Man being placed in a divinely-created and organized 'garden,' called Eden. It may seem somewhat inconsequential as to where geographically Eden was, especially when one considers the sequel: that the entire world revealed in Genesis 2 would be destroyed by a vast deluge, the Great Flood. Certainly the obliteration of the vast majority of the animal world, including mankind, would take with it all physical, geographical vestiges of the earliest lands known to the antediluvians. Yet we

¹⁰³ <http://curiosity.discovery.com/question/africa-the-cradle-of-humanity>

must deal with the fact that Moses, in Genesis 2, spends a fair amount of time giving what appears to be a geography lesson with regard to Eden, giving a description of four rivers in terms of geographical markers we must assume were familiar to his original audience.

A River Runs Through It:

The mention of a river running through the Garden of Eden bears little geographical significance in and of itself. The newly planted garden needed to be watered, and thus a nourishing river becomes the central artery of this special and original abode of Man. The river itself is not named, but it is clear from the text that it serves as the lifeblood of the Garden,

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. (2:10)

The phrasing of this passage is somewhat difficult as to the headwaters and subsequent tributaries of this river. On the face of it, the River originates in Eden and waters Eden, only dividing into four delta-like tributaries upon leaving the Garden. This is somewhat unusual, as we tend to find lesser tributaries joining to form a more significant artery, rather than the reverse. Actually the text is not definitive, for the layout of the River and its rivers depends on whether one is traversing (in perspective) downstream or upstream along the River. Thus Eden is located either at the headwaters of the four tributary rivers, or at the confluence of these same four. The lack of specificity regarding the central River is noticeable, and is likely intended. That River, along with the Garden which it watered, are gone and were gone at the time Moses recorded these words. *Where* Eden first lie is not only not important, but would be a dangerous piece of information to divulge.

The search for the 'eternal city' or *Shangra La* has been a chronic pursuit of man throughout his history. In these utopias, mankind dwells in perfect peace

and harmony, in near-immortal health and without threat from Nature or the gods. Authors throughout time have novelized the concept, and the reception



generally given to the better of these works - Thomas More's *Utopia*, H. G. Wells *A Modern Utopia*, and James Hilton's *Lost Horizons* - seems to indicate a peculiar chord within the human psyche that resonates to the idea. Almost universally,

however, these utopias are viewed as a reminiscence, something to be sought out from the past rather than a vision for the future, as Hilton's title suggests: *Lost Horizons*. Certainly the biblical story of Eden is of the past as well, a remembrance of what once was and is no more. But man, even fallen in sin, was never meant to search out that lost haven, and perhaps this is why the geographical descriptions of the central River are so vague. No, the Garden to which we are admonished to consider is yet future, though it also bears remarkable descriptive similarities to the ancient original.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

(Revelation 22:1-5)

Here is the Utopia of God, the true Shangra La to which all believers look with earnest expectation,

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went

*out, they would have had opportunity to return. **But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.* (Hebrews 11:13-16)

From passages such as these we can again recognize the eschatological aspect of the Genesis account, as the framework of the pristine original marks the lines of the perfected consummation. Yet the original 'River' is delineated in the vaguest of terms, forestalling any conjecture – and certainly any search – for its geographical equivalent in the Ancient Near East. This is, however, not the case with regard to the four tributaries that either confluence into the River, or divide from it. Here it seems that Moses takes great to describe the geographical lines of these rivers in terms understandable to the audience of his day.

*Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is **Pishon**; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is **Gihon**; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is **Hiddekel**; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the **Euphrates**.* (Genesis 2:10-14)

Two of these rivers are given lands to water: the *Pishon* nourishes the land of Havilah, and the *Gihon* goes around the whole land of Cush. The third river, the *Hiddekel*, remains close by in Mesopotamia, watering the lands of eastern Assyria. The fourth is given no additional description, for the *Euphrates* has been known to man throughout recorded history and was undoubtedly well known to Moses' readers. Based on the regional descriptions given in Genesis 2 by Moses, and by process of elimination, we can deduce approximately the identities of the four original rivers that took their beginnings from the River of Eden (whose identity remains a complete mystery). The *Euphrates River* we allow to remain herself through recorded history. In other words, we take the river as it is known today to be the same river spoken of by Moses so many millennia ago. The region through which the *Euphrates River* makes her journey has been so well-inhabited by people – and by people to tended to write things down – that

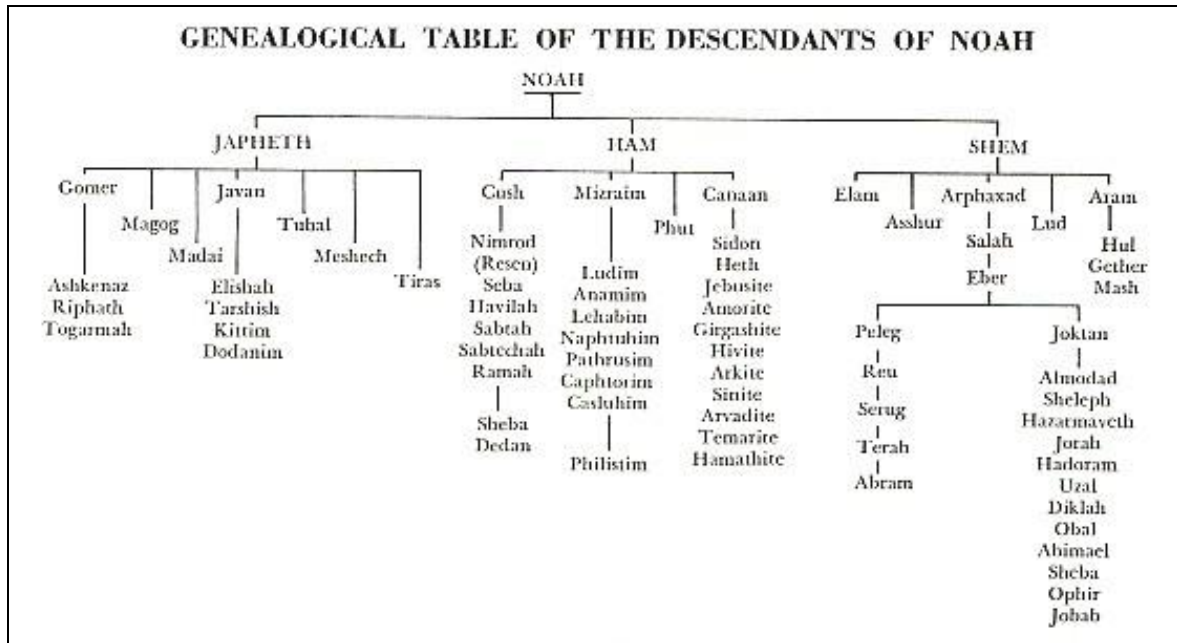
there is no good reason to reject this simplifying assumption: The biblical *Euphrates* is the river that forms in the mountains of northeastern Turkey and



flows through Syria and Iraq to the Persian Gulf. The *Euphrates River* has been one of the most significant tributaries in human history, watering the 'Fertile Crescent' and sustaining the advance of human civilization for thousands of years. To this River we attribute the cultures of Uruk/Ur and of the Akkadian Dynasties of Kish.

The biblical account of the four rivers mentions "*east of Assyria*" as the regional description for the river *Hiddekel*. Assyria was the designation of the ancient civilization centered upon Ninevah, the descendant of the even more ancient Sumerian culture. It stands to reason, therefore, that we assign the modern identity of this river to the sister of the *Euphrates*: the *Tigris*. The map above shows how these two rivers trace roughly parallel paths from the mountains to the same sea, bracketing a region that would come to be known as 'Mesopotamia' – *the land between the rivers*.

The third regional description that may be identified with some degree of accuracy is that of Cush, the territory through (or 'around') which flows the river *Gihon*. Later in the same Book of Genesis we learn that Cush was a son of Ham, the son of Noah. Ham's other sons of note were Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. These tribes of post-Flood humanity settled to the south and west after the confusion of the languages at Babel (see Genesis 10 & 11).



There is adequate evidence both from the Bible and from ancient records, that the four mentioned sons of Ham would each become nations known to us from the ancient world: **Mizraim** would become known as Egypt; **Canaan** would remain the land ultimately promised to Abraham and settled by the children of Jacob/Israel; **Put/Phut** would become known as Libya to the west of Egypt; and **Cush** would become known as Ethiopia. From a worldly perspective, the greatest of these human kingdoms would be Egypt (Mizraim) and Ethiopia (Cush), the latter being the regional description given for the River *Gihon*. Thus it is reasonable to associate that river that serves as the life-blood of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt - the *Nile River* - with its biblical progenitor, the *Gihon*. There are, to be sure, other conjectures with regard to the geographical region assigned to *Cush*, but Moses' original audience would undoubtedly have associated the name with the region of the Upper Nile, having themselves only recently been freed from Egypt.

However, there are two apparent problems with this designation. First, the river *Gihon* is said to 'go around' the land of Cush. This would seem to indicate a river that circumscribes a region. But the consistent pattern of human development has been along rivers, not within the circuit of a river. So it may be

better to interpret the passage in Genesis 2 as referring to the *Gihon* as coursing around, or meandering through the land - something the Nile most certainly does as it traverses the countries of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. The second problem is that the Nile flows in the opposite direction from the Euphrates and Tigris. These two rivers (and the fourth to be mentioned below) flow from north to south, whereas the Nile flows from south to north. This may perhaps be explained as a result of the cataclysmic geological events that occurred as a result of the Great Flood, and later through the separation of the land masses.

In any event, the Nile River remains one of great significance both in the modern world and in the ancient world. One of the major human civilizations of antiquity - the Egyptian - arose along its banks. Hence it vies strongly for the designation as the ancient *Gihon*.

The fourth and final river mentioned in Genesis 2 is mysterious both as to its name - the *Pishon* - and as to the land through which it travels - *Havilah*. Two of the descendants of Noah, listed in the Table of Nations in Genesis Chapter 10, bear the name Havilah. One is descended from Noah through Ham, the other through Shem. The second of these is said to have dwelt "in the mountains to the East," meaning, of course, the east of Shinar or Sumeria. If Havilah the descendant of Shem is indeed the man for whom the land of Havilah is named, then we find another major modern river traversing the lands to the east of Sumer/Shinar: the *Indus*. This deduction derives much from the process of elimination, and from the fact that in the ancient world the civilizations in and around Mesopotamia rose along the four rivers that we are taking as correspondents with the four rivers listed in Genesis Chapter 2.

An alternative explanation for the equivalent of the Pishon river places the land of Havilah in the Arabian Peninsula, roughly occupied today by the countries of Saudi Arabia and Yemen. There is a mountain range there called the *Hijaz* mountains, in which gold is - or at least was in ages past - plentiful. In addition, there is a wadi that runs from these mountains toward the Persian Gulf

(it never reaches the Gulf, however) that is associated with the remains of the river Pishon. This explanation stems from taking 'Havilah' as the descendant of Noah through Ham, rather than the 'Havilah' descended through Shem. The major objection to this theory is that there is no record of any significant ancient civilization having arisen around this river in the Arabian Peninsula, and no proof that it was a viable, flowing river in the days of Moses.

There is a third option for the river *Pishon*, one that has the advantage of remaining in the same general vicinity of the Near East rather than moving a fair distance to the east where the Indus River flows. This option takes us north to the land now known as Armenia, but in the ancient times known as the Hittite Empire. Unfortunately for this option, there is no mighty river or river civilization that arose along it, located in this territory, though it is well watered with many minor rivers and is the headwaters of the Euphrates. Still, at least one biblical geographer believed in this theory, as indicated by this map, source unknown, that shows both the land of *Havilah* and a river named *Pison* located in the territory of Armenia, which would become part of the mighty Hittite Empire.

It is, of course, a major assumption that the civilized world continued to



develop around *four* rivers after the Flood; it is quite possible that the great deluge so altered the landscape of the ancient world that one or more of the original four tributaries was forever lost. But the assumption is not without merit, as the name of the *Euphrates* continued to designate the major

river of Mesopotamia, and that three other rivers also factored powerfully in human development in the centuries after the Flood. So we summarize, without

being dogmatic, the identity of the four original rivers, their corresponding names in the ancient records, and the civilizations that arose along their banks:

<u>Original Name</u>	<u>Ancient Name</u>	<u>Civilization</u>
<i>Pishon</i>	<i>Indus or Pison</i>	Indus Valley or Hittite Empire
<i>Gihon</i>	<i>Nile</i>	Egyptian
<i>Hiddekel</i>	<i>Tigris</i>	Sumerian/ Assyrian
<i>Euphrates</i>	<i>Euphrates</i>	Chaldean/ Babylonian

What is the purpose of this geographical specificity in regard to the four tributaries, details withheld from the River of Eden? We have already theorized as to the vagueness of the geographical information given for the River of Eden; now we need to consider why so much information is given in regard to the others. The answer to this question may lie along the same lines we have already been following as to the 'current' identities of the four tributaries: the flow of human civilization during the millennia before the children of Israel left Egypt. This topic will again occupy Moses' pen in Genesis 11, as he recounts the distribution of the peoples following the incident of the Tower of Babel.

The purpose for giving so much information about the tributary rivers – clearly Moses was trying to make sure his readers *knew* where these rivers flowed – was to reinforce in their minds that the 'story' of the Garden of Eden was no myth, and that from that primal and pristine garden came the mighty powers of the earth, with which the children of Israel were familiar. It is of vital importance to the writers of the Bible, and clearly to the Holy Spirit who inspired them, that readers comprehend the redemptive history of the world *in the context* of the natural and political history of the world. These things were not done in a vacuum, but rather in the presence of the mighty of the earth. Israel was called out from among these nations, to be placed in a 'garden' in the presence of these

nations, and subsequently to be either protected or subjected to the powerful forces that guided these nations.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments... (Deuteronomy 7:7-9)

Thus we revisit the four tributaries with a different perspective: the geopolitical significance of the watered territories to this fledgling nation, Israel. Two of the rivers are fairly easy to discern with regard to their regions' relationship to the children of Israel: the *Euphrates* and the *Nile*. The nation that Moses led into the wilderness needed no reminder of the latter of these two; they had lived along, slaved along, and died along its banks for four generations. Sadly and tragically, many of the grumblers among the unbelieving generation of Israel in the wilderness wanted to go back to the Nile and live out their days in miserable bondage.

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." (Exodus 14:10-12)

But the departure from Egypt by no means meant that their former overlords would be out of Israel's life forever. The various dynasties that would rule Egypt over the next one and a half millennia, including the political descendants of Alexander the Great, would be a constant temptation and danger to the successive generations of the children of Israel. King Josiah would die in

battle with an Egyptian pharaoh, and the evacuees from Jerusalem would drag the prophet Jeremiah down to Egypt to die. Israel's location at the crossroads of the ancient empires guaranteed continued dealings with Egypt; the river Nile remained a feature of Israel's geo-political life.

The *Euphrates* is the river of renown in the Ancient Near East; its name being the same through the tumultuous path of human history from its beginning even until now. The Euphrates waters the land of Babylonia, of the Chaldees and of their ancient city Ur, also known in ancient documents as Uruk. This city may actually be the oldest city in human history, corresponding to the biblical city of *Enoch* (*Uruk* is a derivative of that name) built first by Adam's son Cain.

Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

(Genesis 4:17)

But the most significant aspect of the territory watered by the Euphrates, and of the most ancient of cities, Ur, is that this was the home of the patriarch Abram, from whence he was called by God to form a new people and a new nation. As with the Egyptians, the Babylonians would remain a feature on the political scene throughout Israel's life, sometimes strong, sometimes weak, but always present. It would be the Babylonian Empire - also known as the neo-Chaldean - that would be used by God to chastise Judah, and its King Nebuchadnezzar would lead a large portion of the chosen people into divinely-appointed exile along the river Euphrates.

The *Tigris* is almost as familiar as the Euphrates, the two being sister rivers flowing through the land of Persia. Even though they are in such close proximity, the Tigris is better known for a city far to the north of Babylon: the city of Ninevah, the capital of the Assyrian people and empire. Ninevah, of course, figures prominently in the history of Israel, being the city to which the

prophet Jonah was sent, and being the capital of the kings of Assyria who so often harried – and finally destroyed and deported – the northern tribes of Israel.

The fourth tributary from Genesis 2 is the hardest to locate and to interpret geopolitically. While it is true that the Indus Valley Civilization was a large and powerful people in the ancient world, developing any clear tie between them and the children of Israel is impossible to do. Thus, while on the basis of strict geography the Indus River lays claim to being an important waterway known to the ancients, from a geopolitical perspective the land and empire of the Hittites seems more relevant to the context of Genesis. Yet even here we find the Hittites mentioned only insofar as they constituted a people group that were to be displaced from the Promised Land along with the other ‘-ites’ that dwelled in Canaan.

So little was known about the Hittite Empire until the 19th Century, that

many liberal 18th Century scholars considered the people to be a legend. This perspective changed dramatically when archaeological discoveries not only located the Hittites, but discovered that the people possessed one of the most powerful empires of the Second Millennium BC, the very time period of the Exodus. Their territory included the



lands now encompassed by Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria, and thus they bordered on the Assyrian Empire to the east, and touched (and fought) the Egyptian Dynasties to the south. Of course, right in the middle of this milieu was the land of Canaan, to be given by God to the people of Israel.

It is impossible to say with dogmatic certainty just where the four tributaries of Genesis 2 originally flowed, and who were the peoples that inhabited the lands watered by them. Our approach has centered upon the

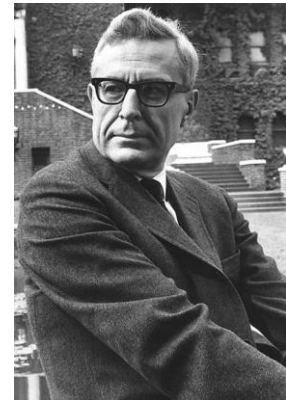
purpose for which Moses recorded such detailed descriptions of these rivers: to associate the people of Israel with the world around them, a world that derived from the original Garden of Eden but was no longer peaceful and benign. In addition, this exegesis fits well with what we read later in Genesis concerning the *re-populating* of the world after the Flood. For in Genesis 10, known as the 'Table of Nations,' we find the progenitors of the lands and empires that would bedevil God's covenant people throughout their existence: *Mitzraim* (Egypt), *Cush* (Ethiopia), *Heth* (Hitta or Hittite), *Havilah*, *Canaan*. The world of Genesis 2 was the real world - geographically and geopolitically - the world in which Israel would fight for her very survival, and not a mythical world of some ancient *Shangra La*.

Week 13: A Biblical Anthropology**Text Reading: Genesis 2:7**

*“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living soul.”*
(Genesis 2:15)

One of the most interesting books written in the whole corpus of evolutionary literature, was published in 1957 by the American anthropologist Loren Eiseley. *The Immense Journey* is throughout dedicated to the theory of evolution, and nowhere betrays the later shift among some evolutionists toward

‘intelligent design’ or ‘punctuated equilibrium.’ What is so remarkable about Eiseley’s book is the childlike *awe* that flows from the author’s pen – wonder at the immensity of Time and Space, at the intricacy and complexity of chloroform, fascination at the dexterity and creativity of Man. Eiseley pondered the advent of Man in terms of the ‘immense journey’ that would have been necessary, on the principles of Darwinian Evolution, to account for the in-



Loren Eiseley (1907-77)

superable gap between the human and his nearest biological kin. No matter the perspective in which one regards Man, he is so much more complex and developed than any conceivable evolutionary cousin, that mankind’s advent ought not to have occurred for many millions of years yet.

The Immense Journey was a best-seller when it was first published, and has since continued in print – in over sixteen foreign languages as well – as it presents the evolutionary perspective in a most poetic, thoughtful, even *human* manner. Yet Eiseley himself never seems to have stopped to ask himself the question: How *did* Man appear so soon? One might have asked the anthropologist, ‘What is Man, that you are mindful of him?’ Given only materialistic evolution to work with, Eiseley’s anthropology could not answer

Eiseley's questions; his philosophical musings had no solid foundation. One may reasonably conclude that a scientific system that marvels at the mysterious complexity of Man, but offers no explanation for how that complexity came to be, has serious credibility problems.

Biblical Anthropology offers a solution that, while religious (and thereby immediately disqualified by modern Science) is nonetheless rational. Indeed, the aspect of human nature that seemed most to intrigue and fascinate Eiseley - Man's artistic creativity - lends credence to the belief that this quality was inherited from Man's Creator, and not mysteriously passed along genetically from Man's entirely uncreative organic ancestors. Biblical Anthropology is a branch of theological and psychological study that seeks to construct a rational description of the human structure, in a manner that also answers to the experiential behavior of man himself. In other words, to formulate a theory that describes, and to some extent even predicts, actual human behavioral patterns. By any definition, an attempt to formulate a theory that accurately describes observable facts is called *Science*. And the Science of Biblical Anthropology begins in Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7.

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (2:7)

Perhaps the first order of business for any exegesis of this passage, is to address the issue of the stylistic and linguistic differences between the 'creation' accounts of Man in Genesis 1 versus Genesis 2. In Chapter 1, the creation of Man was by *fiat* - the proclamation of God bringing Man into being, "*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*"

Well, it is generally assumed that the creation of Man in Genesis 1 came about merely at the word of God, for no other means or manner is divulged. The verb utilized there is *bara*, that Hebrew word that almost exclusively denotes the divine power exerted in creation apart from a material substrate. But, again, this

is what we assume because, within evangelical circles, this is what we have been taught. The creative force of God's Word, however, is explicitly stated in several places in the Bible, most recently in Genesis 1:3. *And God said...* is a frequent refrain in the first chapter, and lends support to the conclusion that creation there is treated as *fiat* and *ex nihilo*.

Because this has been the view of orthodox Christianity for millennia, more modern scholarship has almost unanimously attributed the creation account of Chapter 2 to a different author, stemming from a different oral tradition. But this is to confuse *source* and *means*. No one will argue that, from the biblical perspective, the ultimate and causal source of all things is God. But the divine use of means is evident even in the first chapter, as we have seen earlier: *Let the Earth bring forth...* indicates the use of intermediate means to accomplish the spoken will of the divine Creator. There is no necessary reason why the creation of Man – indeed, the creation of all things – did not progress through the use of means.

Once again it seems better to compare and contrast the two chapters on the basis of literary style and emphasis, rather than on word order and word choice. It is true that the verb *bara* is not used in Genesis 2:7 – the author employs the verb *yatzar* (וַיַּצֵּר) which everywhere connotes the idea of 'fashioning, as with a tool.' For some reason Moses was led to present two perspectives on the formation of Man – one an overview and from the viewpoint of God, the other a more natural account and from the viewpoint of the earth. "The former is the generic account of man's creation – of man the race, the ideal; the latter is the production of the actual man, of the historic Adam."¹⁰⁴ The exegetical task before us is to attempt to determine *why* two accounts.

One theory that has chronically gained followers during Church history is that of pre-Adamism. This view teaches that there was a race of hominids, *proto-humans*, which existed before the formation of Adam. The theory is utilized to

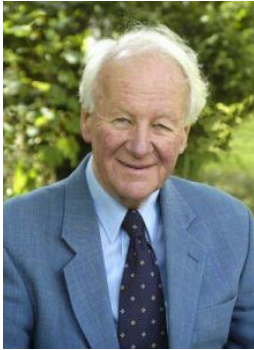
¹⁰⁴ Laidlaw, John; *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1895); 37.

explain the apparent (hostile) population of the world into which Cain was to be exiled,

...you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

(Genesis 4:11-15)

The pre-Adamist view is also employed in that on-going attempt to synchronize evolutionary science with biblical creation – that the pre-Adamic hominids are the ‘missing links,’ so to speak, that tie Man in Adam to his ancient



genetic ancestors. Evangelical advocates of this view – who number the illustrious John R. W. Stott among their ranks – claim that the creation of Adam as recorded in Genesis 2:7 is the actual formation of *homo sapiens*, of Man as we know him today. As with most erroneous and compromising views, however, pre-

John R. W. Stott (1921-2011) Adamism raises more questions than it answers and, in the end, proves biblically untenable. For instance, what is made of Genesis 1:27, was pre-Adamic Man also made in God’s image? If so, what is the explanation of pre-Adamic Man’s precipitous fall from grace between Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7? While it must be admitted that the Bible is silent on such matters as Cain’s wife, it is definitely going beyond that which is written to suppose a race of close cousins to the Adamic family living just outside of Eden.

As for Cain’s fear, that issue can be addressed from biblical principles without having to resort to a parallel humanity on the earth. Later in Scripture we read of the ‘blood avenger,’ but it was a principle as old as the earliest human records. Cain does not specify being discovered by some alien people (and why would they want to kill him, anyhow, not having any intimate association with

Abel?). Rather he feared, we may conjecture, that the judgment of exile given by the Lord would render Cain fair game for any of his siblings – or even his father, Adam – to avenge the blood of his brother Abel. This theory, of course, does not answer all possible questions and cannot be held dogmatically. Nonetheless it is biblically reasonable, and does not require us to conjure an associated human race alongside the person and descendants of Adam.

If we consider the actual form of the passage under investigation here, Genesis 2:7, and allow for the same poetic stylistic features that we have already seen in the opening chapters of Genesis, it may be that a parallel does exist, though not between races of men. The verse begins with matter – the “*dust of the earth*” and moves to the animation of the same by means of the “*breath of God.*” From a strictly biochemical viewpoint, first of all, man is not made of dirt. But he is made from chemicals – organic chemicals that biodegrade. Genesis 2:7 in its literary style, prefigures Genesis 3:19,

*By the sweat of your face you will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken;
For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

The point of Genesis 2:7 is not that Man’s chemical composition is the same as the dust of the earth, but rather that Adam’s initial, inanimate condition was that of lifeless matter, substance capable of corruption and disintegration. In this Man’s procreative state parallels that of the Earth as recorded in Genesis 1:2 – we may even say that, prior to the inbreathing of the spirit of life, man was *tohu va’bohu*. At the inauguration of Creation, the “*Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep*” and at the formation of Adam, “*God breathed into him the breath of life.*” The association of words is, unfortunately, not exact; but neither is the parallel between the events. Yet this much may be stated with exactitude: the executive force in Creation was the Spirit of God, just as the executive force in the

animation of Man was the Spirit of God. Before the Spirit's work: chaos and lifelessness; after: order and life.

In the Spirit the creative principle of actual life is present, and in the chaos the general substratum of material capable of being formed; and the divine words of power are the forces which bring this material, and the life that proceeds from the creative Spirit, into tranquility.¹⁰⁵

The literary aspect of this parallelism stems from the twofold emphasis of the creation account, that of the earth and of Man as regent over the earth. We have already seen that throughout Scripture Man and Creation are inextricably linked; it should not be surprising that the manner of each coming into being is portrayed in somewhat similar terminology.

[Man]...in order to become lord of the earth-world, must become, even in his coming into existence, closely associated with it; he is constituted with it, and it with him, in absolute connection; the being of man plants its foot in the earth, and the being of earth culminates in man, for both are destined to a fellowship in one history.¹⁰⁶

As well, we are profitably reminded that the person and work of the Holy Spirit is from the beginning and not merely a New Testament theological development. He is the 'Spirit of Life,' and the sustainer of the order of the cosmos as well as of the life of Man. But there is more, and again following the patterns already discerned in the literary style of Genesis. If Genesis 2:7 traces back protologically to Genesis 1:2, and forward just a few pages to Genesis 3:19, it also leaps eschatologically forward to the new birth in Jesus Christ. Consider, in the light of Genesis 2:7, the otherwise enigmatic occurrence between Jesus and His disciples after the Lord's resurrection,

*So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, **He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive***

¹⁰⁵ Delitzsch, Franz; *A System of Biblical Psychology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1867); 15.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; 92.

the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." (John 20:21-23)

Genesis 2:7 tells us, in figurative and somewhat inexact terms, how Man was generated. It also speaks to how man in Christ is to be *regenerated*. Such connections – and perhaps there are other, better ones – are made necessary by the fact that what Genesis 2:7 says about Man is not all that unique. It informs us that Man, upon receiving the inbreathing of Life from God, became *a living soul*. The Hebrew for this phrase is *nephesh hayah* (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה) and much has been made of this phrase as it applied to mankind. Unfortunately for any dogmatism, the exact same phrase is used to describe the fish, birds, and land animals in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, & 30 the Hebrew *nephesh hayah* is used in the exact same form as in Genesis 2:7, though our English translations obscure this fact by translating the first three as ‘living creatures’ and the fourth as ‘which has life’ (NASB). Thus Man as a ‘living soul’ is not a particularly solid place to begin building a biblical anthropology, for he shares this designation with all of the other ‘living souls’ on the earth.

Yet we do have warrant for taking as our starting place the unique *literary manner* in which the formation of Man is set apart from that of the other living souls of creation. We know that all life is from God, and it need not surprise us that the other living things of the earth are styled the same way as Man, *living souls*. But only of Man is the mode of animation detailed, *the breathing into him the breath of life*. “The spirit of man is an immediate inspiration from God, the personal transmitted into the bodily form, and by that very means constituting it a person.”¹⁰⁷ Alongside the parallel with Genesis 1:2, this emphatic inbreathing of life into the first man further establishes the intimate communion between God and this particular aspect of His creation: Adam. Man is once again

¹⁰⁷ Delitzsch; 95.

elevated over the other *nephesh hayah* of the earth, though never so exalted as to forget that, at bottom, he is also one of them.

What, then, does Genesis 2:7 tell us about the constitution of Man? May we justifiably derive a 'biblical psychology' from this passage, or does the literary and poetic style preclude any such venture? The fact of history is that men have attempted to build a biblical anthropology and a biblical psychology from this passage, and the few other similar passages in Scripture, so it is at least reasonable to investigate these theories and see if they bear up under biblical scrutiny. Believers have every reason to expect Scripture to reveal not only the nature of God and of salvation, but also of themselves. "And although what Scripture gives us to ponder in such statements as Gen. 2:7 and I Cor. 15:45 may be called only pointings of the finger, still a biblical psychological investigation must be justified which takes the course indicated by these finger signs."¹⁰⁸

Body, Soul, and Spirit:

The classic anthropological debate with regard to the biblical record has to do with the composition of Man. Judeo-Christian scholars are agreed that Man has a body, and that the body is a constituent part of his essential being. This is, of course, in contrast to the dualism of Greek philosophy, in which the soul is trapped in a body which is rather a prison than a necessary part of the human makeup. The importance of the physical body, both in original creation and in redemption, is highlighted throughout the Scriptures, most notably within the doctrine of the resurrection. The Apostle Paul speaks of being 'unclothed' when after death the soul is separated from the body, and of 'longing' to be fully clothed again in the resurrection. Thus any anthropology that does not give equal importance to the body as to the soul and spirit, is simply not a biblical anthropology.

¹⁰⁸ Delitzsch; 15.

It is the body, as we have already noted, that speaks to Man's association with the earth over which he has been ordained to govern. Therefore it is correct to say that the body is Man's lower nature, the soul and spirit his higher nature. But such designations still do not imply a differentiation in importance between the two realms of human being. In addition, the association of the human body with the '*dust of the earth*' from which it derives does not necessitate mortality, as many theologians have concluded. Matter is not inherently corrupt or corruptible; corruption is a process that acts upon living matter due to circumstances and not as a result of innate properties. Inanimate matter, furthermore, is remarkably durable. Thus the 'matter' from which God formed Man provides no clue as to the original mortality or immortality of Adam; it was inanimate until worked upon by the Spirit of Life.

This is, of course, the crux of the issue: What exactly did God do or make when He animated that 'lump' of earthly matter? Was Adam a dichotomy: Body and Soul/Spirit? Or a Trichotomy: Body, Spirit, and Soul? One reason why the debate has continued through every generation of Christian study is that the Bible does not give a definitive answer, and it cannot be made to do so. For each view there are numerous 'proof texts' arrayed. For instance, the benediction of Paul to the Thessalonians seems to advocate a tripartite view.

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(I Thessalonians 5:23)

Yet other passages of Scripture speak of the 'soul' in a much more comprehensive manner, referring the entirety of the man and not merely a part. One need be very careful of reading the exciting news of the many early converts with a tripartite perspective,

*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand **souls**.*

(Acts 2:41)

The psalmists speak of 'spirit' and 'soul' in a manner that seems to be somewhat interchangeable. David asks the Lord to "*renew a right spirit within him*" but also laments to himself, "*why are you cast down, O my soul?*" Paul speaks of the spirit as the lamp of the man, looking into the deep things of the heart (I Corinthians 2:11), but that which is discovered there he calls his soul (II Corinthians 1:23). Perhaps it is an evidence of too much curiosity, but philosophers and theologians have struggled for millennia to sort it all out. Genesis 2:7, once again, gives us a place to begin.

The passage reads somewhat like a formula: $1 + 1 = 2$. God started with the material form of Man molded from the *dust of the ground or earth*. The Hebrew word for ground/earth is *adamah* (אָדָמָה) from whence the name of the first man is taken, Adam. Then God supplied the all-important *breath of life* and that lump of inanimate earth *became* a 'living soul.' To extract the data from the word problem and place them into a mathematical equation,

$$\text{Material Body} + \text{Animating Spirit} = \text{Living Soul}$$

All are agreed that this equation furnishes the student of biblical anthropology with the component parts: body, spirit, and soul. But there the agreement ends, for there are countless variations on the theme; each philosopher/theologian finding his own way of combining the components to best suit (in his interpretation) the teaching of the Bible. The 2nd Century Latin theologian Tertullian had perhaps the most poetic designation, "for the soul is the body of the spirit, and the flesh is the body of the soul."¹⁰⁹ A 19th Century German scholar rose to more metaphysical heights when he wrote, "Body, soul, and spirit are nothing else than the real basis of the three ideal elements of man's being - world-consciousness, self-consciousness, and God-consciousness."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Quoted by Delitzsch; 102.

¹¹⁰ Karl August Auberlen, quoted by John Laidlaw; 85.

Discussions regarding the nature of the three components of Man do not divide them evenly along a spectrum. Rather the soul and spirit are universally classed to one side of the equation, with body situated on the other. Even Tertullian's description houses the spirit in the soul, and the body in flesh. This stands to reason, for whatever one may conclude regarding soul and spirit, it is evident that they are both *immaterial*; they are of like nature in that they do not consist of physical matter and cannot be seen or felt or measured directly. This has led some to equate the two as being essentially synonymous. This is the dichotomous view, in which Man is comprised of two elements: Body and Soul/Spirit.

This view is, to be sure, simple; but at the risk of being simplistic. The problem with the dichotomous view comes just a short while later in Genesis, with the Fall of Man. Among evangelical scholars there is universal agreement that fallen man is "*dead in trespass and sin*" and that this death occurred at the time of Adam's fall, "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*" From an anthropological standpoint, one must ask: What died in Man when Adam sinned? It is clear from the narrative that Adam did not immediately die in his body, for he lived nearly a thousand years subsequent. That leaves only two alternatives: one, that the death threatened as the penalty for disobedience was delayed or, two, that Adam died in some sense at the very moment he sinned. The inward nature of sin itself demands the second option, and thus leads to a deeper investigation of the soul/spirit component.

Of the three terms under consideration, only one tends frequently to be used in Scripture in a comprehensive manner for the whole man; that is, *soul*. Men are never called just 'spirits' as angels are, for somehow that would be to utterly violate Man's corporeal nature. Rather we may conclude that the soul, at least more so than either the body or the spirit, constitutes the whole man, so that

Luke may be understood as speaking of three thousand men, women, and children when he writes of so many 'souls' being saved.

But if the soul and spirit are essentially synonymous, then the death that occurred at the advent of sin would mean the obliteration of Adam as a being, as an identifiable entity distinct from other 'souls.' And if it is the soul that is "*dead in trespass and sin*" then regeneration – the creating of a 'new man' – must result in a new identity, a new 'id' or 'ego.' But both in the fall and in regeneration, human history and human experience prove this not to be the case. Adam was still Adam after he sinned (only now he recognized himself to be *naked* Adam). And the believer is still the same individual – possessing the same *psyche* – after regeneration as before. Indeed, we may confidently assert both from the biblical record and from experience, that it is the soul alone that is the enduring aspect of human nature. The body dies, is corrupted, and awaits re-formation in the resurrection. The spirit is renewed and sanctified. The soul, being the fundamental identity of the individual, is immortal.

Taking our lead from Genesis 2:7, we may surmise that the spirit – the 'breath' of life – is the animating principle by which inanimate earth is made into a living man. The soul is the living being itself, the product of that animation. This provides us with the most basic understanding of the nature of Man – a physical body animated by spirit, together constituting a living soul. Laidlaw writes, "*Nephesh* (soul) is the subject or bearer of life. *Ruach* (spirit or breath) is the principle of life."¹¹¹ Analyzed through the lens of the fall of Man in sin, this perspective allows for the 'spirit death' of Adam at the moment of disobedience: the principle of life received from God was replaced by a principle of death, which in time, having been severed from the fount of Life, brought about the death and disintegration of the physical body.

With regard to the higher faculties of human nature – to thought, ambition, will, emotion, and desire – we find the terms *spirit* and *soul* to be used

¹¹¹ Laidlaw; 88.

by the biblical writers with less exactitude. "When we pass from this primary application of these two terms to a higher, in which they refer not to physical life merely, but to the life of the mind, both denote almost equally and indifferently the inner nature of man as distinguished from the corporeal."¹¹² In this respect the Bible is dichotomous; not so much in the description of Man as to his basic composition, but rather to Man in the course of living.

The terms [i.e., spirit and soul] are parallel, or practically equivalent, expressions for the inner life as contrasted with the outer or bodily life; and the usage, on the whole, makes for the ordinary twofold view of human nature, and not at all for any tripartite view.¹¹³

But the tripartite view cannot be abandoned so summarily, for there are other issues to be addressed. We have already seen the deficiency of the twofold, dichotomous view in the analysis of what happened as a result of the first sin. We have yet to investigate the propagation of the human race – beginning with the unique formation of the first woman, and progressing by natural procreation down through the human race. In the same vein, we must consider the birth of the Lord Jesus – and ponder from a biblical anthropological view how it was that the sin of Adam did not taint His humanity. Such investigations lead us to such theological positions as 'creationism' and 'traducianism,' to be addressed, Lord willing, in the next lesson.

To summarize the current discussion, however, we must never lose sight of the fact that Man is not susceptible of division or dissection. He is "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" and for all we might say about his body, soul, and spirit, he remains a unified whole.

Anyone who does not force on Scripture a dogmatic system, must acknowledge that it speaks *dichotomously* of the parts viewed in themselves, *trichotomously* of

¹¹² *Ibid.*; 89.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*; 90.

the living reality, but all through so as to guard the fact that human nature is built upon a plan of unity.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*; 86.

Week 14: The Propagation of the Soul**Text Reading: Genesis 2:18-24; 5:1-3**

*“When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years,
he became the father of a son in his own likeness,
according to his image,
and named him Seth.”
(Genesis 5:3)*

Man is an amalgam of three parts: body, spirit, and soul; that much can be discerned from the biblical account with a high degree of agreement among theologians. That Adam was created ‘from the earth’ to signify his confederacy with that realm of Creation, and was animated by the Spirit of God, to signify his association with the Divine One, are also points of relative consensus. Even the areas of disagreement on these accounts are somewhat esoteric and inapplicable so long as the discussion is limited to the *first* man, Adam. Considering the massive impact the Fall had on Adam’s constitution, analysis of his original makeup will always be academic, especially when one considers the lack of scientific specificity in the Bible. But in addition to the undeniable fact of Man’s corruption, there is still the very important (from a biblical anthropological perspective) question of the *propagation* of that which makes man what he is, that which is essential to humanity.

There are two passages in the opening chapters of Genesis that bear somewhat on this question: the first dealing with the formation of the woman; the second with the birth of Adam’s son, Seth. From a theological, or biblical anthropological, view, the question arises concerning the origin or source of the human soul *after Adam*. Whether one treats the spirit and the soul as essentially synonymous – or at least of a group together – or sees the spirit and the soul as separate phenomena within the human constitution, there still remains the issue of how his part of Man’s nature passes from one generation to the next. Was (and is) each subsequent human being formed and fashioned in the same manner as was Adam? Or did God endow the first man with the ‘power’ to reproduce

"*after his kind*"? The case of Eve is, of course, unique; but it also bears the same analysis: Where did Eve's soul, or spirit, or soul/spirit, come from if not directly from Adam?

Even as important as these questions are to the formation of a biblical anthropology, they remain esoteric and academic from the standpoint of day-to-day Christian living; they might be ranked with the debates on supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism among ivory tower theological scholars. But there is an aspect of this investigation that brings the matter very much into pedestrian theology: the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe and confess that He was "*born of the Virgin Mary*" and was without sin from His mother's womb. But how could this be, and He remain also *truly* human? Thus the issue of the propagation of the soul becomes closely allied to the issue of the propagation of Original Sin, hardly a splitting of theological hairs.

Its importance in respect of the doctrines of the incarnation and of original sin is manifest. Hence, in the church, from ancient times till now, it has ever been a point of controversy, debated with great earnestness and zeal.¹¹⁵

As mentioned, the 'case' of Adam is somewhat straightforward in terms of origins: his body is formed of matter and his immaterial part(s) originate from God via the Divine Breath or Spirit. Being the account of the advent of the first man, there can be no doubt as to the ultimate (and proximate) source of all parts: body, spirit, and soul. "The inbreathing into the nostrils, therefore, can only be meant to affirm that God, by means of His breath, brought forth and united with the bodily form that same principle of life which became the source of all the life of man."¹¹⁶ But can it be said that every subsequent human being received life in the same, direct manner?

¹¹⁵ Delitzsch; *Biblical Psychology*; 129.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*; 101.

The affirmative to this question is given by those who hold to the *Creationist* view; the negative by those who maintain the *Traducianist* perspective. The former believe that the soul of every human is directly created by God; the latter that the soul is propagated through natural generation from father to child, throughout human history. As with the Dichotomist/Trichotomist debate, there are passages and texts in support of both views, and also logical and theological arguments arrayed for and against each. Neither view commands the field, for both are fraught with insuperable problems, so much so that a reasonable conclusion might be that theologians are asking entirely the wrong question! But no one has come up with an alternative, a third paradigm, and thus from the earliest days of the Church the debate has oscillated between these two positions.

If we examine the history of the controversy at all closely, we encounter so many unresolved problems that the question arises whether there must not be some basic reason for all this opposition of views, and for the frequently visible hesitation and doubt. Think of Augustine, whose own hesitation afterward restrained many others from a decisive choice for one side or the other.¹¹⁷

Creationism versus Traducianism:

Before embarking on a biblical analysis of the two perspectives regarding the propagation of the human soul, we would do well to properly and (hopefully) clearly define the terms. *Creationism* holds that the origination of each and every human soul is an act of immediate creation by God; that the 'formation' of Adam is, in a sense, repeated with regard to the immaterial part of human nature at the conception of every man. This was the view of the ancient Greek and Roman pagans, who believed in the preexistence of the soul and the 'trapping' of the soul within the human body. Early Christians, especially those of the Eastern/Greek wing of the Church, tended to adopt the view while rejecting the preexistence of the soul. Thus the progeny of Adam are, under the

¹¹⁷ Berkouwer; *Man: The Image of God*; 285.

creationist view, a further mixture of that which derives directly from the human father and mother, and that which comes directly from God. That which is derived from the physical generation is necessary to the doctrine of Original Sin,



Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)

for as the Apostle Paul declares unequivocally, “*in Adam all died, for all sinned.*” But the derivation of the immaterial part of human nature, particularly the soul, immediately from God is considered by creationists as absolutely necessary to the preservation of the *Imago Dei* in man, especially after the Fall. Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck, held “That man remains man, and insofar as this is so, remains always and eternally God’s image, can be maintained adequately only by creationism.”¹¹⁸

Creationism is not without biblical support, in spite of the problems associated with the view (to be discussed below). It cannot be denied that Scripture holds to a very close association between the Spirit of Life, the life-giving power of God, and the origination of any and all life on Earth. There is the simple statement by the author of Hebrews, that God is the “*Father of spirits,*” to consider, along with Old Testament allusions such as Zechariah 12:1, “*Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him...*” The psalmist also writes in a distinctly creationist vein in Psalm 33,

*The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men;
From His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth,
He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.*
(Psalm 33:13-15)

Another classic text produced in defense of Creationism is from the wisdom literature of Ecclesiastes,

¹¹⁸ Quoted by Berkouwer; 287.

*Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and **the spirit will return to God who gave it.***

(Ecclesiastes 12:6-7)

Also from the Wisdom corpus, Elihu answers Job and his 'friends' from a creationist perspective, as well,

*However now, Job, please hear my speech, and listen to all my words.
Behold now, I open my mouth, my tongue in my mouth speaks.
My words are from the uprightness of my heart, and my lips speak knowledge sincerely.*

***The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*** (Job 33:1-4)

But some passages urged in support of Creationism tend to say too much, to the point of assigning the immediate cause of the physical aspect of human nature to God as well as that of the immaterial part. For instance, in Psalm 139 the writer extols God's knowledge of him as spanning the entirety of his life, from conception to death. But in so doing, the psalmist attributes the formation of his physical being to the direct handiwork, even stitchery, of God,

*For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.*

(Psalm 139:13-14)

Now such passages neither prove nor disprove Creationism or Traducianism, but rather remind us that dogmatic pronouncements on any theological issue ought not to be derived from Wisdom literature, poetic and abstract as it tends to be. Still, even the few passages presented here do furnish an *a priori* support of the immediate formation of each individual man's soul/spirit by the hand of God.

Traducianism, however, holds the contrary view, and does so as well with some biblical support. The traducianist teaches that the propagation of the human soul is by natural generation from the father to the son, so that the endowment of life to Adam also constituted an endowment to, in a sense, create life. This view comports well by analogy with the creation of the other living creatures, who were then given the ability to reproduce “*after their kind.*” As we have seen, the fish, birds, and ‘beasts of the field’ were all in turn referred to by the same designation given to Man in Genesis 2:7 – *nephesh hayah*, a living soul. The Creationist does not maintain that the soul of every horse, or whale, or eagle is immediately created by God; the traducianist asks why this should be any different than for Man? Of course, the common answer is to safeguard the *imago Dei* in Man which unarguably sets him apart from all other ‘living souls.’

G. C. Berkouwer lists four texts that are traditionally used in support of the Traducian view, although he does overlook one that is part of our directed study in this lesson. The four mentioned by Berkouwer are,

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

(Genesis 2:1-2)

The first of the ‘proof texts’ hinges on the statement that God rested from His work of Creation upon the completion of the sixth day’s labors, the creation of Man. And although Jesus Himself says that the Father is working until now, it is evident from the comparison of Scripture with Scripture that the ‘work’ to which He refers is not an ongoing work of creation. There is no avoiding the conclusion from Creationism that the work of ‘creating’ must continue beyond the sixth Creation day if God does immediately endow each and every human being with a newly and divinely formed soul upon conception.

For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.

(I Corinthians 11:8-9)

Paul was not, of course, debating Creationism versus Traducianism when he wrote these lines; he was trying to establish proper relations within the Church between men and women. Nonetheless, and perhaps in a somewhat unguarded manner, he does seem to speak in a Traducian manner when he states that woman's origin is to found in man. But too much should not be read into the statement, not only because the apostle was not addressing the issue of the propagation of the soul, but also because the Bible frequently speaks of the *unity* of man without attempting to differentiate the parts. It is probably that Paul was simply referring to the act by which the first woman was formed from the first man, recorded in Genesis 2 and constituting the last of the four proof texts.

In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

(Hebrews 7:8-10)

This passage is intriguing in its own right, even without enlisting it in the theological struggle between Creationism and Traducianism. One is tempted to say that the author of Hebrews is speaking metaphorically or allegorically here – he does include the ‘so to speak’ of analogical writing. But it is also hard to write ‘so to speak’ if there is nothing about what is spoken that is *so*. The contextual purpose of the author is to establish that the ‘lineage’ of Melchizedek is more important than the Levitical pedigree of Israel's priesthood, for ‘even Levi’ honored the mysterious priest-king by paying tithes through his father Abraham. The ‘so to speak’ reasonably refers to the fact that the man, Levi (who, by the way, was never a priest), did not actually pay tithes to Melchizedek when his forebear Abraham did. But it does also stand to reason that the author of Hebrews, at least, believed and taught that the seminal identity of Levi – and in consequence the entire Levitical priesthood – resided *in Abraham*. This association of a named individual – a specific identity or *soul* – as being within

his ancestor seems to argue powerfully for the propagation of that identity from father to son to grandson, etc. Conversely, if the writer of Hebrews is speaking entirely in allegorical and figurative terms – if Levi were in no sense to be considered ‘in Abraham’ when the latter gave tithes to Melchizedek – then his overall argument rests upon a figment of his imagination and not upon biblical fact. That is too high a price to pay to salvage any view regarding something so enigmatic as the propagation of the soul.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

(Genesis 2:21-22)

This proof text is one of the focus passages for this lesson, the other being the one ‘missed’ in Berkouwer’s list. Genesis 2:21-22 requires some in depth handling, so we will turn to the other, ‘unlisted’ text first. From Genesis 5 we read,

*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son **in his own likeness, according to his image**, and named him Seth.*

(Genesis 5:1-3)

It is somewhat surprising that Berkouwer should overlook this passage consider the remarkable terms used to describe the natural generation of Adam’s son, Seth. That Seth was generated ‘in the likeness’ and ‘according to the image’ of Adam is so closely paralleled by Adam’s creation from the hand of God, that it is hard to escape the conclusion that God did indeed grant to Adam reproductive power in the fullest sense of the word and concept. In his inimitably clear prose, Delitzsch writes,

The likeness of God did not propagate itself in the immediateness of the origin, but in the mediateness given by Adam’s self-determination, which ensued in the

meanwhile, whereby human instrumentality is required for the origination of the entire man, even of his spirit.¹¹⁹

The Formation of Eve:

The manner by which the first woman was formed is clearly intended to show the essential unity between man and woman, as opposed to a duality of two humans, each formed from the dust of the earth. Woman's origin, and consequently her dependence, is from Man; they are not independent human entities. This, as far as it goes, pertains most obviously to the woman's physical form – she was taken from the side of Adam, furnished with the appropriate accoutrements, and presented to Adam to be his help-meet and wife. And while it is an argument from silence, the fact that nothing is said regarding the inbreathing of the Spirit of Life into Eve can reasonably be taken to mean that her life derived not directly from God, but mediately through Adam. This does seem to be the interpretation given to the passage by Paul in I Corinthians 11:8, cited above.

There is also the context of these verses in Genesis 2, that show us the underlying deficiency within Creation that rendered it 'not good' that Man should be alone. The formation of Eve follows hard upon the naming of the animals by Adam, and this is not simply a coincidence of texts. The naming of the animals was both an act of regency by Man, and a confirmation to him that there was as yet no other living soul compatible to him. Whether C. S. Lewis was correct in his portrayal of talking and non-talking animals in Narnia, there can be no doubt from Scripture that even between Man and 'talking' animals there is an immense gulf, an ontological chasm with all living creatures on one side and Man alone on the other.

It is beautifully exhibited in the picture of Adam scanning the animals as they come before him, distinguishing them by names from each other and from

¹¹⁹ Delitzsch; *Biblical Psychology*; 137 (and the comment about clarity was a joke).

himself until, having separated and bounded off bird and beast, he discovers that he is alone. He finds none of his own kind. He has no spiritual likeness and no companionship with the beasts about him.¹²⁰

The formation of Eve from Adam is not so much the creation of another 'human' as it is the formation of an alter-Adam, a being whose origination is so intimately bound up with Adam's that the two – now physically separate beings – cannot help but have both physical and spiritual connectedness. "The inspiration was given to the two, Adam and the woman, both in one, in the still undivided, complete man. Eva is certainly not Adam's child, but Adam himself in a different sex."¹²¹ Thus Eve is not as much the formation of another human life as she is the duplication of the first form, Adam. All of what makes Woman woman, came originally and derivatively from Man. That which she now has, he now lacks; the union of the two in marriage reunites the one life that was singular in Adam.

It might be objected that Adam, when presented with Eve, proclaims her "*bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh*" without mentioning spirit or soul, thus confirming the Creationist view that Eve's body derived from Adam, but not her spirit or soul. But this line of reasoning proves too much, for it would force us to conclude that the 'one flesh' union of man and wife pertains solely to the bodily consummation of the marriage and not to the more mystical union of two souls. Furthermore, the analogy of marriage to the relationship between Christ and His Church shows that the reference to the flesh or body must be taken by way of a figure of speech with the part standing for the whole. Paul writes in Ephesians,

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS

¹²⁰ Davis, John D.; *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*; 47.

¹²¹ Quoted in Delitzsch; 133.

WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:28-32)

The Fall and Original Sin:

Perhaps the greatest difficulty with a pure Creationist view is in regard to the question of Original Sin: the propagation of sin from Adam to his posterity through natural generation. It is a biblical tenet that all men are “*brought forth in iniquity*” and “*conceived in sin*” (Psalm 51:5). A Creationist view places a newly and divinely created soul/spirit into the newly conceived human being while still in its mother’s womb. Whence sin? To say that sin remains in the physical part of man’s composition is to fall into the Gnostic heresy that the flesh corrupts the entrapped soul, which is manifestly unbiblical. If sin, on the other hand, is primarily a spiritual principle with resultant corrupting effects on the body, then the passing of sin from generation to generation cannot be limited to bodily procreation alone. Frankly, the Creationist view – often maintained in an attempt to preserve the continuation of the Image of God – fails to properly maintain the equally true principle of the continuation of the image of fallen Adam.

But if Eve were formed in the same manner as was Adam, then both would independently owe their higher natures directly to God, though the sources of their physical natures be different. Eve’s sin would therefore have been on par with Adam’s, which biblically it was not.

For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. (I Timothy 2:13-15)

Throughout Scripture the propagation of sin, and the deleterious effects of sin upon both mankind and creation, are assigned to the Man as the responsible party. This phenomenon becomes even more striking when we consider the

Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For He was born of a woman; in a sense, born *naturally* of woman. From woman He derived His true humanity; but without sin. We might take the evasive approach that somehow Jesus' mother, Mary, was herself preserved from sin, but that would implicate us in the Romish fiction called the *Immaculate Conception*. There is another, more reasonable and biblical, explanation.

The Old Testament speaks often of the 'sins of the fathers,' but never of the 'sins of the mothers.' Born of man, woman are equally victims of Original Sin. But to borrow a term from medical genetics, woman are not 'carriers' of sin. Somehow - and no doubt geneticists are seeking to discover just how - the propagation of sin travels through the male seed. It is undoubtedly for this reason that the *protoevangelium* - Genesis 3:15 - speaks of redemption coming through the Seed of Woman rather than that of Man. The true psychology of Man is manifested supremely in the Incarnation: the principle of Life as well as the avoidance of Adam's sin, was provided in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, who 'took the place' of the male seed in the conception of Jesus.

This mysterious and divine conception in no way deprived Jesus of true humanity, for the reason that Woman was herself derived from Adam and was not another 'original' as Adam was. Thus humanity was preserved in Jesus' conception through the natural egg and womb of Mary. But Life itself (and, as we now know, the sex of the child), as well as the propagation of sin come through the male contribution to conception: the male seed. This being bypassed in the Incarnation by the power of the Holy Spirit, a true Man was born into the world wholly without sin.

Yet by adopting a Traducian view we do not dismiss God from the equation altogether. He is still addressed in Scripture as the "*Father of spirits*" and "*the God of the spirits of all flesh.*" In such phrases we have the common distinction and tension between *proximate* and *ultimate* causes. God is the ultimate source of all Life and, hence, the ultimate Origin of all souls. The Bible

can speak of the soul or spirit of a man being formed within him by God, without thereby insinuating that the formation was *immediate* rather than *mediate*. The source of original life in Man was the breath of God, so it is not incorrect or unreasonable to speak of God as the source of animation of all mankind. "It appears to us that God is here confessed (i.e., Numbers 16:22) as the deepest and unique Origin of all living creatures, as Giver of, and Ruler over, all of life...God is the source and the Origin which gives spirit to all of life and who is also the source of human life."¹²² We close by concurring with Delitzsch, who this time is indeed crystal clear: "every birth is and remains a marvel, only to be explained by the co-operation of God's creative power."¹²³

¹²² Berkouwer; 298.

¹²³ Delitzsch; 142.

Week 15: *Posse Peccare: How Could Adam Have Sinned?*

Text Reading: **Genesis 2:15 - 17**

*“...but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
you shall not eat,
for in the day that you eat from it
you will surely die.”
(Genesis 2:17)*

We end this first section of our study of the Book of Genesis with Man standing on the verge of catastrophe. It seems appropriate to pause with Creation still in its pristine condition, as we have focused attention on the cosmos as it came forth from God’s voice and ‘hand,’ as it were. Commentaries on Genesis tend to move seamlessly from the mention of the two trees – and the prohibition of the one – into the narrative of the Fall of Man without pausing to ask what ought to be an obvious question: How came it about that Adam sinned? The question is of the same nature as what is commonly known as ‘theodocy’ – the attempt by theologians and philosophers to determine the origin of evil. And while it is easily comprehended that all that is Good arose from an eternal and Good God, it is horribly difficult to comprehend how evil could enter into a universe created by such a Good God.

Unbelievers have frequently used the evidence of evil to ‘prove’ that God, if He exists, is either not all-loving or all-powerful. They reason that an all-loving God could not have allowed evil to enter into His creation unless He was unable to prevent it, or that an all-powerful God would have prevented evil from intruding upon His creation unless He was not all-loving, actually seeking the pain that evil would wreak upon the created order. Whence Evil, therefore, is an ageless question that has bedeviled men and has remained one of the supreme unanswered – and perhaps unanswerable – quandaries of rational human thought. The question of the origin of Adam’s sin is a microcosm of this larger

query; but since it narrows its realm of study to that of the first man, it offers a slightly greater hope of solution – or at least of plausible conjecture.

A corollary to the question of the source and origin of Adam's sin refers to the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. Could the Man Jesus have sinned? Without doubt Jesus was born sinless; the taint of Adam's sin having bypassed the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb through the agency of the Holy Spirit. And without doubt the Bible testifies that Jesus *did not* sin during the entirety of His life here on earth. He was "*tempted in all ways such as we are, yet without sin.*" (Hebrews 4:15) But it also seems a matter of common sense to most readers that, if Jesus were not capable of sin, those temptations hurled at Him would not have had any teeth; one might say that they would not *really* have been temptations. It is of great comfort to the believer to know that his Lord indeed suffered the same temptation – and far worse – common to our everyday life, but was successful to resist all temptations and to remain in the sinless condition in which He was born.

Furthermore, to say that Jesus resisted temptation through the power of His divinity does not satisfy, for He is clearly portrayed to us in Scripture as being our *human* Champion – His own favorite title in reference to himself was 'Son of Man.' If sin found no place in Jesus merely because of His eternal deity, then passages such as the one from Hebrews just quoted, lose their potency to comfort us 'mere mortals.' No, it is rather evident that Jesus stood surety for the elect *as one of them*, and through faith to His God, resisted temptation and remained sinless to the point of death.

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18)

Herein lies the problem: Adam was created sinless no less than Jesus was born sinless. Man for man, they were at the start (notwithstanding, again, the

eternal deity of Jesus) on the same footing, and that is a very apt metaphor. One walked in perfection; the other fell. How did it happen that Adam, in whom there was no imperfection, did fall when tempted? If we come to a reasonable understanding of this question, we approach an analogous understanding of how Jesus, when tempted, did not fall but stood firm unto the end.

The *reality* of Adam's Fall is beyond all theological (and philosophical) debate. Apart from any theological or philosophical reflection upon the issue, it is an integral feature of Man's experience in this world that things are not as they *might* be, let alone as they *should* be. "Possibly there is no one who is under the illusion that we live in an ideal kind of world, or a world of serene communion and beatitude. Our human experience is not a matter of constant blessings. There fore every man must agree that there are appalling evidences of disturbances around us which can only call forth the question of *whence*."¹²⁴

The liberal and the evolutionist want either to deny the reality of evil, or to say that it is a social construct: that evil is just what society says is evil and nothing more. But that begs the question: Why is there even a concept of evil? Why should society make distinction between 'good' and 'bad' if these things do not in any way reflect the reality of the situation mankind experiences? What is the meaning of 'evil' if not in relativity to that which is considered 'good'? The denial of evil is little more than whistling in the graveyard. But along with the almost universal recognition of evil is the belief that evil is not 'natural' to the state of the world, that it is somehow an intruder on the scene.

Evil, with its manifold ramifications, has so intimately intertwined itself with and grown into human nature, that judging by appearances we might conclude it to be part and parcel of that nature. It is a higher truth concerning our nature, a truth perceived only by a more profound reflection, that enables us to judge of

¹²⁴ Berkouwer, G. C., *Studies in Dogmatics: Sin* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 1971); 12.

evil as a perversion which, though we cannot destroy it, ought to be rejected as an intruder.¹²⁵

So evil is an intruder; but how did it get in? Adam opened the door; but what possessed him to do that? The great 5th Century theologian Augustine reasoned that Adam, though created sinless, was still capable of sinning. He was *posse non peccare* – ‘capable of not sinning’ – and *posse peccare* – ‘capable of sinning.’ But *how* can a creature born directly of God, created perfect and placed in a perfect environment, actually come to the place of *sinning*? Where did sin find its ‘hook’ in Adam’s mind and heart? For the desire to sin is itself sinful; the will to sin is tantamount to sin itself. This may be the ultimate ‘chicken and egg’ question; it is at least one of the more perplexing. We will take a stab at it in this lesson.

A Perfect Man in a Perfect Place:

It is common within modern psychology and jurisprudence to blame an increasing number of societal ills upon ‘environment.’ Broken home; poor education, lack of economic opportunity – all and more are touted as explanations, even justifications, for criminal behavior. And one cannot gainsay the fact that many people indeed grow up in an environment from which it would be just short of miraculous not to emerge a hardened criminal. To some extent all men do, on account of the very evil of which we are seeking to find the source. But was this Adam’s case? Can his sin be blamed on his environment? The text of Genesis 2 seems to take special pains to prevent any such conjecture. “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” (2:15) This verse comes significantly right before the mention of the two tree – the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – and the divine prohibition against eating the fruit of the latter. It is as if to say to the modern reader: ‘Do not seek the answer to Adam’s sin motive in his

¹²⁵ Müller, Julius; *The Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1868); 21.

environment, for no place could be imagined more conducive to obedience and bliss than Eden." Not only was Adam created in sinless perfection - though, to be sure, an undeveloped perfection - he was also placed in a special preserve, a garden, created by God especially for the purpose of being the first man's sanctuary.¹²⁶

It was there that God originally put man and gave him rest when He had formed him. It was there that he could and should live. What he was there is his reality as the creature of God. And it is by that portion of the whole terrestrial space created by God that the totality has meaning and is to be understood...Man finds himself in a place appointed for this purpose by God and fenced off from the other earthly places...The duty of man in this place is to cultivate and keep it - literally, to serve and watch over it - and it is no fancy if we see here the functions of the priests and Levites in the temple united in the person of one man.¹²⁷

Simply put, there was absolutely nothing wrong with Adam's environment. As we know that sin did not enter into the world apart from the will of God (though, mysteriously, sin did not come actively from the hand of God Himself), we must surmise that God placed Adam in such an environment as Eden so as to remove all question of external influence upon the first man's decision to sin. At least, as the narrative in Chapter 3 reveals, all irrational influences arising from the place where Adam lived. John Laidlaw writes of Adam's first abode, that "It was one of happiness, - of undisturbed alliance with physical nature; a state in which work was without toil, in which life was bright and joyous in the consciousness of security and strength, when mastery over the world was a natural inheritance conveyed by the divine benediction."¹²⁸

It is true that Eden was not an unmitigated Paradise; there was the presence of *that tree*. Theologians appropriately refer to Adam's time in Eden as his *probation* - it was a time of testing, a trial of Adam to see if he would choose

¹²⁶ Barth, Karl; *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation; Volume III, Part I*; 253.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*; 253-254.

¹²⁸ Laidlaw; 183.

to obey and trust God over the temptation of the forbidden fruit. Still, even the temptation was a rather mild one; the prohibition minor and seemingly inconsequential in light of the overwhelming blessings given to Adam in the garden, "*From any tree of the garden you may eat freely,*" including, obviously, the Tree of Life. It was not as if Adam were led out into the wilderness without food for forty days! Yet Adam did not resist the Tempter when he came, and it remains to discover just how this weakness developed in a creature who was uniquely made 'in the image and likeness of God.'

Some would say that the very prohibition against eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was the root cause of Adam's temptation and fall. This comes under the principle that the surest way to tempt a person to do something is to forbid them to do it. But to have such a rebellious and disobedient inclination is itself sin, and to posit such an attitude in Adam is to assume that there was already an inclination to sin within Adam's psyche. This is called in theological terms, *concupiscence*, and represents the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the propagation of Adam's original sin; but even Rome does not hold that Adam was created concupiscent, with an inclination to sin. Rather, Adam might well have said the words that our Lord spoke when He perceived His hour to be coming nigh, "*the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*" (John 14:30) Satan had nothing in Adam, until Adam gave him something.

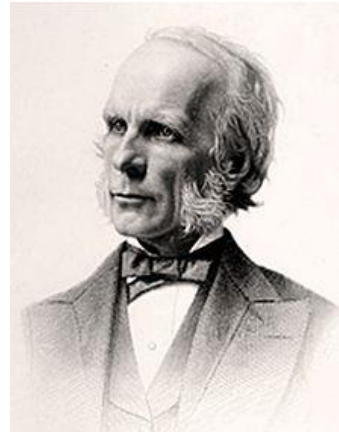
Primitive Righteousness:

Let us consider the nature of Adam as he sprang from the earth and was animated by the Spirit of God. Qohelet declares that "*God made man upright*" (Ecclesiastes 7:29), but this 'modest statement,' as Laidlaw calls it, is not very descriptive of Adam's original righteousness. It can be inferred from the fact that God declared all the works of His hands to be "*very good*" only after the creation of Man, that there was at least nothing 'bad' in the first man. This also follows

from the nature of God, in Whom there is no shadow of darkness and Who is unsullied by even the remotest contact with sin. Thus, although there is no direct statement in the first two chapters of Genesis declaring it to be so, we must conclude that Adam was created *without sin*, in at least a provisional condition that we may term 'righteous.'

The Bible starts man, not with a schism at the root of his being of which the Fall would be an almost necessary consequence, but with a positive righteousness, a living commencement of being right and doing good.¹²⁹

Because sin *did* occur, and because nothing occurs except according the purposes of God, it is easy for Reformed believers to develop an implicit determinism with regard to Adam's sin. In other words, to conclude that the Fall was a necessity, and consequently to surmise that there was really no 'choice' confronting Adam. This is wrong, and dangerously portrays Divine Sovereignty in the garb of Omnipotent Fate. Given his origin, and considering the circumstances of his habitation and his unfettered communion and communication with God, the *necessity* of Adam's sin should be the least logical of our conclusions. William G. T. Shedd notes that, "The positive holiness, then, with which man was endowed by creation, consisted in an understanding enlightened in the spiritual know-



ledge of God and divine things, and a will wholly inclined to them."¹³⁰ This is what makes the *actuality* of Adam's sin so phenomenally mysterious, and so horrible.

Of man, formed after the image of God, nought else could be expected but that he, so long as he displayed that image in untarnished splendour, should know

¹²⁹ Laidlaw; 191.

¹³⁰ Quoted in *The Calvinist International*; <http://calvinistinternational.com/2013/05/28/william-shedd-on-concreated-holiness/>

God, and obey Him, and in His communion enjoy the purest happiness, without being subject to death.¹³¹

Adam, of course, did not continue in this primeval innocence, and with his rebellion threw away for himself and his posterity the blessed communion with God he had enjoyed in Eden. What happened? There have been numerous theological and philosophical theories put forth, some of which we will investigate here.

Roman Catholic “*donum superadditum*”:

According to Roman Catholic teaching, Adam was created morally neutral – neither corrupt nor holy, but ‘good.’ To this nature was added a gift of holiness given by God, the *donum superadditum* or ‘super-added gift.’ This gift rendered Adam holy before God or, we may say, ‘righteous.’ But when Adam sinned, this gift was taken away from him and he was reduced to his ‘natural’ state of morality. Subsequent generations of Adam’s race are born in the same moral neutrality in which Adam was created (essentially a Roman Catholic adaptation of Pelagianism, in spite of the church’s official repudiation of that heresy). Rome’s concept of Original Sin is that man is born with the taint of Adam’s sin – washed away in baptism – and concupiscence, the tendency toward sin, for which the sacramental system of the Church is established.

More to our point, however, is the fact that Rome finds the origin of Adam’s sin in Adam’s morally neutral nature. Adam was not perfect, nor in any natural sense particularly oriented toward God and obedience. Rather it was that, when temptation came, that morally balanced man (neither good nor evil) tilted toward the evil with no greater effort than he had earlier tilted toward the good. But one may ask, of what benefit was the *donum superadditum* if it could not keep Adam from tipping over the brink at such a small provocation? If, for the sake of argument, we agree that Adam’s holiness was not native but a gift

¹³¹ van Oosterzee, J. J. *Christian Dogmatics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1891); 378.

from God, then we are still left with the question of how he could have succumbed so easily to the temptation, thus augmented by the divine gift. The *donum superadditum* is a fabrication of Roman Catholic tradition, necessary as a supporting beam for that church's hierarchical and sacerdotal structure; it is not biblical and it does not answer the question of sin's origin in the first man.

The Lutheran View: *The Holy Spirit*

The position of Martin Luther, and subsequent Lutheran scholars, is sadly but not surprisingly similar to that of Rome. Adam's holiness was, again, not native, but was due to the influence of the Holy Spirit within him - "*and God breathed the breath of Life into him, and he became a living soul.*" But this offers no better solution than the Roman Catholic *donum*, and indeed offers even less. For in this view, it was not merely a superadded gift that failed Adam at the crucial point, it was the Holy Spirit of God! Still, the similarities of the two views ought to be considered carefully: that man was created, in his most natural state, as a morally neutral being. He was neither righteous nor wicked, though capable of either. The fallacy of this view will become more evident when we consider the Arminian position, but it can be summarized here. That is, the choices that rational creatures make are inherently conditioned by moral quality. Choices do not happen spasmodically, man does not possess volitional epilepsy. A 'morally indifferent Man' - created in the image of God? - is a logical impossibility. Laidlaw notes,

So must all man's willing and working start from a nature which has moral quality to begin with. It cannot start from indifference.¹³²

Rather it is as Jesus Himself said, "*A tree shall be known by its fruit...either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt.*" It must be concluded that the creation of Man could not have been on the basis of

¹³² Laidlaw; 185.

moral neutrality, to be augmented by the Holy Spirit or by a *donum*, but rather as the image of God, created morally upright and, in an undeveloped sense to be sure, holy.

That man's original moral position was one of being and doing right, which the Creator Himself had originated, is the only view which will carry us consistently through the Bible scheme of man's moral history.¹³³

The Arminian View: *The Power of Contrary Choice*

The Calvinist finds general agreement with the Arminian on their view of Adam's moral nature as first created. That is, that he possessed the 'power of contrary choice.' He was capable of choosing in accordance with God's revealed will and command, but he was also capable of choosing against that will. This is true, and was summarized by Augustine a thousand years before Arminius. The great Church theologian wrote of man as created that he was *posse non peccatum et posse peccatum* - 'capable of not sinning and capable of sinning.' Where Calvinists part ways from Arminians is that the former hold that Adam was the only member of the human race (naturally born) of whom this could be said, whereas the Arminian believes that this 'freedom of the will' is of the very essence of humanity - that man would not be man without it.

Be that as it may, the fact that Adam possessed this power of contrary choice still does not answer the question before us: How is it that Adam came to make the choice he did make? Again, we must investigate the whole matter of 'choosing,' for it does not occur in a vacuum when the subject is one of God's rational creatures. Choices come as a consequence of rational thought; the mind weighs options and determines the course of optimum value or benefit. We are told in the event that Eve pondered the fruit, summarizing its virtues and perceived benefits before taking and eating. We are not told of Adam's mental exercise before he, too, partook of the forbidden fruit. However, and

¹³³ Laidlaw; 188.

significantly, we are told by the Apostle Paul that Adam performed this rebellious act with his eyes wide open.

*For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And **it was not Adam who was deceived**, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

(I Timothy 2:13-14)

Paul makes a serious distinction between the mental state of Adam and Eve at the moment each made their fateful decision/choice to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The foundation of Eve's deception may be found in the fact that the prohibition against eating from this tree was given to Adam *before* Eve was formed – or at least that is the case if the biblical record is chronological. The text does say, in fact, that “*God commanded **the man...***” and there is no reason to believe that the woman was with the man at that time. But it is evident that the man was with the woman when she was deceived by the serpent, and understood fully what was going down.

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and **she gave also to her husband with her**, and he ate.*

(Genesis 3:6)

Paul was not exonerating Eve for her sin; though it was the result of deception, it was sin nonetheless. What Paul is doing, however, is giving us some insight – not so clear as we might wish – into Adam's mind and heart at the crucial moment: *he was not deceived*, he knew exactly what he was doing! This fact intensifies the mystery of sin's motivational origination, but it also provides at least a glimmer of light upon a solution. Adam apparently heard all that the serpent said to the woman, and chose not to interfere with the discourse as he pondered the threat and the potential benefits of eating from the forbidden tree. Eve was deceived by the master – the father of lies – but Adam carefully considered his path and made his action accordingly. He weighed the words of

Satan against the words of God, and most likely recognized the former to be as a feather in comparison to the latter. Yet he sinned anyway.

Dangerous Knowledge:

The root of the issue is *knowledge*. The forbidden tree is called the Tree of the *Knowledge* of Good and Evil. Satan cuts to the heart of the matter when he says to Eve, “*For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, **knowing** good and evil.*” Leon Kass speaks of this as ‘dangerous knowledge,’ but he mistakenly interprets all independent knowledge as fundamental disobedience against God. In his own analysis, Kass rightly classes the forbidden knowledge as *autonomous*, but then fails to see that this is the real problem, not the knowledge itself, but the autonomous nature of the one seeking to possess and wield that knowledge.

But perhaps Adam’s quest for this knowledge was, at first, innocent. Perhaps it was not the knowledge *per se* that he desired, but the *being like God*. From all that has been said concerning Adam’s original state, it logically follows that he would desire to be like God. Such an aspiration is by no means intrinsically sinful, though the means of attaining that goal may very well constitute the heart and soul of sin. So it turned out the case with our first father.

James sheds light on this issue through his ‘definition’ of sin,

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.
(James 1:14-15)

No doubt James was thinking of man *as fallen* in sin when he wrote these words. But is there any reason not to attribute the same definition to the first sin that so aptly describes its progeny? *Adam was tempted when he was carried away and enticed by his own **lust***. But did Adam have lust? Unfortunately that word in the English has developed an almost exclusive sexual connotation, and there are a

number of theologians who maintain that it was sexual desire that led Adam to disobey God and to strike out on his own. But the Greek word translated here as 'lust' is a more general, though a very intense, term. It is *epithumia* and it denotes any strong desire, whether good or bad. Clearly it has a negative meaning in James 1:14, but the very same word has the opposite sense when spoken by the Lord to His disciples:

*When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, "I have **earnestly desired** to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

(Luke 22:14-16)

And the prophets were not sinning when they *earnestly desired* to witness what the disciples were witnessing.

*But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men **desired** to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

(Matthew 13:16-17)

In both of these passages the very same word – *epithumia* – is used to indicate the intensity of the desire on the part of the subjects. The word itself really has no inherent moral content, rather it signifies how powerfully the subject wants the object of his desire. It stands to reason that the word would develop the negative connotation it now possesses, considering that "*the thoughts and intentions of man's heart are only evil always*" and that "*the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it?*" But the tarnish that sullies the word comes from fallen man, and not from the word itself. It is, as the passages above show, possible to 'earnestly desire' something within the safe bounds of righteousness.

But is it also possible for this earnest desire to cross those bounds and to become sinful because illegitimate. One sees a similar vein of deception attempted by Satan against Jesus Christ; the *things* that Satan offered Jesus were in themselves legitimate, and generally constituted the fulfillment of biblical

prophecy that would indeed come to fruition in Christ. But the *means* of attaining those noble ends, as offered to Jesus by Satan, were wholly illegitimate. Inasmuch as the temptations laid before the Lord were biblical, they constituted a part of the Lord's *earnest desire* to do His Father's will and to see the glory of God manifested in His life and work. But because Satan offered these things as if he were the source and authority behind them, and because he offered them to be taken by Jesus *autonomously*, Jesus summarily rejected each one and resisted the temptation to desire beyond bounds.

The prohibition against eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil need not be considered an eternal ban on knowledge – that Man should be kept in 'ignorant bliss' throughout his generations. It is biblically reasonable to think that God intended for Adam to *grow in wisdom and knowledge* in much the same manner as Jesus did later. It may have been justifiable, and is certainly understandable, that Adam should desire to know as God knows and thus to be more like God. But even the best desires become the source of sin when they entice a man away from the path of obedience, patience, and trust in God, to embark down his own road. Thus Adam came to that fork in the road and, sadly, and in the immortal words of Yogi Berra, he took it.