

# Interpreting Genesis 1-11

Russell T. Fuller

**Russell T. Fuller** is Assistant Professor of Old Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Fuller earned his Ph.D. at Hebrew Union College and was appointed to the Southern faculty in 1998. He has written journal articles and book reviews and has several articles in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Zondervan).

## Introduction

The proliferation of methods and approaches characterizes biblical hermeneutics in the twenty-first century. Each method has its own focus. Some read the text holistically; others fragment the text. Some stress the oral, pre-literary stage; others, the final editing. Each method even has its own audience. The Feminists have their method, the Marxists theirs, along with the Environmentalists and the Post-modernists, to mention only a sample. Few students of the Bible realize that an understanding of Marx, Heidegger, or the latest thinker is a prerequisite for interpreting and for understanding the Bible. In the end, these methods and approaches relativize the text, usually to politicize it. But for the Christian there remains a more excellent way: (1) follow the hermeneutical footsteps of the Apostles by understanding the text according to its plain sense; (2) see the unity of the Scriptures with a “Christ-centered” hermeneutic; and (3) unfold its theology through divinely intended typology.

This thesis, of course, assumes three truths. First, it assumes that God inspired and superintended the process of the writing of the Scriptures so that the human authors, although free as any other human author, produced, both in thought and in word, the word of God. Second, it assumes that the Scriptures, although having many authors over many centuries, reflect one divine mind with one unified theme and with one consistent message. Consequently, Scripture best interprets Scripture. Earlier Scripture

lays the foundation for understanding later Scripture; later Scripture provides a superstructure for understanding earlier Scripture. Third, it assumes that this thesis does not cover all apostolic methods of interpretation. The goal, in short, is to understand and to interpret Genesis 1-11 by the Apostles and to observe and to imitate their method of interpretation as closely as possible.

## Plain Sense

Usually, the apostolic writers interpret Genesis 1-11 as straightforward historical narrative according to the “plain sense” of the text. Christ understands, for instance, that God created Adam and Eve as male and female at the beginning, and that marriage, both then and now, requires a bond and unity of life (Matt 19:4-5). Jesus teaches that his return will mirror the time of Noah, in which people were oblivious to impending judgment (Luke 17:26-27). The Apostle Paul derives many of his teachings from Genesis 1-11, and he speaks of Adam and the Fall when he says “through one man sin entered the world” (Rom 5:12). Paul explains how mankind, as originally created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, degenerated into murder (Genesis 4) and into universal depravity and sinfulness (Genesis 6). Vividly describing human depravity in Romans 3, Paul echoes the language of Genesis 6:5, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,” and of Genesis 8:21, “for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” The

Apostles clearly understood and interpreted the Scriptures according to their plain sense.

Postmodern critics, however, dismiss readily, yea even contemptuously, any notion that a text has a “plain sense” or a fixed meaning. They have made the perfect the enemy of the good, the absolute the enemy of the relative, the theoretical the enemy of the practical. Hence, because the historian cannot be absolutely objective, even the goal of a relative objectivity is useless. Because language cannot communicate reality perfectly, notions such as the fixed meaning of a text are baneful. Neither space nor time (nor patience) will allow a full refutation. A few comments must suffice. Since the beginning of writing, readers have interpreted a document according to the meaning of the words as understood when the document was written. When the words of a document reflect the intention of its author accurately and clearly, the writer communicates effectively. But if an author does not communicate his intention in a written document accurately and clearly, the original understanding of the text and the authorial intent of the text conflict, thereby impairing the author’s intended message. Certainly, language, in whatever form, communicates imperfectly, but it has proven practically effective and reliable. For all its defects, it has no replacement or substitute. The Bible, on the other hand, has a divine author who communicates his intentions infallibly, accurately, and clearly. This does not mean, to be sure, that all Scripture is equally clear or easily understood by modern interpreters, but it does mean that the Scriptures have an original understanding that the original hearers could perceive and later hearers

and readers can discern, an authorial intention infallibly communicated by the original understanding, and a “plain sense” derived from the original understanding. God can communicate, and he did through his Prophets and Apostles.

### *Dispute over the Interpretation of Genesis 1:1*

Not all passages of Scripture, of course, have a clear “plain sense.” Traditionally, interpreters have understood Genesis 1:1 as an independent statement of God’s initial act of creating the universe, with the second verse describing the chaotic condition of the earth after the initial creation, and with the rest of the chapter relating God’s arrangement of the chaotic universe into the Cosmos. This traditional understanding, however, has its critics. The New Revised Standard Bible, for instance, takes Genesis 1:1 as a clause dependent on verse two, “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, (2) the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep. . . .” This translation reflects a profoundly different interpretation of the passage by rejecting, or at least by ignoring, the doctrine that God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Instead, according to this view, in the beginning with the world already in a chaotic state, God created the universe out of existing matter. Proponents support this translation from the grammar of the passage and from the ancient Babylonian creation account, *Enuma Elish*. Indeed, Hebrew grammar will allow a construction that admits the literal rendering, “In the beginning of God’s creating the heavens and earth,” which the New Revised Standard Version smoothes into its translation. This understanding of the grammar, originally pro-

pounded by the Medieval Jewish scholar, Ibn ben Ezra, is further strengthened by *Enuma Elish*, which begins with a dependent clause, “When on high no name was given to heaven, nor below was the netherworld called by name, primeval Apsu was their progenitor.” Because the Genesis account is related to *Enuma Elish*, the issue, for many, is settled.

Nevertheless, there are sound reasons to reject this understanding of Genesis 1:1. First, although the grammar may be understood as a dependent clause (this construction is relatively rare in Hebrew), it is not the most natural understanding of the grammar.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the translator must strain the grammar to admit a dependent clause in Genesis 1:1, the traditional translation renders the syntax smoothly and naturally. Furthermore, the form of the first word (*b<sup>e</sup>re’shithi*) is ambiguous as to whether it is dependent on the following verb. The Masoretes, the preservers of the traditional Jewish reading of the text, read the first word as an independent word, as do the ancient translations—Septuagint, Vulgate, Peshitta, and Targum. In fact, the first two Hebrew words of Genesis begin with the same three consonants *br’*, an obvious word play, to emphasize God’s creating at the absolute beginning. In every occurrence of the verb *bara’*, God is always the subject, and the material out of which something is created (*bara’*) is never mentioned, thus making the verb *bara’* most suitable to express creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*).<sup>2</sup> The grammar, in other words, strongly suggests, perhaps even demands, that Genesis 1:1 be translated as an independent statement.

The appeal to *Enuma Elish* to support the interpretation and translation of the New Revised Standard Version is even

less persuasive. Certainly, there are parallels between *Enuma Elish* and Genesis: both have a watery chaos later separated into firmament and sea; both have etymological equivalents for words like the “deep” (Genesis 1:2); both have light before the sun, and both prominently display the number seven. The differences, on the other hand, are far greater. *Enuma Elish* reads as crude mythology: the gods are childish, degenerate, and wicked; the hapless humans are created as slaves to relieve gods from arduous labor. Genesis, by contrast, reads as sober historical narrative: God creates and orders the universe, and then creates man in his own image at the climax of creation. The Babylonians believed in the eternity of matter;<sup>3</sup> the Hebrews, in creation out of nothing. Only Genesis begins before time and space. The differences between Genesis and *Enuma Elish* are so stark, in fact, that Alexander Heidel, a University of Chicago Assyriologist, has written, “But I reject the idea that the biblical account gradually *evolved* out of the Babylonian; for that the differences are far too great and the similarities far too insignificant. In the light of the differences, the resemblances fade away almost like the stars before the sun.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Heidel accepts the traditional translation of Genesis 1:1, rejecting the parallel of Genesis 1:1 and the beginning of *Enuma Elish*.<sup>5</sup> There are no genuine Mesopotamian parallels to Genesis 1:1. Genesis 1:1 is unique. Consequently, even “progressive,” modern translations such as the Revised English Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible have recognized the accuracy of the traditional translation.

Although grammarians, exegetes, and theologians may debate these facts, the Apostles remove any remaining doubt

concerning the traditional understanding of Genesis 1:1. In teaching Christ's pre-existence before all created things, the Apostle John begins his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word," a clear reference to Genesis 1:1 and to the time before creation, because two verses later, John declares that the Word created all things. John's intentional echo of Genesis 1:1 makes sense only if John understands Genesis 1:1 as an independent sentence and "in the beginning" as the *absolute* beginning. Otherwise, John's echo of Genesis 1:1 is confusing and ambiguous. Likewise, the writer of the book of Hebrews affirms that Genesis 1:1 is an independent sentence, teaching creation out of nothing, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of the God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb 11:3). Hebrews chapter eleven then continues the chronological series of events in Genesis with Abel (Gen 4:2-10), Enoch (Gen 5:22), Noah (Gen 6:13), Abraham (Gen 12:1), Sarah (Gen 17:19), Isaac (Gen 27:27), Jacob (Gen 47:31), and finally Joseph (Gen 50:24). Hebrews 11:3 fits the chronology by referring to Genesis 1:1. Without doubt, the Apostles confirm the traditional understanding of Genesis 1:1 as an independent statement teaching the biblical doctrine of creation out of *nothing*.

### ***Dispute over the Interpretation of Genesis 1:2***

The plain meaning of the text is even more disputed in the latter part of Genesis 1:2, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (NASB). The translators of the New American Standard Bible capitalized the word "Spirit," indicating their interpretation that the

"(Holy) Spirit moved upon the face of the waters." The Hebrew words translated "Spirit of God" (*Ruah Elohim*) allows many translational options for Genesis 1:2, including: "spirit of God" (lower case, God's spirit, but not the Holy Spirit, Revised English Bible), "mighty wind" (New American Bible), "wind from God" (New Revised Standard Version), or "divine wind" (New Jerusalem Bible). Traditional Jewish exegesis, as reflected in the Targum Onqelos, adopts the "wind of God" translation, "And a wind from before the Lord was blowing upon the face of the waters." Moreover, the translation "wind" has possible parallels in *Enuma Elish*. Proponents of translating "Spirit of God" or "spirit of God," counter that the winds mentioned in *Enuma Elish* occur in contexts very different from the context of Genesis 1:2. Winds are prominent in *Enuma Elish* when Marduk kills Tiamat by shooting an arrow down her throat and into her heart. The parallel with Genesis 1:2 is simply not there. Furthermore, the participle (root *rhf*) translated "moved upon" denotes "hovering," used in Hebrew and in Ugaritic of birds hovering over their young or their prey, not for the "blowing" of winds.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the Hebrew words (*Ruah Elohim*) are always translated "Spirit of God" or "spirit of God" in all other occurrences in the Old Testament, never "wind of God."<sup>7</sup> The better rendering of the words, consequently, is "Spirit of God" or "spirit of God."

But is this the Holy Spirit of the New Testament? To be sure, the Old Testament, with its emphasis on the unity of God, does not fully teach the distinction of persons in the Godhead, though it certainly hints at distinctions with the Angel of the Lord and the divine titles and offices of

Messiah.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the Spirit of God functions identically in both Testaments by inspiring, by empowering, and by leading. In a word, the Spirit of God in the Old and New Testament is the *executive* of the Godhead. And the writers of the New Testament do not hesitate to equate the Spirit of God in the Old Testament with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. God fulfilled his promise to pour out his Spirit in Joel (2:27-28) by sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:16). The Holy Spirit's empowering of Christ (Matt 12:18; Luke 4:18-19) fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that the Lord would put His Spirit upon Messiah (Isa 42:1; 61:1). David says that the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him (2 Sam 23:2); the New Testament says that the Holy Spirit spoke through David (Acts 1:16), as the Holy Spirit spoke through and moved upon all the writers of the Old Testament (1 Pet 1:11). The Holy Spirit was grieved consistently and rejected in Israel's history (Acts 7:51). In fact, the Apostles simply refer to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament without introduction or explanation, indicating that the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God was natural and obvious.

The Holy Spirit of God, therefore, in his role as executive of the Godhead, sovereignly controlled and oversaw the chaotic earth as it first came forth from God, then executed the divine commands to set the Cosmos in order. By the Holy Spirit, the heavens were beautified, life was imparted (Ps 104:29-30; Job 33:4; Gen 2:7), and human intelligence was given (Job 32:8). The Holy Spirit is, in other words, the causal agent (not agency) that transforms chaos and desolation into matchless beauty, symmetry, and harmony, just as the Spirit of God revives Israel from its

deserted wilderness into a fruitful plain (Isa 32:14-15) or as the Holy Spirit revives a spiritually dead soul into a divine habitation (Ephesians 2; Rom 8:2-11; John 3:6-7; 5:25; 6:63; and 14:15-17).

### **Christ-centered Hermeneutic**

The Apostles also interpret Genesis 1-11 and unify Scripture with a "Christ-centered" hermeneutic. Christ himself taught this method to his Apostles and Disciples after the resurrection. Luke writes, "And beginning from Moses and from all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Christ clearly implies that the Old Testament Scriptures speak of him from beginning to end. Christ, therefore, is not to be found occasionally, just here and there, or now and then. He is the goal of the Old Testament, the one who unifies the Old Testament, the promised fulfillment of the Old Testament, the bridge that links the Testaments. This understanding of the Scriptures, however, does not come naturally, through human wisdom and investigation, but supernaturally. Christ opened the minds of his disciples so that they understood the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), and he gave his Apostles the gift of inspiration by the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:7-16) to interpret the Scriptures infallibly. Apostolic teachings from Matthew to Revelation portray Christ as the central character of the Old Testament.

To be sure, many object to this hermeneutic. Some, such as the Old Testament translators of New Revised Standard Version and the Revised English Version, extract the Messiah from the Old Testament, thereby nullifying the Christian religion, or for that matter, the Jewish religion. Others find Christ in the Old Tes-

tament, but only occasionally, thus discarding the teachings of Christ and of his Apostles, and even the teachings of the rabbis, who often interpret the Old Testament more messianically than Christian scholars. These Christian scholars often claim that such a messianic hermeneutic illegitimately reads the New Testament back into the Old Testament. Happily, B. B. Warfield dismissed this indictment against the Apostles long ago:

This is not an illegitimate reading of New Testament ideas back into the text of the Old Testament; it is only reading the text of the Old Testament under the illumination of the New Testament revelation. The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before.<sup>9</sup>

Still others will accept the apostolic teaching, but declare that the Apostles employed a “special hermeneutic” that cannot be imitated or followed.<sup>10</sup> God, however, has not left us to our own devices, to our own wisdom, to our own reason, or even to our own rules in interpreting his word. He has given to his Church a foundation to interpret and to understand his word, the foundation of the teachings and methods of the Apostles and the Prophets (Eph 2:20). And their teachings, moreover, are unmistakably “Christ-centered.”

### *Examples of the Apostolic Christ-centered Hermeneutic*

Examples of their “Christ-centered” method of understanding the Old Testament abound. The Apostle John says that Christ (the Word) existed with God, and

as God, before time, and that this divine Person, Christ, created all things (John 1:3, 10), thereby identifying God in Genesis 1:1 with Christ. Paul, of course, teaches the same truth in Colossians 1:15-17 and in 1 Corinthians 8:6, “And to us, there is one God the Father from whom all things are and we are to him; and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things are and we are through him.” And likewise, the author of Hebrews writes, “whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom he made the ages (universe)” (Heb 1:2). And, “But to the Son he says . . . . You from the beginning, O Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.” (Heb 1:8, 10). It is evident that the Trinity is at work in human history, especially the redemptive history of the Old Testament. In particular the office and role of the second person is featured. Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple, whom John identifies as Christ (Isa 6:1; John 12:41), and Isaiah declares that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to God, whom Paul identifies as Christ (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:8-11). Paul teaches that Christ sustained the Israelites in the wilderness, but they tempted Christ (1 Cor 10:4, 9, cf. Exod 17:2, 7 and many other passages). For the Apostles, Christ was not simply an occasional character in the Old Testament, but he was the God of the Old Testament. Surely then, one can safely assume that Christ communed with Adam in the garden, that Christ put Adam asleep and created Eve, and that Christ called to the fallen couple, “Where are you?,” as it was Christ who preached through Noah, the preacher of righteousness, before the Flood (1 Pet 3:18-20).

### ***Remarkable Statement about Christ in Genesis 3***

Certainly, Genesis 3 furnishes the most remarkable statement about Christ in Genesis 1-11. The chapter opens with a snake talking, clearly no ordinary snake because there is no indication that the animals talked in the garden. And even if one assumes that the animals could speak, how could a snake impugn God's goodness and faithfulness, especially when God had declared his creation "very good"? Revelation 12:9 reveals the source of such wickedness, by identifying the snake in Genesis 3 with Satan, who sinned (1 John 3:8) and murdered from the beginning (John 8:44). Genesis 3:15, therefore, speaks of the great world conflict between the serpent (Satan) and the woman, between the serpent's seed (the demonic forces) and the woman's seed (humanity), which will ultimately prevail. God later reveals that Abraham's seed will bless all the nations of the earth (Gen 12:3); and as the collective word "seed" expresses unity, so Paul sees the unity of the seed of Abraham fulfilled in one person, Christ (Gal 3:16). Through Abraham's seed a human deliverer will come. The victory of this human deliverer over Satan hints that the deliverer is more than a human—he is also divine. Revelation 12 describes this conflict, when the woman (Israel) gives birth to a child, Christ (Rev 12:5), and the Devil wages war against "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). Although some of the remnant of the woman lose their lives, the remnant of the woman prevails by the blood of the lamb (Rev 12:11). This conflict runs throughout Scripture so that Paul tells the Roman Christians that God will soon bruise

Satan under their feet (Rom 16:20). Most appropriately, therefore, the Church has accurately called Genesis 3:15, the *protoevangelium*, or the first revelation of the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

### **Typology**

In addition, the Apostles often teach theology through typology. They employed types and symbols, like object lessons, to communicate truth. Types and symbols are not mere historical parallels or coincidental details between persons or events, but they are divinely designed and intended to portray a fact, principle, or relationship of a spiritual truth in visible form. Symbols represent truths of *present* existence and application; types, truths of *future* existence and application. The Old Testament sacrifices, for example, symbolize substitutionary atonement, and typify the ultimate sacrifice, Christ. Old Testament symbols and types prepared the Old Testament saints of God for the coming great events and truths of the New Testament. To be sure, the Old Testament saints may not have fully comprehended the typological significance of the Old Testament, but they clearly did understand the prospective nature of the Israelite theocracy. The Old Testament Prophets and Psalmists, for instance, understood that Israelite kingship symbolized God's kingship, and that it ultimately typified Messiah's kingship. For instance, Ezekiel (37:25) prophesied that David would come in the latter days to restore Israel. Certainly, the Old Testament saints did not believe that David himself would return, but they understood, as Jews and Christians have always understood, that David typified Messiah. Consequently, typology is essential for perceiving the unity of the Bible, for

understanding the theology of the Bible, and for developing the hermeneutics of the Bible.

Of course, many object to interpreting the Bible typologically. Some see typological interpretation as simply New Testament midrash, as fanciful interpretation, as creative exegesis to force the Old Testament into apostolic or early Christian molds. Such objections reject apostolic authority and method, and the inspiration of the Scriptures. Others point to the many abuses in typology that interpreters have committed: the twelve stones of Jordan are the twelve Apostles, the four lepers of Samaria are the four evangelists. No doubt, many have abused typology, but all methods of interpretation have been abused. Interpreters must correct the abuses and seek to follow the patterns and methods of typology as practiced by the Scripture writers. Certainly, careful judgment and discretion is essential, but again, this applies to all methods of interpretation. Biblical typology can be properly understood and safely imitated by following apostolic examples.

### ***Typological Understanding of Genesis 1-11***

The foundational character of Genesis 1-11 naturally lends itself to a typological understanding. God's creating the world in six days and his resting on the seventh day foreshadowed and typified the fourth commandment for Israel, and further typifies the heavenly rests when our earthly labors are complete (Heb 4:9-11). Similarly, the garden of Eden points to the future state of the new heavens and earth as described in Revelation 21-22, when sin and sorrow will no longer exist, and fellowship with God as in the garden of Eden will be restored. Noah, as a preacher

of righteousness who warned his generation of the wrath to come, was a type of Christ (1 Pet 3:18-20; 2 Pet 2:5). The Flood typifies the great final judgment of God (2 Pet 3:6-7), and the floodwaters typify baptismal waters. The Tower of Babel (Babylon) typifies the world and its rebellion against God (Revelation 17). Recognizing the typological character of Genesis 1-11 is fundamental to reading it as part of the Christian canon.

The most important type in Genesis 1-11 is Adam and his relationship to Christ. Paul directly affirms the typology between Adam and Christ (Rom 5:14). Both were heads of the race: Adam, the head of the human race; Christ, the head of the redeemed human race (1 Cor 15:22). Types, of course, can also suggest differences. The first Adam was designed for the earth and made of the earth; the last Adam was a quickening spirit from heaven. Adam's act of disobedience brought condemnation to the entire race; Christ's act of righteousness brought the gift of righteousness to the redeemed. Sin came through Adam; righteousness came through Christ. Moreover, the last Adam will fulfill God's plan for mankind by restoring the original dignity and state that the first Adam lost. In the eighth Psalm, David describes this original state of mankind, which Hebrews 2:5-18 declares that Christ will restore. The typology between Adam and Christ, like the other biblical typologies, displays the impressive unity of the Scriptures, and reveals their rich theology.

### **Conclusion**

In the end, the only reliable guides for interpreting and for understanding Scripture are the Apostles, who understand the plain sense of the text, who display the



unity of the whole through Christ, and who unpack its theology through typology. Their method, after all, is not *their* method. They learned it from Christ, who gave to them the keys of the kingdom, which included—the key to hermeneutics.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>If Genesis 1:1 were a dependant clause, verse two would begin with a vav-consecutive (*wat<sup>h</sup>i ha'arets*) or with a perfect tense verb (*hay<sup>t</sup>ha ha'arets*), compare Jeremiah 26:1 and Hosea 1:2, see further, W. Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910) 422 (130d). The grammar must be stretched and pulled to render Genesis 1:1 as a dependent clause.

<sup>2</sup>*Bara'* may take a direct object, usually: Heaven and earth, people (including Israel), and wonders or marvels. In each case, God created something new that did not exist earlier. Although *bara'* does not mean “created out of nothing,” it certainly can imply this meaning, as the Apostle Paul suggests in Romans 4:17.

<sup>3</sup>Diodorus Siculus, the first century BC Greek historian, writes, “Now the Chaldaeans say that the natural world is eternal and it has neither a beginning nor later will receive a destruction” (Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* [London: Heinemann, 1933] Book 2, section 30, p. 449).

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) 138-139.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 89-96. Heidel also asserts that Genesis 1:1 indicates the independence of Genesis from ancient Near Eastern creation accounts.

<sup>6</sup>The word translated “hovering” (*rahaf*) also occurs in Deuteronomy 32:11a, “As

an eagle prepares his nest, over his young he hovers.” Similarly, in Syriac, *rahaf* means to “brood, hover over, move gently over, fly, nourish,” especially found with birds and their young (R. Payne Smith, *A Syriac Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903] 538). For the Ugaritic evidence, see ‘Aqhatu Legend, CTA 17-19 I 20-21, 30-32; KTU 17-19. Moreover, Hebrew expresses the idea of “great wind” by *ruah g<sup>d</sup>olah* (Jonah 1:4; Job 1:19).

<sup>7</sup>*Ruah Elohim* occurs 16 times with the meaning “Spirit of God” or “spirit of God” (especially for a demon, 1 Sam 16:15); *Ruah Adonai* occurs 23 times: 22 times, “Spirit of God” or “spirit of God.” In Hosea 13:15, *Ruah Adonai* occurs with the meaning “wind of the LORD,” but the context makes this certain by the addition of the word, “east (wind).” Isaiah 40:7 could also be translated, “wind of the LORD,” “The grass withers and the flower fades because the wind (or Spirit) of the LORD blows on it; therefore, the people are grass.” Notice, however, that the word for “blows” is *nashaf*, not the word translated “hovers” (*rahaf*) in Genesis 1:2.

<sup>8</sup>The Old Testament, of course, only hints at distinctions in the Godhead; the New Testament fully reveals these distinctions. The Spirit of God acts as a person in the Old Testament, but this is clarified and fully confirmed by New Testament revelation. If New Testament revelation did not exist, one could explain the portrayals of the Spirit of God acting as a person as personification.

<sup>9</sup>B. B. Warfield, *The Works of B. B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) 2:141.

<sup>10</sup>See e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>11</sup>From ancient Near Eastern parallels concerning the defeat of serpents, R. E. Averbeck persuasively suggests that the Israelites under Moses understood the great promise of deliverance of Genesis 3:15, though without the full understanding of later revelation (R. E. Averbeck, *Genesis 3, the Cosmic Battle, and the Fall of Satan*, a paper delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society, November 15, 2000).