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Foundations for Faith

Editorial: Thomas R. Schreiner

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We cannot understand who we are and where we are going without understanding our origins. Genesis is a book of beginnings, a book that sets the foundation for all that follows in the scriptures. We understand from Genesis that God created everything out of nothing, that this astonishingly magnificent universe did not come into existence randomly but by virtue of the word of God. Genesis teaches that God made men and women in his image, and that we were given the mandate to rule the world for God's glory. It is clear from Genesis 1 that human beings are the crown of God's creation because we are made in God's likeness. Animals are not equal in significance to human beings, as some are suggesting today. We also learn from Genesis that marriage between a man and a woman was God's idea, that he intended marriage for our joy, so that men and women together could function as God's stewards over the world.

What has gone wrong with the human race? Genesis informs us that Adam and Eve rebelled against God, that they trusted their own wisdom and rejected God's lordship. All the misery of the world can be traced back to the first human sin. Over the course of history, many remedies have been proposed to solve the ills of human beings. Any solution that refuses to recognize that the root problem with human beings is our refusal to glorify God as God and give him thanks (Rom 1:21) will not be effective. As believers in Jesus Christ we know that a person's fundamental need is forgiveness of sins, a right relationship with God.

Genesis reminds us of a crucial truth that is foundational to the call for repentance and faith. God did not create humans as evil. Everything God made was good. Adam and Eve turned away from God as the source of joy and life and, as Paul says, they "worshiped the creature rather than the creator" (Rom 1:25). Now all human beings enter the world as sinners and condemned by virtue of their union with Adam (Rom 5:12-19).

Genesis also teaches us about God's plan for redemption. The *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 promises God's victory over the seed of the serpent. He will crush the serpent's head, though the serpent will bruise the heel of the seed of the woman. As the story unfolds, the seed of the serpent appear to be stronger than the seed of woman. Cain belongs to the serpent's seed and demonstrates it by striking down Abel. In subsequent years the seed of the serpent dominates the seed of the woman, for by the time of Noah all the world is corrupt except for Noah. Still, our God reigns and nothing will frustrate his purposes. The great flood demonstrates that the seed of the serpent will be judged, and that those who oppose God will not finally triumph. The Lord also promises that the world will not be totally destroyed again until God brings about the victory and redemption promised in Genesis 3:15.

Some scholars have doubted whether Genesis 3:15 truly represents the promise that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The careful reader sees that the *protoevangelium* is alluded to in other places in the OT. Psalm 72:9 says of the Davidic king, "Let the

nomads of the desert bow before him, and his enemies lick the dust." The licking of the dust reminds us of God's ultimate enemy, the serpent crawling in the dust. In Psalm 89, a Davidic psalm celebrating God's everlasting covenant with David, another allusion to Genesis 3:15 surfaces: "You yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain" (Ps 89:10; cf. Ps 72:4; 89:23). The crushing of Rahab foreshadows the final crushing of Satan that will be accomplished through the work of Jesus the Christ. In 2 Samuel 22 David celebrates his victories, grateful that his enemies have been subdued under his feet and that they are as the dust of the earth (2 Sam 22:39, 43). Once again the work of David anticipates the work of the David to come (cf. Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 37:24-25), Jesus the Messiah.

Perhaps there is also an allusion to Genesis 3:15 in Psalm 8:6 where the Psalmist speaks of the rule of human beings over the world and declares that God has "put all things under [our] feet." We know from Hebrews 2:5-9 that this Psalm is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for he is the perfect human being who succeeded where Adam and Israel failed. Interestingly, a few verses later the author of Hebrews tells us that through his death Jesus stripped the devil of his power (Heb 2:14-15). We see another allusion to the victory over the serpent in Psalm 110, the great Messianic psalm that is cited often in the NT (e.g., Matt 22:41-46 par; Acts 2:32-36; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25-28; Eph 1:20-22; Heb 1:3, 13; 10:12). "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (Ps 110:1). A few verses later God promises to crush his enemies (Ps 110:5-6). Balaam spoke about the Messiah in an oracle, "I see him, but

not now. I behold him, but not near. A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall arise from Israel, and shall crush the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth" (Num 24:17). Paul himself looks forward to the day when this promise will be fulfilled, proclaiming that "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20). In Christ the promise that the kingdom of God will crush all enemies is fulfilled (Dan 2:34, 35, 44, 45; cf. Mal 4:3). The seed of the woman runs from Abraham to David to Christ. The book of Genesis, like all of scripture, as Jesus himself taught us (Luke 24:44; John 5:39), points to Christ. We must interpret the OT in its historical and cultural context, but if we do not see how it points to Christ, then we have not yet progressed to a true understanding of its contents.

My prayer is that this issue of the journal will help readers understand the message of Genesis. Paul House provides a holistic sketch of creation in Old Testament Theology, while Russell Fuller sets forth a proper hermeneutical method. Duane Garrett demonstrates the bankruptcy of the documentary hypothesis, and Ken Mathews refutes an erroneous hermeneutic that justifies racism. In addition, Mark Rooker defends the historicity of the flood. A selection from Andrew Fuller's *Expository Discourses* provides a fitting application of the message of this book to later generations.

Creation in Old Testament Theology

Paul R. House

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Introduction and Methodology

In recent times few passages in scripture have generated as much heated discussion as Genesis 1-2. Naturalistic evolutionists have debated adherents of a literal six-day creation. Theistic evolutionists, framework theory proponents, and others have attempted to find mediating ground in the disputes. Many people simply do not want to engage in the debate, or do not possess the scientific or theological background to comment on the discussions. Through the years much has been accomplished to clarify what the Bible and what science teaches. Gains have been made, though not without significant struggle. Happily, many of the gains made have been in the area of the theology of creation.¹

This article does not attempt to cover the various areas involved in these debates. Rather, it attempts to strengthen readers' theological understanding of creation by tracing the use of creation theology in selected portions of the Old Testament canon. It tries to broaden readers' appreciation for creation theology by demonstrating some of the ways writers of scripture used the truths found in Genesis 1-2 to challenge or comfort their readers. Perhaps this method will then help teachers, students, and ministers to use these texts in their own context.

Because of the current diversity of approaches to Old Testament Theology in academic and ecclesiastical circles, it is appropriate to explain the methodology that will be used to accomplish these goals. Given the brevity of this article and the fact that my general method for pur-

suage Old Testament and Biblical Theology is outlined elsewhere,² I will present my procedure in skeletal form here. Simply stated, Old Testament Theology as it is practiced in this article follows five basic principles.

First, this article proceeds with a commitment to the Bible as God's written word (see Ps 19:7-14 and 2 Tim 3:16-17).³ Since the Bible is God's written word, it carries the authority and character of God. What this means is that the faithfulness, kindness, severity, truthfulness, coherence, accuracy, and authority connected with God's person is likewise attached to the scriptures. It also means that the Bible's main (though not sole) concern is to reveal the character of the triune God. As the Bible unfolds, a distinct portrait of the Lord emerges. God remains greater than the portrait. One never learns all there is to know about God, but one does learn about God.⁴

Second, since the Bible shares God's unified, coherent, and complete character, this article attempts to interpret the Bible's teachings on creation as a unity.⁵ This principle is thereby drawn from the nature of scripture, not from an external system imposed on the text. As Carl Henry writes, "The very fact of disclosure by the one living God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation."⁶ By this statement Henry means that the Bible's unified moral message and consistent emphasis on redemption in history is an outgrowth of God's inherently unified nature. Henry adds, "The revelation of the living God is therefore one comprehensively unified revelation. Its basic

unity derives from the purposive initiative of the self-revealing God, and not from a harmony imposed by philosophical manipulation or theological projection. The strands of that divine revelation imply no discontinuity or rupture in the unity of divine disclosure.”⁷

Third, this article interprets the Bible’s unified teaching on creation in canonical order. It does so because the Bible treats itself as a connected, canonical, theological whole.⁸ After all, in the Old Testament the Former Prophets reflect on the Law of Moses (see Josh 1:1-9; 1 Kings 2:1-10; etc). The Latter Prophets note the importance of Abraham, Samuel, and Moses (Jer 15:2), and they also cite one another (see Jeremiah 2-6; Zech 1:1-6; etc). The Psalmists read the history of Israel as a great unfolding act of the God who rules the universe (see Psalms 78; 89; 104-106; etc), and mention the Law and the testimonies as part of God’s written word (see Ps 19: 7-14). Daniel accepts Jeremiah as an accurate predictive prophet (Dan 9:1-19). Ezra considers himself a priest committed to Moses’ Law (Ezra 7:10). In the New Testament Jesus reads the Old Testament as a connected whole stretching from the Law, to the Prophets, to the Psalms (Luke 24:44). In theological debate the apostle Paul often argues from the Law and the Prophets to the Writings—in other words in canonical order (see Romans 4; Galatians 4; etc). Peter mentions Paul’s writings (2 Pet 3:14-18), and both apostles clearly knew at least some of the contents of the Gospels. Hebrews, James, and Revelation demonstrate a vast and sustained interest in the connection between the Old and New Testaments. They write carefully about how this connection affects salvation, holy living, and several related issues. Thus, it is appropriate to analyze

Old Testament Theology as it unfolds in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, and Biblical Theology as it continues through the Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, and General Epistles and Revelation.

Fourth, this article attempts to wed exegesis and theology. Walter Kaiser was correct a generation ago to stress exegetical theology, and he remains correct today.⁹ Old Testament Theology ought to arise from a careful analysis of the text. It ought to utilize the best results of historical criticism, though it must not become captive to reconstructed histories of how theology emerged in Israel and the early church. History must support theology, not the other way around. Exegesis should keep scholars from imposing theological systems on texts that cannot bear that particular weight. Of course, in an article of this length it is not possible to offer all the elements of exegesis that went into the theological comments. Still, I hope that it will be apparent that exegetical work has been done, even if readers disagree with the article’s exegetical and theological conclusions.

Fifth, this article offers summary statements on the themes that emerge from exegetical, unitary, canonical, and theological analysis. Hopefully, these summaries will not obscure the diversity of the Bible as they seek to stress the unity of scripture. If used correctly, this method should enable readers to see the sweeping scope of the Bible’s theological witness without losing a keen sense of the many particular ways that God’s word coheres. This unity within diversity is especially essential for grasping the many facets of creation, for this theme traverses the whole of scripture.

Creation and God's Person: Creation in the Law

Obviously, the Law begins the Bible's sustained interest in creation and its attendant theology. It is here that themes such as God's personal involvement with human beings, God's sovereignty, God's power, God's giving of standards, and God's willingness to forgive erring human sinners have their origins. It is also here that the fact that God is the only creator, indeed the only deity, begins its key role in Biblical Theology. In some way all subsequent doctrines flow from these truths, all of which are founded on the principle that the Lord is the creator. These truths must be received and processed through human reason, but in the end they must be accepted as true by faith.

The church has long confessed creation as a key article of faith. After all, based on Genesis 1-2, the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed indicate that at the head of all Biblical Theology stands the principle that the living God of the Bible is the maker of heaven and earth, of all things whether seen or unseen. From its inception the church has claimed that the Law stresses that the Lord, the Lord alone, made the heavens and the earth, and the whole of the Bible unfolds the implications of this emphasis. Since the truth of this affirmation is not self-evident, however, it is necessary that human beings accept by faith God's revealed word about creation. Carl Henry asserts, "The question of the ultimate source of the universe brings human experience and reasoning to a standstill that only revelation from without or above can overcome."¹⁰ He adds that creation requires an act of faith on the part of Bible readers.¹¹ Similarly, Karl Barth argues that "the doctrine of the

creation no less than the remaining content of Christian confession is an article of faith" that must be believed by those who trust in God's revelation.¹² Both Henry and Barth conclude that Hebrews 11:3 summarizes the key connection between faith and 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."¹³ Clearly, then, one's understanding of creation is fundamental to one's faith in God and to one's commitment to the Christian faith. How one responds in faith to this first biblical claim has ramifications for one's whole Biblical Theology.

Of course, Genesis 1-2 is the most crucial passage in the Law concerning creation. This text does not include everything the Law, let alone the Bible, has to say about creation, but it does provide the framework for all that follows. Though Genesis 1-2 offers important insights about the human race and the created order, its most significant instruction is in the area of God's person. As Ken Mathews observes, these chapters teach, "God is not merely an idea. He is Eternal Being whom we can know and experience personally."¹⁴ Once one grasps the importance of God's person, it is then possible to place human beings and the created order in their proper perspective.

Genesis 1:1 claims that the Lord is the sole source and cause of creation's existence. This verse also indicates that though the Lord is directly and personally involved in creation the Lord is separate from creation. Commentators generally agree with these initial points, but they have often debated what the opening phrase teaches about the timing of creation. William J. Dumbrell writes,

Since there is no agreed-upon translation of the two verses, interpreting them is fraught with difficulties. Verse 1 may be translated absolutely ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth") or dependently ("When God began to create the heavens and the earth, ..."). Though both translations are syntactically and contextually possible, Genesis 1:1 is best regarded as an absolute beginning, and indication of God's control over all creation as complete.¹⁵

Aalders agrees with Dumbrell's conclusion. He comments, "First of all, this is the most natural and obvious interpretation. Furthermore, this is the rendition that is found in every ancient translation, without any exception. Finally, although the alternative interpretation is linguistically possible, it does not reflect common Hebrew usage."¹⁶ After a very careful and detailed discussion of the matter, Claus Westermann agrees that the traditional translation is accurate.¹⁷

Dumbrell, Aalders, and Westermann all conclude that even if the temporal dispute is solved, the most important concept in the verse is that "the world owes its existence solely to God."¹⁸ It is this personal relatedness to God that "provides the explanation of ourselves and our world."¹⁹ Thus, at the very beginning of all things that are seen and unseen the Lord was there and the Lord was the initiator of creation. Indeed the very word that is translated "created" here is a verb that always has the Lord as its subject. In other words, there is no other biblical character able to create.

Besides emphasizing that the world owes its existence to God, the only one able to create, Genesis 1:1 reveals that the Lord is solitary and unique. That is, there is no other god involved in the creation process and therefore there is no deity like

the Lord. Obviously, this notion of God as solitary deity makes the Genesis creation account different from virtually, if not actually, all other ancient creation stories. Though the Bible doctrine of monotheism grows as the scriptures unfold, the kernel of this truth is planted here. As early as Deuteronomy 32:39 the text proclaims, "See now that I am He, and there is no god besides me...." The twin notions that there is only one God and that this God is the creator has great implications for Old Testament Theology, as will be noted below.

Genesis 1:2 indicates that the Lord personally works in creation through his spirit. Though the earth was "formless and void," the "Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." Though it is possible for "spirit" to mean either "wind" or "spirit," C.F. Keil correctly comments that here the spirit is "the creative Spirit of God, the principle of all life (Ps. xxxiii. 6, civ. 30), which worked upon the formless, lifeless mass...."²⁰ S. R. Driver agrees, adding, "The chaos of v. 2 was not left in hopeless gloom and death; already, even before God 'spake' (v. 3), the spirit of God, with its life-giving energy, was 'brooding' over the waters, like a bird upon its nest, and (so it seems to be implied) fitting them in some way to generate and maintain life, when the Divine *fiat* should be pronounced."²¹ The separation between "God" and "the spirit of God" in this passage does not reveal two gods, but rather two persons of the same God acting purposefully in creation.

The first five days of creation are depicted in Genesis 1:3-25. In this section the personal God speaks things into existence, orders them, assesses them, and moves to the next day. At all times the Lord is portrayed as intelligent, powerful,

and orderly. Perhaps above all, God is absolutely sovereign in this passage. All that occurs God does. God is fully capable, fully responsible, and fully knowledgeable about everything in creation. He not only has no equal in the creating process, none is needed for the creation to be “good.”

So far in Genesis 1:1-25 God has been personally involved with creation as a whole. He has personally hovered over the waters, spoken the world into existence out of nothing, called the result of the creative activity “good,” and named each portion of the world order. Now the Lord adds to his personal involvement in his creation, for in 1:26-31 God makes man and woman in his image, blesses them, and commands them to care for the earth.

Though many interpretations of “God’s image” have been offered,²² at the very least the term means that human beings are able to relate to God in a way different from animals, plants, or planets. Only human beings can relate to God through spoken communication; only human beings receive God’s personal blessing; only human beings are stewards of the rest of the created order. Barth comments, “It is in consequence of their divine likeness that men are distinguished from all other creatures with autonomous life, by a superior position, by a higher dignity and might, by a greater power of disposal and control.”²³ Human beings have both more privileges and more responsibilities than all God’s other creatures. Marsha Wilfong correctly notes,

But if humankind is to carry out the task of dominion as God’s representatives on the earth, then the exercise of human dominion should imitate God’s own dominion over creation, and should have as its goal the fulfillment of God’s good pur-

pose for creation. Exploitation of animals or the earth is not appropriate. Autonomous dominion that ignores or seeks to overthrow God’s ultimate dominion over creation is not appropriate.²⁴

As persons in relationship with God, human beings are told to rule and have dominion in a manner similar to the authority exercised by the sovereign creator. Their relationship with God highlights the fact that they are thinking, responsible, communicative persons, and it is this relationship with God that allows them to act as God’s representative on earth.

Genesis 2:1-3 highlights God’s satisfaction with creation and God’s kindness. All that needs to be done has been done and is good. Thus, God has completed all creation tasks. Now God ceases to create anything new and enters into the satisfaction and rest that come from doing a task completely and perfectly.²⁵ Then, to set an example for human beings, God rests on the seventh day and sets that day apart as a day of rest for all time. Work must not become the only constant element in human life. Ceasing, rest, and satisfaction must punctuate life when life is fully “good.” God is kind enough to keep human beings from engaging in endless activity that has no room for completion. God is gracious enough to make rest a permanent part of the cycle of life even before sin causes work to be a burden as well as a joy.

Genesis 2:4-25 focuses on God’s initial relationship with the newly created human race. The self-existent, self-sufficient creator creates the first male (Adam) in 2:4-7. The man’s life comes directly from God, not from any process of nature. When Adam awakens to life it is in a garden prepared for his sustenance, and

it is in this garden that Adam begins to work and care for the ground—in other words to fulfill the command given in 1:26-31. Since it is not good that the man be alone (2:18), the Lord makes a woman from Adam's side. They are brought together in a permanent relationship devoid of shame or embarrassment, for they are "naked, but not ashamed" (2:25).

God's personal concern for the first human beings is not only shown in his desire for them to enjoy one another and to be sustained in their garden home. It is also shown in his concern for their ongoing relationship with their creator. God walks with them and allows them total freedom with one exception: they may "not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (2:17). Breaking this command will bring death. The man and woman may not do as they please and maintain a good relationship with their creator. To abide by this prohibition they must trust their creator's word. They must believe that he has told them the truth about their situation. Faith is required. In this sense they have entered into a faith-based agreement with their God. Keeping this command is no meritorious work, for they would not even know they were in danger unless the creator had told them of the stricture.

Of course, this ideal situation unravels in Genesis 3. The woman and man do not trust God's word. Instead, they believe the word of the serpent and act on what they believe. As Daniel Fuller writes, "But in thus disbelieving God's mercy, Eve and Adam utterly scorned his glory, whose apex is his disposition to be merciful and benevolent."²⁶ Though there are many consequences to this lack of faith, a primary one is that human beings no longer live in a perfect setting in a sinless state.

Rather, they dwell in a place marred by the thorns and pains of sin. Creation itself and the chief creature in it are both affected. Though in quite distinct ways, both the creation and the creature need to be redeemed. Both need to be remade if they are to be as they were at the outset of the Bible.

At the end of the Genesis creation accounts certain theological elements are in place. First, the Lord has been portrayed as unique, personal, sovereign, caring, and good. God's character is firmly presented as the core of all that is best in creation. Whatever is good about the heavens and earth can be traced directly back to God. Second, human beings are entrenched as the flawed stewards of creation. Third, sin must be overcome for creation to return to its intended purpose. Readers are left to cling doggedly to the belief that the personal God capable of creating the created order will also have the ability to recreate it as needed. In fact, the promises made alongside the punishments set out for the erring humans indicate that God will defeat evil through the offspring of a woman, an event that will in turn undo the damage done by sin (see Gen 3:15). Until then, however, the creation must groan for deliverance (see Rom 8:18-25), cared for by the very ones who caused it to fall from its previous heights.

Creation and God's People: Creation in the Prophets

The Bible's emphasis on creation hardly stops with the Law. Indeed, the Prophets handle creation themes in a manner calculated to deal with the specific problems in their eras as well as with the larger problems related to human sin left unresolved at the end of the Law.

Though other prophets could certainly be cited, Isaiah and Amos are good representatives of how the prophetic literature uses creation themes to correct and exhort the people of their day. Both Isaiah and Amos focus on how a proper grasp of creation theology can form, or re-form, God's people into a holy nation.

Isaiah 40-48 addresses an audience that has been devastated by the Assyrian invasion known as the Sennacherib Crisis, which occurred c. 711 or 701 B.C.²⁷ This audience could easily have been tempted to serve the gods of Assyria, as king Hezekiah's father Ahaz had done (see 2 Kings 16:10-18), given the fact that Assyria had destroyed all of Judah except Jerusalem, which Isaiah 1:1-9 says was left with but a few survivors. They could also have thought it wise to turn to the Babylonian gods, for the Babylonians were constantly opposing Assyria (see Isaiah 39). They might even have considered venerating Egypt's gods, for the Egyptians had been able to withstand Assyria's attempts to overrun their territory. Regardless, the people of God were dispirited, and felt as though the Lord had abandoned them (see Isa 40:1-27). Thus, they were looking to other religious options instead of the one God revealed in scripture.

Isaiah responds to this situation by applying creation theology to the people's attitudes and actions. First, he deals with their feelings of rejection by highlighting God's greatness, power, sovereignty, and mercy in 40:12-31. God cannot grow weary, and God cannot forget Israel, Isaiah argues. Why? Because the Lord is the creator, the one who stretched out the heavens and the earth (40:12). Because the Lord is the one who makes nations and decides how important or unimportant

they will become (40:15-17). Because it is the Lord who sets up and takes down rulers (40:23). Because it is the Lord who commands the stars in the sky, and who is quite able to marshal forces for Israel's sake (40:26). Clearly, Isaiah expects to hearten Israel by reminding them that the powerful, sustaining creator is on their side, comforting and helping them. He also wishes to bring them closer to the personal God with whom they entered into a covenant in the Law.

Second, in 43:1-44:8 Isaiah attempts to eliminate other gods from Israel's consideration. To do so, he states that the Lord, the creator, formed Israel (43:1) and has been with Israel in the past (43:2). Therefore, Israel must not be afraid now (43:5-6), for the Lord will restore all those he has created for his glory (43:7). If God has created Israel for his glory, then it stands to reason that God will gain glory for himself by sustaining the chosen people during this horrible time.²⁸ God's creating was purposeful in Genesis 1-2, and it is purposeful here.

Further, Isaiah bluntly states that the Lord is God and there is no other god (43:10). Paul Hanson asserts, "With these magisterial words monotheism enters the disarray of a world long mired in the confusion of contentious gods (cf. Psalm 82)."²⁹ Clearly, if there is no other god, then there is no other savior (43:11). If there is no other god, then there is no other god for either Israel or the nations. This one God orders human events. There is no one to stop him (43:13). Israel should draw close to God because of the past, as 43:1-7 stresses, but also because there is no other deity with ontological substance. Isaiah counsels Israel to forget about other gods because they are not real. A stronger monotheistic statement could hardly

be made.

Finally, in 43:14-44:8 Isaiah proclaims that the Lord will prove his uniqueness by declaring the future. Of course, God has predicted the future before, such as in the exodus accounts, yet Isaiah makes the point again. This time Israel is to note that the only God, the creator, knows what will happen to them in the future so that they will reject all other so-called deities. God promises to heal Israel, bring exiles home, and restore the nation. Without question, the Lord is making predictions about future contingent events. Much could happen to alter a mere guess or studied sense of probability, but the sovereign creator knows and declares the future. The best proof of this sovereign knowledge of contingent future events is the promise to send Cyrus, who has not yet been born, to release Israel from bondage. This event, which occurs c. 538 B.C., is similar in substance to God's pledge in 1 Kings 13 to send Josiah to reform Israelite worship. Of course, this prediction is made decades before Josiah is born. God knows all future events, and is willing to reveal some of those events to encourage Israel to turn to the creator rather than to the creature for help.

Third, Isaiah informs Israel that the Lord rules the future for his own glory in 44:9-48:16. Israel must now choose God over idols.³⁰ Though Israel has been a rebel from birth (48:8), God will use their current hard times to refine them for his glory (48:10-11). The one who founded the earth will make this promise come to pass (48:12-13). God will save Israel from Babylon in the future (48:14), and God will make Israel a witness to the nations.³¹ In this way the Lord will be acknowledged as the ruler of all creation.

Fourth, Isaiah looks well beyond the

current created order to an ideal future in 65:17-25. At the end of time the creator will "create new heavens and a new earth" (65:17). Weeping and illness will cease (65:19-20). Frustration with work, one of the consequences of sin according to Genesis 3:17-19, will no longer be a factor in human existence. Peace among all creatures will be restored (65:24-25). Coupled with the fact that Isaiah 25:6-12 has already promised that death, the veil that lies over all people, will be removed at the end of time, this promise of new heaven and new earth by the creator amounts to an eternal promise with no negative components. Creation itself will be remade. Death will be eradicated. The question is whether or not Israel will believe the creator or whether they will turn to other deities.

Clearly, Isaiah does not simply restate the doctrine of creation, as important as that restatement might be. Rather, he applies creation truths to a setting quite different from the one in which Moses first articulated the elements of Genesis 1-2. In effect what Isaiah does is preach the truths of scripture to a hurting, doubting, wavering people. By doing so he ministers to the faithful of that age, to be sure, yet he also ministers to every successive era that needs a similar message. By doing so he also offers a model of preaching God's word to preachers of every era, including our own.

Amos is not as interested in comforting and instructing as he is in waking up a stubborn, sinful nation. Working c. 760-750 B.C.,³² Amos seeks to warn the northern kingdom of Israel to repent before judgment comes. To achieve his purposes he calls upon creation theology at three crucial junctures to punctuate his emphasis on the day of the Lord, or the day of

God's wrath. This day is coming not only for Israel, but for all surrounding nations as well (see 1:2-2:8).

After declaring Israel and its neighbors guilty of a variety of heinous acts in 1:1-2:8, the prophet proceeds to focus on Israel's unjust and unrighteousness ways in 2:9-4:5. God brought Israel out of Egypt and called some of Israel's best to be Nazirites and prophets, only to have these messengers rejected (2:9-12). Thus, judgment must come (2:13-15). God's word for the people now is one of punishment, not of deliverance (3:1-15). Their richest men and women have oppressed others and sinned in their religious observances (4:1-5), so God sent them smaller punishments to warn them (4:6-11), all to no avail.

Why should Israel be terrified? Why should Israel repent? Because the creator has decided to judge (4:12-13). The very one who devised creation, who made mountains, who knows human thoughts, and who rules night and day is now devising judgment for them. Israel must seek God (5:1-7), or the creator, the one who controls darkness and light and the raging seas, will pour out wrath on them (5:8-9). Those currently at ease in Zion will go into horrible exile (6:1-7). Judgment will come (7:1-8:3), for the one who made the heavens and earth will bring it to pass (9:5-6).

These texts use the fact that the Lord is the creator to warn (4:12-13), express God's wrath over injustice (5:8-9), and announce the end of God's patience with a rebellious people (9:5-6). In other words, Amos uses creation theology quite differently than Isaiah does. Amos wants his audience to sense fear at continuing to rebel against the creator.³³ He wants his audience to take no comfort in the knowledge that there is no other god. He wants

his audience to tremble at the thought of the creator and let this awe change their behavior. Though quite different from Isaiah's use of creation, Amos's messages use creation theology effectively and accurately. He, too, offers an example of how creation may be preached and taught in subsequent generations, especially to rebellious ones.

Isaiah and Amos use creation theology to remake God's people into a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, a goal first set forth in Exodus 19:5-6. Isaiah attempts to restore the people's confidence in the Lord by stressing God's uniqueness and sovereign power. He comforts them by calling them to respond to a message steeped in the theology of Genesis 1-2. Amos is no less committed to creation theology, but his message is more urgent and searching. He asserts that the same creator who made the heavens and earth in seven days has ordained a day of judgment. Israel has sinned against the creator of the world and of their national identity. Therefore, Amos also uses sound theology to make his call to repentance. To both prophets, creation theology concerning the personal God is the key to a cleansed and chastened people of God.

Creation and the Worship and Wisdom of God: Creation in the Writings

Throughout history the people of God have turned to the psalms for use in personal and corporate worship.³⁴ Here the faithful have found sources of instruction, inspiration, consolation, chastisement, and hope. In these texts the faithful have discovered divine revelation that expresses praise, petition, and lament. The doctrine of creation is one of the

themes that conveyed these elements of worship. Though other emphases could be noted, the psalms use creation theology to stress God's majesty and God's uniqueness as a means of highlighting the fact that the Lord merits worship.

Though their relevant passages are not as well known or as often used as the psalms, Proverbs and Job also make significant use of creation theology. In these books, which are commonly considered part of Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature, creation theology is strategic for declaring God's personal wisdom and absolute sovereignty over the created order. These twin emphases are in turn vital for these books' arguments that the Lord is the source of all wisdom and that the Lord capably rules the universe in a way that demonstrates he is worth serving under all conditions.

Several psalms offer compelling evidence that the Lord is majestic and worthy of worship. For instance, Psalm 8, a hymn of praise, begins with a focus on God's greatness. Here the Lord is declared to be majestic and to have displayed his splendor above the heavens (8:1). The psalmist thinks so because God has created the heavens, yet has entrusted human beings with the stewardship of the earth first introduced in Genesis 1:26-31 (8:3-8). This knowledge leads the psalmist to praise (8:9). Creation themes are used here to demonstrate God's greatness, God's authority over human beings, and human responsibility in the created order. Without question, this text claims that a worshiper in tune with creation theology inextricably links worship and action.

In Psalm 90 God's personal majesty receives further definition through detailed creation theology. In 90:1 the

Lord is depicted as protecting Israel throughout all generations. Then the psalmist claims that God has no personal end or beginning, and bases his opinion on God's role as creator. The author says to God, "Before the mountains were born/ Or you gave birth to the earth and the world/ Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (90:2). Clearly, this text recognizes no end or beginning for the one who has created the world. It also recognizes that God's "majesty can hardly be grasped by his creatures."³⁵ There has never been a time when the Lord was not God, and no such time will ever arise. Because the Lord is the creator, the psalmist goes on to argue that God has power to give and take life (90:3-6). The author also determines that one must pray to the creator for deliverance and forgiveness (90:7-17). Thus, in this psalm the creator is also the giver and taker of life, the one who forgives sin, the one who shelters Israel, and the one who has no beginning or end. Given these facts, it is appropriate for the psalmist to take all needs to the Lord. Creation theology becomes the basis, then, for intercession, for healing, and for confession of sin.

Psalms 89 and 104-106 begin their survey of God's saving works on Israel's behalf with creation. Here creation is the beginning point of God's redemptive plan that culminates in the Davidic covenant and the need for deliverance from exile. In these psalms the people cry out for help as they recall all that God has done in the creation of the heavens and earth, the exodus, the conquest, and finally in the chastisement of the chosen people. Current forgiveness would become, then, the latest in a long line of great acts that began with Genesis 1-2. Creation theology in this passage is intended to lead to contrition,

and ultimately to cleansing and wholeness.

Psalms 93, 95, and 96 return to God's uniqueness, the theme that permeated Isaiah 40-48. The same God who firmly established the world reigns now, according to Psalm 93:1-2, and this reigning Lord merits praise (93:3-5). Further, Psalm 95:1-7 states that Israel ought to worship the one who made them. This God who made them is their king, a king "above all gods" (95:3), and a God who constantly exercises his rights as sovereign.³⁶ The reason the Lord must be "feared above all gods" (96:4) is that "all the gods of the people are idols" (96:5). Like Isaiah 40-48, these texts encourage Israel to reject all other so-called deities in favor of the creator, deliverer, and healer. Creation theology renders all other gods inappropriate rivals to the living God, the unique creator. The creator reigns over creation, is worthy of praise and obedience, and towers above all rivals to his reasonable expectation of worship.

Job and Proverbs have as high a view of God's person and worth as the psalms, but they use these beliefs to make different theological points. For Job the issue is whether or not the creator is faithful, trustworthy, and kind. God's power is never questioned in the book. Rather, God's use of his unlimited authority and strength is under scrutiny. Thus, it is vital that in Job chapters 38-42 emphasize the capable and kindly manner in which God, the creator, rules creation.

Job 38-41 utilizes several key creation-oriented metaphors to stress God's benevolent control of the universe and God's role as the only God and sole creator. Here God reveals himself to Job as master builder, the midwife that gives birth to the sea, light's commanding officer, and the keeper of the world's most

intimate secrets (38:4-24).³⁷ God claims to be the one who has laid the foundation for everything on earth (38:4-7), both in the inanimate and animate orders of existence (38:39-39:30). He identifies himself as the creator who also sustains all that has been made (see 38:25-41). At the end of this section Job confesses his ignorance in matters related to ruling the universe and pledges silence before the creator (40:3-5). Job 40:6-41:34 concludes the section by re-emphasizing the creator's power. In this passage God the creator states that he alone is able to tame the great sea creatures that terrify sailors.

Thus, God responds to Job's cries for information with a description of the creator and sustainer's work. This answer satisfies Job (42:1-6). It is enough for him that the creator has responded in person, responded to serious questions with serious answers, and responded with creation theology. God comforts Job with a comfort as old as creation and as powerful as the creator himself.

In Job, then, the creator is worth serving not because the creator never allows the faithful to suffer, but because the creator can be trusted to rule carefully and ably even when the faithful suffer. God is also worth serving because he responds to the hurting personally and through the kindness of the sort of true friends that visit Job in 42:7-17.

God's personal possession and use of wisdom as creator is not missing in the psalms and Job, but Proverbs 8:22-31 makes this point quite overtly. Indeed, "at the very beginning," at the start of creation, the creator "acquired," "gained," or "created" wisdom. Though all three readings are possible, the first two are preferable given the general Old Testament usage of the word.³⁸ Having gained

or acquired wisdom, the Lord then had wisdom beside him rejoicing at what was made (8:24-31). Thus, wisdom was indispensable, fundamental, and delightful when God created.³⁹ God chose and used wisdom to make certain that the created order reflected intelligent, joyous design.

Certain themes emerge from this text. First, God's attribute of wisdom was with him from the start. Therefore, wisdom is eternal, the first thing God needed to make the world.⁴⁰ Since God used this wisdom, the world has unity and coherence. The creation itself exhibits the wisdom of its maker. Second, the Lord rejoices in wisdom. He enjoys it. In fact, this passage may include the notion that God's joy in wisdom is akin to having wisdom move playfully through creation (8:30-31).⁴¹ Third, every segment of the Old Testament canon testifies to God's creator status. Fourth, the personification of wisdom in 8:30-31 does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the wisdom mentioned here amounts to an Old Testament depiction of Christ. This connection is tempting given the wisdom imagery in Colossians 1:15-17; 2:3 and Revelation 3:14, but one must be cautious here. After all, 8:22 sounds as if wisdom is purchased, possessed, or created by God, which hardly matches the images of divine Father-Son unity found in the Gospel of John and elsewhere.

The Writings' teachings on creation leave readers with a sense of confidence in the creator. God is the only God. As creator, the Lord is the divine king, the one who blesses and judges. The Lord does not shield the faithful from all suffering, yet it is plausible to believe that this suffering occurs within the framework of a universe under control. The creator has not lost the ability to govern what

has been made. Indeed, the creator set forth the earth's foundations in wisdom, and this wisdom permeates the whole of creation. Those who need wisdom may therefore come to the creator for that wisdom. They will find a powerful, unique, wise, and compassionate God who is worth serving under all conditions.

Conclusion

The Old Testament's usage of the truth that God is the creator is obviously multifaceted. Genesis 1-2 teaches that God alone is the creator, the cause and source of all things that are made. It claims that the creator is personal, and as such entrusts human beings with the care of the earth and with divine laws. It sets forth principles about God's intelligence, goodness, and kindness.

Isaiah and Amos accept and build upon the points made in Genesis 1-2. Writing to a dispirited, wavering, people of uncertain faith, Isaiah uses creation theology to comfort, challenge, correct, embolden, and instruct. Isaiah even goes so far as to claim that in the future the creator will create a new heavens and earth in which sickness, sorrow, death, and enemies are no longer factors. When this day occurs the world will indeed have moved from creation to new creation. On the other hand, Amos has little comfort to offer his erring, stubborn, oppressing audience. He uses creation theology to punctuate warnings about judgment for oppression and announcements that the creator's patience with sinful Israel has been exhausted. In the hands of the prophets, then, creation is a two-edged sword that can either comfort or condemn, depending on the circumstances at hand.

Psalms, Job, and Proverbs adapt pro-

phetic uses of Genesis 1-2 still further. The psalmists use Genesis 1:26-31 as a reason for praise, and monotheistic passages such as Isaiah 40-48 as reasons to bow down and worship the only living God. Job stresses the notion that God is a wise, capable, and revelatory God to conclude that the Lord is worth trusting and serving when one suffers due to no fault of their own. Proverbs invites those who need wisdom to seek it from the one who has possessed it from the very beginning. Wisdom is available to human beings because the creator wills to reveal it to them.

Of course, an article of this length can merely suggest ways the scriptures address situations by applying creation theology. Many important texts and their corresponding issues have been left untouched. It is particularly important to note how the themes charted here continue in New Testament texts such as John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-20, and Revelation 21:1-8. When these and other New Testament passages are connected to their Old Testament counterparts, it is evident that the apostles maintain the long biblical habit of expounding the doctrine of creation in their day to their audiences' particular needs. Those who follow the apostles' example may well advance the church's sense of purpose, comfort, and need for wisdom, thus allowing today's faithful to join Moses, Isaiah, Amos, the psalmists, and the wisdom writers in living out the implications of the basic confession we believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

ENDNOTES

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²See Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

³For a comprehensive discussion of the inspiration and authority of scripture, consult Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority: Volume 4* (Waco, TX: Word, 1979).

⁴On this point see Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority: Volume 2* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976) 9.

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⁶Henry, 2:69.

⁷Ibid, 2:76.

⁸Of course, "canonical criticism" is most often associated with Brevard S. Childs and James Sanders. For evangelical approaches to the discipline see John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Richard Schultz, "Integrating Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Literary, Thematic, and Canonical Issues," in Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 185-205; and House, *Old Testament Theology*.

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- ¹²Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III/1: The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. G.W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958) 3.
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- ¹⁵William A. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 15-16.
- ¹⁶G. C. Aalders, *Genesis: 1*, trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 51.
- ¹⁷Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 76, 92-98.
- ¹⁸Aalders, 51.
- ¹⁹Dumbrell, 16.
- ²⁰C. F. Keil, "Genesis," in C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: 1* (n.d.; rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 49.
- ²¹S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen, 1904) 4.
- ²²For the opinions of the early church on the matter consult Andrew Louth, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament: 1, Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001) 27-45. For a concise survey of opinions since the Reformation, see Mathews, 164-172.
- ²³Barth, 187.
- ²⁴Marsha M. Wilfong, "Human Creation in Canonical Context: Genesis 1:26-31 and Beyond," in William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride, eds., *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 45-46.
- ²⁵Keil, 68.
- ²⁶Fuller, 180.
- ²⁷Of course, Isaiah's original audience is a much-debated subject, and the position taken in this essay differs from the majority of Isaiah scholars. For treatments of Isaiah as an eighth-century book, consult J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 13-34; Barry R. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 160-161; and John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 3-60.
- ²⁸Webb, 175.
- ²⁹Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995) 69.
- ³⁰Note Walter Brueggemann's arresting description of this choice in *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998) 84.
- ³¹Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, trans. David Stalker, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 202.
- ³²James L. Mays, *Amos*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 1-3; and Jorg Jeremias, *The Book of Amos*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998) 2.
- ³³See Gary V. Smith, *Amos: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 148-150.
- ³⁴See William Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
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- ³⁷John Hartley, *The Book of Job*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 493-497.
- ³⁸For a discussion of this translation issue, consult R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, New Century Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 129-130; and William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 352-354.
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- ⁴¹Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000) 145.

Interpreting Genesis 1-11

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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.¹ 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^ere’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*).² 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;³ 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.”⁴ Furthermore, Heidel accepts the traditional translation of Genesis 1:1, rejecting the parallel of Genesis 1:1 and the beginning of *Enuma Elish*.⁵ 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.⁶ 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."⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹

Still others will accept the apostolic teaching, but declare that the Apostles employed a “special hermeneutic” that cannot be imitated or followed.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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

¹If Genesis 1:1 were a dependant clause, verse two would begin with a vav-consecutive (*wat^ehi ha'arets*) or with a perfect tense verb (*hay^etha 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.

²*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.

³Diodorus 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).

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

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

⁶The 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^edolah* (Jonah 1:4; Job 1:19).

⁷*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.

⁸The 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.

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

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

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

¹¹From 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).

The Undead Hypothesis: Why the Documentary Hypothesis is the *Frankenstein* of Biblical Studies

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A stock feature of the classic “grade B” horror movie is the undead creature who relentlessly stalks innocent people and terrorizes an otherwise quiet village. Whether it be Frankenstein, the Mummy, Dracula, or simply crude, grotesque zombies with rotting flesh falling off their limbs and faces, these villains share a common trait. They all have already died and usually have already been buried. But then, either through the blunder of some investigator or the work of some evil genius, they rise and walk again. The dilemma posed by these undead monsters is obvious: How do you kill someone who is already dead?

A similar creature stalks the halls of biblical studies. It is routinely raised up from the grave in classrooms and it haunts textbooks and monographs that deal with the Hebrew Scriptures. Wherever it roams, it distorts the analysis of the text of the Bible, confounds readers, and produces strange and irrational interpretations. This undead creature sometimes goes by the quasi-mystical sounding sobriquet “the JEDP theory,” but it is better known by its formal name, the documentary hypothesis.

The time has come for scholars to recognize that the documentary hypothesis is dead. The arguments that support it have been dismantled by scholars of many stripes—many of whom have no theological commitment to the Bible. The theory is, however, still taught as an

established result of biblical scholarship in universities and theological schools around the world. Books and monographs rooted in it still frequently appear. Laughably, some of these books are touted for their “startling new interpretations” of the history of the Bible while in fact doing little more than repackaging old ideas.¹ If the sheer volume of literature on a hypothesis were a demonstration of its veracity, the documentary hypothesis would indeed be well established.² Nevertheless, while the dead hand of the documentary hypothesis still dominates Old Testament scholarship as its official orthodoxy, the cutting edge research of recent years has typically been highly critical of the theory.³

In 1991 I published *Rethinking Genesis*,⁴ which was one of a number of books published within about a decade to challenge the documentary hypothesis and suggest a new approach to the background of Genesis. Notwithstanding the fact that this work and several major challenges to the hypothesis from established critical scholars received some significant attention—but virtually no rebuttals speaking in favor of the documentary hypothesis—J, E, D, and P continue to be paraded before university students as the original documents behind the Pentateuch.

Evangelical readers should not be sanguine about this fact. Despite the assurances of some quasi-confessional scholars that it really does not matter where Gen-

esis comes from, the documentary hypothesis is fundamentally incompatible with belief in even a minimal historical core of the Pentateuch. If the hypothesis is true, then the Pentateuch is essentially fiction. Worse than that, it is a confused, self-contradictory fiction with no unified theological message. It is with this in mind that I return to this topic and seek to make readers of this journal aware of the basic issues.

The Background of the Documentary Hypothesis

The documentary hypothesis began with the speculations of Jean Astruc (1684–1766), who suggested that he could uncover the sources of the Pentateuch by using the divine names Yahweh (“the LORD”) and *Elohim* (“God”) as a guide. He placed passages that use the name *Elohim* in one column (A), those that use Yahweh in another (B), and passages with “repetitions” in a third column (C), and interpolations in a fourth column (D). His suggestion led scholars to believe that the distinction in the divine names—that is, whether a given text calls the Deity “Yahweh” or *Elohim*—was the primary marker of the origin of that text. Using this basic criterion, scholars accounted for the development of the Pentateuch as it exists today in various ways. Some suggested a “fragmentary hypothesis” (which asserts that the Pentateuch was compiled from a mass of fragmentary sources) while others postulated a “supplemental hypothesis” (which asserts that a single document lies at the core of the Pentateuch, but that many fragmentary sources have been added to it). But the triumphant theory of Pentateuchal origins was the documentary hypothesis, often called the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis

after K. H. Graf and Julius Wellhausen, who gave it its classic expression.⁵ In the English-speaking world, the theory was popularized especially by S. R. Driver.

The Documentary Hypothesis Briefly Described

The theory asserts that behind the Pentateuch are four source documents, called J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly Code).

J, the oldest, begins at Genesis 2:4b and includes large portions of Genesis as well as portions of Exodus and Numbers and a few short texts in Deuteronomy. It is often dated to the early monarchy period and is thought to have its provenance in Judah. In Genesis, J refers to God as Yahweh for, according to the hypothesis, J believed that people began using the name Yahweh early in the antediluvian period (Gen 4:26, a J text). As a theological statement, J is often regarded as the work of a great, original thinker who gave shape to the Old Testament idea of the history of salvation.

E is somewhat later than J but follows the same basic story line as J. Genesis 15 is the first extant E text. E comes from the northern kingdom. In Genesis, E refers to God as *Elohim* rather than Yahweh because, according to E, the name Yahweh was not revealed until the exodus period (Exod 3:15, an E text). E is more sensitive to moral issues than J but it views God as somewhat more distant from man. J and E were subsequently redacted into a single document by R^{JE} (R = “redactor”). In the redaction, much of the E material was edited out and thus lost to posterity.

D was written at the time of Josiah’s reformation and is essentially the book of Deuteronomy. According to 2 Kings 22, Hilkiah the priest found a copy of the law

of Moses when the temple was being restored. In the documentary hypothesis, however, Deuteronomy was actually written at this time as a kind of pious fraud to justify Josiah's reformation. D does not have a characteristic divine name but uses both Yahweh and *Elohim*. The redactor R^P subsequently combined the texts JE and D.

P was written in the postexilic period. It begins at Genesis 1:1 and includes large portions of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers and all of Leviticus. It is said to represent the triumph of the postexilic priesthood and it attempts to justify their form of worship and codify their religion. In Genesis, P refers to God as *Elohim* since, like E, it assumes that the divine name Yahweh was first revealed at the exodus (Exod 6:3, a P text). It is dominated by genealogies, priestly regulations, and a very formal manner of narration. P was soon redacted into JED by R^P. The Pentateuch was thus formed.⁶

Defining Principles of the Documentary Hypothesis

One must recognize that according to this theory the four documents were each composed first of all as *independent, continuous, single narrations* and only later were brought together and edited into the present work. The scholars who developed the documentary hypothesis either explicitly or implicitly followed a number of basic principles in their research.

It is easy to determine the purposes and methods behind the documents and redactions. The early framers of the documentary hypothesis thought they could deduce the purposes and methods of the redactors, despite the fact that enormous cultural differences existed between the (mostly German) scholars who studied Genesis

and the ancient Near Eastern world of the text itself. In addition, scholars were willing to tolerate a glaring inconsistency in their approach to the problem. They assumed that each *document writer* (such as J) aimed to produce a single, continuous history but would tolerate no inconsistency, repetition, or narrative digressions. They believed that the *redactors*, however, were oblivious to contradiction and repetition when they combined the documents.

Stylistic differences enable scholars to distinguish one source text from another. Early advocates of the documentary hypothesis felt they could easily separate one text from another on the basis of style. P, for example, is said to have a formal, segmented, and rather aloof style while J is supposed to have written in a flowing and dramatic narrative style. This perception is reinforced by the fact that formal texts (such as Genesis 1, descriptions of the tabernacle and its offerings, and genealogies) are routinely assigned to P while texts such as Genesis 2—4 are for the most part assigned to J. But this is more a matter of content than of style. The whole Pentateuch is in standard (albeit somewhat lofty) biblical Hebrew.

Ancient editors (redactors) simply conflated their source documents without attempting to correct obvious contradictions or smooth out problems created by joining the documents together. That is, the redactors simply merged the texts at hand by the "scissors-and-paste" method of cutting up each document and then joining the whole into a continuous narrative. This is, of course, a questionable and peculiar assumption.

Israelite history and religion developed in a simple, evolutionary manner. In the documentary hypothesis, Israelite religion is

supposed to have moved from a primitive tribal religion to the advanced monotheism of postexilic Israel. Israelite social institutions that reflect a sophisticated, monotheistic religion with a central priesthood (such as the institutions of the Aaronic priesthood and the regulated systems of offerings described in Exodus and Leviticus) are said to be retrojections from the postexilic period onto the (largely mythical) era of Moses and the Exodus. Wellhausen built his theory on an evolutionary philosophy with its roots in the idealism of G. W. F. Hegel. In Wellhausen, Old Testament scholarship is dominated by an outdated and discarded approach to historical analysis.

The Arguments for the Documentary Hypothesis

As scholars have continued to study the texts, they have proposed many modifications to the original documentary hypothesis. Some scholars have made the theory more complex by dividing the four sources into even smaller sources (e.g., J¹ and J²), whereas others reduced the number of sources, especially by rejecting the existence of E altogether. Nevertheless, the basic documentary hypothesis from which all refinements come is the simplest point at which the theory can be analyzed. In addition, the book of Genesis is the true focus of the debate. The central arguments for the hypothesis are as follows.

Some texts in Genesis refer to God as Yahweh, whereas others call him Elohim. Passages in Genesis that call God Yahweh are assigned to J, who thought the name Yahweh was revealed to humanity well before the patriarchal age began. Those texts that refer to God as *Elohim* may be assigned to E or P, both of whom thought

the name Yahweh was not revealed until the Exodus.

Genesis contains some duplicate stories and repetitions. This is because each source document often contained its own version of a single tradition. Thus 12:10–20 (J) and 20:1–18 (E) contain variants of a single tradition of a patriarch passing off his wife as his sister.⁷ Sometimes the two variant versions were redacted into a single narrative, yet the documents behind the single redaction are still apparent. J and P each had a version of the Flood story, for example, but these have been combined in the present text.

Contradictions within Genesis indicate the existence of the separate documents. The implication is that one document had one version of a tradition, but a second document had another version of the same story that contradicted the first in some details.

The language and style of the documents vary. J is said to have been a masterful storyteller, but P is regarded as formal and wordy. Each document also has its own preferred vocabulary.

Each document, when extracted from the present text of the Pentateuch, shows itself to have been originally a continuous, theologically meaningful piece of literature. Some have argued that it is possible to see a specific literary and theological purpose behind each document.⁸ If this argument is established, then it obviously suggests that there actually were separate documents behind the present text.

Even on a superficial reading, some texts obviously involve more than one source. The best example is Genesis 1–2. Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Genesis 2:4ff. seem to differ in many details in regard to the sequence of creation (for example, whether the animals were made before or after the cre-

ation of the first man).

The confused history of the Israelite priesthood found in the Pentateuch is best explained by the documentary hypothesis. In some texts (e.g., Deuteronomy), all Levites are priests. In other texts (the P portions of Exodus and Leviticus), only the Aaronites are priests and the rest of the Levites are mere temple workers without priestly privileges. The Pentateuch, therefore, cannot be a unified work from a single hand. Rather, documents D and P come from different perspectives and different ages.

An Analysis of the Arguments for the Documentary Hypothesis

The Names of God

The criterion of the divine names for source analysis is very weak. First, the criterion cannot be applied consistently. At the beginning of the Pentateuch we read not simply “Yahweh” in the J source (Genesis 2-4) but the unusual Yahweh *Elohim* (“the LORD God”). Genesis 22:11, an E text, uses the name *Yahweh*. M. H. Segal notes that the divine names are often used interchangeably in texts that cannot have different sources, which begs the question of why Genesis should be treated exceptionally.⁹

Second, use of the divine names as a source criterion is contrary to all ancient Near Eastern analogies. No Egyptologist, for example, would use divine names for source criticism in an Egyptian text.

Third, the rationale for the avoidance of Yahweh in E and P sources in Genesis is specious. There is no reason that J should ever avoid *Elohim*; no one suggests that he did not know the word or had theological reasons to exclude it from his texts. And even if the E and P writers thought that the Israelites did not know of the divine name Yahweh until the time

of Moses, there is no reason for them to avoid using the name in patriarchal stories except when they were directly quoting a character whom they believed did not yet know the name.¹⁰ If anything, we might have expected P to use Yahweh in his patriarchal narrative in order to establish continuity with the God of the Exodus.

Fourth, the interchange of Yahweh and *Elohim* can be explained without resort to postulating different sources. Umberto Cassuto makes the point that the two names bring out different aspects of the character of God. Yahweh is the covenant name of God, which emphasizes his special relationship to Israel. *Elohim* speaks of God universally as God of all earth.¹¹ *Elohim* is what God is and Yahweh is who he is. More precisely, one can say that the terms Yahweh and *Elohim* have semantic overlap. In a context that emphasizes God as universal deity (e.g., Genesis 1), *Elohim* is used. In a text that speaks more of God as covenant savior (Exodus 6), Yahweh is more likely to be found. Otherwise, if neither aspect is particularly stressed, the names may be alternated for variety or for no perceivable reason.

Fifth, the assumption that the J text thought the patriarchs knew the name Yahweh but that E and P texts claim they did not is based on faulty exegesis. Genesis 4:26, “Then people began to call on the name of Yahweh,” is often taken as an assertion by J that the name Yahweh was revealed at this moment in history. E and P, on the other hand, are said to have believed that the name Yahweh was first revealed in the period of the Exodus. The relevant texts are Exodus 3:13–15 (E) and Exodus 6:24 (P).

Genesis 4:26 has nothing to do with the question of when the name Yahweh was

revealed. Even Claus Westermann, an adherent of the documentary hypothesis, says that it has been misunderstood. Genesis 4:26 gives an optimistic closure to the sad history of Genesis 3-4 and says that the God his readers know as Yahweh is the one true God whom people have worshiped from earliest times.

In Exodus 3:1-15, Moses asks God his name, and is told first that God is the "I am," and then that he should tell the Israelites that Yahweh, the God of their fathers, had sent Moses to them. God adds that Yahweh is the name by which he is to be worshiped forever. The text does not say that no one had ever heard the name Yahweh before this time. Were that the case, one would find something like, "No longer will you call me the God of your fathers; from now on my name is Yahweh," similar to Genesis 17:5, 15. Instead, the text asserts that the name Yahweh will have new significance because of the Exodus. The people will now see that Yahweh is present with them.¹²

Exodus 6:2c-3 appears to be a straightforward assertion that the patriarchs did not know the name *Yahweh*. Most translations are similar to the following: "I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them." But the Hebrew, as Francis I. Andersen points out, contains a case of noncontiguous parallelism that translators have not recognized: "I am Yahweh . . . and my name is Yahweh". The negative ("not") is part of a rhetorical question and not a simple negative.¹³ The whole text is set in a poetic, parallel structure, as follows:

A I am Yahweh.

- B And I made myself known to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as *El Shaddai*.
A' And my name is Yahweh;
B' Did I not make myself known to them?

The text insists that God revealed himself to the patriarchs. It does not say that they had never heard of Yahweh or that they only knew of *El Shaddai*, although it does say that God showed them the meaning of his name *El Shaddai*. Andersen's comments are to the point: "There is no hint in Exodus that Yahweh was a new name revealed first to Moses. On the contrary, the success of his mission depended on the use of the familiar name for validation by the Israelites."¹⁴

In short, the criterion of divine names, the historical and evidential starting point for the documentary hypothesis, is completely specious. It is based on misinterpretation, mistranslation, and lack of attention to extrabiblical sources.

Repetition, Parallel Accounts (Doublets), and Redundancy

The use of repetition as evidence for multiple documents in Genesis is perhaps the most persuasive argument for the modern student, while in fact it is the most misleading of all. It seems to the modern reader that Genesis 12:10-20 and 20:1-18 must be variants of a single tradition. How else could one explain the presence of two stories that seem so remarkably similar—a patriarch who seeks to avoid trouble by claiming that his wife is his sister? The variants (Pharaoh's house in Genesis 12, Abimelech's house in Genesis 20) appear to be examples of how a single tradition has been handed down in different forms in different com-

munities. But this assumption is an entirely modern reading of the text and ignores ancient principles of rhetoric. In an ancient text, there is no stronger indication that only a single document is present than parallel accounts. Doublets, that is, two separate stories that closely parallel one another, are the very stuff of ancient narrative. They are what the discriminating listener sought in a story.

Simple repetition is common in ancient Near Eastern literature. In the Ugaritic Epic of Keret, for example, large portions of the text are repeated verbatim (albeit from different perspectives). This technique is employed in the Bible as well. In Genesis 24, a great deal of vv. 12–27 is repeated in vv. 34–48, although in the latter text it is from the servant’s perspective.

In an analogous manner, if two or more separate events were perceived to be similar to one another, ancient writers tended to give accounts of the events in parallel fashion. To do this, they would highlight similarities in the episodes. A narrator might put into the same form all the accounts that he wants to present as parallel; he would also select material that fit the parallel he seeks to establish and perhaps leave out some of the differences. For this reason the author of Kings, in summarizing the reigns of each king of Israel and Judah, tends to employ a number of formulas. He gives the date a king came into power, the length of his reign, an evaluation, a reference indicating where the reader can find more information, and a statement of the king’s death and burial. By employing this technique, he establishes the same pattern for every king and emphasizes the evil done by Israel’s kings through the frequent repetition of “and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.” A modern writer, even one with the same theo-

logical point to make, would not employ this technique.

The parallels between Genesis 12:10–20 and 20:1–18, when analyzed by ancient literary standards, strongly indicate that the two accounts are from the same source. That is, when judged according to the narrative techniques of an ancient storyteller, the repetition is evidence that we have a single author giving us parallel but distinct episodes in his story.

In contrast to the phenomenon of doublets, redundancy within a single text occurs when, according to the documentary hypothesis, a redactor combines (for example) a J version and a P version of a tradition into a single narrative. The flood narrative is the classic example of two accounts having been joined in a scissors-and-paste method. As evidence for the conflation, advocates of the hypothesis cite the redundancies and argue that a single author would not have repeated himself so much. Thus, for example, Genesis 6:9–22 is said to be P but 7:1–5 is J. As the text reads, however, the two passages have repetition but are not fully redundant; they are consecutive. The P material is prior to the building of the ark and the J material is a speech of God after its completion but just prior to the beginning of the flood. The repetition heightens the dramatic anticipation of the deluge to follow and is not indicative of two separate documents having been combined.

Similarly, Genesis 7:21–22 is cited as a redundancy in the flood story. The documentary hypothesis assigns verse 21 to P and verse 22 to J,¹⁵ but Andersen has shown that the two verses are chiasmic and are not the product of two separate writers.¹⁶

- A They perished
- B Every living thing that moves on

earth . . .

B' Everything that has the breath of
the living spirit . . .

A' They died

Andersen argues that when the text is left as it stands rather than arbitrarily divided into sources and doublets, the artistic unity of the whole gives the impression of having been formed as a single, unified narration.¹⁷

Contradictions in the Text

Apparent contradictions in Genesis are often cited as markers to the different documents behind the text. A simple example in the flood account concerns the number of animals to be brought on board the ark (6:20 says to bring one pair of every kind of animal, but 7:2 says to bring seven pairs of clean animals). The explanation is simply that 7:1–2 is a precise figure given immediately before the flood but that 6:20 is a general figure given before the ark was built. Provision had to be made to ensure that there would be sufficient livestock after the flood, and thus the higher number of clean animals. Of course, contradictions have to be examined on a case-by-case basis, but apparent contradictions hardly sustain the documentary hypothesis.

The Criterion of Style

As already indicated, the idea that J and P have different styles is a result of artificially dividing the text. The “arid” style of the genealogies of P is simply a by-product of the fact that they are genealogies—it has nothing to do with their being written in a different style. Whybray points out that the genealogies ascribed to J “have precisely the same ‘arid’ character as those attributed to P.”¹⁸

Studies in the Pentateuch written in the early twentieth century from the perspective of the documentary hypothesis tended to contain lengthy lists of what was supposed to be the characteristic vocabulary of each document. One rarely sees in modern studies lists of this kind.¹⁹ The criterion is itself quite artificial; we know nothing of the common speech of the people of ancient Israel, and we cannot be sure that the words cited as synonymous pairs are really synonymous. One word may have been chosen over another for the sake of a special nuance in a given circumstance, or indeed simply for the sake of variety.

The Unity of Each Document

The argument that each document (J, E, or P) is a self-contained and complete narrative when separated from its context in Genesis is simply absurd, although demonstrating the absurdity of it will require us to examine a text in some detail. For example, if one looks at Genesis 28:10–30:7 as it is analyzed in a standard text (Driver’s *Introduction*), the internal confusion of each document is self-evident. Below is the text as separated into its J and E components along with additional, extraneous material.²⁰

J Text

^{28:10} So Jacob departed from Beersheba and headed toward Haran. ^{28:13} And there was Yahweh who stood above it and said, “I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; I will give the land on which you lie to you and to your descendants. ^{28:14} Also, your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west and toward the east and toward the north and toward the south; and all the families of

the earth will be blessed in you and in your descendants.^{28:15} And look, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”^{28:16} Then Jacob woke up from his sleep and said, “Yahweh is definitely in this place, but I did not know it.”^{28:19} He called that place Bethel although the city used to be called Luz.^{29:2} And he looked and saw a well in the field, and there were three flocks of sheep lying there beside it, for they watered the flocks from that well. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large.^{29:3} When all the flocks were gathered there, they would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and then put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.^{29:4} So Jacob said to them, “My brothers, where are you from?” And they said, “We are from Haran.”^{29:5} Then he said to them, “Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?” And they said, “We do know him.”^{29:6} So he said to them, “Is all well with him?” And they said, “All is well; look, there is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep.”^{29:7} Then he said, “You know, it is still the middle of the day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep and go pasture them.”^{29:8} But they said, “We cannot until all the flocks are gathered and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep.”^{29:9} While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep (for she was a shepherdess).^{29:10} And this is what happened: when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban his

mother’s brother.^{29:11} Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept.^{29:12} Then Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah’s son. She ran and told her father.^{29:13} Then this happened: when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister’s son, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he told Laban about all these things.^{29:14} And Laban said to him, “For sure you are my bone and my flesh.” And he stayed with him a month.^{29:31} Now Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.^{29:32} And Leah became pregnant and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, “Because Yahweh has seen my affliction; certainly my husband will love me now.”^{29:33} Then she became pregnant again and bore a son and said, “Because Yahweh has heard that I am unloved, he has given me this son, too.” So she named him Simeon.^{29:34} And she became pregnant again and bore a son and said, “Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore he was named Levi.^{29:35} And she became pregnant again and bore a son and said, “This time I will praise Yahweh.” Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.^{30:3b} “I too may have children by her.”^{30:4} So she gave him her slave girl Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.^{30:5} And Bilhah became pregnant and bore Jacob a son.^{30:7} And Bilhah Rachel’s slave girl became pregnant again, and bore Jacob a second son.

E Text

^{28:11} Then he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the

place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. ^{28:12} And he had a dream, and it was like this: a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were actually ascending and descending on it. ^{28:17} So he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God (Bethel)! This is the gate of heaven!" ^{28:18} So Jacob got up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and he poured oil on its top. ^{28:20} Then Jacob made a vow: "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I am making, and if he will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ^{28:21} and if I return safely to my father's house, then Yahweh will be my God. ^{28:22} "And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and I will indeed give a tenth to you of all that you give me." ^{29:1} Then Jacob went along on his journey and came to the land of the easterners. ^{29:15} Then Laban said to Jacob, "Since you are my relative, should you for that reason serve me for nothing? Tell me, what will your wages be?" ^{29:16} Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ^{29:17} And Leah's eyes were tender, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. ^{29:18} But Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ^{29:19} So Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me." ^{29:20} So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days on account of his love for her. ^{29:21} Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, so that I may go in to her." ^{29:22} And Laban got together all the men of the

place and made a feast. ^{29:23} But this is what happened: in the night he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him and Jacob went in to her. ^{29:25} So the morning came and there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Didn't I serve you for Rachel? Why then have you cheated me?" ^{29:26} But Laban said, "It is not the tradition here in our place to marry off the younger before the first-born. ^{29:27} "Fulfill the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for your service—you will serve with me for another seven years." ^{29:28} So Jacob did that and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ^{29:30} So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel in fact more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years. ^{30:1} But when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I will die!" ^{30:2} Then Jacob got angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld the fruit of the womb from you?" ^{30:3a} So she said, "Here is my slave girl Bilhah! Go in to her so that she may bear on my knees!" ^{30:6} And Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice, and has given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan."

Later editorial additions

^{29:24} Laban also gave his slave girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a slave girl.

^{29:29} Laban also gave his slave girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her slave girl.

Read by itself, the J version makes no sense at all. It indicates that Jacob had a vision of Yahweh when he arrived at Haran and that he built a shrine there (note the jump from 28:19 to 29:2, which

implies he is in Haran). In 28:19 he calls the place Bethel, but a reader who had only J would be confused about whether this is the Bethel in Canaan or if Jacob was naming some site at Haran "Bethel." The story then leaps without any transition at all from Jacob's dream to his encounter with the shepherds and with Laban's family. Then it abruptly tells us that Leah gave birth to four children but was distressed because Jacob did not love her. Bear in mind that the reader of J *has no idea who Leah is*, much less that she is Jacob's unloved wife, because this is the first time she appears in J. In 30:3b somebody (identity not given) says she wants to have children by "her," and only in the next verse does the reader learn that the surrogate mother is Bilhah, who is also otherwise unknown to the reader. But for whom is Bilhah acting as a surrogate mother—for Leah? Only in 30:7 is the reader told in passing that Bilhah is Rachel's slave. But of course, up until this moment the only thing the reader knows about Rachel is that she is the daughter of Laban whom Jacob met at the well. How is the reader to know that Rachel is his second wife?

E, by contrast, tells us that Jacob had a dream of a stairway to heaven at Bethel, but in this version Jacob receives no covenantal promise. Jacob simply deduces that the deity he saw in the dream was Yahweh. He makes a vow to Yahweh despite the fact that Yahweh (in E's version) has not given him any covenantal promise that would give Jacob the right to consider Yahweh bound by an oath to him (note also the divine name "Yahweh" in 28:21, an E text). He then goes to the land of the easterners where Laban enters the narrative abruptly and without introduction. After the story of the marriages of Jacob, we are suddenly told that Rachel

was jealous of Leah. This is strange since in E's version the reader does not know anything about Leah having children; all he or she knows is that Rachel was beloved and Leah unloved! Also, the reader can infer from what she says that Rachel has been unable to bear children (it is actually J who tells the reader that Rachel was infertile). But in 30:6 Rachel is suddenly praising God for giving her a son and she names him Dan. But from where did Dan come? Who is Dan's mother, Rachel or Bilhah? The reader who only has E cannot tell. One should recall that even though E was supposed to have been written after J, it is altogether independent of J. The early readers of E would know nothing of J.

Of course, a standard response is that details that would make the J and E versions more coherent have been suppressed in the redactional process. Such a response, however, only concedes the point that we are making: J and E, as we have them, are incoherent. One cannot claim that the coherence of J and E establish the validity of the documentary hypothesis.

Also, one can hardly claim that the supposed theological vision of each document supports the documentary hypothesis. The assertion is based on the assumption that the hypothesis is true; it is not an independent argument for the theory. Scholars once routinely spoke of the "theology of J" or of "P." One has the sense that, even among scholars trained in the documentary hypothesis, an increasing number have difficulty taking seriously analyses like those by Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff (see note 8) as presentations of the theological background of Genesis. Thomas L. Thompson notes that, in more recent

analysis, the Elohist has disappeared from view entirely and the Yahwist is fast fading from existence, even as P grows larger and larger. The hypothesis has no value as a guide for continued research.²¹ Whybray, too, in outlining especially the recent contributions by Rolf Rendtorff²² and H. H. Schmid, demonstrates that the notion of a “theology of the Yahwist” is vanishing among scholars.²³

The Hypothesis Proven by Some Specific Texts

Many scholars recognize that the arguments as such for the documentary hypothesis have been exploded, but they appear to hold to the hypothesis because a few key passages seem persuasive. In particular, Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Genesis 2:4ff. appear to come from separate sources. They lack both logic and a sense of balance. If the arguments for the hypothesis are shown to be worthless, then the differences in Genesis 1-3 must be explained in some other way. The mere presence of problems in the early Genesis narrative is not sufficient to establish the documentary hypothesis.²⁴

The Hypothesis Verified by the History of the Priesthood

It appears that many scholars continue to support the hypothesis because of questions regarding the history of Israel. In particular, the hypothesis seems to offer the best explanation of why the term *Levite* is used inconsistently in the Old Testament. But the solution to the problem of the history of the priesthood is best explained within the context of the history of Israel as it is traditionally and canonically understood.²⁵ The documentary hypothesis only exacerbates the problem with its competing theologies from

rival groups vying for priestly power.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The documentary hypothesis is a zombie; it is dead but still roaming the halls of Old Testament scholarship seeking its next victim. What can account for this? The only answer can be that no paradigm has arisen to replace the documentary hypothesis as an explanation for the problem of the origin of the Pentateuch. Thus, professors of Old Testament persist in teaching it, even though a large number, one suspects, know that it is not true. Sadly, when confronted with the documentary hypothesis, many students and lay readers are dazzled by the apparent sophistication of the scholarship, and are especially captivated by the fact that “J” seems much more interesting than stodgy old Genesis with all its genealogies.

Many believing Christians may rise to assert that the ruling paradigm should be that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. This is true but inadequate, at least in the case of Genesis. It is inadequate because Moses lived hundreds of years after all the characters of Genesis had died. One could suggest that he received all his knowledge of the history of the patriarchs directly from God, but we do not make this claim about any other historical book. To the contrary, we assert that the writers of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Luke, and every other historical book in the Bible used sources where the author himself was not a witness to the events.

In *Rethinking Genesis*, I suggest that there are sources behind Genesis but that these sources are compatible with the idea of Mosaic authorship. In addition, I suggest that these sources had real ancient Near Eastern analogues (unlike J, E, D, and P, which are completely without par-

allel). Finally, I argue that these sources can be said to have had a real significance for Israel in Egypt and that the collection of these sources into the present book of Genesis during the exodus is the most satisfactory explanation for the writing of the book. I will leave it to the reader to decide whether *Rethinking Genesis* makes for a persuasive solution to the problem. But we can only hope that some paradigm that is not opposed to Scripture will finally put the documentary hypothesis in the grave once and for all.

ENDNOTES

¹Thus Richard Elliot Friedman, *The Hidden Book in the Bible / Restored, Translated, and Introduced* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998).

²A few of the major works are S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1897; reprint, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972); John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2d ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1930); Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941); Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1964); Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968); J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); George W. Coats, *Genesis: with an Introduction to Narrative Literature, Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Claus

Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1984); Werner H. Schmidt, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (London: SCM, 1984).

³R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); Rolf Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977); Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 119ff.; and Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987) xxxiv-xxxv.

⁴Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991; reprint, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2000).

⁵For a history of Old Testament criticism, see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 3-82. See also R. J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism Since Graf* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); also Fohrer, 23-32, 106-113; and Soggin, 79-98.

⁶A few fragments not related to any of the four source documents (e.g., Genesis 14) are also to be found in the Pentateuch. See also the summary in Whybray, 20-21. For a detailed presentation of the classic form of the hypothesis, see Driver, 1-159. For a presentation of the hypothesis in a more complex, evolved form, see Fohrer, 120-195. For a survey of the hypothesis in the context of some more recent developments, see Soggin, 99-160, and Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, xxv-xlv.

⁷See Speiser, 150-152.

⁸Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff, *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975).

⁹M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Authorship* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 11-14.

¹⁰Whybray, 64-65.

¹¹Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1941) 15-41.

¹²Cf. John Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987) 39-41.

¹³Francis I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 102.

¹⁴Andersen, 102.

¹⁵Speiser, 49; Skinner, 153, 165.

¹⁶Andersen, 39-40.

¹⁷Andersen, 40.

¹⁸Whybray, 60.

¹⁹See Rolf Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, trans. Johns Scullion, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplementary Series 89 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 146-150.

²⁰Driver, 16.

²¹Thompson, 49.

²²Rendtorff, *Problem*, 119-136.

²³Whybray, 93-108. He especially summarizes arguments developed in Rendtorff, *Pentateuch*, and H. H. Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976).

²⁴For a more complete analysis of this problem, see my *Rethinking Genesis*, chapter 10 (pp. 185-197 in the Christian Focus edition).

²⁵For a more complete analysis of this problem, see my *Rethinking Genesis*, chapter 11 (pp. 198-234 in the Christian Focus edition).

The Table of Nations: The “Also Peoples”¹

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Introduction

On November 7, 2000 Alabama’s citizens cast their votes for the forty-third President of the United States, electing George W. Bush the first president of the new century. That vote, however, was not the only significant ballot, and maybe not the most important, made by the people of Alabama. Although only symbolic in action, the passage of Amendment 2 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901 repealed the obsolete ban of interracial marriage, signaling the end of another vestige of legal racial segregation that had marked every aspect of life in the deep South for three centuries.² The law was not enforceable, since it contradicted the fourteenth amendment of the United States Constitution, but the Alabama Constitution remained the last state constitution to have this prohibition on the books.

During the era of racial slavery, apologists for the status quo often appealed to the Bible, including Genesis, as their religious and cultural authority. Unfortunately, they misunderstand Genesis 10:1-32, popularly known as the “Table of Nations.” Also, the prelude to the Table of Nations (9:20-29), describing Noah’s curse against his grandson Canaan and his blessing on Shem, became a perverted commentary on the inferior status of the black African peoples, “the lowest of slaves shall he [Canaan] be” (9:25), and their descendants. That the curse meant Ham’s descendants were inferior as a race and forever stigmatized by dark skin color was an interpretation known as

early as Jewish midrash: “Ham and a dog had sexual relations in the ark. Therefore Ham came forth dusky, and the dog, for his part, has sexual relations in public” (*Gen. Rab.* 36.5). F. A. Ross (1796-1883) argued in his *Slavery Ordained of God* (1857) that there was an inherent correlation between the geographical distribution of the races and their relative cultural standing (Gen 10:1-32). By coupling his interpretation of Genesis and A. H. Guyot’s *Earth and Man* (1849), in which Guyot sought to explain a people’s physical environment and their social and moral development, Ross contended that the peoples south of the equator were ethnically inferior to those located in Asia (Shem) and Europe (Japheth). The topography itself conveys the superior features of the Europeans: “That Europe, indented by the sea on every side, with its varied scenery, and climate, and Northern influences makes the varied intellect, the versatile power and life and action, of the masterman of the world.”³

Racial segregationists during the civil rights movement of the twentieth century often appealed to Acts 17:26, which relies on the Table of Nations, when asserting the permanent separation of the races: “From one man he [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” Christian interpreters who advocated segregation maintained that the *true* unity that all Christians have is their spiritual oneness

in Christ, but racial amalgamation contradicted the ordinance of God that established the separation of the races.⁴ By neglecting this creation ordinance, racial integration opposed the wisdom of Providence.

Although the vast majority of interpreters today reject bizarre racial interpretations of passages (e.g., Gen 4:11; 9:25; 10:1-32), occasionally a hint emerges that in biblical times there were pure racial entities, especially the Israelites. As the argument goes, the Jews, by maintaining a pure race, preserved a pure religion. In this essay we will show that ancient peoples were no more pure in race than modern communities and that race as commonly defined today was not of special interest to ancient peoples, nor to the Hebrews. Also, we will examine why the Bible prohibits some kinds of integration between the Hebrews and outsiders, such as intermarriage. Finally, we will comment on the inclusiveness of God's redemptive plan for the ages as manifested by Israel and the church.

The Table of Nations and Israel

Since some segregationists believed the division of the nations in chs. 10-11 showed that God intended for the races to remain separate, we will look at the character of the Table of Nations. Before doing so, we will comment on the bewildering terms that contemporary discourse employs when discussing ethnic groups.⁵

The terms "race" and "ethnic" are often used synonymously today, but each holds a different nuance. In the case of "race" we are speaking of inherited physical traits that characterize peoples, such as cranial shape, facial features, and skin color. "Ethnic" (*ethnos*) or "people group" identifies an affiliated people who share

history, traditions, and culture, such as familial descent, language, and religious and social customs. "People" (*am*) is the common term used by God in referring to the Israelites; with the possessive forms (e.g., *'ammi*, "my people") the expression captures the personal, relational aspect of Yahweh and Israel, the covenant community (e.g., Exod 3:7).⁶ W. von Sodom comments that Israel alone in the ancient Near East developed a word for itself that conveyed "unequivocally" that it was a people.⁷ "Israel" understood itself as a people identified and bound by their devotion to God, not foremostly by territory, language, or even common derivation. They primarily perceived a "nation" (*goy*) as a political term, describing a geopolitical state in a specific locale whose citizenship consists of interconnected communities.⁸

Peoples of the ancient Near East perceived family derivation, shared history, traditions, and customs as the primary means of distinguishing ethnic groups. "Race" as we think of it was not important for ancient peoples, including the Hebrews, and rarely appears in ancient texts or the Bible (e.g., Jer 13:23). Typically, the Hebrews, like the peoples of the ancient Near East, identified foreigners in terms of their language, locale, religion, or customs (e.g., Num 21:29; Isa 33:19; Amos 1:5).

The Table of Nations

First, the Table of Nations employs an eclectic standard for establishing the relationships it describes, providing varied sorts of information, by listing "clans," "languages," "territories," and "nations" (10:5, 20, 31, 32; cf. v. 18).⁹ Individuals' names (e.g., Nimrod [10:8], Peleg [10:25]), territorial entities (e.g., Canaan, Mizraim,

10:6), and tribes and nations (e.g., Kittim [10:4], Jebusites [10:16]) appear. “Sidon the firstborn,” for example, is ambiguous, perhaps referring to a person or to the Phoenician city by the Sea (10:15,19). The expressions “father of” (*yalad*, e.g., 10:8, 13, 15) and “sons of” (*b^ene*, e.g., 10:1,2) are familial terms that may be used metaphorically to signify peoples or places affiliated by political and economic ties (cf. 1 Chr 2:51, “Salma the father of Bethlehem”). An example of a family term commonly substituted for a political tie is “daughters” (*b^enot*) which describes villages that encompassed and depended on an urban center (NIV’s “surrounding settlements,” Num 21:25; Josh 15:45; 1 Chr 2:23; Neh 11:25).

Second, the Table of Nations exhibits a form of genealogy popular in Genesis, known as “branched” or “segmented” (e.g., Cainites, 4:17-24). The branched genealogical pattern includes the names of more than one descendant for each generation cited. The Table arranges the names into three sections according to the number of Noah’s sons (9:18-19): Japheth (vv. 2-5), Ham (vv. 6-20), and Shem (vv. 21-31). The “linear” type of genealogy presents only one name per generation, e.g., the Sethites (5:1-32) and the Shemites (11:10-26).

In the case of Shem, both forms of genealogy occur, providing an illustration of each type (10:21-31; 11:10-26). The former occasion is branched in accord with the practice in Genesis of listing the non-elect offspring, e.g., the sons of Joktan (10:26-30). The second Shemite genealogy is linear, corresponding to Genesis’ feature of identifying the chosen lineage by this pattern, e.g., Peleg (11:16). The two Shemite genealogies encompass the Tower of Babel account (11:1-9). The lit-

erary effect of this arrangement implies that the chosen Shemite lineage (11:10-26), resulting in the family of Abraham (11:26), is the response of divine grace to the Tower of Babel’s tumult. By creating a nation with Abraham, Yahweh provided the means for blessing the nations (12:3b; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

Third, the collection of names is ethnogeographic in emphasis,¹⁰ establishing the broad geographical domains of the groups that make up each branch. The Japhethites, peoples who were most remote to Israel’s history, were primarily located in Asia Minor and Europe. Egypt, Mesopotamian locations, and parts of Arabia were Hamitic descendants, and the Shemites included parts of Mesopotamia and Arabia, and the region of Syria. The Hamite and Shemite peoples, who receive more attention in the Table, had frequent contact with the Israelites in their history. From the perspective of the Israelites emerging from the wilderness, this blueprint of the surrounding populations prepared them for their future role as a burgeoning member of the community of peoples.

Fourth, the seventy names listed in the Table are representative of all nations, not a comprehensive list (cf. 10:5, “From these [named Japhethites] the maritime peoples spread out”). The count of seventy as a multiple of seven and ten indicates completeness, suggesting that the list symbolized all nations. Although Israel’s ancestor “Eber” appears in the list (10:21; 11:14-17), the absence of Israel shows that the biblical author assumed its existence and penned the Table from the standpoint of Israel (cf. 46:27; Deut 32:8).

Fifth, the chief purpose of the Table of Nations was to explain in theological terms the common origin of the nations,

all of whom were derived from Noah's three sons (9:18-19; 10:1). Noah in effect was the "new Adam" (cf. 9:20), whose sons received creation's promissory blessing anew (1:28) as humanity entered into the restored creation: "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth'" (9:1; cf. 9:7). God did not abandon his creation purposes despite human sin and graciously continued his provision for all humanity by establishing a universal covenant (9:1-17). As in the case of the first Adam (3:6-7, 10-11), the new Adam trespassed by misusing the fruit of the land (drunkenness) and experienced the shame of nakedness, resulting in strife among his descendants (9:20-27). Yet, Noah's moral descent served only as the backdrop to the author's greater interest, recounting the curse and blessing that Noah uttered in response to his sons' contradictory behaviors. Ham injured his father's honor and impugned his parental authority by publicly ridiculing Noah's nakedness (9:22). Public nakedness was an especially shameful condition for a person in ancient cultures (cf. 2 Sam 10:4; Hab 2:15). Such an affront against one's parent ultimately transgressed the authority of Yahweh who bestowed a derived authority to parents, for the premise that underlies the first table of the Ten Words was the unrivaled supremacy of Yahweh (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; cf. Gen 49:3-4; Deut 21:18-21). In contrast to Ham's reaction, his brothers Shem and Japheth took elaborate steps to restore their father's honor without offense (9:23). Noah based his curse and blessing on the conduct of his three sons toward his distinct authority. Precisely why the curse was directed against Ham's son Canaan instead of Ham is a recurring

dispute in the history of interpretation. The answer probably lies in the typical Hebrew mindset toward family solidarity, which assumes the son's conformity to his father's conduct (e.g., Exod 20:5-6). This expectation held true, for the licentious behavior of the Hamitic descendants of Canaan stamped their culture as one of the most deviant (e.g., Lev 18:24-30; 20:22-24; Deut 12:31; 18:9-12; 20:18).

Sixth, as the preamble to the Table of Nations, the Noahic curse and blessing (9:20-27) introduced a moral factor, a theological reading of the Table that provided Israel a moral compass when it entered the land of Canaan. Casting the Table of Nations as a theological commentary did not vitiate the historical reliability of the Table's presentation that exhibits real, complex interconnections among the nations.¹¹ By referring to this moral factor, we do not mean that the author believed that the nations had inherent moral traits. We do not find in the Pentateuch, for example, any affirmation of the inherent virtue of Israel versus "also peoples." If anything, Deuteronomy's theology of election demotes the nation, making it clear that one's behavior was not the basis for Yahweh's favor (Deut 7:1, 6-9, 17; 9:1, 4-5; 11:23). When Israel followed the immoral conduct of their neighbors, they would meet the same ends as their Canaanite predecessors (e.g., Deut 8:20; 18:9-12; 28:15, 37; cf. Lev 18:28). The measure of Israel's people was their spiritual condition before God (e.g., Deut 10:16; 30:6, 11-14). Whenever the Hebrews wrongly considered themselves insulated from moral judgment by virtue of their status, Yahweh roundly condemned the notion (e.g., Jer 7:8-17; Mal 2:9), for he did not show partiality based on ethnicity nor did he tolerate partiality (e.g., Deut 10:17):

“Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?” declares the LORD” (Amos 9:7).

To conclude that the purpose of the Table was to prove the racial superiority of the Shemite peoples over the Hamite sadly misconstrues the intention of the passage. That the archenemies of Israel, such as Egypt, Assyria, and Canaan, appear in the Table evidences their inclusion in the divine blessing of the Noahic covenant (9:1, 17). Within the confines of the Table itself, we have discovered that there is no allusion to Israel’s superiority over the “also peoples.” The Babel incident that preceded the dissemination of the nations (11:1-9) impacted all nations who emerged from the plain of Shinar. By means of the creation of a new people (Abraham), God would secure salvation for all of the “also peoples” (12:3b; 22:18; 28:14; cf. Gal 3:8).

“Abraham the Hebrew”

Although common usage today equates the term “Hebrew” with “Jew” (cf. Acts 6:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5), the use of the term in the Old Testament is complex. We have observed that according to the patriarchal promises Abraham was the nexus of the insiders, the “chosen people,” and the outsiders, the “also peoples.” His genealogy shows that he was the offspring of Mesopotamian parentage, whom we may identify anachronistically for our purposes as Gentile (non-Hebrew), and he was the father of a new people, the Hebrews. Abraham is the first person identified as a “Hebrew” (*‘ibri*) in Scripture (Gen 14:13), here by the narrator, who distinguishes him from his ally, “Mamre the Amorite.” “Eber” (*‘eber*), whose name may be the source for the term “Hebrew,” appears in the Table of

Nations as the ancestor to many Semitic speaking peoples (10:21,25), including Abraham (11:16; 1 Chr 1:18-19). The precise etymological history of the term “Hebrew” (*‘ibri*) is uncertain. If it is not simply a word play on the name Eber, making Abraham an “Eberite,” it may have been originally related to the word group ‘-b-r, meaning “to cross over (from the other side),” from which “Eber” (*‘eber*) too is possibly derived (cf. *‘eber*, “the other side,” e.g., Josh 24:3). The LXX reflects this interpretation of the name in its translation of “Abram the Hebrew” (14:13): Abram *tō peratē*, “Abram the one who crossed over,” alluding to the migration of the patriarchs.¹²

The term “Hebrew” in the Old Testament usually, if not always (possible exceptions, cf. Exod 21:2-11; 1 Sam 13:3, 6-7; 14:21; 29:3), refers to an ethnic group, one that can be differentiated from others by affiliation (e.g., 43:32; Exod 1:15-16, 19; 2:11). The word is typically used by non-Israelites, such as the Egyptians (e.g., 39:14, 17; Exod 1:16, 19; 2:6) and the Philistines (e.g., 1 Sam 4:6, 9; 14:11), naming members of the pre-Israelite family of Abraham or members of the nation of Israel. On some occasions, an Israelite employed the term in reference to fellow Hebrews (Exod 2:7, 13), and Joseph made use of it when identifying his homeland (e.g., “the land of the Hebrews,” 40:15). Jonah is the only person in the Old Testament who identified himself directly as a “Hebrew” (1:9), though he did so in conversation with non-Israelites and primarily in terms of Israel’s religion (“and I worship Yahweh,” 1:9). This association of the Hebrews with Yahweh is reminiscent of the appellative for Yahweh in Exodus who is frequently identified as “the God of the Hebrews” (Exod 3:18;

7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). “Hebrew” as a language was later equated with “Judahite,” the language of Jerusalem’s residents (2 Kgs 18:26; 2 Chr 32:18; Isa 36:11, 13). In the eschatological “day of the LORD,” the Egyptians will evidence their loyalty to Yahweh by adopting the “language of Canaan” (Isa 19:18), i.e., Hebrew (or Canaanite dialect). The apostle Paul, too, used “Hebrew” as an ethnic or language designation (2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5; cf. Acts 6:1).

Still, “Hebrew” (*‘ibri*) may have been a social designation at times in the Bible, not solely an ethnic one. Some biblical passages imply a social use of the term “Hebrews,” where the referents appear to be differentiated from the Israelites (e.g., 1 Sam 13:3, 6-7; 14:21; 29:3). Also, the preponderance of the term “Hebrew” occurs in those passages in Genesis 39-50 and Exodus 1-15 where the pre-Israelites are slaves (cf. Exod 21:2-11).¹³ N. Na’aman has suggested that the biblical authors’ use of “Hebrew” shows that the word underwent a change in meaning from a social function to primarily an ethnic term.¹⁴ The basis for this explanation resides in the identification of the similar-sounding word *Habiru/Apiru*, a term indicating social status. The *Habiru* are mentioned in many texts from the second millennium BC that are widely distributed among the chief urban centers of Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan, and Egypt. They were migrants who for varied reasons, such as poverty and war, had become displaced from their birthplace, traveled to a new setting, and eventually assimilated in their new country or circumstances. The *Habiru* became resourceful as mercenary soldiers. For the most part, the *Habiru* were troublemakers for local rulers, and as a consequence the

term was often used in a derisive sense. A modern example of this is the term “minority,” which has become in some circles a pejorative expression, designating those who are deemed socially inferior.

When we consider that the incursion of the Israelites in Canaan took place generally during the same era, the similarity of the words “Hebrew” (*‘ibri*) and *Habiru*, and the disruption in Canaan that the Israelites achieved, it is tempting to equate them. There are, however, too many differences to posit that “Hebrew” referred to social status alone, especially since “Hebrew” is primarily an ethnic designation for Israelite. E. Merrill posits that the similarities between the two possibly led to some confusion by non-Israelites, such as the Philistines and Egyptians. The behavior of some Israelite figures, especially David, who led a mercenary band, contributed to this impression. Also, the evidence from the book of Samuel shows that the Philistines referred to the “Hebrews” in a demeaning way. Merrill adds that the *Habiru* may well have been assimilated into the new Israelite presence in Canaan as the Hebrews controlled much of the central highlands.¹⁵ The earlier uses of “Hebrew” for Abraham and Joseph reflect some of the same social features, such as their alien status. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that “Hebrew” had an ethnic meaning on those same occasions.

In sum, “Hebrew” was primarily an ethnic designation, though it occasionally may have had social implications.

Israel and the “Also Peoples”

The cumulative evidence from the Bible, ancient texts, and archaeological recoveries produce a surprising picture of the place the Hebrews occupied in their

world. The precise ethnic identity of Israel was muddled by the manifold connections the people had with their neighbors. F. Crüsemann shows how the genealogies in Genesis, when taken in their entirety, provide for a system unknown in any other genealogy attested among ancient or modern peoples.¹⁶ The system includes interdependencies among individuals and whole ethnic groups, even the whole of the human family. Indeed the term “human *family*” shows the implication of the Genesis genealogies—all individuals regardless of their ethnic differences remain invariably interconnected as one united family. From the perspective of the Genesis genealogies, all are ultimately kin by virtue of one common parent, whether he is Adam or Noah.

Also, Crüsemann observes that the genealogies of Genesis possess a complex differentiation *within* groups. Although differentiation is paramount in the patriarchal narratives (e.g., Israel/Esau), important differentiation also occurs in the Table of Nations. We have observed already that an important divergence takes place between the sibling lines of Joktan and Peleg, both offspring of Eber (10:25). Although both are Shemites and Eberites, the Joktanites are not in the ancestral line leading directly to the birth of Abraham. Yet, on account of the interconnectedness provided by the genealogical system of the Table, the Joktanites and Abrahamites also had an ancestral linkage. When we consider the peoples that arose from the differentiation within the Terah clan and the Abraham family, we discover a far-reaching range of entanglements that produced some peoples closely related to Israel (e.g., Esau/Edom) and others remotely related (e.g.,

Canaanites).

Such complicated connections make the idea of “races” irrelevant from the perspective of Genesis’ genealogies. Textual evidence from the ancient Near East and the Bible indicate that people groups commonly commingled. According to K. Kamp and N. Yoffee, the traditional criteria of shared language, territory, and ecological acculturation used by anthropologists for differentiating ethnic groups, are not as reliable as once assumed, making it difficult to discern confidently ethnic identities on the basis of material remains and textual data.¹⁷ Ethnoarchaeological studies conclude that in a complex society like those of the urban centers in the ancient Near East, “cultural plurality” dominated and a “pure culture” did not exist.

Though differences in language were recognized (e.g., Neh 13:24; Est 1:22), ancient societies themselves did not perceive language as the primary indicator of national identity. D. Block, in his analysis of language as a kinship factor in designating ethnic groups, found that language by itself could not serve as a certain pointer toward ethnic divergence.¹⁸ Genesis 31:45-49 exhibits different languages spoken by Laban (Aramaic) and Jacob (Hebrew), although they descended from brothers (Abraham, Nahor) who only two generations earlier had migrated into the Paddan Aram region (11:26-32; 22:23; 24:15; 28:2, 5). Geography more than kinship in this case dictated the language adopted by each branch of the family. The modern term “Semitic” cannot refer to ethnicity but only to the languages of the Semitic-speaking peoples.¹⁹ The Elamites who were not a Semitic-speaking people were descended from Shem (10:22). The lan-

guage of Hebrew in the Semitic constellation of tongues corresponds closely to the language of their archrivals, the Canaanites.

Also, the material cultures that the Canaanites and Hebrews produced in the Middle to Late Bronze Ages were not substantively different. The classic problem faced by archaeologists when reconstructing the periods of the patriarchs and Israel's entry into Canaan is discerning a differentiation in the material culture of the Hebrews from the indigenous Canaanites. D. Edelman's study of the Palestinian evidence concludes, "Modern ethnographic studies have indicated the complexity of the formation and maintenance of ethnic identification and inability to predict markers on the basis of practices of various living groups or cultures."²⁰ Solely on the basis of remains, apart from the biblical record, one could conclude that "[t]he evidence from language, costume, coiffure, and material remains suggest that the early Israelites were a rural subset of Canaanite culture and largely indistinguishable from Transjordanian rural cultures as well."²¹ Yet, despite these shared features of language and material culture, Canaanites and Hebrews represented separate lines, according to the Table of Nations.

On the other hand, we may look at the example of the Joktanites and Pelegites who, as Shemites, derived from the common ancestor Eber (10:25). Peleg's branch produced the Terah clan (11:14-17), whereas the Joktan line produced peoples primarily occupying the southern peninsula of Arabia (10:26-20). Thus, the Table of Nations presents people groups, such as the Joktanites, who were distant from the Hebrews in almost every way, yet by their lineal connection were closer in descent to Israelites than the Canaanites.

Thus while language, cultural practices, religion, and politics are factors in differentiation, no one element is the controlling constituent that clarifies the complexities of ancient ethnic divergences.

The Constitution of Israel

As for the identity of the Israelites who emerged from Egypt, they included a "mixed multitude" (*'ereb rab*, Exod 12:38,48; cf. Neh 13:3; Jer 25:24), indicating a mixed number of people groups who were slaves alongside the Hebrews in Egypt (Num 11:14). Throughout Israel's long history there was a mingling of diverse ethnic groups.²² We already noted that the ancestors of Israel included Aramean kinship, e.g., "my father was a wandering Aramean" (Deut 26:5). Although the brothers Abram and Nahor had the same father, the lineage of Nahor who resided at Haran in Paddan Aram was called "Aramean," not Hebrew, due to location or language. The biblical narrator identified Bethuel, the son of Nahor, and Laban his son as "Arameans" (25:20; 28:5); this Aramean stock of the Terah clan provided the wives for the patriarchs Isaac (Rebekah) and his son Jacob (Leah, Rachel) who bore the progenitors of the twelve tribes of national Israel.

Yet, the Bible indicates that individuals and people groups who became members of the Israelite community could retain an ethnic identity (e.g., Beerothites, 2 Sam 4:2-3). The Bible's historians noted this as an important feature when they referenced "outsiders" who had become "insiders." They viewed them as members of Israel but not always fully assimilated, since their ethnic roots were remembered. Full assimilation presumably occurred in later generations (e.g.,

Kenites, Judg 1:16), though in some cases many generations later (e.g., Ammonites, Moabites, Deut 23:3; Gibeonites, Josh 9:27; 2 Sam 21:2). Rahab, the Jericho prostitute and her family (Josh 6:25; cf. Heb 11:31; James 2:25), and “Ruth the Moabitess,” who professed her faith in Naomi’s God (Ruth 1:16-17), illustrate ethnic incorporation of individuals. The Calebites, the descendants of the celebrated Caleb who had urged Israel to enter the land (Num 13:30), were ethnically Kenizzites (<Kenaz, e.g., Num 32:12; cf. Gen 15:19) whose root was originally an Edomite clan (Gen 36:15). The Calebites, who were geographically (at Hebron) and genealogically (by Perez) related to the tribe of Judah, assimilated to the tribe during the monarchy, though they retained some distinctiveness (e.g., Num 13:6; Josh 15:13; 1 Sam 25:3; 30:14; 1 Chr 4:13-15).²³ The Gibeonites, identified ethnically as Hivites (Josh 9:7) and Amorites (2 Sam 21:2), obtained a protected place among the Israelites (albeit by deception), and their chief city became a Levitical city (Josh 9:3-10:14 with 2 Sam 21:1-4, 9; Josh 18:25; 21:17). Despite the Gibeonite incorporation, the Israelites remembered their treachery and refused to acknowledge their original membership in Israel (2 Sam 21:2). Alliances by marriage or political treaty reached their zenith with Solomon’s new policies of internationalization (1 Kgs 11:4-8).

We may now ask the question that is intrinsic to the diversity that we have suggested for the ethnic makeup of ancient Israel: what formed and sustained this new people? There existed a distinctive people known as “Israel” who more or less survived for two hundred years before there was a central authority (monarchy) that forced socio-economic depen-

dencies among groups. Moreover, after the demise of the state and the chief religious institution, the temple, and the displacement of the nuclear populace, this people maintained their distinctive identity and heritage. F. Frick answers this question not as a theologian, but as a social scientist of ancient Israel, when he says, “The mechanism that maintained social solidarity and law and order in the village and inter-village level, and made possible multi-community groupings may very well have been a unifying religious ideology.”²⁴ Echoing the viewpoint of the biblical authors, we may affirm that the principal constituent of ancient Israel was the revelation of God at Sinai that shaped and unified all those who submitted to Yahweh. We may say further that what gave class structure attachment in Israel was not essentially a social mechanism. N. Lemche continues: “Class solidarity has to do with obeying the word of God, with keeping and especially studying the law. It is not primarily a social program; it is a religious program. It is about solidarity within a religious group, ‘Israel,’ not something coming out of the never-never land of ancient Israel.”²⁵

The “Alien” in Israel

The most notable incidence of admission of foreigners is Israel’s tolerance toward the resident “sojourner” or “alien” (*ger-gur*, “to sojourn”). The number of Hebrew terms and specialized nuances conveying the semantic field of a person of foreign extraction indicate the importance attached to the identity and proper place of the non-native in ancient Israel. These included the “temporary resident” (*toshab*, e.g., 23:4; Exod 12:45), the “hired worker” (*sakir*, e.g., Exod 12:45; 22:14), the

“foreigner” (*nokri*, e.g., Deut 14:21), and the “stranger” (*zar*, e.g., Isa 61:5). The *ger* (“alien”) was a resident who had migrated from outside the land, hence having no property of his own.²⁶ Although aliens were counted as part of “all Israel” (Josh 8:33,35), they were also regularly differentiated from the “native-born” (*ezrah*) Israelite (e.g., Exod 12:19; Lev 16:29) or “brother” (*’ah*, e.g., Deut 24:14).

The explanation for Israel’s favorable treatment of aliens is historical and theological (e.g., Exod 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:19). Israel’s forefathers were aliens in Canaan (e.g., 21:23; 23:4; 35:27; Exod 6:4; Deut 26:5; 1 Chr 29:15), including Moses (Exod 2:22), and Israel experienced the same status in Egypt (e.g., 15:13; Lev 19:34; Deut 23:7[8]). Also, as tenants in Canaan, the Israelites were aliens in Yahweh’s eyes, for the land was solely his possession (Lev 25:23). In the Mosaic law, protections provided for aliens (who were often numbered among the poor) recognized their special situation and met their needs of refuge and welfare (e.g., Lev 19:10, 33-34; 25:35; Deut 1:16; 10:18; 14:29; 24:14, 17, 19; 27:19). Nevertheless, aliens could eventually obtain property and wealth, even own a native-born Israelite (e.g., 23:4; Lev 25:47). An escaped slave, presumably an alien to Israel (e.g., Lev 25:44-46), received sanctuary without fear of return (Deut 23:15).

The idea that there was “one law” pertaining to both the native Israelite and the alien in some matters, such as the proper observance of Passover, shows the far-reaching acceptance that aliens received (e.g., Exod 12:49; Lev 17:8, 10, 13; 20:2; 22:18; 24:22; Num 9:14; 15:15-16, 29; 19:10). They could participate in sacrifices and offerings, observing the same obligations as the native-born citizen (e.g., 16:29-34;

Lev 17:8-16; 22:18-25; Num 15:2-30). Yet, there were mandatory laws for the native Israelite that were not binding upon aliens (e.g., Deut 14:21). J. Milgrom differentiates between the *prohibitive* laws that safeguarded community purity and the *performative* laws that did not bear directly on maintaining the sanctity of the land, recognized in the law as the dwelling place of Yahweh.²⁷ Since aliens as well as native Israelites may have offended the holiness of God by profaning the land through impurities, aliens observed laws of prohibition (e.g., blasphemy, Lev 24:16; also 18:24-30; 20:1-5; Num 19:10-13). Yet, those laws that are performative, such as the festival laws, were not obligatory for the alien who declined participation. Should aliens decide to join in the celebration, they must abide by the prescribed regulations for all participants.

The Universality of the Worship of Yahweh

J. Levenson astutely shows that the equally viable biblical doctrine of the particularity of God’s revelation to national Israel does not contradict the universality of God, by which we mean an availability of God to all peoples. He remarks, “It is possible to be a faithful and responsible worshiper of YHWH (the proper name of the name of God of Israel) without being an Israelite.”²⁸ Israel neither originated nor circumscribed the worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel. Genesis reveals that the worship of God by the divine name Yahweh occurred in primordial times (4:26). That “Israel” is not named among the Table of Nations (in fact, the appellative does not occur until Jacob [=Israel, 32:28]) shows that the nation was not primordial. Moreover, unlike the ancient cities of the Gentiles

(e.g., Babylon), Israel's inception was not in heaven or by a divine construction.²⁹ The biblical account of creation and human origin established the oneness of human identity and value (1:26-28).

Since the primordial past, as we see in the example of the prediluvian Noah, men and women have known and worshiped the God of all the earth (18:25; Isa 54:5). Melchizedek illustrates a Canaanite priest-king who worshiped Yahweh (14:22) independently of the Hebrew patriarchs (14:18-20), though probably under the name *El Elyon* ("God Almighty"). That the Canaanite priest blessed Abraham and this father of Israel presented his tithe to him demonstrates the legitimacy of Melchizedek's priestly order as authentically Yahwistic in the eyes of Israel (cf. Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-17). Job, too, was an authentic adherent to Yahweh, although he was a non-Israelite. Regardless of the date of authorship, the account of Job presents a culture comparable to the patriarchal era before the existence of Israel. The setting is thoroughly Gentile, and Job is identified as a man who "feared God" (1:1). This appellative, "one who fears God," may describe a Gentile who observed a high ethical standard, a kind of universal morality (e.g., Gen 20:11). It became the popular designation of Gentiles who adopted monotheism and exhibited moral conduct but who were not fully Jewish proselytes by circumcision (e.g., Acts 10:22; 13:16, 26; cf. proselytes, Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43). That Job worshipped God by the covenant name, "Yahweh," is not only the narrator's view but also is found (though seldom) in the speeches of Job (1:21; 12:9).

Israel for the Nations

Yet, the election of Israel favored one nation over others. God is known forever as the "God of Israel" or the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Nevertheless, that the separating of Abraham antedated the founding of national Israel conveys that the purpose of Israel's position had its roots in the era before Sinai and the wilderness. Levenson comments that "biblical election was instrumental," setting Israel's particularity in the broad landscape of divine universality.³⁰ The purposes of choosing the man Abraham and his family, whose descendants formed Israel, involved revealing the one true God to the nations and transforming the nations into true worshipers of Yahweh. Israel like its ancestors performed a mediatorial role, "a kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:5-7; cf. 1 Pet 2:9), functioning as "witnesses" to the Gentiles (e.g., Isa 43:10, 12; 44:8). Moreover, what truly distinguished Israel was not its sense of uniqueness, for other nations considered themselves divinely destined for world domination, rather Israel's claim to peculiarity was the uniqueness of Israel's God.³¹

In Isaiah 43:10 the ideas of witness and servanthood reinforce the mutually related roles of the nation. Isaiah's "servant" theme underscores Israel's purpose of enlightening the nations to the way of Yahweh (e.g., 42:1, 4; 51:4). But Israel cannot achieve this high calling, for it failed to practice what was right and just according to its founding purpose (Isa 42:19; cf. Gen 18:19). Hence one from among Israel, the ideal servant, must achieve their destiny on their behalf, bringing the way of Yahweh as the "light to the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 52:13, 15; 53:11-12; 60:1; cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23). By this means all

nations will know Yahweh whose rule will be universal, eternal, and marked by justice and peace (e.g., Mic 42:1-4; Zech 2:11). Isaiah depicts the cosmopolitan character of this kingdom in universalistic terms, including all nations and tongues, when he describes Jewish emissaries who enlist the Gentiles to glorify Yahweh (66:18-21). In this portrait we discover the same discrimination we have observed throughout the Old Testament's theology of Israel and the nations: the particulars of Jerusalem's temple and the universals of the nations. Yet, Jerusalem's temple has no legitimacy, unless it is a "house of prayer for all nations" (Isa 56:7; cf. Mark 11:17 pars.; Rev 21:24). Although the basis for the recognition of Israel over other peoples should not be denied, there is no evidence that authentic Yahwism ever claimed Israel was inherently superior in character (Exod 32:9; Deut 9:4-6, 13; 10:16; Jer 7:26). The differentiation of Israel rests in its role among the nations, not merely in the fact of its differentiation.

Endogamy and Religious Fidelity

Because of Israel's role as mediator of the "way of the LORD" (Gen 18:19; Exod 19:6; cf. 1 Pet 2:9) to the nations, this people practiced a limited policy of discrimination between Israelite and non-Israelite, for intermarriage normally resulted in pluralism. It was not absolute, for we will find that given the amalgamation of peoples in Israel intermarriage became a tolerable institution in those cases when the non-Israelite submitted to Yahweh. The chief motivation for marriage within one's family (endogamy) among the Hebrews was the preservation of the family commitment to the God of their father. The first clear case of this practice was Abraham's insistence on

obtaining a wife for Isaac from his brother's household (Nahor) living in Haran (ch. 24). He imposed on his servant an oath, obligating him in the sternest terms to avoid selecting a wife from the daughters of Canaan (24:3). The biblical writer sets the request in the broad frame of the call and blessing that Abraham received from Yahweh (24:1, 7). The same aversion to Canaanite entanglement motivated the admonition by Isaac and Rebekah for Jacob to return to Paddan Aram when seeking a wife (28:1, 6). Rebekah condemned Esau's marriage to Hittite wives and insisted that Jacob avoid the "women of this land" (27:46). Isaac's adamant instructions can only be explained by his desire to perpetuate his father's practice. That the chief concern of intermarriage involved religious fidelity is also evident from the aftermath of Dinah's rape by the Hivite prince, Shechem (Genesis 34). Dinah's brothers insisted that Shechem and his whole clan undergo circumcision before entering marriage with them (vv. 14-17). Circumcision was hardly an inherited racial trait among Hebrew males! During the Mosaic period, this practice of endogamy had the effect of expanding the family circle, yet called for limitations in the custom, protecting the morality of the family (e.g., Lev 18:6; 20:19).

The impending entrance of Israel into Canaan required additional directives, establishing firm regulations regarding marriage to outsiders. The specific cause for prohibiting intermarriage in the legislation itself was the overpowering enticement of religious plurality that such marriages entailed (e.g., Exod 34:16; Deut 7:4-5; Judg 3:5-6). The chief example was the idolatry practiced by Solomon, whose marriages led to his downfall (1 Kgs 11:1-

13). Mosaic legislation restricted access to the assembly of Yahweh for individuals who were descended from mixed marriages, even down to the tenth generation (Deut 23:2). Presumably by ten generations the memory of foreign influences would no longer apply. Deuteronomy made exceptions for Edomites, because of the close relationship of the twins Esau and Jacob, and for Egyptians because of their historic accommodation of the Hebrews when Jacob's family descended into Egypt (Deut 23:7; cf. 2:4-6). Although Esau was initially hostile toward Jacob, upon his return from Paddan Aram the brothers reconciled and Esau welcomed him (Gen 33:4, 11-16). In both these instances, the original connection of the nation with Jacob explained Israel's favorable attitude. Strict regulations applied to Ammonites and Moabites, since they had refused to show hospitality to Israel upon its ascent from Egypt, and the hiring of Balaam by the Moabite king, Barak (Deut 23:3-6; cf. 2:9, 19). Such interaction between Israel and the nations illustrated the promissory blessing, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse" (12:3ab).

Scholars often note a development in the attitude of the Israelites toward foreigners. The patriarchs did not exhibit reluctance to enter into treaty with the Canaanites (e.g., 21:27-32), whereas the Israelites refused except under special circumstances (Deut 7:2; Joshua 9; 11:19; 1 Kgs 5:12). By the postexilic period, Ezra and Nehemiah prohibited any intermarriage with non-Jews, fearing Judah's return to the evil practices of the Gentiles (Ezra 9:1-15; 10:10-11; Neh 10:30; 13:23-28). By commingling with non-Israelites their forefathers had fallen into idolatry, leading to the nation's destruction and

exile. Their refusal to sanction intermarriage, however, was only one of many reforms instituted by Ezra and Nehemiah. Their desire was to reestablish the Mosaic administration among the postexilic community, so as to forestall any compromise of their religious heritage.

Conclusion: Diversity and Unity

The unity of humanity is grounded in the innate dignity of all persons created in the image of God (1:26-28). By the descent of all peoples from the sons of Noah (10:1-32), the Bible likewise declares the solidarity of the human order through our common parentage (cp. 5:1-32). The birth of the nations was not a curse, for unlike the "ground" at Eden (3:17; 5:29; cf. 4:11; 8:21) there is no declaration of divine "curse" at Babel (11:1,9). Rather, the confusion of tongues that led to differentiated people groups interrupted the autonomy that the unified humanity had sought (11:4-6). This unity, achieved through independence of God ("a name for ourselves," 11:4), was not a unity that was intrinsic but was extrinsic to the created order of life. The Babelites feared dissemination and established a social state to assure the centripetal character of one people, refusing to "fill the earth" (1:28; 9:1). The divine blessing for humanity entailed innumerable progeny that populated the whole of the earth, extending its dominion over all creatures (1:28; 9:1-3, 7).

Differentiation was deemed "good" for humanity at creation, entailing both male and female (1:27). Moreover, distinctions were part of the created order at every level, both between the heavenly and terrestrial spheres (days one through four) and the living creatures (days five and six)—all considered "very good" (1:31).

By dispersing the Babelites who founded the nations, Yahweh acted benevolently toward human life and made it possible for humanity, despite its sinful condition, to realize the blessing ordained by God. The promise to bless Abraham with a “great nation” and a “great name” provided for the continuation of blessing meant for “all peoples” (12:2-3). The eschatological kingdom enshrines the same features: a unified humanity, yet a constellation of diverse peoples. The prophets depict such an era when both Israelites and “aliens” join in the restored land (Isa 14:1; Ezek 47:22), a “blessing on the earth” (Isa 19:25).

The formation of this eschatological community that transcended national borders was the chief assignment of the early church, “making disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19; cf. Acts 1:8; 8:1). Pentecost marked the first significant step toward realizing this ideal kingdom. The gathered peoples “from every nation under heaven” heard the kingdom of God preached in their native tongues after the disciples were baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-11). This work of the Spirit culminates in the worship of the Lamb at whose throne are “every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Rev 7:9; cf. 5:9). It is to this end that we as the Church must strive, not just welcoming but fervently gathering in all peoples: “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full’” (Luke 14:23).

ENDNOTES

¹For this expression, we have adapted the term of R. Syrén, *The Forsaken First-Born*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 133 (Sheffield:

Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 144-145, who refers to the descendants of the forsaken sons of the Hebrew patriarchs as the “also sons” (e.g., Ishmaelites, Edomites). We are expanding its reference to all those people groups who are outside Jacob-Israel.

²Section 102 reads, “The legislature shall never pass any law to authorize or legalize any marriage between any white person and a negro, or descendant of a negro.” See State Attorney General Bill Pryor’s commentary in *The Birmingham News*, October 1, 2000, section C, pp. 4, 6.

³F. A. Ross, *Slavery Ordained of God* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1857) 50-51; also, I. L. Brookes, *A Defence of the South Against the Reproaches and Incroachments of the North: in Which Slavery is Shown to be an Institution of God Intended to Form the Basis of the Best Social State and the Only Safeguard to the Permanence of a Republican Government* (Hamburg, SC: Printed at the Republican Office, 1850) 8-9.

⁴T. R. Ingram, *Essays on Segregation* (Houston: St. Thomas Press, 1960); also G. T. Gillespie, *A Christian View on Segregation* (Winona, MS: Association of the Citizens’ Council, 1954), who is rebutted by C. E. Tilson, *Segregation and the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1958) 9, 20.

⁵For this discussion, see especially D. J. Wiseman, “Introduction: Peoples and Nations,” *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) xv-xxi.

⁶E. A. Speiser, “‘People’ and ‘Nation’ of Israel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960) 157-163.

⁷W. von Sodom, *The Ancient Orient: An Introduction to the Study of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 14.

- ⁸See D. I. Block, "Nations/Nationality," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 4:966-972.
- ⁹For detailed discussion of the character of the Table, see A. Ross, "The Table of Nations in Genesis 10—Its Structure," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (1980) 340-353, and K. Mathews, *Genesis 1—11:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996) 431-439.
- ¹⁰Wiseman, "Introduction," xviii.
- ¹¹Contra, e.g., the comment of C. H. Felder, "Rather than an objective historical account of genealogies, the table of nations in Genesis 10 is a theologically motivated catalogue of people. . . the theological presuppositions of a particular ethnic group displace any concern for objective historiography and ethnography." C. H. Felder, "Racial Motifs in the Biblical Narratives," *Voices from the Margin*, ed. R. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) 179.
- ¹²*Gen. Rab.* 42.8 includes the same two etymological possibilities for "Hebrew."
- ¹³See N. Lemche, "Hebrew," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:95.
- ¹⁴N. Na'aman, "Habiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986) 271-288.
- ¹⁵E. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 100-108.
- ¹⁶F. Crüsemann, "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity," *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. M. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 57-76.
- ¹⁷K. Kemp and N. Yoffee, "Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia During the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 237 (1980) 85-99.
- ¹⁸D. Block, "The Role of Language in Ancient Israelite Perceptions of National Identity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984) 321-340.
- ¹⁹S. Moscati, ed., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969) 4.
- ²⁰D. Edelman, "Ethnicity and Early Israel," *Ethnicity and the Bible*, 55.
- ²¹L. Stager, "Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel," *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. M. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 137.
- ²²E.g., "your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" (Ezek 16:3, 45). For the metaphorical and historical significance of this expression, see D. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 508.
- ²³For more, see M. Fretz and R. Panitz, "Caleb," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:809-810.
- ²⁴F. Frick, "Religion and Socio-Political Structure in Early Israel: An Ethno-Archaeological Approach," *Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. C. Carter and C. Meyers (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 448-470, quote p. 465.
- ²⁵N. P. Lemche, "The Relevance of Working with the Concept of Class in the Study of Israelite Society in the Iron Age," *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, USF Studies in the History of Judaism 201, ed. M. Sneed (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999) 97-98.
- ²⁶For discussion of these terms, see R. Rendtorff, "The *Gēr* in the Priestly Laws of the Pentateuch," *Ethnicity and the Bible*, 77-87; D. I. Block, "Sojourner," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:561-564.
- ²⁷J. Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) 398-402.
- ²⁸J. Levenson, "The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism," *Ethnicity and the Bible*, 143-169; the quote from p. 148.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, 147.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, 155.
- ³¹H. and H. A. Frankfort, "Conclusion: The Emancipation of Thought from Myth," *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. Frankfort et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) 330-331.

The Genesis Flood

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Introduction *History of Flood Accounts in the Ancient World*

The memory of a massive deluge of water is attested in many distinct and varied cultures of the world. Accounts of the occurrence of a great flood has been found in Greece, Mesopotamia, Australia, India, Malaya, Polynesia, China, Japan, and among the cultures of the Western Hemisphere. In all there are sixty-eight different legends of a massive flood.¹ No other event in biblical history has as much extra-biblical attestation.

The flood stories that most closely resemble the biblical narrative come from southern Mesopotamia. Three distinct legends have been discovered. The best known is the Gilgamesh Epic, which relates how a certain Utnapishtim² was arbitrarily chosen and warned of a coming deluge. Some scholars associated with the Comparative Religion School have not only attempted to link the Mesopotamian and biblical floods but have also suggested that the Genesis account is dependent on the Mesopotamian prototypes.

Indeed, the shared details between the Mesopotamian stories and the Genesis narrative are striking. They share the following features: (1) only one man is warned of the coming deluge and instructed to build a vessel; (2) the water vessels are lined with pitch for insulation (Heb. *koper*; Akk. *kupru*); (3) the chosen man is commanded what he is to bring into his boat; (4) specific mention is made of closing the door of the boat; (5) the deluge exterminated both man and beast; (6)

mountains appear before the flood waters begin to abate; (7) the boat lands on top of a mountain; (8) birds are released from the opening of a window; and (9) sacrifices are offered after the flood is over.³

Attempts to relate the accounts, however, have not produced a consensus, and claims of direct literary dependence have been largely abandoned. As G. von Rad stated in 1972: "Today, forty years after the height of the Babel-Bible controversy, the dossier on the relation of the biblical tradition to the Babylonian story of the Flood as it is in the Gilgamesh Epic is more or less closed. A direct dependence of the biblical tradition on the Babylonian is no longer assumed."⁴ Each account has distinctive elements and the differences are often more significant than the similarities.⁵ The contrast between the ethical monotheism of the biblical account and the pagan polytheistic outlook of the Mesopotamian versions is particularly distinctive. The gods of the Babylonian accounts are often vindictive, capricious, and deceive both humans and each other. Even the writers of these accounts display little reverence for these gods.⁶ Consistent with the lack of ethics among the pagan gods is the lack of moral and ethical explanations for the purpose of the deluge.⁷ There are no ethical or moral reasons provided for the selection of the lone individual surviving the flood. Moreover, the gods are ultimately subservient to nature as they are somewhat startled by the conditions that resulted from the deluge. They are appalled at conditions over which they have no control.

But how does one account for the specific terminological and literary connections between the Mesopotamian and biblical accounts? It is quite possible that some of the memories of Noah's flood were carried to different cultures such as Mesopotamia where they were corrupted from the true and inspired description now faithfully recorded in the Genesis narrative.

Interest in the Flood and Noah's ark transcends the biblical narrative and has been a continual subject of fascination. As early as the first century A.D. Flavius Josephus, the Galilean General turned historian, cites a common belief that relics of the ark were known to be preserved in Armenia. Similar evidence may be found in Rabbinic Literature and from Berossus, a Babylonian priest who wrote in Greek ca. 275 B.C.⁸ Late last summer, an expedition sponsored by the National Geography Society discovered remnants of human habitation, apparently inundated by a great flood several thousand years ago, under the Black Sea. Many believe this discovery is independent evidence of the biblical flood.⁹

The Flood and Critical Scholarship

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, critical biblical scholars had a field day with the story of the Flood. The Flood narrative in the Book of Genesis was a test case for the critical source theory of the Pentateuch popularized by J. Wellhausen in 1878.¹⁰ Because of the repetition that occurs in the account the critics were quick to assign the repeated events to different sources, the alleged J and P sources. The repeated events were often listed as follows:

	J	P
Male and Female animals	7:2	6:19; 7:9, 16
God sees man's wickedness	6:5-7	6:11-13
God commands to enter ark	7:1-3	6:18-20
Noah enters ark	7:7-9	7:13-16
Flood comes	7:10	7:11
Waters increase	7:17b	7:18-20
All flesh destroyed	7:22-23	7:21
God rules out future destruction	8:21-23	9:9-11

Since the mid-twentieth century, however, this method has increasingly fallen out of favor even among critical scholars. Rather than indicating another source, repetition has been demonstrated as an effective way of indicating emphasis.¹¹

Another criterion for dividing the Pentateuch into various sources was based on the different names for God, i.e., Yahweh and Elohim. In Genesis 1-11, the name Yahweh was said to belong to the alleged J source while Elohim was said to be the name of God in the P source. H. Leupold pointed out the flaw with this criterion long ago when he observed that the different names for God were not to be attributed to hypothetical sources but rather were intentionally used by the author for specific reasons. The name Yahweh was used in the text when God's gracious dealings with Noah and mankind are emphasized while Elohim was used to focus on God's role as Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, who brings judgment upon the disobedient.¹²

Assuming the literary cohesion of the account of the Flood, B. W. Anderson maintains that the Flood narrative was arranged according to a pattern of antithetical parallelism, in which the second half of the story reflects the sections of the first half but in reverse order. This parallelism, which is common in the Old Tes-

tament, accounts for the repetition. He analyzes the repetition in the following manner, suggesting that God's graciousness to Noah is the central theme of the story:

Transitional introduction (6:9-10)

1. Violence in God's creation (6:11-12)
 2. First divine address: resolution to destroy (6:13-22)
 3. Second divine address: command to enter the ark (7:1-10)
 4. Beginning of the flood (7:11-16)
 5. The rising flood waters (7:17-24)
 - GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF NOAH
 6. The receding flood waters (8:1-5)
 7. The drying of the earth (8:6-14)
 8. Third divine address: command to leave the ark (8:15-19)
 9. God's resolution to preserve order (8:20-22)
 10. Fourth divine address: covenant blessing and peace (9:1-17)
- Transitional conclusion (9:18-19)¹³

The Flood Is Universal

In the Bible the Flood is the primary archetypal act of judgment on fallen humanity. For at least eight reasons the Flood described in Genesis 6:9-9:17 should be considered world-wide rather than local:

1. The phrase "under the whole heaven" (Gen 7:19) cannot be reduced to a local situation.
2. The purpose of the Flood was to judge the entire population of humanity apart from righteous Noah.
3. The large size of the ark would not be necessary if the Flood were restricted to a local domain.
4. Second Peter 3:3-7 describes an overwhelming catastrophic event.
5. A local flood could not cover the Ararat Mountains, which reach 17,000 feet, for over a year.
6. The promise never to destroy the earth again with a flood has universal implications. Many have died in local floods since the time of Noah.

7. If the Flood were local, Noah and his family could have easily migrated to another country rather than build an ark.
8. Only a worldwide flood could account for the attestation of legends in virtually all regions of the world.¹⁴

The Narrative of the Flood Account

Introduction

While the account of the Genesis Flood begins properly at Genesis 6:9, the narrative of Genesis 6:1-8 clearly supplies the immediate historical background, since Noah, who will survive the great deluge, was already introduced in Genesis 5:32. In the latter text we are told that Noah was the son of Lamech and that he would bring relief (*nhm*)¹⁵ to the world, which was cursed since the Fall (5:29). In addition, Noah represented the tenth generation from the creation (1 Chr 1:1-4; Luke 3:36-38). He was five hundred years old when he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 5:32).

The Sons of God Marry the Daughters of Men (Gen 6:1-4)

Genesis 6:1-4, which forms the immediate background to the Flood account, is one of the most disputed passages in the Bible. The account speaks of "the sons of God" who took¹⁶ "the daughters of men" as their wives. The debate centers on the identity of "the sons of God." Of the numerous interpretations, the two most common proposals are to identify "the sons of God" as fallen angels or as the godly line of Seth.¹⁷

Two supports for taking "the sons of God" as angels are the use of the phrase "sons of God" to refer to angels in Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7, and the Septuagint's translation of Genesis 6:2 as "angels of God." The apocryphal book 1 Enoch (6:2) also

seems to point in this direction. In addition, proponents of this view cite 1 Peter 3:19, 20; 2 Peter 2:4-6; and Jude 6 as New Testament references to Genesis 6 that show “the sons of God” to be angels. Prominent church fathers such as Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Lactantius, as well as prominent Jewish interpreters such as Philo and Josephus, and several rabbinical writers also take this position. One objection to this view is that in Matthew 22:30 Jesus teaches that angels do not marry (cf. Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34–36).¹⁸

The alternative interpretation argues that “the sons of God” and “the daughters of men” represent two different families of mankind; “the sons of God” are the descendants of Seth while “the daughters of men” are the offspring from Cain. The line of Seth were those characterized by a pure worship of God. They may have received the appellation “sons of God” from the fact that early on they began to call upon the name of the LORD (Gen 4:26). The designation of God’s true worshippers as His sons is common in the Old Testament (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; 32:5, 6, 18, 19; Isa 1:2; 43:6; 45:11; Jer 31:20; Hos 11:1; Ps 73:15) and is a common motif in the New Testament as well (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:26; 4:6; Eph 1:5; Heb 12:7). The line of Cain, on the other hand, represented those who had rejected the worship of the one LORD. These two distinct groups that had been differentiated by character (see Gen 4:26; 5:22, 29) were now beginning to commingle, and thus the moral distinctions between the two lines were on the verge of being obliterated.¹⁹ The great sin in the account of Genesis 6:1-8 is thus that the godly line of Seth had compromised its faith and began to intermarry with the ungodly line of Cain. In essence they

became unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14).²⁰ F. Schaeffer summarizes the violation from the larger context: “The history of divided humanity develops from the two main lines delineated in Genesis 4:16-24 (the line of Cain) and Genesis 4:25-5:32 (the line of Seth). In the account which follows these genealogies, we are introduced to a world in which moral decay comes to so permeate society that only one man is left in the godly line.”²¹ Early church fathers such as Chrysostom and Augustine advocated this interpretation. Additional support for this view include the following observations: (1) there is no other reference to angels anywhere in the context. The judgment of the Flood is upon men not angels; and (2) the combination of the verb *lqh* (take) with *ishah* (a wife) is a common expression in the Old Testament for the act of marriage (Gen 24:4; 21:21; 11:29; 12:19), and Jesus said angels do not marry.²² This view is in keeping with the later prohibition of intermarriage with the Canaanites (Deut 7:1-4) and with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). “There is a constant prohibition throughout the Old and New Testaments against the people of God marrying those who are not of the people of God.”²³ Thus the Jewish rabbis argued that in addition to violence (Gen 6:11), the immorality described in Genesis 6:1-4 was also a cause for the Flood.²⁴

God’s Plan to Judge the World (Gen 6:5-7)

In Genesis 6:5 it is apparent that the human condition has sunk to new depths. Man’s thoughts are described as continually evil. This situation demands a universal judgment upon man’s rebellion. The wickedness of man in this verse was correctly observed by Martin Luther as the

locus classicus for the natural depravity of the human heart. The expression “the Lord saw” invites comparison with the Creation account, most notably by contrast with the affirmative declaration that “God saw” all He had made and it was good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).²⁵ This emphatic declaration came only after the creation process was complete and God had made man and woman in His own image. Now, in this expressive statement about the condition of the human heart God saw that the human intentions were only evil (see Rom 7:18). This statement is a pointed conclusion to what began with the Fall. As Skinner stated: “The ground of the pessimistic estimate of human nature so forcibly expressed in v. 5 is rather the whole course of man’s development as hitherto related, which is the working out of the sinful knowledge acquired by the Fall.”²⁶ This working out of sinful knowledge would include the murders of Cain and Lamech, as well as the marriages of the godly line with the ungodly line.

As a result God was sorry²⁷ that He made man (Gen 6:6).²⁸ This effect upon God communicates something of the incomprehensibility of the intrusion of sin into the world.²⁹ Human evil has reached its ultimate depths. The limits of divine tolerance being breached, the world must now be purged of its corruption.³⁰ The just punishment for such a perversion of the original creation is the blotting out of life which the Lord God had made (6:7). Man’s morality has adversely affected the natural created order. Thus the creation now awaits its final redemption along with fallen humanity (Rom 8:19-22). Yet in the midst of this section dominated by the themes of sin and punishment there is a ray of hope based solely on God’s

grace: “Noah found favor in the eyes of God” (6:8).³¹ The word translated favor (*hen*) is from the root *hmn*, which refers to “grace” or “unmerited favor.”³²

Structure of the Flood Account

U. Cassuto breaks down the structure of the Flood account into twelve paragraphs. Each paragraph deals with a given episode in the sequence of events, and all the paragraphs are linked together by literary connections between words and expressions. The series of paragraphs is composed of two basic groups, each comprising six paragraphs. The first six depict, step by step, the acts of Divine justice that bring destruction upon the earth, which had become filled with violence (6:9-12, 13-22; 7:1-5, 6-9, 10-16, 17-24). The second group shows us the various consecutive stages of the Divine compassion that renews life upon the earth (8:1-14, 15-17, 18-22; 9:1-7, 8-11, 12-17).³³ This paper will follow a four-point outline, with the main divisions coming after the second point. This divides the Flood account in two main sections, similar to Cassuto’s analysis.

In the larger context of the primeval history of mankind described in Genesis 1-11 Skinner noted that the author’s primary interest in the Flood account is to mark a departure of God’s dealings with the world, to explain the modification of the original constitution of nature (9:1-7), and to provide the immediate historical background for the establishment of the first of the three great covenants, 9:8-17.³⁴

God Instructs Noah to Build an Ark to Escape the Judgment of the Wicked (6:9-22)

Noah Walked with God, but the Wicked Corrupted the Earth (Gen 6:9-12)

Three things are said about Noah in this section: he was righteous, blameless, and he walked with God.³⁵ Several scholars see in the description of Noah as righteous and blameless the opposite of what characterizes the rest of humanity: violence and corruption (Gen 6:11). The virtues of righteous (*tsaddiq*) and blameless (*tamim*), used here for the first time, are virtues favored by God. Righteousness is often understood as a legal term applying to the person who is declared righteous in a court (Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1; and Prov 17:15). This indicates that the individual is above reproach when measured against God's standards. The term blameless is often found in ritual texts describing an animal with no blemish or defect that qualified for sacrificial use (Exod 12:5; Lev 1:3, 10). When applied to the moral sphere, it refers to one without moral or ethical blemish, one with unimpeachable integrity. According to Psalm 15:2 and 101:6, this person, like Noah, is one who walks with God.³⁶ The latter description was also used of Enoch, an ancestor of Noah who walked with God and was delivered from death (Gen 5:22-24).³⁷ This connection between Enoch and Noah may foreshadow Noah's deliverance from death while the rest of humanity was destroyed by the Flood.³⁸ Ezekiel recognizes Noah as one of the outstanding illustrations of righteous living in all antiquity (Ezek 14:14, 20).

Noah was unique in his day because the rest of mankind was corrupt and had filled the earth with violence (6:11). The concept of "corruption" (root, *shat*) may be viewed as a general term describing the violation of the divinely appointed order God had established in Creation.³⁹ "Violence" (*hamas*) gives a more specific explanation of the corruption that existed dur-

ing Noah's time. While the term *hamas* is normally translated "violence," because of its use here and in other contexts, some have suggested that the term should be understood to apply to any action that disregards the sanctity and inviolability of human life. The term occurs in parallelism with terms for "falsehood," "deceit," or "bloodshed," and is applied to such sins as idolatry (Ezek 8:17), deceptive business methods (Ezek 28:16), divorce (Mal 2:16), and slanderous words (Ps 140:1-3 [Heb. 2-4], 11 [Heb. 12]; Prov 3:31-32; 16:29).⁴⁰ Man had been commanded to "multiply and fill (*ml'*) the earth" (Gen 1:28), but now, because of man, "the earth was filled (*ml'*) with violence." The earth's inhabitants had corrupted their way—they had transgressed the natural bounds God had established in Creation. These sins are against nature (Rom 1:26).

The use of the inclusive terms "the earth," and "all flesh"⁴¹ indicates that a universal judgment was unavoidable. Although God created everything and declared it "good," it is now apparent that circumstances have radically changed. In humanity, the pinnacle of God's creation, the change is unmistakable. Sailhamer noted the connections of this section, which focuses on the extent of the Fall and man's corruption, to the original Creation:

Here (6:5-7) and throughout the Flood story, there are numerous ties established with the Creation account in chapter 1. The effect is to show that the Flood was a reversal of God's good work of Creation. In chapter 1 God is shown as the one who prepared the *good land* for man and his family. In the account of the Flood, on the other hand, God is shown as the one who takes this good land from man when he acts corruptly and does not walk in God's way. . . . The cause for the

Flood is tied directly to the earlier account of the fall of man in chapter 3. As a result of the Fall, man had obtained the “knowledge of good and evil” (*tov wara’*, 3:22). It is clear from the previous narratives that the author does not consider man’s having obtained a knowledge of “good and evil” to be beneficial for man. . . . After the Fall, when man had to find the “good” on his own, what God “saw” (*wayyar’*, v. 5) was not that his Creation was *good*; but rather, the Lord “saw” (*wayyar’*) how great man’s wickedness (*ra’at*) on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil (*ra’*).⁴²

God Distinguishes the Righteous from the Wicked (6:13-22)

Verses 13-22 of chapter 6 open with the phrase “Then God said to Noah.” This phrase, which occurs seven times in this narrative (Gen 6:13; 7:1; 8:15; 9:1, 8, 12, 17), is an extension of the choice and selection of Noah and is continuing evidence that Noah had found favor with God. This section contains the instructions for building the ark, which at four hundred fifty feet long, seventy five feet wide, and forty five feet high, has dimensions similar to some modern sea-going vessels.⁴³

The term for the ark (*tebah*) suggests a box-like craft with no rudder or sail or any other navigational device. The fate of the occupants of this vessel was solely in God’s hands. The only other occurrence of the term *tebah* in the Old Testament is in Exodus 2 where the term is used for the small basket that transported the baby Moses through the water. Cassuto has commented on the significance of this correlation:

The exclusive occurrence of ark here and in Exod 2:3-5 is certainly no coincidence. By the verbal parallel, the Torah wished, apparently, to draw attention to the parallelism of

theme. In both cases there is to be saved from drowning one who is worthy of salvation and is destined to bring deliverance to others; here it is humanity that is to be saved, there it is the chosen people; here it is the macrocosm that has to be preserved, there it is the microcosm. The experiences of the fathers foreshadow the history of the descendants.⁴⁴

After announcing that He will bring the Flood upon the earth and destroy all flesh from under heaven (Gen 6:17), God avowed that He would establish a covenant with Noah and his family (Gen 6:18). This is the first occurrence of the important theological word “covenant” (*berit*) in the Bible. (This covenant, which is spelled out in Genesis 9:9-17 after the Flood, is founded on grace, just like the Mosaic covenant [Exod 19:4, 5] and the New covenant [Matt 26:28].⁴⁵) God instructed Noah to bring male and female pairs of every living creature into the ark so as preserve each species (Gen 6:19-20). The precise enumeration of the species of animals clearly evokes the order of animals in Genesis 1. Details of this process are not provided but we must assume that God controlled this operation by stimulating the animals to preserve their lives and their species. This section closes with the announcement that Noah exercised complete obedience to God’s demands (Gen 6:22).

The Lord Destroys the Wicked by the Flood but Preserves Noah and His Family (7:1-24)

The Lord Preserves Noah from Judgment (Gen 7:1-9)

The beginning of this new section is marked by the phrase, “Then the LORD said to Noah” (Gen 7:1). In Genesis 7:2 further information is provided about the

animals to be taken into the ark. The single pairs were unclean (Gen 6:19-20), but here Noah is commanded to take seven pairs of clean animals. This difference is attributed to the fact that it was the clean animals only that would be a food source for the humans on the ark. Thus there is an assumption that the distinctions between clean and unclean animals were understood before they were delineated later in the Mosaic law (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14).⁴⁶

The reason for taking these animals into the ark is explicitly stated in Genesis 7:4: God was to send rain on the earth for forty days and nights to blot out every living thing on the earth.⁴⁷ The rest of this section continues the theme of Noah's obedience to the Lord's command to take the animals into the ark (Gen 7:5, 9).

The Lord's Judgment Destroys the Wicked (7:10-24)

In the second month of the six hundredth year of Noah's life the fountains of the great deep and the floodgates of the sky burst open (7:10-11). The description of the great upheaval of the flood is clearly reminiscent of Genesis 1 where the waters above and below the firmament were separated. Now they are merged again, as if to reverse the work of creation and place the earth back into its original chaotic state (Gen 1:2).⁴⁸

After the Flood Recedes Noah Left the Ark and Offered a Sacrifice to God (8:1-22)

God Restores His Creation after Judgment (8:1-19)

"God remembered"⁴⁹ Noah and the animals in the ark and sent a "wind" (*ruah*) to pass over the earth (8:1). As God begins to fashion the earth after the del-

uge there is a clear terminological connection with the Creation account where God's wind or spirit (*ruah*) was at work over a submerged earth (Gen 1:2).⁵⁰ The conditions God brought forth in Genesis 7:11 were abruptly terminated as the fountains and floodgates were closed and the rains came to an end (8:2). The waters of the Flood thus steadily receded until the seventeenth day of the seventh month when the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat (8:4). By the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible (8:5). To investigate the extent to which the water had receded, Noah sent out a raven from the ark, which made repeated forays (8:7) as it apparently fed upon vegetation and carrion that it might have obtained from floating carcasses.⁵¹ Next Noah sent out a dove, but it soon returned. After another seven days he sent the dove from the ark again, but this time the bird returned with a freshly picked olive leaf. The olive tree, which does not grow in great altitudes, indicated that the waters had sufficiently abated (8:11). When the dove was sent out again seven days later, it did not return (8:12), indicating that it found suitable living conditions.

When the land itself was sufficiently dry, God commanded Noah to leave the ark with his sons and their wives, along with the living creatures (8:13-17). In a clear allusion to the creation account (Gen 1:22), the animals are let out "so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it" (Gen 1:17). This allusion, combined with the image of Noah's family emerging from the ark, indicate that God's plan and program are about to commence.

The Restored Remnant Acknowledges Their Gratitude by Sacrifice (8:20-22)

Noah's immediate response to his deliverance from destruction was to build an altar to the LORD. Thus man's first act in response to divine deliverance was one of worship (see Gen 2:1-3). On this altar Noah offered a burnt offering sacrifice to the LORD. The burnt offering (root *'olah*), which literally means "that which ascends," was a sacrifice that not only was a means of expiation but was also particularly distinguished as a dedicatory sacrifice to the LORD. Noah offered a burnt offering in gratitude for the Lord's work on his behalf. God was pleased with this offering: "God smelled the soothing aroma."⁵² The latter technical formula was often used in cultic texts (Exod 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 26:31) to indicate God's approval of the sacrifice. In expressing satisfaction with Noah's offering God vowed never to curse the ground again on account of man,⁵³ even though "the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth" (8:21). This latter statement is virtually identical to the description of human depravity in 6:5, which justified the coming of the judgment in the Flood. Here, after the Flood, the statement functions like a divine observation of the nature of the human predicament. The Flood has not improved man. Though the motivation for the Flood still remains, God will never again take the same course of action. In spite of human depravity, God commits Himself to His world.⁵⁴ This is an indication of the graciousness of God who kindly tolerates sinful humanity.⁵⁵

In his forbearance, the Lord pledges a regular flow in the course of nature (Gen 8:22). The order of nature is indicated by

four series of environmental and temporal contrasts. The rhythm of life reflected in these ordered processes indicates that a flood will never again disrupt this consistency.⁵⁶ There will certainly be natural catastrophes after the Flood, but these will be on a local, not universal, level. The aftermath of the Flood is thus an affirmation of Creation and speaks ultimately not of divine punishment but of God's faithfulness to preserve his creation.⁵⁷

God's Covenant with the New World (9:1-17)

Life Is to be Produced and Preserved on Earth (9:1-7)

With God's relationship with mankind reestablished after the Flood, God now calls on Noah to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 9:1, 7), just as He commanded Adam (Gen 1:28). Mankind is in effect to start anew. Man's dominion over the animal kingdom (Gen 1:28) is reestablished and the animal world will now fear the presence of man (Gen 9:2). The meat or flesh of animals is permitted for food as long as the blood has been drained (Gen 9:3-4; cf. Lev 17:11, 14; Deut 12:23). This is the first important, biblical statement made about the theological significance of the term blood. Delitzsch summarized the reason for the dietary restriction on blood:

Blood and life are one, inasmuch as they are in one another in a relation of intercausation; the blood is not the same as the life, but it is before all other constituents of the animal corporeality the manifestation, material and vehicle of that life, which pervades, fashions and continuously regenerates the corporeality. This relation of the life to the blood, a far more direct one than to the flesh (for the blood is the medium of life to the latter), is indicated by the juxtaposition of *nfshv* and *dmv*, which at the same time suggests the reason for

this prohibition of the blood, viz. a sacred reverence for that principle of life flowing in the blood, which even as that of the animal is derived from God, who bestows a participation in His all-animating life. . . . This prohibition of blood is repeated seven times in the Mosaic legislation besides Lev 19:6; 3:17; 7:25-27; 17:10-14; Deut 12:16, 23, 24; 15:23, and gives as a further reason, Lev 17:11, that the blood is an atonement, *bannefesh*, by reason of the life that is in it.⁵⁸

While it is permissible to shed the blood of animals for food, man should not become calloused so as to think he could also shed the blood of a human being (Gen 9:6). The significance of human life needed to be stressed at this juncture since all but eight members of the world's population had just lost their lives. Moreover, the explicit sin that necessitated the Flood was violence. Capital punishment for murder limits man's violent acts. Those who take a life made in God's image commit such an atrocity that they forfeit their privilege to live. Furthermore, human beings are responsible for carrying out the sentence of capital punishment (Gen 9:6b).⁵⁹ This responsibility certainly led to the establishment of courts and other legal means to carry out justice and punishments not only in ancient Israel but also in other cultures under the influence of biblical revelation.

God Promises to Preserve Creation (9:8-17)

This section is divided into two subsections—9:8-11 and 9:12-17—by the occurrence of two divine proclamations “God spoke to Noah” (Gen 9:8), “And God said” (Gen 9:12). The key term, is the term *berit*, “covenant,” which occurs seven times, resuming the promise made before the Flood in Gen 6:18. The promise is that

God would never again destroy the earth by a flood. As the Flood affected both man and the animal world, this pledge is established with both man and beast (Gen 9:9-11).

The sign of this covenant is the rainbow (Gen 9:12-13), which is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture in connection with the glory of God (Ezek 1:28; Rev 4:3; 10:1). The rainbow serves as a sign for God to remember His promise not to judge the earth with a worldwide flood ever again (Gen 9:14-17). As the term for rainbow (*qeshet*) was most frequently used for the bow in warfare, the appearance of this sign may be a token to indicate that God will no longer make man the target of His anger as He did in the Flood.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The Flood: The Undoing of Creation

The profound significance of the Flood may be indicated from the fact that there are numerous allusions to the Creation account in the Flood narrative. Various elements in the account of the Flood echo terms and concepts from the Creation narrative. The two primary verbs used in the Creation account (*'asah* and *bara'*; Gen 1:26-27) are employed in the announcement of the decision to wipe out the human race, but in reverse order (Gen 6:7). This may be an early hint in the narrative that what is taking place in the Flood is a reversal of the process of Creation, or Creation's undoing. Whereas Creation in Genesis 1 was largely a matter of separation and distinction, the Flood reversed this order. Based on similar observations, Kruger well stated: “The flood replays the creation account in reverse.”⁶¹

The reference to the animals that were to be taken into the ark (Gen 6:20; 7:14)

are clear allusions to the organizational categories that had been delineated in the Creation week (Gen 1:21, 24-25). The destruction caused by the waters of the Flood followed the same sequence of the Creation: the water first covers the earth and its high mountains, then birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creatures and finally man (Gen 7:13-22).⁶² The provision of food Noah was to take in the ark (Gen 6:21) depends on the earlier reference on what God had provided for man to eat (Gen 1:29-30).

For several reasons Noah should be considered a second Adam. First of all, he was apparently the first man born after the death of Adam (5:28-29), an indication that he will be the second father of humanity. Like Adam, Noah had three sons, one of whom rebelled against the law of God. Additional connections to the Creation account include the role of the wind in Genesis 8:1 in sweeping back the flood waters as in Genesis 1:2, the rhythm of life established in Genesis 1:14 being resumed in Genesis 8:22, the blessing of Genesis 9:7 which repeats Genesis 1:28, and the fact that both narrative accounts are followed by a genealogical list of the Table of Nations (4:17-26; 5:1-32; 10).⁶³ Ross also noted additional associations of the Flood account to the early chapters of Genesis:

The parallels to the beginning of Genesis must not be missed in these next few units of the book. In this first unit the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven brought a flood over the whole earth (chaos), but then the waters abated and dry land appeared as the seas were once again gathered into their places (creation). In the next unit, Noah was commissioned to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, for he now was the new man of the earth. But then in the following unit

Noah's failure was displayed in his lying naked, just as the knowledge of nakedness was evidence of the fall. In both cases curses resulted from the failures. There is thus a deliberate parallel between Adam and Noah and between Adam's world and Noah's world. With Noah there is a new beginning of God's creation, but there is also a new beginning of evil.⁶⁴

Timeless Truths from the Flood Narrative

The Human Heart Is Depraved

In the preface to the Flood account (Gen 6:5), man is described as wicked and the intent of his thoughts as continually evil. After the Flood waters have subsided (Gen 8:21), the same essential portrait of man is given. The Flood has not radically changed man's basic nature. Even Noah himself, the only righteous and blameless man prior to the Flood, became drunk and his son Ham committed the sin of looking upon his father's nakedness (Gen 9:20-27). The human race is characterized by sin (Jer 17:9; Ps 5:9; 14:3; Rom 3:10-18). Jesus himself depicted the human race as evil (Luke 11:13).

God Is Displeased with Sin and Must Judge It

We are told that when God saw the pervasive wickedness of man He was grieved in his heart that He had made man (Gen 6:6). The nature of God requires that He judge man's sin. Because God is holy He cannot wink at sin. For man, this judgment is a judgment of death, which God promised would be the outcome for violation of His commands (Gen 2:17). This judgment is fair and just based on the fact that God created man (Gen 6:7). We clearly see in this sequence of events that sin and judgment are thus inter-related. Judgment is the outcome of sin.

The verb used for “destroy” in the Flood account (*shahat*, 6:13) is the same root for the word corrupt in 6:11, indicating the intrinsic relationship between crime and punishment. “What God decided to destroy (v. 13) had been virtually self-destroyed already.”⁶⁵ The punishment is commensurate with the crime.

But in judging man, a purpose of Creation has been undone, since man, the pinnacle of Creation, was to be God’s representative and have dominion over what God had created (Gen 1:28-30). Instead, because of man’s degradation, what God had made must be destroyed. One purpose of man’s creation in the image of God was to have communion with God (Gen 2:1-3). Man’s evil heart has thwarted this purpose, and so “death in the Flood is no more than the outworking of man’s behavior.”⁶⁶

God’s act of judgment is as personal as His creation of man. God stated in the Creation, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:27), but in the Flood God states “I will destroy man whom I created” (Gen 6:7); “I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:13); “I Myself am bringing the floodwaters on the earth” (Gen 6:17). The personal judgment is necessary because man, who alone is made in God’s image, is the only creature that can have fellowship with God. Of all God’s creation, only man was to enjoy a unique communion with the Creator. This makes man’s sin, which breached God’s law and fractured the personal relationship man had with God, all the more deplorable.

Sin and judgment as well, as the recognition of Noah’s righteousness, are based on the existence of an accepted, universally binding morality. This conventional morality is acknowledged in the Genesis narratives before Israel received

the Law from God on Mount Sinai. This assumption of an assumed moral code is necessary to condemn such actions as murder (Cain, Lamech) and homosexuality (Sodom and Gomorrah) as evil. That a moral law is binding on all humanity is confirmed in the eschatological judgment of the earth in Isaiah 24:5. In the New Testament we find the same teaching in Paul’s recognition of the universal, innate consciousness of sin (Rom 2:14).

In the subsequent revelation of Scripture, the themes of sin and judgment are addressed in terminology associated with the Flood. The Pentateuch uses the terminology of washing with water as a symbol for purging of sins (Lev 8:6, 21). The New Testament picks up the same connection (Titus 3:5). Peter makes a comparison between the flood of water and the end of the world (2 Pet 3:6-7). Conditions preceding the Flood serve as a type and warning of the events at the end of time (Matt 24:36-42; Luke 17:26-27).

At the outset of biblical revelation we have this word about God’s deadly anger over sin. This must be in the back of every reader’s mind as he studies subsequent revelation. God is angry with sin and must judge it. As Mark Twain reportedly said, “It is not the difficult things in the Bible that bother men. It is the things I do understand that keep me up at night.” Certainly what principally disrupts the sleep and rest of all sinners is that we are ultimately accountable to God in judgment (Heb 9:27). The doctrine of judgment for sin is one that cannot be avoided.

God Is a God of Mercy and Grace

It is not by mistake that the first occurrence of the word “grace” in the Bible should come in the narrative of the

Flood—the greatest display of judgment the world has ever witnessed—as grace can only be understood in the context of man’s depravity and God’s righteous anger. The tumultuous judgment of the Flood stands at the beginning of the Bible to provide the necessary setting for God to demonstrate His grace. Noah, to be sure, is undeserving, but he finds favor with God. Every subsequent mention of grace in the succeeding pages of Scripture must be understood against this backdrop of man’s just condemnation.

In the Flood account we also find the first occurrence of the word, “remember” (*zkr*). God remembering Noah is also an aspect of God’s grace. According to C. Westermann, to remember is to apply mercy toward the one threatened with death.⁶⁷ Grace demonstrated by the Flood is found in the New Testament, which sees the Flood as a type of baptism (1 Pet 3:18-22). Both the Flood and water baptism symbolize a way through death into life.

By saving only a remnant of people God was saving man from himself. Clearly, the Flood portrays mankind on the brink of destruction and extinction. God’s concern for man is shown after the Flood as He affixes the most severe penalty to those who commit murder (Gen 9:6). The ordained establishment of capital punishment for murder conveys the high value the Bible places upon human life. This is essential in view of the savage atrocities already committed by Cain and Lamech before the Flood (Genesis 4). The post-flood legislation is meant to limit human violence.

Those Who Receive God’s Grace Should Live Godly Lives

It is only after Noah received God’s grace that we hear of his godly character

(Gen 6:8-9). Righteousness and blamelessness pertain to two distinct aspects of a life with which God is pleased. These qualities were demonstrated by Noah in his obedience (Gen 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16; 8:15-19, 20). In this text righteousness refers to societal faithfulness and loyalty in personal relationships while blamelessness normally refers to ritual purity. Noah found favor with God and man (see 1 Sam 2:26; Luke 2:52). He loved God with his whole being and his neighbor as himself (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Matt 22:34-40).⁶⁸ He is distinct from those of his generation, who are corrupt and violent. He alone stood against the values and morality of his culture. It was disobedience to God’s command that brought on the tumult of the Flood, and it is obedience to God that enabled mankind to survive. Thus obedience to God affects our own lives, our families, the creatures of the world, and the entire earth. Noah had to obey God to avoid the judgment. Every event that determines the course of human history is set in motion by God’s command and man’s obedience.⁶⁹

Because Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, God spared him, his family, and many animals from the judgment of the Flood (Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20). Noah’s finding favor at the outset of the narrative (Gen 6:8) is no doubt significant as the qualities Noah then demonstrates flow from this initial electing grace. The Apostle Paul makes the identical point in Ephesians 2:1-10. We are saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is not alone; it is verified by good works.

Extended grace and favor leads to fellowship with God. Seven times in the narrative the statement is made that God spoke to Noah (Gen 6:18; 7:1; 8:15; 9:1, 8, 12, 17). Grace was the foundation of

Noah's life as it is the foundation of every believer's life today. "It was grace alone that gave Noah his spiritual position before God. He was saved by grace alone."⁷⁰ Those who receive this grace like Noah should walk in righteousness, that is, in obedience. Noah did all that God commanded him (6:22; 7:5, 9). Believers are to do the same today (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3).

The choice of Noah and the instruction he received stem solely from God's grace. Later in Israel's history the Law was given to the nation also in the context of grace, coming immediately after the formative saving event of the Old Testament, the Exodus from Egypt. Grace, and only grace, can provide a way of escape. As in the giving of the Law to the nation of Israel, the commands given to Noah should be seen in this context of grace. Indeed, these commands were given for Noah's survival: "Make for yourself an ark"(Gen 6:14); "Take for yourself all the food that is eaten" (Gen 6:21); "Come into the ark" (Gen 7:1); and "Go out of the ark" (Gen 8:16). The commands are not heavy burdens for those who receive grace, the commands are for their good. In obeying God's ordinances and commands man can then experience abundant life (Deut 32:47; John 10:10). As Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt 11:30).

The People with Whom God Is Pleased May Be Few

Noah had separated himself from the wicked and was separated from sinners in judgment (Psalm 1). The solitary obedience and survival of Noah address the biblical theme of a faithful remnant that occurs throughout the Scripture. We find the remnant theme in the time of Elijah

(1 Kgs 18:22; 19:14) and particularly in the writing prophets Amos and Isaiah.⁷¹ Throughout Israel's history, a select number have identified themselves with the people of God. The New Testament continues this theme in that only a remnant of the Jewish nation responds with belief upon the arrival of their Messiah (Rom 9:6). Only a remnant of the nation of Israel belongs to God. This theme is also reflected in Jesus' statement that those who find life will be few (Matt 7:14). In church history men like Athanasius, Luther, and Knox felt that they were alone in their faithfulness to God and His Word. The biblical Flood is the earliest reference to the remnant theme in the Bible.

God Is Sovereign over Creation and Has Control of the Forces of Nature

Perhaps no other narrative in Scripture, outside the Creation event itself, illustrates this truth more forcibly. As with no other event in world history, the earth stood at the brink of annihilation, sovereignly determined by God in response to human wickedness. Yet, there was never a time when conditions were outside of God's control. He not only brought on the deluge, but also preserved Noah's rudderless ship amid the annihilation.

God shut the ark's door on the very same day the Flood began (Gen 7:13-16). He is not only sovereign over matter but over time as well. The Flood illustrates God's complete control of nature and all the circumstances of life. He preserves and sustains His Creation (Gen 8:21-22; Matt 5:45); the wind and the sea still obey Him (Mark 4:41). God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and reserve the unjust for punishment at the day of judgment (2 Pet 2:9).

ENDNOTES

- ¹J. Lewis, "Flood," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:798. For a helpful geographical layout of the various traditions, see J. Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary Volume 1, Genesis 1:1-11:32* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 285-287.
- ²In other Mesopotamian accounts he is called Ziusudra or Atrahasis.
- ³See S. E. Loewenstamm, "mabbul," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 4:601-602 [In Heb.], and N. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 43-47.
- ⁴G. von Rad, *Genesis*, rev. ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 123. See also N. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 48.
- ⁵Lewis, 799.
- ⁶J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910) 178.
- ⁷One Mesopotamian tradition relates the cause of the flood to the noise of the people.
- ⁸See L. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Noah and its Parallels in Philo, Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities, and Rabbinic Midrashim," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 55 (1988) 31-57, and L. Ginzburg, *The Legends of the Jews: Notes to Volumes I and II From the Creation to the Exodus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968) 5:186, n. 48.
- ⁹Tim Friend, "Evidence Possibly Tied to the Biblical Flood Found in Sea," *USA Today*, 13 September 2000, 4A.
- ¹⁰J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1878; reprint, New York: World, 1957).
- ¹¹For a recent analysis of the source critics' approach including a discussion of the analysis of the flood, see M. Rooker, *Leviticus*, New American Commentary 3B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000) 23-39.
- ¹²H. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942) 1:281.
- ¹³B. Anderson, "From Analysis to Synthesis: The Interpretation of Genesis 1-11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978) 38. Similarly, a more detailed chiastic arrangement may be found in G. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Biblical Flood," *Vetus Testamentum* 28 (1978) 336-348.
- ¹⁴See H. Vos, "Flood (Genesis)," *ISBE* 2:317-318; J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1998) 126; and H. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker/San Diego: Creation-Life, 1976) 182.
- ¹⁵The etymology seems to be a word-play on the similarly sounding roots *nhm*, meaning "comfort," and *nh* (Noah), meaning "rest."
- ¹⁶The wording of Gen 6:2 recalls the account of the Fall in Gen 3:6 where Eve saw that the tree was good, and took and ate.
- ¹⁷For an excellent layout of the major interpretations regarding the identity of "the sons of God," see J. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 98.
- ¹⁸This objection may be countered by the observation that Jesus refers to angels in heaven whereas the Genesis 6 passage pertains to fallen angels that may not have been hindered from marrying and having sexual relations with humans. It is of interest, however, that in Luke 20:36 angels and sons of God are distinguished by Jesus.
- ¹⁹Leupold, 1:249. Leupold is somewhat distinctive in that he holds that "the daughters of men" may have been of either line, and thus refer to women who lack spiritual qualities (1:252).
- ²⁰See J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses*, trans. J. King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 1:237-239.
- ²¹F. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space & Time* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972) 127.
- ²²Jude 6, 7 is concerned with fornication, whereas Gen 6:1-4 specifically deals with marriage (see Davis, 111-112).
- ²³Schaeffer, 132.
- ²⁴See especially Feldman, 37, and Ginzburg, 5:173, n. 17.
- ²⁵It is not an accident that the declaration that all God made was good occurs seven times. For an exhaustive treatment of the use of symbolic numbers in the Book of Genesis, particularly in the Creation and Flood accounts, see U. Cassuto, "biqqoret," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 2:318-335 [In Heb.].
- ²⁶Skinner, 150.
- ²⁷Frequently we find in Scripture the expression "God was sorry" or "God repented" (Exod 32:14; 1 Sam 15:11; Jer 18:7-8; 26:3, 13, 19; Jonah 3:10). The meaning of the phrase is qualified here by the expression "He was grieved in His heart."

²⁸The three roots of the three verbs in Gen 6:6 *nhm* (sorrow), *'sh* (made), and *'sb* (grieved) are the same verbal roots employed in Gen 5:29 in introducing Noah, suggesting that it is Noah who has been chosen to bring some remedy to this intolerable situation. Moreover, the root *'sb* occurs twice in the discourse on the curse (Gen 3:14-19) to describe the new condition of man and woman brought about by the Fall (Gen 3:16, 17). The term thus links terminologically with the Creation account and the experience of the first man and woman, suggesting that in some way Noah's purpose is to remedy the effects of the Fall.

²⁹Von Rad, 117.

³⁰Sarna, *Genesis*, 47.

³¹The words for grace or favor (*hn*) and Noah (*nh*) form an anagram in Hebrew (one term is the reverse spelling of the other).

³²The use of the root demonstrates the idea of "without reason," "without cause," or "unmerited favor" (see 1 Sam 19:15; 25:31; Job 1:9; 2:3; 9:17; 22:6).

³³U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2 vols., trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984) 2:30-31.

³⁴Skinner, 149.

³⁵By the placing of the phrase "with God" first in the final phrase (Gen 6:9) the author underscores that the source of Noah's righteous and blameless living is his relationship with God.

³⁶It is worth noting that in Ps 15:2 the quality of being blameless, often translated as "integrity," is placed in the foremost position of those

qualities necessary to maintain fellowship with God.

³⁷Significantly, Enoch was the seventh in line from Adam, while Noah was the tenth. These indicate significant places in the genealogy just as Boaz and David occupy the seventh and tenth positions in the genealogy of Perez (Ruth 4:18-20).

³⁸See J. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 2:81.

³⁹See Skinner, 159.

⁴⁰See Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:52-53, and Sarna, *Genesis*, 51.

⁴¹It is probable that the animals are to be included in the phrase "all flesh." Man's sins have affected animals and the earth (Hos 4:2-3; Isa 1:2-7; Jer 23:10; Rom 8:19-22). Sin often leaves in its wake a host of innocent victims.

⁴²Sailhamer, 80.

⁴³See Skinner, 161, and Sailhamer, 83-84.

⁴⁴Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:59.

⁴⁵D. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1967) 89.

⁴⁶The same point could be made also from Genesis 15 were it is only clean animals that are sacrificed in the covenant making ceremony.

⁴⁷The number forty is a symbolic number in the Bible often associated with a trial and purging from evil (Num 14:33; Exod 24:18; 1 Kgs 19:8; Jonah 3:4; Matt 4:2; Acts 1:3).

⁴⁸This reversal of Creation is also sup-

ported from the use of the term *l'hom* to describe the waters (Gen 1:2; 7:11). For a defense that God's original creation is described in Gen 1:2, see M. Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation?" Part 1, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (July-September 1992) 316-323, and *ibid.*, Part 2, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (October-December 1992) 411-427.

⁴⁹In the Bible remembering, especially when God is the subject, is not a recollection of thought but a focusing on the object of the memory and faithful intervention on behalf of the object (Gen 9:15; 19:29; 30:22; Exod 2:24; 6:5; Luke 1:54, 55).

⁵⁰Sailhamer notes a parallel to the Exodus as well in the wording of the Genesis 8. Just as God remembered his covenant (Exod 2:24) and sent a strong wind to dry up the Red Sea to allow dry land to appear (Exod 14:21-22), so also in the Flood God remembered Noah, sent a wind so the people may eventually come out of the ark on dry ground (p. 89).

⁵¹Sarna, *Genesis*, 57.

⁵²Hebrew *nihoh*, "soothing aroma," sounds much like *noah*, "Noah." For discussion of the significance of the burnt offering, see Rooker, *Leviticus*, 84-93.

⁵³The occurrence of the terms *'adam* (man) and *'adamah* (ground) recall the original creation in Genesis 1-2.

⁵⁴D. J. Clines, "Noah's Flood: The Theology of the Flood Narrative," *Faith and Thought* 100 (1972-73) 140.

⁵⁵Alternatively, Kidner argues that the resolution not to destroy man again is based on Noah's sacrifice, which typifies the sacrifice made once for all by Jesus Christ (Rom 3:25, 26)

(p. 93).

⁵⁶Skinner, 158.

⁵⁷Clines, 140.

⁵⁸F. Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978) 1:284-285.

⁵⁹Poetic justice is established in the putting to death of one who takes another human life. The first three Hebrew words of Gen 9:6 describe the crime and are placed in reverse order in the announcement of the sentence (see Sarna, *Genesis*, 61).

⁶⁰See Von Rad, 134.

⁶¹H. A. J. Kruger, "Creation-Uncreation Reflection of Reversal Motifs in Genesis 9:18-24 (25-29)," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999) 129.

⁶²For a discussion of other biblical texts that allude to the Creation pattern, see M. Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971) 151-167.

⁶³Sarna, *Genesis*, 49-50.

⁶⁴A. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988) 189.

⁶⁵Clines, 134-135.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 137.

⁶⁷C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) 441.

⁶⁸The Ten Commandments also exhibit this twofold division (see Rooker, *Leviticus*, 65-77).

⁶⁹Westermann, 424.

⁷⁰W. H. Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946) 72-73.

⁷¹G. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1972).

Three Expository Discourses on Genesis¹

Andrew Fuller

Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) was a Baptist pastor and served churches in Soham and Kettering, England. Historically, he is perhaps best known as a friend and supporter of William Carey. Among his many works, "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation" (1785) is most familiar to modern readers. The Expository Discourses included here are taken from volume three of *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications.

DISCOURSE IV. THE FALL OF MAN Genesis 3:1-7

We have hitherto seen man as God created him, upright and happy. But here we behold a sad reverse; the introduction of moral evil into our world, the source of all our misery.

There can be no doubt but that the serpent was used as an instrument of Satan, who hence is called "that old serpent, the devil." The subtlety of this creature might answer his purposes. The account of the serpent *speaking* to the woman might lead us to a number of curious questions, on which, after all, we might be unable to obtain satisfaction. Whether we are to understand this, or the temptations of our Lord in the wilderness, as spoken in an audible voice, or not, I shall not take upon me to decide. Whatever may be said of either case, it is certain, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that evil spirits have, by the Divine permission, access to human minds; not indeed so as to be able to impel us to sin without our consent; but it may be in some such manner as men influence each other's minds to evil. Such seems to be the proper idea of a tempter. We are conscious of *what we choose*; but are scarcely at all acquainted with the things that *induce* choice. We are exposed to innumerable influences; and have therefore reason to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!"

With respect to the temptation itself, it begins by calling in question the *truth* of

God.—Is it true that God has prohibited any tree?—Can it be? For what was it created?—Such are the inquiries of wicked men to this day. "For what are the objects of pleasure made," say they, "But to be enjoyed? Why did God create meats and drinks, and dogs and horses? What are appetites for, but to be indulged?" We might answer, among other things, to try them who dwell on earth.

It seems also to contain an insinuation that if man must not eat of *every tree*, he might as well eat of none. And thus discontent continues to overlook the good, and pores upon the one thing wanting. "All this availeth me nothing, so long as Mordecai is at the gate."

Ver. 2, 3. The answer of Eve seems to be very good at the outset. She very properly repels the insinuation against the goodness of God, as though, because he had withheld one tree, he had withheld, or might as well have withheld, all. "No," says she, "we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: there is only one withheld." She also, with equal propriety and decision, repelled the doubt which the tempter had raised respecting the prohibition of that one. The terms by which she expresses it show how clearly she understood the mind of God, and what an impression his command had made upon her mind: "Of the fruit of this tree, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it; neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die!" We do not read that they were forbidden to *touch* it; but she understood a prohibition of eating to contain a prohibition of *touching*.

And this exposition of the woman, while upright, affords a good rule to us. If we would shun evil, we must shun the *appearance* of it, and all the avenues which lead to it. To parley with temptation is to play with fire. In all this Eve sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Ver. 4, 5. The wily serpent now proceeds to a second attack. Mark the progress of the temptation. At the outset he only suggested his doubts; but now he deals in positive assertion. In this manner the most important errors creep into the mind. He who sets off with apparently modest doubts will often be seen to end in downright infidelity.

The positivity of the tempter might be designed to oppose that of the woman. She is peremptory; he also is peremptory; opposing assertion to assertion. This artifice of Satan is often seen in his ministers. Nothing is more common than for the most false and pernicious doctrines to be advanced with a boldness that stuns the minds of the simple, and induces a doubt: "Surely I must be in the wrong, and they in the right, or they could not be so confident."

Yet the tempter, it is observable, does not positively deny that God might have *said*, so and so; for this would have been calling in question the veracity of Eve, or denying what she knew to be true; which must have defeated his end. But he insinuates that, whatever God might have said, which he would not now dispute, *it would not in the end prove so*. Satan will not be so unpolite as to call in question either the honour or the understanding of Eve, but scruples not to make God a liar; yea, and has the impudence to say that *God knew* that, instead of proving an evil, it would be a benefit. Alas, how often has man been flattered by the ministers of

Satan at God's expense! Surely we need not be at a loss in judging whence those doctrines proceed which invalidate the Divine threatenings, and teach sinners going on still in their trespasses, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" Nor those which lead men to consider the Divine prohibitions as aimed to diminish their happiness; or, which is the same thing, to think it rigid or hard that we should be obliged to comply with them. And those doctrines which flatter our pride, or provoke a vain curiosity to pry into things unseen, proceed from the same quarter. By aspiring to be a god, man became too much like a devil; and where human reason takes upon itself to set aside revelation, the effects will continue to be much the same.

Ver. 6. This poison had effects ... the woman paused ... looked at the fruit ... it began to appear desirable ... she felt a wish to be *wise* ... in short, she took of the fruit ... and did eat! But was she not alarmed when she had eaten? It seems not; and feeling no such consequences follow as she perhaps expected, ventured even to persuade her husband to do as she had done; and with her persuasion he complied. The connexion between sin and misery is *certain*, but not always *immediate*: its immediate effects are deception and stupefaction, which commonly induct the party to draw others into the same condition.

It does not appear that Adam was deceived; but the woman only, 1 Timothy 2:14. He seems to have sinned with his eyes open, and perhaps from love to his wife. It was the first time, but not the last, in which Satan has made use of the nearest and tenderest parts of ourselves, to draw our hearts from God. Lawful affection may become a snare. If the nearest relation or friend tempt us to depart from

God, we must not hearken. When the woman had sinned against God, it was the duty of her husband to have disowned her for ever, and to have left it to his Creator to provide for his social comfort; but a fond attachment to the creature overcame him. He *hearkened to her voice*, and plunged headlong into her sin.

Ver. 7. And now, having both sinned, they began to be sensible of its effects. Conscious innocence has forsaken them. Conscious guilt, remorse, and shame possess them. Their eyes are now opened indeed, as the tempter had said they would be; but it is to sights of woe. Their naked bodies, for the first time, excite shame; and are emblems of their souls; which, stripped of their original righteousness, are also stripped of their honour, security, and happiness.

To hide their outward nakedness, they betake themselves to the *leaves of the garden*. This, as a great writer observes, was “to cover, not to cure.” And to what else is all the labour of sinner directed? Is it not to *conceal* the bad, and to *appear* what they are not, that they are continually studying and contriving? And being enabled to impose upon one another, they with little difficulty impose upon themselves, “trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others.” But all is mere show, and when God comes to summon them to his bar will prove of no account.

DISCOURSE V.
THE TRIAL OF THE
TRANSGRESSORS
Genesis 3:8-14

Ver. 8. We have seen the original transgression of our first parents; and now we

see them called to account and judged. The Lord God is represented as “walking in the garden in the cool of the day;” that is, in the evening. This seems to denote the ordinary and intimate communion which man enjoyed with his Maker, while he kept his first estate. We may be at a loss how to hold communion with them that loved him. To accommodate it to our weak capacities, it is represented under the form of the owner of a garden taking his evening walk in it, to see, as we should say, “whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded;” to see and converse with those whom he had placed over it.

The cool of the day, which to God was the season for visiting his creatures, may, as it respects man, denote a season of *reflection*. We may sin in the daytime; but God will call us to account at night. Many a one has done that in the *heat* and bustle of the day which has afforded bitter reflection in the *cool* of the evening; and such, in many instance, has proved the evening of life.

The *voice* of God was heard, it seems, before any thing was seen: and as he appears to have acted towards man in his usual way, and as though he knew of nothing that had taken place till he had it from his own mouth, we may consider this as the voice of kindness; such, whatever it was, as Adam had used to hear beforetime, and on the first sound of which he and his companion had been used to draw near, as sheep at the voice the shepherd, or as children to the voice of a father. The voice of one whom we love conveys life to our hearts: but, alas, it is not so now! Not only does conscious guilt make them afraid, but contrariety of heart to a holy God renders them unwilling to draw near to him. The kindest lan-

guage, to one who is become an enemy, will work in a wrong way. "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Instead of coming at his call, as usual, they "hide themselves from his presence among the trees of the garden." Great is the *cowardice* which attaches to guilt. It flies from God, and from all approaches to him in prayer or praise; yea, from the very thoughts of him, and of death and judgment, when they must appear before him. But wherefore flee to the trees of the garden? Can they screen them from the eyes of him with whom they have to do? Alas, they could not hide themselves and their nakedness from their own eyes; how then should they elude discovery before an omniscient God? But we see here to what a stupid and besotted state of mind sin had already reduced them.

Ver. 9. God's general voice of kindness receiving no answer, he is more particular; calling Adam *by name*, and inquiring, "Where art thou?" In vain does the sinner hide himself: the Almighty will find him out. If he answer not to the voice of God in his word, he shall have a special summons served upon him before long. Observe what the summons was, "Where art thou?" It seems to be the language of injured friendship. As if he should say, How is it that I do not meet thee as heretofore? What have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of drought? How is it that thou hailest not my approach as on former occasions.—It was also language adapted to lead him to reflection: "Where art thou?" Ah, where indeed! God is thus interrogating sinful men. Sinner, where art thou? What is thy

condition? In what way art thou walking, and whither will it lead thee?

Ver. 10. To this trying question man is compelled to answer. See with what ease God can bring the offender to his bar. He has only to speak, and it is done. "He shall call to the heavens and the earth, that he may judge his people." But what answer can be made to him? "I heard thy voice in the garden."—Did you? Then you cannot plead ignorance. No, but something worse:—"I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." Take notice, he says nothing about his *sin*, but merely speaks of its *effects*; such as fear and conscious nakedness, or guilt. The language of a contrite spirit would have been, "I have sinned!" But this is the language of *impenitent misery*. It is of the same nature as that of Cain, "My punishment is heavier than I can bear!" This spirit is often apparent in persons under first convictions, or when brought low by adversity, or drawing near to death; all intent on bemoaning their misery, but insensible to the evil of their sin. To what a condition has sin reduced us! Stripped naked to our shame, we are afraid to meet the kindest and best of Beings! O reader! We must now be clothed with a better righteousness than our own, or how shall we stand before him?

Ver. 11. Adam began, as I have said, with the *effects* of his sin; but God directed him to the *cause* of those effects.—Naked! how came such a thought into thy mind? The nakedness of thy body, with which I created thee, was no nakedness; neither fear nor shame attached to that. What meanest thou by being naked?—Still there is no confession. The truth will not come out without a direct inquiry on the subject. Here then it follows: "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee

that thou shouldest not eat?" Thus the sinner stands convicted. Now we might suppose he would have fallen at the feet of his Maker, and have pleaded guilty. But oh the hardening nature of sin!

Ver. 12. Here it is, it is true, a confession of his sin. It comes out at last; "I did eat;" but with what a circuitous, extenuating preamble, a preamble which makes bad worse. The first word is, *The woman*; aye, the woman. It was not my fault, but hers. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me."—It was not I, it was *thou thyself*! If thou hadst not given this woman to be with me, I should have continued obedient.—Nay, and as if he suspected that the Almighty did not notice his plea sufficiently, he repeats it emphatically; "*She gave me, and I did eat!*" Such a confession was infinitely worse than none. Yet such is the spirit of fallen man to this day: It was not I ... it was my wife, or my husband, or my acquaintance, that persuaded me; or it was my situation in life, in which *thou* didst place me!—Thus "the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord."

It is worthy of notice that God makes *no answer* to these perverse excuses. They were unworthy of an answer. The Lord proceeds, like an aggrieved friend who would not multiply words:—I see how it is: stand aside!

Ver. 13. Next the woman is called, and examined: "What is this that thou hast done?" The question implies that it was no trifling thing; and the effects which have followed, and will follow, confirm it. But let us hear the woman's answer. Did she plead guilty? The circumstance of her being first in the transgression, and the tempter of her husband, one should have thought, would have shut her mouth at least; and being also of the

weaker sex, it might have been expected that she would not have gone on to provoke the vengeance of her Creator. But, lo! She also shifts the blame: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."—I was deceived. I did not mean evil; but was drawn into it through the wiles of an evil being.—Such is the excuse which multitudes make to this day, when they can find no better:—The devil tempted me to it!—Still God continues his forbearance; makes no answer; but orders her, as it were, to stand aside.

Ver. 14. And now the serpent is addressed: but mark the difference. Here is no question put to him, but merely a doom pronounced. Wherefore? Because no mercy was designed to be shown him. He is treated as an avowed and sworn enemy. There was no doubt *wherefore* he had done it, and therefore no *reason* is asked of his conduct.

The workings of conviction in the minds of men are called *the strivings of the Spirit*, and afford a hope of mercy. Though they are no certain sign of grace received, (as there was nothing good at present in our first parents,) yet they are the working of a merciful God, and prove that he has not given over the sinner to hopeless ruin. But the serpent has nothing to expect but a fearful looking for of judgment.

The form under which Satan is cursed is that of *the serpent*. To a superficial reader it might appear that the vengeance of Heaven was directed against the animal, distinguishing him from all cattle, subjecting him to a most abject life, condemning him to creep upon his belly, and of course to have his food besmeared with dust. But was God angry with the serpent? No: but as under that form Satan had tempted the woman, so that shall be the form under

which he shall receive his doom. The spirit of the sentence appears to be this—Cursed art thou above all creatures, and above every thing that God hath made. Miserable shalt thou be to an endless duration!—Some have thought, and the passage gives some countenance to the idea, that the state of fallen angels was not hopeless till now. If it had, the curse could only have added a greater degree of misery.

DISCOURSE VI.
THE CURSE OF SATAN,
INCLUDING A BLESSING TO
MAN—EFFECTS OF THE FALL
Genesis 3:15-24

Ver. 15. By all that had hitherto been said and done, God appears to have concealed from man who was his tempter; and for this reason, among others, to have pronounced the doom on Satan under the form of a curse upon the serpent. By this we may learn that it is of no account, as to the criminality of sin, whence it comes, or by whom or what we are tempted to it. If we choose it, it is *ours*, and we must be accountable for it.

But mark the wisdom and goodness of God: as under the form of cursing the serpent he had pronounced a most tremendous doom on the tempter, so under the form of this doom is covertly intimated a design of mercy the most transcendent to the tempted! If man had been in a suitable state of mind, the promise might have been *direct*, and addressed to him: but he was not; for his heart, whatever it might be afterwards, was as yet hardened against God. It was fit, therefore, that whatever designs of mercy were entertained concerning him, or his posterity,

they should not be given in the form of a promise to *him*, but of threatening to Satan. The situation of Adam and Even at this time was like that of sinners under the preaching of the gospel. The intimation concerning the woman's Seed would indeed imply that she and her husband should live in the world, that she would bring forth children, and that God would carry on an opposition to the cause of evil: but it does not ascertain *their salvation*; and if there appear nothing more in their favour in the following party of the history than what has hitherto appeared, we shall have no good ground to conclude that either of them is gone to heaven. The Messiah might come as the Saviour of sinners, and might descend from them after the flesh, and yet they might have no portion of him.

But let us view this famous passage more particularly, and that in the light in which it is here represented, as a *threatening to the serpent*. This threatening does not so much respect the *person* of the grand adversary of God and man as his *cause* and *kingdom* in the world. He will be punished in his person at the time appointed; but this respects the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy his *works*. There are four things here intimated, each of which is worthy of notice. **1.** The ruin of Satan's cause was to be accomplished by *one in human nature*. This must have been not a little mortifying to his pride. If he must fall, and could have had his choice as to the mode, he might rather have wished to have been crushed by the immediate hand of God; for however terrible that hand might be, it would be less humiliating than to be subdued by one of a nature inferior to his own. The human nature especially appears to have become odious to his eyes. It is possible that the

rejoinings of eternal wisdom over man were known in heaven, and first excited his envy; and that his attempt to ruin the human race was an act of revenge. If so, there was a peculiar fitness that from *man* should proceed his overthrow. **2.** It was to be accomplished by the Seed of the *woman*. This would be more humiliating still. Satan had made use of her to accomplish his purposes, and God would defeat his schemes through the same medium; and by how much he had despised and abused her, in making her the instrument of drawing her husband aside, by so much would he be mortified in being overcome by one of her descendants. **3.** The victory should be obtained, not only by the Messiah himself, but by all his adherents. The Seed of the woman, though it primarily referred to him, yet, being opposed to "the seed of the serpent," includes all that believe in him. And there is little or not doubt that the account in Revelation 7:17, has allusion to this passage: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Now if it were mortifying for Satan to be overcome by the Messiah himself, considered as the Seed of the woman, how much more when, in addition to this, every individual believer shall be made to come near, and as it were set his feet upon the neck of his enemy! Finally, though it should be a long war, and the cause of the serpent would often be successful, yet in the end it should be utterly ruined. The *head* is the *seat of life*, which the *heel* is not: by this language, therefore, it is intimated that the life of Christ's cause should not be affected by any part of Satan's opposition; but that the life of Satan's cause should be that of Christ. For

this purpose is he manifested in human nature, that he may *destroy* the works of the devil; and he will never desist till he have utterly crushed his power.

Now as the threatenings against Babylon conveyed good news to the church, so this threatening against the old serpent is full of mercy to men. But for this enmity which God would put into the woman's seed against him, he would have had every thing his own way, and every child of man would have had his portion with him and his angels.

From the whole, we see that Christ is the foundation and substance of all true religion since the fall of man, and, therefore, that the only way to salvation is by faith in him. We see also the importance of a decided attachment to him and his interest. There are two great armies in the world, Michael and his angels warring against the dragon and his angels; and, according to the side we take, such will be our end.

Ver. 16-19. The sentence of the woman, and of the man, which follows, like the rest, is under a veil. Nothing but temporal evils are mentioned; but these are not the whole. Paul teaches us that, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to *condemnation*; and such a condemnation as stands opposed to *justification of life*, Romans 5:18. The woman's load in this life was *sorrow in bearing children*, and *subjection to her husband*. The command to be fruitful and multiply might originally, for aught I know, include some degree of pain; but now it should be "greatly multiplied:" and there was doubtless a natural subordination in innocency; but through sin woman becomes comparatively a slave. This is especially the case where sin reigns uncontrolled, as in heathen and Mahomedan countries.

Christianity, however, so far as it operates, counteracts it; restoring woman to her original state, that of a friend and companion. The sentence on *man* points out to him wherein consisted his sin; namely, in hearkening to the voice of his wife, rather than to God. What a solemn lesson does this teach us against loving the creature more than the Creator, and hearkening to any counsel to the rejection of his! And, with respect to his punishment, it is worthy of notice, that as that of Eve was common to her daughters, so that of Adam extends to the whole human race. The *ground* is cursed for his sake—cursed with barrenness. God would, as it were, take no delight in blessing it; as well he might not, for all would be perverted and become the food of rebellion. The more he should bless the earth, the more wicked would be its inhabitants. Man also himself is doomed to wretchedness upon it; he should drag on the few years that he might live in sorrow and misery, of which the *thorns and thistles* which it should spontaneously produce were but emblems. God had given him before to eat of *the fruit of the trees of the garden*; but now he must be expelled thence, and take his portion with the brutes, and live upon *the herb of the field*. He was allowed *bread*, but it should be by the *sweat of his face*; and this is the lot of the great body of mankind. The end of this miserable state of existence was that he should return to his native *dust*. Here the sentence leaves him. A veil is, at present, drawn over a future world; but we elsewhere learn that at what time “the flesh returns to dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it;” and that the same sentence which appointed man “once to die” added, “but after this the judgement.”

It is painful to trace the different parts

of this melancholy sentence, and their fulfillment in the world to this day; yet there is a bright side even to this dark cloud. Through the promised Messiah a great many things pertaining to the curse are not only counteracted, but become blessings. Under his glorious reign “the earth shall yield its increase, and God, our own God, delight in blessing us.” And while its fruitfulness is withheld, this has a merciful tendency to stop the progress of sin; for if the whole earth were like the plains of Sodom in fruitfulness, which are compared to the garden of God, its inhabitants would be as Sodom and Gomorrah in wickedness. The necessity of hard labour, too, in obtaining a subsistence, which is the lot of the far greater part of mankind, tends more than a little, by separating men from each other, and depressing their spirits, to restrain them from the excesses of evil. All the afflictions of the present life contain in them a motive to look upward for a better portion; and death itself is a monitor to warn them to prepare to meet their God. These are things suited to a *sinful* world; and where they are sanctified, as they are to believers in Christ, they become real blessings. To them they are “light afflictions,” and last “but for a moment;” and while they do last, “work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” To them, in short, death itself is introductory to everlasting life.

Ver. 20. Adam’s wife seems hitherto to have been known only by the name of *woman*; but now he calls her *Eve*, that is, *life, living, or the mother of all living*. He might possibly have understood from the beginning that the sentence of death would not prevent the existence of the human race, or if not, what had been said of the woman’s seed would at least sat-

isfy him on the subject.

But it is generally supposed, and there seems to be ground for the supposition, that in calling his wife *life*, or *living*, he intended more than that she would be the mother of all mankind; that it is expressive of his faith in the promise of her victorious Seed destroying, what Satan had succeeded in introducing—*death*, and that thus she should be the means of *immortal life* to all who should live in him. If such was his meaning, we may consider this as the first evidence in favour of his being renewed in the spirit of his mind.

Ver. 21. By the coats of skins wherewith the Lord God clothed them, it seems to be implied that animals were slain, and as they were not at that time slain for food, it is highly probable they were slain for sacrifice, especially as this practice is mentioned in the life of Abel. Sacrifices therefore appear to have been ordained by God to teach man his desert, and the way in which he must be saved. It is remarkable that the clothing of Adam and Eve is ascribed to *the Lord God*, and that it appears to have succeeded the slender covering wherewith they had attempted to cover themselves. Is it not natural to conclude that God only can hide our moral nakedness, and that the way in which he does it is by covering us with the righteousness of our atoning sacrifice?

Ver. 22. This ironical reflection is expressive of both indignation and pity.—Man is becoming wonderfully wise! Unhappy creature! He has forever forfeited my favour, which is life, and having lost the thing signified, let him have no access to the sign. He has broken my covenant: let neither him nor his posterity henceforward expect to regain it by any obedience of theirs.

Ver. 23, 24. God is determined that man

shall not so much as dwell in the garden where the tree of life grows, but be turned out as into the wide world. He shall no longer live upon the delicious fruits of Eden, but be driven to seek his food among the beasts of the field; and, to show the impossibility of his ever regaining that life which he had lost, “cherubim and a flaming sword” are placed to guard it. Let this suffice to impress us with that important truth, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified;” and to direct us to a tree of life which has no flaming sword to prevent our access! Yet even in this, as in other threatenings, we may perceive a mixture of mercy. Man had rendered his days *evil*, and God determines they shall be but *few*. It is well for us that a life of sin and sorrow is not immortal.

ENDNOTES

¹Except for minor stylistic modifications the original spelling and punctuation have been maintained.

Letters to A. T. Robertson

Editor's note: At this point we depart from our topic of Genesis in order to include the following two pieces of correspondence written to A. T. Robertson. Dr. Robertson taught at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1890 to 1934. His legacy remains to this day in his grammar, *The Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, and in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. We think these letters might be of interest to our readers. One of the letters is from Dr. Bruce Metzger, the renowned NT scholar from Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Metzger has written numerous books and articles. Dr. Charles W. Draper, Associate Professor of New Testament at Boyce College, discovered these letters and provides the commentary.

Charles Darwin, Lady Hope, and A. T. Robertson

In 1915 quite a stir was set off when a British woman, one Lady Hope, while at the famous Moody Northfield Conference, told of a visit she made to Charles Darwin, father of evolution, late in his life, during which he recanted much of his scientific work and professed Christian conversion. Lady Hope wrote the story for the *Watchman Examiner* (New York, August 19, 1915), which also ran other stories on the matter.

All of this is well known. A book, *The Darwin Fraud*, has been written about the episode. The matter has resurfaced from time to time up until the present, and seems to be a story that will not die. What is not commonly known is how A. T. Robertson figured in the matter.

Robertson repeated the story from the platform at Northfield soon after the original telling and was drawn into the controversy, which soon spread north to Canada and across the Atlantic to Britain. He too was mentioned in the *Watchman Examiner*. Unfortunately, correspondence from Robertson on the matter is unavailable, but the correspondence he received is preserved in the Robertson archives at

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he studied and then taught for forty-six years prior to his death in 1934.

A British acquaintance living in Toronto, Canada, wrote Robertson on Nov 2, 1915, that he had been asked about the Lady Hope story and Robertson's apparent corroboration of it. This correspondent, whose name is lost (the last page of the letter is missing), wrote that he told inquirers that he doubted the truthfulness of the story, as some known details in the story about Charles Darwin were inaccurate. He further confided to Robertson, however, that he personally knew Lady Hope in London and trusted neither "her judgment or her imagination." Beyond this, he added, "I could a tale unfold, if it were necessary." This letter reveals that it was the writer's contact with Professor Poulton of Oxford that brought Darwin's son, Sir Francis Darwin, into the fray. Robertson's correspondent wrote, "From another son of Charles Darwin, I have received testimony to the absolute and almost entire inaccuracy. I may mention also, that I have from two other quarters, one of them, if I named it would be well known to you, I am

assured that the story is ‘a fake, and a very shameful fake.’”

This friend wrote Robertson so he could be well informed for the furor to follow.

Shortly later Robertson received a letter from England, dated Nov 8, 1915:

Dear Sir

I have today written the *Watchman Examiner* of New York denying the authenticity of Lady Hope’s account of a visit to my Father at Down, and I think it due to you and your position that I should at the same time communicate with you (sic)

Neither I nor other members of my family have any knowledge of Lady Hope, and there are almost ludicrous points in her statement which make it impossible to believe that she ever visited my father at Down. I think you will agree that he could not have become openly Christian without our knowledge. It is quite certain that no such change occurred (sic)

I regret that you should have been misled into believing Lady Hope, but under the circumstances it was quite natural that you should have done so.

Yours Very Truly,
Francis Darwin

Robertson apparently dealt with the matter and put it behind him. But years later, in October, 1930, he received a long letter from J. A. Derome, a newspaper columnist for *The Daily Argus-Leader*, of Sioux Falls, S. D., who was publishing a series of articles on the theme, “Was Charles Darwin an Atheist?” After outlining for Robertson all the data he had found in the course of his research about Darwin’s spirituality, he described a single page from a pamphlet he had been given. Apparently it was about the Lady Hope affair and had Robertson’s name in it. Having established to his own satisfaction that the story was a hoax, Derome

wanted Robertson’s permission to say that Robertson had repeated the story “without sponsoring its accuracy.” He added, “I want to say the fair thing all around.” A note in Robertson’s handwriting at the bottom of the letter indicates that he dealt with it, although he did not keep a copy of his reply to Derome.

Robertson’s presence at Northfield indicates his extreme popularity as a Bible preacher and teacher. Robertson once said that he thought of himself first as a preacher. The interest in Robertson’s connection to the story in America, Canada, and Britain and its longevity (fifteen years) indicates the grand stature that he achieved as a scholar. In fact, the famous New Testament Greek scholar, James Hope Moulton, told G. Campbell Morgan that no one on earth knew more about the Greek New Testament than A. T. Robertson.

A. T. Robertson’s name is still known, mostly because of his magisterial and still useful, large Greek grammar and his *Word Pictures*. But his shadow is much longer than most realize. The current generation would benefit greatly by rediscovering the more than forty books he wrote on the New Testament and on the study of Greek.

A Serendipity at the Library

Recently while searching the correspondence of A. T. Robertson for material on a matter I am researching, I went through the folder for 1933 and found a postcard between two letters. I started to ignore it, but then decided to glance at it. The front of this penny postcard had no return address, and was simply addressed to “Prof. A. T. Robertson, Louisville, Kentucky.” On the reverse was written:

July 29, 1933
Middletown, Pa.
Dear Professor Robertson:

I appreciate your taking time to write again sending me information as to where I might get the works of E. Jacquier. Thank you. Perhaps you may be interested to know that I am 19; a junior at Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Pa.; and that I like Greek immensely—hope to be a N. T. Greek Prof.

Respectfully,
Bruce M. Metzger

Bruce Metzger obviously knew the stature of A. T. Robertson, but Robertson, who to the end of his days was as helpful as he could be to students and others, could little know that his act of kindness was performed for one who would later achieve Robertsonian stature, and who also would be kind and helpful to others at every opportunity.

In a gracious reply after being sent a copy of the postcard, Dr. Metzger wrote that he had planned to study under Robertson after graduating from college, but Robertson died in the fall of his senior year.

Book Reviews

Paul and His Letters. By John B. Polhill. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999, vii + 485 pp., \$29.99.

John B. Polhill has provided students of the New Testament with a brilliantly researched and highly readable volume on the life and letters of Christianity's great apostle. Building on the widely used work of F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, and his own outstanding exegetical commentary on the Book of Acts in the *New American Commentary* series, Polhill has given us a comprehensive treatment of the Pauline materials. There is no question that this new volume will serve as a standard textbook and resource for years to come.

The author makes clear that he is not writing a "life of Paul." At the same time, the book is laid out chronologically, following the order of the events and travels of the apostle as they are presented in the Book of Acts. Given the disjunction between Paul and Luke often proposed by contemporary Pauline scholars, Polhill's coherent work is a welcomed contribution to the field of New Testament studies.

Polhill is at his best in the early chapters as he surveys the background material behind the life and thought of the apostle Paul. As a citizen of two cities, the apostle's background in Tarsus and Rome is ably portrayed. Next the reader is introduced to the significance of Paul the Jew, Paul the Pharisee, and Paul the Persecutor. By correlating the Pauline materials with the Book of Acts, Polhill sketches the events surrounding Paul's conversion followed by a proposed

(rather traditional) chronology. The apostle's conversion is dated at 32 A.D. and the first missionary journey from 45/46-47/48, with the "silent years" falling in between this period. The second mission is dated from 48-52 and the third mission from 53-57. The Caesarean imprisonment is identified during the years of 57-59, the house arrest in Rome from 60-62, and Paul's martyrdom prior to 68 (see pp. 78-80).

In dealing with the hotly debated Pauline issues, Polhill adopts a "north Galatian" setting for the Epistle to the Galatians (*contra* F. F. Bruce's strong case for south Galatia). Polhill defends the integrity of the Thessalonian letters, dating both early in Paul's ministry. Contrary to the traditional position of placing Paul in Rome (60-62) for the writing of Philipians, Polhill leans toward an Ephesian imprisonment (52-55). Capably discussing the issues surrounding the Corinthian correspondence, Polhill is especially helpful in dealing with the challenges of 2 Corinthians. He presents Ephesians as a circular letter from the apostle to the churches of Asia Minor. This feature plus the doxological language explain the "non-personal" nature of this majestic letter.

Polhill defends the Pauline authorship of the disputed letters: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles. His arguments are cogent and persuasive, taking seriously the issues of style, setting, content, and the role of an amanuensis. Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians are placed in Paul's Caesarean imprisonment. The comparisons and contrasts between 1 Timothy and Titus will

be extremely valuable for beginning students. The second letter to Timothy and the tradition surrounding Paul's martyrdom conclude the work.

Key issues in contemporary Pauline studies such as the nature of Rabbinic Judaism during this time period, Paul's meaning of law, covenant, and justification/righteousness are thoughtfully presented for the reader. Beginning students are introduced to the more recent proposals of Beker, Dunn, Sanders, Cranfield, Stuhlmacher, Käsemann, Betz, Wright, and others. Polhill is fair and balanced in his treatment of others, carefully demonstrating the strengths of positions he rejects. The treatment of many of these issues is especially prominent in Polhill's discussion of Romans and Galatians.

Every letter is presented with appropriate background material, and a summary of the letter built on Polhill's own outlines. The theme and arguments of each letter are laid out for all to understand. Each discussion is carefully documented demonstrating Polhill's interaction with a wide variety of Pauline scholars. Each chapter concludes with a list of sources for further study including Polhill's choices of the finest commentaries available on the Greek and English text. Obviously written with the student in mind, the book accomplishes its purpose. It is one of the finest textbooks ever published by Broadman and Holman and deserves wide usage (I hope the Broadman & Holman marketing people can get the good word out on this outstanding book).

The shortcomings of the book are few. One could wish for a stronger theological treatment of the letters or of Paul's theology overall, but the fact that Polhill primarily sees Paul as the early church's

great missionary rather than a great theologian may explain this shortcoming (see pp. 440-442). Of course, any serious Pauline student can pick areas where he or she will disagree with some of Polhill's conclusions, but the overall treatment of the life and letters of Paul in this volume is nothing less than outstanding. The work of thirty years of teaching New Testament provides a gold mine for interested readers. I know of no better textbook on this subject for beginning students. I hope the book is also discovered by pastors, for it provides a wealth of information that could enrich preaching week after week in the churches. Certainly, John Polhill is to be heartily congratulated on this significant achievement.

David S. Dockery
Union University

1, 2, 3 John. The New American Commentary, vol. 38. By Daniel L. Akin. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001, 296 pp., \$29.99.

Daniel Akin is Dean of the School of Theology and Vice President for Academic Administration at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His volume on the Johannine epistles is a welcome addition to the New American Commentary series. It is particularly successful in fulfilling the purpose of that series to combine the best contemporary scholarship with a practical application to the life of the church.

Akin provides commentaries on all three epistles with a separate introduction to each. The introduction to 1 John covers 28 pages of which 8 are devoted to the

questions of authorship and place of writing. Akin argues strongly for the apostle John as the author of all three epistles as well as the Fourth Gospel. Typical of his approach throughout the commentary, he presents all viewpoints on the issue in a fair, balanced manner and provides extensive footnotes. The footnotes are one of the most valuable components of the commentary, giving in detail the fine points of issues and pointing the reader to the most valuable bibliography for further research. Akin covers the major literature on the epistles, regularly citing the main commentaries and significant articles. He includes the gamut of scholarship but always makes his own position clear.

Four pages of the introduction to 1 John are devoted to the occasion and purpose of the epistle, which Akin sees as the threat of false teachers who have departed from the Johannine congregations and who espoused a docetic Christology akin to that of Cerinthus. His fullest treatment of the heresy is found in the commentary itself in the relevant passages of 1 and 2 John.

Akin's background as a teacher of Systematic Theology is apparent in the introduction's brief summaries of the major theological themes in the epistle—the doctrines of God, sin, Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation and eschatology.

By far the most extensive treatment in the introduction—nearly half—is devoted to the structure of 1 John. Akin provides an excellent summary of the main approaches and the scholars who represent them, providing detailed outlines. Akin has obviously wrestled with the question of the epistle's structure, done extensive research and given as able a summary of scholarship on the question as is to be found anywhere. His own

conclusion is perhaps best summarized on page 113: "Perhaps John never intended for scholars to outline his epistle nicely and neatly." His own choice is to divide the epistle into two main sections: God is Light (1:5-3:10) and God is Love (3:11-5:122). He admits much overlap between the two divisions.

Akin's commentary is thorough. He covers all the major exegetical issues, giving particular attention to the more problematic passages. For example, he treats in some detail the tension between the statements that the one who claims to have no sin is deceiving himself (1:8-10) and the equally strong statement that no one who sins truly abides in God (3:5-6). Akin deals with this by giving attention to the original setting in the false theology of the heretics and by noting the present tense of the latter statement: no one who truly belongs to God lives a sinful lifestyle. This is a good example of Akin's careful attention to the Greek text throughout the commentary. He often refers to the Greek but always in a clear manner, which should not distract the reader who is unfamiliar with the language.

Akin treats the issue of the atonement at some length. In particular, he deals with the meaning of *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. He argues convincingly that one must not eliminate the concept of propitiation from these passages as has been done by Dodd in his insistence on translating the word group as "expiation." Akin provides a very helpful excursus on this issue (pp. 253-65).

At the beginning of his first major division of the epistle, "God is Light" (1 John 1:5-3:10), Akin includes helpful excurses on the theme of light in both the Johannine Gospel and first epistle. He

ably demonstrates his own conviction that the Gospel and epistle are by the same author, showing how an examination of the Gospel's treatment of light greatly enhances one's understanding of this motif in the epistle.

Akin insists on understanding the epistles in their original context. A good example of this is his relating John's references to "Anti-Christ" to the false teachers who went out from John's churches. A succinct excursus on the concept of Anti-Christ is provided on pages 267-70.

Akin's commentary is particularly valuable for its discussion of major theological issues raised by the text. For example, he treats the issue of the limitations of Christ's atoning sacrifice as raised by 1 John 4:15. He concludes that "the atonement of Christ is unlimited in its provision (the world) and limited in its application (applied only to those who have faith)" [p. 183, fn. 129]. In connection with the "sin unto death" of 1 John 5:16-17, he demonstrates that this cannot refer to apostasy. After discussing the main suggestions of scholars as to what constitutes this "mortal sin," he concludes it likely refers to one's total rejection of the gospel. Examples of the theological insight provided by Akin could be multiplied. One of his commentary's greatest contributions is that it incorporates the skills of one who is both an informed theologian and an able exegete.

As one who sometimes teaches textual criticism, I would be remiss not to note Akin's fine discussion of the infamous *Comma Johannaicum*, the reference to the Trinity found in the *Textus Receptus* at 1 John 5:7-8, but not included in almost all of the Greek manuscripts and consequently not in most modern versions.

Akin argues against the originality of the disputed lines. He presents the issues clearly and reasonably in an excursus (pp. 198-200), in which he demonstrates in a manner anyone should be able to understand that the issue is not a theological but a textual one.

Akin provides a very thorough commentary for both 2 and 3 John, devoting nearly 20 pages to each of the single-chapter books. He sees 2 John as being written to a single congregation which was being threatened by the same docetic heresy as the congregations of 1 John. The most problematic passage in the epistle is verse 10, where John directs the congregation not to greet or receive the heretics into their homes. The author provides a very helpful appendix, which offers a practical approach to dealing with contemporary sectarian proselytizers who come to one's front door. For 3 John, Akin gives particular attention to Diotrephes, outlining the various scholarly views as to what lay behind his conflict with the elder. A final appendix provides twenty expository sermon outlines, which cover the whole of 1 John. Following the usual NAC format, the commentary concludes with a bibliography and subject, person, and Scripture indexes. The bibliography provides rather comprehensive coverage of the commentaries, monographs, and articles on the Johannine epistles for the past 20 years, as well as a number of significant earlier works. It reflects the depth of Akin's research.

When I first prepared the Johannine epistles for a January Bible Study some thirty years ago, commentary and research sources were limited. The situation has changed radically in the past decade or so, as Akin's bibliography reflects. One now has a wide choice

among the many available commentaries on the epistles. I recommend Akin's commentary as one of the very first choices. It provides a thorough overview of the major scholarship on the epistles, a clear presentation of the significant exegetical issues, an equally cogent discussion of the main theological issues raised by the text, and an able application of the message of the epistles to the life of the contemporary church and individual believer.

John Polhill

The Baptist Reformation. By Jerry Sutton. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000, 542 pp., \$29.99.

The "Conservative Resurgence" within the Southern Baptist Convention was launched in 1979 with the election of Adrian Rogers in Houston, Texas as President. By the year 2000 the movement was solidified with inerrantists leading every denominational agency and institution, and with the overwhelming adoption of the revised *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Baptist moderates have drained many an ink well with book after book giving their perspective on what they call the "Fundamentalist Takeover." Conservatives had been slow to write about the controversy, with only Jim Hefley's *Truth In Crisis* series (5 volumes) telling the story as they saw it. That situation, however, has now changed. If you would like an autobiographical viewpoint of the past 20 plus years, pick up Paul Pressler's *A Hill On Which to Die* (Broadman & Holman, 1999). It is fascinating and provocative. If, on the other hand, you are looking for a history that meticulously details and documents blow by blow the key personalities and

events of the Conservative Resurgence, Jerry Sutton has written just the book for you. It is my hope that this book will sell well and circulate widely for years to come. If it does, future generations may avoid the mistakes of the past, which made the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention necessary. College and seminary classes on Baptist History will neglect this book only at a great loss to the students who need to know *what* happened and *why* it happened.

Sutton's book is well researched and is written by one who often had a ringside seat at the events he describes. The root causes of the conflict are carefully uncovered, dealt with honestly, and interpreted fairly. Unlike most moderate missives, Sutton acknowledges his colors from the beginning. He is a theological conservative and he judges what happened from this vantage point. In my judgment this honest admission enhances the treatment of the history. Facts and perspectives are easily discerned and kept separate.

The book is comprised of four sections with twenty-three chapters. It is endnoted and indexed. A bibliography is not included, though its addition would have been helpful. The book begins by noting "the way things were" (Part I) and why theological erosion and institutional bureaucracy made the Conservative Resurgence necessary. The Resurgence at its heart was a return to our historic roots and a back to the Bible movement.

Part II catalogues "the way the convention changed." Here Sutton examines each president of the SBC from Adrian Rogers (1979) to Paige Patterson (2000), and captures the high points of their terms and the seismic shifts that began to take place. Insightful vignettes of the main characters of the movement and an

eye for detail in the context of the larger picture makes this an especially important and interesting section.

Part III provides a blow by blow analysis of the changes that took place in the institutions and agencies of the SBC. The radical transformations which took place, for example, at Southeastern and Southern Seminaries were things I personally witnessed with my own eyes (I served at Southeastern from 1992–1996 and at Southern from 1996 to the present), and Sutton’s treatment of both are right on target. I am often asked if both institutions were as bad off theologically as I was led to believe and my ready answer for both is the same, “No, it was much worse!” Ma and Pa Baptist, had they known what was being taught, would not have called for a Reformation. They would have declared war.

Part IV provides Sutton’s analysis and interpretation. The crucial issues of biblical authority, the nature of salvation, and the priesthood of believers receive careful attention. Sutton’s study of the Peace Committee proceedings is superb, and here we learn things previously not covered in print anywhere else to my knowledge. The book concludes with Southern Baptists’ search for their identity and what the future may hold.

There are a couple of areas where a word of critique is in order. As a student at Southwestern Seminary from 1980–1983, I found Sutton’s evaluation of her condition too favorable. Things were not as healthy as he indicates. I had professors who questioned Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the unity of Isaiah, the integrity of Daniel, the accuracy of Paul, and miracles in the Bible. They affirmed women as pastors and at best, shied away from confessing a personal commitment

to biblical inerrancy. In addition, some sections of the book do not flow smoothly and on occasions, Sutton assumes a contextual awareness of an issue he is discussing that I am not sure most Baptists have (for example, the Burnett Case, p 287, 297ff). There is also some unnecessary repetition, overuse of certain terms and phrases, and too many typos. A better proofing of the final manuscript should have been done on such a crucially important work.

These minor criticisms noted, Southern Baptists owe Jerry Sutton an enormous debt of gratitude. With the mind of a scholar (Ph.D. in Church History) and the heart of a pastor (Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, TN), Sutton helps us understand better the miraculous and unprecedented theological turnaround that took place in the Southern Baptist Convention. His account is accurate and it indeed provides, as Paige Patterson well said, “the rest of the story.”

Daniel L. Akin

The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity. By James S. Jeffers. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999, 352 pp., \$19.99 paper.

What did a city in the ancient world smell like? How were ancient cities organized? What was it like to live in an apartment in an urban area? How did the rich live and how did their lives differ from the poor? What was the role of women in various geographical settings in the first century? The answer to these questions and many more can be found in this book. The relevant material set forth here would help

one have a much better understanding of the world of Jesus and the early church. Each chapter is replete with examples from the New Testament illustrating their relevance for a more thoughtful understanding of the Bible. The reader of this book will find Biblical narratives come alive. The author is an expert in both Roman history and early Christianity and writes from the perspective of an evangelical Christian.

The author divides the book into thirteen chapters. A cursory survey of chapter two can illustrate the valuable information contained in the book. Chapter two is entitled "Life & Death in the First Century." In this chapter Jeffers gives the reader an idea of what it must have been like to live in the first century, both in a Mediterranean setting as well as in a Greco-Roman setting. He describes how people in the first-century worked, what they did for recreation, how they traveled, what they ate, what they wore, and how they cared for their deceased.

A brief comment on the other chapters will allow one to see the breadth of information the author has brought together in one volume. The first chapter introduces the reader to the cultural and political atmosphere in first-century Jerusalem via a fictional dinner party. Chapter three describes city life in the Greco-Roman world and its impact on the church. While most people in the ancient world lived in the countryside, Paul planted many of his churches in influential cities. The fourth chapter examines how the early believers organized themselves and how other organizational structures in the cities might have influenced them. Jeffers, in chapter five, surveys various religious systems of the ancient world and he examines Rome's

attitude toward religion. Chapters six and seven explore how Rome ruled its massive empire. Topics in these chapters include Roman governance of its provinces, the collection of taxes, its legal system, and military. Chapters eight through eleven explain the social order of the first-century world and how these issues affected believers. The final chapter sets forth the structure of the family including the role of women and education in the ancient world. The author concluded the book with two appendixes. The first is a twenty-eight page summary of Greco-Roman history and the second is a chronology of events from 50 B.C. to A. D. 90.

The book contains a few minor errors. For example, Jeffers refers to 1 Corinthians 7:34-36 as Paul's admonition on the silencing of the women in church; instead it is found in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (p.252). He also attributes Luke's commendation to the Bereans in Acts 17:11 to the Thessalonians (p.257). Nevertheless, despite these minor errors and a few questionable biblical interpretations, the book provides a wealth of insight into the first century world. If you are interested in a book that provides a lucid, straightforward portrayal of life during the days of Jesus and the apostles you will want to read this book.

Bill Cook

The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text. NIGTC. By G. K. Beale. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, lxiv + 1,245 pp., \$75.00.

G. K. Beale is Kenneth T. Wessner Chair of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College Graduate School. This commentary is a worthy addition to the outstanding series,

The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Beale has published extensively, frequently in the area of the use of the Old Testament in the New, particularly with reference to Revelation. He was guided in this area of study by his first doctoral supervisor at Cambridge, Barnabas Lindars.

The 175 page introduction and the 37 page bibliography are sufficient to guide one in a comprehensive study of Revelation, but the book offers much more besides. The introduction focuses on those issues applicable to interpretation of the content, such as date and occasion, structure, argumentation, and the use of the Old Testament in Revelation. Less attention is given to canonicity, authorship, genre, destination, source criticism, rhetorical criticism, and similar concerns, since these are less important for his rigorous, inductive, historical-exegetical approach. Beyond these, important introductory concerns addressed include symbolism, grammar, text-critical matters, major interpretive approaches to Revelation, and the theology of Revelation. The concise explanation of the textual history of Revelation is especially well done.

The heart of the commentary is verse-by-verse exegesis, but there is a conscious effort to follow the thought within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph. Main points of paragraphs and longer sections are summarized. Special attention is paid to Jewish interpretation and exegesis of Old Testament passages alluded to in Revelation and the influence of their Jewish usage on Revelation. A prominent feature is that within major divisions and smaller sections are articles of various length pertinent to the interpretation of the section. For instance, within the major division, "12:1-15:4: Deeper Con-

flict," the following articles appear: "The End-Time Exodus against the Background of the First Exodus," "The Desert as a Place of Both Trial and Protection," "The Background of the 'Three and a Half Year' Period," "The 'Place' of Refuge in the Desert as the Spiritual Sanctuary," "How Christ's Redemptive Work Resulted in Satan's Expulsion from Heaven," and "The Jewish Legal Background of Satan as an Accuser and Its Relation to 12:10." Segregated from the exegesis, these articles stand alone and add much to the commentary. The Greek text is treated carefully and fully. Beale provides English translation of most Greek words, so that readers limited to English can follow the argument and benefit from the exegesis.

In Beale's treatment of the interpretive approaches to Revelation, the fifteen or so historic approaches have been reduced to four, plus his own proposal. Seven might be more accurate, but each of the four, as categorized by Beale, are briefly but fairly presented. If his subcategories were divided, the number would be larger. His categories are Preterist, Historicist, Futurist, and Idealist. The Preterist view he divided into two forms. The first sees the book as a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The second sees Revelation as prophecy of the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD. Weaknesses include limiting the book's relevance to the first or early centuries of Church history and limiting judgment to Israel. The Historicist view has many versions, with interpreters in each era seeing fulfillment of the book's predictions related to their own times. Numerous examples of this type of interpretation occurred throughout church history. Beale suggests that historical over-specification and an absence of relevance to the first century

are major weaknesses.

The futurist view is divided into dispensational futurism and a modified futurism. The elements of dispensational premillennialism are so well known as to not need explanation here. Modified futurism does not hold as firmly to a chronological sequence of the prophecies of Revelation, sees the church as the true Israel, and does not hold to a pretribulation rapture. Weaknesses include reduced relevance to the first century and not identifying the events of Revelation with final judgment or with any historical events. The idealist view presents Revelation as a symbolic portrayal of the conflict between God and Satan, good and evil.

Beale advocated what he called an “Eclecticism,” or a “Redemptive-Historical Form of Modified Idealism.” He acknowledged a final salvific consummation, with judgment.

No other historical events are seen beyond the final coming of Christ to deliver His people, to judge, and to set up his kingdom. But there are a few exceptions. Symbolic portrayals of historical events demonstrate the sovereignty of the Lamb and his guidance of the events that will unfold before the end. Some events may be depicted by one narrative or symbol. Taking the historicist practice of identifying specific historical events, Beale denied that the identification could be limited to one historical reality. Rather, multiple identifications are possible. He affirms that there are prophecies of the future in Revelation, but suggested that careful exegesis would recognize past, present, and future relevance. The closest interpretive frameworks to his are those of Caird, Johnson, Sweet, and especially Hendriksen and Wilcock.

The editors stated that the design of the

series is “something less technical than a full-scale critical commentary,” but it is difficult to see any deficiencies in that regard with this volume. They further state that these volumes are intended to interact with current scholarship and make a scholarly contribution to New Testament study. This work admirably succeeds in both these regards, treating all important problems of history, exegesis, and interpretation rising from the text. Beale said that his book took seven years to write, and another year to edit and update. The care he took in the preparation of this volume is obvious.

Beale’s personal goals were: to study carefully the Old Testament allusions and their significance; to study Jewish exegetical use of the Old Testament allusions and how Jewish interpretation related to their use in Revelation; to trace precisely the exegetical argument in Revelation; and to interact with the vast amount of secondary literature of the last several decades. These are ambitious goals, but he met his objectives effectively.

The commentary clearly advocates and develops a particular interpretive approach to Revelation, which many readers may not accept. The careful exegesis and thorough treatment of relevant matters, however, may be well used regardless of one’s own view of Revelation. Glowing recommendations of the book have come from important New Testament scholars and their statements are not undeserved. Beale’s commentary will take its place on the front line of recent Revelation scholarship. If careful study of Revelation is the objective, then Beale’s book should be acquired.

Charles W. Draper

Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. The Anchor Bible, vol. 18A. By Michael V. Fox. New York: Doubleday, 2000, 720 pp., \$42.50.

Michael V. Fox is a Jewish biblical scholar, who teaches in the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is well known for his work on Hebrew wisdom literature. This volume is the first of a two-volume commentary on Proverbs. The commentary is divided into a Preface, followed by five parts: Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Essays and Textual Notes on Proverbs 1-9, Textual Notes on Proverbs 1-9 (concerned with textual variants from the Masoretic Hebrew text, mostly LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate), and a Bibliography. Fox has produced an outstanding commentary and every serious reader of the book of Proverbs should have access to it. In a comment about the book, Roland E. Murphy, one of the foremost expositors of the wisdom literature, calls it a “stunning commentary” that “combines erudition with clarity, originality with the necessary dialogue with previous scholarship.” He adds that the essays on wisdom are “masterful, sweeping away past misunderstandings.” Perhaps these words are somewhat too exuberant (and highly pleasing to the publisher!), but this is an exciting piece of work.

Some features of the book seem especially appealing to me. The Introduction contains a very helpful survey and analysis of the words for wisdom (28-43). The reader of Proverbs needs to know these words and how they are used. The Introduction includes, of course, brief attention to matters of date and authorship. Proverbs is traditionally ascribed to Solomon, as in Proverbs 1:1, but the headers and

references in other parts of the book indicate that the book is “a sampling of the collective wisdom of ancient Israel” (6). The reader should note the headers in 10:1 and in 25:1, plus references to unknown “sages” in 22:17 and 24:23, along with the teaching of Agur (30:1) and the mother of Lemuel (31:1). The sayings in Proverbs date from various periods, but Fox agrees with most scholars that Proverbs 1-9 is a later part of the book, serving as a prologue to the rest of the collections, and likely dates from the Persian or early Hellenistic period. Precision in the dating of individual sayings is not possible, according to Fox.

The author is concerned at more than one place in the commentary with the disputes in current scholarship about the social setting of the book of Proverbs and the figure of Wisdom. He concludes that the book was drawn from different social groups and domains, but that “learned clerks” were “the membrane through which principles, sayings, and coinages, folk and otherwise, were filtered” (11). In the case of the personification of wisdom in the figure of Woman Wisdom, Fox forcefully rejects postulations of a setting in the post-exilic period of a breakdown of religion and faith, with the need for a more personal understanding of the presence of God (342-45). He contends that the idea that Yahweh had become less approachable in the postexilic period is the result of “the caricature common among nineteenth-century scholars” who thought of the Judaism of this period as “a cold legalistic formalism” (345). Fox’s point that there was no lack of intense feeling of the presence of God in the later period is well-taken, but he seems to me to take the socioeconomic situation of the exilic experience too lightly and never

seems to come to a satisfying explanation for the development of Wisdom. More attention to the continuing sense and experience of “exile” in the period after 587 BC would help. He also gives only limited attention to the significance of the feminine nature of Wisdom.

The content of Proverbs 1-9 is divided into what Fox calls the Ten Lectures, with five somewhat extensive Interludes. The Lectures are found in 1:8-19; 2:1-22; 3:1-12; 3:21-35; 4:1-9; 4:10-19; 4:20-27; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27. The Interludes are found in 1:20-33; 3:15-20; 6:1-19; 8:1-36; 9:1-18. For each Lecture and Interlude, Fox provides translation, commentary, discussion of the literary design, and other features, including attention to the message of each passage. Textual variations relating to each passage are found on pp. 360-423. Four essays deal with the following subjects: (1) The Formation of Proverbs 1-9, (2) The Origins of Personified Wisdom, (3) Wisdom in the Lectures, and (4) Wisdom in the Interludes (322-59).

In an important introductory note to essays 3 and 4 on page 346, Fox maintains that wisdom is a central theme throughout the book of Proverbs. Wise behavior is a major consideration, of course, but the book is “not only about doing, it is about knowing.” Wisdom is most clearly manifest in Proverbs 1-9, but Fox finds that it is pervasive throughout the book. Indeed, it is “so pervasive that it usually escapes notice.” Fox could have added here what he says about wisdom in the Ten Lectures (347-8). Wisdom cannot be reduced to a collection of precepts and sayings, but it is aimed at a higher goal of “wisdom as power.” The knowledge of wisdom precepts resides in the learner “as a potential and must be activated by God in order to become the power of wisdom, an

inner light that guides its possessor through life.” Wisdom is something to be both learned and loved with desire: “Wisdom is a configuration of soul, it is *moral character*” (348).

The feminine figure of Wisdom is a striking feature of the Interludes. Before coming directly to Fox’s treatment of that subject, I will pause to note his interpretation of the much debated *’amon* in 8:30a. He notes that there are three basic categories of explanation for this word: (1) artisan, (2) constantly, and (3) child/ward/nursling. His solution is to work within the third category and read the *’amon* as an infinitive absolute serving as an adverbial complement, and translates the line as “I was with him growing up.” He reads the next line as “and I was his delight by day,” supplying a “his” to the Hebrew text, as in the LXX and probably implicit in the Hebrew. This means that God, rather than Wisdom is the one who delights. In v. 31, Wisdom is “frolicking” before God and has delight in mankind (Fox takes the ambiguous “my delight” in v. 31b as the delight of Wisdom rather than the delight she gives to humans—God delights in Wisdom and Wisdom delights in humankind). Thus he thinks that the picture here is that of “a little child near her divine paternal guardian as he goes about his great work.” This does not allow for any role or function of Wisdom in creation (see also, p. 354). This may be correct, of course, but the concept of an artisan and co-worker with God does not exclude exuberance, delight and play. The idea that these qualities are restricted to children is obviously false. Furthermore, the strong presence in later traditions of the idea of an artisan or arranger should make one wary of detaching Wisdom from the divine work

of creation.

In understanding the figure of Lady Wisdom, Fox argues that the primary model is that of teacher, similar to that of father in the Ten Lectures (340). However, he wisely contends that no one model is adequate and that Lady Wisdom in reality is a new and independent literary figure, constructed from elements drawn from a variety of models. Lady Wisdom is treated as a “mythos” in the sense of Plato, meaning: “a narrative trope that serves as an explanatory paradigm in areas where literal discourse must be supplemented by poetic imagination” (352). The “mythos” requires decoding, and Fox takes his readers on a turbulent flight of reading through several tightly packed pages of discussion (353-59). If he never quite lands, it is to his credit, in keeping with the nature of the subject as mythos, and with the elusive nature of wisdom/Wisdom herself. Wisdom is greater than the total of all teachings and transcends all human efforts to grasp and hold her in a precise way. My difference with Fox is that he seems to restrict the function of Wisdom as the living presence of God, if he permits it at all. He concedes that she is “god-like,” but limits this to “a literary guise” (354). She is also “a child to God” (366) and has “angelic proximity to God” (359), but her activity is severely limited in the reading by Fox. Undoubtedly, she is a personification of the “actual teaching of human sages” (354), but this does not mean that she is totally other than God. I would prefer to see her as a literary construct whose primary referent is the actual presence of God in the world, apprehended through the teachings of the father, mothers, and sages.

The counterpart of Lady Wisdom is the Strange Woman found in Proverbs 2:16-

22; 5:1-23; 6:30-35; 7:1-27. This figure has been identified in six ways: (1) a foreign, secular harlot, (2) a foreign devotee of a foreign god, (3) a foreign goddess, (4) a social outsider, (5) a native prostitute, and (6) another man’s wife. Fox discusses all of these briefly, but he has no doubt the last one is correct. The Strange Woman is “a type-figure representing any seductive, adulterous woman” (434). He argues his conclusion through the passages with a fervor like that of a Puritan preacher denouncing the evil of adultery. Unlike the case of Lady Wisdom, he allows no “mythos” for the Strange Woman (although this is tempered slightly on page 253, with reference to 7:26-27). His argument seems too constrained to me, especially since he allows that Lady Folly in 9:13-18 has her human counterpart in the Strange Woman (302).

Fox writes in a direct, pithy, and contemporary style of English that his readers will enjoy. His remarks are sometimes pungent, but he is fair when dealing with viewpoints that differ from his own. His style has a clarity that is commendable, and his commentary is an exegetical treasure for which we can all be grateful, even if we may differ with him here and there.

Marvin E. Tate

The Mystery of Godliness and Other Sermons.
By John Calvin. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999, 212 pp., \$12.99.

No one reads Calvin without benefit. This includes those who do not agree with him on every point of doctrine. This particular work was first published in 1830 by S. & D. A. Forbes and again in 1950 by Eerdmans. The book consists of 14 ser-

mons based on texts in the Pastoral Epistles, and they provide an excellent overview of Calvin's thought in sermonic form on crucial theological issues. A sampling of titles and texts include "The Doctrine of Election" (2 Tim 1:9-10); "The Word Our Only Rule" (Titus 1:15-16); "The Salvation of All Men" (1 Tim 2:3-5); "The Privilege of Prayer" (1 Tim 2:8); and "The Only Mediator" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). The clearness of Calvin's presentations and the cogency of his arguments continue to amaze generation after generation. These particular sermons are among his best, to my mind, and the challenge to honor God and pursue the lost both find a home in these messages. "Those who do not endeavor to bring their neighbors and unbelievers to the way of salvation plainly show they make no account of God's honor, and that they try to diminish the mighty power of His empire ... they likewise darken the virtue and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and lessen the dignity given Him by the Father" ("The Only Mediator," p. 200). This is but a small taste of the delightful delicacies one will find in these fine biblical expositions of the sacred Word. Would to God that more of Calvin's most devoted followers would show the same heart and balance as their hero.

Daniel L. Akin

The Prayer of Jabez. By Bruce Wilkinson. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2000, 93 pp., \$9.99.

Should a minister, in particular, give a couple of hours to a 93-page book on an obscure prayer found in 1 Chronicles 4:10? You bet your ordination papers he should!

Why? Because nearly one million people in America have and the book has hovered near the top of numerous Bestsellers lists for months. If you want to know and be in touch with what the people in the pew are reading (this alone justifies competent familiarity with the *Left Behind* series), this is something of a no-brainer. Still, there are a couple of additional reasons a small time investment is prudent. First, the book has motivated people to read the Bible. Second, many have been encouraged to a greater devotion to prayer and a greater faith in God. At its best the book hearkens to themes seen, for example, in the writings and life of William Carey: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." These are obviously good things concerning which we can rejoice and rejoice greatly.

However, the serious shepherd of souls should read *The Prayer of Jabez* because of some real and present dangers as well. What might these be? The book comes close to affirming an almost "magical view" of prayer. Pray the precise words of the prayer of Jabez and get blessed and have your territory enlarged. The appeal of a marketplace prosperity theology is too obvious to ignore and this may explain, in part, the phenomenal success of this little book. One cannot help but wonder why books on our Lord's model prayer (Matt 6:9-13) have never struck such a chord. Now to be fair, I do not think Bruce Wilkinson either holds to or would endorse a "claim it and get it" theology. Still, sections of the book can easily be read this way if one is not careful, and ministers need to be prepared to provide a balanced perspective concerning God's sovereign will, prayer and the Christian life. "It's only what you believe will happen and *therefore do next* that will

release God's power for you and bring about a life change. But when you act, you will step up to God's best for you" (p. 87), is one example of what I have in mind. This comes close to a blanket promise for blessing; does it not? How do we square this with those who suffer for Jesus, some to the point of martyrdom? If they had just prayed the prayer of Jabez, would it have been different? This is problematic biblically and theologically.

So, should we encourage the reading of the little Jabez book? I think so, though not without a warning label being attached. While desiring to break through to the "blessed life" is understandable, breaking through to the "obedient life" is preferable.

Daniel L. Akin

Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction. By Ilham Dilman. New York: Routledge, 1999, 273 pp., \$26.95 paper.

Ilham Dilman, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Wales, offers in this work a helpful and accessible introduction to the philosophical problems associated with human free will. Dilman dedicates a chapter each to surveying the contributions on the subject of free will from the perspective of a variety of thinkers: the classical approaches of Homer, Sophocles, Plato, and Aristotle; the Christian theological approaches of Augustine and Aquinas; the Enlightenment philosophical approaches of Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, and Schopenhauer; the psychological approach of Freud; the existentialist approaches of Sartre and Weil; and the linguistic approaches of Moore and

Wittgenstein.

There is a richness and depth in Dilman's writing that makes this work more than merely a flat historical survey. For example, the discussion includes not only the usual philosophical notions of free will and necessity and the scientific concept of causation, but also considers the bondage of the will to moral evil and compulsion. Dilman engages the views of these thinkers in an ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue of ideas from classical theology and philosophy as well as from literature and modern psychology. While Dilman never fully explains his own position in this historical survey, he does contribute his own evaluation throughout the book. The product is a thoughtful discussion that contributes not only to knowledge of the major issues involved, but also to wisdom for life. In particular, it reminds us that a life dragged down by what Simone Weil calls the "moral gravity" of self-centeredness is not freedom but bondage, and true freedom comes only through submission to the will of God.

This book raises issues that impact Christian theology in dialogue with the broader world of ideas. While some might be reluctant to hear such a diverse menagerie of ideas including many secular thinkers, the book raises important issues worth reflection. Recommended for the thoughtful reader.

Steve W. Lemke
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Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South. By A. James Fuller. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Uni-

versity Press, 2000, xvi + 343 pp., \$49.95.

Basil Manly, Sr. (1798-1868) was one of the leading Southern Baptists of his day—pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston, co-founder of Furman University, president of the University of Alabama, co-founder of the Southern Baptist Convention, and co-founder of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, A. James Fuller, assistant professor of history at University of Indianapolis in Indiana, offers the first biographical narrative of Manly. Well-researched and carefully written, the biography succeeds as a narrative of Manly's life and the institutions with which Manly was associated.

However, Fuller's book fails to deliver more due to its lack of a thesis. Though Fuller appears to recognize his thesis-less approach in the introduction, where he notes that the book does not trace a "grand argument" from Manly's birth to death (3), he is unable to tie the different parts of his narrative together in any significant fashion. Instead, the reader is led through a forest of historical ideas which are pointed out as the narrative progresses—duty and honor, mastery and slavery, science and religion, revivalism and social control, mercy and judgment, republicanism and states' rights. None of these ideas stands out as a thesis that holds the narrative together. The result is a frustratingly disjointed narrative that careens from event to event without letting the reader know why the reported events are important to Manly's life story.

Moreover, the book reads more like a dissertation than a revised and mature discussion of the subject matter. For example, Fuller offers close textual studies of several of Manly's important

addresses as pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston; these discussions might have been profitably summarized in a single chapter rather than extending them over three. In addition, Fuller refers to the "Charleston style" in chapter three and five without disclosing what he means. It appears that the Charleston style was a southern ethic of honor and gentility that required Baptists to aspire to upward social mobility in order to take part in the city's social order, but this reader had to read between the lines in order to piece that together. This might work in a dissertation, but in a finished biography, it appears sloppy. Another example of this immaturity is the issue of Manly's move from South Carolina to Alabama. Fuller fails to place Manly's migration in the larger pattern of movement during the 1830s and 1840s, in which South Carolinians left for the Alabama frontier in droves. In particular, it would have been instructive to compare Manly with James Henry Hammond, later governor of South Carolina who nearly migrated to Alabama but decided to remain at home. Fuller simply fails to ask the questions that one would expect in a revised project.

Fuller also appears less than confident in dealing with theology and church polity. He identifies Manly as a General Baptist, a strict Calvinist, and a follower of Jonathan Edwards and Andrew Fuller (62-64)—three identifications that would appear to be mutually exclusive. While the Manly papers in the Southern Seminary Archives have several sermons that would assist in portraying Manly's theological position, Fuller spends a scant seven pages on Manly's theology. Surely Manly's theology was more influential than such limited treatment indicates; as

a “public man” who sanctified southern rights and social order, Manly’s theological concerns produced a public theology that undergirded public life in the South. With church polity issues, Fuller highlights Manly’s approach to church discipline as well as his role in the centralizing of Southern Baptist life in the creation of the SBC. However, this reader did not gain a sense of Manly as a pastor or the churches that he served. Short pages were devoted to Manly’s approach to pastoral issues while large sections were taken up with his promotion of revivalism. Perhaps if Fuller had investigated the church minutes books from the churches Manly served, he would have been able better to portray life under Pastor Manly.

What makes Fuller’s life of Manly frustrating is that there are wonderful, fairly recent examples of biographies with theses—one that comes to mind is Drew Gilpin Faust’s *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Perhaps if Fuller had allowed his book to gestate a little longer, and if he had been prodded more by his editors, he would have been able to produce a first-rate biography of Manly, a historical figure who clearly deserves more. If one does not expect a “grand argument” from *Chaplain to the Confederacy*, then Fuller’s work serves as a useful, though flawed, introduction to this Southern Baptist founder.

Sean Michael Lucas

Mary—Another Redeemer? By James R. White. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998, 158 pp., \$9.99 paper.

The Catholic relationship to Protestantism is certainly a curious topic these days. Over the last half-century Rome has moved from viewing Protestants as apostates, to cousins, to “separated brethren,” whom she now wants to bring back into the fold. Many in the non-Catholic camp have interpreted these shifts as representing a fundamental moderation of some of the more distinctive (and anti-gospel) aspects of Roman Catholic theology. Growing up in a (Landmark) Baptist setting as a youngster, I was taught that the Catholic church was a false church with a false gospel, that it taught many heretical doctrines, such as purgatory, prayers to the saints, and some strange ideas about Mary, and that most if not all of its members were *lost*. In this day of “live and let live,” there has been a tendency in non-Catholic circles to assume that Catholics now are actually becoming more “protestant,” and that they are shedding some of the theological trappings of a bygone era. James White is here to tell us that, at least in regard to Mariology, nothing could be further from the truth. He relates how in a public debate with Catholic apologist Gerry Matatics, that his opponent noted that evangelicals are always asking, “Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?” Matatics then posed this to White, “Well, have you accepted Mary as your Mother?”

White’s introduction to this issue concerns the recent push for the Pope to authorize the doctrine of Mary as coredeemress (or coredemptrix). In 1997, 4.5 million petitions from 155 countries were submitted to the pope, asking him to seek the official authorization of this doctrine. Among the petitioners were over 500 bishops, including forty-two cardinals (page 12). No official action has yet been

taken.

White spends most of his effort in the remainder of the book explicating, through Catholic primary sources (mostly official documents from Councils, papal bulls, and other official sources), and through the writings of various Catholic saints and theologians, the Catholic doctrine of Mary. Though I was fairly familiar with this material from previous research, there were a few quotes that raised my eyebrows.

Briefly, White shows not only that the Catholic Church considers Mary to have been perpetually virginal (29-34), immaculately conceived (and therefore completely sinless, 35-43), “assumed” into heaven without dying (51-55), and “venerated” (57-84), but also that official Catholic dogma has made even more extreme asseverations about Mary. They consider her, for instance, to be the “Spouse of the Spirit” or “Spouse of God” (11, 31, 77, 104, 114), and the Mediatrix of the redemptive benefits of Christ’s passion (37, Vatican II called her Mediatrix, 93, Pope John Paul II has so referred to her in his encyclical *Lumen Gentium*, 103).

John Paul II has said in public statements, “There is no better approach to her Son than through [Mary],” and “to Christ through Mary” (112). His personal motto, inscribed on his coat of arms, is *Totus Tuus sum Maria* (“Mary, I am totally yours”). Pope Benedict XV in the 1918 Apostolic Letter *Inter Sodalicia* affirmed Mary’s “atonement” for sinners, “To such an extent did she suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son . . . in order to appease the justice of God, that we may rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ” (126). Mary is the “ladder to paradise” in Catholic thought (73). God revealed himself to one saint,

telling him, “In vain will he invoke me as a Father who has not venerated Mary as a Mother” (73). According to another saint, along with the text in John in which Jesus says, “No one comes to me unless the Father draws him,” Jesus also affirms, “No one comes to me unless my Mother first of all draws him by her prayers” (76). Other saints write, “At the command of Mary, all obey, even God,” and “Yes, Mary is omnipotent” (79). A major Catholic theologian has written, “We often obtain more promptly what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus.” (71).

White also gives some excellent refutations of these doctrines from Scripture, and shows many of them to be contrary to the gospel of free grace through *sola fide, solo Christo*. This is a very fine little book, one which anyone must read who ministers in a Catholic community. Its use of primary sources, and its demonstration from official Catholic writings of these heterodox views is worth far more than the price of the book (don’t tell the publisher). All of White’s books are excellent, and this little one is a true jewel.

Chad Owen Brand