

Chapter 4

GENESIS: INTRODUCTION TO THE CANON AND TO BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

H. Ross Cole

It is a well-known fact that the Bible is not actually a single book, but a library of many different literary pieces, written by a variety of different authors under a variety of different circumstances over a period of more than a millennium and a half. Yet in the midst of this diversity believers assert a deep unity, which even in the case of Genesis itself is today being reaffirmed by many biblical scholars.¹

The logical place to begin then is at the beginning. A synonym for the word “genesis” is “origin.”² So it seems right that a book called “Genesis” should come first in the canon of Scripture. However, Genesis provides much more than a chronological starting point. In a profound sense, it introduces the story and theology of Scripture as a whole. Indeed, without the orientation it provides, there are important parts of the rest so subtle in their expression that we might overlook them altogether. These assertions especially apply to the so-called primeval history of Genesis 1-11, ironically the portion of the book that to most modern and postmodern readers alike seems the most fantastic and the least historical of all.

This chapter notes eleven vital orienting themes in Genesis, especially in chapters 1-11:

- The Oneness of the Sovereign God
- The Goodness of Creation
- The Reality of Cosmic Conflict
- The Sinfulness of Humanity
- The Balance of Work and Rest
- Marriage and the Blessing of a “Helper”
- The Conditionality of Life
- The Status of the Remnant
- Redemption as a New Creation
- The Coming Messiah
- The Response of Faith

The Oneness of the Sovereign God

In the ancient Babylonian creation account known as the *Enuma Elish*, gods themselves are the product of creation, and are in turn agents of further acts of creation. In the Genesis account God alone is God, and is identified as such by his creative acts. Throughout the Old Testament the active forms of the Hebrew verb *br'* always have the Deity as their subject. The dividing line between the Creator and the created is absolute. As agents of the divine, created objects are ascribed no divine status, not even of an honorary kind. Sun and moon are not even named in Genesis 1, lest in written translation into Babylonian or Egyptian the symbol of divinity be attached to them as a necessary part of customary spelling. They are simply called "lights"³ (v. 16). Light itself is described as being created three days earlier, lest anyone or anything other than God himself be seen as the source of light. Stars do not ordain human destiny. Their creation is almost an afterthought to that of the two great light-bearers. Sea monsters are not gods to be defeated, but the mere playthings of the one true God. Human beings alone are said to be created in the image of God, but this assertion does not mean that they are God. When they cross the boundary to become like God/gods, a tragic ungodlike expulsion from the Garden is what follows, not exaltation to divine status.⁴

Is there any suggestion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity here? None that is overt. However, the plural cohortative of Genesis 1:26 is tantalizing:⁵ "Let *us* make man in *our* image."⁶ One thing is clear. The New Testament asserts that Jesus is the agent of creation against the background of the Genesis declaration of creation as a divine act (e.g., John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-18; Heb 1:2, 10-12). In so doing, it ascribes him full divinity – "in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead" (Col 2:9). The very least that can be said is that he is seen as the visible manifestation of the transcendent Genesis Creator.

The Goodness of Creation

In Genesis 1:4 God sees that the light is good. He sees the separation of the land from the seas as good in verse 10, the creation of vegetation as good in verse 12, the arrangement of the lights as good in verse 18, the creation of air and sea creatures as good in verse 21 and the creation of land creatures as good in verse 25. Human beings are then created, and God sees all that he had made as very good in verse 31. The blessing of fruitfulness is announced upon animals in verse 22 before it is announced upon human beings in verse 28. There is no suggestion here that God is interested only in "spiritual" realities, or even especially in them. He is interested in everything, in the totality of creation. The Black Death wiped out up to half the European population in the thirteenth century, and can be ascribed in large part to an utter absorption in the spiritual at the expense of the physical.⁷ To see nature as an independent entity in which God takes an interest only once humans appear is equally fallacious. The words "environs" and "environment" relate to surroundings or neighborhoods. "Environmentalism" therefore does not adequately capture the concern of these verses.⁸ The created order does not have value simply because it provides the context for human life. It has a value of its own quite apart from human beings. Losses in the created order are intrinsic tragedies. The tragedy they bring to human beings is only part of the picture.

Human beings are given rulership over other living creatures and the authority to subdue them (Gen 1:26-28).⁹ However, this authority is only delegated in the image of God. It is neither absolute nor independent. Adam is placed in the Garden to serve (Gen 2:15).¹⁰ Adam is a scientist before he is a husband, Yahweh God bringing the animals before him and seeming to wait with bated breath

for what Adam will call them. So Adam does for the animals what God earlier does for the light and darkness (Gen 1:5) and the expanse of the heavens (v. 8). Is this just a matter of classification, or is Adam even assigning their function in the created order?¹¹ There is no angel here whispering the correct name in Adam's ear, as in the Qur'an.¹² Later when the destruction of all living things comes before Yahweh, Noah illustrates an ideal of what is involved in the human rulership over the animals by bringing pairs and sevens of the different kinds of animals into the ark (Gen 6:19-20; 7:2). He thus becomes the first conservationist. After the Flood, God gives permission for the first time for humans to eat animals, but prohibits the eating of blood, out of regard for the sanctity of life (Gen 9:3, 4).¹³

The Reality of Cosmic Conflict

Satan and demonic powers are mentioned little throughout much of the Old Testament. Belief in the existence of such beings has sometimes been seen as a late development in Jewish thinking. However, "the notion of an opposing voice represents a challenge to belief in a sovereign God. The wonder, therefore, is not that the Bible says so little about the opposing power but that it says so much."¹⁴ The issue is therefore one of repression rather than destruction.¹⁵ The serpent is fully identified as Satan and the devil in Revelation 12:9 (cf. 20:2). It might seem anachronistic simply to read this understanding back into Genesis 3. Nevertheless the question arises even here, as to whether there is a power behind the serpent, albeit one ultimately as creaturely as he is. The Old Testament scholar John Sailhamer perceptively comments:

Though the "enmity" may lie between the two "seeds," the goal of the final crushing blow is not the "seed" of the snake but rather the snake itself; *his* head will be crushed. In other words, it appears that the author seems intent on treating the snake and his "seed" together, as one. What happens to the snake's "seed" in the distant future can be said to happen to the snake as well. This suggests that the author views the snake in terms that extend beyond this particular snake of the garden. The snake, for the author, is representative of someone or something else.¹⁶

In Genesis 3 there is plainly a personal power at enmity with the divine, and his tools of trade range from deliberate exaggeration ("Has God said that you can't eat of any tree of the Garden?"), to outright lies ("You certainly won't die"), to statements that are technically true, but have the wrong meaning in its mouth ("Your eyes will be opened," but in shame not delight; you will know "good and evil," but in the sense of knowing blessing and curse, not in the sense of knowing everything).¹⁷ The temptation in the Garden is clearly part of a larger if as yet untold tale.

The Sinfulness of Humanity

"Behold I have found only this, that God made men upright but they have sought out many devices" (Eccl 7:29). The Fall in the Garden has catastrophe written all over it, and the first couple are consequently expelled from their land, as Israel will later be from its land. Yet things do not improve. If the first sin is stealing fruit (Gen 3), the second is fratricide (Gen 4:1-15) and soon bringing down vengeance for murder is something to be delighted in (vv. 23-24). In short order the whole earth is filled with violence, to the extent that God himself is caught by surprise at the

depth and persistence of human rebellion – or so it appears, if one takes the words of Genesis 6:11 literally, “The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in his heart.” The promise “never again to curse the ground on account of man” (Gen 8:21) appears to be based on a divine resignation to how inveterately evil human devising has become, rather than on compassion *per se*. As if to prove the point, Noah, it is stressed, is “a righteous man, blameless in his time” (Gen 6:9). However, even he ends up drunk (Gen 9:21 – a folly of wrongly chosen fruit once more), with a curse descending upon his grandson Canaan (v. 25) and the whole world soon in rebellion again (Gen 11).

The situation is no better in the later chapters of Genesis. Twice Abraham lies about his relationship to Sarah and leaves her in the harem of another man (Gen 12:10-20; 20), an example followed by his son Isaac with Rebekah (Gen 26:1-16). Rebekah and Jacob deceive Isaac so that he will bless Jacob instead of Esau (Gen 27:5-29), Laban gives Jacob Leah as a wife instead of Rachel (Gen 29:14-30) and cheats him by changing his wages ten times (Gen 31:7). In turn, Jacob deceives Laban when he runs away from him (v. 20) and Rachel deceives him by stealing the household gods (vv. 19, 34-35), as if the family of promise should treasure graven images anyway! In the next generation, Tamar plays the prostitute to trick Judah into giving her a son (Gen 38) and Jacob’s sons trick their father into believing that a wild animal has killed Joseph (Gen 37:20-23).

Deceit is far from the only sin in Abraham’s family or in the lives of his descendents. The way these brothers treat Joseph is, of course, a terrible tale of betrayal all on its own (Gen 37). Lot’s daughters seduce their father with wine to ensure a progeny (Gen 19:30-38), Tamar knows how easily Judah will fall to the charms of a whore (Gen 38), and Simeon and Levi slaughter the Shechemites *en masse* (Gen 34). As for people outside Abraham’s family, Sodom and Gomorrah are wiped out on account of their wickedness and depravity (Gen 19:1-29) and like the Flood become types of the end of the age (*e.g.*, Luke 17:28-30). In Genesis, the Amorites have not yet filled their cup of iniquity, but there is no doubt that fill it they will (Gen 15:16).

The perplexities of the battle with sin and the deeply embedded tendencies to sin in human nature described so graphically in Romans 7 are writ large from the beginning. The underlying message of Genesis is clear – no solution to the human predicament lies in human beings themselves!¹⁸

The Balance of Work and Rest

In Genesis, work is clearly presented as a blessing, even in the unfallen state. It is then that humans are commanded to rule over other living creatures and to subdue them (Gen 1:26-28) and Adam is placed in the Garden to serve (Gen 2:15). However, from the beginning there is provision for rest as well. Human beings do their work “in the image of God.” If all we had was the Creation account, it would have to be said that the main thing we know about God is that he works and rests in a weekly cycle of darkness and light. It would therefore appear to be a fundamental aspect of our humanity that we work and rest in the same cycle.¹⁹

It is noteworthy that there appears to be no limitation to the divine power that would require God to take a whole week over creation, nor any exhaustion on his part that he would need to stop to recover his energies at the end of that week. Both the attenuation of time over work and the ceasing of work to rest when it is over appear to be for the sake of humankind, in contrast to the situation in the *Enuma Elish*, where humans are created for no other reason than to give the gods rest. The idea of God taking six days to create the world and then resting,

reveals the kind of anthropomorphism which all too often aggravates biblical parlance about God. . . . [The prohibition against idolatry] forcibly reminded even the most earthy Jew of the non-material nature of the true God. But if God was so different from anything material, what could be the reason for the emphatic assertion that He ceased from His work of six by takings by taking a rest on the seventh? . . . Clearly one is faced here with a divine role model set for man.²⁰

From the beginning we are thus reminded of how indebted we are to grace in what God has done for us, before we ever do anything for him.

To remove the sanctification of the seventh day to eons after the creation is to truncate the story and to deprive it of its goal. Genesis 2:1-3 is a tightly knit unit in its own right, “a unified composition which does not let the reader bracket out any traditions within it with any degree of certainty.”²¹ All the blessings in Genesis 1 clearly have creation and humanity in view and become operative at the moment that blessing is made.

It is thus “with respect to his creation and with respect to man in particular that God blessed the Sabbath day.”²² The last section of each successive genealogy in Genesis is always “the one which announces the following history,” and thus the divine Sabbath observance clearly begins “the new history, the human one.”²³ The Sabbath blessing is thus operative from the first seventh day onwards.²⁴

It is true that no direct command is given to humans in Genesis 2:1-3 to observe the Sabbath, but since human beings are created in the image of God, one is hardly necessary. His humble example of relationship to the creation is enough. The sanctification of the day further implies a public proclamation of its holiness. In the Old Testament, the sanctification of time is always either estimative, referring to the actual observance of a holy time,²⁵ or declarative, emphasizing a public announcement.²⁶ In Genesis 2:3, the estimative use can be ruled out, since God did not sanctify the seventh day by stopping on it; instead he sanctified it because he then stopped his work. The use is therefore declarative, with an emphasis on the public proclamation of the sanctity of the seventh day at the time of creation.²⁷

If it were not for Genesis 2:1-3, it might be easy to dismiss the Sabbath as a distinctively Jewish identity marker, with no relevance to wider humanity; or as a shadow of salvation from sin, like the sacrificial system. As it is, Genesis paints it as a universal blessing before the advent of either Jew or sin. William Paley, famous for his theistic arguments from design, ably put the case for the ongoing significance of Creation ordinances, much and all as he believed the Sabbath was only instituted at the Exodus. “If the Divine command was actually delivered at the creation, it was addressed, no doubt, to the whole human species alike, and continues, unless repealed by some subsequent revelation, binding upon all who come to the knowledge of it.”²⁸

The significance of the theme of rest does not decrease with the entrance of sin; it increases with the curse that comes upon the land (Gen 3:17-19). Lamech accordingly names his son Noah (meaning “comfort” or “rest”) because he will bring comfort or rest for all this toil (Gen 5:29). When the ark lands, the same root is used to say it comes “to rest” on the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4). The promise of land is thus not only about an opportunity to work, it also comes to stand for rest, to the point that not to enter the land is not to enter the divine rest (Psa 95:11). Yet just being in the land does not equate with entering into the rest either (vv. 7-10), a fact picked up by the New Testament

to point to the eschatological rest as the true fulfillment of the promise of land (Heb 4:6-8), of which the Creation Sabbath becomes an anticipation (vv. 3-4).

Marriage and the Blessing of a "Helper"

"It is not good for the man to be alone," so Yahweh God therefore makes a woman, "a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2:18), or "comparable to him" (NKJV), or better still "a power equal to him."²⁹ The Genesis paradigm for male-female relationships hardly seems to match at all the values of the patriarchal culture through which the story has come to us. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife" (v. 24). However, in ancient Israel it was women who left and the men who stayed. Yet herein we see the power of stories that transcend their setting to sow the seeds of change. Marriage will be the appropriate state of life for most human beings. Singleness will be the situation for some, as was the case later in the Bible – Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul (at least during his apostleship). But under normal circumstance is it not good for humans to be alone.

When Matthew reports Jesus' position on divorce, he has him go back before the provisions of Moses on the subject to the original creation, citing Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, to the effect that what God has joined together humans should not put asunder (Matt 19:3-39). The original creation presents a view of marriage as monogamous, heterosexual, permanent and reproductive, necessary for the fulfillment of the original divine intention for humans to populate the earth.

On a fallen planet, ideals are not always met. In the ancient world, the element of reproduction is especially brought to the fore. The more children a young man has, the happier he is considered to be (e.g., see Psa 129:5). In Genesis, both Abraham and Jacob so idealize fertility that they add concubines to insure it comes to pass (Gen 16; 30), but these attempts do not bring happiness. So today we must set our ideals according to the creation record, but remember the reality in which we live.

The Conditionality of Life

In line with the Genesis emphasis on the goodness of creation, there is no hint of an incorporeal human existence before the creation. To the mind of the writer, "incorporeal" and "human" would be oxymoronic. It is only when Yahweh God breathes the breath of life into the nostrils of the newly formed man that he becomes "a living being" (Gen 2:7). At death human beings do not enter a higher state of being. Creation is instead reversed, they return to the dust, and they become (for the time) as though they had not been (Gen 3:20). The expulsion from the Garden is precisely to insure that humans in their sinfulness do not take from the tree of life and live forever. To claim that death is anything other than death is to repeat the serpent's lie (v. 4). The genealogies throughout Genesis confirm like a drumroll the reality of death, even when life is long.³⁰

In line with the teaching of Genesis, elsewhere in the Old Testament it is not the dead who praise God, but the living (e.g., Isa 38:18-19) for the dead "know nothing" and all their emotions have "perished" (Eccl 9:5-6). From the added New Testament perspective, God alone possesses immortality (1 Tim 6:16) and it is only through the gospel that life and immortality are brought to light through Christ who has abolished death (2 Tim 1:10). And that life is found not in death itself, but in resurrection from the dead. If there is no resurrection from the dead, then we have hope only

in this life (1 Cor 15:12-19, 32). The New Testament scholar N. T. Wright speaking specifically of 1 Corinthians 15 and the Christian hope of resurrection states, "The whole chapter echoes and alludes to Genesis 1-3. It is a theology of new creation."³¹ It is a clear example of the opening chapters of Genesis being seminal to biblical theology in its fullness.

The Status of the Remnant

Enmity is placed between the seed of the women and the seed of the serpent as a whole (Gen 3:15), yet there is a narrowing interest in a particular seed throughout Genesis. Cain's line is vanquished and Seth's line replaces it. Only Noah and his family survive the flood. Canaan is early removed from particular focus (Gen 9:25). Abraham becomes the person of special focus (Gen 12:1-3). Yet in a point Paul delights to emphasize, Ishmael is not the child of promise, and Jacob inherits the birthright above Esau (Rom 9). In a process of time and in language anticipating Revelation 12:17, the focus is always on a remnant of the woman's seed. Indeed, the root of the Hebrew verb used in Genesis 7:23, "and only Noah *was left*," is identical to that of a nominal form often translated (*š'r*) as "remnant" throughout the Old Testament.³²

Reading the story of Genesis, a picture readily emerges of "remnants" who appear concerned primarily for their own existence and little more. Do Pharaoh or Abimelech feel blessed by their encounter with Abraham, or does Hagar for that matter, at least in the short term? Simeon and Levi's slaughter of the Shechemites make Jacob "odious among the inhabitants of the land" (Gen 34:30). Joseph saves the Egyptians from famine (Gen 41), but they lose their land to Pharaoh in the process (Gen 47:20-25). Yet in Yahweh's call to Abram it is promised that he "shall be a blessing" (Gen 12:2), and that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (v. 3). The tension between this introduction and what follows is profound. However, it might scarcely be noted if it were not for the extended introduction to the story of Abraham's family provided by Genesis 1-11. Abram/Abraham's story is a divinely initiated counterbalance to what had threatened to be a global catastrophe and does not reach its ultimate fulfillment until reinterpreted in the New Testament.

So it ever is when God works with the particular. The selection of the particular is never an end in itself. It is always intended as a channel of blessing on a wider, even global scale. So the idea of a remnant soon becomes apparent in Genesis, and may even have been in Jesus' mind when he spoke of "few" ultimately being chosen (e.g., Matt 22:14).

Redemption as a New Creation

Within Genesis 1-11, the Fall and Creation together provide a powerful framework for depicting future judgment and restoration. The temptation account of Genesis 3:1-6 becomes a prelude to the Pentateuch and Israel's history as a whole.³³ The Flood is a reversal of Creation, with the boundaries set on the second day between the waters above and the waters below now obliterated, and the separation between land and sea established on the third day now nullified. Even though the passage of time is still marked, the distinction between day and night established on the first day is surely profoundly obscured by the storm clouds. Then the windows of heaven close again, the fountains of the deep dry up, dry land re-emerges and Creation ordinances are reiterated for the new creation (Gen 9:1-7). The stage is set for the depiction of the Exodus as a new creation, with a pillar of

cloud regulating day and night and dry land emerging from the Red Sea. The Exile is a return to the formlessness and emptiness of the original creation (*cf.* Gen 1:2; Jer 4:30),³⁴ and the return a second Exodus. John depicts redemption as a new creation, opening with same words as Genesis, "In the beginning" (John 1:1), speaking early of "the light that shines in the darkness" (v. 5), and recounting later the cry of a completed work, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Without the grounding provided by the Creation and Flood accounts it might be easy to think of events along the way of the biblical narrative as random and disconnected. However, in the light of the Genesis record, the Exodus, Exile and restoration become preludes to paradise restored. The goal of salvation is not simply the restoration of *those* who are lost – it is the restoration of *all* that has been lost through sin. The Hebrew for "beginning" in Genesis 1:1 does not simply suggest the first in a series. It denotes a beginning as opposed to an end.³⁵ The end, or the new beginning, is not finally here until the tree of life is once again established among human beings (Rev 22:2).³⁶

The Coming Messiah

In Genesis 3:15 the Lord God promises to put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between his seed and her seed. Seed here no doubt ultimately represents their descendents as a whole. However, the seed of the woman is not said to defeat the seed of the serpent *per se*. It is the head of the serpent himself that the seed of the woman will crush. The suggestion is that of a personal one-on-one conflict, embodying the wider, more inclusive encounter. A particular Messianic and unmistakably male individual appears to be in view here.³⁷ The fulfillment of his mission will involve personal loss and pain ("you shall bruise his heel," Gen 3:15), yet it will be a victorious mission ("He shall bruise you on the head," v. 15). Messianic hope is already well under way in the opening chapters of Genesis.

Messianic hope also appears to be writ large in Genesis 49:10, where it is promised that the scepter (the symbol of kingship) will remain in Judah "until Shiloh comes," or as the NIV translates, "until he comes to whom it [tribute] belongs." The future appearance of a specific male ruler (a Messiah?) is again in focus. Verse 11 then stresses his wealth: "He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes," and verse 12 his attractiveness: "His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk."

Commenting on verse 11 Victor Hamilton says:

Tethering an ass to a vine (which the ass would readily consume) would be like lighting a cigarette with a dollar bill. Laundering one's clothing with wine might also point to opulence.

It is clear that *wine* is not exactly the same as *grapes' blood*. The first refers to the finished product. The second refers to the crushing of the grapes. May we have here a pastoral image, but within which there is the intimation of violence? . . . To his own this one will bring joy and fullness; to those who reject him he brings terror.³⁸

Derek Kidner, author of the Genesis volume in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series, points to the caution that he thinks should be exercised in finding a Messiah in verse 10 alone, although at the same time noting "the Messianic content which Jewish and Christian exegesis has found in the saying from earliest times." But all that changes in the light of verses 11 and 12:

Every line of these verses speaks of exuberance, intoxicating abundance: it is the golden age of the Coming One, whose universal rule was glimpsed in [verse] 10c. . . . In its own material terms it bids adieu to the pinched regime of thorns and sweat for "the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast." Jesus announced the age to come in just this imagery in his first sign at "Cana" of Galilee.³⁹

The Response of Faith

"And he [Abram] believed in the LORD; and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6, NKJV). Genesis portrays a wide-ranging picture of the scope of the divine intention for humanity. Paul will later describe Abraham's faith as unwavering (Rom 4:20). Given the fluctuations in Abraham's life, such an assertion can only reflect how faith is indeed counted for something more than its obvious meaning implies. One source describes Genesis 15:6, as "the oldest and most profound definition of faith."⁴⁰ Paul would later build on it to articulate the defining doctrine of New Testament theology: justification or righteousness by faith.

Paul elsewhere suggests that Ishmael was the product of human works and that Isaac was the product of faith (Gal 4:21-31). A study of Genesis in its own context suggests that Paul has read Genesis in a way that the author of Genesis would have been profoundly comfortable. Announcements of plot in Genesis are not matched by straightforward fulfillment. God blesses the first pair (Gen 1:26-28) yet they end up in exile. As we have already noted, Abram and his seed will be a blessing to other nations, yet too often they turn out to be a curse, or at best a mixed blessing. Abram is promised seed and land (Gen 12), but it is decades before Isaac is born and the only part of Canaan he owns at the end of his life is the tomb he has purchased for Sarah. Similar situations arise as patriarchal history unfolds. Indeed, Genesis may be read as a sequence of unfulfilled divine promises waiting to be fulfilled in the future and calling for the continued exercise of faith in the present.

Ishmael is clearly the result of a misdirected attempt to bring to fulfillment the divine promise, and this episode seems not to be the only such instance. Abraham's attempted manipulations of Pharaoh are not his finest hour. They leave him with wealth, but not the fulfillment of the promise. The attempts of Rebekah and Jacob to deceive bear fruit in a lifetime of deceiving and being deceived. They certainly do not lead to a lifetime of family harmony or leadership. As Joseph plays games with his brothers, his motives may be multifaceted. Certainly, the youthful dreams of his family bowing down to him are part of his thinking. Is he trying to manipulate his father into bowing down to him with his brothers? If so, he fails. So, in these Genesis stories a pattern certainly seems to be emerging. The divine promise is fulfilled by God in his sovereignty as the participants in the story trust in him. It is not fulfilled by human conniving, even by human striving.⁴¹ How close to Paul in all this we are centuries ahead of time!

Conclusion

What a rich perspective Genesis gives us for all that follows! Israel's God is no tribal god of a limited space. He is the eternal, transcendent sole Creator of all. Creation is good and God is not just interested in "spiritual" things. He is interested in everything, including how we care for his creation. The human drama is part of a larger cosmic conflict between good and evil, in which the very nature of truth is at stake. There is a profound inclination to sin in fallen human beings, one too profound

for humans themselves to fix. Life is not all about work; it is also about rest and relationship. The Sabbath is no mere identity marker for Jews. It is a universal symbol of divine grace. No part of a human being is innately immortal, for life can only ever be a gift from God. We were not created to be alone, and marriage is a divine gift to human beings, not simply an institution of human devising. God works through shattered remnants, but not simply for their own sakes. They are his agents for a global salvation. Redemption is creation restored. The metanarrative undergirding all biblical narratives is paradise lost and found again. The coming of the suffering yet triumphant Messiah is assured. Human conniving to assist the divine will is doomed to failure, as are all human attempts to earn either divine favor or the fulfillment of divine promise. Faith is the only appropriate response to the creator.

Such is the diverse and fundamental theological content of Genesis, briefly as it has been surveyed here. It is self-evidently foundational to the rest of the Bible and therefore a fitting introduction to the canon of Scripture. The final chapter in James McKeown's recent study of Genesis is entitled "Genesis and Biblical Theology." In it he demonstrates the many theological links between Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament. He also states, "Clear thematic continuity may be discerned between Genesis and the New Testament," adding, "It was important for the early Christians to show that they were not establishing a new religion but heralding a new era of blessing in which the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ."⁴² McKeown then concludes, "The book of Genesis has many interrelated themes and characters. It is well suited to be a book of beginnings, since many of these themes and characters are found throughout both Old and New Testaments."⁴³ It is hoped that this brief overview of Genesis has demonstrated the truth of this assessment.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. E.g., Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 30-38, particularly "it is not without significance that recent studies have tended to support the essential unity of Genesis," 38.
2. E.g., s.v. "genesis" in *The Macquarie Dictionary*, 2nd edn., 1991.
3. So translated in most English versions, but literally "light-givers" or "luminaries."
4. The anti-Babylonian polemic of Genesis 1 was first especially developed by Gerhard F. Hasel, "Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972), 1-20. More recently, note Jan Christian Gertz, "Antibabylonische Polemik im priesterlichen Schöpfungsbericht?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 106 (2009), 137-155.
5. See Gerhard F. Hasel, "Meaning of 'Let Us' in Gen 1:26," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 13 (1975), 58-66.
6. Again the preferred translation, although some more recent versions use "humankind" instead of the generic "man." The NIV is the most frequently quoted version in this chapter.
7. Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 332-339.
8. *Ibid.*, 390.
9. For a summary of interpretive traditions for understanding Genesis 1:26-28, see Jakob Wöhrle, "Dominium terrae: exegetische und religionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen zum Herrschaftsauftrag in Gen 1:26-28," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 121 (2009), 171-188.
10. The word translated as "work" in the NIV is "the normal Hebrew verb meaning 'to serve.' So again the note is sounded that man is placed in the garden as servant. He is there not to be served but to serve," Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 171.
11. This question was raised by Richard Rice in his Avondale College master's level class, "Issues in Contemporary Theology," July 6, 2010.
12. I do not remember where I first read of the Qur'anic contrast with Genesis at this point. However, an excellent study of the broader issue can be found in Torsten Löfstedt, "The Creation and Fall of Adam: A Comparison of the Quranic and Biblical Accounts," *Svensk missionstidskrift* 93 (2005), 453-477.
13. For further development of the implications of Genesis for an ethic of earth care, see Walter McConnell III, "In His Image: A Christian's Place in Creation," *Asia Journal of Theology* 20 (2006), 114-127; Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Live Wisely and Well: A Biblical Ecological Vision," *Perspectives* 17 (2002), 6-14. On the way a clear

- understanding of the goodness of creation might influence the shape of Christian ministry, see Iain W. Provan, "Creation and Holistic Ministry: A Study of Genesis 1:1-2:3."
14. Tonstad, 51, citing Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 136.
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein and Richard P. Polcyn, eds., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House Academic and Professional Books, 1990), 2:55.
 17. For an excellent study of the nature of the deception in Genesis 3, see Beverly J. Stratton, "Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric and Ideology in Gen 2-3," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplementary Series*, No. 208 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 109-156.
 18. Cf. John J. Scullion, "What of Original Sin? The Convergence of Genesis 1-11 and Romans 5:12," in *Schöpfung und Befreiung: für Claus Westermann zum 80 Geburtstag*, R. Albertz, ed., (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1989), 25-36.
 19. Sailhamer, "Genesis," 39. Our focus here is especially on the rest aspect of the cycle. However, significant research is currently being conducted on the work aspect by Avondale College PhD student and medical practitioner, Elizabeth Ostring.
 20. Stanley L. Jaki, "The Sabbath-rest of the Maker of All," *Asbury Theological Journal* 50/1 (Spring, 1995), 37-38.
 21. Niels-Erik Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath: A Tradition-Historical Investigation*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 7 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), 191.
 22. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 69.
 23. Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 221-222. See also Richard S. Hess, "Genesis 1-2 in Its Literary Context," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (1990), 143-153.
 24. Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," in Kenneth A. Strand, ed., *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 25.
 25. As in Exod 20:8; Lev 25:10; Deut 5:12; Neh 13:29; Jer 17:22, 24, 27, listed in George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance: Coded to Strong's Concordance Numbering System*, rev. Jay P. Green (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 1090.
 26. Exod 19:12, 23; Lev 25:10; Deut 5:12; Josh 20:9; 2 Kings 10:20; Joel 1:14; 2:15, listed in Wigram, 1090.
 27. For more information on Genesis 2:1-3, see H. Ross Cole, "The Sabbath and Genesis 2:1-3," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45 (2003), 5-12.

28. *The Works of William Paley*, 1 vol., new edn. (Philadelphia, PA: Crissy & Markley, n.d.), 103.
29. See David Noel Freedman, "Woman, a Power Equal to Man: Translation of Woman as a 'Fit Helpmate' for Man Is Questioned," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9/1 (January-February, 1983), 56-58.
30. On the significance of human mortality in Genesis, see Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-historical Study of Genesis 2-3* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 47-49.
31. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 155.
32. E.g., in the KJV in Ezra 3:8; Isa 7:3; 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 14:22; 16:14; 17:3; Zeph 1:4, as listed in Wigram, 1223. For a study of the remnant throughout Genesis, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea From Genesis to Isaiah*, 3rd edn., Andrews University Monographs, Studies in Religion, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), 135-159.
33. Martin Emmrich, "The Temptation Narrative of Genesis 3:1-6: A Prelude to the Pentateuch and the History of Israel," *Evangelical Quarterly* 73 (2001), 3-20.
34. See J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, "Back to Chaos: The Relationship Between Jeremiah 4:23-26 and Genesis 1," in G. H. van Kooten, ed., *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Genesis 1 in a Jewish, Ancient Near Eastern, Graeco-Roman, Christian, and Modern Context, Themes in Biblical Narrative*, no. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21-30.
35. Sailhamer, "Genesis," 20-21.
36. In this section I am especially indebted to the insights of Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001).
37. See C. John Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997), 139-148.
38. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 662.
39. Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, UK and Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 230.
40. *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), "Genesis," 2.
41. On the way in which the tension between the announcements of plot and plot itself emphasizes the divine sovereignty and the place of human faith, see Laurence A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, Journal of the Old Testament Supplementary Series, no. 96 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).
42. James McKeown, *Genesis*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 371-372.
43. *Ibid.*, 375.