

'Ēlōhîm, the Creator

The term 'ēl, which means “god,” suggests power and authority. Some suggest that 'ēl derives from the root 'wl (strong), others suggest 'eloah (God), and others see the root 'lh together with 'ēlōah (implying fear).¹ Though there is disagreement in the etymology of the term, it is broadly recognized in its use to mean “god.” Here in Genesis it is used to describe a profoundly powerful God in contrast to the other cosmologies of the ancient Near East. So the effective power and authority to create swiftly and effortlessly helps to inform the grandeur of this God 'el. Many suggest that the plural, 'Ēlōhîm, extends these conceptions of power, authority, and majesty beyond which a singular name can do justice. For example, Eichrodt developed this as an overwhelming monotheism.

A similar design led the writer of Genesis 1 to use the term *elohim* for the Creator God. By choosing this particular name, which as the epitome of all embracing divine power excludes all other divinity, he was able to protect his cosmology from any trace of polytheistic thought and at the same time describe the creator God as the absolute Ruler and the only Being whose will carries any weight.²

¹ An example of a brief discussion of this etymology can be found in Laird Harris, Gleason Archer and Bruce Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

² Walter Eichrodt, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 186-87. There should be no development of trinity in these early chapters of Genesis, for if “plural” is to be taken as a plural of person it would mean “polytheism” in this early context of revelation and that is clearly not correct in a Pentateuch context in which monotheism dominates.

It has become popular in certain contexts to see *elohim* as God's court or angels. For example, Psalm 8:5 as understood by the LXX and Hebrews 2:7 takes *elohim* as angels. Job 1:6 and 2:1 presents the sons of *ēlōhîm* to be angels in God's court. However, this same author denies angels a role involved within the creation except that of worship while God creates the universe (Job 38:1-11). Furthermore, Isaiah in his development of the incomparability of Yahweh develops that He is the One, Who creates the universe and people as well; there is no one else (Isa. 42:5-9).³ This brings us back to this context of Genesis in which no other than *ēlōhîm* is described as the creator. The creation is singularly done so effectively by One's speech. This is better understood in this Mosaic context as a single monotheistic God (Deut. 6:4), Who as the creator creates so effectively that the plural is best taken as a plural of majesty. This plurality of majesty may be viewed as carrying over into the pronouns that are used in grammatical agreement with *ēlōhîm* like the 'Us' and 'Our' of Genesis 1:26 and 3:22.⁴ So, no development of plurality of person is being developed by these texts, when they are easily explained by simple grammatical agreement. Perhaps the abundance of singular pronouns used with the plural *Elohim* makes a case for monotheism.

In ancient Near Eastern cosmology the creation accounts often involve a long period with deep conflicts through which a born god who would be king battles and destroys rival gods and the forces of chaos in order to remake them into the new creation. An example is seen in the *Enumma Elish*. In stark contrast, *ēlōhîm* is neither born, or developing. Carroll Stuhm Mueller develops the unique theological entrance of this God, for He alone among all semitic creative gods undergoes no birth or metamorphosis.⁵ God is complete in Himself and He

³ Cf. Chapter on the incomparable Yahweh for further development of this point.

⁴ There does not seem to be any other creator involved in Genesis or crafting the image of God as man. The second pronominal referent is in Genesis 3:22. Here the singular referent who is the judge is Yahweh Elohim. It is only after the judgment that a cherub appears on the scene. In other contexts, where the plural is clearly developing "God and His court," the variety of referents are clearly visible in the context before the plural pronoun is used, as in Isa. 6:8.

⁵ Carroll Stuhm Mueller, "The Theology of Creation in Second Isaiah," *CBQ* 21 (1959) 429-67.

stands transcendently apart from all that is created. This polemic both the Egyptian pantheism and the Mesopotamian dualism, which both are developing inferior gods. Our God is truly worthy of control because only our God truly created everything. God is presented as creating swiftly and effortlessly a whole creation with no threatening rivals within the creation. John McKenzie develops that there is no cosmic mortal combat with the risk of God's being defeated by a monster of chaos, but rather God is in His shop as a carpenter with no risk of being devoured by His chair (the created thing).

Against this background, the Hebrew account of the origins can scarcely be anything else but a counter statement to the myth of creation ... The Hebrew author enumerates all the natural forces in which deity was thought to reside, and of all of them he says simply that God made them. Consequently, he eliminates all elements of struggle on the cosmic level; the visible universe is not an uneasy balance of forces, but it is moderated by one supreme will, which imposes itself with effortless supremacy upon all that it has made. By preference the author speaks of the created work rather of the created act, because he wishes to emphasize the fact that the creative Deity, unlike *Marduk*, has not had to win supremacy by combat with an equal.⁶

This chapter will especially draw together the parallel texts of Genesis 1 and 2 and Psalm 104 to develop a Biblical theology of creation from the O.T.

The structure of Genesis develops literary units with the hinge of the word "account" (*ṯōl•dōt*). For example, both Genesis creation accounts begin with the same grammatical structure: a summary of the whole creation within the unit, followed by three circumstantial clauses (which explore the attending circumstance of lack within which the creation makes sense). The fact that these circumstantial clauses of Genesis 1:2 and 2:5-6 depend on the main verb of the overview statement (Gen. 1:1 or 2:4) clarifies that grammatically there is no temporal gap or events between these textual statements.

⁶ John McKenzie, *The Two Edged Sword* (N.Y.: Image Books, 1966), pp. 101-2.

There is no existing creation before the summary statement of Genesis 1:1. This summary creation event begins with the first two words connecting together by the alliteration of the *BRA* sound in the words “In the beginning” and “created.” Or as Young develops. “This is a beginning that is characterized by creation, and this is a creation that is characterized by the beginning. Here it means ‘the absolute beginning!’”⁷ The word created (*bārā*) is an activity of God alone; it is never used of man. The result is always a definitive creation, something new and fresh. “The heavens and earth” is a merism of opposites presenting God as the creator of all.

A number of chaos metaphors are developed in the conditional clauses that set a conceptual framework in order to bring out the creation order. For example, the concepts of formless (*tōhū*) and void (*bōhū*) signify chaos and lack of order, as in a desert waste (Dtr. 32:10; Job 6:18) or after a devastating judgment (Jer. 4:23-26; Isa. 34:11). Perhaps the form of God’s creation is given through God’s activity of the first three days and then God fills the creation in days four through six, however here the two words operate as a hendiadys for amorphous chaos. Additionally, darkness is symbolic of evil and vulnerability throughout the Bible (eg. Ex. 10:21-22; 14:20), however in this context darkness is merely part of the designed time of day without light (Gen. 1:4-5, 18). Furthermore, the watery deep (*thm*) is not conducive to life and represents the abyss. This deep is what drowns Egypt, Tyre and everyone in the flood when it is released by God to fight sin with chaos/flood (Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Ex. 15:5, 8; Ezek. 26:19). God’s way of deliverance for Israel was to pass through this deep on dry ground in the midst of the exodus into kingdom (Ps. 106:9; Isa. 51:10; 63:13). God’s conquering over this chaos is a polemic against the Babylonian goddess *Tiamat* and other mythological conceptions of the sea of chaos (*yām*), which is occupied by the monsters of chaos (*Leviathan* and *Rahab*). Here God does not Himself sense any risk from the deep and later it can be seen as a creation sea out

⁷ Young, *In the Beginning*, p. 24.

of which blessing may come (Gen. 49:25). The “*rûaḥ* of *Ēlōhîm*” could join the chaos metaphors as a chaotic wind from God (Isa. 11:4; 30:28) without the battle imagery of *Marduk*’s use of the chaos wind to defeat *Tiamat*, but *Ēlōhîm* is presented in Genesis 1 as God involved in creation, so it is best to take it as the monotheistic Divine Spirit involved in creation.⁸ There is no life besides God, so the Spirit of God hovers like a mother bird over her brood with such movements as to cause her brood, the creation, to take flight (Dtr. 32:11); God has intimate contact with the creation to bring forth order. Waltke develops that there is no restrainer of the chaos as in the ancient Near Eastern myths and there is no threat or rival to God; the monotheistic God creates utilizing these chaos metaphors.

The Spirit of God does not contend with a living hostile chaotic force but hovers over the primordial mass awaiting the appropriate time for history to begin. How can the chaos be hostile when it is not living but inanimate? It can only be shaped according to the will of the Creator.⁹

The pattern of creation follows regularly as: 1) an announcement (And God said), 2) command (let there be...), 3) report (and it was so), 4) evaluation (And God said that it was good) 5) temporal framework (And there was evening and morning, the ... day). *Ēlōhîm*’s creating by word implies sovereignty and extends far beyond *Marduk*’s magic by word as he was unable even to quiet *Tiamat* by word.¹⁰ The evaluation of “good” (*tôb*) can be an aesthetic judgment of beauty (perhaps Gen. 6:2) but in this context it is an acknowledgment of purpose and order and blessing, thus the creation is fitting into God’s sovereign design (Gen.2:9, 17-18; 3:5-6, 22). Sometimes, this evaluation comes in the middle of the day to structure levels of the creation. For example, the water, sky, and land are all separated into a structure on day two and three, the evaluation

⁸ Do not read this as the Holy Spirit (as in a trinitarian understanding) for in the Pentateuch context monotheism is emphasized as a foundational stage of progressive revelation. The trinity is not clearly taught in the Bible until the N.T.

⁹ Bruce Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, p. 48.

separates these as a lower structure than that of vegetation. (Gen. 1:10). Likewise, in the middle of day six, after the land beasts were created, the evaluation occurs to identify man in the creation as a superior content of creation. The fact that God creates only good reflects back onto Him as the Good God (e.g. Mt. 19:17; Jas. 1:17). The days (*yôm*) of Genesis can be taken as the light part of the day in contrast to darkness (Gen. 1:5), or as an age of creation (Gen. 2:4) but the term day used with a number and described in the Hebrew way as dark of night and then light of morning is best taken as a *solar* day (Ex. 20:11). So in comparison to other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts the Biblical creation moves swiftly to its completion in six solar days. These days in Genesis 1 set up a loose parallel (of light, separated environs, and climax) between the structure of days one through three and the contents of days four through six.

The creation of light does not occur prior to the creation as in other ancient Near Eastern myths, where it is an attribute of their gods (e.g. *Apsu* and *Marduk*). In this case light is created by God to dispel the chaotic darkness thus effortlessly obtaining an immediate victory (Gen. 1:3-5). The separation of light from darkness and the naming of them demonstrates *Ēlōhîm*'s sovereignty, as Von Rad develops.

The ultimate enunciation of this orderly cosmic arrangement and wholesome stabilization is the divine naming of the present darkness as night and the present light as day. The name given by God, is an expression of the essence and a seal of the way it will look henceforth. Thus the accent lies, not on the verbal naming, but on the calling into and fixing of the existence of creation. The precise translation, therefore is 'And God *appointed* the light as day...' But in the ancient Oriental view the act of giving a name meant, above all, the exercise of a sovereign right (cf. 2 Kings 23:34; 24:17). Thus the naming of this and all subsequent creation works once more expresses graphically God's claim of lordship over the creatures.¹¹

¹⁰ Compare tablet 2:117 or the sovereignty theme is developed by Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (N.Y.: McGraw Hill, 1966), p. 12.

Israel would remember the plagues (Ex. 10:21-24), how God brought thick darkness over the Egyptians but light among the Israelite huts. Light would represent good and salvation as dark represents chaos, evil and judgment. Psalm 104:1 contemplates that in this creation God wraps Himself about with a majestic garment of light. Israel would know that God was the way when they followed the light phenomenon through the wanderings, day and night. They would also see here that this same God is sovereign over both light and darkness; metaphors of goodness and evil were both present but in their proper place.

The parallel creation of lights on day four simply brings the word for lamps as visible from below as in the expanse of the creation (Gen. 1:14-19). If any of these lights were named it would conjure up pagan gods but here the word 'light' is meant to be prosaic and degrading, as to exclude polytheism. These are created objects; sun and moon are not named so that every tempting association may be avoided; the words sun and moon are also names for pagan deities, namely *Shemesh* and *Yareach*. The stars are briefly stated as created lights showing no place for astrology. These lights are established as functionaries in the creation for signs, seasons, days and years. *Ēlōhîm* has created these lights to fill His heavens showing again His sovereignty.

In days two and three God continues to bring separation to the creation (Gen. 1:6-10). This is first brought about by a firmly hammered or stamped barrier called firmament (*rāqîa*).¹² Psalm 104:2-3 describes the firmament

¹¹ Gerhard VonRad, *Genesis*, p. 53.

¹² Firmament is an extended surface, a solid expanse as if beaten out in a bowl. It is created by God, holding up the heavenly waters, so that the birds can fly in an open environment under its expanse (Gen. 1:6-8, 20). The sun, moon and stars are phenomenally seen in the firmament and as such the firmament declares God's glory through the created items seen through it (Gen. 1:14-15, 17; Ps. 19:2; Dan. 12:3). Praise is appropriate anywhere in this created sanctuary of the earth (that is within the firmament) that God has made (Ps. 150:1). The firmament continues to be presented in a solid way, for it is the structural expanse appearing as a crystal roof with God's sapphire throne sitting upon it (Ezek. 1:22-26; 10:1). This firmament might be a circular or a vaulted arch since Isaiah 40:22 claims God sits upon such a shape above the earth in the context of the clouds (cf. Job 22:14). Other images communicate this structural element in more fabric like as of a heavenly tent curtain or clothes, or with upper chambers with beams for support (Ps. 104:2-4; Isa. 40:22). This realist imagery is furthered by the use of *'arubah* (windows or lattice in a literal building Ec. 12:3; Isa. 6:8). The word for window however refers to the flood

structurally with beams to support the upper chamber holding up the waters and surrounded with a tent curtain. This barrier that holds up the heavenly waters from the waters below is joined by the rising of land that separates the land from the seas. Psalm 104:6-9 portrays the rising of the land and the fleeing of the waters as dramatically responding to God's thunderous rebuke which limits the earth's garment to its proper place. Something like this occurs again as the flood waters recede and the earth is once again brought up from the waters of chaos (Gen. 8). The simplicity of accomplishing these divisions by a word stands boldly as a claim for *Elohim's* sovereignty; He rules over the domains of the pagan gods and separates and controls them. Once the waters are separated under God's sovereign control they become territorial markers and irrigation channels created by God to do His bidding as tools which water the plants and animals (Gen. 2:6, 10-14; Ps. 104:10-13).

The last division of form is God's creation of vegetation. It is described with an emphasis on its kind maintaining the God-given order and its fruit sustaining this God-given order. Bringing the vegetation from the inanimate earth identifies it with the earth in contrast to the ancient Near Eastern gods, who have been sidelined again. The speed at which *Ēlōhîm* creates the plants demonstrates God's sovereign power, as well as continues to polemic evolutionary views. This vegetation is primarily developed in these creation accounts to show God's generosity in blessing animals and man with food as a loving Father who crafts the environment for those who are His (Gen. 1:11-12, 29-30; 2:16; Ps. 104:14-17).

waters pouring through these heavenly firmament windows (Gen. 7:11; 8:2). Furthermore these heavenly windows may be either spiritually real or metaphorical as in the instances where a more generic judgment of entrapment, or blessing of deliverance from enemies or food coming from God (2 Ki. 7:2, 19; Isa. 24:18; Mal.3:10). Perhaps with the realist emphasis of firmament and windows, it is best to incorporate them as spiritually real dimensional phenomena that are visible only at selected instances like the angelic army surrounding Elisha whether his attendant could see them or not (2 Ki. 6:17). This spiritually real cosmology is a broadly accepted perspective in the ancient Near East, though the Hebrew framework does not reflect the polytheistic bias common among the other ancient Near Eastern religions.

Then God created the animals. The creation of the animals involves both the spoken word and the intimacy of personal creation, which indicates a higher form of existence. These animals are created as “living creatures” or more appropriately as “living souls” (*nepheshîm*, eg. Gen. 1:20, 24, 30; 9:10, 12, 15). In Hebrew, the word soul is not a special human psychological or spiritual quality, but *nephesh* refers to a wholistic living, willing being. These souls are enumerated as the swimming things, flying things, livestock, crawling things, and wild animals. It is this animal pattern of wholistically being a soul that is then applied to man as well in creation (Gen. 2:7). As such souls, these animals and man experience the blessing of God in fertility. Once again the pagan myths are polemicized, for fertility comes from the Creator, Who designed them to be fruitful, multiplying and filling the earth (Gen. 1:22-25). The fact that animals are souls identifies them to be responsible agents, who should and do receive consequences for their sins. For example, the snake involved in the temptation is judged (Gen. 3:1, 14-15). Additionally in the Noahic covenant animals and humans alike who kill a human are to suffer capital punishment (Gen. 9:5-6). Likewise in the Law, the ox that gores a man to death is to be killed as well as the owner of the ox if the ox had a prior propensity to gore people (Ex. 21:28-29). The fact that animals are souls also means that they have limited rights as well, such as being rescued if they fall into a pit even on a Sabbath day (Mt. 12:11-12).

The greatest polemic of the false gods with regard to the animals is the way *tannînim* or sea monsters occur in the account (Gen. 1:21). Psalm 104:26 mentions them by name as the *Leviathan*. For the Cannanites, the *tannînim*, called *Leviathan*, are ominous chaos rivals that have preceded *Baal*, which he must confront in warfare at the beginning; *Baal* must conquer these with much effort to bring order to the creation. However, in the Biblical account, the *tannînim* or *Leviathan* are God’s bath toys; thus no rival at all and the order of the creation is well under way before they are briefly mentioned in passing as created by *’Ēlōhîm*. When compared to God, these puny creatures are created by God to

play in God's seas. The *tannînîm* experience the blessing of God's fertility along with the rest of the animals. In response to this much of the creation account Psalm 104 breaks forth in petition and song for the glory of the Lord and the destruction of the enemies of God (Ps. 104:31-35).

God is seen as the definitive Creator. In contrast to the other cosmologies God is seen in these Biblical accounts of creation as more powerful in His accomplishment of the creation. The Biblical text portrays God as a greater sovereign than the other cosmologies that require their gods to express huge effort in order to accomplish their attempts to rule. Perhaps the repeated reminders of the creation's being good reflect on God as good or the source of goodness. These features in which God demonstrates Himself in Genesis 1 are then reflected in minute form through the image of God, which pictures God.

Man is the climax of God's creation. This is evident by the parallel structure to vegetation as after the pronouncement of good on their respective days (Gen. 1:10, 25). Additionally, the divine announcement of resolution preceding man's creation shows unique handling of this creation. Furthermore, the repetition of *bara* in Genesis 1:28 indicates the highpoint of the creation. Cassuto also makes the case that the change from narrative to poetry accentuates man as the noblest of God's creatures.¹³ Certainly the image of God and the intimacy with which God creates indicates that man is God's superior creation.

Image (*selem* and *eikōn*) and likeness (*d*miūt* and *homoiōsis*) are synonyms which convey a copy or a duplicate. Such a concept would not be thought of in this ancient Near Eastern context without accentuating the physical representation. Humans are statues or representations of God. In the ancient Near East the setting up of the king's statue was equivalent to proclaiming that his domain was over that sphere in which the statue was erected (e.g. Dan. 3:1ff.).¹⁴ For example, when in the thirteenth century B.C., pharaoh Rameses II had his image carved out of rock at the mouth of the river *el-Kelb*, on the Mediterranean

¹³ Cassuto, *Genesis*, p. 57.

north of Beirut, the image meant that he was ruler of this area. The fact that God has set man up as His statues and man has dispersed around the globe in obeying God shows that *ʾĒlōhîm* is sovereign over the whole earth. Wherever we meet a fellow human, God is sovereign there as well. One obvious implication to this as an image of God is the utter foolishness of crafting an idol, because such lifeless things do not represent the living God nearly so well as the living image does. As representations of God we have the task of being His representatives, to do his will. *ʾĒlōhîm* has been strongly developed in this context as the creative and sovereign One. There is no surprise that the blessings for the image of God reflect these attributes of God through humans being fruitful, multiplying, filling the earth so that they can subdue and rule the earth (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-7). To accomplish these blessings which demonstrate God, we are the image of God individually and, as male and female together, we are corporately the image of God. Of course, each of the persons involved in the procreative task is evidencing a minute picture of God's creative task. In fact, the concept of image in this context also can be seen as sonship (Gen. 5:1, 3; Lk. 3:38). The concept of son of God in the ancient Near East is used of kings. Furthermore, the terms subdue and rule (*rādā* and *kābash*, Gen. 1:26, 28) are forceful terms that speak of trampling on others in conquest or vine press to force these others to serve. The naming of the animals and woman by Adam argues that man is in fact operating as an ancient Near Eastern sovereign, for kings have the right to name others and thereby demonstrate that these others are under their dominion (Gen. 2:19, 23; Dan. 1:7). After the fall the terms subdue and rule are never undone, but as humans become contorted by the lure of sin, restrictions that limit man's excesses are seen instead (e.g. Gen. 9:2-6). Man remains viewed in contrast to the creation as a little lower than God with glory and majesty so that he can rule over the works and creatures of God's hands (Ps.8:4-8).

¹⁴ Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, pp. 160-61.

The creation account in Genesis 2 emphasizes God in the role as Father creating the environment for His son Adam with the provision for place, resources, occupation, blessings and an arranged marriage. Man should recognize that the resources lovingly enable the occupation, which God has for man. The occupation itself has man expressing his care for the orchard (which is what an ancient Near Eastern garden is). Normally the ancient Near Eastern garden was surrounded by a hedge or a wall to set it off from the outside world (Gen. 2:8; 3:23). The fact that God is met in the garden hints that the garden is sacred space (Gen. 2:8; 3:8-9).¹⁵ In the ancient Near East the meeting place of heaven and earth was on a mountain where a sacred stream ushers forth, which similar description further hints that the garden is sacred space (Gen. 2:10). When humans are finally excluded from the garden, the garden is then seen as holy in comparison to the surrounding area. At that point they are met by *cherubim* at the gate back to the garden, which creatures are associated in the ancient Near East with royalty and temples, thus further hinting that the garden is sacred space (Gen. 3:24). The words referring to the care of the garden focus man toward the sacredness of his task as serving God. For example, "cultivate" (*ʾabad*) elsewhere in the Pentateuch expresses the idea of servant to God, which is the highest role a man can have (Gen. 2:15; Ex. 3:12; 10:3, 8, 11, 24, 26). Likewise, the word "keep" (*shāmar*) is used elsewhere in the Pentateuch as obeying God's commands (Gen. 2:15; Ex. 15:26; 16:28; 19:5; 20:6, 8). These words hint that man's responsibility in chapter two may be more priestly in order to balance the creative and regal thrust of chapter one, but all these roles can be subsumed within the role of man's being the son of God. Humans have relationship to God accessing this

¹⁵For development of this theme see Gordon Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story" in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986). Additionally Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *Journal of Religion* 64(1984), pp. 275-98 develops the creation narratives as viewing the cosmos as a temple. Furthermore, Kathryn Gleason, "Gardens in Preclassical Times" *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. E. Meyers (N.Y.: Oxford, 1997), 2:383 develops the close relationship that temples tend to have with gardens in the ancient Near East.

relationship as priests and sons. Humans reflect God in miniature as creative and ruling.

To enable these roles, God arranges a marriage for Adam. In fact the only thing of the two creation accounts that is declared not to be good is that man is alone. The Hebrew for "alone" (*bad*) means without aid or helpless; it does not mean psychologically lonely. The point is not man's need for a companion but that he cannot do the tasks such as procreation without the woman's aid. The woman becomes a helper (*ʿezer*), like God who assists in these tasks (Gen. 2:18, 20; Ps. 121:1-2). Because she is a helper corresponding (*kʿnegdō*) to man she is to be seen as a duplicate or corresponding copy of himself. The descriptions of the woman further develop this similarity. The rib (*ṣēlāʾ*) actually means a side portion as in barbequed ribs that have meat and bone together. Adam recognizes that they are made of the same flesh and bone, so that he poetically names her woman (*ʾishā*), which contains the name man (*ʾiś*) within it (Gen. 2:23). In the commentary for Israelite readers, arranged marriages enable the man to leave or forsake a oneness with one's parents in order to cleave or physically join to each other in loyal love, ushering in sexual intercourse and progeny. This drive for marriage can be seen as an outworking of the original union of one flesh of man and woman in the creation.

With the close of the creation account in Genesis 1 there is the development of sacred time, which serves as the temporal climax for this first creation account, structured as it is by the repeated temporal framework (Gen. 2:1-3). God stopped (*seboth*) creating and set this day apart as a day in the calendar, which reflects God's stopping the creation. Later as the sign of the Mosaic covenant for Israel this sacred seventh day of creation is incorporated as the rationale for the Sabbath day (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17).

The second Genesis creation account continues to explain the origin of temptation, sin and judgment (Gen. 3). This account provides a narrative that reflects the historical account but also is selective in recounting the process of

how temptation works so that Israelite readers and now Christian readers might not follow into the way of temptation. The account also provides a view of God as He responds to this temptation and sin that is instructive about human relationship with Him. The fact that man and woman are both naked and not ashamed shows that they are at ease with one another without any fear of exploitation and potential for evil in contrast to the tensions that will come as a result of the fall. There is however a word play which shows that in their naked (*‘arûmmîm*) innocence the snake¹⁶ was particularly shrewd (*‘arûm*) to take advantage of them (Gen. 2:25-3:1). For example, this particular snake is described as a beast with unusual craftiness such as being able to talk and there is no mention that Eve is surprised, nor that other snakes need to have these abilities, but then again other animals might have had some of these abilities then; the text

¹⁶ The tempter is a snake, which will crawl on its belly, not a Satan that is rarely developed in the O.T. Many in Christendom see an age old struggle with Satan and man heavily developed out of the O.T. as in Greg Boyd, *God at War* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998). No Biblical text places Satan in the Genesis 3 account. Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 develops that Satan has a long standing conflict with the woman Israel and her son Christ. John 8 develops Satan as a murderer from the beginning (*arxēs*), in which beginning is used in the near context as the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 8:25, 44) and the subject immediately preceding this statement is how the religious leaders have been seeking Jesus' life (John 8:40, 44, 59). Romans 16:20 is a metaphorical allusion for future blessing of the Roman Christians and not a comment on the players of the fall. Ezekiel 28 does not mention Satan or describe what relation the described event has to Genesis 3. However, it does describe a cherub in the garden of Eden in a beautiful nonfallen condition and there is one cherub on the way to the tree of Life but no mention of one behind the snake (Gen. 3:23-24; Ezek. 28:12-14). Snakes (*nāhāsh*) in Moses' theology of the pentateuch are affirmed as good channels of the work of God (like a blessing to Dan, Moses' rod, and the healing bronze snake) as well as threatening crawling animals (Gen. 3:1, 14; 49:17; Ex. 4:3; 7:15; Num. 21:6-9; Deut. 3:15). Evil is not invading on the back of one greater than man, but rather a subordinate snake as an expression of the creation is seen as rebelling against man who is the miniature sovereign. So where does this resilient tradition of Satan as behind the snake come from? Jeffrey Russell in *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 207-9) claims that the first century pseudopigraphal works *The Books of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses* are the first to identify Satan as tempting Adam and Eve in the garden. Russell (pp. 218-20) explains that there is a consensus among historians that this is the effect of Iranian Zoroastrianism on these texts. Under this influence, Judaism identified the *Ahriman* myth (a dualistic god of evil which takes the form of a snake to destroy happiness by the two men eating some fruit (*Zendavesta*, Th.3: p. 54-55, 62) and a chief angel Sammael described in the pseudopigrapha text *Wisdom of Solomon* 2:24. I don't think that we want to identify with a view that has Zoroastrian myth as its root as seen through the lens of rejected Jewish sectarian writings. So this author sees no clear text that places Satan as involved with the temptation and fall of humans.

just does not say how extensive animal reasoning and communication happened to be in that forum. There had been some hint in the creation account that humankind's miniature sovereign role would be resisted by the choice of such forceful terminology as *rādā* and *kābāsh* (Gen. 1:26, 28). Evil is not invading on the back of one greater than man but rather a subordinate snake (an expression of the creation) is seen as rebelling against man who is the miniature sovereign. The temptation is a pre-modern event, so as an event it needs to be taken together without dividing it up into seconds or parts as if they could stand alone. The whole narrative recounts our fall into sin. The temptation begins with a subtle distortion questioning God's generous freedom given to Adam and Eve to eat freely from the trees of the garden (Gen. 2:15; 3:1). Eve betrays her lack of knowledge¹⁷ of God's word by overemphasizing God's strictness ("nor touch it"), minimizing the freedom (the infinitive absolute "eat freely" becomes you "may eat"), and weakening the penalty (the infinitive absolute "surely die" becomes "lest you die" Gen. 2:15-16; 3:3). In such a vulnerable condition of inaccurate knowledge of God's word, the snake responds by denying God's word, especially with regard to denying judgment. Such comments judge God's nature with a bias toward disobedience, and in God's place the snake promises good things that are half true with a horrible double meaning (Gen. 3:4-5). As the snake moves from the focus of the narrative, the temptation continues with the woman (Gen. 3:6). It is the lure of the world that thrusts the temptation home. There is a progression from the external description of physical practicality and beauty to internal desire (a longing for wisdom perceived to be helpful from a twisting independent mindset). Once in the act of sin, sin involves others with it, so she gave to her husband with her and he ate. Their eyes were opened as the snake had said, but with a twisted perception that rendered them ashamed of their nakedness and

¹⁷ The text does not explain whether she had been told correctly or whether it is a lapse in her memory. The text merely points out the proper point of view and by contrast her slightly askew view of it reflected here. Either way she reflects an incorrect knowledge of the tree and its fruit.

pathetically tried to cover it up (Gen. 2:25; 3:7). Fig leaves look like they will cover more than they actually do; they dry quickly; and they have fuzz on them that itches.

In the setting of the sacred space of the garden, God manifests Himself to man intimately by walking and talking with man face to face (Gen. 3:8-9). However, having sinned man forfeits this privilege of intimacy by fleeing in fear and is thus expelled from the holy garden to common soil (Gen. 3:8-10, 23-24). Still, humans are able to maintain some relationship with God but so few do so. It takes until Enosh is born before men begin to call upon the Lord in prayer (Gen. 4:26). Additionally, Enoch and Noah are unique in recovering this intimacy of walking with God (Gen. 5:22; 6:9). The choice of relationship with God seems to be available, but the record shows that we humans chose either sin or distraction with other things¹⁸.

Unfortunately, the record also shows that humans increasingly gave themselves over to sin. With the taking of the forbidden fruit, it was then shared with others (Gen. 3:6). This act of sin is extended by Cain in his submitting to the dominance of the beast of sin (Gen.4:7). However Adam and Eve had shame in their sin (Gen.3:10-13). Cain also had shame in his punishment (Gen. 4:13-14). In bragging about his double murders, Lamech is a harbinger of our era with the loss of shame even when the crime is found out (Gen.4:23-24). In such a condition as this, sin eventually dominated the earth. The description of man's sin prior to the flood is one of the most pungent statements of total depravity, "the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

The sovereign God fights chaos with chaos by instituting futility within the created order, as evident in the divine oracles of judgment (Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:20-21). This futility permeates all relationships: 1) intimacy with God breaks down, 2) humans are exhausted in their work now that the ground is

cursed, 3) marital relationship exists with tension between woman's quest for liberation¹⁹ and male dominance, 4) there is increased pain in child bearing, 5) there is enmity between human and snake relationships,²⁰ and 6) snakes are cursed to crawl in the dust. This futility leaves the blessings (be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue, and rule) intact, but now mingles them with the experiential knowledge²¹ of evil, such as increased pain in childbirth and increased effort in accomplishing labor (Gen. 1:28; 3:5; 9:1-7). Likewise, humans still retain the initial tasks such as cultivating the ground but now in a manner that subjects them to futility with thorns and thistles and much labor (Gen. 3:17-19, 23). Even the extreme measures of God's utilizing the waters of chaos to attack the sin-dominated condition of the earth renders the remnant as preserved in blessing and work (Gen. 9:1-7, 20).

One of the most devastating features of this chaos futility is that of death. Soul (*nephesh*) is a synonym to life, so it is chaotic that souls die. God warned Adam that in the day that he would eat from the forbidden fruit he would surely die (Gen. 2:17). God's oracle of judgment speaks of Adam eventually dying and returning to dust (Gen. 3:19). Adam responded to this pronouncement of death as a ray of hope of release from futility and therefore named his wife Eve, the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20). God further barred their way to the tree of life, which had been available before, but now was beyond their reach so that humans would not be caught in the teeth of sin perpetually (Gen. 3:24). This life is a kind

¹⁸ Compare the successes of the two genealogies of Genesis 4:17-26. Seth obtains prayer while Cain's line obtains city making, metallurgy, and other distractions.

¹⁹ The word "desire" in Genesis 3:16 should be taken as the near context takes it in Genesis 4:7 "desire to dominate and conquer" rather than the distant context of Song of Songs 7:10 "desire of that husband for his wife."

²⁰ This prefigures the Israelite experience with the snake attacks of Numbers 21:6. Thus Genesis 3:15 is not a first statement of the gospel for snakes and humans are described here, as developed in note 13. The word for seed (*zera'*) is a collective referring to plural descendents of snakes, and humans (compare with other Genesis *zera'* texts like Gen. 15:3-5).

²¹ The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the test portal through which humans could enter into the experience of curse among the blessing. The second literary unit has three mentions of curse (Gen. 3:14, 17; 4:11) to mirror the three statements of blessing mentioned in the first literary unit (Gen. 1:22, 28; 2:3).

of walking death as well. However, when sin begins to dominate murder ensues (Gen. 4:8, 23). The repeated death knell sounds through out the genealogy of Adam with the phrase “and he died” (Gen.5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 27, 31). With sin burgeoning to total depravity all souls are killed in the global flood except those in the ark (Gen. 7:21-23).

Within the increase of chaos, *’Ēlōhîm* still provides hope. For example, God’s questioning that reveals sin limits the swift plunge toward total depravity. Additionally, Adam took the oracles of judgment to still provide hope as he named his wife Eve (Gen. 3:20). Furthermore, God provided clothes to take care of human nakedness in a manner that did it better than the pathetic cover up of fig leaves (Gen. 3:21).²² However as sin increases, hope is primarily available for those who have a relationship with this living God. Enoch walking with God, found himself removed from this sinful earth to be translated to be with God (Gen. 5:24). Likewise righteous Noah in his walking with God obtained God’s favor to continue God’s created earth’s souls (human and animals) through God’s deliverance via the ark (Gen. 6:9; 8:1). God’s covenant with Noah and all life provides hope that no use of the waters of chaos in a global flood will ever come again; God has put this weapon of war down with a promise (Gen. 9:8-17).

’Ēlōhîm has defined Himself intimately through His power to create and rule His creation. Thus God is intimately involved in the narrative of His own creation. However, this narrative is an open one in which God continues to foster life, struggle, hopes, and death.

²² There is no development or teaching evident in this verse about sacrifice or atonement so it is inappropriate to see gospel here. Some of the ways God helps are just very practical, and clothes that last are a generous gift of God.