

## Biblical Creation and Storytelling: Cosmogony, Combat and Covenant

BY BRIAN GODAWA

**ABSTRACT:** *The literary conventions employed in Genesis chapter 1 mark it out, not as a scientific document describing material origins, but as a literary polemic against surrounding ancient Near Eastern pagan religions. This interpretation divests the text from any obligation to communicate “accurate science” to the modern reader. Genesis 1 is a theological-political document that has nothing to do with science as the modern reader understands it. Creation language here and elsewhere in Scripture is not about establishing scientific origins of material substance and structure but about covenantal establishment and worldview.*

I am not a scientist. I am a professional storyteller. My interests lie in understanding the literary genres and cultural contexts of the Bible as it existed within an ancient Near Eastern worldview that included common metaphors, images and concepts. As readers displaced from such an ancient world by time, space, and culture, we will misread the text through our own cultural prejudice if we do not seek to understand it through the eyes of its original writers and readers. Creation stories (cosmogonies) are particularly vulnerable to this kind of interpretive violence.

Genesis 1 is an ancient cosmogony, a story of the origin of the universe. Its Semitic authorship is birthed within a varied cultural heritage of Babylonian, Egyptian and Canaanite environments. The Judeo-Christian tradition has received the entire corpus of the Old Testament as “breathed out” by God through the writings and personalities of those human beings embedded within their cultures (2Tim 3:16; 1Pet 1:20-21). This doctrine of “dual authorship” between divinity and humanity is not a dictation theory or automatic writing, but rather a providential means of transmission of truth through incarnation of human literary convention.<sup>i</sup>

This factor of human and divine authorship of Scripture tends to be polarizing over the similarities and differences between the Bible and the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts. Without wanting to generalize unfairly, liberals have tended to stress the *similarities* of the Bible with ANE literature, thus highlighting the human dimension of biblical authorship and giving little doctrinal weight to the *differences* between them. Conservatives, although acknowledging these similarities, have tended to accent the differences and so offer a defense of the Bible’s ultimate divine origin.

As an orthodox Christian, I affirm both the human and divine origin of the Bible with equal ultimacy. The differences between it and other ANE literature surely illustrate a divine antithesis, but the similarities between it and other ANE literature surely illustrate human synthesis that need not support the claim of errancy and untruth. God accommodates and uses human culture and conceptions to communicate his truth because we cannot comprehend God’s kingdom outside of our finite paradigms of understanding. As John Calvin so aptly put it, “But it shows an extraordinary degree of wickedness, that we yield less reverence to God speaking to us, because he condescends to our ignorance; and, therefore, when God prattles to us in Scripture in a rough and popular style, let us know that this is done on account of the love which he bears to us.”<sup>ii</sup>

In light of this “loving accommodation” that Calvin spoke of, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) concluded, “Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed... Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors

aimed.”<sup>iii</sup> So, what is “the measure of focused truth” at which the Biblical authors aimed? If it was not absolute precision by modern standards, as these conservative scholars admit, then what kind of truth was it? Let’s take a look at some of the ANE literary and storytelling features of Scripture to see just what kind of truth God’s word intended when it comes to biblical creation.

## Creation as Cosmogony

The 18th century “Age of Enlightenment” established autonomous human reasoning as the primary source of authority and elevated “scientific” empirical observation over abstract philosophy and theology. One of the effects of this cultural revolution on the way we think today is a materialist prejudice, the belief that ultimate reality is material, not spiritual. Any appeal to teleology or purpose behind natural events became illegitimate because the dominant assumption was that we live in a closed system of natural causes. So when we as moderns approach cosmogony, or the story of the origin of the universe, we naturally assume any such story is about answering the question of where matter comes from (since this is ultimate reality). Our post-Enlightened scientific minds demand “objective” descriptions of material structure, natural laws that work upon matter, and taxonomic categories of material substances.

But this is not the way the ancient Near Eastern mind thought when approaching cosmogony. To interpret ancient pre-scientific cosmogonies through our post-Enlightened scientific materialist categories is to do violence to the text: commonly called cultural imperialism. As John Walton argues, “People in the ancient world believed that something existed not by virtue of its material properties, but by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system.”<sup>iv</sup> And that ordered system was not a scientific system of matter and physics, but a human system of society and culture.

Walton explains that creation and existence in the ANE mindset involved three elements alien to modern notions of existence. He lays out examples from Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation myths in common with Genesis to illustrate that bringing something into existence was not about “making things” or manufacturing material substance but about naming, separating, and assigning roles to things.<sup>v</sup>

### Naming

- The Egyptian Memphite Theology describes Ptah creating everything by pronouncing its name.<sup>vi</sup>
- The Babylonian Enuma Elish begins with the heavens and earth as well as the deities “not yet named,” whose existence comes from being so named.<sup>vii</sup>
- The Hebrew Genesis shows Yahweh naming things and calling them “good,” a word not of moral quality, but of orderly fittingness.<sup>viii</sup>

This is not so much a denial of material *creatio ex nihilo*, (creation out of nothing) as it is a cultural linguistic focus on purposes over properties. “Thus, the [Hebrew] text never uses *bara* [a special word used exclusively of divine activity] in a context in which materials are mentioned...that materials are not mentioned suggests that manufacture is not the issue.”<sup>ix</sup>

## Separation

- Everything in the Egyptian universe came into existence through separation from something else. The limitless ocean above the sky (the god Nun) was separated from the waters under the earth (Tefnut) by Shu, the god of air.<sup>x</sup>
- In the Babylonian Enuma Elish, the victorious Marduk created the heavens and the earth by splitting the corpse of his vanquished foe Tiamat in two.<sup>xi</sup>
- In Genesis, God separated the light from the darkness (1:4), the waters above from the waters below (1:6-7), the land from the waters below (1:9), male from female (2:21-24), and the Sabbath from other days (2:3).

Separation is differentiation, distinction between things. God separates a people for himself (1 Sam. 12:22), and gives great detail in the Law from Sinai for cultic separations that reinforce a code of holiness. The separation of creation is a theological reinforcement of God's majority theme of holy otherness in Scripture.

## Roles

- The Egyptian Papyrus Insinger describes 18 creations of functions for things from the earth to wealth.<sup>xii</sup>
- The Babylonian Enuma Elish has Marduk creating sun, moon and constellations for their purposes, and specified stations for the gods.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Yahweh is described as creating the things-in-the-world of Genesis 1 by explaining their purposes: light and dark to mark time (1:5); sun, moon, and stars to give light (1:16); and signs for seasons (1:14); plants and fruit for food (1:29); mankind to rule over animals and the creation (1:27-28).

Things-in-the-world were thought of in terms of their purpose for humankind not their material being. This stress on teleology (purpose) sheds light on the personification of nature into deities whose ANE stories become mythic explanations of cycles that are used instrumentally in religious cult.<sup>xiv</sup> Purpose can only come from persons, so pagan deities were imminent within nature. Though Yahweh was contrastingly transcendent he was nevertheless the person behind the purpose of the depersonalized nature. Thus, even Yahweh uses natural elements such as wind, lightning and thunderstorms as means of revealing his presence (theophany) and purposes.<sup>xv</sup>

Interpreting the creation story of Genesis with an expectation of modern scientific discourse is hermeneutical violence. The notion of creation and existence in the biblical ancient Near East was not one of physics, life sciences, material substance and structure, it was a story explaining the creation of the functions of the world through naming, separation and purpose. Purpose (teleology) is theological not empirical and does not therefore require any scientific theory, be it young earth creationism or theistic evolution.

## Creation as Combat

In his analysis of ancient creation accounts, Richard Clifford concludes that “many ancient cosmogonies are narratives and depend on plot and character for their movement; they must be read as drama rather than ‘objective’ description.”<sup>xvi</sup> To the ancients, creation was not a historical chronology of material origins, but a drama of spiritual purposes. The essence of drama is conflict, and that conflict is reflected in biblical creation, no less than in ANE accounts, through the text as theological-political polemic -- images of combat.

One of the functions of ancient creation narratives is to literarily encode the religious and political overthrow of one culture by another. When a king or kingdom would rise to power in the ancient world, they would often displace the vassal culture’s creation stories with their own stories of how their deities triumphed over others to create the world in which they now lived.

The Enuma Elish tells the story of the Babylonian deity Marduk, and his ascendancy to power in the Mesopotamian pantheon, giving mythical justification to the rise of Babylon as an ancient world power most likely in the First Babylonian Dynasty under Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.).<sup>xvii</sup> As the prologue of the Code of Hammurabi explains, “Anu, the majestic, King of the Anunnaki, and Bel, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, who established the fate of the land, had given to Marduk, the ruling son of Ea, dominion over mankind, and called Babylon by his great name; when they made it great upon the earth by founding therein an eternal kingdom, whose foundations are as firmly grounded as are those of heaven and earth.”<sup>xviii</sup>

The Baal myth of Ugarit tells the story of the storm god “Baal the Conqueror,” and his epiphany in becoming “Lord of the earth” in Canaan. Chapter I of the text reads,

**“Let me tell you, Prince Baal,  
let me repeat, Rider on the Clouds:  
Behold, your enemy, Baal,  
behold, you will kill your enemy,  
behold, you will annihilate your foes.  
You will take your eternal kingship,  
your dominion forever and ever.”<sup>xx</sup>**

Genesis 1, according to scholar Bruce Reichenbach, was also written “as a theological-political document that describes how the Supreme Monarch establishes his kingdom and thereby justifies his claim to exclusive possession of everything in it.”<sup>xxi</sup> God was preparing Israel to displace the pagan Canaanites and their gods both physically and literarily, so He inspired this authorship of the creation account to express that ancient Near Eastern motif of justifying transcendent authority and land ownership with a creation story.

Genesis follows the structure of suzerain-vassal treaties that reflects the activity of ancient Near Eastern monarchs. “God says and it happens, names and it is his, sets his representative images throughout the land, sits and pronounces in council, establishes the cultic, and is the ultimate arbiter of what is



good.”<sup>xxii</sup> It is distinctly polemical for the Genesis account to describe the common male and female as God’s representatives, created in His image, since this concept seems only to be applied to kings in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Genesis 1 is the legitimation of Yahweh, the God of Israel, and his authority and power over all things, including the gods of Canaan, who are in fact, reduced to nothing. The literary act of replacing one identity with another by investing new meaning into commonly understood words, images, metaphors or motifs is called “subversion.” This subversion of pagan deities in the text is also achieved through the demythologizing of nature. Mesopotamian, Canaanite and Egyptian cosmogonies all personify nature through their various deities of sun, moon, stars, waters and the heavens. These gods are mere personifications of nature and are therefore subject to the cycles and seasons of nature.

In Genesis 1 we see a specific description of Yahweh as sovereign creator and sustainer of seasons and their signs for His purposes. Nature has no animistic personality. When describing the creation of sun and moon, the Hebrew text seems to avoid the names for sun (*shemesh*) and moon (*chodesh*), perhaps because *Shemesh* was the name of the Akkadian sun god. Instead, the writer simply calls them the “greater” and “lesser” lights, heavenly bodies. When describing the surface of the deep waters over which the spirit of God hovered (Gen. 1:2), the author uses a word for the deep (*tehom*) with possible linguistic connections to ANE myths of a sea dragon, a symbol of the chaos out of which deity brings order.<sup>xxiv</sup> While the Genesis account reflects a similar creation out of watery chaos, it nevertheless strips all animation from that watery chaos. It remains an inert lifeless state without personality, moldable in the hands of the Creator. Genesis subverts the ancient Near Eastern creation genre of literature by using common ANE narrative concepts and reinvesting them with new definitions and contexts.

Another way that biblical creation reflects ancient Near Eastern culture, while subverting it is in its appropriation of what ANE scholars call the *Chaoskampf* motif, or the creation of order out of chaos through struggle. Hermann Gunkel first suggested in *Creation and Chaos* (1895) that some ancient Near Eastern creation myths contained a cosmic conflict between deity and sea, as well as sea dragons or serpents that expressed the creation of order out of chaos.<sup>xxv</sup> Gunkel argued that Genesis borrowed this idea from the Babylonian tale of Marduk battling the goddess Tiamat, serpent of chaos, whom he vanquished, and out of whose body he created the heavens and earth.<sup>xxvi</sup> Later, John Day argued in light of the discovery of the Ugarit tablets in 1928, that Canaan, not Babylonia is the source of the combat motif in Genesis,<sup>xxvii</sup> reflected in Yahweh’s own complaint that Israel had become polluted by Canaanite culture.<sup>xxviii</sup> In the Baal cycle, Baal battles Yam (Sea) and conquers it, along with “the dragon,” “the twisting serpent,” to be enthroned as chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon.<sup>xxix</sup>

While the image of struggle has already been noted as being polemically absent in Genesis 1, it is certainly alive and kicking in other creation passages throughout the Old Testament. Rather than speculating about who borrowed whose understanding of *Chaoskampf*, Walton suggests “borrowing is not the issue... Likewise this need not concern whose ideas are derivative. There is simply common ground across the cognitive environment of the cultures of the ancient world.”<sup>xxx</sup> *Chaoskampf* is simply a common ancient Near Eastern motif shared between Israel and its pagan neighbors that Jewish authors appropriate, under divine authority of Yahweh, for their own discourse. For biblical authors, creation and *Chaoskampf* language are intertwined to describe the action of Yahweh creating his world order out of chaos -- alternately symbolized as Sea, Leviathan, Dragon and Rahab.

You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters.  
 You crushed the heads of Leviathan;...  
 You have prepared the light and the sun.  
 You have established all the boundaries of the earth;  
 (Psa. 74:12-17)

Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,  
 Who pierced the dragon?  
 Was it not You who dried up the sea,  
 The waters of the great deep;  
 [Y]ou have forgotten the LORD your Maker,  
 Who stretched out the heavens  
 And laid the foundations of the earth...  
 “For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the  
 LORD of hosts is His name).  
 (Isa 51:9-14)

You rule the swelling of the sea;  
 When its waves rise, You still them.  
 You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain;  
 You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.  
 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;  
 The world and all it contains, You have founded them.  
 The north and the south, You have created them;  
 (Psa. 89:6-12)

In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,  
 With His fierce and great and mighty sword,  
 Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;  
 And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.  
 (Isa. 27:1)

So the language of *Chaoskampf* in battling the sea/dragon/Leviathan/Rahab is an image that Israel had in common with its ancient Near Eastern pagan neighbors to describe God’s creation of the cosmos.<sup>xxxii</sup>

The controversial difference lies in God’s transcendent control *over* creation versus Canaanite or Mesopotamian imminent struggle *within* creation. God doesn’t battle with the beasts like Baal or Marduk does, he sovereignly controls them and destroys them for his own purposes. Creation of cosmos out of chaos is not a great effort for the monotheistic Yahweh of the Hebrew Scriptures. But exactly what kind of cosmos does Yahweh create in the Biblical text? *It is not the cosmos of material substance and physics, but rather the cosmos of God’s covenant.*

## Creation as Covenant

*Chaoskampf* and creation language are used as word pictures for God’s covenant activity in the Bible. For God, describing the creation of the heavens and earth was a way of saying he has established his covenant with his people through exodus into the Promised Land,<sup>xxxii</sup> reaffirming that covenant with the kingly line of David, and finalizing the covenant by bringing them out of exile. The reader should understand that the Scriptures listed above, exemplary of *Chaoskampf*, were deliberately abbreviated to make a further point in this section. I will now add the missing text in those passages in bold to reveal a deeper motif at play in the text – a motif not of creation as mere material manufacturing, but of creation as covenantal formation.

**Yet God is my king from of old,  
Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth.  
You divided the sea by Your strength;  
[A reference to the Exodus deliverance of the covenant at Sinai]**  
You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters.  
You crushed the heads of Leviathan;...  
You have prepared the light and the sun.  
You have established all the boundaries of the earth;  
(Psa. 74:12-17)

Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,  
Who pierced the dragon?  
Was it not You who dried up the sea,  
The waters of the great deep;  
**Who made the depths of the sea a pathway  
For the redeemed to cross over?...**  
[Y]ou have forgotten the LORD your Maker,  
Who stretched out the heavens  
And laid the foundations of the earth...

“For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name). **“I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”**

[a reaffirmation of the Sinai covenant through Moses]

(Isa 51:9-14)

You rule the swelling of the sea;  
When its waves rise, You still them.  
You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain;  
You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.  
The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;  
The world and all it contains, You have founded them.  
The north and the south, You have created them;  
(Psa. 89:6-12)

**“I have found David My servant;  
With My holy oil I have anointed him,  
With whom My hand will be established;  
And in My name his horn will be exalted.  
“I shall also set his hand on the sea  
And his right hand on the rivers...  
“My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever,  
And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.  
“So I will establish his descendants forever  
And his throne as the days of heaven.  
(Psa 89:19-29)**

In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,  
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,  
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;  
And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.  
(Isa. 27:1)



**In the days to come Jacob will take root,  
Israel will blossom and sprout,  
And they will fill the whole world with fruit.**

**It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. [the future consummation of the Mosaic and Davidic covenant in the New Covenant of Messiah]**

**(Isa. 27:6-13)**

In these texts, and others,<sup>xxxiii</sup> God does not merely appeal to his power of material creation as justification for the authority of his covenant, but more importantly He uses the creation of the heavens and earth, involving subjugation of the sea and dragon, as poetic descriptions of God’s covenant with his people, rooted in the Exodus story. The creation of the covenant is the creation of the heavens and the earth. The covenant is a cosmos – not a material one centered in astronomical location and abstract impersonal forces as modern worldview demands, but a theological one, centered in the sacred space of land, temple, and cult as ancient Near Eastern worldview demands.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

As Ronald Simkins observes of other ANE creation texts, “According to the *Enuma Elish*, for example, Marduk chose Babylon to be the special place of his temple and organized the rest of the creation around it. In the [Sumerian] *Creation of the Pickax* humans sprout from the ground at Uzunua, and Duranki is the place at which heaven and earth were originally attached. In the Egyptian creation myths, the land of Egypt is the hillock that first emerged out of the primeval ocean Nun...Each place is a symbolic geographical expression of the structure of creation...The ideas of creation and the experiences of sacred space are mutually dependent.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

This “covenant as creation” word picture is reiterated in a negative way when God judges nations and cultures. If creation of covenant involved establishing the foundations of the heavens and the earth, then covenantal judgment involves “decreation” imagery of the destruction or “shaking” of heavens and earth. Haggai conveys this decreation polemic against the nations, “Then the word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai... saying, “Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.’ I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations” (Hag 2:20-22).

Jeremiah calls the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. a return of the heavens and earth to the “formless and void” (*tohu wabohu*) of Genesis 1:2 without man or beast yet created<sup>xxxvi</sup>: “I looked on the earth, and behold, it was formless and void; And to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness” (Jer. 4:23-27). Isaiah proclaims the “good news” of a New Covenant in Messiah (Isaiah 61) as a “new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65).<sup>xxxvii</sup> Covenant is understood as creation of a heaven and earth, so important covenantal events, such as judgment on a people or creation of a new covenant, are understood as shaking that heaven and earth or a return to a pre-creation state of the universe.

The New Covenant kingdom as a “new heavens and earth” is picked up in the New Testament with the same language of shaking and removing of the previous heavens and earth: “Yet once more I will shake

not only the earth, but also the heaven.” And this expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. *Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken* [emphasis added]...” (Heb 12:26-28). The replacement of the Old Covenant of Moses with the New Covenant of Christ is here described as God “shaking” and “removing” the old heavens and earth.<sup>xxxviii</sup> To the ancient Jew, the covenants of God with his people are the very “cosmos” of their existence and meaning. So important covenantal events are described in cosmic terms, and the purpose of creation language is theological not natural or “scientific.”

The inauguration of the New Covenant through the incarnation of Christ is reaffirmed in Revelation as a new heaven and earth cosmos coming out of heaven to eliminate chaos (the sea) and bring a new sacred space of holy city and temple fulfilled in Christ<sup>xxxix</sup>: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them” (Rev. 21:1-3).<sup>xl</sup>

## Conclusion

A merism is a phrase of joined opposites that indicate a totality. The Hebrew for “Heavens and earth” has long been accepted as a merism of the ordered cosmos.<sup>xli</sup> Whereas the modern scientific mind conceives of “cosmos” as a physical system of materials and their properties, the ancient Near Eastern mind of the Hebrew conceived of “cosmos” as the covenantal order of God. Everything had its place and purpose in God’s plan for His people in their land. The idea of the earth as a spherical globe and the heavens as a vast expanse of light years was alien to their thinking. As noted expert on biblical apocalypics, Milton Terry wrote, “in these opening chapters of Genesis we are not to look for historic narrative, nor contributions to natural science, but to recognize a symbolic apocalypse of God’s relation to the world and to man.”<sup>xlii</sup>

John Sailhamer makes the connection between covenant and creation in arguing that God’s preparation of the Edenic Garden in Genesis is a parallel to his preparation of the Promised Land in Deuteronomy, because in fact, they are the same exact location!; “Heavens and earth” is not about a globe and solar systems, but about a more localized “sky and land”; “Formless and void” (*tohu wabohu*) is better translated “wilderness and uninhabitable,” a term applied to the Promised Land without God’s blessing (Jer 4:23); “working” and “keeping” (*abad* and *shamar*) the Garden of God’s presence (Gen 2:15) is more suitably translated as “worshipping and obeying” in a parallel of the Tabernacle of God.<sup>xliii</sup> Sailhamer concludes that the covenant on Sinai is grounded in the events of creation. “The writer of the Pentateuch wrote Genesis 1 primarily because he wanted his readers to understand something about God and the nature of the covenant He made with Israel on Mt. Sinai... Thus, the theme of the Sinai Covenant – God’s good gift of the promised land – lies at the center of the author’s account of creation.”<sup>xliv</sup>

The Bible is covenantal storytelling in theme and structure. The purpose of the exalted prose of Genesis 1 seems to be covenantal justification of Yahweh’s ownership of everything, specifically the Promised Land he was about to forcibly take from the Canaanites and give to Israel. *Chaoskampf* poetry of subduing the Sea and the twisting serpent or dragon Leviathan/Rahab is metaphorically united with

creation language. That creation language is often used to narrate the covenantal order of Israel while decreation language is used to narrate convenantal disorder. The localized ancient Near Eastern mindset of the text of Genesis revealing purpose through naming, separating and giving function does not comport with a modern post-Enlightened scientific mindset of astrophysics and material substance and properties. One can only conclude that the attempt to find a concordance between Genesis 1 and any kind of scientific theory, be it young-earth or old-earth, 24 hour days or long ages, fiat creation or evolutionary adaptation is an act of interpretive violence against the text that comes from a culturally imposing modern hubris.



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## Notes

- i. "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," Article VIII, 1978: "We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared. We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities."
- ii. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 3:12.
- iii. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), Exposition: "Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation."
- iv. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove: IL, InterVarsity Press, 2009), 26.
- v. John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006) 188-189.
- vi. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1950, 1955), 5.
- vii. Alexander Heidel, trans., *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1942, 1951, 1963), 18.
- viii. Walton, *The Lost World*, 51.
- ix. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 183.
- x. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 6.
- xi. Heidel, *Babylonian Genesis*, 42.
- xii. Walton, *The Lost World*, 32-33.
- xiii. Heidel, *Babylonian Genesis*, 44-45.
- xiv. The Baal cycle tells the story of Baal, god of the storm, winds, and rain, being killed by Mot, the god of death. Baal's sister Anat, then defeats Mot and Baal is revived and the drought ends with the coming of rain. Michael David Coogan, trans. *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press), 84-85. In Egypt, a similar cycle of death and regeneration based on agriculture is found in such myths as Osiris. The "great god" Osiris is killed by his brother Seth, and "resurrected" as king by decree of the gods at the behest of Osiris's sister, Isis. Egyptians would worship Osiris as the god of agricultural fertility. Robert A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo), 178-179.
- xv. Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994, 2003), 145-146.

- xvi.** Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 26 (Washington D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 199.
- xvii.** Heidel, *Babylonian Genesis*, 14.
- xviii.** W.W. Davies, *The Codes of Hammurabi and Moses: With Copious Comments, Index, and Bible References* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 1905, 2006), 17.
- xix.** Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 75-115.
- xx.** Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 88.
- xxi.** Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Genesis 1 as a Theological-Political Narrative of Kingdom Establishment," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13.1 (2003), p. 48.
- xxii.** Reichenbach, "Genesis 1," 49.
- xxiii.** Edward Mason Curtis, *Man As The Image Of God In Genesis In The Light Of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels*, Dissertation (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania).
- xxiv.** John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite myth in the Old Testament* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5.
- xxv.** Hermann Gunkel, Heinrich Zimmern; K. William Whitney Jr., trans., *Creation And Chaos in the Primeval Era And the Eschaton: A Religio-historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (Grand Rapids: MI: Erdmans, 1895, 1921, 2006), xvi.
- xxvi.** "He cast down her carcass and stood upon it.  
After he had slain Tiamat, the leader...  
He split her open like a mussel into two parts;  
Half of her he set in place and formed the sky...  
And a great structure, its counterpart, he established, namely Esharra [earth]."  
(Enuma Elish, Tablet IV, lines 104-105, 137-138, 144 from Heidel, *Babylonian Genesis*, 41-42)
- xxvii.** John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon*. Day argues that the Canaanite Baal cycle implies a connection with creation, since it is a ritual fertility festival (cyclical creation) falling on the New Year, traditionally understood as the date of creation. But his strongest appeal is the argument in reverse that the Canaanite myth makes a connection between creation and *Chaoskampf* because the Old Testament does so.
- xxviii.** "Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite." (Ezek. 16:1-3)
- xxix.** "Didn't I [Baal] demolish El's Darling, Sea?  
didn't I finish off the divine river, Rabbim?  
didn't I snare the Dragon?  
I enveloped him,  
I demolished the Twisting Serpent,  
the seven-headed monster.  
(Baal II from Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 92.)
- "When you [Baal] killed Lotan, the Fleeing Serpent,  
finished off the Twisting Serpent,  
the seven-headed monster,  
the heavens withered and drooped."  
(Baal IV from Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 106.)
- Most recently, David Tsumura has argued against any connection of such mythic struggle in the Biblical text in favor of mere poetic flair: David Toshio Tsumura, *Creation And Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006).
- xxx.** Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 21.
- xxxi.** See also Isa. 27:1; Psa. 77:16-18; Job 26:7-13.
- xxxii.** John Owen, *Works*, 16 vols. (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965-1968), Vol. 9 134.
- xxxiii.** See also Psa. 77:16-20; 136:1-22.
- xxxiv.** N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 306-307.
- xxxv.** Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 133.
- xxxvi.** David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987-1990), 541.



- xxxvii.** John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Trans William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 4:397-398.
- xxxviii.** Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Draper, VA: Apologetics Group Media, 1992, 2009), 259.
- xxxix.** Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Navigating the Book of Revelation: Special Studies on Important Issues* (Fountain Inn, SC: GoodBirth Ministries, 2009), 167-174;
- xl.** That this passage depicts the inauguration of the New Covenant with the incarnation of Christ rather than a future event at Christ's "Second Coming," is evident in a couple of observations. First, the reference to God dwelling with tabernacle among men is well understood as a theological expression of the incarnation in John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt (*tabernacled*) among us." Secondly, a heavenly Jerusalem coming down from above is previewed in the Hebrews 12:18-24 description of the New Covenant as the "heavenly Jerusalem," in comparison with the Old Covenant of an earthly Jerusalem; and that New Covenant is reiterated by the apostle Paul in Galatians 4:24-26 as the "Jerusalem from above." Also, the body of Christ is the bride of Christ, which constitutes the new temple of God (Eph 2:19-22).
- xli.** Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 59.
- xlii.** Milton Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1898, 1988), 49.
- xliii.** John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 47-59, 61-66, 75-76.
- xliv.** Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 87-88.