

The Unique Cosmology of Genesis 1

Gerhard F. Hasel

Michael G. Hasel

The opening chapters of the Bible (Gen. 1–11) contain the history of beginnings, focusing on natural and historical beginnings and the ensuing history of the world and humankind.¹ Nowhere else in Scripture is found such a comprehensive and detailed narration of the origin of the earth and humanity.

While this is important in itself, it receives greater significance when one recognizes that the Genesis account for the origin of the universe (cosmology) in the Creation account is without rival. Nowhere in the ancient Near East or Egypt has anything similar been recorded. The unique words about Creator, creation, and creature—of God, world, and humanity in Genesis 1; 2—set the entire tone for the wonderful and unique saving message of the Bible. It can be said without hesitation that the world and humankind were in the beginning and remain now in the hands of the Creator. Scripture is able to speak about an end of the world and humanity only because God is the Creator of that world and humanity.

The Genesis Cosmogony of Totality

This awe-inspiring Creation account in Genesis contains the first conception of the world and humankind as totalities from their beginning. No one experiences

and “knows” humanity in its totality. But in the biblical Creation, these realities are expressed in their totalities as originating from the Creator. The totalities of God’s created world and what is in it depicts how the origin and continuing existence of the world and life is expressed in time and space.

Today, there are many who believe that it is unnecessary to engage in a dialogue between the biblical presentation of Creation and the scientific quest for understanding the world and humanity. But such dialogue and interaction are not only desirable, they are essential. The sciences can deal only with partial spheres of knowledge but not with totalities.

This totality is already revealed in the first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).² This simple sentence makes four basic affirmations that are completely new and profound in the human quest for an understanding of the world’s origin and themselves.³

The first affirmation claims that God made the heaven and the earth “in the beginning.” There was, then, a time when this globe and its surrounding atmospheric heavens did not exist. In ancient Near-Eastern mythologies, the earth had no beginning, and in Greek philosophical thought, the world existed

from eternity. By the use of the words “in the beginning,” however, the Genesis cosmology fixes an absolute beginning for Creation. The pregnant expression “in the beginning” separates the conception of the world once and for all from the cyclical rhythm of pagan mythology and the speculation of ancient metaphysics. This world, its life and history, is not dependent upon nature’s cyclical rhythm but is brought into existence as the act of Creation by a transcendent God.

The second affirmation is that God is the Creator. As God, He is completely separate from and independent of nature. Indeed, God continues to act upon nature, but God and nature are separate and can never be equated in some form of emanationism or pantheism. This is in contrast to the Egyptian concepts in which creator-god Atum himself is the primordial mound from which arose all life in the Heliopolis cosmology, or where, in another tradition, Ptah is combined with “the land that rises” in the Memphis theology. In Egyptian cosmologies, “everything is contained within the inert monad, even the creator God.”⁴ There is no separation in Egypt between god and nature.

The third affirmation is that God has acted in fiat creation. The special verb for “create,” *bara’*, has only God as its subject throughout the Bible. That is in the Hebrew language—no one can *bara’*, or “create,” but God. God alone is Creator, and no one else may share in this special activity. The verb *bara’* is never employed with matter or stuff from which God creates; it contains—along with the emphasis of the phrase “in the beginning”—the idea of creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). Since the earth is described in verse 2 as being in a rude state

of desolation and waste, the word *create* in the first verse of Genesis must signify the calling into existence of original matter in the formulation of the world.

The fourth affirmation deals with the object of Creation, the material that is brought forth by divine creation, namely “the heaven and the earth.” These words, “the heaven and the earth,” are in the Hebrew language a synonym for our term *cosmos*. A close study of the forty-one usages of the phrase “heaven and the earth” reveals that they do not mean that God created the entire universe with its thousands of galaxies at the time He created the world. The focus remains on the planet Earth and its more or less immediate surroundings. The elevated ideas expressed in this first verse of the Bible set the tone for the entire Genesis cosmology.

Modern Interpretations of Biblical Cosmology

It is widely believed that the biblical cosmology is a myth describing a three-storied universe with a heaven above, a flat earth, and the netherworld underneath. If this understanding is coupled with the assumption that the Bible supports a geocentric, or “earth-centered,” universe, then it seems hopelessly dated. Thus, many modern scholars have become convinced that the biblical cosmology is historically and culturally conditioned, reflecting a primitive and outdated cosmology of the ancient world. They argue that the biblical cosmology should be abandoned and replaced by a modern, scientific one.

New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann wrote some decades ago that, in the

New Testament, “the world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath”⁵ made up of hell, the place of torment. Other modern scholars believe that the cosmology of the Old Testament literally depicts such a picture of a three-storied universe, with storehouses of water, chambers of snow and wind, and windows of heaven. This is depicted in a vaulted canopy of the heavens above a flat earth, at the center of which is a navel, with waters under the earth including rivers of the netherworld. Such a mythological cosmology is now out of date, wrote Bultmann. Modern people cannot believe in such a mythological cosmology while simultaneously flying in jets, browsing the Internet, and using smartphones.

In modernist thinking, this leaves open only two alternatives: (1) accept the assumed mythological picture of the world at the price of intellectual sacrifice, or (2) abandon the biblical cosmology and adopt whatever happens to be the latest scientific theory.

But these two alternatives are false. Do we find, after careful investigation, any evidence in the Bible for a three-storied universe? Does the Bible support the notion of a geocentric universe? If anything, the Bible is human-centered, or more accurately, it is centered on the interrelationship between God and humans. In the Old Testament, God is the center of everything but not the physical center. The Bible does not provide information for a physical center. According to it, the solar system could be geocentric, heliocentric, or something else.

Where has the interpretation come from that the Bible presents a geocentric picture? This idea arose in post—New Testament times, when leading theologians adopted the Greek Ptolemaic cosmology of second century A.D. and interpreted the Bible on the basis of this nonbiblical concept. The famous trial of Galileo in the seventeenth century could have been avoided had theologians of the church recognized that their interpretation of certain Bible texts was based on the cosmology of the pagan mathematician-geographer Ptolemy.

Although we are freed today from the Ptolemaic cosmology, a vast number of biblical scholars still read the cosmology of the Bible through the glasses of what they believe to be the pagan cosmologies of the ancient Near East and Egypt. In the final analysis, these ideas are based on a faulty interpretation of certain biblical passages. It is important to recognize this claim, stating that the cosmology of the Bible is mythological, is of fairly recent origin. But the Bible, properly and honestly interpreted on its own terms, is, in fact, acceptable to the modern mind and does not present the kind of cosmology so widely attributed to it.

The Biblical Concept of Cosmology

The widespread notion that the biblical cosmology reflects a pagan picture of the three-storied universe has cast its shadow broadly. But there is a question whether ancient mythological cosmologies truly had a clearly defined three-storied universe.

The ancient Egyptian view in the Memphite theology was that the permanent place of the dead was in the West. In the

Amduat of the New Kingdom, the deceased are swallowed with the sun by Nut in the West, travel through the twelve hours of the night, and emerge with the sun in paradise, experiencing daily regeneration and re-creation. In Canaanite mythology, the supreme deity El had his throne near the “sources of the Two Rivers, in the midst of the Double-Deep,”⁶ which means that the gods did not always dwell in the heavens or the upper story of a supposed three-storied universe. The Canaanite god Baal, who, unfortunately, was also worshiped at times by the Israelites, had his place of abode on the mountain of Zaphon in northern Syria, at the mouth of the Orontes River.

Such examples make it clear that there was no uniform ancient mythical picture of a three-storied universe. The dead could dwell in the West, and the gods could dwell in various parts of the earth rather than in a heavenly world. The most comprehensive study on Mesopotamian cosmic geography concludes that there was no belief in a three-storied universe with a solid metal vault, but rather, it concludes that the Mesopotamians believed in six flat heavens, suspended one above the other by cables.⁷ This concept is altogether absent in the biblical cosmology.

The original word for “deep” in Genesis 1:2 figures prominently in the argument of those scholars supporting the view that the Genesis cosmology is three storied. There is heaven above and earth below (v. 1), and underneath is “the deep,” interpreted as the “primeval ocean.” It has been claimed that the original word for “deep,” or *têhôm*, is directly derived from the name *Tiamat*, the mythical Babylonian monster

and goddess of the primeval world ocean in the national epic *Enuma Elish*. *Têhôm* is said to contain an “echo of the old cosmogonic myth,”⁸ in which the creator-god Marduk engages Tiamat in battle and slays her. The interpretation that the biblical term “deep” is linguistically dependent on Tiamat is known to be incorrect today on the basis of an advanced understanding of comparative Semitic languages. In fact, “it is phonologically impossible to conclude that [the original word translated as “deep”] was borrowed from *Tiamat*.”⁹ The thirty-five usages of this word and its derivative forms in the Old Testament reveal that it is generally “a poetic term for a large body of water,”¹⁰ which is completely “nonmythical.”¹¹ To suggest that verse 2 contains the remnant of a conflict from the pagan battle myth is to read ancient mythology into Genesis—something the text actually combats. The description of the passive, powerless, and unorganized state of the “deep” in verse 2 reveals that this term is nonmythical in content and antimythical in purpose.

More recently, a Canaanite background has been suggested for this chaos-battle myth embedded in Genesis, marking a shift of origin from Babylon to the West. But there is little evidence for this. The term translated as “seas” does not appear until verse 10, when one would expect it in the initial few verses of the account. Any connection with the Canaanite deity Yam is, therefore, not present, making it “difficult to assume that an earlier Canaanite dragon myth existed in the background of Gen 1:2.”¹² In fact, several scholars reject that there even was a creation myth in Ugarit

where these texts were found, and others question whether Baal ever functioned as a creator-god.

What can be said of “the fountains of the great deep” mentioned twice in the Genesis Flood account (7:11; 8:2)?¹³ The “great deep” refers undoubtedly to subterranean water. But there is no suggestion in these texts that this underground water is connected with the mythology of an underworld sea on which the earth floats. During the Flood, the springs of the subterranean waters, that had fed the springs and rivers, split open with such might and force that, together with the torrential downpour of waters stored in the atmospheric heavens, the worldwide Flood came about.

The subterranean features, such as “the waters beneath the earth” (Exod. 20:4; Deut. 4:18; 5:8; Job 26:5; Ps. 136:6), fail, on close investigation, to uphold the supposed three-storied or triple-decked view of the world. And what about the underworld? *Šē’ôl* is invariably the place where dead people go.¹⁴ It is a figurative expression of the grave and may be equated with the regular Hebrew term for “grave.” In the Bible, *šē’ôl* never refers to an underworld of gloomy darkness or waters as the abode of the dead, as was conceived in pagan mythology among Babylonians and Greeks. As a designation of the grave, *šē’ôl*, of course, is subterranean, because it is in the ground. The three usages of the phrase “the waters beneath the earth” (Exod. 20:4; Deut. 4:18; 5:8) easily refer to waters below the shoreline, because, in one of the texts (Deut. 4:18), it is indeed the place where fish dwell.

Some poetic passages describe the

“foundations” of the earth as resting on “pillars” (1 Sam. 2:8; Job 9:6; Ps. 75:43). These words, however, are used only in poetry and are best understood as metaphors. They cannot be construed to refer to literal pillars. Even today, we speak metaphorically of “pillars of the church,” referring to staunch supporters of the community of believers. So the pillars of the earth are metaphors describing that God can support or move the inner foundations that hold the earth in place and together, because He is Creator.

Moving from what is “below” the earth to what is “above,” the act of fiat creation on the second day calls into existence the firmament (Gen. 1:7). The firmament is frequently associated with firmness and solidity, ideas derived from the Vulgate *firmamentum* and the Septuagint *steréōma* but not from the original term in the Hebrew. Following the Vulgate, many have suggested that this was a “vaulted solid body.”¹⁵ But this is a very recent interpretation, first suggested in the eighteenth century, by the French philosopher Voltaire. The Hebrew term *rāqîa’*, traditionally translated “firmament,” is better rendered with “expanse.” Some have tried to document on the basis of nonbiblical texts that the original word designated something solid, perhaps a strip of metal. But these attempts at explaining the Hebrew word fail to convince. Such interpretations are based on unsupported philological guesses and extrabiblical mythical notions but not on what the biblical texts actually demand.

In passages like Genesis 1:7; Psalm 19:1; Daniel 12:3, *firmament* has the meaning of the curved expanse of the heavens, which

to an observer on the ground appears like a vast inverted vault. In Ezekiel (1:22, 23, 25, 26; 10:1), it has the sense of an extended platform or level surface. No text of Scripture teaches that the firmament, or expanse, of heaven is firm and solid and holds anything up.¹⁶

Rain does not come through “windows of heaven” in a solid firmament. Of the five texts in the Bible that refer to the “windows of heaven,” only the Flood story (Gen. 7:11; 8:2) relates them to water, and here, the waters do not come from the firmament but from heaven. The remaining three texts clearly indicate that the expression “windows of heaven” is to be understood in a nonliteral sense; it is figurative language in the same way as we can speak today of the “windows of the mind” or the “vault of heaven” without implying that the mind has windows with sashes and glass or that heaven is a literal vault of solid bricks or concrete.

In 2 Kings 7:2, barley comes through the “windows in heaven.” In Isaiah 24:18, it seems to be trouble and anguish that use this entrance, while in Malachi 3:10, blessings come through “the windows of heaven.” Such figurative language does not lend itself to the reconstruction of biblical cosmology. This is underlined by the fact that the Bible makes abundantly clear that rain comes from clouds (Judg. 5:4; 1 Kings 18:45), which are under and not above the firmament of heaven (Job 22:13, 14). In Psalm 78:23, this association of clouds with the “doors of heaven” is explained in poetry, where the first line and second line repeat the same concept: “Yet He commanded the clouds above, and opened

the doors of heaven” (NASB). In the Old Testament, whenever it rains heavily, this is expressed figuratively by the expression that the windows or doors of heaven are opened.

The recognition of the nonliteral, metaphorical use of words—pictorial language—in the Bible is important. If the Bible is read and interpreted on its own terms, it is usually not difficult to recognize such language. We still refer to “the sun setting in the horizon” today, when we, in fact, know that the earth is rotating on its axis away from the sun. Such language was used in ancient times in the same way as metaphor or poetic language.

On the basis of this evidence, the widespread view that the biblical cosmology describes a three-storied universe cannot be maintained. The so-called primitive or primeval view turns out to be an “assigned interpretation and not one which was derived from the texts themselves.”¹⁷ Even when certain narratives of the Bible date to the time of some of these pagan myths, this does not necessarily imply that every ancient writer used the same ideas, whether inspired or not.

Other Aspects of Contrast

The reality is that the Genesis account strongly contrasts with ancient Near-Eastern and Egyptian accounts so that there is an intended polemic or argument against these myths.

Sea Monster or Sea Creatures? On the fifth day of Creation (Gen. 1:20–23), God created the “great whales” (v. 21) or “great sea monsters,” as more recent translations (RSV, NEB, NAB) render the Hebrew term.

In Ugaritic texts, a related term appears as a personified monster, a dragon, who was overcome by the goddess Anath, the creator-god. Is it justified to link the biblical term to mythology in this context? The word in verse 21 appears in a clearly “nonmythological context.”¹⁸ On the basis of other Creation passages in the Bible, it appears to be a generic name for large water creatures in contrast to the small water creatures created next (Gen. 1:21; Ps. 104:25, 26). God’s totally effortless creation of these large aquatic creatures, as expressed through the verb “create,” which always stresses effortless creation, exhibits a deliberate argument against the mythical idea of creation by battle and combat.

The Lack of Combat, Force, or Struggle. The red thread of opposition to pagan myth is also visible in the fiat creation of raising the “firmament,” or “expanse” (Gen. 1:6, 7), without any struggle whatsoever. Ancient Near-Eastern and Egyptian mythologies link this act of separation to combat and struggle. The ancient cosmologies are not absorbed or reflected in Genesis but are overcome.

Creation by Word of Mouth. In the biblical Creation story, the most striking feature is God’s creation by the spoken word. On the first day, “God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light’ ” (vv. 3–5). This is without parallel in Mesopotamian and Egyptian mythology. In *Enuma Elish*, Marduk does “not create the cosmos by utterance, but by gruesomely splitting Tiamat.”¹⁹ In the *Atra-Hasis Epic*, humankind is created from the flesh and blood of a slaughtered god mixed with clay, but “no hint of the use of dead deity or any other material of a living

one is found in Genesis.”²⁰

A number of scholars have claimed that creation by word of mouth is best paralleled in Egyptian cosmologies. There are several different traditions, however, that developed over time with significant variations. In the Heliopolis cosmology or theogony, Atum generates the Ennead (nine gods) from himself by the act of masturbation or spitting, “and the two siblings were born—Shu and Tefnut.”²¹ In another tradition, the Coffin Texts describe Atum as the sun with the name Re-Atum. Sometimes, the two are separated as in “Re in your rising, Atum in your setting.”²² In this sense, Atum, often equated with the sun-god Re, is self-developing and is the originator of the gods and all things.

In the Memphite theology of Egypt, Ptah is compared and contrasted with Atum. Whereas Atum created by “that seed and those hands, (for) Atum’s Ennead evolve(ed) through his seed and his fingers, but the Ennead is teeth and lips in this mouth that pronounced the identity of everything and from which Shu and Tefnut emerged and gave birth to the Ennead.”²³ Here, the writer achieves his goal of merging the two accounts by saying “that the origin of ennead through the teeth and the lips (of Ptah) is the same as the origin through the semen and hands of Atum.”²⁴ The mouth is, thus, equated with the male organ “from which Shu and Tefnut emerged and gave birth to the Ennead.”²⁵ It was through self-development that Atum or Ptah created the gods. That this teeth and lips here are to be compared to the effortless speech found in the Genesis Creation ignores the parallelism made

with Atum and the sexual connotation.

In contrast, there is no hint at self-generation or procreation in the Genesis account. The recurring expression “God said, . . . and there/it was” (e.g., Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11) speaks of the effortless, omnipotent, and unchangeable Divine Word of Creation. God’s self-existent Word highlights the vast unbridgeable gulf between the biblical picture of Creation and pagan mythology. The Genesis cosmology stresses the essential difference between Divine Being, creation, and created being in order to exclude any idea of emanationism, pantheism, and dualism.

Descriptive Argument. The Genesis cosmology exhibits in various crucial instances a sharply antimythical polemic or argument in its description of created material. This is evidenced in the description of the “deep” (v. 2), the creation of the large aquatic creatures (v. 21), the creative separation of heaven and earth (vv. 6–8), the purpose of the creation of humans as the pinnacle of created beings on earth (vv. 26–28), and creation by Divine Word (v. 3). To this impressive list should be added that the description of the creation and function of the sun and moon (vv. 14–18), whose specific Semitic names were surely avoided, because the same names refer, at the same time, to the sun-god and the moon-god. The use of the terms “greater light” and “lesser light” “breathes a strongly anti-mythical pathos,”²⁶ or polemic, undermining pagan religions and mythology at fundamental points. The author of Genesis intended the reader to know that the sun and the moon were not gods but were the creation of God for specific functions.

The Creation of Humanity. The magnificent Creation narrative of verses 26–28 speaks of humanity as “the pinnacle of creation.”²⁷ The term for “create” is employed three times in these verses to emphasize the fiat creation of humanity by God. Humans appear as the creature uniquely “blessed” by God (v. 28); they are “the ruler[s] of the world,”²⁸ including the animal and vegetable kingdoms. All seed-bearing plants and fruit trees are for food (v. 29). This lofty picture of the divine concern and care for humanity’s physical needs stands in such sharp contrast to the purpose of creation in ancient Near-Eastern mythology that one is led to conclude that the Bible writer described the purpose of humanity’s creation deliberately to combat pagan mythological ideas, while, at the same time, emphasizing the human-centered orientation of Creation.

All the ancient Near-Eastern myths describe the need of humanity’s creation as an afterthought, resulting from an attempt to relieve the gods of hard labor and procuring food and drink. This mythical notion is contradicted by the biblical idea that humanity is to rule the world as God’s vice-regent. Obviously, this antimythical emphasis cannot be the result of adopting pagan mythical notions; rather, it is rooted in biblical anthropology and the biblical understanding of reality.

In Egyptian cosmologies, “so far no detailed account of the creation of man is known.”²⁹ The primary focus of Egyptian cosmologies is the creation of the Egyptian pantheon of gods; thus, they are better described as theogonies, although the gods themselves represent the elements of

nature. A few texts indicate that human-kind came from the tears of Re. “They [Shu and Tefnut] brought to me [Re] my eye with them, after I joined my members together I wept over them. That is how men came into being from the tears that came forth from my eye.”³⁰ The primary emphasis is not on the creation of humanity, which is simply mentioned in passing, but in the restoration of the eye of Re, which had such significant magical and protective powers in ancient Egyptian mythology. In a Coffin Text (7.465, Spell 1130), “I created the gods by my sweat, and mankind from the tears of my eye.” It is pointed out that humans are “created like everything else and are called ‘the cattle of the god’ (Instruction to King Merikare) or ‘cattle of Re,’ but it is the gods who occupy the center state in the cosmogonies.”³¹ In the Memphite theology, the creation of humans is not mentioned at all.

The Seven-Day Week and Order of Creation. The complete sequence of Creation in Genesis 1 demonstrates a divine order, so that which was formless and void is formed and filled into a complete ecosystem that will support life. The divine sequence of six literal, twenty-four-hour, consecutive days that culminate in the Sabbath rest is entirely absent in ancient Near-Eastern and Egyptian accounts.

Enuma Elish indicates some analogies in the order of creation: firmament, dry land, luminaries, and lastly, humankind. But there are also distinct differences: (1) There is no clear statement that light is created before the luminaries. (2) There is no explicit reference to the creation of the sun (to infer this from Marduk’s character

as a solar deity and from what is said about the creation of the moon in Tablet V is difficult). (3) There is no description of the creation of vegetation. (4) Finally, *Enuma Elish* knows nothing of the creation of any animal life in the sea, sky, or earth. A comparison between Genesis and this account indicates that twice as many processes of creation are outlined in Genesis 1. There is only a general analogy between the order of creation in both accounts; “there is no close parallel in the sequence of the creation of elements common to both cosmogonies.”³² Concerning the time for creation, the only possible hint is provided in the *Atra-Ḥasis* account of the creation of humankind. Here, fourteen pieces of clay are mixed with the blood of the slain god and placed in the womb goddess. After ten months of gestation, the goddess gives birth to seven male and seven female offspring. The birth of humankind after a ten-month gestation is not found in Genesis; humanity is created on the sixth day. The link of the Sabbath to a Near-Eastern background has also been futile.

In Egyptian cosmologies, there is no finality of creation. Rather, there is a “one-day pattern of recurrent creation brought about each morning with the sunrise symbolizing the daily rebirth of Rê-Amun, the sun-god creator as embodiment of Atum.”³³ The cycle of death and rebirth is so central to Egyptian thinking that death itself is seen as part of the normal order of creation. On a funerary papyrus of the Twenty-First Dynasty, a winged serpent on legs is standing on two pairs of legs with the caption: “Death the great god, who made gods and men.”³⁴ This is “a personification

of death as a creator god and an impressive visual idea that death is a necessary feature of the world of creation, that is, of the existence in general.”³⁵ A similar image can be seen in the burial chamber of Thutmose III, in which during the eleventh hour of the Amduat, Atum is shown holding the wings of a winged serpent, surrounded on either side by Udjat eyes—the eyes of Re and Horus. The concept of a Sabbath and seven-day sequence is entirely absent.

The Genesis cosmology represents a “complete break”³⁶ with the pagan mythologies of the ancient Near East and Egypt by undermining prevailing mythical cosmologies and the basic essentials of pagan religions. The description of Creation not only presents the true account, but in so depicting it, the writer chose a great many safeguards against mythology. He used certain terms and motifs, partly related to cosmologically, ideologically, and theologically incompatible pagan concepts and partly in deliberate contrast to ancient Near-Eastern myths, and employed them with a meaning and emphasis expressive of the worldview understanding of reality and cosmology of divine revelation.

The exalted and sublime conception of the Genesis account of Creation presents, at its center, a transcendent God who, as supreme and unique Creator, speaks the world into existence. The center of all creation is humankind as male and female. The Genesis cosmology, which unveils most comprehensively the foundations on

which the biblical world reality and worldview rest, knows of no three-storied or triple-decked universe. It provides inspiration’s answer to the intellectual question of the who of Creation, which the book of nature points to God as the Creator. It also provides answers to the related questions of how the world was made and what was made. Through action verbs such as “separated” (Gen. 1:4, 7; NASB), “made” (vv. 7, 16, 25, 31), “placed” (v. 17; NASB), “created” (vv. 1, 21, 27; 2:4), “formed” (2:7, 8, 19), “fashioned” (v. 22; NASB), and “said” (1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26) an indication of the how of divine creative activity is revealed. The third intellectual question asks what the transcendent Creator brought forth. The biblical writer himself sums it up in the words “the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them” (2:1).

The biblical Creation account, with the Genesis cosmology, goes far beyond these intellectual questions by addressing itself also to the essential existential question, because it is also the report of the inauguration of the natural and historical processes. It answers what the Divine Creator is able to do. Since the Creator, who is none other than Christ, the Father’s creating Agent (John 1:1–4; Heb. 1:1–3), made the cosmos and all that belongs to it, since He is the Maker of the forces of nature and the Sustainer of creation, He can use these forces to bring about His will in the drama of ongoing time, through mighty acts and powerful deeds in nature and history.

Notes

1. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Genesis Is Unique," *Signs of the Times*®, June 1975, 22–26 and "Genesis Is Unique~2" *Signs of the Times*®, July 1975, 22–25. The article was revised and expanded by Michael G. Hasel to include current sources and new information on ancient Near-Eastern and Egyptian parallels.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references in this chapter are from the King James Version of the Bible.
3. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look," *The Bible Translator* 22 (1971): 154–168; Hasel, "The Meaning of Genesis 1:1," *Ministry* 49, no. 1 (January 1976): 21–24.
4. Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1994), 114.
5. Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. H. W. Bartsch, vol. 1 (London: Harper & Row, 1953), 2.
6. Albrecht Goetze, "El, Ashertu and the Storm-God," *Ancient Near-Eastern Texts* (1969): 519.
7. Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 2nd corr. printing, Mesopotamian Civilizations, bk. 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011).
8. S. H. Hooke, "Genesis," in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, eds. H. H. Rowley and Matthew Black (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962), 179.
9. David Toshio Tsumura, "The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation," *Journal for the Study of Old Testament*, supplement series 83 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1989), 31.
10. Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle With the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 86.
11. Kurt Galling, "Der Charakter der Chaos-schilderung in Gen 1.2," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 47 (1950): 151.
12. Tsumura, "The Earth and the Waters," 32, 33.
13. See Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Fountains of the Great Deep," *Origins* 1 (1974): 67–72.
14. The term *šē'ōl* is translated as "grave" (thirty-one times), "hell" (thirty-one times), and "pit" (six times) in the KJV. The rendering "hell" is unfortunate, because the term has nothing to do with torture, torment, or consciousness.
15. Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 1974), 160.
16. Randall W. Younker and Richard M. Davidson, "The Myth of the Solid Heavenly Dome: Another Look at the Hebrew Term *rāqîa'*," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 49 (2011): 127.
17. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Literary Form of Genesis 1:11," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Payne (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 57.
18. Theodor H. Gaster, "Dragon," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1 (1962), 868.
19. Gordon H. Johnston, "Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (2008): 187.
20. Alan R. Millard, "A New Babylonian 'Genesis' Story," *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967): 3–18.
21. "From Pyramid Texts Spell 527," trans. James P. Allen, *The Context of Scripture* 1, no. 3:7.
22. James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 10.
23. "From the 'Memphite Theology,'" trans. James P. Allen, *The Context of Scripture* 1, no. 15:21–23.
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