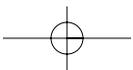
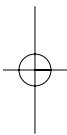
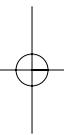


TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 1

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TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 1

GENERAL EDITOR: DONALD J. WISEMAN

GENESIS

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

DEREK KIDNER



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Inter-Varsity Press, England
Norton Street, Nottingham NG7 3HR, England
Website: www.ivpbooks.com
Email: ivp@ivpbooks.com

©The Tyndale Press, 1967

First published 1967
Printed in this format 2008

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USA ISBN 978-0-8308-4201-8
UK ISBN 978-1-84474-256-1

Set in Garamond 11/13pt
Typeset in Great Britain by Avocet Typeset, Chilton, Aylesbury, Bucks
Printed and bound in the United States of America ∞



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kidner, Derek.
Genesis: an introduction and commentary / Derek Kidner.
p. cm. — (Tyndale Old Testament commentaries; v. 1)
Originally published: London: Tyndale P., 1967.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-8308-4201-8 (US: pbk.: alk. paper)—ISBN
978-1-84474-256-1 (UK: pbk.: alk. paper)
1. Bible. O.T. Genesis—Commentaries. I. Title.
BS1235.53.K53 2008
222'.1107—dc22

2007052795

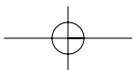
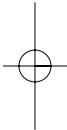
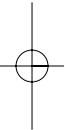
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

P	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
Y	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10		

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GENERAL PREFACE

The aim of this series of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, as it was with the companion New Testament volumes, is to provide the student of the Bible with a handy, up-to-date commentary on each book, with the primary emphasis on exegesis. Major critical questions will be discussed in the introductions and additional notes, but as far as possible undue technicality will be avoided in the commentary itself.

While all are united in their belief in the divine inspiration, essential trustworthiness and practical relevance of the sacred writings, individual authors are free to express their own point of view on all controversial issues. Within the limits of the space available they frequently draw attention to interpretation which they themselves do not hold but which represents the conclusions of equally sincere and loyal Christians. In Genesis, a book which has been the subject of so much debate, it would be easy to devote a disproportionate amount of space to such discussions. But the aim throughout has been to draw the reader as close as possible to the meaning of the text rather than to speculations about it.

In the Old Testament in particular no single English translation is adequate to reflect the original text. The authors of these commentaries freely quote various versions, therefore, or give their own translation, in the endeavour to make the more difficult passages or words meaningful today. Where necessary, words from the Hebrew (and Aramaic) Massoretic Text underlying their studies are transliterated. This will help the reader who may be unfamiliar

with the Semitic languages to identify the word under discussion and thus to follow the argument. It is assumed throughout that the reader will have ready access to one, or more, reliable rendering of the Bible in English.

There are signs of a renewed interest in the meaning and message of the Old Testament and it is hoped that this series will thus further the systematic study of the revelation of God and his will and ways as seen in these records. It is the prayer of the editor and publisher, as of the authors, that these books will help many to understand, and to respond to, the Word of God today.

D. J. Wiseman

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A music critic once demolished a certain descant to a great hymn tune, with the remark that it impoverished the immaculate harmony and sure-footed rhythm of its companion, 'like a Mini round a Rolls-Royce'. Any book on Genesis is bound to invite some such comparison (even if theological reviewers usually resist the impulse to put things quite as pungently), and particularly a commentary as slim, in more ways than one, as this.

What is almost equally unavoidable is the offence which any writer on this subject is likely to give to many of his readers at one point or another, in discussing the immense issues that are raised by Genesis at every turn. There can scarcely be another part of Scripture over which so many battles, theological, scientific, historical and literary, have been fought, or so many strong opinions cherished. This very fact is a sign of the greatness and power of the book, and of the narrow limits of both our factual knowledge and our spiritual grasp. If the interpretations and discussions offered here are found far from infallible or complete, no-one is more aware of it than the author; but they are put forward in the hope that even where they are unpalatable they will provoke all the closer study of the inspired text itself.

A preface gives an opportunity of making some acknowledgments, and I am glad to express gratitude first to those who have drawn my attention to a number of archaeological and linguistic matters, especially Professor D. J. Wiseman, the General Editor of the series, and Mr A. R. Millard, the Librarian of Tyndale

House; also to the Rev. J. A. Motyer, whose theological insight has at several points made him 'eyes to the blind'. Dr R. E. D. Clark was kind enough to read part of the manuscript where it touched on cosmology, and to make valuable criticisms and suggestions. The help of all these has reduced, but naturally not eliminated, my errors and omissions. Unfortunately Mr K. A. Kitchen's *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Tyndale Press, 1966) was published too late to be consulted for this commentary, but it is good to know that its wealth of information on the world in which Genesis has its setting is now available to fill out (and no doubt to correct) the picture which is only lightly sketched in the present book.

Finally it is a pleasure to thank the publishers for their encouragement and expertise, and Miss J. M. Plumbridge who deciphered and typed a far from easy manuscript with extraordinary accuracy and cheerfulness.

May this commentary be found as faithful and straightforward a servant of the text as was Abraham's steward to his master.

Derek Kidner

CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS

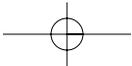
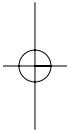
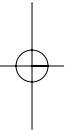
- AASOR* *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research.*
AN *Abr Nabrain.*
ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*² J. B. Pritchard, 1955.
ARI *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*⁶ by W. F. Albright, 1953.
 AV English Authorized Version (King James).
BA *Biblical Archaeologist.*
BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.*
BDB *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Brown, Driver and Briggs, 1907.
 Bennett *Genesis* (Century Bible) by W. H. Bennett, c. 1900.
Bib. *Biblica.*
 Calvin *Commentaries on the Five Books of Moses, Genesis* by J. Calvin.
 Cassuto *Commentary on Genesis, I, II*, by U. Cassuto, 1961, 1964.
CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly.*
 Delitzsch *New Commentary on Genesis, I, II*, by F. Delitzsch, 1888, 1889.
DOTT *Documents from Old Testament Times* edited by D. W. Thomas, 1958.
 Driver *The Book of Genesis*¹⁵ by S. R. Driver, 1948.
ET *Expository Times.*
FSAC *From the Stone Age to Christianity*² by W. F. Albright, 1957.

- G–K *Hebrew Grammar*² by W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 1910.
- HDB *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.*
- Hooke *In the Beginning* (Clarendon Bible, VI) by S. H. Hooke, 1947.
- HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual.*
- IB *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 1952.
- IBD *The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary*, 1962.
- ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, 1939.
- JASA *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation.*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature.*
- JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies.*
- JLAS *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies.*
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies.*
- JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies.*
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies.*
- JTVI *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute.*
- K–B *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* by L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, 1953.
- LXX The Septuagint (pre-Christian Greek version of the Old Testament).
- mg margin
- Moffatt *A New Translation of the Bible* by James Moffatt, 1935.
- MT Massoretic Text.
- NBC *The New Bible Commentary* edited by F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, E. F. Kevan, 1953.
- NBD *The New Bible Dictionary* edited by J. D. Douglas et al., 1962.
- RSV American Revised Standard Version, 1952.
- RV English Revised Version, 1881.
- Simpson C. A. Simpson (see *IB*).
- Skinner *Genesis*² (International Critical Commentary) by J. Skinner, 1930.
- Speiser *Genesis* (The Anchor Bible) by E. A. Speiser, 1964.
- UM *Ugaritic Manual* by C. H. Gordon, 1955.
- UT *Ugaritic Textbook* by C. H. Gordon, 1965.
- Vergote *Joseph en Égypte* by J. Vergote, 1959.

CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS

13

- von Rad *Genesis* (Old Testament Library) by G. von Rad, Eng.
tr. 1961.
- VT* *Vetus Testamentum*.
- Vulg. The Vulgate (translation of the Bible into Latin, by
Jerome).
- WTJ* *Westminster Theological Journal*.
- ZAW* *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*.



INTRODUCTION

1. The pattern and place of Genesis

No work that is known to us from the Ancient Near East is remotely comparable in scope, to say nothing of less measurable qualities, with the book of Genesis. Certain epics from Babylonia tell of Creation, others of a Deluge; the fullest extant version of the Epic of Atrahasis, more than 1,200 lines long, links the two events in a continuous story¹ which provides some sort of parallel to Genesis 1 – 8; but when these come to an end, Genesis has barely begun. Its story has started at an earlier point than theirs (since with them the waters, personified, are the beginning, and the gods who

1. On this, see A. R. Millard, 'A New Babylonian "Genesis" Story', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 18, 1967. For the rest of the Babylonian Creation material see A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Edition, 1963), and for the flood stories see A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (University of Chicago Press, 1949).

will overcome them are only their offspring) and it will not end until the church of the Old Testament has been firmly rooted and four generations of patriarchs have lived out eventful lives against the background of two different civilizations.

The book falls into two unequal parts, of which the second begins with the emergence of Abram at the junction of chapters 11 and 12. Chapters 1 to 11 describe two opposite progressions: first, God's orderly creation, to its climax in man as a responsible and blessed being, and then the disintegrating work of sin, to its first great anticlimax in the corrupt world of the flood, and its second in the folly of Babel.

With this, the general history of man gives way in chapter 12 to the germinal story of 'Abraham and his seed', with God's covenant no longer a general pledge to all mankind as in chapter 9, but narrowed down to a single family through which 'all the families of the earth' will be blessed (12:3). Abram, landless and childless, is made to learn that the great promise, the lodestar of his life, must be fulfilled divinely and miraculously or not at all. In this context his nephew's hard-headed choice of the cities of the plain, and his own desperate attempts at self-protection or the raising of a family, stand out in contrast to the fruitful way of faith. There is no future, the story makes plain, in Sodom or Egypt, or in Ishmael, as there is in the promised Canaan and Isaac. Such lessons persist in the remainder of the book as men accept or fight against the will of God over the choice of Jacob against Esau in the second generation, Joseph above his brethren in the third, and Ephraim above Manasseh in the fourth. By the end of Genesis the chosen people has begun to take shape, while its cousins and neighbours have settled into their territories and patterns of life. But it has migrated meanwhile from the promised land, and the story cannot end at such a point.

By its close, then, the book has lost nothing of its impetus. Its fifty chapters are the spring-board for the greater things of the exodus which its final events demand and its closing words anticipate. It is only the first of 'the five fifths of the law', as the law itself is the seed of a still bigger harvest. One of the impressive facts about the Old Testament, and about Genesis within it, is this forward thrust towards a consummation which is foretold yet, in detail, unforeseeable; which fulfils it without destroying it.

Genesis, in fact, is in various ways almost nearer the New Testament than the Old, and some of its topics are barely heard again till their implications can fully emerge in the gospel. The institution of marriage, the fall of man, the jealousy of Cain, the judgment of the flood, the imputed righteousness of the believer, the rival sons of promise and of the flesh, the profanity of Esau, the pilgrim status of God's people, are all predominantly New Testament themes. Finally there is the symmetry by which some of the very scenes and figures of the earliest chapters reappear in the book of Revelation, where Babel (Babylon) and 'that ancient serpent ... the deceiver of the whole world' come to their downfall, and the redeemed, though they are now veterans rather than untried innocents, walk again in Paradise by the river and tree of life.

2. The date and authorship of the book

a. Indications from Scripture

While the New Testament speaks of the Pentateuch in general as 'Moses' or the 'book' or 'law' of Moses, it nowhere points specifically to Genesis by itself in these terms. The Pentateuch for its own part tells of Moses' decisive share in its making, from his first written records of the curse against Amalek (Exod. 17:14) and the book of the Sinai covenant (Exod. 24:3-7) to the writing and safe keeping of his final exposition of the law (Deut. 31:24-26). Under God, the core and substance of the books Exodus to Deuteronomy are his work, just as under God the events are his life-story.

Yet Moses is always 'he', never 'I', in these events. Even the 'log-book' of Numbers 33 is in the third person (i.e. it has been written up from his record, not simply inserted), and when he does speak in the first person, as in Deuteronomy, an introduction and conclusion frame his words and make the final account history, not autobiography. There is nothing to correspond to the un-introduced memoirs of Nehemiah or the 'we'-passages in Acts.

The New Testament, in attributing the Pentateuch as a whole to Moses, seems to imply for Genesis a similar relation between substance and final shape as it implies for the rest of the books: that is, that the material is from Moses, whoever was his biographer and editor. It seems artificial, for instance, to exclude Genesis from our

Lord's dictum, 'Moses ... wrote of me' (John 5:46) and from his Emmaus exposition 'beginning from Moses' (Luke 24:27; cf. 44). Such a distinction would have occurred to none of the original readers of the Gospels.

This estimate of Moses' relation to the books that bear his name seems to agree with some of the small clues on the surface of Genesis, though it must be emphasized that they are inconclusive. On the one hand, for example, Genesis 47:11 uses the expression 'the land of Rameses' for the Israelite territory, a term which could have come especially easily to Moses if he was a contemporary of Rameses II. On the other hand 36:3 *iff.*, which tells of kings reigning in Edom 'before there reigned any king over ... Israel', dates itself, on any normal understanding, in or after the time of Saul. This king-list, however, could be an addendum to bring an old book up to date, as easily as it could indicate the time of composition; there is no sure means of telling. Other minor phrases with a possible bearing on the date are 12:6 (cf. 13:7), 'the Canaanite was then in the land', and 14:14, 'as far as Dan' (cf. Judg. 18:29). The former is inconclusive, since 'then' can mean 'then, as now' (cf. Josh. 14:11), while the latter, like 36:3 *iff.* cited above, could indicate the period either of the author or of a scribe who substituted a current name for an archaic one.

The scriptural evidence, then, within and without the book itself, leaves it an open question whether the inclusion of Genesis among the writings of Moses implies simply that it is the foundation of the Pentateuch or that Moses himself wrote it. But it may be added perhaps at this point that the book shows a breadth of conception and a combination of erudition, artistry and both psychological and spiritual insight which make it outstanding, by common consent, even in the Old Testament. If its chief architect was not Moses, it was evidently a man of comparable stature.

b. Pentateuchal criticism

It is generally held that Genesis provides many more clues to its composition than the few that are mentioned above. The first of these to attract notice were the variations in the use of divine names and the apparent repetitions in the narratives. In 1753, J. Astruc attempted by these means to isolate different documents used by

Moses, and by the close of the eighteenth century the figure of Moses was receding from the view of investigators, to be replaced by an unnamed redactor. Passages using the term God (Elohim) were ascribed to the 'Elohist', abbreviated to E; others which spoke of the Lord (Jahveh, Yahweh) were the work of the 'Yahwist', J. It was soon decided that there were more than one Elohist, and the initial P (Priestly source) was eventually added to E and J to distinguish the first Elohist from the second. A far-reaching revolution took place however in the 1860s and '70s when K. H. Graf, followed by J. Wellhausen, produced arguments for reversing the chronological sequence PEJ to JEP – an upheaval which was more radical for the rest of the Pentateuch than for Genesis, since it put the levitical law near the end instead of the outset of Israel's history. For Genesis it meant that P, thought of as an exilic or post-exilic writing, supplied the final framework, interweaving its own version of events with J in the earlier part of the book, and with J and E from chapter 15 onwards.

Once this method of study had established itself, other distinguishing marks of the documents were reported in great numbers, and in the latter half of the nineteenth century the Pentateuch was so rigorously dissected that it was not uncommon to find a single verse parcelled out between two or even three sources, since each of these was held to have its own vocabulary, character and theology. If there were two synonyms available for some noun, verb or pronoun, one of them might be virtually the fingerprint of J or E, the other of P. If there were genealogies or dates, these were mostly the special interest of P; if attention centred on the northern tribes it was likely to be the work of E. Theologically it appeared that, in J, God would speak with men directly, his personality strongly evident; in E, his messages would tend to come in dreams or by angels speaking from heaven; in P, he was majestic and remote, planning the progress of events towards the establishment of an ecclesiastical state.

The presence of duplicate and composite narratives continued to be pillars of the theory. Stories which professed to be distinct were taken to be variants of the same events, while single narratives were so meticulously sundered and so brilliantly reconstructed that it became a commonplace to find two accounts standing where only

one had shown itself before. Under these miracles of surgery scarcely an Adam, so to speak, now lacked an Eve, fashioned from his bones, to contradict him. The classic examples of the technique are the analyses of the flood and of the Joseph stories, which are discussed in the Additional notes to chapters 8, 37 and 42.

Study of the Pentateuch has since branched out in various directions, with a growing interest in recent years in Form Criticism, which looks for the literary units underlying a connected work, and tries to understand them as the products of various types of situation. The consequent emphasis on the life of the community in which the writings arose has modified the conception of JEP, which are no longer pictured as the straight products of, say, the ninth, eighth and sixth centuries respectively, but as bodies of tradition preserved and developed in different Israelite circles over the centuries, each containing its share of very ancient material.

While this approach, among others, has broken down some of the rigidity of the earlier criticism, so that A. Bentzen, for one, could declare (his italics) '*I think we must stop speaking of "documents"*',² the initials JEP are still predominantly used and still signify for most purposes, in spite of Bentzen, the documents that are thought to embody their respective traditions. Even the suggested dates for these documents are broadly unchanged, and individual scholars continue to subdivide them as of old, or to discover sources hitherto unsuspected. So, e.g., C. A. Simpson³ follows E. Meyer and others in dividing J into J⁴ and J⁵; R. H. Pfeiffer⁶ adds to JEP his Edomite

2. *Introduction to the Old Testament*⁶ (Gad, Copenhagen, 1952), II, p. 31. See further C. R. North in H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (OUP, 1951), pp. 48–83; E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Tyndale Press, 1964 edn), pp. 107–154.

3. *IB*, I, pp. 192ff.

4. *Introduction to the Old Testament*⁶ (Gad, Copenhagen, 1952), II, p. 31. See further C. R. North in H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (OUP, 1951), pp. 48–83; E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Tyndale Press, 1964 edn), pp. 107–154.

5. *IB*, I, pp. 192ff.

6. *Introduction to the Old Testament*⁶ (A. and C. Black, 1952), pp. 159ff.

'S'; and O. Eissfeldt⁷ isolates an early 'lay' source, 'L', to arrive at a Pentateuchal documentary sequence LJEBDHP.

The old literary analysis of the Pentateuch is in fact still treated as substantially valid and is made the basis of most subsequent work, even if primary interest has now shifted to other areas. It therefore seems worth pointing out that much of it falls very far short of proof.

1. *The divine names* are not as safe a criterion of authorship, even (in practice) to the literary critic, as they seem to be at first sight. For example, it is very widely held that the E document begins, fragmentarily, in Genesis 15; yet with 'Elohim' quite absent from that chapter and 'Yahweh' occurring seven times, certain commentators are ready where necessary to ascribe verses containing 'Yahweh' to the Elohist, on the assumption that a later hand has marred the evidence that once stood there. In 22:1–14, a stronger E passage, there are three occurrences of 'Yahweh' to five of 'Elohim', which have to be similarly explained. Again, in 17:1 and 21:1b, P speaks of 'Yahweh'. To dismiss these and other anomalies with such a remark as 'Originally 'el... must have stood here'⁸ is to abandon the existing evidence simply because it is inconvenient.

Such a situation cries out for a more flexible approach, so that one allows not only for possible sources but for an author's conscious and unconscious choice between the more personal term 'Yahweh' and the more general 'Elohim' in certain contexts, and for the aesthetic impulse, where the choice is theologically open, to use a run of one expression or another, or again a free alternation of the two.⁹ The usage of other ancient peoples amply supports this: cf., e.g. the interchangeable terms Baal and Hadad in the Ugaritic Hadad

7. *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 1965), p. 239.

8. C. A. Simpson, on 22:14.

9. It is a modest but illuminating exercise to examine the distribution of these terms in the book of Jonah. Cf. also the study of the use of the divine names in the Pentateuch and in the rest of the Old Testament, in U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Magnes Press, 1961), pp. 15–41. This work is an abbreviation of *La Questione della Genesi* (Florence, 1934).

tablet,¹⁰ or the multiple designations of Osiris on the stele of Ikhernofret,¹¹ to give no more examples.

Against this free variation, Exodus 3:13ff. and 6:3 are often quoted as proof-texts to show that in Genesis E and P could not have used the name Yahweh, since it was unheard of, in their view, before the call of Moses. But this is to neglect the context of those verses. In Exodus 3:14 the divine exposition, 'I AM ...' introduces and illuminates the name given in 3:15, and this remains the context for 6:3 as well, in the book as we have it. The name, in short, was first *known*, in any full sense of the word, at its first expounding; but the name of Moses' own mother Jochebed (Exod. 6:20), a name compounded with Yahweh,¹² is proof enough that it was already in common *use*, according to P itself. Cf. E. Jacob (who accepts the JEP analysis): '... we do not have in the Exodus narrative the revelation of a new name but the explanation of a name already known to Moses which in that solemn hour is discovered to be charged with a content the richness of which he was far from suspecting.'¹³

2. *Other linguistic criteria* are equally inconclusive. In the first place, as U. Cassuto¹⁴ has pointed out, to treat alternative expressions for a given idea simply as hallmarks of different authors is often to miss the nuance of a word. For example, to 'cut'¹⁵ a covenant highlights the historic moment and manner of its making; to 'give'¹⁶ a covenant emphasizes the sovereignty and grace of its Initiator; and to 'establish'¹⁷ it puts a stress on his faithfulness in giving it effect. (Incidentally the last two of these terms are allowed to co-exist in

10. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (T. and T. Clark, 1956), pp. 70–72.

11. K. A. Kitchen, *NBD*, p. 349a. The text is in *ANET*, pp. 329f.

12. Cf. H. Bauer in *ZAW*, LI, 1933, pp. 92f.

13. *Theology of the Old Testament* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), pp. 49f. See also J. A. Motyer, *The Revelation of the Divine Name* (Tyndale Press, 1959), *passim*.

14. *Op. cit.*, pp. 42–54.

15. Allegedly the JE word, found at 15:18; 21:27, 32; 26:28; 31:44.

16. Attributed to P; found at 9:12; 17:2.

17. Also attributed to P; found at 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17; 17:7, 19, 21.

P; should they not be criteria for dividing it?) Again, to bring Israel 'forth' (J) from Egypt emphasizes the aspect of liberation, while to bring them 'up' (E) directs attention to their destination, the promised land. These are worthwhile distinctions. Or the nuance may be one of rhythm and weight, observable in the principles which govern the choice of the long or short pronoun 'I' (*'ānōkī*, critically ascribed to JE, or *'ānī*, the alleged mark of P). Incidentally the Ugaritic equivalents of these two forms can be found side by side: they occur, e.g. within two lines in Aqhat III.vi.21, 23,¹⁸ where there is no question of dual authorship.

In the second place, examples of many of these uses are too few to be statistically significant or too minutely circumscribed to allow for an author's freedom. Eissfeldt's two instances of J and E words will illustrate the point. His first is E's use of the name 'Amorites', where J has 'Canaanites', for the natives of the promised land.¹⁹ Only two E passages can be produced for this, while 15:21, which mentions *both* 'the Amorites, and the Canaanites', is ignored in spite of its proximity to 15:16 which is cited. Eissfeldt's other example is the pair of terms *šiphā* and *'āmā* for 'handmaid', attributed to J and E respectively. The reasoning, however, begins to look laboured when it makes Rachel offer her maid to Jacob in E (30:3) and carry out the offer in J (30:4). Confidence in the method is hardly restored by Eissfeldt's corollary that yet another source, a variant of J, betrays its presence in the third noun, *pīlgeš*, for these subordinate wives.²⁰

3. 'Doublets' tend to fall still further short of proof, for they are postulated almost as a matter of course when two stories resemble one another. If the events are closely similar, the matter is felt to need no arguing; if they are dissimilar, they only show how far the traditions diverge. These assumptions can be detected, for instance, in the standard analysis of Hagar's two departures from home. Treating chapters 16 and 21 as the J and E versions of a single event, with P insertions, G. von Rad, in company with most critical scholars, notes the contrasts between the two stories, in that

18. Text in G. R. Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

19. Eissfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

20. *Ibid.*

Abraham is passive and pliable in 16, responsible in 21; Hagar is proud and impetuous in the first story, an innocent victim in the second; again, the angel seeks out Hagar in 16:7, but calls to her from heaven in 21:17; and so on.

These are true and fascinating distinctions. What is tacitly dismissed is any possibility that they reflect two different occasions, as they profess to do. Yet for Hagar to despise the barren Sarah in 16, and for her son to be caught bullying²¹ the child who has now dispossessed him in chapter 21, are not mutually exclusive possibilities but an organic sequence, true to the tensions of fourteen years implied in the family history. The same can be said of Abraham's two attitudes to these crises, for on the second occasion he had a powerful precedent to give him pause, in that Hagar had been divinely ordered home the first time this had happened (16:9). (Similar marks of sequence can be noticed in the attempts of Abraham and Isaac to pass off their wives as sisters: see the opening comments on chapter 26.)

It is surely prejudice rather than reason which will leave Scripture's own and self-consistent version of events either un-discussed or, in the case of its explanatory comments (e.g. 26:1a), dismissed as artificial harmonizations.

4. The existence of *composite* narratives, intricately interwoven, is particularly open to question. As an editorial method it would be unparalleled (it was first suggested in the days before our access to old Near Eastern literature offered a control to speculation), and the analysis which tries to unravel the design is based on the improbably rigid idea of literary style which has already been noticed in paragraphs 1 and 2 above. Extended examples and a critique of the method can be found in the Additional notes to chapters 8, 37 and 42.²²

c. Some conclusions

With the study of Genesis *on its own terms*, that is, as a living whole, not a body to be dissected, the impression becomes inescapable that

21. See on 21:9.

22. See pp. 93ff., 184ff., 200ff.

its characters are people of flesh and blood, its events actual, and the book itself a unity. If this is right, the mechanics of composition are matters of small importance, since the parts of this whole are not competing for credence as rival traditions, and the author of the book does not draw attention, as do the writers of Kings and Chronicles, to the sources of his information.

No lack of such sources, oral and written, however, need be supposed for an author of the period indicated in section *a*. (pp. 17f.), since Abram had migrated from a country that was rich in traditions and genealogies,²³ and Joseph (like Moses after him) had lived many years in the intellectual climate of the Egyptian court on the one hand (with access to, e.g., the detailed ethnography reflected in Genesis 10) and of the patriarchal society on the other, with ample opportunities of preserving these stores of information. Accordingly there have been some attempts to find traces of material compiled at earlier dates than those that are suggested for the completed J, E and P. Two of these ventures are now briefly described.

P. J. Wiseman, in *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*²⁴, examined the possibility that the recurring phrase 'These are the generations of ...', which punctuate Genesis at eleven places,²⁵ give a clue to the keeping of family records by successive patriarchs. He interprets this refrain as a colophon,²⁶ to be translated 'These are the historical origins of ...'. In other words, in his view it always marks the *conclusion* of a section, rounding off the archives written or possessed down the years by Adam (Gen. 5:6), Noah (6:9), Noah's sons (10:1), and so on: a growing series entrusted to successive heads of the family.

In support of his argument this author points out that no section overshoots the lifetime of the person so named; that the blocks of material reflect accurately (e.g. in vocabulary and place-names) the different stages which they record; and that the art of writing, which

23. Cf. W. F. Albright, *FSAC*, p. 238.

24. Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1936.

25. These are listed at 2:4.

26. *Op. cit.*, pp. 47–60. A colophon is an identifying phrase at the end of a tablet.

was copiously practised for many centuries before Abraham, is of very high antiquity.²⁷ He also lists a number of duplicate expressions occurring in the vicinity of the ‘colophons’, which could be catch-phrases, a device commonly used to link successive tablets in their right sequence.²⁸

But the case for referring the word ‘generations’ (*tôlêdôt*) only to the past has its weaknesses. It is clearly inapplicable, for example, to Ruth 4:18, where the phrase ‘these are the generations of’, exactly as in Genesis, can only point forward. In Genesis itself it can always refer as suitably (and often more so) to the future as to the past. From 2:4 onwards, every occurrence is followed by an account of what *issued* from the point just named, whether this point is the bare world (2:5 ff.) or Adam (5:3 ff.) or Noah (6:9 ff.), etc. So from Terah, for example, (11:27) spring not only Abraham, who will dominate the scene, but Abraham’s kinsmen from whom eventually the bride of Isaac must be chosen; and from Jacob (37:2) arise the twelve tribes (whose fortunes are traced far ahead in chapter 49), not merely the hero Joseph. To make the phrase an ending instead of an opening gives us the anomaly, if it is strictly applied, of having the whole story of Abraham preserved by Ishmael (11:27b – 25:12), while Isaac keeps Ishmael’s archives (25:13 – 19a), Esau those of Jacob (25:19b – 36:1) and Jacob those of Esau – a situation of almost operatic complexity, and a conclusion which the author rather arbitrarily avoids.²⁹

Further, by insisting on a complete succession of named tablets, the theory implies that writing is nearly if not quite as old as man. Genesis itself, read in any other way, does not require this: it leaves it perfectly tenable that while the genealogies were committed to writing at an early but unspecified stage,³⁰ the rest of the family history may have been passed down by word of mouth, as its

27. Some that survives is over 5,000 years old: cf. *NBD*, p. 1341.

28. *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

30. See on chapter 5.

31. *Oral Tradition* (Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 11, SCM Press, 1954), p. 36.

manner often suggests. Some of the characteristics of oral tradition listed by E. Nielsen bring Genesis to mind, e.g.: ‘... recurrent expressions, a fluent, paratactic style, a certain rhythm and euphony which are especially noticeable when one hears the account ...’³². It is worth pointing out that this kind of transmission can be exceedingly accurate where it is in regular use.³²

The second approach, from quite different presuppositions, is that of E. Robertson,³³ who drew attention to the unusual opportunities of Samuel to gather and record Israel’s traditions as he visited Beth-el and other centres (1 Sam. 7:16) in regular rotation as judge. Robertson recalls the critical state of Israel at the time, with the old order crumbling, the sanctuary destroyed, and the demand for a king threatening to paganize the theocracy. A recall to the law of Moses must have been vital at such a moment. Pointing out in some detail the appropriateness of Deuteronomy to this whole situation, Robertson finds it specially significant that according to 1 Samuel 10:25 Samuel ‘recited the constitution of the kingdom (*mišpāt hammamlakā*) to the people, wrote it in a book, and deposited it before the Lord’.³⁴ This, in his view, was the crown of Samuel’s labours, which had amounted to the editing of the whole Pentateuch, possibly with the help of ‘scholarly scribes working ... under the direction of Samuel’s ecclesiastical councils’. To Robertson, then, ‘the different writers, or rather compilers, of the Torah all lived in the same age and all were occupied with their great tasks at the same time’.³⁵

Robertson’s thesis gives Samuel and the sanctuaries a more creative part in the making of the Pentateuch than Scripture itself seems to allow (cf. section *a.* above), but it may point in the right direction. Certainly the spiritual stature of Samuel, and his experience of the realms of government, priesthood and prophecy,

32. Cf. the examples cited from other peoples by Nielsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 23f., 31f.

33. *The Old Testament Problem* (Manchester University Press, 1950), pp. 33–53.

34. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

35. *Op. cit.*, pp. 42f.

make him as likely a final architect of the Pentateuch as any of whom we know before Ezra; and if he was the narrator who told of Moses and edited his writings, the occasional references to post-Mosaic names and situations referred to in section *a*. would be fully in keeping with the fact.

But all these attempts are, in their different degrees, speculative and of only secondary importance. One has the feeling that Paul, if he were inveigled into such a discussion, would say sooner or later 'I speak as a fool'; though he might add, 'you forced me to it' – for the debate, once started, has to continue. Perhaps the last word, again from the New Testament, would be more appropriately the gentle reminder to Simon Peter when he was too fascinated by Moses and Elijah, on the mount, to remember their *raison d'être*. Whether we are tempted, in our pentateuchal studies, to erect many tabernacles or few, for Moses or a multitude, the answer of heaven is, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him.'

3. Human beginnings

In the main, two outlines of man's infancy confront the modern Christian. The book of Genesis portrays, in a few strokes of the pen, a creature fashioned from earthly matter, God-breathed and God-like, whose spiritual history runs from innocence to disobedience and on into a moral decline which the beginnings of civilization can do nothing to arrest.

The second picture, that of palaeontology, a mosaic of many fragments, depicts a species fashioned over perhaps a million years or more into the present human form, showing the outward characteristics of modern man upwards of twenty thousand years ago, not only in his bodily structure but in his practice of making tools, using fire, burying his dead, and, not least, creating works of art comparable with those of any period. Even at this remote time the apparent forerunners of our chief racial groups seem to be distinguishable,³⁶ and the species had already spread widely over the

36. Cf. M. Boule and H. v. Vallois, *Fossil Men* (Thames and Hudson, 1957), p. 325; C. S. Coon, *The Origin of Races* (J. Cape, 1963), p. 5.

world, displacing another type of hominid, ‘Neanderthal Man’, whose own relics, rough as they are, indicate that tools, fire and burial had been in use for long ages before this. On the other hand, the first known signs of pastoral and agricultural life and, later, of metal working (e.g. by hammering copper or meteoric iron; cf. on 4:19–24) are much more recent, appearing in the Near East, on present evidence, somewhere between the eighth and fifth millennia BC at earliest.

How the two pictures, biblical and scientific, are related to each other is not immediately clear, and one should allow for the provisional nature both of scientific estimates (without making this a refuge from all unwelcome ideas) and of traditional interpretations of Scripture. One must also recognize the different aims and styles of the two approaches: one probing the observable world, the other revealing chiefly the unobservable, the relation of God and man. The style of reporting will be drily factual for the former, but the latter may need the whole range of literary *genres* to do it justice, and it is therefore important not to prejudge the method and intention of these chapters.

Other scriptures, however, offer certain fixed points to the interpreter. For example, the human race is of a single stock (‘from one’, Acts 17:26); again, the offence of one man made sinners of the many, and subjected them to death (Rom. 5:12–19): and this man was as distinct an individual as were Moses and Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:14).³⁷ Others too are counted as individuals in the New Testament: e.g. Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah. These guidelines exclude the idea of myth (which dramatizes the natural order, to ‘explain and maintain’ it³⁸), and assure us that we are reading of actual, pivotal events.

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37. Any attempt to argue that in Rom. 5 Paul was reinforcing his exposition of imputed righteousness by an analogy drawn only from the wording of Gen. 3, somewhat as Heb. 7:3 uses the wording of Gen. 14, seems to be precluded by the distinction between Adam’s and other men’s sins in Rom. 5:14. No room is left there for a collective Adam or for ‘every man his own Adam’.
38. Cf. B. S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 27, SCM Press, 1960), pp. 29, 66.

It could be that the events are presented here in simplified pictorial form (cf. the opening comments on chapter 3), or are landmarks punctuating an immense tract of time. Even so there are difficulties. If Genesis is abbreviating a long history, the sheer vastness of the ages it spans, on this view, is not so sharp a problem as the fact that almost the whole of this immensity lies, for the palaeontologist, between the first man and the first farmer – that is, in terms of Genesis, between Adam and Cain, or even between Adam inside and outside Eden. Yet the birth of Seth, or of his ancestor, sets an upper limit of a mere 130 years to this (4:25; 5:3). Even if the figures in Genesis 5 are non-literal, the proportions raise the same difficulty. Some other approach therefore seems necessary.³⁹

To the present author various converging lines point to an Adam much nearer our own times than the early tool-makers and artists, let alone their remote forbears. On the face of it, the ways of life described in Genesis 4 are those of the neolithic and first metal-working cultures alluded to above, i.e. of perhaps eight or ten thousand years ago, less or more. The memory of names and genealogical details also suggests a fairly compact period between Adam and Noah⁴⁰ rather than a span of tens or hundreds of millennia, an almost unimaginable stretch of time to chronicle. Yet this seems to widen the gap still further between Genesis and current chronologies.

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39. Various answers to the problem are discussed in B. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Paternoster, 1955), pp. 119–156. Two that have had a wide influence in some Christian circles are (a) the ‘Gap’ theory, which postulates a catastrophic period between Gen. 1:1 and 1:3, long enough to produce the main phenomena of geology, after which the world was reconstituted in six days (see especially G. H. Pember, *Earth’s Earliest Ages*³³ (Pickering and Inglis, 1921). On this, see the comment and first footnote at Gen. 1:2. (b) ‘Flood Geology’, which makes the single year of Noah’s flood the period in which were deposited the sediments and fossils usually considered to have been laid down over many millions of years. This view is expounded in detail in J. C. Whitcomb and H. M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961); it has not won support amongst professional geologists.
40. On this period, see Additional note to chapter 5, p. 87.

The answer may lie in our definition of man.

Man in Scripture is much more than *homo faber*, the maker of tools: he is constituted man by God's image and breath, nothing less. It follows that Scripture and science may well differ in the boundaries they would draw round early humanity: the intelligent beings of a remote past, whose bodily and cultural remains give them the clear status of 'modern man' to the anthropologist, may yet have been decisively below the plane of life which was established in the creation of Adam. If, as the text of Genesis would by no means disallow,⁴¹ God initially shaped man by a process of evolution, it would follow that a considerable stock of near-humans preceded the first true man, and it would be arbitrary to picture these as mindless brutes. Nothing requires that the creature into which God breathed human life should not have been of a species prepared in every way for humanity, with already a long history of practical intelligence, artistic sensibility and the capacity for awe and reflection.

On this view, Adam, the first true man, will have had as contemporaries many creatures of comparable intelligence, widely distributed over the world. One might conjecture that these were destined to die out, like the Neanderthals (if indeed these did), or to perish in the flood, leaving Adam's lineal descendants, through Noah, in sole possession.⁴² Against this, however, there must be borne in mind the apparent continuity between the main races of the present and those of the distant past, already mentioned, which seems to suggest either a stupendous antiquity for Adam (unless the whole accepted dating of prehistory is radically mistaken, as some have tried to show – e.g. Whitcomb and Morris, *op. cit.*) or the continued existence of 'pre-Adamites' alongside 'Adamites'.

If this second alternative implied any doubt of the unity of mankind, it would be of course quite untenable. God, as we have seen, has made all nations 'from one' (Acts 17:26). Genetically indeed, on this view, these two groups would be of a single stock;

41. Cf., e.g. Job 10:8ff., Ps. 119:73, where God's use of natural processes is described in terms of the potter's art as in Gen. 2:7.

42. Cf. A. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible* (IVF, 1942), p. 81, in a discussion of various views.

but by itself that would avail nothing, as Adam's fruitless search for a helpmeet makes abundantly clear. Yet it is at least conceivable that after the special creation of Eve, which established the first human pair as God's viceregents (Gen. 1:27, 28) and clinched the fact that there is no natural bridge from animal to man, God may have now conferred his image on Adam's collaterals, to bring them into the same realm of being. Adam's 'federal' headship of humanity extended, if that was the case, outwards to his contemporaries as well as onwards to his offspring, and his disobedience disinherited both alike.

There may be a biblical hint of such a situation in the surprising impression of an already populous earth given by the words and deeds of Cain in 4:14, 17.⁴³ Even Augustine had to devote a chapter to answering those who 'find this a difficulty',⁴⁴ and although the traditional answer is valid enough (see commentary on 4:13, 14, below), the persistence of this old objection could be a sign that our presuppositions have been inadequate. Again, it may be significant that, with one possible exception,⁴⁵ the unity of mankind 'in Adam' and our common status as sinners through his offence are expressed in Scripture in terms not of heredity⁴⁶ but simply of solidarity. We nowhere find applied to us any argument from physical descent such as that of Hebrews 7:9, 10 (where Levi shares in Abraham's act

43. Cf. Rendle Short's tentative suggestion (op. cit., p. 81) that the dwellers in Cain's city 'may conceivably have been members of a more primitive type of man' – a suggestion, however, which did not envisage them as fully human.

44. *The City of God*, XV, viii.

45. If Gen. 3:20, naming Eve 'mother of all living', is intended as an anthropological definition, with the sense 'ancestress of all humans', the question is settled. This may be its purpose. But the meaning of her name, 'life', and the attention drawn to it by the term 'living', suggest that the concern of the verse is to reiterate in this context of death the promise of salvation through 'her seed' (3:15).

46. Isa. 43:27, which may spring to mind against this, is asserting Israel's long history of sin (whether back to Jacob, Abraham or Adam), not Adam's fatherhood of man.

through being ‘still in the loins of his ancestor’). Rather, Adam’s sin is shown to have implicated all men because he was the federal head of humanity, somewhat as in Christ’s death ‘one died for all, therefore all died’ (2 Cor. 5:14). Paternity plays no part in making Adam ‘the figure of him that was to come’ (Rom. 5:14).⁴⁷

Three final comments may be made. First, the exploratory suggestion above is only tentative, as it must be, and it is a personal view. It invites correction and a better synthesis; meanwhile it may serve as a reminder that when the revealed and the observed seem hard to combine, it is because we know too little, not too much – as our Lord impressed on the Sadducees about their conundrum on the resurrection. What is quite clear from these chapters in the light of other scriptures is their doctrine that mankind is a unity, created in God’s image, and fallen in Adam by the one act of disobedience; and these things are as strongly asserted on this understanding of God’s word as on any other.

Secondly, it may be thought that this whole discussion allows science too much control over exegesis. This would be a serious charge. But to try to correlate the data of Scripture and nature is not to dishonour biblical authority, but to honour God as Creator and to grapple with our proper task of interpreting his ways of speaking. In Scripture he leaves us to find out for ourselves such details as whether ‘the wings of the wind’ and ‘the windows of heaven’ are literal or metaphorical, and in what sense ‘the world cannot be moved’ (Ps. 96:10) or the sun daily ‘runs its course’ (Ps. 19:5, 6). Some of these questions are answered as soon as they are asked; others only by the general advance of knowledge;⁴⁸ most of

47. Cf., e.g. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (A. and C. Black, 1957), p. 111; F. F. Bruce, *Romans* (Tyndale Press, 1963), p. 130.

48. It was Galileo’s telescope, not his church, that conclusively refuted the interpretation of Ps. 96:10 as a proof-text against the earth’s rotation. Galileo incidentally realized that the new astronomy discredited only the expositors, not the Bible. See, e.g. G. Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church* (John Murray, 1914), pp. 23off.; A. Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers* (Penguin, 1964), pp. 44off.

them are doctrinally neutral. We are asserting our own infallibility, not that of Scripture, when we refuse to collate our factual answers with those of independent enquiry.⁴⁹

Thirdly, however, the interests and methods of Scripture and science differ so widely that they are best studied, in any detail, apart. Their accounts of the world are as distinct (and each as legitimate) as an artist's portrait and an anatomist's diagram, of which no composite picture will be satisfactory, for their common ground is only in the total reality to which they both attend. It cannot be said too strongly that Scripture is the perfect vehicle for God's revelation, which is what concerns us here; and its bold selectiveness, like that of a great painting, is its power. To read it with one eye on any other account is to blur its image and miss its wisdom. To have God's own presentation of human beginnings as they most deeply concern us, we need look no further than these chapters and their New Testament interpretation.

4. The theology of Genesis

There is material in Genesis for a substantial book under this title. Here we shall briefly consider only three of its themes, namely God, man, and salvation.

a. God

From the outset, Genesis confronts us with the Living God, unmistakably personal. The verbs of the opening chapter express an energy of mind, will and judgment which excludes all question of our conceiving God 'in the category of the "it" instead of the

49. 'It is tempting ... to deny the problem, either by discounting one or other set of facts, or by locking them into separate compartments in our minds ... The truth is that the facts of nature yield positive help in many ways for interpreting Scripture statements correctly, and the discipline of wrestling with the problem of relating the two sets of facts, natural and biblical, leads to a greatly enriched understanding of both.' J. I. Packer, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* (IVF, 1958), p. 135.

“Thou” (to borrow E. Brunner’s phrase⁵⁰); and the book continues to make this emphasis in its account of man’s constitution in God’s image, and of God’s persistent concern for a personal relationship with his servants.

Secondly, he is the only God, the Creator and Sovereign of all that is. If the later chapters of Isaiah, the *locus classicus* of explicit monotheism, affirm this vehemently, in Genesis the question of other deities simply does not arise – except in the single episode of Jacob’s flight from Laban, where, to an attentive ear, Laban can be heard invoking a separate god on his side of the covenant (see on 31:53), and where images make a brief and ignominious appearance, successively stolen, sat on and buried (31:19, 30, 34; 35:4). The creation story has settled the matter, and subsequent history confirms that God is as much the master of events in the rise and fall of nations (15:14, 16; 25:23) as in the conception of a child or the call of a follower. Time and space, sin and even death (5:24) are no match for him, whether he is working through obvious miracles or hidden providence. And this is the faith not only of the narrator but of the chief characters, who declare him the Maker and Judge of all (14:19, 22; 18:25) and the Disposer of the most intractable of situations (45:5–8).

Thirdly, his ways are perfect. The series of expulsions and cataclysms in Genesis declares that heaven can make no truce with sin, whether it is the Godward sin of unbelief and presumption (as at Eden and Babel) or the manward wrongs of violence, lust and treachery. Yet his righteous wrath is also grief (cf. 6:6). His judgments are sweetened with mercy (3:21; 4:15; 6:8; 18:32; 19:16, 21; etc.) and are slow to fall (15:16). (His concern for the sinner’s reclaiming is discussed below, in section 6.3.) Equally, if his justice has love in it, his love contains moral demand. There is a trace of challenge in it even in the earthly paradise (cf. on 2:8–17), and Abraham was to find, over a long period, and supremely at mount Moriah (chapter 22), that to be the friend of God demanded, even if it repaid, everything he had.

50. *Revelation and Reason* (SCM Press, 1947), p. 401.

Fourthly, he is self-revealed. Commanding, conversing and, above all, entering into covenant, he is always in some degree self-giving, never the aloof object of human groping. He is known in this book by many names, over and above the general term *God* and the personal name *Yahweh*.⁵¹ Some are titles expressing facets of his being (*Most High*, 14:18–22, a frequent title in the Psalms; *Almighty*, 17:1 [see note] and elsewhere, also often in Job; *Everlasting*, 21:33; cf. Isa. 40:28). Others commemorate a special moment of encounter (*God of seeing*, 16:13, when he revealed himself to Hagar; *God, the God of Israel*, 33:20, recording the re-naming of Jacob, cf. 32:28; *God of Beth-el*, 35:7, in memory of Jacob's dream). Again others declare a pledged relationship (*God of Abraham*, 28:13, etc.; *Fear of Isaac*, 31:42, 53; *Mighty One of Jacob*, 49:24). These three classes of title correspond to three main elements – propositional, historical and personal – in all revelation.

Finally, we may note the occasional indications, in the terms 'the Angel of the Lord' or 'of God'⁵² and 'the Spirit of God',⁵³ that God's unity is not monolithic. A study of 'the Angel of the Lord' passages (listed in the footnote) leaves no room for doubt that the term denotes God himself as seen in human form; what should be added is that 'Angel', by its meaning 'messenger', implies that God, made visible, is at the same time God *sent*. In the Old Testament nothing is made of this paradox, but it should not surprise us that the apparent absurdity disappears in the New Testament. Just as 'the Spirit of God' was an Old Testament expression awaiting its full disclosure at Pentecost, so 'the Angel of the Lord', as a term for the Lord himself, becomes meaningful only in the light of 'him whom the Father ... sent into the world', the pre-existent Son.⁵⁴

b. Man

1. *Man before God*. Since this subject is discussed as its various

51. See on 4:26.

52. Cf. 16:7–11, with verse 13; 18:1, with verses 2, 33 and with 19:1; 31:11, with verse 13; 32:24, 30, with Hos. 12:3–6; 48:15, with verse 16.

53. 1:2; cf. 6:3; 41:38.

54. See also the discussion of the plural pronouns, *us* ... *our* ... *our*, towards the end of the comment on 1:26.

aspects arise in the commentary on chapters 1 – 3, it is enough to mention the places where this is done.

- (i) *Man's constitution*: see on 1:26 and 2:7.
- (ii) *Man's calling*: see chiefly on 2:8–17, but also the last paragraph on 1:26, and 3:22.
- (iii) *Man's fall*: see chapter 3, chiefly the introductory remarks to the chapter, and the comments on verses 6 and 7.
- (iv) *Man's plight*: see on 3:16ff., and the Additional note to the chapter (on sin and suffering).

2. *Man in society*. For all the emphasis which Genesis lays on the individual, with God calling men by name and seeking the outcasts, its model for human life is not that of the solitary mystic or the freelance, but of a social being who lives within a certain pattern of responsibilities.

Already in Eden the beginning of this pattern is discernible, with its three dimensions of things, persons and authority, in relation to which a man must normally fulfil his calling and glorify God. As the book continues, the pattern is both developed and distorted; developed as time and increasing population enrich its content, but distorted as sin brings its disturbance into every part.

(i) *Things*. A large element of man's original calling was to 'cultivate and keep' (2:15) his immediate environment, and to 'subdue' as well as to fill the earth (1:28). From these terms, their vigour matching that of the earth's teeming fertility described in 1:11f. and its wealth of mineral resources glimpsed in 2:11f., it was obvious that man was blessed with an immense creative task from the first. If this was an inviting prospect, sin and the curse of God changed it largely to a burden, with poverty as the taskmaster and death as the final word (3:17–19). Work itself was not the legacy of the fall; only its new character as toil.

The subsequent picture is of chequered progress, such as we still experience, and man's work and possessions are presented as tools that can be put to good or evil use, not as ends in themselves. The civilized arts and crafts are not hailed as a panacea, nor shunned because the Cainites invented them; yet we are shown which one of them caught the fancy of Lamech the tyrant (4:22–24), and what new terrors it consequently held for the race. As the story develops, skill is now a blessing, now a curse, as it serves God in the building

of the ark or challenges him at Babel. As for possessions, they are seen in the same light, to be enjoyed from God's hand and tithed in his honour (14:18–20, RSV; 28:22), but not accepted unconditionally ('lest you', the king of Sodom, 'should say, "I have made Abram rich"', 14:23). Above all, these things must not become one's goal, as they became Lot's to his ruin, or one's obsession, as they became Laban's to his utter corruption.

It may be added that in the patriarchal stories some of the sting has gone out of the ancient curse on the ground, just as for Cain something was added to it (4:11, 12). There were famines, true enough, and for Jacob at least, bitter hardships (31:40). But there were also exceptional blessings which attracted the notice of their contemporaries in each generation, whether of Abraham (21:22), Isaac (26:12–16, 28), Jacob (30:27, 30) or Joseph (39.5). Perhaps we are meant to see in this a fleeting foretaste of the general blessing which was promised to come through them in the end: nothing less than the lifting of the curse and the undoing of the fall.

(ii) *Persons*. Companionship is presented in Eden as a primary human need, which God proceeded to meet by creating not Adam's duplicate but his opposite and complement, and by uniting the two, male and female, in perfect personal harmony. We shall confine the present study to this fundamental human relationship.

The shattering of the harmony of man and wife, not by any mutual disagreement but by their agreeing together against God, proved at once how dependent it had been on his unseen participation. Without him, love would henceforth be imperfect, and marriage would gravitate towards the sub-personal relationship foreshadowed in the terms 'desire' and 'rule' (3:16, where see commentary).

While the rest of the book confirms this tendency, it shows at the same time God's restraining grace; for throughout Genesis marriage is strong and enduring, and the very fact that the verb 'to know' (4:1, etc.) is used of sexual intercourse suggests a view of it that was originally personal rather than purely sensual, even if the term degenerated (19:5, 8) into a mere euphemism. Against this stability, however, must be set the fact that there is scarcely a family, of those that are described in any detail, which is not torn with murderous jealousies, most of which reflect parental conflicts.

Polygamy is partly to blame for this, but polygamy is itself the symptom of an unbalanced view of marriage, which regards it as an institution in which the wife's ultimate *raison d'être* is the production of children. Where God had created the woman first and foremost for partnership, society made her in effect a means to an end, even if a noble end, and wrote its view into its marriage contracts. It was admittedly a view which the wives seem to have shared (16:2; 30:3, 9), and an arrangement which God did not rebuke. But its cost in human relationships, as chapter 30 among others demonstrates, could be very high. Similarly, levirate marriage, which was to become an obligation under the Mosaic law, illustrates in chapter 38 the tensions that were set up in any form of union that was a mere procreative mechanism, even when due weight is given to the unscrupulous characters involved in that particular story. Whatever the value of these institutions in their day – and some value is undeniable – they only confirm the wisdom of God's foundation ordinance in 2:24.

(iii) *Authority*. The responsibility of government (apart from man's dominion over the animals) seems at first sight to emerge only after the fall; but germinally it goes back to the founding of human society, as 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8–10 points out, in the priority of Adam over Eve.

A harsher note, as we have seen above in discussing marriage, intruded into the relationship at the fall (3:16b), and it is the Cainite Lamech who is the first to be heard expressing it (4:19, 23). His bombast draws attention to the element of brute force which is the dark side of all authority in a fallen world; for while God is the source of human rule, and has ordained it for the ends of order and fair dealing (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14), the powers that are in the saddle in a given situation usually owe their position, from another angle, largely to the aggressiveness of ambitious men. For a purer example of authority we have to turn to the patriarchs, whose headship of their little community owed everything to the divine ordinance. This was in part their prerogative simply as parents, a fact which is very evident in the incidents of 9:20ff. where Ham, the son of Noah, brought a curse on his own progeny by the dishonour he showed his father, while Shem and Japheth took elaborate care to avoid such an impiety. Noah's honour at this moment resided in the dignity of his office as father; all other dignity

had deserted him. Yet God upheld his authority. The patriarchs from Abraham onwards, however, had the additional power of transmitting the divine promises to one or other of their sons before their death. The story of Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau illustrates both the power attaching to his office (for he could not revoke the blessing he had given, 27:33) and its independence of his personal merit.

But in the world outside, the patriarchs wielded no authority. Not even full citizens, they had to make what arrangements they could by private treaties (e.g. over disputed watering rights, 21:30; 26:15ff.) or alliances (as Abram's with Aner, etc. 14:13) or purchases (23:4ff.; 33:19). While they disapproved of marrying into Canaanite families (24:3; 26:34) and dissociated themselves from flagrant immorality (14:23; 34:7), they conformed with local laws and customs, aware of no call to be social critics or to seek office. It was only Lot who set himself to rise in the world, and attained a seat 'in the gate' (19:1), which was all too ineffective when the test came (19:9).

The one apparent exception to this rule is Joseph. His promotion came unsought and was so clearly the work of God that he had no hesitation over accepting it and proving himself equally God's servant and Pharaoh's. Where Moses became his people's saviour by renouncing Egypt, Joseph did so, in his quite different context, precisely by giving all his energy and wisdom to promoting that country's interests.

The attitude of Genesis to government emerges, in fact, as substantially that of the New Testament, where human rule is upheld as a divine ordinance, and its officers as God's servants, while the people of God are required to live not only as 'strangers and pilgrims' (1 Pet. 2:11) but as co-operative citizens whose 'well doing' (1 Pet. 2:15) puts criticism to silence.

c. Salvation

1. *Grace* must be the beginning of this topic, and Genesis reveals that grace, so far from being a mere answer to sin, is fundamental to creation itself. It appears in the very decision to bring 'many sons to glory' which is implied by the making of man in God's image and by the preparing of a world in which sonship could be brought to maturity (see on 2:8-17), and immortality put within man's grasp

(2:9; 3:22). The entry of sin brings other aspects of grace to the fore, in God's measures to preserve mankind at some level of decency and order, and to bring certain men into covenant with himself, through whom he will ultimately bless the world (18:18). As 'Saviour' (i.e. Preserver) 'of all men'⁵⁵ he is shown in Genesis restraining the corruption and anarchy of sin through the discipline of hardship and mortality (3:17ff., 22ff.), the constructive use of natural resources (3:21), the sanctions of law (9:4–6), and the power to recognize moral obligations (cf. Abimelech's use of moral terms in 20:5, 9), as well as through the direct influence of his servants (e.g. 50:20). As Saviour 'especially of those who believe', he reveals his grace in choosing and calling them, justifying them, bringing them into covenant and educating them in his ways. These activities are summarized under the remaining two headings.

2. *Election.* Romans 9:6–13 points out that Genesis makes God's sovereignty of choice indubitable by its birth-stories of Isaac and Jacob, in particular, was marked out from his brother Esau 'though they were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad'. So far from being random volunteers, such men owed their very existence to God's intervention (for Rebekah as well as Sarah had been childless, 25:21), and his choice was maintained against a long history of parental wavering and scheming. The same divine initiative raised up all the deliverers, from Seth, the 'appointed' successor for Abel (4:25), through Noah (whose role was prophesied at birth, 5:29) and Abram (called out from his country and kindred) to Joseph, who was 'sent', against all human intentions, 'to preserve ... a remnant' of the chosen family (45:7, 8).

Yet it is important to notice, in passing, that the choice of Isaac and Jacob before birth, and the corresponding rejection of Ishmael and Esau, were related explicitly to their function, not to their own salvation or doom. This is especially clear in the case of Ishmael, who was rejected in the one capacity, accepted in the other. When Abraham prayed, 'O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!', God's answer was 'No' to the implied request that he should displace Isaac, but 'Yes' to the words at their face value. 'I have heard you; behold,

55. 1 Tim. 4:10.

I will bless him ...' (17:18–21), Election, in Genesis, concerns a man's place in or outside the line of succession leading to Christ, the 'seed' for the blessing of the nations (Rom. 9:5; Gal. 3:16).

3. *The sinner's reclamation.* From the moment of the fall, the mortal effects of sin are a major theme of Genesis, showing its immediate divisiveness manward and Godward, its increasing hold on man, which culminated in the general depravity evident at the flood, and its various outbursts in presumption at Babel, decadence at Sodom, and, in the family circle, all the manward sins of the decalogue.

God's saving work is no less full and varied. His manner of seeking the sinner may be through straight conviction of guilt (whether by the personal questioning addressed to Adam and to Cain, or by the enigmatic ordeal that broke down the brothers of Joseph in 42:21; 44:16) or it may be through the sheer grace that surprised Jacob into response at Beth-el. But it is God, rather than man, who seeks. Lot is dragged to safety, having 'found grace' (19:19) almost in spite of himself; and it is grace, too, that begins the whole story of Noah (6:8).

On man's side, we might be tempted to suppose (but for the clue of Noah just mentioned) that rectitude of worship and life were his passport to acceptance, until we reach the statement that ends speculation, namely that Abram was justified by faith (15:6; cf. Rom. 4:1–5, 13–25) – a saying that illuminates not only every subsequent age, but every previous one, by making it clear that from the first, faith had been indispensable for access to God (Heb. 11:4ff.).

But salvation in Genesis is much more than bare acceptance. Full grown, it is an intimacy with heaven which is as varied in tone as are the characters who enjoy it: men as diverse as Enoch, for whom the barrier of death melted away; Abraham 'the friend of God', whose devotion was tested almost beyond bearing; his servant Eliezer (chapter 24) with his straightforward, centurion-like faith; and Jacob, whose career was virtually a 'taming of the shrew', epitomized in the wrestling at Peniel. And this intimacy was not that of likemindedness alone, but the pledged relationship of a covenant, in which God promised, 'I will be their God' (17:8), and man responded, 'the Lord shall be my God' (28:21).

In the realm of character and manward conduct, salvation similarly goes far beyond a merely imputed righteousness. In a

lawless age Noah stood alone in his integrity (6:9), and in contact with Sodom Abram shunned even its wealth for God's sake (14:22, 23), while Lot himself rebuked its vice (19:7–9; cf. 2 Pet. 2:7, 8), even if his way of doing it revealed a sadly lop-sided moral code. A similar moral insensitivity in Abraham and Isaac could earn the contempt of the heathen themselves on occasion; but if by nature these men were as fallible as their contemporaries, by grace they could rise immeasurably higher. Abraham's intercession for Sodom, like Judah's for Benjamin, exhibits a selfless concern which is the mark of the saints from Moses to Paul, while Joseph's patience, purity, wisdom, and love for his enemies are little less than God-like.

On the ultimate aspect of salvation, deliverance from the last enemy, Genesis has only faint adumbrations. 'You are dust, and to dust you shall return' has a ring of finality; yet the context itself leaves a door ajar, for God had once breathed life into this very dust. Twice, too, there are more direct glimpses of his power over death: once when Enoch was taken (5:24), and once when Abraham realized that God could bring back Isaac from the dead ('we will ... come again to you', 22:5; cf. Heb. 11:19).

These, however, were lessons for another time. Hope, at this stage, was God-directed towards the growth of the chosen family, the possession of the land and the blessing of the nations. If death was taken calmly meanwhile by the patriarchs, it was largely because burial in the family tomb anticipated that family's entry into its inheritance (cf. 47:29f.; 50:24f.); for the promise and mission were vested in the chosen 'seed', not in any of these individuals as such. 'God will surely visit you' (50:25): that was hope enough. From its fulfilment there would open out, in time, the fullness of salvation as the New Testament knows it. Genesis is content to see this from afar, and meanwhile to concern itself with the early flow of this river, rather than its distant estuary and ocean.