

Notes on Genesis 1

“The Morning of the World” (Genesis 1-2)

Fretheim Explores Genesis, Luther Productions, St. Paul, 2000

A Book of Beginnings

Genesis tells the story of:

- the beginning of human beings, animals, sun, moon, stars
- the beginning of sin (in chapter 3)

It is also a new beginning for God. It begins a new story in the life of God.

The Nature of God’s Creative Process

- Not all of God’s creating is out of nothing. God also creates new things out of previously created material.
- God creates through words.
- God also creates by making, separating, getting down in the dirt, designing.
- God’s creating is a process. During this process, God evaluates God’s own work, and decides it is good -- or not good, as when God sees it is not good for the man to be alone.

The Nature of the World

- Creation is not haphazard, but a purposeful, willful, personal act of God
- Creation is not God.
- God evaluated all of creation to be good. Hence all of creation has value.
- God intended creation to be without sin and evil.
- Although creation is good, it is not “perfect.” Creation is not fully developed. There is room for chance.
- God asks “that which is not God” to participate in the world’s creation and continue its development
 - Human beings are told to “subdue” the earth and continue the development of the world. Humans beings are also asked to evaluate and name parts of creation
 - God lets the earth and the waters “bring forth”. . .
 - Creation is still on-going. God is involved and God’s creatures are involved.

The Nature of Human Beings

- God is a social being. God is not in heaven alone. Human kind are the product of a dialog / conversation among a heavenly society. “Let *us* make human kind in our image”

- God made humankind in the image of God, therefore:
 - Human Beings are social beings, part of a larger community
 - Human Beings have responsibilities. Among them: domination over the earth, which involves care and nurture.

The Nature of Law

- Law is a good gift of God that orders creation.
- A strict association of law with sin is specious, for law came before sin entered the world

The Nature of Knowledge

- The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represents the difference between divine knowledge and human knowledge
- God has a wisdom and knowledge that we do not. God knows what is in the best interest of human beings. In not eating of this tree, human beings acknowledge this difference between the Creator and their own status as created beings

Note on the “Two Versions” of Creation

- The Priestly Account (1:1 to 2:4a) and Yahwist Account (2:4b –2:25) have been placed together as a canonical, theological reflection on creation. We should thus try to read them together.
 - Chapter 2 can be thought of as providing more details on the creation of human beings

The Nature of Male and Female

- Both male and female are made in the image of God and both are equal. There is no subordination of female to male (Adam: “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh”):
 - God designs woman from a man’s rib; God molds man from dirt
 - Adam names Eve, but Hagar also names God
 - Woman called helper; but “helper” is a lofty role, a word most often used for God
 - Woman created last (pinnacle of creation?)

Genesis and Modern Science

- Writers of Genesis made use of the best scientific knowledge they had; we in turn must make use of the best scientific knowledge we have in our theological reflections on creation

References

- Video series: **Fretheim Explores Genesis**. Luther Productions. St. Paul. 2000. (Available from: <http://www.lutherproductions.com/bibleseries.htm#bible2>)
- “The Book of Genesis. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections.” Terence E. Fretheim. In: **The New Interpreter's Bible, A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume I**. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1994.