



The Beginning

Version 1.2/ 2012

A study of Genesis 1-2

David Boan

The website **www.davidboan.net** introduces the ministry of Jan and David Boan, and lists for download some of their most recent work.

Past work, including audio files in the mp3 form, are linked to another website **www.thegraciousgod.net**. This is a larger sight and acts as a repository of past work.

Their most recent work is associated with the York Street Silo, a teaching facility located in 4 York Street, North Perth W.A. This work began in 2012 and is where courses in Bible teaching, Greek, and other useful practical courses in Christian discipleship and living are carried on without charge.

1973.01 GFG - The Gift, the Fruit and the Gifts, Thomas Barton.

1990.02 F - The Framework, Sovereign World

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

Contents

1 - Reading the Bible	4
2 - God freely chooses: He is an electing God	6
3 - The elect [chosen] people of God	6
 OUR PLACE TODAY	
4 - Where we are now - in a fallen world.	8
5 - The world doesn't begin with us!	9
6 - Revelation from the eternal Creator.	10
7 - Reading the book Genesis	10
8 - Concrete, relational encounters with real people.	11
9 - Personal encounters, genealogies and God's initiative.	12
10 - Reciprocal interactions	12
11 - God, the Spirit of God and the Word of God	14
12 - God is holy	14
13 - The Word of God is the self-revelation of God.	16
14 - The Word of God is the Agent of God's actions.	17
15 - Responding humbly to what is revealed changes us.	17
 THE GLORY OF PERSON	
16 - Relating things to one another	18
17 - Relational glory	19
18 - We reciprocate; we answer to one another. This is life.	23
19 - To be addressed by God is to be blessed by Him	23
 IMAGE BEARERS	
20 - Humans: active image bearers in a contingent	28
21 - Man is made from elements of the earth and then enlivened	29
22 - No answering person among the animals	30
23 - Humanity takes two forms: a man and a woman	33
24 - The true Man from heaven	34
25 - Naked and unashamed - a created glory	35
 LIVING BY THE WORD OF GOD	
26 - Knowing God as Creator and Provider through things	37
27 - Living by faith in God's present Word	37
28 - Direct knowledge of God through trust in His Word	38
29 - No gifts without the Word of the Giver	40
 INTIMACY	
30 - The Giver is the Gift - expressed intimacy	41
31 - Meaning of persons as gifts of God to one another	41

1 – Reading the Bible.

Two testaments make up the Christian Bible, the “old” and the “new”. Sometimes, there is included a section called the Apocrypha, usually between the Old and the New Testament sections. The Old Testament section begins with the creation, followed by a record of God’s dealings with the Jewish people. God called this ancient, chosen [elect] people of Israel into being through one man, Abraham. He initiated His own covenant with them, making them to be holy - exclusively His and so distinct from the rest of the nations. A non-Jewish person, a Gentile, would learn from the Old Testament that he was not chosen of God as Israel was, but was part of the rest - the “rejected” peoples of the Old Testament.

The New Testament presents four “Gospels” - accounts of the “good news” brought to Israel in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Upon His ascension, His continuing work in the Church through the Spirit is laid down accompanied by letters of the apostolic men to the Christians of that time. Those who receive this understanding of Jesus would now see His work fulfilling the hope of Israel and applicable to the whole world.

Bible readers are given different places to stand.

[i] There are curious persons who read the Bible because it is there to read and is a book deemed worthy of reading by much of the educated world - it is a classic text.

[ii] Jewish people, reading the Old Testament, would rightly think of themselves as the elect of God, as His own peculiar people.

Within Israel, the awareness of the “elect” and the “rejected” was constantly expressed. Where there is Abel there was a Cain. More “duos” appeared - Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Saul and David.

External to her national life, Israel looked out on the world of the gentiles where the same principle was discernable. The Gentiles stood beside her, the elect nation; yet over against her, as the rejected. To know themselves as elect, involved, at the same time, knowing the Gentiles as not so. Like the “duos” found within Israel, the external Jewish-Gentile division was also a dual, reciprocal arrangement.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

[iii] A Christian of Jewish origin, in reading the New Testament, would acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Then, like the Jewish apostles of Christ, he would know himself to be blessed to see the mystery of the Old Testament unfolded. He would think of the New Covenant as that promised [Jeremiah 31.31] under the Old covenant.

Recognising the continuity of the New Testament with the Old Testament, he would understand the “New” to be a record of the fulfilment of the “Old”. With Paul, the apostle, he would see that all the promises of God, lying there in the Old, are affirmed in Jesus Christ.

[iv] In reading the New Testament, the believing Gentile, has been miraculously given a place in which to stand. As a Gentile, he knew that once he was outside of the promises of God to Israel. Yet, he called to trust in the God of Israel, comprehends that God has fulfilled all His promises to the Jewish people in their Messiah, the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God. Understanding that Jesus is God’s elected Man “for us”; our reader thinks of himself as having been included in God’s people “in” and “through” the Christ.

The apostles of Christ first took this message to the people of ancient Israel. The Jewish people heard it and some believed it; but most rejected Jesus as Messiah. To this day many still do. By contrast, as the apostolic message was preached to the hitherto ‘rejected’ Gentiles, many were arrested by such a gracious message.

Prophets of Israel received and brought the Word of God as something external to themselves and their hearers. Jesus was the actual Word of God come in the flesh. He was “the” Prophet long promised to come [Deuteronomy 18.18-19]. Believing Gentiles learned that Jesus, being truly God and man, could bring revelation out from the inner Being of God’s own life. He conveyed to them the actual Life of God, both as a revelation of Who God is, and also by impartation in meeting Him and receiving later His Spirit.

Along with the Jewish apostles, these believing Gentiles worshipped Christ as their Lord; which is to say, as their God. They knew that they were worshipping a man, but a man Who is God. They also knew that Jesus himself worshipped God as His Father. So when they spoke of God, they spoke of Three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Further, they were clear that God known as Trinity in Unity was the one God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They called God, as revealed through Christ, the “the God and Father

of our Lord, Jesus Christ" [Ephesians 1.3]. He was the God of Jesus Christ, the man, and He was the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 – God freely chooses: He is an electing God.

God, having a full life within the Godhead, has no need to create for His own sake. Any outgoing activity from within His inner life arises from his own loving character and His freedom to decide. While being under no external pressure to share His life, He freely loves to do so.

Out of His sovereign freedom God not only creates but He also chooses to covenant with Israel to be their provider, on-going carer; the faithful partner who initiates and to whom they respond. Further, He does this as a holy God; that is, He calls Israel to be exclusive to Him – having no other gods; to be like Him in that they respond to His ways; to trust Him as the grounds for their obedient response.

From within the life of God, the Father refuses to express His mind, or do a work, apart from His Son. In this way, we are not wrong to think of the Son of God as His chosen One. If we are to speak of the electing of the Father, we can speak also of the elected Son. For this holy, exclusive engagement is the expression of their Life together.

Further, in dealing with His Son first and primarily, He can deal with us secondarily as an elect people "in" his Son. We can understand Paul's statement that we have been predestined "in Christ" before the foundation of the world from this perspective.

And further still, when the Son of God takes flesh amongst us, He presents to us the electing [choosing] God and is at the same time in His person, the elected [chosen] man.

3 – The elect [chosen] people of God; the Jewish people and the Church of Jesus Christ.

The Christians, of both Jewish and Gentile origins, heard through the apostles of Christ that there is good news for all men and women. Jesus, as true man, lived representatively "for us" – offering to God the response of a holy life through His own obedience. Being God's

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

own choice [elect] Lamb, He also died “for us” as a true propitiation for our sins. Not being a sinner Himself, yet dying under the conditions of sin – where it ruled human life - He suffered, embracing for us the rejection of God and the curse of death. In this work for us, He stands as God’s Rejected One.

Following the death and resurrection of Jesus the apostles proclaimed the forgiveness of sins to all who heard them. They understood that God was, and still is, not counting anyone’s sins against them; He has reconciled the world to Himself in His Messiah Jesus [2 Corinthians 5.19]. This expresses God’s current stance towards the people of the world. The apostolic call, handed on by the preaching of the Church today, requires the world to be “reconciled to God”. It is a call to respond to this completed work of God in His Christ, by receiving this word and, in faith, relying upon it. Those who do respond come to experience the forgiveness of their sins, and a consequent peace with God.

Those Christians who were formerly Gentiles, have learned that salvation for the whole world is “from the Jews”. This saving mercy is now focussed in the person of Jesus Christ for the Jews as well as for Gentiles.

He has become for Jew and Gentile, both the electing God as well as the elected man. This is part of the mystery of Christology, how we think about Jesus being God and man. He, being God, expresses the choice [election] of God as His own initiative. He, being man, is, at the same time, the elected man in whom God deals with all humans.

As the elect of God He requires no Cain to stand alongside Him as Cain stood in contrast to Abel. He needs no rejected one to testify to his election. He is, in Himself, both the elected one and the rejected one. This is central to what He does “for us” as truly God and truly man.

Former Gentiles, who now believe, have learned that God has chosen them, in Christ and has always had them in His mind. Now, called to see themselves as God sees them in Christ Jesus, they trust Him about this wonderful place in which they stand. Formerly, as Gentiles they were the rejected ones – strangers to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world. But now, they have been “brought near” in Christ Jesus [Ephesians 2.12-13]. “In” that Elect man and through His work, they stand in a place of access to God.

So, the apostles of Christ teach Gentile believers to think of themselves as historically once rejected, but now the elect, the chosen, the saints of God, as the “new” Israel. Not understanding that new Israel to be a rejection or replacement the Jewish people, but seeing a new Israel that

includes both groups, no longer divided; and so seeing old Israel's mission to the Gentiles as come to fruition [Isaiah 9.2].

Where we stand, that old wall of Jew and gentile has been broken down. God has made one new community, one Israel, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek but all are one "in Christ Jesus". Within this Church of Jesus Christ, there are those formerly elect and formerly rejecting [Jewish by birth and formerly rejecting Christ] and there are those who were formerly the rejected [Gentiles] but who are now the elect.

When we approach the Bible, we see and know things according to where we have been given to stand. That is a gift of the calling of God. Subsequently, we study what is now ours, along with the whole Church of God. This is the peculiar and definite knowledge of God that is given to the Christian Church, the new people made up of former Jews and Gentiles, but living no longer under those terms.

4 – Where we are now - in a fallen world.

To understand where we are at any time is often made clear by looking back to where we have come from. When we look at a work in progress we can only assess the advance by comparing it with where we started.

Humble beginnings present a contrast. They may encourage our pride in the current achievements leading us to celebrate how far we have come. The clear contrast may tempt us to self congratulation, perhaps vindicating a belief in our natural progress. We might even think of our optimism as downright courageous.

All this may be true of our work, but it is a different matter for our persons. Our review of our works may disguise from us that we have left our humble origins and ceased to depend upon God our Creator. In the light of our optimism, it can also occur to us that the world is not good, particularly as we look at people, including ourselves. We may even begin to think that, in the first place, it never was good.

Such conflicting attitudes - fulfilment in what we do, coupled with such a sense of foreboding - suggest that things are not quite right. Has it always been this way, or have things changed? There are signs things have changed.

A kindergarten mirrors our world – it is a place with people in it. The first children, whoever they were, found their blocks piled up for their

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

play, the paint pots were filled and the chalks arranged on the easel shelf. We, the later ones, are presented with scattered blocks, spilled paints and broken chalks. But even in this evident disorder, we discern original patterns.

Blocks have fallen in such a way that we can infer how they once were. The paint is spilled, mixed with the dirt on the floor. As our brush mops it up, the dirty mixture applied to our paper suggests to us the original purity and density of the colour. The chalks are now broken, but we can still hold the little stub if we try. We see things that are real, but we also understand them to be “remains” that point us to something which once was.

Our blocks, paints and chalks are a pretty simple matter; they are things we use with some satisfaction. But people are more complicated. When they are marred and broken, a deeper adjustment is required. To relate to them in their disorder is not easy. Certain broken ones are such a challenge, we would, if we are honest, prefer not to relate at all. Anyhow, it is here that the analogy we are using becomes strained; unlike blocks, paints and chalk, people were not made to be picked up and used.

We cannot ourselves, go back to the beginning. So how can we see the original patterns? We need outside help. There are some basic underlying things to know before we try to work out the things around us.

5 – The world doesn’t begin with us!

That we are not the beginning of things is the first thing to get clear. We have arrived by birth through a woman into the world among people already here. We have been slotted “on stage” into a sequence of things, within creaturely space and time. We feel creaturely; but we may resent the dependency it implies.

There is a history here; things have gone on before our arrival. The history we are taught by others is a human-centred interpretation of our “progress”; what else could it be, we think? Is there another centre than ourselves?

If all we have is the kindergarten remains and the original seems lost, how shall its knowledge be re-covered to us? There is nothing we can do; we have no re-set button to return to the settings as they were given at the factory floor. Anyway, we are on stage, we are part of the broken scene –

we don't even see things clearly ourselves.

Since it is impossible to return to see the original for ourselves, we need Someone who was there and sees clearly to reveal it to us.

6 - Revelation from the eternal Creator.

When Genesis speaks of the "beginning" it means our beginning, the creation of the world and of "time and space" as we know them. God Himself has no beginning. He is eternal, unbound and free in regard to creaturely space and time. When, in space and time, He communicates to us, He graciously limits Himself, adapting to our creaturely ways.

What took place there and then can only be "given" to us by God, who was at the beginning and still relates to us here and now.

He gives us a measure of what has changed and in what way. It is not only information about things, He also reveals Himself in conveying His own way of thinking and relating to His creation. This revelation of God's own mind, in turn teaches us how to think here and now. By adopting His way of thinking, even if the world is a mess, we see clearly how to operate within its disorder.

We also learn His vocabulary and syntax - His words and how He uses them. There is a connection between His words and His character. For example, when He reveals that He is the Creator, and what He makes He subsequently calls "good" we learn the meaning of "good" and "true" and words like that. They take their definition from Him, for they express His character.

7 - Reading the book Genesis

The early chapters of Genesis tell us how everything once was and how it changed. For us, they are the starting places for our thinking and understanding of the world. The revelation they make assumes that the world is clearly not as it once was.

These chapters will tell us about the "givens" - things in their settings/ context as given to us by God.

Genesis is a "base document"; it lays down the things that God

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

wants us to know about Himself, the world and one another. It is a revelation of God which serves us as a guide book. We refer to it so that we can live without fear of being tricked in a world that we recognize has some deceptive elements. Genesis addresses how such deceptions could be there in God's "good" world.

8 – Concrete, relational encounters with real people.

Genesis deals with broad, foundational, grand themes but not in an abstract way. It focuses our attention to concrete situations concerning actual persons. We are - indirectly to be sure - introduced to exchanges within the Godhead "Let us...". As readers, we are invited to consider exchanges between Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, all the way to Abram and his father Terah. This inter-personal presentation persists all the way through the Old and New Testament.

Jesus Christ is presented to us in a similar way; as an actual man, with human exchanges set in everyday life. He is a presentation of God known to us in the flesh.

The content presented in the encounters surely instructs us. But so does the method of presentation, with its focus on particular people in dialogue. It has the effect of forcing us to attend to real concrete exchanges. It leads us from the particular to the general. It personalises the issues before we apply them to all of mankind, or to a particular man's descendants.

Such presentation then, teaches us to think in a certain way. This Hebrew way of perceiving and representing truth is derived from the way God reveals Himself through His acts and words. For He never asks us to bring our own ideas about Him to Him, nor to take initiative in that way. It is He who initiates, He begins the encounter; we are to respond to what He reveals. So, for us meeting God will always be a concrete, real, space-time encounter.

All this is in sharp contrast to an abstract, reflective, withdrawn way of thinking that originates from within ourselves. Whenever we bring our interpretation to an encounter, we are deciding what to focus upon. This can lead us to force our ways of thought upon the text of the Bible, rather than letting the Bible direct us to its concerns in its own way.

9 – Personal encounters, genealogies and God’s initiative.

Even though Genesis first invites us to consider the detail of the human exchange, it still addresses truths applicable to the whole of mankind - truths that we can apply and in which we can recognize ourselves. The consequences of the particular encounters opens up for us wider implications for mankind in general. For a genealogy sometimes follows an encounter. So we are lead on to consider that people are significant; and where they occur first, are representative. Their examples will be copied as their persons are honoured. The person standing at the head of the dynasty represents those they sire.

But they do not fatalistically commit their progeny to slavishly copying them. For God intervenes; and the genealogies, rather than simply fixing the history of their descendants, also record variation and departure from the foundational person presented.

In this way a balance is maintained concerning the reality of decisions taken in life encounters; the significance of senior, initiating people is honoured; and the sovereignty of an electing God is elucidated.

10 – Reciprocal interactions

The encounter-method of presentation, just described, demands a relational way of thinking about personal interactions. It requires us to focus, not on an individual but on both persons involved. This reciprocal focus leads the reader to consider the to-and-fro of an exchange; how there is a question and an answer, a venturing forth of one person generates a response from another.

A good example of this is the idea of God’s choice of persons. The election by God is only seen as persons express themselves in relation

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

to one another. In this reciprocal arrangement the rejected person bears witness to the other as elected and vice versa. The elected can know themselves, and only be known to the reader, when they are seen in tandem with the rejected [Romans 9-11]. They are there for the sake of each other!

These reciprocal two-somes are demonstrated in Cain and Abel, Noah and his contemporaries, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Saul and David. Initially, in the Old Testament, such election and rejection is expressed through the personal histories within the people God Himself has elected to be His covenant partner.

Later, it is true that Israel is dealt with by God as a representative group over and against the whole Gentile world.

Each Bible passage to be read is shown by the indent to the right and a little pointer. When you see this:

- [1] put this book down,
 - [2] pick up your copy of the Bible and read the section/s indicated.
 - [3] then read what is written about the section.
 - [4] think about what I have written and always check what I write
- Here is your first section.

Read carefully through Genesis Chapter 1.1-5

[a] The first chapter of the Bible presents to us God as present and the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is there, existing before the creation of matter and its subsequent formation. What is created comes about at His will and design. He does not need to create. Arising from the work of the Creator, we learn what God wants us to know about our origin.

[b] What is presented to our faith is God Himself as the Creator of all that is. The reality of the world around us is visible and tangible, open to our senses. And there are also invisible realities to which we intuitively respond by our own spirit.

Genesis states that there are only two realities to consider - God and his creatures ie what He has made. There is no third kind of reality.

[c] So, the fantasies and imaginings of our own origin are not objectively

real, not made by God. Images of our own mind may be subjectively “real to us” in our own warped way of knowing things. Later, Genesis 3 gives us a way to think about this distortion.

[d] The Word of God is His agent of creation. God creates by His Word; He speaks to create. Whatever this Word brings into existence is “good”, which is to say it originates in God. It is what He meant it to be. As to manner and time, what He says will be, comes into existence, and it is perfect.

11 - God, the Spirit of God and the Word of God

While we cannot develop this immediately, it is important for us to begin to think of God as three Persons - Father, Son and Spirit. Each Person of the Godhead is distinct from the Other, and yet they are One God.

While reading the Old Testament we only have a knowledge of God that is determined by His actions with Israel. Later, through the New Testament record we will see the Trinity of the Godhead more clearly. It records how the Word of God took flesh for our sakes [John 1.1-18]. He entered our world - as we did - through birth from a woman. He did so directly by the initiating work of the Spirit of God [Matthew 1.18; Luke 1.35].

Sufficient to notice here in Genesis 1.1 that the Spirit is hovering, ready to actualize [make happen] whatever God says through His Word. The powerful work of the Spirit will operate in tandem with that Word of God to bring about what God desires to be. Genesis sets out here a pattern of working that the rest of the Bible maintains.

12 – God is holy

[1] God is Himself

In Genesis 1, God is presented as already there, long before He creates us and the known world. He is both self-contained and self sufficient. He has no need to create. Yet, being communicative, when He does create, then creation, being His own deed, expresses something of Himself. The act of creation is a self-revelation.

To speak of “self-revelation” points us to God’s own eternal life expressed in the inner relations of the Trinity of the Godhead. For God is self-determined, a real Self, otherwise He would have nothing to give out of Himself; He could not bless.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

[2] The holy Trinity.

In the New Testament we learn that the Father's life is a holy focus on the Son. The Son's life is entirely looking to the Father. The total pre-occupation involved in these holy, exclusive focii find expression in and by the Holy Spirit.

In the inner relations of the Godhead there is a holy seeking out of each Person by the Others. We could say that God is holy, exclusive and set apart for Himself.

We notice this when He comes to create the man and the woman after His likeness;" Let Us..." He says; He refers to the Other Persons of the Trinity. Turning away momentarily, in the midst of the creating act, He seeks His own.

Holiness is not a property of God, in the sense of a thing or attribute He "has". It is relational, and so is expressed in action; it is a seeking of His own because He can seek no higher. Holy Persons are preferential, they are exclusively for one another, and so become exclusive of others who are not their own.

[3] The holy love of God.

The holiness of God is the foundation of His love towards us. What underpins, and what is assumed in God's love to us is His debt to Himself – His holiness, His own Selfhood. It is out of that holiness that He generates His love towards us.

That God is love finds expression within the Godhead. It is holy love; it looks homeward within the inner Life of God as well as it is outward bound in its expression to His creatures.

God is not gushy or effusive in His love towards us. His love for us has a bite, a moral strength that expresses his own self sufficiency and self determined life. Effusive love, understood simply as an outgoing flow, is not a holy love. That God loves us is not fixed by our need; His love has this godly, holy style before it flows to us.

Since the love of God directed towards us is the same holy love expressed in God's own life, it becomes a revelation of God Himself.

[4] The holy God saves through judgment.

The holy love, being a matter of God's life, is not evoked from

Him by our circumstances. His love is not His pity; His compassion and pity are results of His love. Nor is His holy love expressed to us because of any remedy God takes, as if it is evoked by His investment. For example, God does not love us because Christ died for us; it is the reverse. Christ died for us because God has always loved us; because God is love; it is His nature. Christ's death for us is a revelation of that antecedent love; it conveys that love to us.

The understanding of our need, and the application of a remedy, will be according to how God's holy love perceives the situation. It is not our analysis, nor simply what it means to us, which will describe the tragedy. The remedy He calls for will satisfy God and at the same time will become salvation for us.

To say that the death of Christ satisfies the holiness of God declares the moral issue at its centre. Our salvation, as worked by God, is a moral victory for it is salvation from tragic circumstances seen from the perspective of God's way of Life, and it is a salvation to holiness, which is to share God's Life.

[e] Our salvation is a revelation of holy love.

In this way, the remedy for our salvation and restoration will be a revelation of God. As the salvation worked by a holy God, being His work, it is consistent with His own Life. Any love of God will always be a holy love; a love which saves through judgment. From our sinful perspective, it will be love with a bite; it has an edge to it. For, holy love declares sin to be what it is and judges it; while, at the same time, it saves us from its curse of death, its guilt and its power. Salvation, as it is worked by God's grace and through Christ, is a revelation of the righteousness of God.

For this reason, we must not be surprised that the revelation of God's love to us in Christ is, at the same time, a revelation of our sin. This is simply to recognise that His love is holy, not simply effusive.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

13 - The Word of God is the self-revelation of God.

What God says expresses the desire of His heart for us. So, viewed as a revelation, the Word of God is as God Himself. Later, in the Bible record, we are directed to the highest expression of this truth in Jesus, the incarnate Word of God.

Jesus taught that this principle is paralleled in human life and self-revelation. Words that come out of a person's mouth express the thoughts and intentions of the heart [Matthew 12.34-37], and so they reveal the person.

14 - The Word of God is the Agent of God's actions.

Genesis shows a connection between "word" and "work". The Person of God - Who He is in Himself - finds expression through practical action. His Being and His Act are revealed as identical.

He is not presented as a reflecting, thinking, subject-centred, withdrawn Person; but as an active, outgoing, loving Agent expressing his practical action through his Word.

Throughout the Bible, when God acts, he first speaks His Word out to his prophets, who then speak it to His people. If God is not acting, that registers among His people as a famine of the Word of the Lord and so the people have no life [Amos 8.11-12].

15 - Responding humbly to what is revealed changes us.

Genesis teaches that we are made to respond to the initiative of God. When we submissively yield to the revelation of God we are declaring to Him, by this act of will, that we desire to receive what He is saying to us. We want to think of Him as He reveals Himself to be.

As we read, we are called upon to apply the truth we are receiving

from the Genesis material. In that we are made to respond, then we ought. If we do, the reality enters our experience and the truth is confirmed to our inner person.

So we could pray, "Lord God, my Creator, I want to respond to your revelation of Yourself. I want to think and relate to You in the way You reveal I may. I am willing to do this."

By the way, this is in itself a change. Instead of telling God who we think He is, taking the initiative and attempting to impose our ideas upon Him, we are listening attentively to Him, and to what He says about Himself. It is, of course, simply accepting that we are creatures and He is the Creator, the basic relation that exists between Him and us.

We are not looking to impose our way of thinking upon the world, or God. Rather, we are to allow the nature of things as they are to teach us how to think about them.

Read carefully through Genesis Chapter 1.6-25

[a] Two created things may be connected to one another. For example, the two great lights in the heavens, the Sun and the Moon, separate the day from the night [Genesis 1.14]. And in doing this, they are said to respectively "govern" [Genesis 1.16-18] the day and the night. Here we have an initial positioning of things by God. These two great lights sustain that relation - they express the order of day and night. This dynamic, continuing order of God is revealed every day in his creation and sustaining of the universe. The "governing" of the Sun and the Moon however, are dependent upon his Word - should there be a change ordered by Him, there would necessarily be a change in their "governing".

[b] When it is said that the sun "governs" the day, then the daylight itself is seen to be a result - a state of affairs - manifesting the rule of the Sun. We could say, the Sun has a kingdom which is called the "day" and so think of the day as manifesting the Sun's rule.

[c] This understanding of the meaning of "day" will be helpful when we come to look at such expressions as the "day" of the Son of Man [Luke 17-22-30]; the "Sun of righteousness" [Malachi 4.2] as applied to Jesus. When Christians are called "children of the day" [Romans 13.11-14] we are manifesting a rule - the kingdom of God - that has arrived in Jesus Christ. This context elucidates what the apostle, John, calls the "light" and the "darkness" [John 1.5-9; Mathew 6.23. All these expressions imply a governing activity that manifests a kingdom.

[d] God also names things by his Word. The glory of things is expressed in His "calling" them by their name [Genesis 1.5,8,10]. For God to name something is to declare what it is according to His own mind. A name God gives expresses,

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

in a shorthand way, what the thing is in itself. In this way, the glory of the thing is being declared as it is named, and so as distinguished from other things.

16 - Relating things to one another

As Genesis presents God's creative work, it directs us to look at things-in-relation to one another.

[1] Distinct differences.

If we are to think relationally, we must first be able to distinguish things from one another. Once the distinction is clear, then we can see how different things relate to one another. Here, in the Genesis reading, God separates "this" from "that", and then goes on to set the way "this" and "that" are to interact or relate.

[2] By a "relation" we understand a context or a setting. That setting, or arrangement, is shown when distinctly different persons and/or things act upon each other, how they co-relate. These correlatives describe a dynamic relationship - where something happens - between persons and things. Such correlations or relationships occur within the life of God Himself. First we see a distinction between Persons, and then each dynamically relating to one Another.

In the creation of man and woman in God's likeness [Genesis 1.26], the same sort of relating takes place. The man and the woman are distinct from each other, both as to their persons as well as their body types. And yet, in their relating to each other, we see the deep unity of reciprocal humanity. Just the way we see reciprocity in God's Life.

17 - Relational glory

[1] The correlative glory of things and persons.

Arising out of this relational way of thinking is the idea of the "glory" of a thing [See Genesis 1.6-25.d]. We are not surprised, that from the perspective of the observer on the earth, the sun is a "greater light" which is to rule the day, and the moon a lesser light to rule the night. Here we are invited to think of the day as a setting - a context - arising from the rule of the sun. Similarly, the night is the expression of the rule of the lesser light, the moon. In this way we are invited to think relationally and to see a set of prevailing situations [night and day] as connected to the dynamic

governance of the moon and the sun. Indeed, this is what separates the darkness from the light.

In the Greek thought of our education, the sun and the moon might be presented as simple entities in themselves, but we are invited here to think of them as inter-related dynamic powers. Their governance finds expression when light and darkness is manifested as a result of their presence.

In thinking relationally, we do not focus on the thing itself, but on the situation registering its presence. For example, as the Sun rises - presences itself - the day is said to dawn. This is because the Sun and the day are "relationally correlative". These dynamic exchanges manifest the glory of each distinctive entity but the glory of each can only be seen as the relating happens.

This relationship between "presence" and "rule" is beautifully expressed in the coming of the kingdom of God through the presence of Jesus with us. It is what is meant by the Greek word *parousia* [parousia] which speaks of the 'coming', or 'presencing' of a person. The New Testament uses this word to express the return - or second coming - of Jesus as well. For the coming of the rule [kingdom] arrives as the person does.

[2] The relational glory of persons.

Consider a teacher as she sits at her desk at the front of her class. If you simply study her dress and general appearance you do not see her glory. Yet, as soon as there is dynamic movement within the class, her glory appears.

The pupils honour her by their speech and general behaviour towards her. And we see her careful way of speaking to them as well. This mutually-honouring demeanour towards one another shows how glory of persons is relational. In this way, we see the glory by attending to the relating between them; not by focussing upon either the teacher or the pupils solely.

There are no solo opportunities for glory of persons. Glory of persons is only seen in a relationship. This implies more than one. The Creator made Adam as a true individual, but refused to keep him 'solo'. This matter of relational glory is what underpins why God said in Genesis 2.18 that it is "not good" that the man should be alone.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

[3] The glory of initiative

As in the above example of the teacher, in relation to the class, her glory consists in her taking initiative, setting their syllabus, guiding their development and consolidating their cumulative learning. Their glory consists in being addressed by her, in submissively responding to her address and by doing the work she sets for them. As these exchanges take place the relational glory of each person in the arrangement is seen.

New Testament shows the mutual glorifying of the Father and the Son. It is the glory of the Father to send and the glory of the Son to be so sent by the Father. Here we see the initiative of the Father and the submission of the Son to that initiative.

When persons voluntarily obey, as in the case of the Son, it manifests the glory for the one obeying as well as for the one obeyed. We must know our 'place' - where we fit in God's arrangement for us. Living out our own "place" in a relation manifests the glory of others; as is the case in our relation with God, as we take our "place" it reveals the Creator's glory.

In the teacher's class, when each participant responds faithfully to the arrangement, not only is glory shown, but the outcome of such faithful relating is their accumulated learning.

[4] The glory of responding

The students' glory is manifested in their submissive learning. They are "good" students as they faithfully relate to her as their teacher. "Good" here is not as a matter of the comparative results achieved in their tests. To be "good" is to have honoured her. And then, but only then, do their results also become her glory insofar that they are the outcome of the whole relationship. The results of their learning, evident in later situations in their lives to be appreciated by others, will then also bring honour to the one who taught them.

Read carefully through Genesis Chapter 1.26-31

Formerly, we noticed that God issued a simple command that something will be. As He said, "Let there be..." then it "was so". There the emphasis was upon the Word of God as the Agent of God; it pointed to creation through and by the Word.

[a] Unified, yet distinct, Persons.

The creation of humans is introduced conversationally, through an address to Others within the Godhead. The Word of God expressed is "Let Us...". It reveals distinct Persons within the Godhead. We must know this before we can comprehend the Creator's action of making humans in the image of God, after their likeness. That is, in creating distinct, human persons - this man and this woman – a likeness of God is expressed.

As we have seen before, God's actions show us something of Himself. This particular creation of humans as distinct persons, yet somehow one, does not just reflect God's mind for a particular created thing, as different from Him, but for a creature who is like Him.

[b] Human solidarity with the creatures, yet distinct because personal.

The man and the woman are like the rest of the creatures in having their origin in God's activity. But they are unlike the rest in that they are made in the image of God. That is, their coming into being is according to a pattern of pre-existing Persons who relate to one another. This pattern follows the likeness of God.

[c] Address and response; personal knowing within the Godhead.

Within the Godhead, the Persons - here indicated by "Us" - have a separate relation to one another, and so each must have a Name in a relation to one another. They have a distinct glory, which must be expressed in their way of relating to one another; this includes mutual submission, which displays the relations operating between One another.

The proposal of a question "Let us", in the sense of "shall we...", is an initiative spoken out to Others who are there to answer. This is different from what we have seen God do in his creating, relating, and naming sequence so far. The conversation affirms that they may be addressed by God and that they may answer to Him. Being addressed opens up an opportunity to know God and one another. By "knowing" we mean experiencing each other, not knowing about each other.

[d] Plurality.

When mankind is made there is to be a plurality, there are two personal forms, male and female. This too, reflects the likeness of God where there is relating of more than one person to another in the Godhead. Someone calls and a different, yet reciprocal, person answers. There is a Lover and Beloved, there is an expression of love that answers one to another, and there is One who mediates that love which is between them.

[e] Authority over their world.

In relation to the rest of the created world the men and women are to rule it - to govern it. We must not understand "subdue" to imply that the world is hostile as if their will is to be imposed upon it; that is a fallen perspective.

Rather, it means that they may initiate - and it is expected that the earth will submissively yield. This is the God-given initiative of the man and the woman. It

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

assures them that they can take such a stance towards the earth. It sets their mind at ease that they may use it. It is a “given” of the Creator. It is their kingdom, the sphere in which they exercise their initiative and authority.

They are to govern in the heavens as far as the creatures of the earth fly. It does not say that the government of the heaven, where God dwells, or the heaven [mid heaven] where the angelic spirits are, is extended to mankind to rule. They may also eat the plants of the world for food.

[f] Blessed by God – gift precedes the task

Insofar that the man and the woman are made in the image of God - made to be addressed and spoken to - they are blessed. The Blessing takes the form of command; the command is to do what God has made them to do. The gift of their creation equips them to act. This gift precedes the command. It is always so with God. If the man and the woman obey this command that is intended to bless, they will experience the blessing. They are to be fruitful, to multiply, fill the earth and to subdue it. They are to rule the other creatures. Authoritatively, they are the apex of the heap, the pinnacle of earthly creation.

18 - We reciprocate; we answer to one another. This is life.

This section of Genesis presents us with a revelation of how the Creator wants us to think about ourselves. We are persons-in-relation, able to be addressed by Him and He invites us to answer in return. Being made in the image of God; we can reciprocate when spoken to. We answer to Him; in a good sense, we can “answer back”. Indeed, to remain silent when spoken to would be reprehensible. We are caught up into a reciprocal relationship; a relationship set as “I” and “You”.

We have already seen in #17, to focus our attention on what takes place between persons if we want to see each person’s glory. We are built to share in the life of God, albeit as a creature. We are persons made for personal exchange with our Creator; and if we should lose that, or it is denied to us, we shall wither and die. Separation from the Creator would mean to have no relational exchange with God; it would be a relational death - a failure to share in Their life.

This is the form of life we were made for, it mirrors the reciprocal way the Persons of the Godhead address and answer one Another.

19 - To be addressed by God is to be blessed by Him

Genesis conveys to us that, when God speaks to us, it is itself a blessing. It is so because it is God's life shared.

We need to remember this because now, when our relationship with God has been skewed and warped, we do not always seek the voice of God nor do we desire it as a blessing. Our guilty hearts so often would rather that God did not speak to us.

[1] To be addressed is a blessing because it is to be drawn into the very life of God as an image bearer. It is the beckoning of God to come into His shared life. His address to us invites us into His conversation; it expresses His outgoing love in the form of a Word of address - we are not ignored.

It is not simply that God wishes to reveal Himself to us; it also implies He is content to be known in a reciprocal way. It is not just one-way revelation; it is a two-way communication to which He calls us by this address. He starts the conversation and we can hear and respond to Him. So He not only speaks, He also invites us to not be silent. This is the basis for responding to God in words. An activity we call prayer.

Prayer is conversation with God on the basis of His given revelation of Himself to us. The New Testament reveals that, as we receive the outgoing love of God for us in Christ, we can respond to God because He has taken the initiative to address us in the God-Man. This is to pray to God, Who we now know as Father, "in the name" of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In making these responses to God, we must make them for ourselves. But, precisely because it is a relational exchange, we never make them by ourselves. They are actually drawn from us.

[2] It's a blessing because His heart towards us is good, for that is His nature. And so we are invited to relate with a good God, who did not need to create us, but did so because He wished to have men and women, who bear his image, share his life.

[3] It's a blessing because all his commands to us are gracious. We know this because He always precedes them by a gift of life as well as the relationship itself, before He calls us to act within that relationship.

This is mirrored in God setting the man and the woman in an authoritative relation to the rest of the earth and its creatures. Any relating

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

of the creatures to the man and the woman expresses their mutual glory.

This relationship between “gift” and “task” we discuss later; and especially so when we come to the arrival of the Word of God upon the earth as He takes flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Read carefully through Genesis Chapter 2

Genesis 1 conveyed the place of the man and the woman in the wider creation. Chapter 2 introduces the man in his relation to God, the ground, the garden and to the animals, climaxing in the relationship between the man and the woman.

[a] God rested – the seventh day.

The creation of the man and the woman is presented against the background of the seventh day when God “rested”, having created in six days. It is not that God is tired, but that the seventh day is the day after His work, and that the act of creation “out of nothing” is over. He had finished His work [Genesis 2.2].

The seventh day marks off God’s work from human endeavour. The chapter will move on to consider the works of the man and the woman. This demarcation of the seventh day from the previous six implies that God’s gracious work for them is complete and that the humans are not co-creators; they do not add to the created work of God.

The man and the woman participate in what is already provided. They are passive, in that they receive what is given, but they lead an active life in doing what God has enabled them to do.

Later, in Hebrews 4.1-13, we see a “sabbath rest” still awaits disobedient Israel, the people of God. It will be a time when they simply “receive” what God has prepared for them in Christ, and out of that saving “work” of God they go forward to the active life of sharing God’s life with Him; a matter He always intended for them.

[b] The “Sabbath rest”.

For God to bless the seventh day and make it holy, declares it is a day set apart, or hallowed, and so different from the other six days. Later, in the Old Testament, He will speak to Israel about “My Sabbaths”, showing that the sabbath relates to Him. The special seventh day was His idea, reflecting God’s ‘work and rest’ pattern. It was required of Israel to mimic this pattern as their communal way of sharing in the life of God, since they were His people [Exodus 20.8-11 et al.].

As we have said before, God does not grow weary. He neither rests nor sleeps. So the “work and rest” pattern separates, for us, what He does from who He is, His work from His being. For Israel it will be the same, their works and their being will be separated lest they should mix the two. Here there is a similarity.

There is a reverse orientation as well; for toiling Israel does grow weary and tired. As sleep is the gift of energy for the new day, the Sabbath is a rest day - a resting demarcation from work - but also a rejuvenation for work that is to come.

[c] The forward-looking references in Genesis 1-11.

The Genesis account of the Sabbath in Genesis 2.2-4 is "proleptic"; it looks forward. This creation account gives us the original settings, and so presents a corrective to what we now see in a fallen, skewed way. It conveys a pristine, unsullied viewpoint upon something that later comes to have importance but is only known to us in its changed form. It is as if the Genesis account assumes we know of the Sabbath day, and we are now being invited to link our 'later' knowledge to this 'unfallen' perspective presented here.

We shall see this proleptic usage again in Genesis 2.24, which assumes the knowledge of marriage in the reader.

[d] The making of the man

Unlike the rest of creation, the man is not made according to the formula "Let there be...". Some red dirt [Adam = red earth] is taken and formed into a body that is earthy, formed from what is already there, having a continuity with the elements of the earth [Genesis 2.7].

God makes the earthly body before breathing into the body Himself. The result of this is said that the man is said to become "a living being [soul]" – a living person. He shares the life of God but he is not an extension of God, nor some sort of "little" god, nor is he of the same essence as God.

Luke, in the genealogy of Jesus [Luke 3.38] tells us He is "son of Adam, son of God". The first title speaks of the incarnation where Christ takes flesh as Adam had, now fallen as we have. The second title states that Jesus is a true man like all other created human beings.

It is, of course, also true that Jesus is the incarnation of the Word of God, who is the son of God because He is of one being with the Father – He shares the very essence of God. On this basis He can take us into the very life of God because He is the God-man. A matter Adam could not even attempt.

[e] Adam's glory.

As we have seen from chapter 1, glory arises through being placed by God in relation to other persons or things. To see Adam's glory we must consider the relations God has arranged for him.

[i] Adam's relation to the garden.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

God placed the man in the garden [Genesis 2.8], where the trees please his eyes and their fruit is suitable to be eaten [Genesis 2.9] by him. God is the originator of his sensual pleasure and the Sustainer of his life.

The man is to cultivate the garden; to work with it as it produces by God's gift. And he is to keep this garden; to preserve it as it is given. The implication is that the life of the garden is in the hands of the man; it may be lost to him if he does not preserve it. Later in Genesis, we see Adam's use of the ground relationally changed and further, Cain loses access to the ground entirely.

God directs Adam to two central trees - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Like the rest of the trees, they are sensually pleasing to him [Genesis 2.9,3.6]. However, unlike the other trees, they are important because they are centrally placed and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has a different word attached to it. God's word is that Adam must not eat of this tree. This differing word brings a new set of relational requirements for Adam to obey.

[ii] Adam's relation to the woman, Eve - the helper who reciprocally answers him.

In the general statement of creation in Genesis 1 we saw that the rulers of creation were the man and the woman. They were made in the image of God as a twosome. Genesis 2 re-states this creation from a complementary perspective that deepens our knowledge of the relations between the man and the woman. Formerly, when God said a created work was "good", this implied, not only that He was pleased with it, but also that it was completed. Of Adam it is said [Genesis 2.18] that it is "not good" that he should be alone. The Lord has someone in mind to be there for him and he for her.

The creation of the man first has an implication for their life together. She is derived from him, being formed from him by God. That she will reply to him corresponds to the Godhead, where there is Someone who 'speaks' and initiates and Another who will 'answer' and respond. It does not state an inequality between them, no more than it does of the Son with the Father in the Trinity. Rather, it establishes the relational glory between the man and the woman. That she has come to be establishes someone given to relate to him - who answers him.

When the New Testament states [1 Corinthians 11.7-9] that the woman is the "glory" of the man, it refers to this relational glory first given at their creation. It is a state of affairs "given" between them. It is like the glory which is 'in God' and, as we have seen, adds to our understanding of what it means to be made "in the image" of God.

Similarly, 1 Timothy 2.11-13 speaks of a responsiveness of the woman to the man as expressive of this image-bearing between them. The man's position in this relationship is given from the Originator.

[iii] Adam's relation to the animals.

In this complementary account of creation, the animals are introduced [Genesis 2.18-20] as part of the discussion of the need for a helper who answers

to man. It is definitely said that they are not that helper [Genesis 2.20]. While the creation of an animal is not in the hands of man, the relationship of authority over them is expressed by the action of naming. Whatever Adam calls them sets how they are to be known and spoken about, by him and also by God. God will refer to them as the man thinks to call them. This “naming” we have already encountered; it is the final part of God’s sequence of action in ‘creating-relating-naming’.

Naming expresses a rule, a government, a relation. For the man, this invitation to participate in this last “naming” section of the sequence is a sharing in the life of God. The man cannot “make” an animal; but he may be graciously allowed to “name” a fellow creature as an indication of his relation to them.

[if] the “givens” of life.

Parents give names to their offspring. This does not imply that they are animals and so to be named. For our children, as it is for Adam in respect of Eve, naming our children registers that we were created first - before them - and it expresses our initiative in regard to them. God has set this relational glory between children and parents by conception and subsequent birth.

These are the “givens” of life for each of us. When we come into the world we do not choose our relatives - they are “given” to us. We need to honour those relatives for that is to respect the relationships we have been given. These “givens” set the ways of relating between older and younger ones within family and society as we know it.

When we are found in loving, caring relationships with spouses, friends, and children we often have ‘nick names’ - names that express our experience of them.

It is so with the revelation of the names of God. For, as the revelation of God is cumulative and on going, He can make Himself known by a new Name on His own initiative. Or, when He has done something in relation to us, He allows us to think of Him according to what his act meant for us. So for Hagar, he is the “God who sees me” - Beer Lahai Roi [Genesis 16.13]. This is not making up a god of our own mind – it is responding to the revelation of Himself through what He does.

This is quite distinct from the real affront to God of idolatry - when men and women call a creature ‘god’ they have moved out of order to the “givens” of life. This is a deep rebellion.

20 – Humans: active image bearers in a contingent world.

To be made in the image of God is to do “works” as He does, albeit in a creaturely, derived way. God creates of his own will and by the simple utterance of his Word. Things come into being by his “Let there be...”. It is not so with man. He works with what God has given. In the

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

contingent world in which man lives, the garden is made to grow by God. He does participate in this growth, but he is neither the source of it nor does his work make it grow.

The garden is the occasion of a shared life with God through tilling. What is not being conveyed here is the horticultural method to grow plants. The garden does not grow because the man tills it; it grows, and is productive, by virtue of God's work.

So to say that a man "works" means that shares in the working activity of God. It is first something to do with God and him before it is to do with him and the ground. His work is a creaturely activity; a derived form of shared work. So, it does not mean that he makes things grow of himself, He acts, he carries out purposes of his own, but the increase is a work of God. So we have to think of work for the man as also something of God's work in which he is given to participate, to share. It is a meaningful co-operation with God's creative power.

All our work is like this. It is purposive action which co-operates with the thing God makes to grow [in the organic sense]; or the things God has given form and make up [in the natural sense of working with matter to form it]; or the ways of created things [in the sense of physical sciences]; or the things that God has revealed [in the sense of thinking his thoughts after him]; or the care of others [in expressing his love to our neighbours and relatives]. Such purposive action assumes the make up of a contingent universe that God has made which is separate from Himself, operating with ways and means peculiar to itself, as given by Him but distinct from Him.

This revelation of Genesis corrects our perception concerning work. For, where we live in history, we are creative in the sense that we can assemble or arrange in new ways things that have been given, or in old ways that have gone before; but we cannot bring things into existence out of nothing. The creativity of men and women is more concerned with the forming and re-forming of existent materials; not in the sense that brings things into being out of things that were not there beforehand [Hebrews 11.3]

21 - Man is made from elements of the earth and then enlivened.

The account of Genesis 1 showed that the man and the woman [humanity] were placed over the rest of created world and expected to exercise their authority over the entire earth.

Genesis 2, relates the formation of the man before the woman. He is made of the dust of the ground, from material already in existence. His body takes shape [within space-time] and it is made of the same elements as the earth itself. Insofar that his body participates in organic life, he shares this with the rest of the animal kingdom.

However, since he is enlivened by the very breath [spirit] of God, he is unlike the rest of the creatures. He has a body, but becomes, with the inbreathing of God, a living soul. As to his person then, man is different from the other creatures.

This distinction doesn't imply that we should think of a man as having component parts. We are certainly right to think of him as a person with a physical body - with an outward appearance - and an "inner man", who demonstrates that the life of God is within Him. He is an incarnate being made in the likeness of God.

To sum up, likeness is not a bodily shape; for God is spirit; but a reference to relations between persons, as it is in the Trinity. Here the emphasis is on the incarnate soul – a man is a person with a body.

The idea of relational answering to one another is raised again. The discussion begins in a negative way by showing that the animals cannot be for man what another human person can, despite the fact that they too share in the organic life he has.

22 - No answering person among the animals

Animals often respond to our initiatives with obedience, this affirms us as fellow creatures who have authority and this way of dealing with them does not take us out of order. As a rock or a tree may serve our purposes in the plan of God, so may they. And as fellow creatures they can be taken into our purposes and domestic life in a way that they serve us appropriate to their creaturely ways.

People, when deprived of human exchange, often take animals as

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

pets. They experience with them a deep sense of continuity of organic life. As fellow-creatures they share, with us, a life dependent on our Creator. Similar to us, our pets grow old and die, they suffer and bear it, and that is true whether they are in the wild or domestic sharers of our life.

But to endue them with personality is a deep mistake. They, like us, have bodies and may be bodily cared for by us who have authority over their lives. But animals are not persons, who are made in the image and likeness of God.

Read carefully through Genesis Chapter 2.18-25

[a] God comes and goes in the garden

In the garden God comes and goes [Genesis 3.8]. Adam and Eve's intermittent experience of God's presence then contrasts with our experience of union with Christ now. Our union arises through the ministry of the "second" and "last" Adam, the only begotten Son of God. His Spirit, once given to us, never leaves us.

[b] The forming of the woman from the side of the man states some deep things.

[i] The woman shares the organic life of the man.

She is stuff of his stuff - she is fashioned wholly from part of him. Adam, knowing this, welcomes her as "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh". Although she comes from his body, he is not her origin in the sense of Originator, that is God's work and place alone. Adam, being created "first", [2 Timothy 2.13] is before her, and she is bodily made from his stuff.

Bodily then, she is derivative from him, and in sexual intercourse would experience a return to bodily union.

Personally, while Eve is distinct from him, relationally she "corresponds" [Genesis 2.20 ASV marg] to him. In this way she is "fit for him" [suitable] in a way the animals are not.

The woman in drawing her bodily life from the man, shared in the life he already had. This record of her creation from a sleeping, co-operative Adam anticipates the redemptive work of God done in Christ. For it is in our Saviour, Christ, that we see this relation deepest. We cleave to Him, spirit to spirit, because we have already drawn our life from Him. In co-operation with the Father, Christ freely gave up His life. He slept for us [voluntarily died], and awoke again [been resurrected] to present the Church to Himself. From our side, we share in his life by the will of the Father.

[ii] Adam does not see the woman's creation.

Adam is asleep during the process of her creation. So her formation is hidden

from him. God worked alone, with no spectator to watch the process of her "becoming".

And we the readers are in the same place - it is not given to us to know the "how" of her formation except that she was made from the man. When Christ dies, He dies "for us". Yet, in the light of His relationship to the Father, His death is the occasion of the church coming to life. It is a work secret to Him, but in the hands of the Father, yet consequent upon His death.

Christ Himself dies trusting that Another is at work to raise Him. He is passive as to his resurrection and awakening. How we, the Church, are formed is hidden from us, and yet we know it to be hidden "in Christ in God" [Colossians 3.3] Our life is derived from our Saviour's sleep and awakening, but how it is done is a secret work of God.

[iii] Adam calls her "woman".

The man did not strictly "name" the woman with a name that expressed his own idea of her, but he simply stated what had happened. The expression, "woman", stated that her source was from himself. She was "...out of man...". Further, he did not refer to any giving of himself, but acknowledged that God "took" her out of him. The text wants us to consider exclusively the work of God when the man said how she shall be "called".

That Adam sets how she shall be called, relating that to his body and God's action, speaks to us of the church, as the body of Christ. There are many names for the church that express her relation to her proper Man as her Creator and Redeemer.

[iv] Neighbours, before husband and wife.

The bodily origin of woman from man has a counterpart expression which is presented here between these two [Genesis 2.24]. They are neighbours, they are a man and a woman, and yet they are also husband and wife. This origin of the woman from the man explains the reason people marry. Another proleptic statement!

For the man it is a leaving - from his mother and father. It does not mean that he ceases honouring his parents. But he leaves their day-to-day life of provision, governance and authority. Previously, for the man, parents are the "given" providers, carers and conveyers of the traditional knowledge of God. So there needs to be a reason, authorized by God, why a man should leave them. That reason is the woman.

There is a cleaving - which pictures them glued together; it refers to a joining of bodies in sexual intercourse.

Leaving and cleaving is what they do, and in this way, under God, they become one flesh. Leaving and cleaving marks a return to the oneness of shared life, to being one flesh. It is the form of expression of their oneness while being separate persons with their own bodies. Genesis shows that this leaving, cleaving and becoming celebrates origins.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

There is a proleptic statement being made here that is only clear after the Cross, Resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus. It is that the Second Adam also slept in death to awaken to a Bride presented to Him. While asleep, his side was opened; and his life flowed out from his wounded side. From this life shed another has come into existence. She is the Bride of the Lamb who was slain. For shed blood does not simply speak of an infliction of death, although it is that. It is, at the same time, the release of His life for another to share. For shed blood and flesh may be eaten like food and so be a source of life and sustenance to the Bride - a heavenly manna [John 6.33-35,51-56]. The imagery of Adam and Eve, as reflected in the Lord and his Church, anticipates a union of spirit. Whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him [1 Corinthians 6.13-17].

[v] Openly naked and glorious.

The man and the woman are naked and not ashamed [Genesis 2.25]. The Lord God brought the woman to the man [Genesis 2.22]. Their bodily glory was an expression of their "correspondence". His body was made for union with hers - and their distinctively different anatomy declared that truth of God. They differ bodily but correlatively.

Nakedness means that they were transparently open, answering to each other; this was their delight and their glory. That they were unashamed of themselves means that they accepted how God had made them to relate and had no shadow between them in their relating and correspondence. [Of course, this statement about being unashamed, itself anticipates the rebellion and its consequences of Chapter 3]. Their outward bodily difference from each other underlined their correspondence for each other. Such transparency was mirrored in their personal relating. Their inner persons and their outward bodies expressed no break, no disjunction.

23 - Humanity takes two forms: a man and a woman. Marriage is a universal human arrangement.

That the man and the woman "answer" or "correspond" to one another is a deep matter. It is mysterious in that it may be stated but not fully plumbed.

Although the man is involved in the tilling of the garden, when the woman is made and presented by God to the man, she is not presented to him as a helper in his work. She is made a "helper fit for man" by the same Originator as one who will correspond to who he is, in a way that the animal kingdom does not.

In the first place, she is a neighbour, a fellow human - the comparison with the animals makes that clear. Yet there is something more to know -

she is a wife of a husband. Something is being stated here about the nature of intercourse as well as about marriage. There is a union of persons here in body, soul and shared life.

A man leaves, cleaves, and in doing so seeks a union that he has yet to experience. She has, by creation, some knowledge of that bodily oneness. She understands herself as presented to the man, made for him by God, and taken from the man himself.

In the second place, Genesis gives a creation-based understanding of marriage common to the whole world. It is supplying a foundational corrective to our own fallen viewpoint. Marriage is in every culture and all over the world. It is here linked with the creation of a person for a man who is alone; a situation described as “not good” that he should be that way. This indicates that humanity is built for social exchange and reciprocal relating.

Third, human neighbourliness is distinctively different from the company and shared creatureliness of the animals; they won’t do for man what God has in mind. God creates someone who answers/responds to the man in body and soul. She is “fit” for him because she is human, but takes a form which is correlative to “him” in that she is a “her”.

24 - The true Man from heaven

The observations presented about the Genesis text interweaved material concerning Jesus Christ and his Church. Historically, at His incarnation, Jesus Christ appears later than Adam. But as Son of God he but actually shares the life of God and exists before Adam. As the Word of God, He is an eternal Person.

We, as readers in our time, recognise that the Genesis statements about Adam are forward looking because we have seen the goal of God’s work expressed in the God-man Jesus. With this fully developed revelation found in Christ, we see in the Genesis narrative the anticipated coming of this “second Adam”, as Paul calls him.

So we find in the Genesis text, implications which are not obvious at the time of writing, but are deeply prophetic when the Bible is read as a whole.

Here is the very Word of God, the second Person of the Trinity, who has laid aside his heavenly glory and taken sinful flesh, and entered our world of space and time, with all the limitations it places upon him, for

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

our sakes. As the true God-man, He has stood with sinners in His baptism, lived a godly life in the flesh, died on our behalf and in our place, and risen from the dead. He has, as the only proper, submitted, obedient man, lived a life that brought God real pleasure. It is the life we should have lived but could not, since we lost our glory and fell into bondage to rebellious spiritual powers. Once lived for us, His is a life we can share through the Spirit. His life becomes our redemption, restoring us to God and to our proper life again.

As He lives, dies, resurrects, and ascends into heaven, our life is caught up into His and, by receiving His Spirit, united to His. He is the representative Man God has sent to live for us, and also a substitute Man God has sent to die for us. In going into death and rising for us, He has defeated death for us. He defeats relational death overcoming the separation from God and He defeats bodily death by triumphing over decay.

Adam has an origin in the earthly elements. He is formed of what is already made. Christ, by the Spirit, takes flesh from his mother and yet, at the same time, is the man from heaven who shares the life of God Himself. Through Him the human life, such as we have it, has been taken into the shared life of God. In this way, in His own Person, He mediates the life of God to men and women. It is an eternal life, not bound by space and time, and yet has drawn bodily human life into such a realm that we may now speak of a 'spiritual' body.

25 - Naked and unashamed - a created glory.

While people are naked and ashamed today, this Genesis revelation asserts that it was not always so. We encounter a contrast to our experience today.

Today, when we speak of nakedness, it is usually a bodily statement. It means that people have no clothes on. It means not physically covered. But Genesis states something about a time when clothing was not present; so nakedness there cannot mean the absence of clothes. Rather, it states that they are open to each other's gaze. There is nothing between them that either of them would want to withhold or cover. They are bodily, relationally and in the presence of God expressing their full glory. This transparent openness celebrates the access to God and the access they have to one another in every way.

Reflecting that they come from God's creative hand, being a work which is "good", their relating to one another is uninhibited. They are who they are, they look as they look to one another, they speak what they speak to each other, and do it all in the presence of their Creator with a happy dependence upon Him. They accept the order of their creation in relation to each other; this expresses their created glory. They rejoice in the mind of their Creator as perfectly expressed by their situation. There is a pure, rich and pristine experience implied here; such as we do not know and can only look back upon with regret for what is now lost to man. We learn from this picture of reality that what we would regard as our "normal" life style reflects a state of affairs that is "abnormal".

Read carefully through Genesis Chapter 2.4-9

As the man and the woman are set within the garden God has provided for them, God provides them a word. It is this word that tells them how to relate to surrounding things - what to do with them and how to foster their life together; for example, that the garden must be tilled and kept.

[a] Word and work of God.

Whenever God works, whether it is in Creation, as here, or in Preservation of on-going life, He always provides a word to accompany His work. Both His work and His word reveal His character and purpose [Psalm 19]. The word is expressly given for those made in his image, for they can be addressed by Him and may answer to Him in freedom. In that the Word of God expresses His character, it may be said that man "lives" by every word that proceeds from God. Human response to God's word is the foundation of human life.

[b] The first word about the trees.

Previously, trees of the garden are accompanied by a word to Adam that he may "freely eat" of them [Genesis 2.16]. If he acts upon the word given, he will receive something from the tree that is God's intended provision for him.

For example, if he takes a banana, he will know the delight of its colour to his eyes, feel the texture with his hands, smell its aroma and have the satisfaction of its taste in his mouth. He will experience that it is good for his bodily sustenance. This taking and eating is a sensual experience, yet there is another effect in his life. For, as he obeys the word to freely eat, these trees convey to him a knowledge of God's love and goodness.

[c] "Things" communicate love indirectly.

This experience of the trees is immediate, bodily known and appreciated. It communicates the love of God for him; he knows God as Creator and Provider.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

However, it communicates the love of God for him in an indirect way; it comes through the provision of things. These gifts of God are direct expressions of God's care but they are not God Himself - only the word accompanying them is God Himself. So the man can only really find the experience of God as Creator and Provider as something mediated to him by the word accompanying the fruit; it is not something obvious in regard to the fruit itself.

[d] A new, gracious word for a different tree.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil also has a word – "...do not eat..." - attached to it. If obeyed, this word does not lead the man to any tangible, sensual product in his mouth. As a thing, materially speaking, this tree cannot bring him anything through this word of God. This tree and its word, reflect a decision by God that He will set before them what is good and what is evil for them.

The word concerning this tree is a gracious, covering word of God. It is a protective word in that it shields the man and woman from a loss they would incur if they disobeyed God. But we can only consider the full impact of this after Genesis 3 is read.

[e] An offer of direct knowledge of God.

Through these ever-deepening exchanges with God, each continuing revelation brings an ever-increasing experience of relating to God. God's word is not a word "about" a subject; it is a new offer to "take knowledge" - to experience God - in some facet of his character not yet known to them.

Notice that God has the initiative in revelation. He loves to reveal Himself to the man and woman. It is the only way they may know Him and enjoy Him.

However, He may not be inquired into as a subject of study on the initiative of the man and the woman. Genesis 3, which records the mishandling of this tree, will explain to us how these ideas of "knowing about" and studying something from self-drive and curiosity came to be in our experience.

26 – Knowing God as Creator and Provider through things

Up to this point all knowledge of God has worked with the material and the sensual. It has brought a bodily experience and a material satisfaction to their life. The word concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in that it requires that they shall "not eat", does not lead to any such material or sensual product. For this tree, they must refrain from doing what they have already been doing with the other trees – actions, which, on that occasion, were satisfying and bodily pleasing and which God had said were "good".

27 – Living by faith in God’s present Word.

They still have the past word about eating from the trees that are good for food. That word still stands for those trees. However, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a particular tree accompanied by a new, specific word.

They must not approach this tree according to the past word and its circumstances. That would be to assume that because the trees look alike they know what to do with these two different trees. It is not a matter of working out of past faith in another word already re-inforced by the past experience of sensual attraction and satisfaction of the fruit of a tree. Trusting the new word and circumstance will demand a different action, in this case to not eat.

Faith is always a response to revelation. The revelation is in the initiative of God. So, where He brings a new word something is revealed about Himself in the new context being presented. The obedience of faith is the response to trust His word – which is to trust Him. So, in different settings, with different accompanying words from Him, deepening experiences of God accumulate. The Bible presents this progressive revelation of God for us by recounting His constant interactions with His covenant people as they encounter new circumstances that require a new word from God.

This helps us understand the work of the prophets in Israel. As the exchanges take place between Israel and God, and they fall into difficulties by their own rebellion, He meets their new circumstance with an appropriate word. The prophetic ministry keeps this dynamic interchange alive, communicating the mind of God to the people of God. In this way, the covenant relationship is sustained notwithstanding that Israel is recalcitrant. What is more miraculous, a progressive revelation of God is maintained all the way through this history of a covenant-keeping God with a covenant-breaking people.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

28 – Direct knowledge of God through trust in His Word

Since this new word differs from their previous good experiences, the man and the woman must now proceed by faith in the Character of the God they already know as their trustworthy Creator and Provider. This new word requires that they abstain from eating on no other grounds than their present knowledge of God's character.

This new word shifts the focus from the sensual and material product of God's provision to the knowledge of Himself gained by that experience. And as we have seen, He makes His particular word for this particular tree the decisive matter for them, not the likeness of the tree to the rest or a past word about another set of trees. This has the effect of keeping their relationship to Him existential – something lived moment by moment.

The word asks for obedience for no other reason than He has required it. Since it is a word that conveys only God Himself, it is an offer of direct fellowship with God mediated only through His Word, laid hold of by trusting obedience. The offer of the word reduces the exchange to simply God and them. It calls them to relate directly as persons, uncluttered by things, such as what He can and does provide.

Here, their knowledge of God mediated through His material provision is not denied, but it is transcended. In the light of the subsequent revelation through the Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, we learn of knowing God the way a son knows his father. Where, from the side of the "son", faith and obedience are the responses that actualize this fellowship – making it real in our experience.

We must not see the meaning of this word as simply a protection from a Satanic tempter. The true meaning of this word to "not eat" offers a wonderful and positive gift; it is the Gift of God Himself. It is a circumstance in which He is, at once, both the Gift offered and the Giver.

The expression "the day you eat of it you shall surely die" warns them of a consequence of disobedience, but is not an incentive to obedience. If we thought it was the latter, we imply that God is appealing to their self-centred gain as a reason to obey. He is simply stating that, should they fail to obey this word to "not eat", then they would not actualize the life God intended for them. It appraises them of the true significance of this word confronting them. They would be relationally "dead" – not alive within the shared fellowship with God, as sons with a father.

As we shall see, the man and the woman never actually knew God

this way - for Genesis 3 reveals the circumstances of how they failed to actualise God's purpose for them as well as with Him.

As to our loving Saviour:

1. It is through faith in His life as a true Son, who hung on a cross so that the world may know that He loved his Father that we see true obedience enacted and known. He reveals the Father through his relational obedience expressed through his life and in his death. This death, in obedience to his Father, shows his glory as a sent Son. It is the basis of His plea to the Father to glorify the Son [John 17.1-5].

2. It is through faith in the Son of Man as the mediating Word of God that we receive Him for who he is and so are given authority to become children of God - his obedience accrues to us and, by the Spirit, we share his life. So we actually experience that we are children of God [Romans 8.16-17].

29 - No gifts without the Word of the Giver.

As we shall see later, in the work of the tempter, what is presented to the woman is to accept the mindset of the Tempter – expressed in the idea that there can be a separation of the gifts of God from Himself as a giver. Here, prior to the rebellion of man and woman, there is no such separation.

But the deception is close to the truth. For, we can, in thought and in fact, distinguish the gifts of God from God Himself. The trees, the park, the animals, the rivers, the precious metals; all these things are creations of God, not God Himself. But what makes it good for the man and the woman to eat of the trees in the garden is the word of God that accompanies them. This is because the gift and the Giver's word come as a package.

That these created things are not God is, in fact, true; when focussed upon for what they are in themselves as distinct from God. But given that they are accompanied by a word from God, it is not relationally true. The deception seems, to our already fallen minds, as close to truth. Its power lies in that it contains a way of thinking about things for themselves as already separated from God's word.

Genesis 1-2 :The Beginning version1.2

The primary relationship for the man and the woman is their relation to God Himself. He is the source and main focus of their life, and His person is known through his Word. His Word is as Himself; for it is the expression of his inner Self.

So there is an order expressed here. Before man and woman can discern the use, or meaning, of any created gift, they must first attend to the Word of God about that gift. For “use” and “meaning”, when they are known through the Word of God, tell us the purpose of God – what is in His Mind. The gift cannot convey the love and care of God to us unless it is handled for the purpose it was given. Such handling only comes through obedience to the Word of God concerning it.

In this way, the meaning of gifts, and their power to convey that message from God depends upon handling them under the impact of his Word. We can say that the gifts of God plus the Word of God, when obeyed, convey the full knowledge and meaning of the gift in the experience of the man and the woman.

Once the rebellion takes place the knowledge of the man and the woman becomes self-referred. They have begun to think of gifts as given by God for them to “have” – to “own” and “possess” like money in our pocket. And so comes the idea that we can do with God’s gifts as we please, without reference to His expressed purpose for that gift.

30 – The Giver is the Gift – expressed intimacy.

We have seen that God’s giving of the word and His invitation to obey it is to offer Himself. If obeyed, such a response would have led to a direct experience of His Person. It is the occasion where He is both the Giver and the Gift.

The language of God is one of gracious command. The joyous response to such grace is reciprocal [answering] obedience. This is the best setting for the intimacy that can be known between persons - it is the obedient response, returned because it perceives and knows the command [an initiative taken] as the best form of outgoing love. It draws its own corresponding reply.

That there is a second tree implies that there was a deeper experience of sonship to come. That they are now denied access to this tree of life implies that the sonship of obedience was foundational to that further depth. Entry into sonship will now be achieved through redemption.

God's redemptive plan for the future will bring them to Himself through His gift of His Son, who, coming into the flesh, will mediate to them a revelation of the Father, reconcile them to the Father, and eventually bring them to be in union with God the Spirit, who is both the Giver and the Gift of God Himself. The tree of life reappears in the Bible after redemption is established through Christ.

Because the man and the woman do not come to "know" God in the direct and beautiful way, which He offered, Genesis shows that they must now be prevented from taking from God what He is not offering. This is a gracious response of God to their disobedient response.

31 - Meaning of persons as gifts of God to one another.

If God offers us the gift of Himself, it will not surprise us that this is how the Persons in the Godhead live Their Life together. They are Gifts one to Another.

For those made in the image of God, the same understanding applies to persons who are given to us as well. For the woman is presented to the man by God, in such a way that she is not an inanimate object, but is a gift of a person-in-relation to him. Adam knows this gift in the person of the woman. He knows what it is to receive a person presented to him as a gift from God. Eve knows this also, but from the reciprocal side. She knows what it is to be given to someone by God.

To make it work they must attend to the word accompanying the giving of the gift of the person. Such a word is reflected, after the resurrection of Christ, in a wedding service. There a man and a woman, "take" each other, to live before God as a married couple, where the man is said to "have" a wife and a wife to "have" a husband.

This "taking" and "having" does not refer to the cheap, fallen sense of ownership or possession of a "thing", considered as separated from the word of God. They mean it within the covenant relationship where they give themselves one to the other, freely, and in constant attention to the Word of God in respect to how this union shall be lived and managed. Only in that way, can they "take knowledge" of one another so as to live out their union together mirroring that mystery, the union between Christ and his Church. For this is the reason they were called into the marriage in the first place.