

Genesis 1-2

Different views of God

A fifth reason offered by *theistic evolutionists* or *evolutionary creationists* for not expecting Genesis 1 and 2 to be harmonised records is that Genesis 1 presents God as “transcendent” while Genesis 2 portrays him as more “down to earth”, not “aloof or distant”¹. *Theistic evolutionists* acknowledge that anthropomorphism occurs in both these chapters and that this does not allow the drawing of “a thick line between Genesis 1 and 2” and yet they describe this difference as more important than others previously mentioned². The way God is portrayed in Genesis 3 as holding conversations with Adam, Eve and the serpent and the manner in which he interacts with them is arraigned as support for these distinctive presentations of God: it is claimed that the difference in presentation “is clearer if we read Genesis 2 with what follows”³.

special pleading

Before we get into more detailed analysis of the differences in God’s portrayal in Genesis 1 and 2, we cannot overlook further evidence of special pleading for the *theistic evolutionary* cause. To employ the language of a *theistic evolutionary* apologist, if we were to *draw a thick line* anywhere in the early chapters of Genesis, it would be between Genesis 2 and 3, given the latter chapter’s description of the entrance of sin and death into man’s world where previously it was not. Sustaining a disharmonised reading of Genesis 1 and 2 on the basis of similarities between Genesis 2 and 3 just blithely sets aside such a fundamental issue.

differences of presentation

Nevertheless, it is the case that God is presented as transcendent in Genesis 1 while he participates more tangibly in Genesis 2. Indeed, we have already had cause to note this difference when we considered *theistic evolutionary* claims about contrary durations of creation being recorded in Genesis 1 and 2⁴. In that exposition we considered the reason why God was portrayed in these different ways: in Genesis 2 the Lord God is portrayed with more intimate tactile involvement as a father to his child. In this essay we shall consider if this difference of presentation necessarily means we are dealing with disharmonised records. We shall do this by considering how this difference is taken up elsewhere in scripture.

Psalm 8

Both the transcendence of God and his intimate involvement with man is arguably one of the principal themes of David’s Psalm 8⁵. Indeed, the literary power of this psalm depends on these contrasting aspects of the Lord. Without a recognition and acknowledgement of these different characteristics, the expression of wonder and amazement that begins and ends this psalm would have little meaning and certainly less power. The integration of these differing features of the Lord God is found in a single psalm illustrating that the presence of such differential characteristics of God ought not to be read as disharmony in the record.

In fact, this thematic support of Psalm 8 for a harmonised reading of Genesis 1-2 also works at a detailed level. The two aspects are interleaved in this psalm in such a way that *source criticism* would face a near-insurmountable task to argue that Psalm 8 reflects two different

¹ For example: <http://biologos.org/blogs/archive/israels-two-creation-stories-part-2> [cited Feb 10, 2016].

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: the duration of creation*.

⁵ Other psalms present the two aspects we are considering with a variety of literary purposes. See, for example, Psalms 121; 124; 146, in all of which it is the *maker of heaven and earth* who *helps* his people.

Genesis 1-2: different views of God

sources as is claimed for Genesis 1 and 2. This is illustrated in the following tabulation of Psalm 8:

<u>Psalm 8</u>	<u>God's portrayal</u>
<i>O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens</i>	v1: As with the order in Genesis 1-2, the psalm begins with the Lord's transcendence
<i>Out of the mouth of babes and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger</i>	v2: Immediately, the psalm turns to God's involvement with man as with young children
<i>When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place</i>	v3: Setting the scene for another juxtaposition of the two aspects of God we are considering, the psalmist marvels at the creative work of God by reference to Genesis 1
<i>what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas</i>	v4-8: David gives voice to the wonder that the creator God cares for man and that he exalts him with reference again to Genesis 1
<i>O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!</i>	v9: With a refrain that establishes a kind of envelope structure, the psalmist concludes by reflecting again on the Lord's transcendence

conclusion

Psalm 8 shows that Genesis 1-2 is purposefully structured to evoke awe and wonder that the maker of heaven and earth is mindful of man. The portrayals of God in Genesis 1 and 2 do not to communicate disparate stories and while a *theistic evolutionist* might read disharmony between these chapters, the prophet David did not. And this demonstrates once more, that *theistic evolutionary* readings of Genesis 1-2 are like a cancer at the heart of verbal inspiration of scripture.

Issue 1	February 2016
---------	---------------