

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 2b



In the beginning

GOD

(continued)

The SOVEREIGN GOD: OUTSIDE CREATION, YET WITHIN IT (1:2b,3a)

1:2b Modern rationalists (and Enlightenment deists) would restrict God. How? (1 Kings 8:27,30; Jer.23:23,24)

The deep (tehom) seems to be etymologically akin to (but not derived from) the word *tiamat*, the personified ocean and rival of the gods in the Sumero-Accadian creation myth. But here it is the literal ocean, whatever poetic play is made elsewhere with the taming of its fury and its monsters (Ps. 74:13,14; 89:9,10; 104:6,7; Is. 51:9,10). ... Not in conflict, then, but in evocative activity *the Spirit of God was moving* (RSV rightly retains the participle). In the Old Testament the **Spirit is a term for God's outgoing energy, creative and sustaining** (cf. Jb. 33:4; Ps. 104:30). Any impression of Olympian detachment which the rest of the chapter might have conveyed is forestalled by the simile of the mother-bird "hovering" (Moffatt) or fluttering over her brood. The verb reappears in Deuteronomy 32:11 to describe the eagle's movements in stirring its young into flight; this aspect of intimate contact must be kept in mind throughout. -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p. 45 (bold emphasis added)

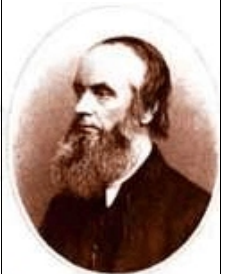
AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS HOVERING -- The throne of *Divine* Glory was standing in space, hovering over the face of the waters by the breath of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, and by His command, even as a dove hovers over its nest. -- **Rashi**, a Jewish rabbinical commentator *Genesis* p. 3

What is the first hint of *DISTINCTION* in God?

And the Spirit of God -- so, beyond question, the words are here to be rendered. The English reader need hardly be told that *spirit* is originally and literally *breath*, or *wind*; but that it has in usage and in Scripture acquired the meaning which we now commonly assign to it, of an immaterial, sentient, and active being; and when joined with *of God*, as here, the term becomes a theological one, variously indeed revealed and understood in the various ages of revelation, but always importing a personal agency of God. -- **Henry Alford**, *The Book of Genesis* p. 2

From this place onward, and throughout the whole Scripture, the spirit of God is the single formative principle evermore presenting itself with personal attributes in all the divine creative constitutions, whether of the earth, of nature, of the theocracy, of the Tabernacle, of the church, of the new life, or of the new man. -- **J.P. Lange**, *Genesis* p. 164

Does it not seem reasonable that the Spirit of inspiration should have so worded the words that bear upon His activity that, when the full New Testament revelation has come, all statements concerning the Spirit are in perfect harmony with this later revelation? -- **H.C. Leupold**, *Exposition of Genesis* p. 50



HENRY ALFORD
sees the first hint
of the greatest
Mystery – the
nature of God

1:3a Again, merely a hint of creative agency in God. Explain why the Trinity doctrine could only be adumbrated, not elucidated, in Genesis (and the rest of the Old Testament. NOTE: The first surface symmetry, see verses 6,9,11,14,20,24,26,28,29).

When mention is made, here and in the following verses, about God *speaking* in order to bring the organized world into being, this must be carefully understood. This does not mean that God merely made certain sounds and that as a result the desired thing came into being. The fact that in several instances this speaking of God is accompanied by an action on God's part (vv. 7,16,21,25,27) clearly indicates that we are dealing with a manifestation of divine power. In His speaking, God's effective will comes into expression. -- **G.Ch. Aalders**, *Genesis* Vol. 1 p. 56

In this employment of the Divine word as the agent in creation we see the first germs of the mysterious doctrine of the Personal Word as now known to us in the N.T. revelation. -- **Henry Alford**, *op.cit.*, p. 2

The simple phrase *And God said* precludes some far-reaching errors and stores up a wealth of meaning. These eight specific commands, calling all things into being, leave no room for notions of a universe that is self-existent, or struggled for, or random, or a divine emanation; and the absence of any intermediary implies an extremely rich content for the word "said". This may not be at once apparent, for we ourselves know what it is to order things to happen. But our

commands, even at their most precise, are mere outlines; they rely on existing materials and agencies to embody them, and the craftsman himself works with what he finds, to produce what he only knows in part. The Creator, on the other hand, in willing an end willed every smallest means to it, His thought shaping exactly to the least cell and atom, and His creative word wholly meaningful. One might almost express this immediacy of knowledge by saying that He knows each mode of created existence by experience -- only experience is too weak a word: "Thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139:4; cf. Am. 4:13). This is not pantheism: it is taking creatorship seriously. So the New Testament reveals what is already latent here when it calls the Son and Word of God "the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, ... and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:15-17, RSV; cf. Jn. 1:1-4; Heb. 1:2,3). -- **Derek Kidner**, *op.cit.*, p. 46

God. Moses has it *Elohim*, a noun of the plural number. Whence the inference is drawn, that the three Persons of the Godhead are here noted; but since, as a proof of so great a matter, it appears to me to have little solidity. I will not insist upon the word; but rather caution readers to beware of violent glosses of this kind. They think that they have testimony against the Arians to prove the Deity of the Son and of the Spirit, but in the meantime they involve themselves in the error of Sabellius: because Moses afterwards subjoins that the *Elohim* had spoken and that the *Spirit of the Elohim* rested upon the waters. If we suppose three persons to be here denoted, there will be no distinction between them. --



JOHN CALVIN
"Beware of violent
glosses ..."

John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis* p. 70

In a fascinating book, *The Conflict of Truth* (by Mr F.H. Capron), the author refers to the five factors which Mr Herbert Spencer regards as "the most general forms into which the manifestations of the Unknowable are re-divisible." These forms are said to be: Space, time, matter, motion, force. Mr. Capron calls attention to the suggestive and even remarkable analogy between these forms and the early verses of Genesis 1.

- (a) Time = "In the beginning."
- (b) Space = "The heavens."
- (c) Matter = "The earth."
- (d) Force = "The Spirit of God."
- (e) Motion = "Moved."

Even though we many think it too ingenious to be true, there is ample proof, apart from this, to lead to the conclusion that there is -- at any rate, up to present -- nothing in the chapter which conflicts with any assured results of science. --

W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis* pp. 23,24

NEXT: Why ELOHIM, not JEHOVAH, throughout Genesis 1?