



Chapter One

Three Models of Creation in the Bible

To understand the priestly vision of Genesis 1, a look at the Bible's creation traditions is a good starting point. In ancient Israel, people told the creation story in different ways, as we see in various biblical books.¹ There are allusions to the creation story in the prophets (for example, Jer. 10:12; Amos 4:13, 9:6; Zech. 12:1), and it is recounted in various wisdom books (Prov. 8:22-31; Job 26:7-13, 38:1-11; Ben Sira 1:3-4, 24:3-9). The creation story was also a topic in Israel's worship (Pss. 74:12-17, 89:11-13, 90:2, and 148). These passages show us that in ancient Israel many different creation accounts existed, not just one single creation story.² In fact, these passages indicate that there were various ways of telling the creation story.

In the Bible, creation refers to the divine production of the physical world, mostly involving divine making or manufacturing. The common terminology for creation involves words for manufacturing, such as “to make” (*sh*), “to form, fashion” (**ysr*) and “to create” (**br*).³ Most creation passages use one or more of these verbs. When a passage describes creation using one of these verbs we have a creation *text*. If a passage also involves a narrative, then we have a creation *account*. Other biblical verses mention creation only in passing; these we may call creation *allusions*.

Creation passages in the Bible differ in important ways. The Bible's ways of telling the story of creation may be grouped into a number of categories or models. We may identify three major models of creation: God created the universe by divine *power*, with divine *wisdom*, or with some form of the divine *presence*. Divine power, wisdom, and presence also characterize the connection between God and the world outside of

creation contexts.⁴ In emphasizing these three models, I am not claiming that the Bible does not have other models of creation.⁵ For example, creation by divine procreation enjoyed a long and venerable tradition in the ancient world,⁶ and it lies in the deep background of Genesis 1,⁷ as we will see later in chapter 3. Still, in general, these three models of creation are particularly useful for understanding Genesis 1.

It is also important to mention that these models are not entirely separate from one another. First of all, they are all related to kingship.⁸ Power, wisdom, and presence (especially in the palace) are all attributes associated with kings. In addition, the king is responsible for building temples. In accordance with these ideas, various creation accounts present God as a warrior-king, as a wise ruler, or as the great monarchic presence in his palace or builder of his sanctuary space. All of these were old ideas in the ancient world well before the historical emergence of Israel around 1200 BCE.⁹ Finally, we should note that more than one model is sometimes operative in a creation text. All three models inform a number of biblical passages, such as Genesis 1, Psalm 104, and Second Isaiah (Is. 40–55, a sixth-century addition made to the book of Isaiah).¹⁰ In some cases, it may be that an older royal model was adopted and modified under other influences. Perhaps some of the wisdom texts should be viewed in these royal terms. Similarly, Genesis 1 might be seen as a priestly text that has drawn extensively on royal ideas and reshaped them with priestly concerns.¹¹

The three models of creation that we will examine in this chapter will help us to identify and organize the various features in creation texts. By grouping the ways of telling or alluding to the creation story according to these models, we will be able to appreciate the contours of specific creation accounts, and in particular the version of creation in Genesis 1.¹² I would like to begin by offering a summary of the three models. Then we will discuss each model in more detail.

The First Model of Creation: Divine Power

The first model that we will explore entails creation issuing from God's powerful victory over cosmic enemies,¹³ for example in Psalms 74:12-17 and 89:11-13.¹⁴ In this model, the universe is the stage on which God engages in battle against a cosmic enemy understood to be either the waters personified or a monster dwelling in the waters. In the aftermath of his victory, the divine warrior-king reconfigures the elements, such as the waters, from the divine conflict into creation. This model sometimes uses verbs of making, but they are not necessarily the dominant way

of expressing creation in this model. For example, Psalm 74:12-17 uses only one such verb. Instead, this passage focuses on God's power (see also Psalms 65:7-8 and 68:35).

In the first model of creation, the deity is viewed primarily as a warrior-king, and power is the primary idea in this divine reality.¹⁵ This king has a palace (also regarded as his temple), from which he marches to battle and to which he gloriously returns after the divine victory.¹⁶ The proper human response is to honor the divine king as a servant would, by paying him homage. In religious terms, this translates into sacrificial cult and praise of the warrior-king at the temple. In this model, God punishes enemies with acts of powerful violence.¹⁷

In ancient Israel, this first model sometimes involved the figure of the human king. In various Bible passages, the human king functioned as mediator between the divine king and his subjects. As God's intermediary, the human king drew his own power from the power of the divine king.¹⁸ In some cases of the first model, it is through the human king that divine power is made manifest in the world. For example, in Psalm 89:10-11 (MT 11-12), creation occurs in a context concerned with the king's power and his divine support. In this psalm, the king derives his power from God's own power, as expressed by God in verse 25 (MT 26): "I will set his hand on Sea and his right hand on River(s)."¹⁹

The Second Model of Creation: Divine Wisdom

The second model involves creation accomplished by divine wisdom, for example, in Psalm 104 and Job 38:1-11 (especially vv. 5-6; compare Job 28:25-27).²⁰ This model often presents creation as the work of the divine craftsman,²¹ who works variously as builder, engineer, and architect (see Job 28:25 and 38:4-6), and occasionally as a metal worker (see Job 37:18).²² Isaiah 40:12-14 describes God as the wise craftsman of creation in contrast to the human craftsmen who make idols in 40:18-20. In Proverbs 8:22-31,²³ the wisdom of divine creation is embodied by Wisdom personified as a female figure who was with God at the beginning of the divine acts of creation (see also Wis. 6:22).²⁴ In this model, wisdom is the primary idea, in contrast to power in the first model.

In the second model, the human response to God as creator builds on the first model's idea of human reverence to God: "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7); and "the beginning of wisdom is reverence for God" (Ps. 111:10; compare Eccles. 12:13).

Biblical texts in this second model call men (and often not women) to acknowledge the wisdom of the universe as created by God, to learn wisdom and understand it, and accordingly, to live a life of wisdom. If in the first model the king is the mediator of divine power, it is wisdom itself built into the world's fabric that mediates between God and people. In order to become wise, one is to learn God's wisdom in the world, or in the terms presented by Proverbs 1–9, to approach Wisdom herself and to learn from her. As a result, people gain divine wisdom, which helps them to withstand challenges over time. Sinners instead perish from their lack of wisdom, and not necessarily through the instrument of divine punishment. Instead, because of their foolishness, they set themselves on their way to the underworld (see Ps. 49). The biblical scholar Adele Berlin remarks of Psalm 104:35: “sinners undermine God's favor to the world: they may cause God to hide his face.”²⁵ It is hoped that they disappear from the earth (Ps. 104:35).

Instances of this model may draw on the first model of divine conflict, for example, in Psalm 104:6-7: the waters of creation “fled at your rebuke,²⁶ rushed away at the sound of your thunder.” On the whole, however, the second model emphasizes how creation is an expression of divine wisdom. The wisdom vision of Psalm 104, which is the focus of the second section of this chapter, corresponds to Genesis 1 in a number of ways.

The Third Model of Creation: Divine Presence

The third model offers a view of the universe as the place of God's presence, and this idea is expressed by various terms that connect God to the world. Like the first model, the third involves the notion of the divine palace-temple, but its emphasis is not so much on divine power, with the warrior-king marching from his palace. Instead, it focuses on the idea of temple, imbued with aspects of divine presence, such as holiness. In some cases, we see the ideas of divine power and holiness together, for example in the heavenly divine home referenced in Psalm 150:1: “Praise God in his sanctuary (holy place), praise God in the firmament, his stronghold!” The firmament is not only the divine fortress; it is also God's holy place, the divine sanctuary (as we see also in Isaiah 40:22, 57:15; see also Ezekiel 1). From the heavenly temple-palace, God makes the divine presence manifest in a variety of ways.

Parallel to the heavenly palace or temple is God's temple-palace on earth. It, too, is regarded as a sacred space established by God in the

wake of divine victory. The praises of Exodus 15 include a reference to the sacred space that God provided for the people (v. 17) following the divine triumph over the Egyptians:

You brought them and planted²⁷ them
 on the mountain of your inheritance,
 The place for your dwelling that you made, O Lord,
 The sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands established.

The divine temple, whether in heaven or on earth, is God's sanctuary that mediates divine presence in different ways. It is this sense of temple that informs the third model.

In the third model of creation, the universe bears some characteristic of God associated with the temple²⁸ or the divine presence²⁹ in it. The Psalms in particular convey God's connection to the world in contexts describing creation.³⁰ Following its initial reference to creation, Psalm 8 discusses the divine *name* in the universe.³¹ Psalm 33:6 states that God made the world by the divine *word*.³² Psalm 148 depicts various parts of creation joining in praise of God because God created them (v. 5); the divine *name* and *splendor* are over all heaven and earth (v. 13).³³ God's *light* is prominent in the account of creation in Psalm 104:2, and it is also notable in Temple contexts. For example, Psalm 36, which describes an experience of God in the temple, declares in verse 10: "In your light we see light."³⁴ Divine light is a well-attested element of temple experience linking human worshippers to their deity.³⁵ For example, Psalm 27:1 calls God "my light," and verses 4-7 describe the speaker's desire to be in God's temple.³⁶

Divine name,³⁷ word,³⁸ holiness,³⁹ and light⁴⁰ are all features⁴¹ relating to the divine presence associated with the temple,⁴² in contrast to the stress put on power in the first model and wisdom in the second model.⁴³ In addition, there is devotion centered on divine teaching (see Pss. 1, 19, and 119), a verbal manifestation of the divine *word* (see Ps. 33:6).⁴⁴

The human response in this third model builds on the first. It certainly includes giving proper service to God. In addition, people are to acknowledge God's presence in the world through praise (see Ps. 33, especially vv. 1-2). The divine name is a source of trust for the upright (Ps. 33:21). The wicked honor neither God nor the divine presence in the world. In a sense, it is the self-inflicted punishment of the wicked to remain outside of the upright community, which recognizes God and the divine presence in the world. The wicked stand outside this worldview (for example, in Ps. 8). As a result, they perish, as expressed in Psalm 1:6: "The LORD knows the way of the upright, but the way of the wicked

perishes.” In this case, they perish not because God violently punishes them as in the first model, but because they do not ground their lives in God’s presence mediated by divine teaching, so they do not prosper like the upright (see vv. 2-3). As a result, they simply fall away like chaff (see v. 4) and will not stand in the assembly of the upright (v. 5). In short, they place themselves outside of life with God, and so they pass away. In the third section of this chapter, we will explore this third model, especially in Psalm 8 as it compares with Genesis 1. For now, I would emphasize that this model assumes the idea of the created universe as comparable to the Temple; within this Temple the divine presence is at work. Outside of this Temple are threats of cosmic waters (see Jonah 3:3-9), which correspond to the potential threats of violence to humanity and the traumas of human experience.

In this discussion I may give the impression that the Bible delineates these three models clearly and keeps them separate. On the contrary, they were used with a great deal of flexibility, and they can overlap. So we should be careful not to distinguish them too strongly. Different biblical authors combined motifs from different models as they suited their purposes. For example, Psalm 104, a passage that emphasizes the wisdom of God’s creation (v. 24),⁴⁵ also mentions the divine light (v. 2) and the divine presence or “face” (v. 29).⁴⁶ Biblical texts that clearly belong to the second or third models skillfully play off the first model.

Genesis 1 alludes to and works off the first model, as we will see in chapter 2. In addition, it uses the language of divine making, as found in the second model.⁴⁷ In our discussion of Genesis 1, we will also see signs of divinity which comprise the third model: divine *word* and *light* are important beginning with the first day; and divine *holiness* along with divine blessing marks the seventh day. Genesis 1 draws on all three models, with divine speech and light as well as other features informing its vision of creation.

To understand the use of older creation traditions in Genesis 1, we may draw on an observation made by Ronald S. Hendel about biblical worldviews and their social settings. Hendel comments as follows: “The cosmology corresponding to a particular social context should be defined not as an ideal pattern as such, but as the consequence of an interpretation of a preexisting cultural tradition.”⁴⁸ In the case of Genesis 1, its worldview emerged from the priesthood and its interpretation of pre-existing cultural traditions. The ideal order that Genesis 1 expresses did not develop in isolation. Instead, its vision of creation came about as a response to earlier traditions, including older Israelite traditions

about creation. The three models examined in this chapter will help us to see how the priestly account of Genesis 1 responded to nonpriestly traditions. We will be able to identify nonpriestly features of creation in Genesis 1, which in turn will help to highlight its priestly features that we will explore in the following chapters.

At this point, we may address the three models in greater depth; for each model one biblical passage will serve as an illustration. We may begin with the first model of creation.

1. Creation as Divine Might

In the Bible, the most common model of creation involves divine might and conflict that issues in creation. In this model, elements involved in the battle figure also in creation. Psalm 74:12-17 offers a good example. In its appeal to God to provide help against enemies, this passage describes creation in the wake of the divine battle against the cosmic enemies:⁴⁹

- 12 Yet God my⁵⁰ King is from of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
- 13 You—you scattered⁵¹ Sea by your might;
You smashed the heads of the Tanninim on the waters.
- 14 You—you crushed the heads of Leviathan,
You made him into food for the work of sea-beasts (?).⁵²
- 15 You—you split open springs and brooks;
You—you dried up mighty rivers.
- 16 Yours is the day, yours also the night;
You—you established⁵³ the luminary of the sun.⁵⁴
- 17 You—you fixed all the boundaries of earth;
Summer and winter,⁵⁵ you—you fashioned.

The passage is marked by invocations of God in the second person, each one with a display of divine power. The divine victory here depicts God smashing the primordial enemies, Sea, Tanninim, and Leviathan, which in verse 14 serves as food for animals. In this case, one of the primordial enemies is transfigured to serve in God's creation. Creation in this context hardly uses verbs of making, and it does so only at the very end, in verse 17. Instead, the focus falls on God's power. Psalm 74:12-17 makes the divine conflict over the cosmic enemies of the waters the basis for the establishment of the sun, moon, and stars as well as the boundaries of the earth. Genesis 1 largely follows the format of creation found in Psalm 74:12-17. These shared features indicate that the overall format

was a basic one known in ancient Israel. We will return to this passage in chapter 2, but for now it is important for illustrating the idea of divine conflict in ancient Israel.

For examples of the first model, we could marshal additional passages, such as Psalm 89:11-13. This model also underlies the presentations of the divine conquest of the cosmic waters in Job 26:7-13 (especially v. 10) and Job 38:1-11 (especially v. 8), as well as Psalm 104 (especially vv. 6-9).⁵⁶ Other passages alluding to creation likewise mention the divine subjugation of the waters (Jeremiah 31:35; Job 9:8). It is for this reason that some creation passages specifically mention God's might or strength at creation, for example, Psalm 65:6-7 (MT 7-8), Job 26:12, Isaiah 66:1-2 and Jeremiah 27:5 (compare Amos 5:8 and 9:6). These as well as other passages would suggest that cosmic might and conflict issuing in creation was perhaps the best-known model of creation in ancient Israel.

The idea of ancient divine conflict was a very old one in the ancient Near East. The text perhaps cited most often as an example of creation emerging from conflict between divine wills is the Babylonian classic known from its first two words, *Enuma Elish* ("When on high"), or as it is called in some translations, the *Epic of Creation*. In this story, after various generations of deities have come into existence, a divine conflict ensues between the older gods and the newer generations of high deities. In the course of the story, we meet the older goddess, Tiamat. Her name identifies her as the cosmic waters; it is related to the word "deep" (*tehom*) in Genesis 1:2. Tiamat conspires to destroy the newer gods in revenge for their slaughter of her mate, Apsu. To address this challenge, the younger gods meet as a divine council and choose the warrior storm god Marduk as their divine champion. After they accept his terms for agreeing to fight Tiamat, he meets her in battle. He suffers an initial setback, but then he slays her with his weapons of weather. He cuts her carcass into two parts that form the top and bottom of the perceivable universe. At this point, creation emerges explicitly out of the defeated enemy. Marduk then creates the constellations of the stars, identified as the abodes of deities. In turn, humanity is created in part with the blood of Tiamat's right-hand man, Qingu. The center of the newly created world is Esagila, the palace of Marduk and his temple on earth, which the text locates by name in Babylon. *Enuma Elish* then closes with fifty names given to Marduk as an expression of praise.

This epic poem has been read against the political events of the late second millennium BCE Babylon and the later Assyrian and Babylonian empires of the first millennium BCE. The late second millennium

witnessed a rise in the worship of Marduk, and in the first millennium his power symbolized the power of Babylon. In their own versions of *Enuma Elish*, Assyrian kings would sometimes substitute the name of their patron-god Assur, for the name of Marduk. One Assyrian king, Esarhaddon, had an inventive political strategy to integrate Babylon more fully into the neo-Assyrian empire.⁵⁷ He combined construction projects with symbols and imagery associated with Marduk in order to demonstrate what a good friend Esarhaddon was to Babylon. Later in his reign Esarhaddon went further, trying to use Marduk as a symbol of unity between Babylon and Assur. It is clear from this history that Marduk and *Enuma Elish*, which celebrates the god's cosmic achievements, in turn celebrated the rulers who patronized this epic.

The universe that the epic depicts is not altogether unlike the human world that celebrated it. On the heavenly level, deities face off in battle like the human royalty who patronized the epic. In the wake of this divine conflict, creation emerges. The worldview of the epic corresponds to the human world. Marduk, like the human rulers who revered him, faces cosmic enemies who threaten him with their primordial powers. The enemies of the divine king and his human counterpart can be threatening in the world that he created. Both divine and human kings reign from Babylon; the temple of the god in Babylon is the cosmic center on both divine and human levels. The heavenly world corresponds to the earthly world. The relationship might be expressed in the following diagram:

heavenly level	god	divine enemies
earthly level	king	human enemies

On these two levels, the god and the king mirror one another in status and power, and both face hostile enemies who threaten the kingdom.

When we move from Mesopotamia toward the Mediterranean coast, closer to the world of the Bible, we see a number of texts that refer to the cosmic conflict between the storm-god and his enemies. The conflict story served to reinforce human kingship in a variety of texts hailing from the city of Mari (lying on the great bend of the Euphrates River) all the way to Egypt. A letter sent by a prophet named Nur-Sin of Aleppo to King Zimri-Lim of Mari quotes to him the following words of the storm-god Adad: "I brought you back to the throne of your father, and I handed you the weapons with which I battled Sea."⁵⁸ In other words, the king had received the very power of his god. We also see this idea of divine power of the king in some of the Amarna letters written to

the Egyptian king by his vassals living in various cities up and down the Mediterranean coast in the fourteen century. In some of these letters, local vassals of the pharaoh compare him with “Baal in the heavens” (El Amarna letters 108:9; 147:14; 149:7; 159:7; 207:16).⁵⁹ Here again there is an association of the king with the power of the god.⁶⁰ The Baal Cycle, the longest religious text from the ancient city of Ugarit (located on the coast of modern day Syria), does not explicitly make this link between Baal and the Ugaritic king. At the same time, the royal line, whose patron god was Baal, sponsored the Baal Cycle, because this text embodied the royal ideals of divine support for the Ugaritic royal line. Baal’s enemies such as Sea and Death as well as the better known Leviathan mirrored the Ugaritic king’s enemies.

The imagery in some of these cases (for example, the letter to King Zimri-lim) does not simply express a correspondence between the divine and human kings. Rather, it goes further in making the king sound like his patron storm god.⁶¹ The language was not a mere figure of speech, but a statement of the king’s power and how it was linked to the power of his patron god.⁶² In the first model, power is what fundamentally connects the divine and the human.⁶³ The king’s power flowed from the god. The human king and his power were thought to come from the power of God, the divine king.

The political use made of the conflict between storm god and cosmic enemies passed into Israelite tradition. The biblical God is not only generally similar to Baal as a storm god, but God inherited the names of Baal’s cosmic enemies, with names such as Leviathan, Sea, Death, and Tanninim (see Ps. 74:13-14; Job 3:8, 26:12-13, 41:1; Is. 25:8, 27:1). Baal’s home on Mount Saphon is identified with Zion in Psalm 48:3. God’s titles, “Rider in the heavens” and “Rider of the Steppe” (for example, Ps. 68:4) are also echoes of Baal’s own title, “Rider of the Clouds.”⁶⁴

As we see in *Enuma Elish* and in Ugaritic, biblical passages draw a parallel between God, the divine king, and the Davidic ruler, the human king. This correspondence of the divine and human kings may be seen in Psalm 89. Its description of the victorious power of God in verses 5-18 matches its praise of the divine favor that God bestows upon the Davidic monarch in verses 19-37. Creation belongs to this divine scheme in verses 5-18, as expressed in verses 10-13. The parallelism between God and the king changes, however, in verse 26, and a different sort of notion appears: God extends his power to the monarch in language that recalls Baal in Ugaritic: “I will set his hand on Sea and his right hand on Rivers.”⁶⁵ Here God invests the king with power capable of mastery

over the cosmic enemies, Sea and River, which are elsewhere titles of God's cosmic enemy (just like Sea in Ps. 74).⁶⁶ Psalm 89:26 expresses a correspondence between heavenly and earthly levels, which may be put in the following way:

heavenly level	God, the divine king	divine enemies
earthly level	the Davidic human king	national enemies

The image of the Davidic monarch receiving martial power from God also informs the simile used for the house of David in Zechariah 12:8: "On that day the Lord will put a shield about the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord at their head."⁶⁷

The mirroring of divine enemies and earthly enemies appears in other texts of the Hebrew Bible. This sort of divine imagery worked its way into various biblical images not only for the enemies of the king, but also for people's personal enemies. We see various echoes of cosmic imagery known from the Ugaritic texts appearing in biblical passages aimed against wicked human beings. Habakkuk 2:5 and Proverbs 1:12 compare the wicked with the underworld (Sheol) personified with its insatiable mouth. These descriptions echo Death's appetite as in the Ugaritic story of the god Baal, and in the story of the destructive gods known as the "Goodly Gods."⁶⁸ Both Death and the Goodly Gods are said to have "a lip to Earth, a lip to Heaven," and they swallow the animals of creation.⁶⁹ Similarly in Psalms, the Underworld is said to have a mouth that threatens the speaker, and the cosmic Deep can likewise "swallow" the speaker (Ps. 69:16). Human enemies, too, "would have swallowed us alive," if not for God's saving help (Ps. 124:3). Like these foes, human foes in Psalm 73:9 set their mouth against heaven. Isaiah 9:19 draws on the image of enemies, devouring on their left and their right. (This particularly echoes the description of the "Goodly Gods.")⁷⁰ These passages suggest that this was stock language for cosmic enemies applicable to various sorts of earthly foes, whether king or commoner. Just as the cosmic enemies parallel earthly kingdoms opposed to the Judean king, this language of cosmic enemies is used to describe enemies or wicked persons who threaten individuals. This imagery was used for a long time, both for kings and for people more generally.

After the monarchy fell in 586, the royal view of creation did not disappear. In biblical texts dating to the postexilic period (from 538 on), the idea of divine conflict was not only a matter set in the primordial past. It

also became a way to talk about the future, definitive moment of God's salvation of Israel. Among the texts after the exile, Isaiah 27:1 may be the most poignant expression of this theme: "In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea." We hear a more consoling voice along these lines in Isaiah 25:6-8 (RSV):

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.⁷¹

The later apocalyptic visions of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 describe beasts rising from the Sea. They are political empires that God the divine warrior will ultimately sweep away (Dan. 7:23-27 and Rev. 19:17-21).

The book of Revelation contains a dramatic example of this old tradition in 21:1-4 (NRSV). This passage echoes the sequence of events known all the way back in the Late Bronze Age story of the Baal Cycle, with Baal's defeat of Sea, the building of his palace and his conquest of Death (as marked by my italics):

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and *the sea was no more*. And I saw *the holy city, the new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. *Death will be no more*, mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

In this passage the cosmic Sea is destroyed, then the heavenly city (the divine palace-city) appears, and finally Death is overcome.

The political link between these beasts and world empires was not a late invention. It echoed the old mirroring of divine and human kings and the cosmic and human enemies. Throughout Israel's monarchy and even over the centuries of domination by several political empires, the

model of divine power endured. Divine power not only expressed the political fortunes of Israel's monarchy; it also expressed hope through Israel's times of trouble and powerlessness.

2. Creation as Divine Wisdom

Ancient Israelites conceived of creation as being infused with divine wisdom.⁷² Psalm 104:24 views God's creation in terms of wisdom: "How many are Your creations, O LORD; all of them You made with wisdom." Proverbs 3:19-20 similarly proclaims: "The LORD established earth by wisdom, He established Heaven by understanding."⁷³ Here Proverbs 3:19-20 adds understanding to wisdom as the means God used to make the world. Psalm 136:5 attributes understanding to the divine creation of the heavens. Proverbs 8:22-31 presents the figure of female Wisdom personified as present with God throughout creation. With personified Wisdom, this passage, in a sense, "anthropomorphizes" the traditional idea of divine wisdom present in creation. According to Job 11:6, it is God who could tell "the secrets of wisdom" (see also Job 12:13),⁷⁴ and according to Job 38:16, God put wisdom into the hidden parts of the world. Wisdom is commonly associated with God as creator in the book of Job, for example, in Job 28:20-28 specifically, but see also Job 39:17, 26. Wisdom, in the divine speeches of Job 38-40, is not only a matter of an architect's wise order, but it also presents creation's wondrous beauty made by the divine artist.⁷⁵

Of all these texts, it is Psalm 104 that most fully elaborates a picture of creation based on divine wisdom.⁷⁶ In several respects, it also offers a valuable comparison with Genesis 1. To facilitate our appreciation of the similarities with Genesis 1, I provide a translation of Psalm 104, with my own section headings marked in bold letters⁷⁷:

Opening Invocation of the Creator of the Heavens

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul!⁷⁸
O LORD, my God, you are so great!
In splendor and majesty you are clothed,
- 2 Wrapped in light like a robe.
Spreading the heavens like a tent-curtain,
- 3 Putting beams in the waters for his upper chambers;
He is the one who sets the clouds as his chariot,
The one who moves on the wings of the wind,⁷⁹
- 4 Making winds into his messengers,
Fiery flames, his servants.⁸⁰

Praise of the World's Creator

- 5 He established the earth on its foundations,
So that it would never shake.
6 As for the ocean (*tehom*), you covered it like clothing,
Above the mountains the waters stood.
7 At your roar they fled,
At the sound of your thunder they hurried.⁸¹
8 They went up the mountains, went down the valleys,⁸²
To the site that⁸³ you had established for them.
9 You set a boundary they would not cross,
And never again cover the earth.

Praise of the Creator of Waters on Earth

- 10 You are the one who makes springs gush in torrents,
Between the mountains they flow.
11 They give drink for every beast of the field,
Wild asses quench their thirst.
12 Beside them the birds of the sky dwell,
Among the foliage they sing.
13 Watering the mountains from his upper chambers,
By the fruit of your work the earth is sated.

Praise of the Creator of Food

- 14 Growing grass for the beasts,
Herbage for humanity's labor:
To yield food from the ground,
15 And wine that⁸⁴ gladdens the human heart;
To make the face shine⁸⁵ with oil,
and food that sustains the heart.
16 The trees of the LORD have their fill,
The cedars of Lebanon that he planted,
17 Where birds nest,
The stork has its home in the junipers.
18 High mountains are for wild goats,
Cliffs are a refuge for badgers.

Praise of the Creator of Seasons and Days

- 19 He made the moon to [mark] seasons,
The sun knows when to set.

- 20 You make it dark, and it is night,
Then every beast of the forest roams.
21 The lions roar for prey,
Seeking their food from God.
22 The sun rises, they retire,
And they lie down in their lairs.
23 Humanity goes out to its work,
To its labor, until evening.

Praise of the Creator of the Seas

- 24 How many are your creations, O LORD!
All of them you made with wisdom,
The earth is fully your property.⁸⁶
25 There⁸⁷ is the sea, great and vast,
There with creatures beyond number,
Living things, small along with great.
26 There ships go about, Leviathan as well,
Whom⁸⁸ you formed to play with.

Creatures' Dependence on the Creator

- 27 All of them hope in you,
To give them food in due season.
28 You give to them—they gather,
You open your hand—they are sated with good.
29 You hide your face—they are terrified,
You take away their spirit—they expire,
And they return to their dust.
30 You send forth your spirit—they are created (**br'*),
And you renew the face of the earth.⁸⁹
31 May the glory of the LORD be forever,
May the LORD rejoice in his creations,
32 The one who looks to the earth and it trembles,
Touches the mountains and they smoke.
33 Let me sing of the LORD throughout my life,
I will rejoice in my God while I live.
34 May my discourse⁹⁰ be pleasing to him,
I—I will rejoice in the LORD.
35 May sinners vanish from the earth,
And the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!
Hallelujah

The overall sense of creation is a dynamic interaction of its parts, especially the waters flowing from the beginning of the psalm. It also shows various relationships between these parts of creation. They are designed with wisdom (v. 24) so that they help one another.⁹¹

We may also note that in its treatment of the waters in verses 6-9, Psalm 104 draws on the model of creation of divine conflict. The storm god rides on his chariot in verse 3,⁹² and the waters of the psalm “flee” at the sound of the divine “rebuke” (v. 7). As in the first model, these waters are left over from the implied conflict and are transformed into beneficial components of nature. Similarly, Leviathan, another maritime cosmic enemy,⁹³ appears in this psalm. At the same time, the psalm moves away from the model of conflict. The waters are not accorded any status as opponents, and Leviathan here is no more than God’s pet. While Psalm 104 draws on elements of the first model of the warrior god’s battle against the cosmic waters, its presentation is informed by the considerably different concept of divine wisdom. In keeping with the second model of creation, creation is imbued with wisdom (v. 24). Moreover, the wicked are not punished by divine violence, as in the first model; instead, the author of the psalm wishes that they would vanish from the earth (v. 35).

Readers may recognize some similarities between this psalm and Genesis 1. Many elements of creation and their overall order as known from Psalm 104 also appear in their essence in Genesis 1. Scholars have generally noted the following similarities:⁹⁴

Psalm 104:2-4; Genesis 1:6-8: God as Creator presented with respect to the cosmic waters.

Psalm 104:5-9; Genesis 1:9-10: God establishes the earth with respect to the waters and establishes bounds for them.

Psalm 104:10-13; Genesis 1:6-10: With the cosmic waters under control, they provide sources for springs.

Psalm 104:14-18, Genesis 1:11-12: Vegetation is produced and feeds living creatures.

Psalm 104:19-23, Genesis 1:14-18: The moon and sun are created to mark times and seasons.

Psalm 104:24-26, Genesis 1:20-22: In the remnant of watery chaos live the sea creatures.

Psalm 104:27-30, Genesis 1:24-30: Humanity’s place in creation is shown.

The similarities and the fairly similar order in these two passages are impressive. They share in common a general schema, reflected in different degrees in a variety of biblical texts (see also Ps. 89:10-13; cf. Job 38–39): description of God as creator of the universe; sea and the sea monsters overcome; fixing of the earth on its foundations; release of springs; creation of day and night; creation of the sun as well as the seasons; and human creation. The authors of Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 incorporated the traditional outline into their presentations. Genesis 1 structures the outline into its scheme of seven days, as we will see in chapter 3.

With its dynamic vision of creation, Psalm 104 offers a constructive and appealing presentation of humanity, nature and God. The parts of creation in this psalm serve and help one another in many respects. Unlike the ordered picture of Genesis 1, with boundaries set for various realms and animals, the effects of these realms and their animals in Psalm 104 interconnect with one another, to their mutual benefit. Unlike the picture of humanity in Genesis 1, humanity in Psalm 104 is not the ruler of creation; humanity is woven into the pattern of creation with other beings.⁹⁵ In its presentation of humanity, Genesis 1 stands closer to Psalm 8, to which we now turn.

3. Creation as Divine Presence

The model of creation as divine presence works off the model of creation as divine conflict. This model expresses its sense of divine presence in creation by using any number of terms, such as divine name and holiness. A good example is Psalm 8. In several ways, this psalm resembles the priestly vision of Genesis 1.⁹⁶ Both evoke the image of the word or speech in the universe, which is metaphorically or analogously God's temple.⁹⁷ In this section, I would like to look at Psalm 8 in some detail, with the purpose of using it to understand some aspects of the priestly vision of Genesis 1 that we will see in chapters 2 and 3. As we will discover, the visions of reality in these two biblical passages also differ in some respects.

Let us begin with a translation of Psalm 8, which I have laid out according to its poetic structure (following the prose label, or what scholars call the "superscription"). I have also highlighted some key words with italics and marked my headings in bold:⁹⁸

Prose Label (Superscription)

Musical Personnel:

S (MT 1) For the director

Musical Information

On the *gittit* (?)

Type of Composition:

Song

Putative Authorship:

Of David.

Poem

A: The Divine Name throughout the Earth

1 (MT 2) O Lord, our God,
How (*mah*) mighty is your Name (*shem*) in all the Earth!

B: Heavenly Creation

Let me acknowledge [= sing of]⁹⁹ your splendor over the heavens (*shamayim*):

2 (MT 3) From the mouth of babes and suckers,
You established a strong place¹⁰⁰ because of your foes,
To put an end (*lehashbit*) to the enemy and avenger.

3 (MT 4) When I behold your heavens (*shameka*),
The works of Your fingers,
Moon and stars that you established^{101, 102}

C: The Question of Humanity in the Universe

4 (MT 5) What (*mah*) is the human being that you remember her,
The human that you are mindful of him?

5 (MT 6) You made her little less than divinities,¹⁰³
And with glory and majesty you crowned him.

B': Earthly Creation

6 (MT 7) You made him rule (*tamshilehu*)
The works of your hands,
All you set beneath her feet:

- 7 (MT 8) Sheep¹⁰⁴ and cattle, all of them,
Also, beasts of the field.
- 8 (MT 9) Bird of heaven (*shamayim*) and fish of the sea,
The path-crosser of the seas.

A': The Divine Name throughout the Earth

- 9 (MT 10) O Lord, our God
How (*mah*) mighty is your name (*shem*) in all the Earth!

This hymn of praise opens and closes with a communal invocation of “Lord, our God” followed by a proclamation of the divine name’s power throughout the world (vv. 1 and 9). This proclamation at the psalm’s beginning and end frames the rest of the poem and gives it a universal horizon. The first major section of the poem (vv. 1-4)¹⁰⁵ opens with a first person proclamation of the divine honor (v. 1), which continues the cosmic horizon of the introduction. The divine victory at creation that neutralized the enemies of old prepared a place for humanity (v. 2). Here we may sense the old model of creation as conflict,¹⁰⁶ but the psalm does not dwell on the matter.¹⁰⁷

Instead, the psalmist is moved to contemplate the creation of the universe, which issued in the astral bodies (v. 3). This reflection leads to the speaker’s question, which does not praise God either for that creation or for the divine power as the source of this creation.¹⁰⁸ Rather, it leads to the speaker’s question about the nature of humans.¹⁰⁹ The next part (vv. 5-8) answers the question with a reflection on humanity and the world. The psalmist presents humanity as the ruler of creation exalted nearly to the level of the minor divinities of the divine council (v. 5) and above the creatures known from human experience (vv. 7-8). From this vision of the universe, the psalmist is led to finish with one final expression of “hymnal elation.”¹¹⁰ The hymn is directed to God, and the basis for its praise is humanity itself.¹¹¹ For this presentation of humanity as a reason for divine praise, Psalm 8 is perhaps unique in the Bible.

Consistent with this theme, the literary structure of Psalm 8 places humanity at the center in its arrangement, as reflected in the following scheme¹¹²:

- A verse 1 = verse 9: envelope of praise;
 B verses 2-3: heavenly creation (“the works of your fingers”);
 C verse 4-5: humanity as the crown of earthly creation;
 B' verses 6-8: earthly creation (“the works of your hands”);
A' verse 9 = verse 1: envelope of praise.

The structure here has what is called a “chiasm” or envelope structure (which I have labeled above as A and A’ and B and B’). This structure is reinforced through a three-fold repetition of the particle “how, what” (*mah*). This word is used twice at the beginning in verse 1 and at the end in verse 9, and also once in the middle of the psalm in verse 4.¹¹³ In addition, we see the consonants “sh” (*shin*) and “m” (*mem*) standing in prominent positions: the word “name” (**shem*) in both verses 1 and 9; “heavens” (**shamayim*) in verses 1 and 8; and, “your heavens” (*shameka*), the second word in verse 3, and “you made him rule” (*tamshilehu*), the first word in verse 6. This alliteration using the sounds “sh” and “m” links creation with the name (**shem*) of the Creator.

The divine splendor and divine name are within the heavens, as in all creation (vv. 1 and 9). Creation bears the signature of the Creator, and more, because “splendor” and “name” are also cultic expressions of the divine. These two terms suggest a model of the heavens and earth as the site of God’s manifestation to humanity. In other words, the heavens are metaphorically like a temple or sanctuary containing divine splendor, and the earth analogously is the part of this sanctuary where the speaker senses the name of God.¹¹⁴ To this picture of the divine name, we may compare the glorious manifestation of the divine name in Psalm 29:2 (made manifest in v. 9), the personification of the divine name as a warrior in Isaiah 30:33, or the idea that God’s sanctuary is where God establishes the divine name, for example in Deuteronomy 12:5, 11, and 14:23-24.¹¹⁵

To the idea of the divine name in the universe, we might also compare the notion of the divine “glory” (*kabod*) filling the earth.¹¹⁶ We see this idea in the famous exclamation of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”¹¹⁷ It also occurs in the priestly divine speech of Numbers 14:20-21.¹¹⁸ Here God describes himself in the third person: “the glory of the LORD fills all the earth.” These passages show a temple or priestly sensibility. For Genesis 1, creation embodies the priestly vision of holiness and proper ordering, with humanity as the highpoint of creation and Sabbath rest evoked as its concluding moment.¹¹⁹ Where the first model of creation stresses divine might, and the second model emphasizes divine wisdom, Psalm 8 offers a picture of the divine name made manifest in creation. Somewhat similarly, Genesis 1 proclaims divine holiness, embodied specifically in its picture of divine rest and Sabbath.

Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 are similar in other important ways.¹²⁰ For example, humanity is featured as the literary highpoint of both accounts.

For the prose account of Genesis 1, this highpoint is the sixth day of creation, while for Psalm 8 the reference to humanity is the poem's middle-point. Both passages make humanity the highpoint of creation. They also draw on similar imagery to describe humanity. They evoke the royal notion of the king as *'elohim*, a Hebrew word that may mean, "divine," "divinities," or "God," depending on the context. In the royal worldview, the king could be exalted as a minor divinity (*'elohim*) because of his relationship to God, as seen, for example, in Psalm 45:6 (MT 7) in its address to the monarch, "Your throne, O divine one, is forever and ever" (compare the king being called "my son" by God in Psalm 2:7). Psalm 8:6 draws on this royal idea for its understanding of humanity. At the same time, the verse qualifies the status of humanity by positioning it only slightly lower than *'elohim*, sometimes understood as "God" (for example, in the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion as well as the Latin Vulgate of Jerome), but elsewhere as "angels" (for example, in the Greek Septuagint). A similar movement away from the royal worldview is made in Genesis 1, which applies the notion of the king as created in the image of God (*'elohim*), an idea that we will see in chapter 3.

The similarities between Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 extend also to the notion of human rule in the world. God has placed the world at the feet of humanity in Psalm 8:6 in a manner recalling the verb "to rule" (**rdh*) in Genesis 1:28.¹²¹ In Psalm 8:5-6, royal terms again are applied to humanity,¹²² "majesty" (*hadar*) like that of God (Psalms 29:4, 90:16, 104:1, 111:3 and 145:5) and perhaps also like the king's (see Psalm 21:5; cf. Psalm 45:3-4).¹²³ In Job 40:10, God taunts Job by asking: "Can you dress in glory and majesty?" These are God's characteristics, and humanity is graced with these divine qualities in Psalm 8:6. Finally, there is some similarity in the presentation of the animals and their realms in Psalm 8:7-8 and Genesis 1.¹²⁴ In sum, Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 draw on ideas and motifs from the first model, that is, that creation emerges from conflict waged by the divine warrior king over the cosmic enemies. At the same time, these passages recast the worldview of divine conflict. Psalm 8 focuses on the divine name filling the world, while Genesis 1 presents the sacred plan of space and time, as we will see in chapter 3.¹²⁵

The two passages also display some significant differences. While Psalm 8 resembles Genesis 1 in evoking a picture of the universe as a divine sanctuary, it does not include the specifically priestly emphases found in Genesis 1, in particular its themes of sanctification and divine rest. Genesis 1 presents the created world with the holiness of the Sabbath on the seventh day. This sense of the universe as a divine sanctuary

is also conveyed, as we will explore in chapter 3, by its picture of God acting as a divine priest who utters blessing upon creatures, including humanity (Genesis 1:22, 28). The verb, “to cease, end” (**shbt*) in the two texts may mark a subtle difference within their overall similarity: in Genesis 1 this verb, which refers to the divine rest, may play off the older notion of this root that we see in Psalm 8, that God put an end to the divine enemies.¹²⁶

Conclusion

Let me close this discussion with some general comments on the three models. As we consider these models, it is important to reflect on their limitations as well as their insights. They are all deeply indebted to Israel’s patriarchal society, primarily reflecting the experiences and perspectives of men: in the first model, the monarchy; in the second, the sages; and in the third, the priesthood. Moreover, these were primarily men of elite status. It is evident that they offer limited intellectual horizons within Israel’s overall experience. They do not offer reflections from the experiences of women or from the generally less privileged of Israel’s society. At the same time, they offer the best (or at least some of the best) of what Israelite elites in their times had to say about the nature of God, humanity and the world. We may further appreciate the dire conditions in which many of them wrote their works. Several of Israel’s writers, especially those of the sixth century, sought to speak with hope at Israel’s critical moments and through its terrible crises. All three models convey a quality that speaks to the human condition. The language of divine power, wisdom, and presence address the situation of human beings enmeshed in the realities of power, engaged in the search for understanding, and attuned to a sense of the divine in the world.

All three models have conceptual advantages and disadvantages. At first glance, the first model of divine conflict today would seem to be the least satisfying of the three. It works on a premise of divine power and violence, and it casts God in the leading role in this drama of violence. Because such biblical portraits of God may be used to justify violence,¹²⁷ this model seems least helpful for creating a world without violence. Divine conflicts such as Job’s can feel like the violent clashes initiated by a sort of a divine, misguided Don Quixote in the name of order and justice.¹²⁸ At the same time, the first model has the distinct theological advantage of exploring the chaos of the world and human experience. Violence and chaos are real parts of our world. The first model permits an examination of the unruly character of our reality. While we may

be—and arguably should be—uncomfortable with the idea of a God who takes up violence to punish or test, such a way of looking at the world reminds us that God both cares about the world and cares enough that God is prepared to act. When we feel our discomfort at this side of God, we may also be forgetting the terrible violence of the ancient world in which Israel lived—and in which many people around the world live today. To my mind, the first model acknowledges not only God’s power; it also calls us to resist human power and human structures in which our lives are intractably embedded. Moreover, I am often struck by the comfort that the first model gives to people who themselves have little or no recourse in this world. While I recoil at the idea of the violent God, many people who take comfort in it are consoled not so much by the picture of divine violence, but by the sense of divine attention and care that it conveys to them for the possibility of overcoming terrible human power in the world. I may recoil perhaps in part because I can afford to; as a fairly privileged upper middle-class American, I suffer little from the world’s violence and thus far—thank God—it has not intruded much into my existence. But this is hardly the case for the vast number of people who look to the Bible for how it may speak to their lives.

In this context, it may be helpful to mention Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and the Hymn of Mary in Luke 1:46-55 (known as the Magnificat). Many people find great consolation in these poems. These two poems also include images of God not simply in control of human history, but also exercising divine power: “The Lord kills” (1 Samuel 2:6); and “He has shown strength with his arm” (Luke 1:51). Hannah’s prayer belongs in the worldview of the first model, especially with its mention of divine power (vv. 4 and 10) and the human king (v. 10). Despite the violence of these poems, people take great comfort in them, as do I. To my mind, they point to an important consideration about the first model, that it might be read less as a model to be emulated and more as a model of creation offering hope. It tells us that the world does not have to be the way that it is. It tells us that there is a power in this universe that hears the cries of the oppressed, the lonely, and the abandoned against the powers of this world and their destructive effects, and that somehow God acts. From this perspective, this first model can seem closer to the problems of our world than the second or third models.

The second model is quite appealing for today’s world. It gets away from violence that many people find repugnant. We saw, for example, how Psalm 104 departs from the violence of the first model. In addition, the wisdom model conveyed in this psalm offers an ecological vision that

is particularly attractive.¹²⁹ Its balance of humanity with other species may resonate in a culture increasingly sensitive to human dominance of other species.¹³⁰ In the next chapter of this book, we will also see joy, play, and wonder in the second model; these themes, too, are appealing today. All of these aspects of the second model I find very compelling. People engaged by the physical universe and its secrets may also find inspiration in the second model. The science of the Bible in passages such as Job 38–41 may look more like myth than science (so may the Big Bang theory two millennia from now), but it offers a biblical basis for human beings to exercise their intelligence in the search to understand the world. The second model's contribution, then, is not only the particular pictures of the universe that it yielded in the Bible. It is additionally the recognition of our God-given intelligence and the importance of using it as fully as possible to understand the world. It calls for thinking about the world.

At the same time, we need to be attentive to the potential abuses of the second model. Its biblical versions often assume a wise balance and order in the world that might serve too easily to justify things in the world as they are. Sometimes it can seem just too optimistic about reality. The model can also be misused to justify a hierarchical social order that might claim its blessings point to its divine approval. A wise order may also leave little room for exploring evil and suffering in our world. However, the search for wisdom can go beyond the Bible's particular pictures of the universe's wise order. The very search for wisdom sanctioned by the second model calls for exploring its weaknesses and its inability to explain certain problems of human existence, such as the problem of evil in the world. The wisdom search modeled in biblical wisdom texts provides a check on the limitations of traditional understandings of reality in those texts. The search for wisdom embodied by the second model also challenges us not to accept any one picture produced by this search, but to pursue this search with the same energy and insight that the biblical authors mustered.

The Bible itself recognizes the problems with the wisdom model. This issue comes out in Job and Ecclesiastes (*Qohelet*). These books go beyond the simple vision of a wise and good order imprinted on the universe. Their search for wisdom acknowledges the issue of God's power and the problem of human finitude: if God's creation is wise, then why do people suffer without understanding (Job), or why must people struggle with their mortality and never fully understand (Ecclesiastes)? Creation in Job shows the darkness of creation, and not only its light

(see Job 3). Ecclesiastes 3:21 asks whether people really know in the end that the human life-force (*ruah*) rises upward to God. These two biblical books acknowledge humanity's finite capacity to understand creation. In the end, this wisdom search may seem like a failure to disclose true knowledge. The limitations of the human condition seem to keep humanity in the dark with respect to God's wisdom (see Job 28; Eccl. 3:11). This is hardly a consolation, much less any answer, and we might identify with "The Secret Sits," a two-line poem by Robert Frost: "We dance round in a ring and suppose, But the Secret sits in the middle and knows." People may feel tempted to dismiss the premise of the wisdom search that God is powerful, good, and wise.

Despite humanity's limitations, these biblical books affirm the search to keep pressing toward the Creator's ways in creation. We learn from Job and Ecclesiastes not only their views of creation, but also the central importance of the search for wisdom, a God-given capacity that we need to exercise as we try to understand the world around us. For Ecclesiastes, it is a capacity arguably built into people by God. Ecclesiastes (3:11) says that God has put eternity into the human heart and people cannot reach to the end of the matter.¹³¹ The eternity put into the human heart perhaps gives it an intuition into the Eternal One who made us so. And despite Ecclesiastes' initial sense that the human condition is ultimately little different from animals' (3:18-21), the search affirms the basic goodness of God's blessings; these include the ability to enjoy what God has given (2:24-26; 3:12-13; 11:7-10), and especially in the form of human companionship (4:9-12). It also affirms that the human life force (*ruah*) does return to God in the end (12:7), the very matter questioned earlier in the book (3:21).

Job's search for wisdom leads to the fundamental insight that the wisdom search does go somewhere. At the end of Job, it is the experience of God that ends up as a response to the sorts of traditional theories about God (42:2-6). Experience is a sort of answer for Job who says to God at the end: "I had indeed spoken but without my having understood, Of things too wonderful for me, without my having known. . . I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now with my eyes I see you." And despite Job's difficulties, God affirms his search for understanding in the end (42:6-16). For all the limitations of human understanding, people can come to understand something of the reality of the world. Even when the world may seem like "void and vacuum" (Genesis 1:2), it still offers the prospect of some God-given knowledge and good.¹³²

The third model of divine presence may be the most difficult of the three models for people today. Having a sense of God strikes many people as a difficult proposition; having a sense of divine presence in the world is even a harder proposition. The idea of divine presence barely resonates in our culture. We stand at such a massive distance from the ancient traditions of the Jerusalem temple that supported this sense of divine presence in the world. As the decades pass, our culture seems increasingly removed from the Christian and Jewish religious traditions that drew upon the experience of temple. Divine presence seems little more than an outmoded relic of our religious past. Even for people of faith, a sense of divine presence may seem increasingly difficult to grasp, as our religious communities suffer from fragmentation and strife. The third model of divine presence can feel like an impossible challenge in today's world.

At the same time, the third model appeals to our basic intuition that our lives are not simply physical power struggles or intellectual and emotional pursuits. People often sense that there is more to their lives, and the third model takes account of this fact. It suggests that faith is central to the human person. People recognize that they act on faith all the time. In our human interactions, we act on faith every day. We continue to hope for things, often with little empirical basis. For example, people deeply believe in love. So while faith in God and a sense of divine presence offer great challenges, the third model offers people an invitation to discover within themselves the light and life-force that links them to God and to one another.

Potentially the third model offers great comfort. For my conclusion of this discussion of the third model, I have saved one final example, the beautiful Psalm 23. This psalm talks about the pilgrimage with God, who walks with people to the Temple as their shepherd (in vv. 1-4) and who serves as divine host there (in vv. 5-6). This vision culminates in verse 6 with the idea of life in the Temple "all the days of my life." This famous psalm presents life in the divine presence on the way to the temple and in the temple as a model for life and not simply for a particular occasion of pilgrimage.¹³³ For Christians, such a model for life is embodied in the figure of Jesus, who according to the Gospel of John (1:14) lived in the world (more literally, "pitched a tent") as the living tabernacle of God's word and glory. The model of the temple and tabernacle is not only an ancient one; it continues today. Jewish and Catholic traditions use temple language and imagery in their Sabbath services, offering moments of sanctuary.

The third model, as much as it is a challenge of faith, speaks to the human desire and urge to overcome the limitations of this world and to sense the wider connections of life within it. It further acknowledges that somehow the great giver of the life force of our universe is near, that the universe is not simply an empty and impersonal “void” (Gen. 1:2), but a reality where the transcendent can become immanent and personal. As a consequence, the third model adds motivation and inspiration to the search for understanding the world’s challenges, and it is a call to act on them. It summons our best selves to respond to the worst in ourselves and our world.

All three models offer distinct theological advantages, and together they suggest a powerful way for thinking about reality. The first model recognizes the real problems of power in the world. The second calls for a life of the heart and mind to examine and understand these realities. The third connects this life to a sense of the divine that can guide and give hope in responding to the world’s challenges. If we can set aside the limitations of these models and focus on their insights, we may gain a view of the world’s goodness, grace, and wondrous potential for the divine, even as we acknowledge the world’s unruliness, its chaotic quality, and the potential for terrible human evil. The three models, and the visions that they express, contribute toward our understanding Genesis 1. Over the next two chapters, we will see how Genesis 1 transforms the language and imagery of these models into its own priestly vision of reality.