

### Chapter Three: An Analysis of Genesis 1 – 11

God's blessing on Noah is an important milestone in the relation between humanity in general and the land. Prior to the flood, God refers to humanity and the earth virtually synonymously: 'Men began to multiply on the face of the land...the Nephilim were on the earth...the wickedness of man was great on the earth...the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth...I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land...the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth' (Gen.6:1 – 12). Afterwards, God commits Himself to never cursing the ground again for as long as the earth remains (Gen.8:21 – 22). In an echo of the original creation when the waters first receded from the virgin land, God blessed humanity, who at that time was Noah and his sons. But despite the similarities, differences exist. The blessing on Noah and his sons does not override the previous curse of thorns and thistles on the land provoked by Adam and Eve. Noah and his line are to 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'

The phrase 'rule and subdue' is curiously absent from the blessing, however, suggesting that the original creational dominion is not restored to humanity in general. To add an additional complexity to the post-flood world, God instills the fear and terror of humanity in the animals. This is similar to but different from the original creational blessing in that human beings are still clearly at the top of the creation order and unique in creation (they bear the Adamic *imago dei*), but not in the same way as in Genesis 1. The creation is not cooperative, responsive, and receptive to humanity as it was with Adam and Eve. Rather, the post-flood creation is increasingly adversarial to humanity. Humanity and the animals are at odds. Stipulations on consuming animal blood are inserted (9:4), confirming Noah's sensitivity that his continued existence on the land is linked to (or even dependent on) innocent animal bloodshed (8:20 – 21). In addition, human bloodshed must be answered by the blood of the guilty human party (9:5 – 6) because of God's commitment to not duplicate the flood as His response to human violence and evil. Apparently the earlier divine sign of protection given to Cain was either impractical to duplicate or failed to prevent bloodshed on a wider level. It was necessary therefore for God to sanction some measure of human retaliation. However, from the caveat 'while the earth remains' (8:22) and from what we know from the New Testament, God leaves open the possibility that He will create an entirely new earth if it is ever overwhelmed again with human violence and bloodshed.

The unique status of Israel as God's true humanity further tempers how we can apply the creational accounts to the subject of work. Only Israel out of all of humanity could properly say that their relationship with their land allowed them to live and work as God intended, or at least near to what God intended. This idea is reinforced by the Wisdom writings, which we will study below. By their occupation of the divinely superintended promised land, Israel expressed the idea that they were or becoming God's true humanity, the people to whom God restored or was restoring the blessing Adam had lost. The special relationship Israel had with their land was a unique arrangement God ordained as the tangible manifestation of Israel's covenant relationship with Himself. Through their relationship to their land, Israel bore witness to the fact that her covenant God was the Creator, the Creator of the earth. Israel also bore witness to what had been lost by humanity in creation, and by extension to the redeeming, supernatural provision of God to God's true humanity, the covenant people. These themes are present in a very important passage from Deuteronomy:

For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, **is not like the land of Egypt** from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. **But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.** It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you. (Dt.11:11 – 17, boldface mine)

Israel's land was not just different from the land of Egypt, it was unlike any other area of land in the world. The eyes of YHWH were upon it, and so long as God's people maintained a right relationship with Him, God nourished the land primarily by rain as opposed to humanly devised methods of irrigation. Of course God sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous, but this does not diminish the special significance of Israel's land. It would not be like the vegetable gardens so familiar to the Egyptians and all the other people in the world. Israel's land was absolutely unique because they stood in a unique relation to YHWH. The boundaries of the land promised to Abraham (Gen.15:18) have the same boundary markers as the garden given to Adam and Eve (Gen.2:8 – 14). Later

we find in the prophets the idea that when Israel's relationship with God is restored, the promised land would become like the garden of Eden (Ezk.36:35, Joel 2:3, Isa.35:1-10, 51:3) and Jerusalem will be the new supernatural source of water like the river in Eden (Ezk.47:1 – 12, Zec.14:8). This is significant in that Israel and Israel alone was the people to whom God was restoring the original primeval blessing. While the rest of humanity would eventually be blessed because of God's promise to Abraham, only to Israel was God directly renewing the blessing and making their life similar to the life experienced by humanity in the garden.

The significance of this arrangement was not lost upon Israel. It was part of the wider theme that God's original creation was good, and that God would also restore the original creation order to His people. Thus the primeval motif of blessing, fruitfulness, and possession of land given to Adam and Eve recurs at very important moments in the lives of the patriarchs: Abraham's call (Gen.12:2), his circumcision (17:2, 6, 8), his offering of Isaac (22:16ff.), God's restating of the promise to Isaac (26:3ff.), God's reassurance of Isaac (26:24), Isaac's blessing of Jacob (28:3), God's promise to Jacob (35:11), the sojourn of the chosen family in Egypt (47:27), and Jacob's narration of the family history to Joseph (48:3ff.). The shift, however, between these events and the original creation account is that God turns the command to be fruitful into a promise, while dominion over nature becomes dominion over Israel's enemies. N.T. Wright suggests that the Genesis Rabbah (14:6), by claiming that Abraham was God's means of undoing the sin of Adam, implies that Israel is or will become God's intended true humanity possessing God's good land.<sup>1</sup>

God was shaping Israel to be (in a sense) a restoration of His true humanity, a parallel to Adam and Eve. He placed them in a garden land because He wanted them to enjoy the fruit of His gardening. The significance of this arrangement was not lost upon Israel. It was part of the wider theme that God's original creation was good, and that God would also restore the original creation order to His people.

As we see in Deuteronomy 11 and other passages of Scripture, Israel's garden land paralleled Adam and Eve's garden land in Eden: God's original home for humanity. The garden land Israel inherited would flow 'with milk and honey' and 'drink water from the rain of heaven' because the LORD God Himself cared for it (Dt.11:10 – 12). This was similar to God's first arrangement with Adam and Eve. God made a garden for them, filled it with trees laden with fruit; and God Himself watered the garden with a river He caused to flow from Eden (Gen.2:9 – 10). By contrast, however, the land of Egypt, out of which God delivered Israel, required sowing and watering 'like a vegetable garden' (Dt.11:10). This was similar to the 'toil' and 'sweat' required cultivating 'fields' after the fall (Gen.3:17 – 19). Thus, Israel's land was unique because only here, out of all the places in the world, did the Creator God, for that people and at that time, promise to care for both land and people like this. Only with Israel did God open a window of insight back into the way things were.

Consideration of the Sabbath expands our understanding. The links between the creation narrative and Israel's practices are especially important concerning the recurring theme of sabbath rest. In Leviticus 25, God promised Israel that He would water their land, bring forth produce abundantly, and thereby nourish the people even when they did no work on their sabbath day every seven days, their sabbath year every seven years, and in their Jubilee year every fifty years. During these Sabbath times, Israel was to simply go out into their land, pick fruit from their trees, and eat (e.g. Lev.25:6 – 7). This echoes the original conditions humanity was intended to enjoy in the creation, where Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the trees of the garden land freely (Gen.2:16). Again we find a confirmation of our view of pre-Fall life. Israel's multi-layered sabbath ordinance seems to have been an absolute mitigation of work on behalf of Israel during these times for three reasons: to look backward to the rest imposed on creation (Ex.20:8 – 11, 23:12, Deut.5:14) which was the rest that Adam and Eve were originally living within, to foreshadow the rest of being in Christ (Heb.3:12 – 4:13), and to allude to the rest in the future Eternal Kingdom (compare motifs in Rev.21 – 22). The first link is the important one for our purposes. Israel was to do no farming, irrigating, or cultivating on their seventh day, their seventh year, and their Jubilee year. Instead they were simply to enjoy the abundance of the land and eat from the land directly.

The entire structure of Genesis 1 – 11 makes simple appeals to Genesis 1 and 2 problematic. Just as there is a contrast between Israel, God's true humanity, and all Israel's neighbors, so there is a contrast between living (and working) on God's good land and living (and working) in cities. The Pentateuch begins by leveling a critique on the city not only by describing it as the brainchild of Cain and Nimrod, but using a very particular literary structure. Scholarship originally done by Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn and strongly affirmed and extended by Duane Garrett has compared Genesis to the oldest Near Eastern primeval history – the Akkadian version of the Atrahasis

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<sup>1</sup> These observations of Genesis and the rabbinical literature was made by N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1990)

epic – and the Greek mythic tradition exemplified by Homer’s *Iliad* and Stasinos’ *The Cypria*.<sup>2</sup> Myths from other traditions are very concerned with overpopulation. Atrahasis, for instance, records the Babylonian gods trying to control the spread of mankind with a plague, a famine, another famine, and a resolution to have natural barrenness in some women, a high infant mortality rate, and artificial barrenness by three types of cult priestesses. The Zoroastrian tale of Yima also deals with overpopulation and the gods’ response to man’s crowding the earth with a flood of snow. In the Greek tradition, war is the agent of the gods to combat overpopulation. *The Cypria* of Stasinos has the note:

There was a time when the countless tribes of men, though wide-dispersed, oppressed the surface of the deep-bosomed earth, and Zeus saw and had pity and in his wise heart resolved to relieve the all-nurturing earth of men by causing the great struggle of the Ilian war, that the load of death might empty the world. And so the heroes were slain in Troy, and the plan of Zeus came to pass.

Interestingly enough, Genesis 1 – 11 seems to follow a five fold structure that undergirds other ancient literature. I have modified the structure ascribed to Genesis 1 – 11 by Kikawada and Quinn and also Garrett. I have placed a genealogy at the start of each subsection, which seems to me a more natural way to break up the text. A diagram may help in comparing the various traditions:

<b>Homer’s Iliad (European)</b>	<b>Atrahasis (Babylonian/Akkadian)</b>	<b>Zoroastrian Avesta (Old Iranian)</b>	<b>Genesis 1 – 11 (Hebrew)</b>
Problem: Overpopulation, wickedness, earth burdened	Creation (1.1 – 351): the work of the gods and the creation of humans	Creation: Ahura Mazda tells Yima (human) to be king over creation	Creation (1:1 – 2:3): God creates the world and humans and blesses them
First Threat: Zeus sends the Theban War; many destroyed	First Threat (1.352 – 415): Humans numerically increase; plague from the gods to limit overcrowding; Enki’s help	First Threat: Overpopulation; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	First Threat (2:4 – 4:25): Genealogy of heavens and earth; the fall; God promises victory to the seed of the woman; Cain kills Abel and settles in a city; God preserves Seth
Second Threat: Zeus plans to destroy all by thunderbolts; Momos dissuades Zeus	Second Threat (II.i.1 – II.v.21) Humanity’s numerical increase; drought from the gods; Enki’s help	Second Threat: Overpopulation; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	Second Threat (5:1 – 9:29): Genealogy of Adam to Noah; human corruption and bloodshed; God cleanses the land through the flood; God preserves Noah and family
Third Threat: Momos suggests that Thebis marry a mortal to create Achilles and that Zeus father Helen of Troy; war results between the Greeks and the barbarians	Third Threat (II.v.22 – III.vi.4): Humanity’s numerical increase, Atrahasis Flood, salvation in boat	Third Threat: Overpopulation; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	Third Threat (10:1 – 11:9): Genealogy of Shem, Ham, Japheth; Tower of Babel and dispersion

<sup>2</sup> The original five-part structure displayed below was discovered by Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1989), p.36-53; see also Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (2nd publishing Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publishing, 2000), p.105 – 109

Resolution: Many destroyed by Trojan War, earth lightened of her burden	Resolution (III.vi.5 – viii.18): Numerical increase; compromise between Enlil and Enki; humans cursed with natural barrenness, high infant mortality rate, cult prostitution (to separate sex and procreation)	Resolution: Ahura Mazda sends a deadly winter with heavy snowfall to punish overcrowding; Yima told to build a three storied enclosure to survive; humanity destroyed outside while a boy and girl born in enclosure every 40 years	Resolution (11:10 – 26): Genealogy of Shem; introduction of Abram (In 11:27ff., God calls Abram out of Ur to begin Israel.)
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We can see at a glance that the Hebrew tradition is also concerned with population, but in exactly the opposite sense. The Hebrew God, far from punishing human beings for population growth, orders them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’ Kikawada and Quinn argue, ‘This command, so long familiar to us, is in its cultural context utterly startling, as unexpected as the monotheism.’<sup>3</sup> Frymer-Kensky says that this command to be fertile is ‘an explicit and probably conscious rejection of the idea that the cause of the flood was overpopulation and that overpopulation is a serious problem.’<sup>4</sup> Temple cult prostitutes who used various forms of birth control divorced sexuality and childbearing, but the Hebrew God unequivocally united the two. It is significant that such cult practices were coupled with overpopulation myths in ancient *cities*, because cities faced that problem. Kikawada and Quinn conclude: ‘All other traditions view population control as the solution to urban overcrowding. Genesis offers dispersion, the nomadic way of life. Population growth is from the very beginning of the Genesis primeval history presented as an unqualified blessing. The blessing in Genesis 1:28 finds a fulfillment in the dispersion ‘upon the face of the whole earth,’ which concludes the primeval history. Genesis 1 – 11 then constitutes a rejection of Babel and Babylon – of civilization itself, if its continuance requires human existence to be treated as a contingent good. For Genesis the existence of a new human was always good.’<sup>5</sup>

Jewish creational monotheism thus begins with a strong ethical critique and condemnation of human civilization, or at least certain forms of it. This certainly impacts work as a facet of human civilization. While it affirms the goodness of creation, and while later Psalmists and New Testament writers would draw on the implications of the creation narrative to say that the natural world and all foods are good, or that the human body, as a part of creation, has ethical importance and must also be resurrected into the new creation, Jewish creational monotheism carries with it a pessimistic view of the cultural and institutional matrices that are laid on top of the created world by human beings. There is a tension the biblical writers perceived between human conduct as originally intended and circumscribed by God for His covenant people, and the way in which human life was actually conducted everywhere else, and often among the chosen people as well. Israel’s charter document, the Pentateuch, begins with a sophisticated polemic against the institutions and attitudes of their pagan neighbors. Genesis 1 – 11 is fighting doctrine. It uses Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 not as a description of what is true for all humanity in general, but as a polemical doctrine to show how only Israel out of all humanity was a partial restoration of God’s original intent. This framework impacts how we discuss work, and we will see exactly how later.

The theme of the city is also important because of the polemical role it plays in the framework of the canonical biblical literature. This may be surprising because of my personal involvement in urban ministry and intellectual interest in urban development, but a negative literary evaluation of cities does not mean a disdain for people in cities; quite the opposite. A negative literary evaluation of cities is rooted in a firm love for human beings, and in fact for particular human beings who are often victims of the city. When human sin reaches its summit in the Bible, it is always expressed in a city. When God’s judgment falls the most severely, it falls on a city. We have here a theme with two simultaneous faces. Humanity is doubly alienated from both God and land by the fall and the murder of the innocent. The first city, Enoch, began with Cain the murderer, and symbolized a rebellious humanity that continues to shed human blood and claims a false permanence on the earth. The second city was Babel, a project epitomizing human arrogance, which God scattered. The third city of note was Sodom and its sister city Gomorrah, upon which God’s fiery wrath burst down. God set up hard distinctions between priestly Levitical cities and the rest of non-city-dwelling Israel (Lev.25). But Israel nevertheless urbanized after the Jews had spent some

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p.38.

<sup>4</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky. ‘The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for Understanding Genesis 1-9,’ *Biblical Archaeologist* 40 (1977):152. See also B.S. Yegerlehner, *Be Fruitful and Multiply* (Diss., Boston University, 1975) and David Daube’s *The Duty of Procreation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn. *Before Abraham Was*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, p.51

time in the land, due to a variety of influences: the presence of the Canaanites (under Gideon and Abimelech), national security and defense considerations (under David), and pride, diplomacy, and statecraft (under Solomon).

This development was *criticized*, not legitimated by the major narrative works: Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. During the era of the divided kingdom, we find that the Northern Kingdom of Israel urbanized rapidly. Hosea and Micah condemned this development (Hos.8:14; 11:6; Mic.1:5 – 16; 5:10 – 15), but no prophet saw the issues more clearly than Amos, who prophesied God’s scattering of the Northern Kingdom using the motif of the city: ‘and it shall devour the citadels of Ben-Hadad, Gaza, Tyre, Bozrah, Rabbah, Kerioth, Judah, and Israel’ (Am.1:1 – 2:5; 3:6 – 11; 5:1 – 5; 6:8). The Southern Kingdom of Judah resorted to city-building many times and distorted the priestly meaning of Jerusalem, which caught the attention of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, the Chronicler, and many other prophets; God destroyed Jerusalem on two significant occasions, once after the Israelites drove out the Shekinah glory, and the other after the national leadership crucified Jesus Christ. The other Gentile cities, like Babylon, the cities of Egypt, Nineveh, and Tyre were all universally condemned by God. Peter referred to the church being in Babylon, which is probably not a cryptic reference to Rome (it is hardly subtle), but a thematic echo reminding Christians that the human civilization in which the church sojourns is akin to the Babylon of old (1 Pet.5:13). And of course God’s eschatological judgment is described as judgment on a city called Babylon; poetic references and literary forms used by the book of Revelation come from all the cities denounced in the Old Testament. The Great City manifests all their characteristics and invites God’s ultimate judgment upon it. Just because humanity’s final destiny is a city, the New Jerusalem, does not make the sin of city-building any less sinful. The relation between the New Jerusalem and humanity’s current cities is one of discontinuity, not continuity, as we will explore in chapter 3.

We can now explore how exegesis has been affected by ignoring the literary markers in the Genesis text. One interpretation of Genesis 1 – 11 is the so-called ‘cultural mandate’ in the Reformed tradition. In principle and in practice, the Reformed notion of the ‘cultural mandate,’ originating as it did in response to the medieval Catholic position that true spirituality necessarily led one into the clergy, affirms humanity’s contemporary work on the earth as God intended plan for humanity from Genesis 1. The Reformed tradition has generally held that economic development, government and politics, and culture are merely God’s affirmative will for humanity’s spread over the created world. It would be hard to overstate how significant this assumption is to the Reformed tradition, particularly the magisterial Reformation (e.g. Presbyterians, Lutherans, etc.) because of their historic alliance with local government and the merchant class over against imperial Rome and the Catholic landowning class.

In this conceptual framework, what we experience in human history is supposedly what God intended from creation. Human civilization is even seen (e.g. by Reformed theology) as the goal of creation. Typically, however, very little attention is given to the full impact of the Fall because interpreters treat Genesis 1 – 3 as an arbitrary unit about ‘creation and fall’ leading to merely personal problems like marital tension, as opposed to *two* literary units consisting of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 and 2:4 – 4:26 leading to personal *and* broad social/institutional problems, archetypally. Most Protestant commentators, because of their non-literary approach to the Genesis text, miss the implication that enjoying God’s blessed land was characteristic of the true humanity whereas living in humanly constructed cities (i.e. civilizations) was characteristic of apostates. Whereas originally we were commissioned to spread a garden, now we spread cities. Moreover, virtually all interpretations of the Genesis record suggesting that human work ‘fulfills’ the creation tend to divorce the unique history of Israel from the creation account. This is due to Protestant interpreters’ failure to recognize that Genesis 1 – 11, contextualized into the remainder of the Pentateuch, is a polemical text arguing for the uniqueness of Israel. The most critical exegetical move, however, involves the creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3. The Reformed tradition takes the ‘rule and subdue’ command as if the form and conditions in which it was given are the same form and conditions that exist today. So does Pope John Paul II in the papal encyclical *Laborem Exercens*.<sup>6</sup> That text is taken as applicable and intact to all humanity as we are today, which, if my analysis above is correct, is *precisely the opposite of its true meaning*.

Often, to bulwark the ‘cultural mandate,’ a hallmark of Reformed theology, the meticulous sovereignty of God in history, is invoked. Of this, many things could be said, but I will venture only one remark at this point. It is one thing to say with Moses that ‘the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,’ ‘separated the sons of man,’ and ‘set the boundaries’ of the Gentile families from the outset (Dt.32:8, cf. Paul’s remark on this in Acts 17:26), but it is quite another to claim that God superintended all of their activities henceforth (e.g. Cain’s activity, Noah’s unrighteous contemporaries, Nimrod’s ambitions, humanity’s warfare, the rise of the military empires, etc.). The Genesis text is cautious about seeing God’s providential hand behind every human act. Later prophetic writers also encourage us to be cautious. For example, although Habbakuk proclaimed that God was raising up the Babylonians, Zechariah says that the Babylonians violently overstepped God’s intentions (Zec.1:15). Likewise, Daniel saw major

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<sup>6</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*.

Gentile empires as distorted animals, reflecting a distortion of the creation order where God's boundaries were blurred. Protestant eyes, through rather uncritical theological lenses, have tended to interpret worldwide variations in economic activity, government, and cultures merely as manifestations of God's providential supervision of humanity's dispersal across the earth. On the popular level this contributes to why the Reformed tradition, notably in Europe and America, has been slow to recognize situations of injustice and inequality. Our reading of Genesis 1 – 11 requires that we be sensitive to precise those issues. It also contributes, unfortunately, to Protestants – not least contemporary American evangelicals – being resistant to recognizing when they themselves have been complicit in producing such injustice and inequality. We will have occasion to study more aspects of the Reformed position alongside other positions held by other church traditions. Suffice to say here that we have enough data using a literary interpretation to question this Reformed notion of the 'cultural mandate.'

The broad theme of Israel being the redeemed people of God restored to live – in some sense – the human life intended from creation cannot be overlooked. Israel alone had special status as God's true humanity. This is reinforced by the themes of land and special blessing. Only God's true humanity enjoys God's good land. Hence Israel's national lifecycle of faithfulness and apostasy is described in terms of enjoying the promised land and being exiled from it, just as the original humanity, Adam and Eve, were initially stationed to enjoy God's good land and then were exiled from it. And the nation Israel at the end of Moses' life was to enter the promised land, which echoes the idea of the true humanity who once possessed God's land in the idyllic creation. One simply cannot align 'creation theology' (emphasizing humanity's commonalities by blurring the distinctions between Israel and the Gentiles) to eclipse 'salvation history' (emphasizing Israel's uniqueness), an assertion I will substantiate throughout this chapter and the next. God's election of Israel made them a unique people. God brought about something of a restoration of the original creation to them and no one else. Additionally, we have no indication that when humanity comes to God through Jesus Christ that this theme functions in the same way for Christians (see the next chapter); Jesus was an alien and pilgrim in a way that Israel had not been. These errors result from the lack of a serious literary methodology in approaching the texts.

Thus in Genesis we find several important considerations when trying to understand work, and at least a few arguments directly against the work ethic promulgated by most Christians today. (i) The textual clues highlighting the difference between pre-fall and post-fall life strongly suggest that Adam and Eve did not work in a conventional manner before the fall. Prior to that, their chief responsibility was a priestly one: to worship YHWH and to spread the conditions of the garden throughout the creation. (ii) The contrast between land and city should immediately raise issues, not simply about whether living in a rural or urban environment is more desirable, but how Israel clearly saw all Gentile civilizations as symbolized by the city, a negative theme to say the least. Work conducted by and in Gentile civilizations is therefore suspect. (iii) Stated another way, the special role of Israel as God's true humanity must be considered. Only Israel out of all peoples was given a special land in which their life and work on it approximated somewhat the life of Adam and Eve in the unspoiled creation. Israel was unique, and the very introduction to their covenant charter is a polemical historical rendering of their origin relative to the origin of other human civilizations. (iv) The nature of Israel's sabbath suggests that even Israel did not experience the fullness of God's creational blessing. The theme of sabbath rest evidenced by Israel's sabbath points to a much more restful and physical labor-free original relationship with creation.