

## The Bible Versus Its Texts: Genesis 1 and 2 as a Case Study

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For Further Reading: [Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate: Being Honest to the Text, Its Author, and His Beliefs](#) (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

See Also: [Why Academic Biblical Scholars Must Fight Creationism](#)

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Biblical scholars often talk about the necessity of reading and acknowledging the texts of the Bible *on their own terms*. This gets repeatedly voiced by the scholarly community because in the large majority of cases the Bible's texts are not read on their own terms, but on the terms of their readers—that is through the assumptions and beliefs that readers bring to this collection of ancient literature, even prior to reading a single page.

Said differently, modern readers—and I target fundamentalists, creationists, and evangelicals in particular—often approach the texts of the Bible with handed-down beliefs and assumptions *about* these texts that were shaped by what is implied or understood in this collection of ancient texts' title, "the Holy Bible," one of which is the belief that they are no longer a collection of texts in the plural—with competing worldviews, ideologies, and theologies—but a text in the singular, and moreover one with a homogeneous narrative and message penned by the spirit of a single divine author! All of these a priori belief-claims *about* the text, now in the singular, are examples of reading the Bible's texts on the terms and context imposed by this exterior interpretive framework, "the Holy Book," and not on the terms of the texts themselves and their unique cultural contexts. The modern tendency to harmonize Genesis 1 and 2 together, and in effect toss out the unique—and competing—messages and beliefs of the authors of these texts, is just one example among hundreds of the violence done to these texts when modern readers insist on reading them through the terms dictated by this collection of ancient texts' centuries-later label.

When modern readers attempt to "harmonize" these differences away what they are actually

guilty of doing is placing their own beliefs *about* the text or those they inherited through that which is implied in this text's later interpretive framework, "the Holy Bible," above the independent messages and beliefs of the authors of these texts. And this places these readers in a precarious situation because they not only place their beliefs about the texts above the individual beliefs and messages of the authors of these texts, but they also display—unintentionally I assume—a certain disdain and negligence for the texts themselves and what *they* reveal about their own compositional nature and the beliefs and messages of their once independent authors. Such reading practices negate our authors' beliefs and unique messages, and replace them with those of the reader! (*Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate*, 122)

It is my belief that one of the roles of biblical scholarship, especially when it comes to bringing knowledge about this field of study to a public readership, is to *defend* the biblical texts on their own terms, and that primarily means getting modern readers to acknowledge the competing and even contradictory beliefs, ideologies, and messages that the Bible's numerous authors had. It is an appeal for a more objective study of this collection of ancient texts, and not a subjective one where the reader's beliefs *about* the text trump those of the authors of these texts, our object of study.

### Genesis 1 and 2: A Case Study

Let me start by laying out the interpretive problem: fundamentalists, creationists, and most evangelicals claim that Genesis 1 and 2 are not contradictory creation accounts, that they were penned by one author (often understood as God himself), and that they express the same "divine" message, beliefs, and worldview. We should initially note that such belief-claims *about* these texts are influenced more by what the title of this collection of ancient literature implies than by what the texts themselves actually claim about their own compositional nature and the beliefs and messages of their authors. In fact, when read on their own terms the texts adjudicate against such belief-claims! I will do my best to textually support this claim in the limited space below, but for a fuller treatment consult my *Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate*, 1-64.

No reader, even the most fundamentalist, would deny that Genesis' opening chapters present two creation accounts, even indicating where one ends and the other begins (Gen 2:4). This itself is a strong textual indicator that we have two once separate traditions which were redacted together at a later date. That is, the text of Genesis 1–2 itself indicates that it is in fact a composite text. Add to this our knowledge about literary production, duplicate traditions, and storytelling in the ancient world and we have corroborating cultural evidence that Genesis' opening chapters contain two different traditions, each representing how ancient Israelites variously told the story of creation.<sup>1</sup>

Yet even without these editorial markings, studying the Hebrew and paying attention to each creation account's unique vocabulary, style, message, how that message was told, and thematic and theological emphases, portraits of Israel's god, the presentation of holy days and other cultic

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1. For general discussions of the scribal culture and literary production in the ancient Near East see: Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (2004); Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (2007); Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (2011); Müller, Pakkala, & Haar Romeny, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible* (2014).

elements or the lack thereof, the condition of the earth at creation, the manner through which man and woman are created and the rational why, etc. further corroborate the fact that Genesis 1 and 2–3 are two competing versions or stories of creation which were most likely preserved by editors of a later date *precisely because* they represented varying traditions.

#### Genesis 2:4b — Observing Stylistic and Thematic Differences

For a critical reader whose guiding principle is to understand the texts of the Bible *on their own terms*, and this very much includes being able to identify the messages, worldviews, and beliefs of their authors, the fact that Genesis' second creation account was penned by a different scribe who held contradictory beliefs about the origin of the world and of man and woman is evident right from its opening verse. I will attempt to support this claim with the textual evidence below but readers should consult my *Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate* for a more thorough and persuasive treatment.

There are some significant differences that already appear in the opening verse of the second creation account: “In the day that God Yahweh made earth and skies. . .” (Gen 2:4b).

Let's just say momentarily that we're assuming single authorship. Then no matter how one treats the time referent “in the day” (*b<sup>e</sup>yom*), that is as an abstract reference or a concrete time, it plainly negates Genesis 1's symmetry and chronology. Read literally, according to the second creation account earth, the skies, man, plants, animals, and lastly woman were all created on one day. That is, “in the day that God Yahweh made earth and skies” he also formed man, then apparently plants, animals, and lastly woman. This radically contradicts with all of Genesis 1:1–2:3 on thematic, stylistic, and even theological grounds! The subsequent creation of each one of these life forms is chronologically dissimilar and utterly contradictory to the presentation, order, *and manner* in which the creation of each one of these life forms is presented in the first creation account: for the days on which God created the earth (day 3) and the skies (day 2) come and go without the creation of man (day 6).

The discrepancies are even more glaring if “in the day” is understood in figurative or abstract terms. For in this case not only does this time referent clash with the previous account's symmetry and chronology, but more significantly the temporal referent of Genesis 2:4b does not reflect the same precision and formulaic presentation of the chronology of creation so emphatically and carefully laid out throughout Genesis 1:1–2:3, nor for that matter the same language and style. This is because the same author did not write this verse! In other words, the orderly, formulaic, and precise use of both language, themes, and the chronology of creation so ritualistically accentuated throughout the entirety of Genesis 1:1–2:3 is simply abandoned and negated—when erroneously assuming the same author—by the imprecise, incorrect, or even abstract temporal reference of v. 2:4b concerning which day(s) god Yahweh made “earth and skies.” Again, this is because v. 2:4b and the story that follows were not written by the same scribe. Rather this is a textual indicator that a whole other creation narrative begins here, one that furthermore commences by claiming, contrary to the narrative of Genesis 1:1–2:3, that neither man, vegetation, nor animals have yet been created.

The presentation and appellation of the deity is also vastly different in this opening verse as well as throughout the entirety of this second creation myth. For instance, we immediately notice that the creator deity is now specified by name, Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> This feature is unique to both this creation account and the textual tradition to which it belongs, unceremoniously named the Yahwist.<sup>3</sup> The author of Genesis 1:1–2:3 on the other hand consistently refers to the deity with the Hebrew word for god (*'elohim*) in all thirty-five of its occurrences. And likewise, in the textual tradition to which the first creation account belongs (the Priestly source), the name Yahweh is not used nor is it known until it is revealed to Moses at Sinai.<sup>4</sup> Not so for the textual tradition to which this second account belongs; it always uses the personal name Yahweh and contradictorily professes that the name Yahweh was known and invoked throughout the whole patriarchal era.<sup>5</sup> This is just one example of contradictory authorial agendas and theologies between these two textual traditions.<sup>6</sup>

Along with the different terms for the creator god, both texts also portray their deity in strikingly different manners. In the first creation account God speaks things into existence. He is presented as majestic and utterly transcendent; he never interacts with his creation and stands completely outside of it. In the second creation account, by contrast, Yahweh is consistently portrayed in anthropomorphic terms. Yahweh *molds* man from the dust of the earth, presumably with his hands<sup>7</sup> (2:7), *breathes* into the man's nostrils, *plants* a garden (2:8), *takes* and *puts* the man in the garden (2:15), *commands* the man (2:16), *molds* animals from the ground (2:19), *builds* a woman from the man's rib (2:22), *walks* in the garden (3:8), calls and *speaks* to his creation (3:9, 13–14), *makes* garments of skins for the human pair (3:21), and lastly *puts* the human pair outside the garden (3:23). This type of anthropomorphism is never found in the first creation account's portrait of God. Rather it is a unique feature of the author of the second creation account.

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2. The divine name for Israel's god, Yahweh (transliterated as *yhwh*), is rendered in the majority of English translations as LORD. This practice, which is misleading as well as misrepresentative of the Hebrew text, follows a late Judaic oral tradition of substituting the Hebrew *adonai* (lord) for *yhwh* in the reading of the Torah, since later Judaism—centuries after these texts were actually composed—conceived of the name as sacred and unspeakable. Modern translation practices have regrettably chosen to follow this later oral tradition rather than the actual Hebrew text! Thus everywhere your English translation has LORD in small caps, the Hebrew manuscript has Yahweh, or more precisely \_\_\_\_.

3. Although the Yahwist as a literary source as Wellhausen originally hypothesized has come under criticism, it is still reasonable to talk about traditions, written and oral, that originated from the editorial hands of southern Judaean scribes.

4. See Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; and Exod 6:2-3—all from the Priestly textual tradition. For more on how the Priestly source differs from the earlier Yahwist see Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (1996), and more generally on the Documentary Hypothesis Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (2012).

5. See Gen 4:26; 12:3-8; 13:4; 15:7, etc.—all from the Yahwist textual tradition.

6. The Bible's various and at times competing textual traditions and how they relate to one another is the topic of my forthcoming book, *Understanding Bible Contradictions: Why They're There and What They Tell Us about the Bible and the Men Who Wrote It*.

7. Cf. The image of Yahweh as a potter fashioning man with his hands (Isa 64:8). See also Isa 29:16 where the verb *yatsar* is likewise used to describe the act of forming man from clay, like a potter does.

The verb choice of 2:4b also evidences the mindset of a different author. Here the author chooses the general verb “to make” (*‘asah*). Although we find *‘asah* also employed in the first creation account, the verb of choice for this author in expressing God’s creative work is *bara’*, “to create.” In fact, this is the verb this author consciously chooses for his opening verse. Here is the Hebrew of our two authors’ opening verses.

Gen 1:1        *bere’shit bara’ ’elohim ’eth hashamayim we’eth ha’arets*  
 “In the beginning when God created the skies and the earth”

Gen 2:4b       *beyom ’asot yahweh ’elohim ’erets weshamayim*  
 “In the day that God Yahweh made earth and skies”

The use of the verb *‘asah* in Genesis 2:4b not only marks a linguistic difference, but it also displays the mindset of a different author who conceived of creation in different terms from those employed by the author of the first creation account. Simply put, the author of Genesis 1:1 would not have used *‘asah* for his opening statement. It would have been an ill-conceived verb choice for this author. Conversely, the author of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 *never* uses the verb *bara’* anywhere in his composition! This especially holds true for this author’s presentation of the creation, or rather fabrication (*yatsar*), of man (2:7). This is not just a difference in verb choice, but a larger difference revealing how each one of our authors conceived and imagined the deity’s creative act.

The absence of the untranslated Hebrew particle *’eth* and the definite article *ha*, “the,” in v. 2:4b are other stylistic differences that evidence the mark of a different scribal hand and reflect this author’s desire to express a more poetic, even archaic, style. Conversely, the author who penned Genesis 1:1 does not, and would not have, written his Hebrew in this manner. There is the added difference that the order is inverted between these two verses—“the skies and the earth” and “earth and skies”—which on its own might not mean anything, but together with the differences reviewed so far is a further indication of another author’s hand.

In sum, the Hebrew of Genesis 2:4b and in fact the Hebrew of all of the second creation account evidences a more poetic style and tone, and has a more storyteller feeling to it. By contrast, the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1–2:3 evidences the hand of an educated pedantic scribe. It is no surprise to learn then that the first creation account was written by a sixth-century elite priestly guild; while the second creation account was written by a secular scribe, a storyteller from the days of old. These different social groups are reflected in the style and tone of the Hebrew itself (*ibid*, 48-50).

Genesis 2:5–24

The textual differences announced in just the first 6 words of the second creation account become even more pronounced when we read through the rest of this account on its own terms. Let me briefly note a couple of other linguistic or stylistic differences between our two authors that amount to larger thematic and/or theological differences, and indeed contradictions.

Not only does the beginning of the second creation account (Gen 2:4b-7) acknowledge, contrary to the imposed beliefs of fundamentalists, that no plants, animals, nor man have yet been created, but the earth is also portrayed in a radically different state of being. In Genesis 1:9-10, the earth is portrayed as emerging from the now tamed bodies of waters below; it is fecund and produces on God's command all kinds of seed-bearing plants and vegetation. Yet Gen 2:5 presents an earth that is dry and barren, unable to support plant life. It is a radically different worldview. In fact, the way in which each creation myth portrays the earth mirrors the different cultural influences that exerted themselves on our authors. Genesis 1 portrays earth that rises up or emerges from the waters, influenced by looking out onto the delta regions of fertile land that marked the Mesopotamia landscape. The earth of Genesis 2:5 however depicts the dry barren landscape of Canaan, where its underground springs (v. 2:6) were needed to water the ground. The contradictory portraits of earth, therefore, reflect the geographical realities of our different authors.

The earth also serves a very important thematic and theological purpose for the author of the second creation account that is not only missing from the first account, but actually negates it. This author employs a unique word to speak of not only the earth or ground, but more importantly of man's relationship to that ground, *'adamah*. The author of Genesis 1, however, uses *'erets* to invariably speak of the earth, and only uses *'adamah* in one specific expression, "every creeping thing *of the ground* by their kind." Moreover this is its only use throughout the entire Priestly source (Gen 1:25; 6:20; 7:14)! So the word *'adamah* and its meaning are unique to the author of the second creation account, and its use expresses this author's, and only this author's, views and beliefs about the nature of man, and of man alone.

The creation of man in the second creation account not only contradicts the chronology of creation so ritualistically set down in the first creation account but what many fundamentalist fail to recognize is that it also contradicts it on the manner *through which* man and man alone is created as well as the reason why, from the perspective of our author. In other words, its author's message and rationale are at odds with those of the author of the first account. This is nothing more than acknowledging these texts on their own terms and being honest to the beliefs and messages of their authors.

For example, Gen 2:7 uses a unique verb, *yatsar*, to speak of Yahweh molding man from the earth like a potter molds clay on a wheel.

And God Yahweh molded (*yatsar*) the man (*ha'adam*), clay from the ground (*ha'adamah*), and blew into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being (*nephesh hayah*). (Gen 2:6-7)

Indeed, the use of this verb reverberates with older traditions found in the Psalms where Yahweh is spoken of as molding (*yatsar*) man on a potter's wheel (Isa 29:16; 64:8). But not only is there a difference in the manner in which man, and man alone, is created between these two creation accounts, but more importantly the substance from which he is created and the rationale why. Gen 2:7 presents us with the first of this author's puns. Yahweh fashions man from the ground, *'adam* from *'adamah*. This is more than a play on words for our author; rather it represents his culturally-shaped

perceptions and agricultural worldview. Man is intricately attached to working the ground, so much so that when this author sat down to write his creation narrative he portrayed his god fashioning and defining man from the substance of the earth itself, thus providing an etiological tale explaining why man must till the ground for his livelihood—because he is substantively and linguistically formed of the ground! Woman is created from a different substance and her creation narrative also serves an etiological purpose.

Although the material from which man and woman are created together in the first account is not explicitly stated, this author nevertheless distances man and woman's creation from the earth and the animals of the earth. In Genesis 1 God creates the animals of the earth "by their kind." But man is not created by its kind, but rather *after the kind* of the divine beings, "in our image and likeness." In other words, man and woman are created (*bara'*)—not molded (*yatsar*)—apart from and in radically different manner to the creation of the animals of the earth, which the earth "brings forth" in this creation account. Not so in the second creation account. Man's creation, and only man's, is substantively and linguistically no different than that of any other animal. Both are molded (*yatsar*) by Yahweh from the same substance, the earth (*'adamah*), and both are referred to as "living beings" (*nephesh hayah*). Even after Yahweh blows into man's nostrils the breath of life (Gen 2:7), he still merely becomes no more than that by which the animals are also defined as: *nephesh hayah* (2:19). Of course, our author purposefully created these connections and has a specific reason for doing so. We should acknowledge *his* message, and not subordinate it to that of the author of Genesis 1 or interpret it away because it does not conform to the beliefs of later readers.

Genesis 2:18 specifically claims that god Yahweh molded the animals from the ground *so that* the man would not be alone, and *so that* he would have a counterpart or helper, that corresponded to his own being. Since man in both essence and name is of the earth, *'adam* from *'adamah*, it was only natural that a suitable counterpart for man be sought from the same substance and essence. Thus Yahweh fashions the animals too from the *'adamah* with the sole purpose of bringing them to the man so that he might *recognize* his own essence as it were among these potential suitors. We might again pause and note that this etiological story outright contradicts not only the order of the creation of the animals and then mankind in the first creation account, but more significantly the manner and the reason for their creation as well. This narrative detail our author consciously created in order to construct a narrative explaining why man's life-partner is not found among the animals of the same essence as himself, but rather in another being, not yet created—woman. This story ends by claiming that Yahweh *could not* fashion from the ground a fit companion for man. He must now fashion man's companion not from the *'adamah*, the substance from which man was created, but from the substance of man himself!

And God Yahweh caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man (*ha'adam*) and he slept. And he took one of his ribs and closed up flesh in its place. And God Yahweh built the rib which he had taken from the man into a woman (*'ishah*) and brought her to the man. And the man said: "This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. Accordingly she shall be called woman (*'ishah*) because from man (*'ish*) she was taken." (Gen 2:21-23)

The point behind the creation and naming of the animals in this second account is to

give an account of woman's creation, who contrary to the animals, is the perfect fit/companion for man. There is additionally not only wordplay going on in this account, but also the presentation of a culturally formed perspective that accentuates the essences from which man, animals, and woman were all created, and therefore how each one's being defines them and their relationship to one another: man is essentially tied to and defined by the ground whence he was molded, 'adam from 'adamah, and woman is essentially tied to and defined in relation to man whence she was "built," 'ishah from 'ish.

This was a consciously constructed narrative on this author's part and represents a radically different cultural perspective and worldview than that presented in Genesis 1:27, where man and woman are both created together in the likeness and image of the divine. It may even be argued that the later sixth-century BCE Priestly writer who wrote what is now the first creation account vehemently disagreed with this earlier portrait which essentially defined man as of the earth, and woman as of man.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the message of the first creation account and its author is that man and woman are essentially defined by the fact that they are both equally images and likenesses of the divine! These are radically contradictory and competing creation accounts of man and woman. Anyone seeking to harmonize these two different messages dilutes each one and neglects each author's unique perspectives and beliefs, valuing their own modern beliefs *about these texts* above the unique beliefs and messages expressed by the independent authors of these texts.

Finally, both accounts of the creation of man and woman serve as an etiological story explaining the origins of matrimony. This is more apparent in the second creation account. Why does man eventually marry woman? Our text responds by saying that it is because woman was substantially and essentially made from man's flesh. "On account of this a man ('ish) shall leave his father and his mother and adhere to his woman/wife ('ishah), and they shall become one flesh"—that is, as they originally were and still are! The first creation account gives a radically different answer. It is because God created mankind ('adam) as both male (zakar) and female (neqebah) together. (*Ibid*, 60-62)

Wordplay and puns are also unique to this second creation account, and help accentuate this account's anthropological orientation and the views of its author. For instance, we are told that from the ground ('adamah) Yahweh molds the man ('adam), but no other beast formed from the ground ('adamah) has a name, that is, a corresponding essence, similar to the man's; only woman does: "This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. Accordingly she shall be called 'woman' ('ishah) because from man ('ish) she was taken" (2:23). In the first account, male and female are created together in the image of the deity and his divine council ("let us make," "in our image" [1:26]). But in the second account, the creation of man and woman is presented separately; and through the use of wordplay their essences, that is, the created stuff from which each one was fashioned, is highlighted: man ('adam) comes from the ground ('adamah), woman ('ishah) from man ('ish). These two distinct perspectives and messages reveal how each one of our authors variously viewed, and thus uniquely composed a narrative about, the nature of man and woman.

In sum, I hope my readers start to perceive that each creation myth was shaped by a variety of

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8. For more about the Priestly writer of Genesis 1 see especially chapter 2, "The Seven-Day Creation Account and the Priestly Writer" of my *Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate*, as well as Carr's *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (1996), and Smith's *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (2010).



different factors. The first proceeds with a formulaic and ritualistic rigor, thematically and linguistically, presenting the creation of the then visible world in an order and fashion that is easily perceivable. Here in Genesis 2, on the other hand, the creation of man and then plants follows a rational set by this author and his agriculturally oriented worldview. Creation does not proceed on any spatially or temporally ordered grounds as our first account does, but rather on etiological and thematic grounds with an eye toward linguistic wordplay and etymologies. It's a secular storyteller's creation account, not that of an elite priestly guild.

Moreover, there are numerous lexical and stylistic features unique to Genesis 1 or to the Priestly source in general that also strengthen the conclusion that these are two radically different creation narratives with differing worldviews and messages about the creation of the earth and skies and especially of man and woman. These include: 1) the Hebrew verb "to separate" or "to divide" which highlights the primary task of the priests, to distinguish and divide between the pure and the impure; 2) the word for dry land (*yabbashah*), while elsewhere the earlier Yahwist uses *harabah*; 3) the noun *miqweh*, a "collection" (1:10); 4) the Hebrew word translated "by their kind," which also finds itself employed in P's dietary laws and in P's version of the Flood narrative. More significantly the lengthier and uniquely P expressions "every creeping thing of the ground by their kind," "the animals (of the earth) by their kind," "the beasts by their kind," and "birds by their kind" are found nowhere else in the Bible, only in the Priestly source; 5) the Hebrew word for "lights" or "luminaries" in Genesis 1, *ma'or*; 6) *raqi'a*, the "solid domed expanse," is unique to P and other postexilic texts, as with the expression *tohu wabohu*; 7) the term *mo'adim*, "fixed times/assemblies" (Gen 1:14) is unique to Genesis 1 and is found 160 times in the Priestly source while only 11 in non-P texts; 8) the noun *sherets*, "a swarm" or "swarming creatures," employed in Genesis is found fourteen more times in the Pentateuch, thirteen of which come from P. And the longer expression employing the verb, *sherets sharats*, is only found four other times, all of which come from other P passages; 9) likewise for the noun *remes*, "creeping-creature"; 10) the word for serpent, *tannin*, occurs five times in the Pentateuch, four of which are from P; 11) the word for "image" which appears three times in Genesis 1:26-27 only occurs three other places in the Pentateuch, all of which come from P. Additionally, the specific expression "created in the image of God" is unique to P, occurring here in Genesis 1:27 and in one other place, Genesis 9:6; 12) the expression "male and female" as opposed to "man and woman"; 13) the expression "be fruitful and multiply" occurs twelve times in the Pentateuch, all of them from P; 14) the verb "to subdue" is also unique to the Priestly literature and other postexilic texts. And the verb "to have dominion over" occurs seven times in the Pentateuch, all from P; 15) the expression "bearing/sowing seed" (*zara' zera'*) is also unique to P; 16) the expressions "vegetation yielding seed," "fruit trees producing fruit of its own kind," "seed of its own kind," and "trees producing fruit whose seed was in it" are unique to the Priestly source; 17) the term used for "food" (*'oklah*) in Genesis 1:29 is not only unique to the Priestly literature, appearing seven times in the Pentateuch, all from P; but it is also distinguishable from J's use of the word for "food"—*ma'akal* (Gen 2:9); 18) the verb "to consecrate" or "to make holy" obviously shares a unique place in any literature written by ancient priests.

These unique expressions and word choices reflect much more than just differences in style and language from the other Pentateuchal sources. Rather they reveal this author's unique mindset, religious beliefs, education, social standing, and even ideology (see *ibid*, 71-76).

## Conclusion

It should be noted in conclusion that everything in these two competing creation stories represent the culturally-formed beliefs, worldviews, and messages of their authors. Acknowledging and understanding their messages is what I have been labeling as being honest to the texts and their authors. When modern readers influenced more by the ideas and belief-claims associated with this collection of ancient literature's title, "the Holy Book" impose these ideas and belief onto these ancient texts, they unknowingly neglect the very texts themselves, their author's messages and beliefs. Perhaps I'll just end by citing my concluding paragraph to *Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate*.

So in the end the challenge that Creationists, Fundamentalists, and literal Evangelicals face is deciding whether they wish to be honest to these ancient texts and the beliefs and messages of their authors by simply acknowledging them, and acknowledging also that we in this century no longer believe in the same beliefs and worldview, or be honest to centuries-later interpretive claims and beliefs *about these texts* which represent the concerns and beliefs of later readers rather than those of the individual authors of these texts. And if being honest to these texts, their authors, and their beliefs and messages leads us to conclude that our most cherished beliefs about these texts, indeed what have become cultural "truths" for many, are not supported by the texts themselves when read on their terms, then that is the conversation that we as a culture must embark upon, openly, honestly, and courageously (126).