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NT 504 OA

Essay #2

John Walton explored the concept of cosmogony which describes a possible theory for how the world came into being. John suggested that people in the Ancient Near Eastern culture believes that one or more gods might have cooperated to bring the world into existence. John also explained that cosmology is the study of how the world was created. There is limited information to describe the actual creation process. However, one possible theory suggests there was no earth formation, then materials and elements came together to form the world and maybe the gods helped to bring the elements together. This is an interesting concept that is similar to the creation narrative in Genesis 1. In Genesis chapter one the Bible describes creation as the concept of things coming together to form the earth. The book of Genesis indicates that a single deity was responsible for bringing a world into being in six days. This single deity is referred to as God. The creation narrative has outlined a possible explanation regarding what occurred each day. Ultimately, one cannot prove or disprove the validity of the cosmogony narrative presented in the Ancient Near Eastern culture or the creation narrative presented in the bible.

John proposes that the Israelites believe that the concept of creation describes how things were organized and brought together to develop order in the universe. John also suggested the people in the Ancient Near East believe that on the first day the light was an important element in the formation of the world. Light represented the concept of time, space and periods. Light represented night and day, it represented periods of light and darkness, periods to be awake and periods for rest. The meaning of light was symbolic of time for Ancient Near East cultures. It

also appears that the light was a symbol of the presence of new life such as new plants and animals. One can conclude that in the Ancient Near East culture the concept of cosmogony is viewed as the organizing of matter that already existed in time and space to form a new world and the light was a significant symbol in the new creation.

As I review the Ancient Near East cosmogony reference, the story is similar to the creation narrative in Genesis 1. This shows me that Ancient Near Eastern culture had some belief in a deity as well as some form of creation. The similarities are things came together and the world was no longer the same. The differences in the Ancient Near East concept of creation the matter was already present. Then the matter organized themselves with the help of one or more deity. I was surprised by the major emphasis that was placed on the presence of the light source. It was as if the light was the symbol of the new creation and life began because there was light. The light removed the darkness and new life began. I was reminded of the text in John 8:12 (KJV)- “Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followed me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”. Also, 1 John 1 verse 5 “This is the message we have heard from him and declares to you: God is light; in him, there is no darkness at all”. Their belief system does not change my belief in the biblical version of creation. I believe that the narrative is explained differently in various cultures and cosmogony is just an explanation of what Ancient Near East cultures believe to happen on the day of creation.

In contrast to the Ancient Near Eastern culture, the book of Genesis suggests that there was nothing on the earth and God called the earth into existence in the form of a new creation. The first day the God started to create the earth and light was brought into existence. The second day the heavens or outer space was created. The third-day bodies of water, trees, other plants were created. The fourth day the sun, moon, and stars were created. The fifth-day sea creatures

and birds and other flying organisms were created. The sixth-day land animals were created and humans. The book of Genesis suggests that it took six days to create the earth and God rested on the seventh day. There appeared to be a vast contrast between the different areas of the creation, for example, light and darkness, water and dry land, heaven above and the earth beneath, humans and animals, living creatures like humans, plants and animals and nonliving things like mountains and rocks. Every aspect of the creation had a unique purpose but everything worked together to serve the needs of the creatures in the earth.

The light in the creation narrative appeared to be a significant part of creation. The light was created the first day of creation and its presence marked the establishment of time in the form of the first day. There were two major light sources and they were the sun which provided light in the day and the moon and stars that provided light in the night. The sun provided heat to warm the earth and it symbolized the start of a new day. In the dark period, the moon, and stars appear to represent the time of rest and rejuvenation in preparation for the next day. The light appeared to be a significant part of creation because before the beginning there was only darkness, then the light was used to demonstrate a difference in time that included night and day. As well as the establishment of seasons which are blocks of time. The light showed the contrast between light and darkness. The light was needed for the animals and trees to grow and the light-regulated when people slept and when they were awake. So, people slept when it was dark and they were awake and worked when it was the day.

The creation of humans was another significant part of the creative experience. Genesis 1 suggests the humans were made on day six and they were blessed by God. The blessing included being fruitful, multiplying to replenish the earth and having the dominion over the earth. The humans were encouraged to eat mainly green herbs. The humans had the privilege and the power

to rule the earth. The only specific limitation placed on the first humans was they should eat green herbs or plant source foods. The Bible is viewed by some individuals as a guideline regarding how they should live and some people interpret the bible literally. As a result, many people choose to maintain a meat-free diet. They strive to eat food that comes from the earth rather than manufactured food. One can also interpret the bible figuratively to suggest that green was symbolic of fresh healthy food sources.

I will conclude by suggesting both Ancient Near Eastern cultures and biblical readers appears to have an appreciation for the fact that the existence of the world was an important historic point. The creation of the light marked the beginning of time. Despite each culture's different approach to explaining the phenomenon, we all are grateful to have an opportunity to exist in the world. I am grateful for the ability to learn about different cultures and to share information in the world that came to being.

Bibliography

Genesis 1. <https://www.biblegateway.com>.KJV

John H. Walton, 2018. Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament, 2nd edition: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible Baker Academic