

GENEALOGIES AND SPIRITUALITIES IN GENESIS 4:17-22, 4:25-26, 5:1-32

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ABSTRACT

The three genealogies in Genesis 4:17-22, 4:25-26 en 5:1-32 show different intentions: the first wants (amongst other purposes) to give an aetiology of the trades; the second wants to stress the importance of a new beginning; the third wants to relate Adam to Noah. Each of these approaches to genealogy has a different intent; each wants to indicate a different aspect of God's care. Each thus evidences an own (though not unrelated) configuration of faith experienced, that is, a different spirituality.

1. OF FAITH IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES, THE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY, AND GENEALOGY SCHOLARSHIP

Recent Old Testament scholarship has increasingly become aware of the variety of configurations of faith within ancient Israel. This diversity does not involve only a rather straightforward growth in the faith of Israel from one form of belief in God to, presumably, a more advanced form of belief in God. Such a *heilsgeschichtliche* approach — in the earlier sense of the term (cf. Mildener 2000:1585) — would be akin to

the concept of progressive revelation, a view which regarded Old Testament history as a process of divine education of the Israelite nation (Rogerson 1988:537; cf. also Lombaard 2003:441).

Rather, Old Testament scholarship has made us increasingly aware of different forms of faith within ancient Israel at different times, also with such different expressions competing with one another at the same time. Particularly useful in this regard have been formulations such as those by Rainer Albertz and Philip Davies, the former referring to “Religionsinterner Pluralismus” (Albertz 1978), the latter to “Judaisms”

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(Davies 1996:145-182).² The diversity of the expressions of faith in Yahweh in ancient Israel finds expression within the Old Testament to the extent that, once recognised, it cannot be ignored.

Another interesting development of late in theological scholarship in general, is the strong rise in interest in the discipline of Spirituality. This is demonstrated, for instance, by the founding of two new academic societies for the study of spirituality during this year: in Africa, SPIRASA (the Spirituality Association of South Africa),³ and in Europe (the European Association for the Study of Spirituality). In both cases, the Dutch Psalm scholar, Kees Waaijman, who has been working in the field of spirituality for some four decades (cf. particularly Waaijman 2000), has been instrumental in setting up these societies.

This growth in interest in spirituality⁴ may provide us with yet another avenue, alongside proposals such as those by Albertz and Davies, with which to analyse the faith of ancient Israel, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible. To be sure, the tone set by Albertz and Davies and others — despite differences in where they set the bar for accepting material as historically useful — should in my opinion be adhered to: that a fundamentally historical approach is the key to studying the spiritualities we encounter in the Bible. The concern that an approach which takes spirituality as its express point of departure may gloss over exegetical and historical *minutiae*, is not unfounded (cf. Lombaard 2003:439-440; Brueggemann 2002:59; Houlden 1983:48).⁵ However, I remain con-

- 2 Neither of these is unique in the points they make: Albertz acknowledges as much in the opening paragraph of his Vorwort, and Davies takes his terminology from a number of authors he refers to in his footnotes.
- 3 See www.otnet.net/Home/to_the_point.html (January 30, 2004).
- 4 Spirituality may be described as, in essence, the ways in which faith finds expression in human thought and action. Spirituality and faith are thus not synonymous: pisteological orientation is, for these purposes, accepted as the given, with the subject matter of spirituality being the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and other results springing forth in certain particular ways, both conditioned and creative, from this existential orientation. For fuller descriptions of the concept of spirituality, see Kourie (2000: 9-33); Oostenbrink (1999:367-383); Marmion (1998:3-40); Downey (1997:5-29); Waaijman (1993:5-57); Smit (1989:85-92).
- 5 Albertz (1992:20-32) has for related reasons expressed similar reservations about Old Testament theologies.

vinced (cf. Lombaard 2003:440) that working with precisely these *minutiae* will lead Old Testament scholarship to productive insights on the ways in which Israel related to Yahweh, and on how this faith was then related to later generations (be it orally, in writing, or through editing). After all, the faith of ancient Israel was nothing if not historical⁶ (Von Rad 1962:118-125). What is more, for scholars so inclined, such study of the faith we find reflected in the Old Testament may well prove valuable, by means of parallels and analogies, for considered use in modern contexts of faith (e.g., Nolan 1982; cf. Lombaard 2004).

A third recent trend important for our purposes here, is a specific development in Old Testament genealogy research. Academic writings have tended to focus attention on historical (that is, referential and numerical — e.g., Heinzerling 1998:581-589; Etz 1993:171-187) and anthropological (e.g., Prewitt 1981:87-98; Andriolo 1973:1657-1669) issues.⁷ Of late, though, and building forth on these publications, a greater exploration of the theological possibilities of Old Testament genealogies is found (e.g., Plum 1989:66-89; Vermeulen 1991:175-193; and based inter-culturally: Oosthuizen 1993:190-104; Paul 1996: 143-162). This explicit search for theology in genealogy to a greater extent opens up avenues for finding further meaning in these texts.

In this study, I seek to bring together these three recent developments: the sensitivity to the multiple expressions of the faith we find reflected in the Old Testament, the increasing research interest in spirituality, and the search for extended meaning in Old Testament genealogies. I have therefore chosen three genealogies — Genesis 4:17-22, 4:25-26 and 5:1-32 — to show how each has a different intent. Each wants to indicate a different aspect of God's care. Each of these genealogies thus evidences an own (though not unrelated) configuration of faith; that is, a different spirituality.

6 Though, of course, not in the modernist sense.

7 The latter is fraught with at least as much difficulties as the former — cf. Johnson (1988:xiii-xiv).

2. SOME REMARKS ON GENEALOGIES IN GENERAL

Far from being mere lists of blood relations,⁸ genealogies in cultures ancient and modern serve/d multiple purposes. These include matters of law, inheritance, politics and diplomacy, economics, ideology, administration, theology, identity, cultural criticism, historical and societal (re)-presentation, association, power, status, aetiology, tradition, the military⁹ — usually in one sense or another to provide legitimacy to some current state of affairs (cf. Oeming 1990:9-36; Wilson 1994:213-215; Wilson 1979:19; Aufrecht 1988:208-209, 215-218, 223; Andriolo 1973:1659). Genealogy, as Aufrecht (1988:206-207) observes, is thus more than the patronymic phrase “X son of Y”: once this phrase is multiplied, it becomes genealogy; once it is genealogy, it gains multiple denotations.

Despite Noth’s (1948:232-237) distinction between genuine and secondary genealogies resting on the no longer accepted theory that names in genealogies are of necessity related to more extensive histories,¹⁰ what remains important is his recognition that at least some genealogies serve narrative purposes (Wilson 1994:202).¹¹ The value of this insight is that genealogies are now accorded interpretative value beyond what their historically accurate significance may or may not be purported as.¹² The historical setting in which genealogies had been re/created

- 8 British comedian Spike Milligan (1993) writes humorously of the “much begetting” one encounters in the Old Testament.
- 9 If one wanted to choose between these options, as used to be the case in earlier research (and still is with, e.g., Frankenfeld [1997], who is bent on pinpointing the exact Biblical genealogy from Adam to Jesus), it would have to be done in respect of a specific genealogy, not genealogies in general, and — advancing on Wilson (1994:204) — even then distinguishing between these possibilities would have to be done with circumspection. For brief overviews of research into Old Testament genealogies, see, e.g., Wilson (1994 [1975]:200-2011); Plum (1989:683&4).
- 10 Compare Gunkel (1911:73) with Von Rad (1934:35) for, respectively, seeing this relationship as condensation or expansion — Robinson (1986:603-605).
- 11 This insight has seen further developments in structural analyses of genealogies in Genesis; see, e.g., Johnson (1988); Steinberg (1989:41-50).
- 12 That is, Albright’s (1957:72-76, cf. 239) historical reliability of genealogies (among other texts) *versus* Wellhausen’s (1927:206-207) (i.a.) view that it is a social —

(as reflected by the reconstructed textual history) has at least as much significance as the genealogical plot. Put differently: the history of the telling is central to the history of the told. Put differently again (in the language of Wilson 1994:215, 222-223): the function of a genealogy is essential to understanding it.¹³

It remains interesting to note that in ancient Near Eastern societies priests were often the carriers of genealogies, probably because of the writing abilities, the social standing, and the political roles of priestly groups. This detail is open to assorted interpretations ... (cf. Ez. 2:62/ Neh. 7:64!). Suffice it for the moment, though, to note that the multiple denotations of Old Testament genealogies is perhaps a prime instance of its unmodernist fusion of religion and all other aspects of life (so too Plum 1989:86).

3. INITIAL REMARKS ON THE THREE GENEALOGIES

In the brief descriptions of the three genealogies following below, I will not be pointing out all the detailed exegetical and interpretative intricacies on which I have made all my decisions. Rather, I will relate in a few words the contents of each genealogy, en route to indicating the respective theologies and, from that, spiritualities we find reflected here. Where pertinent, though, I will briefly argue a point or refer to an interesting interpretation which occurs in the literature.

To start with precisely such a point: it seems clear to me that Genesis 4:17-26 cannot be read as a single text. Thematically, the three sections of 4:17-22 (genealogy), 4:23-34 (the curse of Lamech), and 4:25-26 (genealogy) are quite diverse. Reading the three sections as one (as, e.g., Bryan 1987:186-187 does), joins together too many lines of genre, theme, and theology. The composite nature of this text is just too pronounced for such treatment. Hence, I treat 4:17-22 and 4:25-26 independently.

or, in Laato's (1994:77-78) language, "ideological" — rather than a historical genre — cf. Wilson (1979:11-12, 21).

13 Still Gunkel, after all these years ...

3.1 Genesis 4:17-22 (Cainite genealogy; J)

Traditionally referred to as the Cainite genealogy, the “cultural genealogy” would probably be a better label in this instance. For here we have:

- In 4:17, Cain and his wife producing Enoch, and Cain¹⁴ then going on to build a city, named for Enoch.¹⁵
- In 4:18 is named in the briefest possible manner the birth of four new generations, from Enoch to Lamech. From Lamech, with his two wives Adah and Zillah (4:19),¹⁶ spring the initiators of four other parts of culture:
 - in 4:20, Jabal (son of Adah), is the first of the tent-dwelling livestock farmers;
 - in 4:21, Jubal (son of Adah), the first of the musicians (strings and pipes);
 - in 4:22, Tubal-Cain (son of Zillah), the first metal smith; and
 - in 4:22, we also find the enigmatic three-word concluding phrase *וַאֲחֹתַי תּוֹבֵל־קַיִן נַעֲמָה* thus, also daughter of Zillah).¹⁷ This brief sentence has usually been ascribed to the persistence of

14 Despite objections (cf., e.g., Wilson 1977:157-158; Wilson 1979:19, where the circularity of his argument renders it unpersuasive), the possibility that this genealogy may reflect Kenite tradition, and hence be an important consideration in the theory of the Kenite origins of Yahwism (cf. Johnson 1988:92), remains intriguing.

15 Wilson (1977:139-141) briefly weighs the problems of interpretation of 4:17 since Budde, namely the possibility that the closing reference in 4:17 to Enoch is a gloss, thus opening up the etymologically satisfying possibility that the city referred to would be called Irad, which parallels Eridu, the first pre-flood city in Mesopotamian narratives. Sasson (1978:174) favours a pun as the solution to the different but similar names in 4:17 and 5:15. Genealogical fluidity would offer another possible solution.

16 The atypical inclusion of the wives' names in 4:19 has been ascribed (so, e.g., Wilson 1977:141) to the names being carried over from Lamech's song, 4:23. The cohesive character of the narrative unit of 4:19-22, however, does not really warrant such a conjecture in this instance.

17 Andersen's theory on genealogical indicators of importance falters here (among some other problems with his broad structural theory on Genesis), in that Naamah should be encountered more readily in Genesis, and not only here, based on his theory — cf. Andersen (1994:244). A commonly held view is that each of the

a strand of tradition, awkwardly holding on for dear life here, or to the Jahwist's need for narratological/structural balance (i.e. a second child for Zillah too; cf. Wilson 1977:144). As it turns out, both possibilities may be correct (though not for the reasons they were proposed): continuing the pattern in 4: 20-22 of a connection between name and profession, Naamah (= "Giver-of-pleasure")¹⁸ may well, according to Vermeylen (1991:176, 182),¹⁹ be the initiator of prostitution.²⁰

When taken as a genealogy which has as its most important purpose the aetiology of certain facets of culture, the way in which the seven generations are referred to here (cf. Hess 1994:64; Westermann 1974: 439; Sasson 1978:173), seems less important to understanding these verses. It remains true, of course, that only in the last generation, with Lamech's offspring, does the linear style change to a segmented style: recording different children and not only the main genealogical line

names given in a genealogy would have been connected to a broader narrative, known to the Yahwist and his contemporaries. Wilson (1977:14728, 163) seeks to refine this view by contending that only those genealogical notes which are accompanied by brief descriptions may be adduced to prior, broader narratives. However, Wilson's criticism that the common view is never supported by evidence, is equally true of his proposal. Both alternatives remain possible.

18 Brichto (1998:305) recognises the meaning, but not the professional implications raised here.

19 Vermeylen takes this interesting possibility from the 1973 edition of the Jerusalem Bible. The English edition (1985:23i) preserves this interpretation, but does so through fine, nuanced formulation, without using the term prostitution — thus copying the style of the Yahwist here.

20 This unforeseen interpretation renders earlier descriptions of these "originators" as "father" of... (e.g., Wilson 1977:142) somewhat awkward.

It also clears up other earlier problems: probably because Hess (1994:59) draws heavily on the distinction in Wilson (1977:9-10, 18-37), who depends on Malamat (1994 [1968]:184-185), between segmented and linear genealogies, and ignores the distinction between narrative and list genealogies (Westermann 1974:8-24, 438 and Tengström 1981:19-21), he seeks repetitive patterns, and finds little and none such in Gen. 4:17-22 and 4:25-26. Only 4:18 evidences such a pattern (Hess 1994:60). Vermeylen would now offer him one more pattern.

In lighter vein: despite common wisdom, this interpretation also renders Naamah's profession only one of the oldest in the world.

(Wilson 1977:138). But the fact that a linear and segmented style is mixed, as is a list and a narrative style (cf. Westermann 1974:8-24, 438; Tengström 1981:19-21),²¹ was not the prime concern of the Yahwist here.²² These references — 4:17, 4:20-22, and 4:26 — are primarily what Golka (1977:44, read with Golka 1976:411) would term “aetiological” notes: aetiologies without narratives, yet universal in scope (referring to events that touch the whole of humanity), affirming the present by extrapolating into the past, ordering life rather than questioning it. The past thus authorises the present (Golka 1977:46-47).

The purpose of this genealogy is thus, on the one hand, to pinpoint the origins of key parts of ancient Near Eastern society: urban and rural settlement, music,²³ metal work and sex work (and, in 4:26b, religion). The implication this would have for the Yahwist’s intended audience, is to indicate these activities as ancient and, therefore, legitimate. This stands in distinction to other ancient Near Eastern narratives on the origins of components of civilisation, which tend to be mythological in nature (cf. Wilson 1977:149-155; 1979:13-18 for an overview). J, however, posts these developments in history, related to human figures. That is an important theological and anthropological point, demythologising society’s activities.²⁴

Because this pericope follows directly on the Cain-Abel fratricide narrative, its interpretational history has tended to see these cultural/technological developments as negative (cf. Paul 1996:144-160). The text itself gives no indication of this, though. Yet, this text, together with 4:25-26, leads Paul (1996:161-162; cf. Westermann 1974:453) to the following insightful remarks:

- 21 Distinctions such as these, and those by Noth (1948:232-237), Malamat (1994: 184-185) and others, between kinds of genealogies betray a clear scientific need to refine this genre. Hence, declaring the whole of the Bible as “eigentlich selbst schon eine Genealogie” — Frankenfeld (1997:7) — is unhelpful in this regard.
- 22 These considerations do lend further credence to the Yahwist’s role as editor, rather than as author, though.
- 23 Music as a profession, rather than as a phenomenon; hence “entertainment” — Sasson (1978:173).
- 24 Could it be that we have here also a sociological point, namely the endorsement of diversity within society, that lies as (another) motivation behind this text?

The manner in which the story is told indicates a correlation between man's rejection of serving God and the introduction of technology ... Cain's descendents are dedicated to technological progress yet reject God, but Seth's descendents call upon the name of the Lord ... that is of enormous significance for our own involvement in science and in society.

Naturally, the suggestion by Vermeylen (1991:176, 182) that Naamah is the mother of prostitution, would make such theologising for modern times more difficult, given moral sensitivities to such practice. Such objections could read into the comparatively understated formulation of 4:22b that the Genesis text itself gives a hint of dissatisfaction. However, whether that is the case, remains a matter for further investigation.

3.2 Genesis 4:25-26 (Sethite genealogy; J/D?)

This, the shortest of the Genesis genealogies, filled with narrative (cf. Hess 1994:60), relates four matters: first, that Adam and his wife bore another son, Seth; second, that by the grace of Elohim Seth replaces the murdered Abel,²⁵ third, that Seth has a son, Enosh; and fourth, that prayer to Yahweh then began.²⁶

Clearly, the theme of this genealogy has to do with new beginnings. This may even be reflected in the word play of Enosh ("man") on Adam ("man") (Sasson 1978:175; cf. Vermeylen 1991:187), and is indicated by the initiation of the cult, which indicates a positive human-divine relationship. On a grander scale, Von Rad's famous theological construct (see also, with some differences, Clines 1978) of Genesis as a history of the growth of sin (referred to also by Wilson 1977:155; cf. Bailey 1994:269) offers us another perspective for interpreting this genealogy. For here we have an instance of a new beginning (a concept which is, of course, of central importance within the Old Testament and, broader,

25 Seth's name indication is followed by the explanatory note that Seth replaces Abel — a contradiction with Gen. 5:3, where Seth is the first son; cf. Wilson (1977:145).

26 The beginnings of Yahwist faith described here does not accord with either Gen. 4:4-5 or Ex. 6:1-7 (cf., e.g., Wilson 1977:145). Proposals such as that we have here only the first *public* worship, or that worship is now renewed, do not take seriously the literary independence of the traditions reflected in these texts. Cf. further Westermann (1974:461-466).

to Christian theology). With Seth no victim of the curse of Cain (Gen. 4:11-12), with prayer to Yahweh originating in the very next generation after Seth (Wilson 1977:155-156), and because there is further offspring (= blessing), the overriding theme characterising this genealogy may be formulated as: “harmony restored”, or more theologically formulated “grace”.

Though this genealogy is usually ascribed to J, Vermeylen (1991: 188-191) makes an interesting case for a Deuteronomistic — that is, in essence, a theological — redaction of 4:17-24 and 4:25-26 + 5:28b-29 (thus, the latter two taken together, with 5:28b-29 relocated from its present position to follow on 4:24-26 directly). This redaction stresses God’s justice in rejecting exilic Israel for their Cain-like deeds, yet includes beginning anew via Seth.²⁷

3.3 Genesis 5:1-32 (P)

This independent (Westermann 1974:458), narrative (Tengström 1981: 19-21)²⁸ genealogy starts “beyond the realm of actual history” (Malamat 1994:187) by referring back to the Priestly creation narrative of Genesis 1:1-2:4a (cf. Robinson 1986:599-600).

Starting with Adam, and concluding with the three sons of Noah, Genesis 5 offers a highly structured account of twelve generations. The usual structure of this writing is (cf. Hess 1994:61; Oeming 1990:73; Tengström 1981:21; Wilson 1977:159-160; Westermann 1974:470):

- Name and age of X when he fathers Y (and Y is X’s oldest son);
- After the birth of Y, X lived a certain number of years longer, fathered more children (unnamed and uncounted, but of both genders);
- The total age of X is then given, and his death indicated.

Apart from 1), the introductory verses (5:1-3) linking this genealogy with Genesis 1, two brief narratives break the structural mono-

27 This attractive possibility (see below) would call for greater nuance in remarks such as those by Johnson (1988:3) on D and genealogy.

28 Narrative, in the sense that, except for

Noah and his three sons, all the names in the genealogy also appear in some form in the Yahwist’s genealogical narrative (Wilson 1977:163).

tony of Gen. 5, namely 2), 5:24 (Enoch being taken away by Elohim and 3), 5:29 (indicating the approaching role of Noah) — often ascribed to P preserving J-elements in his genealogical editing (e.g., Wilson 1977:160). Furthermore, 4), the atypical presentation of the next generation in the closing verse of Genesis 5 (in that three sons are introduced to the reader, rather than the main genealogical line only).

A note on each of these four narrative interpolations to this otherwise tightly structured genealogy, is in order:

- 1) P, here as in Genesis 1, offers a reinterpretation of J's creation narrative, in this case emphasising God's blessing of the generations, which includes, implicitly, both the multiplication itself (Gen. 5:2) and, explicitly, the indication that creation in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) is continued into the next generation/s (Gen. 5:3). This, Wilson (1977:163-164) argues, is a decidedly more positive view than J's switch between sin and grace.
- 2) It does not seem necessary to attribute 5:24 to a non-P hand because of stylistic reasons, that is, because of its narrative nature: the usual structure of the Genesis 5 genealogical notes remains intact here; the *וַיִּמָּוֶת*-note is merely replaced by what the tradition regarding Enoch had to offer in its place. Neither does the theological stand indicate a hand other than P. Enoch's being taken by God without dying differs from Sumerian and Akkadian parallels in the theologically important respect that it is God who is the subject of the action here (Schmitt 1982:41). This accords well with a broader theme in P, of God providing certain pious men. This theme has as its purpose the encouragement of the exilic community to whom P is addressed (Schmitt 1982:43-44).
- 3) Vermeylen (1991:177-178) proposes that 5:28b-29 should be read in direct continuation of 4:2.6.²⁹ The content of 5:28b-29 certainly would not argue against such an interpretation: this text alludes to Genesis 3:17-19, which is J. Furthermore, unlike the case with

29 If this attractive proposal is generally accepted, it would force the re-examination of a great many analyses of the depth ("how many generations?") and number ("how many members mentioned in the genealogy?"; cf. Bryan 1987:185) of the Genesis 4 and 5 genealogies.

5:24, 5:29 constitutes a definite break in the usual Genesis 5 genealogical style. From both these arguments, it follows that this is not inherently Priestly material. In addition, the styles of 4:25-26 and 5:28b-29 are compatible. The case could therefore be made strongly that 4:25-26+5:28b-29 is a Deuteronomistic redaction of, respectively, J and P (Vermeylen 1991:188-191). The purpose of this redaction, as indicated above, would be to underscore the theological theme of new beginnings.³⁰

- 4) The brief narrative in Genesis 5:32, constituting only the opening line of the usual Genesis 5 genealogical pattern (“Name and age of X when he fathers Y”), and indicating the three (!) sons of Noah, clearly has to do with the nature of this verse as introduction to the subsequent Noah story (Gen. 6ff.).

A last issue remains here: the similarities between the names in the Genesis 4 and 5 genealogies are usually attributed to either — source critically — varying interpretations/applications of a basis genealogy, or — culturally — to genealogical fluidity³¹ (cf. Bryan 1987:180; Wilson 1977:161-163; Hess 1994:64-65). The latter generally offers a more satisfying explanation of variance. It also leaves us free to interpret the intentions of Genesis 5 (*sans* verses 28b-29, as I have argued above) as a genealogy.

Apart from God’s continued blessing and the explicit continuation in this genealogy of the concept of the image of God, mentioned above, a third and related theological thread here is the uniqueness of Israel.

- 30 Not to beg the question as to why the combined text would then later be divided into two, with 5:28b-29 placed in its current position: the most obvious possibility is that the reference to Noah in 5:30 tempted a later editor to commit the modification.
- 31 Genealogical fluidity refers to the process by which a genealogy is edited (i.e., substitution, removal, addition; altering the spelling, order and relationship of names, etc.) in order to reflect new social or political circumstances. Whereas our modern sensibilities on authorship and copyright might shudder at such practices, this fluidity occurs quite naturally in an oral or written culture where genealogy serves to indicate/stabilise current social and other relationships, rather than to retain the past with historical accuracy. As Wilson continually pointed out in his publications on this matter: the *function* of a genealogy influences its form.

This genealogy (similar to 1 Chron. 1-9, and different to Genesis 10)³² does not intend to indicate the unity of humanity. The current identity of Israel, during or after the exile, is related through the continued blessing of descendants to their ancient ancestry (cf. Oeming 1990: 108-209).³³ P seeks security for the present in the continuation with past generations.

4. THREE CONFIGURATIONS OF FAITH

We have now taken a closer look at our three genealogies, indicating in each instance some theological dimensions inherent to the genealogy, too. It is quite clear that we have here three quite different intentions expressed by means of the same genre. In a sense, genealogies could be described as a form of ancient Near Eastern wisdom: the world as known at present is summarised and ordered (Oeming 1990:208). However, as is the case with the varied intentions of different wisdom writings, what is unique to each genealogy should not be subsumed to the traits it shares with other expressions in the genre. Cognisance must be taken of both the general and the specific aspects of genealogies.

Old Testament genealogies may share certain form and function coordinates with genealogical lists in the greater ancient Near East. However, taken together, they differ too. For instance, whereas Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian royal genealogies place the rulers as direct descendants of the gods (Wilson 1977:56-119; cf. Oeming 1990:23), Canaanite genealogies tend not to (Wilson 1977:119-125; cf. Oeming 1990:23; Westermann 1974: 11-12, 472). Within this context, genealogy in Israel too was a demythologised enterprise (Oeming 1990:35). The distinction between the world of God/the gods and the human world is maintained, though not with the interrelation between these

32 In genealogies referring to other nations too, it is possible that the understanding of their shared heritage with Israel may reflect their understanding as well (Malamat 1994:185).

33 Brodie (2001:301) sees as part of a deliberately unifying pattern in Genesis a parallel between Gen. 4:17-26 (taken as a single unit) and Gen. 5. These parallel genealogies would both illustrate a turnaround from disharmony to restoration, a view that calls for some rather circuitous argumentation.

worlds denied. This feature makes a relationship between the human and divine possible.³⁴

The question now is, how is this general relationship concretised in our three specific genealogies?

The Cainite genealogy (Gen. 4:17-22), we have seen, is a cultural genealogy. Aetiological in nature, this genealogy affords current cultural practices legitimacy. Not explicitly related to God, but implicitly only, this reflects an earthy kind of atmosphere (the kind of description often related to J's Genesis 2 creation narrative!). This is a "spirituality of the road" (cf. Bosch 1994) — involved directly with the usual patterns of practices in the lives of ordinary people. These normal, daily habits are authentic: they come from ancient times, almost from the beginning of time. These practices are not religious *per se*: they do not come from gods, nor are the practices related to gods. These cultural artefacts stem from people, and have continued through the ages, by the grace of God, blessing each generation with a subsequent generation. In this "vague" sense (again, similar to aspects of Old Testament wisdom), God is involved in human enterprise. Here, God is not directly present, as with cultic exercises, or steering human actions directly, as through law, but — a standard view expressed in scholarly literature on Old Testament wisdom — God is present "behind the scenes", as it were. This approaches, in some respects, lay spirituality (cf. Waaijman 2000:23-116).³⁵

Thinking through theologically the relationship between science and faith, as was indicated above, is a second strand of thought from this

34 It has become common to add two more general features too: that, whereas ancient Near Eastern genealogies in general relate to the political and religious elite only, the Genesis genealogies tend not to do so (Hess 1994:65); and that the purpose of the Genesis genealogies is not to idealise the earlier/earliest generations (Hess 1994:68). However, both these matters require further scrutiny. The detail that the genealogies were the work of priestly groups, who had elite and political and other aspirations, draws into question the former assertion. And: though perhaps not idealised (because negative aspects may be included in a genealogy too), the earlier generations were important for the genealogists and their audience in that they (in)formed the identity of the later generations in various ways. Here is room for further refinement.

35 Interestingly, Waaijman refers on the first page of this section to Albertz (1978)!

genealogy that can inform our spirituality. In societies where technological advance and decline in religious interest have coincided, in the presently popular academic debate between natural science and theology, in the recently rising intersection between business and ethics, and in the current resurgence of interest in “spirituality” (here meant as “anything vaguely but not specifically religious”) and the media, including the internet, Genesis 4:17-22, and also with 4:25-26 +5:28b-29, offers us interesting points of reference. Faith and culture, an ancient concern, remains “in the air”.

The theme of the Genesis 4:25-26 +5:28b-29 genealogy has already been indicated a few times as “new beginnings”. What murder destroyed, the continued blessing of fertility restores; worship starts; Noah’s birth holds promise of lifting the curse of Genesis 3:17. This would generally have been contextualised within the broader Yahwist theology of sin and redemption. The Deuteronomistic theology, not unrelated in this respect to J’s thinking and, it seems, a more accurate context for these verses, would emphasise a new start, post 586. God’s grace has offered new hope in the past, and will do so in future. This is the spirituality of hope, with substantive pastoral, political, and ecclesial application possibilities in our time.

In the Genesis 5 genealogy, three (related) theological lines have been identified above: God’s continued blessing through each next generation, the maintenance of the image of God in each successive generation, and the distinctiveness of Israel. The post 586 identity of Israel is fed, in this genealogy, by a text that uses the continuity of past generations to give security in the present. Particularly with the open-endedness of the closing verse, the implication for P’s audience is that hope remains: the stability of succeeding generations will continue. Within this re-generation, the likeness of Elohim continues. The unique group of Israel will thus continue.

Though this message of hope seems at first to offer possibilities for greater application, this is tempered by the exclusivist tone (similar to the problem one encounters with Ezra-Nehemiah). This is not a universalising spirituality. The theological lines of continued blessing by means of each new generation and the concept of the image of God may offer some possibilities. The former possibility, though, is difficult in cultures (such as Western/ised cultures) where God’s blessing

and fertility may not be equated as strongly. Perhaps by placing this genealogy within the broader context of the Toledot-books within P, further possibilities will develop. As to the image of God concept, it remains such a widely used concept, called in support of almost any cause (e.g., political freedom, social and economic justice, the abortion debate, the legalisation of marijuana, etc.), that it can hardly be used within narrower exegetical delineations.

Nevertheless, this has brought us to a point where we may acknowledge that the intersection between the diversity of the faith we find reflected in the Old Testament offers us some avenues for intersecting with the diversity of faith we find reflected in the modern world. Spiritualities may in/form spiritualities. Even with genealogies, a genre not very attractive to Western/ised audiences, such possibilities exist.

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