

# **GENESIS**

**An Introductory Commentary**

**by**

**MICHAEL FALLON, MSC**

**Chevalier Press  
2008**

By the same author

Introductory Commentaries by the same author.

Published by Chevalier Press, 1 Roma Avenue, Kensington NSW 2033 (02) 9662 7894

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew 1997<sup>1</sup>, 2005<sup>2</sup>

The Gospel according to Saint Mark 1997<sup>1</sup>, 2009<sup>2</sup>

The Gospel according to Saint Luke 1997<sup>1</sup>, 2007<sup>2</sup>

The Gospel according to Saint John 1998<sup>1</sup>, 2005<sup>2</sup>

The Acts of the Apostles, 2003

New Testament Letters Volume 1 Paul, 2004

New Testament Letters Volume 2 James, Peter, Hebrews, Jude & John, 2004

The Apocalypse: a call to embrace the Love that is stronger than death, 2002

The Psalms, 2005

A Priestly Kingdom and a Holy Nation: Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, 2008

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2008

Israel's Eighth Century Prophets: Amos, Hosea, IOsaiah, Micah

Israel's Seventh Century Prophets: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, 2011

Israel's Sixth Century Prophets: Ezekiel, Isaiah 40-55; Haggai, Zechariah, Isaiah 56-66, 2011

Israel's Fifth Century Prophets: Obadiah, Zechariah 9-14, Joel, Malachi, Jonah (& Daniel), 2011

Israel's Festival Scrolls: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, 2011

Proverbs & Job, 2011

First and Second Samuel & First Chronicles, 2012

First and Second Kings & Second Chronicles, 2012

Ezra & Nehemiah, 2012

First and Second Maccabees, 2012

Tobit & Judith, 2012

Wisdom of Ben Sira & Wisdom of Solomon, 2012

Published by Chevalier Press, 1 Roma Avenue (P.O. Box 13), Kensington, NSW Australia 2033.

Phone: (02) 9662-7894. Fax: (02) 9662-1910.

Nihil Obstat: Warrick Tonkin

Imprimatur: + Mark Coleridge. DD BA DSS, Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn

September 9, 2008

The Nihil Obstat is a declaration that the book is judged to be free from doctrinal or moral error. The Imprimatur grants permission to publish. It is not necessarily implied that those responsible for these judgments agree with all the opinions expressed by the author.

© 2008 Chevalier Press

ISBN 0 86940 320 6

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. All right reserved. Used with permission.

#### A NOTE ON THE FORMATTING OF THE TEXT

The biblical text is presented in narrow columns on the outer side of the page. The commentary is presented in wider columns towards the inside of the page. Where the commentary extends beyond the page on which the biblical text is presented, the whole page is given over to the commentary.

Cover photo: The first page of the Hebrew text of the Book of Genesis

Printed by Joy Stationary & Printing Co Pte Ltd Singapore 339159. Phone: 65-6398-1668; Fax: 65-6392-1668

## PREFACE

I had the privilege of spending most of 2007 living with my brother MSC in our Italian provincial house in Rome, ten minutes walk from the library of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. I thank the Australian Provincial Council for organising this time for me, my Italian brothers for their hospitality, and Father James Dugan SJ for graciously allowing me such easy access to the library. On the academic side, I am especially grateful to Father Jean-Louis Ska SJ, professor of Old Testament studies at the Institute. It was he who gave me invaluable assistance in working my way through the complexities of modern research into the Pentateuch, and who kindly read and offered me advice on the Introduction to this commentary.

I have been lecturing on Genesis 1-11 for over thirty years. One fruit of my recent Roman research is this introductory commentary in which I hope to make available to the interested reader an accessible starting point for further investigation of this remarkable piece of inspired literature, with its primeval narrative, Genesis 1-11, that uses story to communicate what it means to be human beings in relation to one another, to the world, and to God, followed by stories of the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph – stories that have inspired much art in the Judeo-Christian cultures, and have played such a large part in forming our religious imagination.

Understanding the kind of literature that we find in the Book of Genesis is fundamental to how we read this inspired work. This is especially important because of the insistence of many who think that truth in the inspired word requires that it make only statements of fact, as though God could not inspire poetry, drama, saga. They resist the findings of scientific inquiry. In doing so they misinterpret the Scripture, and fail to appreciate the wonderful richness of this literature when it is read as it is written, *as story*.

I thank Father Warrick Tonkin for the time and care he put into reading the manuscript and granting it the 'Nihil Obstat', and Archbishop Mark Coleridge for permission to publish. My prayer is that this Introductory Commentary will enrich your appreciation of this ancient and inspiring book.

– Feast of the Sacred Heart 2008