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“The Power of Genesis 1-2 to Leverage the Nations”
A Vision for “First the Gospel, then Politics...” A Passion for “The Love of Hard Questions”

Only Genesis and Questions for Barack Obama

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President Barack Obama professes to be a Christian, and I take him at his word. And to be a Christian is to be accountable to the nature and content of the Bible.

Elsewhere I address the nature of the “pre-partisan” (www.prepartisan.us). I believe in honest partisan debate, and the pre-partisan aims to set ground rules for such debate, where all partisan ideas are equally heard. The pre-partisan stands alongside three other terms. First, the “non-partisan” is non-human because it pretends to be above human opinion, and we all have opinions. Second, the “bi-partisan” is a fiction, where competing partisans pretend to work together for the moment, while waiting for later opportunity to prevail over the other.

And third is Mr. Obama’s use of the “post-partisan” in the 2008 campaign. When I first heard the term, I was immediately struck by its novelty. As well, at that time I also knew of no one else using the language of the pre-partisan. Both ends of the spectrum, as it were.

Yet Mr. Obama never defined his term explicitly. I see three possibilities. First, the post-partisan can mean an appeal to move past petty or dishonest partisan agendas. But, does this not also abort honest partisan debate? Second, the post-partisan can mean partisan debate is over because everyone agrees. But can such agreement happen short of the second coming of Jesus? And third, the post-partisan can mean partisan debate is over because those in political authority say so and insist upon it. But, is this not the opposite of checks and balances in representative government?

The theology of Only Genesis is by definition pre-partisan.

In Genesis 1-3, the Bible sets forth the storyline defined by creation, sin and redemption, or to put it another way, **goodness, descent into broken trust, and rescue.** The order of creation is entirely good and trustworthy, and defined in Genesis 1-2, in what I call **Only Genesis.** In Genesis 3, the brokenness of this goodness and trust then enters by an act of the human will. Also in Genesis 3, the promise of redemption is given to restore the promises of Genesis 1-2, fulfilled ultimately in Jesus the Messiah. Jesus literally buys us back from the slavery of broken trust.

Thus, only when we understand the heights of the goodness of the order of creation, can we then understand the depths of the injustice and evil that breaks it. And only then can we grasp the height of being rescued from the depths, and receive the good promise of the resurrection.

Thus, three questions:

- What is Mr. Obama's definition of the post-partisan?
- Does Mr. Obama find the pre-partisan attractive?
- Where in Mr. Obama's political agenda do we see the assumption of creation, sin and redemption in place, and giving interpretive perspective?

The original goodness of Only Genesis involves ten positive assumptions:

1. **Only Genesis has a positive view of the Creator's nature.** The Hebrew language for the one true Creator is *Yahweh Elohim*, and it uniquely defines the One who is greater than space, time and number. His power is unlimited, his nature is good and his purpose is to give to and bless all people equally. In being greater than space and time, this means Yahweh Elohim is also great enough to come into our human world and relate to us. In being greater than number, Yahweh Elohim is not numerically restricted in himself, and this leads to the triune understanding of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From this point, as manifest in human community, checks and balances on power are derived, in tripartite forms of government, e.g., co-equal branches of the executive, legislative and judicial. This equals diversity in service to unity, and thus a healthy social order.

Thus, three questions:

- Where in Mr. Obama’s political agenda do we see explicit acknowledgement of the one true Creator, and dependency thereupon?
- Where in Mr. Obama’s political agenda do we see checks and balances on political power honored?
- Are the fruit of Mr. Obama’s politics a) unity without diversity, and thus imposed conformity; b) diversity without unity, and thus the chaos of competing parochial fiefdoms; or c) diversity in service to unity, and thus a healthy social order?

2. **Only Genesis has a positive view of communication.** The first words spoken by the Creator in Genesis are “Let there be light.” This is the nature of revelation or communication – where by definition, light reveals what is truly there. Part of Yahweh Elohim’s communication in the Bible is that it is a dialogue – he invites us to ask him questions as we learn his ways. Yahweh Elohim communicated this way with Abraham and all the biblical prophets, many others in the Bible, and likewise to the present through the Holy Spirit, in accord with what has been revealed in the Bible. In the Gospel of John, Jesus declared himself to be the “I AM,” to be Yahweh Elohim, the one true Creator in human form, to communicate with us as the living Word, as the Light of the world. One of the names for Jesus in the Hebrew, *Immanuel*, means that Yahweh Elohim is “with us.”

Thus, two questions:

- What is Mr. Obama’s track record in terms of transparency and recognition of reality?
- Is Mr. Obama in dialogue with the one true Creator – does he know Jesus as Immanuel?

3. **Only Genesis has a positive view of human nature.** The whole structure of Only Genesis is designed to highlight the creation of man and woman as the image-bearers of the one true Creator, as Yahweh Elohim breathed the breath of life into Adam and Eve. The creation was made for us, and to bear his image means that in our finite nature we reflect the Creator’s infinite qualities of communication and creativity. We were made to govern the good creation and take care of it with satisfaction in building families and nations. Or as it declares in Psalm 8, we are “crowned” with “glory and honor” as the highest purpose of the creation. In other words, central to the greatness of Yahweh Elohim is his joy in making man and woman to share his glory.

Thus, one question:

- Where, in Mr. Obama’s political agenda, is the essential and equal humanity of all people honored?
4. **Only Genesis has a positive view of human freedom.** In fact, it is the only proactive definition of human freedom in history. The first words spoken by Yahweh Elohim to Adam in Genesis 2 are, in English translations, “You are free ...” More dynamic is the Hebrew language itself, in a metaphor translated “in feasting you will continually feast” (*akol tokel*). In other words, an unlimited menu of good choices in all of life is presented, so long as the forbidden and poisonous fruit is not eaten. To eat the forbidden fruit means “in dying you will continually die” (*moth tamuth* in the Hebrew). Thus, feast on what is good, or eat poison and die – the sovereign Creator gives man and woman dignity and honor in giving us such a freedom to choose. Unless we are free to say no, we are not free to say yes. There is no coercion in the Gospel. We are free to choose between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, between life and death, between freedom and slavery. We will always reap what we sow.

Thus, two questions:

- Where, in Mr. Obama’s political agenda, is freedom honored?
 - Does Mr. Obama proactively oppose coercion in all forms?
5. **Only Genesis has a positive view of hard questions.** When Yahweh Elohim gave man and woman stewardship over creation, an endlessly delightful learning process was put in place. We were made to learn in his presence, a central part of which was asking questions. Even after the broken trust of sin, the power to pose hard questions in the presence of Yahweh Elohim and one another is seen dramatically, for example, in the persons of Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Paul, and supremely in Jesus as he modeled the rabbinic teaching method. No questions were ever prohibited. Yahweh Elohim allowed himself to be directly challenged, and Jesus also invited the same in the face of his plotting enemies.

Thus, one question:

- Where, in Mr. Obama's political agenda, does the love of hard questions find place for all people equally?
6. **Only Genesis has a positive view of human sexuality.** The structures and trajectories of both Genesis 1 and 2 focus on man and woman as full equals and complements, as image-bearers of the Creator. They are joint stewards of the creation, and joint heirs of eternal life. Healthy human sexuality is defined by chastity outside of marriage, and fidelity within the marriage of one man and one woman for one lifetime. It is within this covenant of faithful marriage that trust is first learned, between man and woman, then modeled for their children, then to the extended family and local communities, and then to the nations.

Thus, two questions:

- Where, in Mr. Obama's political agenda, is the marriage of one man and one woman for one lifetime honored?
 - Or, does Mr. Obama's political agenda simply advance sexual promiscuity in various forms?
7. **Only Genesis has a positive view of science and the scientific method.** In Genesis 1, the sun, moon and stars are treated as inanimate objects, as opposed to being deities as in pagan religion. From there on the Bible views creation as it is, setting the table for honest scientific observation of the universe in which we live. The Law of Moses also provides the ethical basis for the scientific method, the principle of falsification, where 100 percent accuracy is required of Hebrew prophets. If there is one mistake, then the prophet is not a true prophet. In science, if an experiment to prove a theory produces the same result 1,000 times, then a different result the next time, it has been falsified, and must be reviewed to find the error. This is science's most exacting standard, coming from the Bible's most exacting standard. Thus, the historical, geographical and observational claims of the Bible are relentlessly confirmed by the discipline of archeology and other sciences, from the Garden of Eden, located at the headwaters of the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates rivers in ancient Mesopotamia, through ancient Israel and the capitol of Jerusalem, to the apostle John on the island of Patmos.

Thus, one question:

- Where in Mr. Obama's political agenda do we see science and the scientific method fully honored?
8. **Only Genesis has a positive view of verifiable history.** Beginning with Adam and Eve, the biblical revelation is always ratified by multiple eye-witnesses, rooted in the Law of Moses, all the way to Jesus, along with very detailed genealogies; then from Jesus to the end of the New Testament. Indeed, when Jesus appeared, he did so in accordance with millennia worth of recorded history rooted in multiple eye-witness checks and balances to certify truth. This commitment to verifiable history has informed all Hebrew, Jewish and Christian scholarship across the millennia.

Thus, one question:

- Where in Mr. Obama's political agenda do we see honest attention to verifiable history honored?
9. **Only Genesis has a positive view of covenantal law.** Here, Yahweh Elohim first holds himself accountable to being just, fair and loving, before he requires man and woman to obey his laws. The original covenant in the Garden of Eden was one of freedom, and all subsequent covenants aimed to restore such freedom, finally fulfilled in the Messiah. Covenantal law on this basis is a bulwark against human despotic governments. Then, central to this biblical witness is the reality that the covenantal people are held to higher standards than are the pagans. The prophets Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Amos and Habakkuk, among others, first held Israel and Judah accountable for their sins; as did Jesus; as did the apostles Paul and Peter for the church.

Thus, two questions:

- Does Mr. Obama understand the difference between how Samuel was faithful to the covenant of freedom in the Law of Moses; and how, in contrast, Saul twisted the covenant to serve his own ego and despotic purposes?
- Where in Mr. Obama's political agenda do we see political leaders being held to the same laws, and high moral standards, they require of the rest of the nation?

10. **Only Genesis has a positive view of unalienable rights.** Yahweh Elohim gives the gifts of life, liberty and property (stewardship of the creation) to all people equally in Genesis 1-2. “Unalienable” refers to rights given by the Creator, rights that cannot be alienated, rights that are above the power of human government to define, give or take away. These unalienable rights are simply to be honored. The unalienable right of liberty means religious, political and economic freedom for all people, regardless of religious or philosophical beliefs. Biblically faithful Jews and Christians celebrate these liberties for all people equally, including atheists, under the rule of law.

Thus, two questions:

- Where in Mr. Obama’s political agenda do we see an explicit and defined rootedness in unalienable rights given by the Creator?
- Where in Mr. Obama’s political agenda do we see the clear rejection of government usurping such rights?

Here is a summary of what I call **The Six Pillars of Honest Politics**, which are rooted in the prior **Six Pillars of Biblical Power** (written about elsewhere). The first four pillars are drawn from **Only Genesis**, and the last two are drawn from the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount – he who restores the promises of **Only Genesis**.

1. **The power to give** affirms that the unalienable rights given by the Creator belong to all people equally, and leaders in human government should serve such a gift.
 - Does Mr. Obama, and his administration, first seek to serve unalienable rights for all people equally?
2. **The power to live in the light** means leaders in human government at every level should be as fully transparent as possible.
 - How transparent is Mr. Obama and his administration?
3. **The power of informed choice** is rooted in an honest definition of terms in political debate, providing a level playing field for all ideas to be heard equally, apart from which political freedom is not possible.

- How accurately does Mr. Obama, and his administration, seek to define terms and thus serve political freedom for all people equally?
4. **The power to love hard questions** is in place when political leaders honor and answer those who pose them the toughest questions.
- Does Mr. Obama, and his administration, run at hard questions in order to give good answer, or flee from them?
5. **The power to love enemies** recognizes that even the harshest of political opponents share a common humanity and are to be treated with respect.
- How does Mr. Obama, and his administration, treat political “enemies”?
6. **The power to forgive** recognizes the need to address our individual and societal transgressions against one another, and to work toward justice and reconciliation.
- What place does forgiveness play in Mr. Obama and his administration?

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