The Textual Unity of Genesis 2–4 against the Backdrop of the History of Exegesis

By

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Doctor of Philosophy
University of St. Michael’s College
2014

Abstract

The thesis explores the literary unity of the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel supplemented with an inquiry into the history of traditional exegesis. Most contemporary studies and commentaries reflect a varied understanding of the textual relationship between the narratives of creation and sin in Eden and outside of it (Gen 2:4b–4:16). According to one dominant stream of historical tradition, the unit of Genesis 1–3 is delimited and expounded apart from the juxtaposed chapter 4. A key figure in this hermeneutical tradition is Augustine, who devoted his Genesis commentaries to chapters 1–3 apart from the sin narrative of Cain. An important implication arising from this thesis is that Christian exegetes of Genesis should be aware of, and avoid, any uncritical adoption of the tradition represented by Augustine in their reading of the stories of the origins. According to another historic exegetical tradition of Jewish and Christian interpreters the narratives of creation and sin are treated conjointly. In their view, the narrative of Cain-Abel in Genesis 4 is closely related to the preceding narratives of Adam-Eve. These works include some representative exegetical elaborations from Second Temple Judaism, Church Fathers, and the Protestant reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin.
In addition to examining in detail a selected portion of the history of exegesis, this thesis delineates the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel as an interdependent familial saga within the literary framework of Gen 2:4b–4:26. The present author contends that these juxtaposed texts are interrelated by means of the following textual elements inherent within Genesis 2–4: (1) *toledot* formula; (2) diptych; (3) the primeval characters; (4) the motifs of silence and voice; (5) the tests of Adam and Cain; (6) the motif of knowledge; (7) the motif of death; (8) the trials; and (9) punishment and hope. Finally, other Genesis narratives echo the literary contours of the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel (Gen 9:20–26; 16:1–2, 12; 21:8–13; 22:1–19).
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### Abbreviations

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<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td><em>Anchor Bible Dictionary.</em> Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992</td>
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<td>ABRL</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCS</td>
<td>Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture</td>
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<tr>
<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta Biblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUSS</td>
<td><em>Andrews University Seminary Studies</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td><em>Biblical Archaeology Review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td><em>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td><em>Biblische Notizen</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td><em>Biblical Research</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BST</td>
<td>The Bible Speaks Today Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>BTB</td>
<td><em>Biblical Theology Bulletin</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BTCB</td>
<td>Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td><em>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQMS</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBR</td>
<td><em>Currents in Biblical Research</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Continental Commentaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTJ</td>
<td><em>Calvin Theological Journal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CTM</td>
<td><em>Concordia Theological Monthly</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSB</td>
<td>The Daily Study Bible Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECJ</td>
<td>Eastern Churches Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ</td>
<td>Evangelical Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESV</td>
<td>English Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAT</td>
<td>Forschungen zum Alten Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCI</td>
<td>Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOTL</td>
<td>Forms of Old Testament Literature Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBS OTS</td>
<td>Guides to Biblical Scholarship Old Testament Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBM</td>
<td>Hebrew Bible Monographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDB</td>
<td>Harvard Divinity Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKAT</td>
<td>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSS</td>
<td>Harvard Semitic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
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<td>ISBL</td>
<td>Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>International Theological Commentary Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBQ</td>
<td>Jewish Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JJS</td>
<td>Journal of Jewish Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSJ</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOTSUP</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSP</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSPSUP</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTI</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHBOTS</td>
<td>The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTTHS</td>
<td>Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>The New American Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCBC</td>
<td>The New Cambridge Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>New English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIB</td>
<td>New Interpreter’s Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIBCOT</td>
<td>New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIVAC</td>
<td>New International Version Application Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>NJB</td>
<td>New Jerusalem Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>New King James Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBS</td>
<td>The Oxford Bible Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library</td>
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Chapter One: The Textual Unity of Genesis 2–4 in Contemporary Scholarship

Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to explore the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel as a literary whole against the backdrop of the history of exegesis. The primeval history begins with the creation of the world and ends with the dispersion at Babel as the formal conclusion of the Urgeschichte (Gen 1:1–11:9). The narrator unfolds the model of creation and affirmation (Genesis 1–2), proceeds to the narratives of indictment and sentence (Gen 3:1–4:16), and concludes with a reversed pattern of indictment and sentence, affirmation, and the new creation (Genesis 6–9). Chapters 10–11 are post-flood materials (the Table of Nations, the Tower of Babel, and the ten generations from Shem to Abram). The juxtaposed narratives of creation, temptation, and fratricide are putatively penned by the Yahwist who is considered a sophisticated storyteller who compiled dynamic narratives full of action, crises,


humour, irony, anthropomorphism, and emotional tension (Gen 2:4b–25; 3:1–24; 4:1–16).³ Some of the key etiological elements within Genesis 2–4 include the formation of man and animals from the ground (2:7, 19); the formation of the woman from the man’s rib (2:21–22); the serpent’s curse (3:14); childbirth pains (3:16); building the first city by Cain (4:17); the invention of music by Jubal (4:21); and metallurgy by Tubal-Cain (4:22).⁴

The internal unity of each account of creation and sin under study has rarely been challenged by modern biblical scholars. The second creation narrative in Gen 2:4b–25 is earthy and folkloristic. It can be divided into four parts: 1) YHWH God forms the first male Adam, plants a garden in Eden, makes it grow trees, including the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and puts man in the Garden of Eden to till and keep it (vv. 4b–15); 2) YHWH God commands man to abstain from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (vv. 16–17); 3) YHWH God forms a female helper to Adam (vv. 18–22); and 4) this female helper becomes Adam’s wife (vv. 23–25). The temptation story of Adam and Eve in Gen 3:1–24 consists of three interwoven pericopes: 1) the human couple partakes in the


forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (vv. 1–8); 2) God deals with the offenders judicially (vv. 9–21); and 3) Adam is banished from the Garden of Eden (vv. 22–24).

Genesis 4 proceeds outside the Garden of Eden. In the first pericope (vv. 1–8), two siblings, Cain and Abel, offer sacrifices to the Lord. Abel and his blood sacrifice are preferred over Cain and his vegetarian offering. Cain’s anger results in the first actual transgression against his brother and God himself. Cain claims Abel’s life, which passes away like a vapour (וְזָרָה). The Hebrew word for sin (חטאת) appears first in Gen 4:7. In the second pericope (vv. 9–16), Cain is being cursed from the ground, granted a protective mark, and destined to be a wanderer (Gen 4:9–16). After its first appearance in Gen 4:10, the motif of the innocent blood has found its place in other biblical traditions (Gen 18:20–21; Exod 22:21–22; Num 35:30–34; Job 24:12). The post-Edenic fratricide might be seen as a prototype of a legal record. While Abel’s blood is a type of plaintiff, the divine mark protected Cain from “spiralling violence.”\(^5\) The death of Abel is not the end of the familial story of Adam and Eve. Seth was not born to Adam and Eve until after the tragic loss of their son Abel (Gen 4:25). The Cainite and the Sethite genealogies appear in Gen 4:17–24 and 5:1–32.\(^6\)


Review of Secondary Literature

The current review of secondary literature examines the textual relationship between the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel (Genesis 2–4). It offers a chronological assessment of major commentaries, monographs, and articles written in the period from the end of the nineteenth century until the present time. An equal representation is given to both Jewish and Christian voices across the discipline of biblical studies. Contemporary scholars implement various methods which broaden the hermeneutical scope such as canonical criticism, narrative analysis, reader-response criticism, liberation theology, feminist criticism, and history of reception (Wirkungsgeschichte). The remainder of this chapter will disclose the thesis of this study, its methodology, and overall structure.

1883–1897

Some of the most important developments in biblical scholarship took place in continental Europe, specifically those related to the demise of the field of Hebrew Bible (hereafter HB) theology and the rise of the history of Israelite religion. For example, William Robertson Smith (1846–1894), a prominent Scottish biblical scholar, in his lectures The Old Testament in the Jewish Church (1881), has voiced his dissatisfaction with the traditional Christian view

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of the Bible, considering the emerging historical criticism as the most viable means to uncover the roots of the Hebrew religion and their writings. Another paradigm shift had taken place as a result of the research of Karl Henning Graf (1815–1869), Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891), and Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). These scholars saw the Mosaic religion as a late historical development dependent upon Israelite prophecy (e.g., Amos and Isaiah). Thus, for some biblical scholars, the Pentateuch had lost its association with Moses and the Exodus. Deuteronomy was understood to have been compiled in the seventh century B.C.E. The work of the Yahwist was seen to cover the books Genesis to Leviticus and the pre-Deuteronomic Joshua. According to this approach, the Yahwist used the *Grundschrift*, a Priestly composition comprising the narrative from Genesis 1 and parts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

Julius Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (1883) was another milestone in historical-criticism of the Pentateuch. According to Wellhausen, the Hexateuch narrative comprised the Priestly Code and the Yahwist source. In his view, Genesis 2–3 emerged before the time of Solomon. Wellhausen interprets Genesis 3 as a psychological drama of the “forbidden good” that most powerfully attracted the human couple, willing to

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10 Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 308 (n. 1).
become like God, to their own sorrow. In his view, chapters 2–3 are being isolated from the juxtaposed narrative of Cain-Abel.\textsuperscript{11} Wellhausen reads the tribal history of Cain and Abel only as an excessive Israelite element that crept into the mythic universal history of humankind: “Even the fratricide of Cain, with the contrast in the background between the peaceful life of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan and the restless wanderings of the Cainites (Kenites) in the neighbouring desert, quite falls out of the universal historical and geographical framework.”\textsuperscript{12} For Wellhausen, the narratives of Cain and the curse of Canaan originally belonged to the patriarchal history of Genesis.\textsuperscript{13}

The German biblical scholar Christian Friedrich August Dillmann (1823–1894) devoted himself to Ethiopic studies, Pentateuch, Joshua, and Isaiah, as well as the historical development of the Israelite religion with an eye on the concept of God’s holiness as the quintessence of the Hebrew religion (from the patriarchal period to Moses and to the prophets). Dillmann engaged the religious ideas of ancient Israel and the Hexateuch theory. In his commentary on Genesis, Dillmann (1897) studied the biblical text with the aid of philology and cognate languages, grammar, history, and archeology. Dillmann divided chapters 3 and 4 into two distinct categories as follows: (1) Gen 3:1–24; 4:1, 2b, 16b–24 (J\textsuperscript{1}) and (2) Gen 4:2a, 3–16a (J\textsuperscript{2}). Although a passing footnote marks some of the textual connections within Genesis 2–4, he considered Genesis 4 as an “artificial imitation” of Genesis 3. There is a natural leap from the sin of eating the forbidden fruit to the fratricide, yet he claims that the story of Cain and Abel was not originally intended to be set at the

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\textsuperscript{11} Wellhausen, 302.
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\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 314.
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\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 317, 324 (n. 1).
\end{flushleft}
beginning of primeval history. Dillmann’s literary isolation of Genesis 4 derives from his source-critical approach rather than from other hermeneutical grounds.14

1904–1999

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Samuel Rolles Driver (1904) used source-criticism and ancient Near Eastern counterparts to shed light on the primeval and patriarchal narratives alike. In Driver’s view, Adam’s propensity to sin is transmitted to Cain in an aggravated form: “The disobedience of Adam is followed, in the case of his son, by a terrible outburst of self-will, pride, and jealousy, leading to a total and relentless renunciation of all human ties and affection.”15 Driver identifies three hallmarks of textual unity between the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel: (1) the human failure to resist temptation, (2) the human loss of control over impulses, and (3) God’s enduring care for the sinner.16 For John Skinner (1910), the verbal parallels between chapters 2–3 and 4 represent a case of a hypothetical imitation of one writer by another (after Dillmann). Skinner affiliates the ancestral figure of Cain to the Kenite tribe.17

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Hermann Gunkel’s (1910) classic commentary on Genesis is another milestone in historical-critical biblical scholarship. In this commentary, Gunkel champions form criticism and the oral prehistory of the sources against the backdrop of the ancient Near East. This cultural backdrop has been utilized to point to biblical recensions of the story of Paradise like Job 15:7 and Ezek 28:1–19. Gunkel develops the Urzeit–Endzeit view of Zion as the eschatological restored Eden. In his view, chapters 3 and 4 exhibit an “intimate relationship.” According to Gunkel, Cain, a wild progenitor of the Kenites, was famed for blood vengeance. At the same time, in his opinion, most of the aetiologies can be read independently of one another. Only at a later stage did the editor arrange the loose primeval narratives into a particular relationship (the only exceptions are those texts such as Gen 4:25; 5:29; 6:6; 9:18–19). In Gunkel’s view, the parallel of Gen 3:16 and 4:7 is a case of textual corruption.18 In fact, Gunkel divides the J-source into three redactional layers, adding to the fragmentation of the primeval narratives: (1) JÇ–portions of the Edenic story, Seth’s genealogy, Noah’s vineyard, Table of Nations, and the story of the Tower of Babel; (2) Jj–portions of the Edenic story, Cain’s genealogy, angelic marriages, the Flood, Table of Nations, and the story of the Tower of Babel; and (3) Jr–the text of Cain’s fratricide.19

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) lectured on creation and fall in the winter semester of 1932–1933 at the University of Berlin. In his book Schöpfung und Fall (1937), Bonhoeffer


19 Gunkel, Genesis, 3.
points to the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to this church-oriented reading of chapters 1–3, the fall and original sin are interpreted as highly symbolical manifestations of primordial evil. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is interpreted as the tree of limitation and prohibition. In Bonhoeffer’s opinion, the purpose of Genesis 3 is to witness the character of evil as guilt and burden. The human being became a limitless offender who can no longer control his desires. The discovery of nakedness turns out to be the discovery of sexuality as a result of the transformation of the innocent human couple from a childlike state to a state of maturity. Genesis 4 is not covered in Bonhoeffer’s commentary. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer comments on Gen 4:1 as follows:

They become the proud creators of new life but this new life is created in the lustful intercourse of man and death; Cain is the first man to be born upon the cursed ground. The whole story of death begins with Cain. Adam, preserved on the way to death and consumed with thirst for life, begets Cain, the murderer . . . . The man who is not allowed to eat of the tree of life all the more greedily reaches out for the fruit of death, the destruction of life.

A few theological observations derive from Bonhoeffer’s commentary on Gen 4:1. First, the birth of Cain is cast in a negative light since it is believed that “new life is created in the lustful intercourse of man and death.” Second, unlike some other exegetes and theologians, Bonhoeffer posits that “the whole story of death begins with Cain.” Third, the murder of


22 Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 95.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
Abel by Cain is explicated figuratively so as to remind the reader of the forbidden tree of life. The fratricide is likened, therefore, to a tragic attempt to reach out for “the fruit of death, the destruction of life.”

In his thirteen-volume *Church Dogmatics* (1932–1967), Karl Barth (1886–1968) scrutinizes theological topics like revelation, God, creation, and reconciliation. In volume IV on reconciliation, Barth discusses the fall of man into sin, opting for the hamartiology of Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109 C.E.). Barth’s hamartiological discourse develops under the auspices of God’s reconciliation with humankind through the eternal redemption of the Savior Jesus Christ. In Barth’s view, sin was accused, condemned, and abolished in Jesus Christ. In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth is not preoccupied with questions of origins. While Genesis 3 is mentioned occasionally, chapter 4 is omitted from his hamartiological discourse. Barth thus comments on the fall of the man in Genesis 3:

> The fall of man. The term corresponds exactly to what we have learned to know as the essence of sin—the pride of man. “Pride goes before a fall.” The proverb is true. But we have to be more precise than that. The fall of man comes in and with the pride of man. He falls in exalting himself where he ought not to try to exalt himself, where, according to the grace of God, he might in humility be freely and truly man. He dies because he tries to take to himself a life which if he would thankfully receive it he might enjoy in peace.

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25 Ibid.

26 See a detailed discussion of Barth’s hamartiology in John Webster, “The Firmest Grasp of the Real: Barth on Original Sin,” *TJT* 4 (1988): 19–29. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. David Demson for kindly referring me to this article.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Gerhard von Rad (1961) refined traditio-historical criticism, and developed the Hexateuch theory (Genesis–Joshua).\(^{28}\) In his commentary on Genesis, von Rad attributes to the Yahwist portrayal an increasing degree of sin from Eden to the story of Babel (the pattern of “sin–speech–mitigation–punishment”).\(^{29}\) The punishments, by their nature, reflect this theological dynamic. As a source of universal blessing, the call of Abram launches the beginning of the history of salvation. This is a type of Israel’s soteriological aetiology envisioned by the Yahwist whose primeval history reached its goal in the call of Abram (Gen 12:1–3). This epochal episode in Genesis marks it as an individual work of divine grace to be spread over to the rest of humanity through the blessed seed of Abram.\(^{30}\) In his commentary, Genesis 3 is regarded as a didactic epic that took its cue from Oriental traditions. This didactic epic aims to disclose the lost paradise, life of trouble, hopeless struggle with the power of evil, and the inevitable enslavement to the majesty of death. Von Rad and his antecedents viewed Genesis 4 as the aetiology of the Kenite tribe.\(^{31}\)


\(^{30}\) Cf. Brevard S. Childs, “The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church,” *CTM* 43 (1972): 709–22; idem, *IOTS* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 158, who contends that primeval history prioritizes the creation as the initial act of God. This divine initiative does not derive from the election of Israel, and yet the election of this nation has a significant place in God’s soteriological programme. In Childs’ view, the JE strand contains the premonarchial traditions of Israel alongside the P strand, which encompassed old material formulated in the postexilic era. According to Childs, the canonical impact of Genesis on the community of faith and practice bears witness to God’s activity in the world under the auspices of creation and blessing, judgment and forgiveness, redemption and promise. See also John H. Hewett, “Genesis 2:4b–3:31; 4:2–16; 9:20–27; 19:30–38,” *Review & Expositor* 86 (1989): 237–41.

According to Umberto Cassuto (1961), Genesis 3 is a moral lesson for the believing community rather than an aetiological story. In his view, Genesis 4 is a vocal protest against the practice of blood-revenge.\(^ {32}\) Unlike Cassuto, Ephraim Speiser (1964) contends that the rift between the pastoral and agricultural occupations lies in the core of the conflict between Cain and Abel without connecting this narrative to the preceding temptation narrative.\(^ {33}\) A strikingly different interpretation is put forward by Walter Brueggemann (1968) who contends that the primeval plot of Genesis has been shaped by the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2). According to Brueggemann, the motifs of Israel’s knowledge of sin, grace, curse, and blessing derived from the royal currents of David and Solomon. Brueggemann notes the following literary parallels: (1) David and Bathsheba//Adam and Eve; (2) Amnon and Absalom//Cain and Abel; (3) Absalom and David//Noah and the Flood; and (4) Solomon and David//Tower of Babel.\(^ {34}\)

In his commentary on Genesis, Brueggemann (1982) reads the primeval history in the theological direction of God being willing to bring his creation to final unity. The corpus of Genesis 1–11 is divided into two parts: (1) the unit of Gen 1:1–9:17 is filled with the


dramatic tension between God’s will for and call to creation and its mixed response; and (2) the unit of Gen 9:18–11:29 comprises post-flood materials. Brueggemann’s commentary sets the stage for a theological reading of Genesis that embraces the final form of the text. In his view, the original sin does not necessarily refer to the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, having understood Genesis 3 as a marginal text in the Bible. According to Brueggemann, the fratricide reflects an escalating situation of power control and human aggression. Furthermore, the hidden will of God and the ominous power of death are crucial to the theological thread in Genesis 4. The crucial brother-problem summons us to the drama of Cain and Abel in the triangle of brother-God-sin. Brueggemann comments on the relationship of God and his creation in the primeval history:

The text, then, is a proclamation of covenancing as the shape of reality. The claim of this tradition is opposed both to a materialism which regards the world (nature, cosmos) as autonomous and to a transcendentalism which regards the world as of the same stuff as God. The term “create” asserts distance and belonging to. It is affirmed that the world has distance from God and a life of its own. At the same time, it is confessed that the world belongs to God and has no life without reference to God. Both characterize the relation of creator and creation.

In his article on the flood and structure of pre-patriarchal history, Malcolm Clark (1971) has scrutinized the unity of the flood story against the ancient Near Eastern background. The revolt motif is considered original to the flood narrative with its imprints in Gen 3:22, 24 and 11:6. In his view, the judgment stories in Genesis 3 and 4 share common ground with the account of Nathan rebuking David after his sexual affairs with Bathsheba (see 2 Sam 12:1–

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36 Brueggemann, Genesis, 17 (italics in the original).
14). In Clark’s view, chapter 3 complements chapter 4 in terms of human responsibility. The Adam cycle, the Noah cycle, and the Sodom narrative reflect a punitive paradigm in Genesis.37

According to Claus Westermann (1974), there is no “snowballing of sin” from Genesis 3 onwards.38 For one, the unqualified emphasis on chapter 3 might be considered a source of social individualism. For another, it is obvious that the figures of Adam and Eve have attracted more interest than those of their sons Cain and Abel. Westermann writes along these lines:

If the fall is seen only in ch. 3, then there must be distortion of the biblical teaching. This severing of the connection between chs. 3 and 4 and the one-sided emphases given to ch. 3 have made a substantial contribution to the far too individualistic understanding of sin in church teaching and practice. There are many reasons why social involvement is so much to the fore in the Church of today: one reason is that the Church in her understanding of sin had directed herself too narrowly towards Genesis ch. 3, and had neglected, or at least not considered sufficiently, the social responsibility which is the concern of ch. 4. This can be seen quite clearly in the influence exercised by the biblical figures. Adam and Eve walk through the whole history of western thought and art right up to the song hits and jokes of today. Cain and Abel have always remained shadowy figures.39

In one of the most thorough commentaries on Genesis, Westermann (1984) posits that no ‘fall’ can be deduced from Genesis 3, and he did not subordinate the primeval history to patriarchal history. He contends that Genesis 3 is confined to the question of the human limitations caused by sin, toil, suffering, and death. In Westermann’s view, genealogy and

37 Clark, “The Flood and the Structure of Pre-patriarchal History,” 184–211.
39 Westermann, Creation, 20.
narrative converge in J-source, having the same literary elements severed in P-source. Westermann developed the pattern of “sin–speech–punishment.” Westermann emphasizes the aspect of a divine speech in the narratives of the temptation, Cain, sons of God, flood, and Babel (Gen 3:14–19; 4:11–12; 6:3, 5–7; 11:6–7). In his perspective, the idea of hamartiological growth is foreign to the primeval history.  

In his article “Linguistic and Thematic Links between Gen 4:1–16 and Gen 2–3,” Alan Hauser (1980) reads the narratives of Genesis 2–3 and 4 as complementing one another. Hauser expounds the following commons motifs: two pairs of primordial characters, divine warnings prior to the acts of defiance against God, divine confrontation, sentence, separation from God’s presence, and dwelling east of Eden. Some of the linguistic parallels include the use of “know,” “conceive” and “bear,” the name of Abel and breath of life, the “fruit” offering and the fruit of the tree, the use of “his wife”/“the woman” and “his brother,” and the “face” of God and Cain’s fallen face. As well, the motif of intimacy and alienation is present within Genesis 2–4.  

In his detailed form-critical analysis of Genesis, George Coats (1983) establishes the following form-critical criteria: (1) a distinctive structure; (2) distinctive vocabulary patterns; (3) a typical setting; and (4) a distinctive intention. According to Coats, three saga genres

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41 Alan J. Hauser, “Linguistic and Thematic Links between Gen 4:1–16 and Gen 2–3,” *JETS* 23 (1980): 297–305. Cf. John C.L. Gibson, *Genesis* (DSB vol. 1; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1981), 142: “The story of Cain and Abel, which takes up the first 16 verses of Chapter 4, may originally have been a separate story with its own self-contained lesson, but as we have it in Genesis it is an addendum to the story of the Garden of Eden, and composed undoubtedly by the same author.”

are prevalent in Genesis: (1) the primeval saga, (2) the family saga, and (3) the heroic saga. (Other genres include tale, novella, legend, history, report, fable, etiology, and myth.)  He traces common forms and motifs within the texture of Gen 1:1–50:26. The cycle of primeval sagas consists of the paradise tale (Genesis 2–3) and a genealogy (Gen 4:1–26). According to Coats, Genesis 4 is a literary bridge between chapter 3 and chapters 6–9. The patriarchal theme in P and J intends to demonstrate the blessing spread over to individuals and families in prosperity and crisis. In his view, Genesis 4 “represents a natural parallel to J’s paradise tale.”

The inquiry into the ancient Hebrew Weltanschauung is enriched by Coats (1993) who underscores the strife and broken intimacy in Genesis 1–3. According to Coats, this textual unit sets the pace for the history of God’s salvation. Chapters 1–2 depict a paradise filled with intimacy in relationships between the Lord and his creatures. Chapter 3 is marked by broken intimacy with the Lord and humans. Likewise, Coats interprets Genesis 4 as the story of the broken intimacy between the two brothers who compete for God’s attention.

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43 Coats, Genesis, 5–10.
44 Ibid., 28–30.
46 Ibid., 65.
47 Idem, “Strife and Broken Intimacy: Genesis 1–3 Prolegomena to a Biblical Theology,” in The Moses Tradition (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 151–69. Cf. Thomas W. Mann, “‘All the Families of the Earth’: The Theological Unity of Genesis,” Int 45 (1991): 341–53 here 351: “The theological unity of Genesis thus consists in a combination of stories that depict alienation within the family (Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Noah and sons) and within the state (Babel), followed by stories that trace a resolution of the pain and alienation within the family of Abraham.”
Joel Rosenberg (1986) explores the narratives and characters from Genesis 2–3 and 12–25 as parallel to the Davidic history in 1–2 Samuel. Rosenberg posits the primeval stories and the political events of the monarchic Israel are interrelated as a political allegory serving the national concerns of Israel as a religious entity under God’s providence. He promotes the unity of the corpus of Genesis–2 Kings, and looks at the universal and patriarchal narratives as commentaries reflecting upon the Davidic history. In particular, the narratives of Adam and Abraham are interpreted as pre-monarchic political allegories that are rephrased and point to the Davidic monarchy. As for the possible connections between primeval history and the Davidic monarchy, the hamartiological narratives of Genesis 3 and 4 are taken as a political blueprint to the following episodes: (1) the Edenic temptation resembles the account of Amnon seducing his sister Tamar (2 Sam 13); and (2) the primeval fratricide of Cain is likened to the murder to Amnon by Absalom (as reported by the wise woman of Tekoa; see 2 Sam 14:5–7).  

In the introduction to his extensive commentary on Genesis, Gordon Wenham (1987) opts for a fine balance exists between the recourse to diachronic and synchronic methods. In his view, the J-source (ca. 1250–950 B.C.E.) draws on the P-source (the second millennium B.C.E.). Wenham voices his methodological disagreement with Westermann and Coats who viewed the sources J and P running in tandem. Similar to Westermann, Wenham does not advocate the traditional delimitation of Genesis 1–3. Wenham regards Genesis 2–3 as both paradigmatic and protohistorical. Seven characteristics feature the paradigmatic narratives of

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creation and temptation: (1) the toledot formula from Gen 2:4a is linked to the narratives of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph; (2) the narrative of chapter 4 is tied to the episodes of chapters 2–3; (3) chapter 5 links Adam with Noah; (4) the serpent’s curse entails consignment to the ground; (5) pain, toil, and death are the results of the first human disobedience; (6) the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden is a one-time event; and (7) chapters 2–3 explain why the world does not remain in the original state of order (Genesis 1). As noted above, the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel are related one to another insofar as Genesis 4 is patterned after the temptation narrative.49

In another study, Gordon Wenham (1990) undertakes to analyze the plot of original sin in Genesis 1–11 against the backdrop of the ancient Near Eastern traditions. Wenham argues that Genesis 1 is crucial for the theological-canonical uniformity of the creation act, its goodness, and the plausibility of the chaotic transformation taking place in Genesis 3 and 4 and onward. The goodness of the creation is sustained in Genesis 1. He applies the term “man’s fall” to the encounter of God with humans in Genesis 3. Given the place of the story of Adam-Eve at the beginning of the Pentateuch, ‘Adam’ is considered every man in Israel. The primeval narratives of Genesis 2–4 are taken together to point to patriarchal and national figures and histories in Israel’s past. The man lost many optimal human-divine opportunities for physical and spiritual pleasure. The expulsion from Eden is understood by Wenham as a severe punishment. Genesis 4 takes a step forward in the direction of a human alienation from the blessed conditions of Eden. According to Wenham, the process of the proto-historical degradation of humankind is evident in the words of Lamech, the intermarriage of

the sons of God and the daughters of man, the prevalence of human wickedness at the time of Noah, the self-exposure of Noah after drinking wine, Ham’s transgression, and the building of the Tower of Babel. Wenham concludes that the primeval hamartiology is cumulative based on the Sumerian flood story. In his view, it is the case of Hebrew primeval history corresponding to the pessimistic Mesopotamian myths. Wenham shares his perspective on the hamartiological contours of primeval history: “Genesis 1–11 presents a very gloomy picture of the human situation without the grace of God. A perfect creation is spoiled by human sin, sin which eventually reaches such a pitch that the old world must be destroyed and a new world created. But this world is not sinless . . . Without God’s grace man is without hope according to Genesis.”

In his commentary on Genesis, Donald Gowan (1988) approaches the text of Genesis as “archetypal stories” rather than the “traditional saga.” As noticed by Gowan, the creation narratives of Genesis are not supposed to comply with modern scientific standards. Discussing the reception of Genesis 1–11 in the synagogue and church, Gowan alludes to the Christian reception of Genesis 1–3 (e.g., Christian cosmogony and hamartiology). In his view, the “self-contained narrative” story of Cain and Abel can be read independently of either Genesis 3 or chapters 6–9. Allen Ross (1988) guides the reader into the pathways of Christian preaching and holistic reflection on the narratives of Genesis. Ross interprets the

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teleological stories of Genesis 4–11 as oriented to the blessing of all humankind despite the sinful nature of the human heart.\footnote{52}

John Kselman (1988) connects the fratricide to the preceding episode of temptation, explaining that the vocational conflict of the shepherd and the farmer intensifies the familial conflict of the defiant parents. According to Kselman, Genesis 4 represents an offence against the reproduction command to humankind, as well as a daring protest against the authority of God to take life. In his view, Cain’s violent action can be read as an aggravated repetition of the sin “to be like God.” Kselman’s bottom line is that God’s benevolence is reflected in chapters 3 and 4.\footnote{53}

Nahum Sarna’s (1989) historical-critical commentary on the amalgamated nature of Genesis provides valuable data on the ancient Near Eastern milieu. This commentary provides concise philological notes, thematic surveys, and extracts from Jewish exegesis. For Sarna, while Genesis 3 focuses on the temptation of greed and ambition, Genesis 4 points to the irrational factor in human conduct. Significantly, Sarna observes a few common themes that connect chapters 2–3 and 4: free will, personal responsibility, and punishment for offences. Sarna avers that the reader might think of the “propagation of the species” as a final triumph over death.\footnote{54}

\footnote{52} Ross, \textit{Creation and Blessing}, 77–8.


In his commentary, Victor Hamilton (1990) traces the history of source criticism alongside the challenges posed by rhetorical and literary criticism. Hamilton reads Genesis 3 as a heuristic act of spiritual awakening. Hamilton poses the following relevant questions on the textual relationship between chapters 3 and 4: (1) What is the relationship of chapter 4 to chapter 3? (2) Did Genesis 4 have an originally independent history, and was it attached to Genesis 3 only later and artificially? (3) Should Genesis 4 be read as a natural and legitimate continuation of Genesis 3? In Hamilton’s view, the parallel between Gen 3:16 and 4:7 might be a later editorial revision.\(^55\) John Rogerson (1991) regards chapter 4 as an attachment to chapter 3.\(^56\) On a different note, however, Calum Carmichael (1992) points to three core elements from the paradise story that reappear in the story of Cain and Abel: (1) the brokenness in the relationship between God, human beings, and animals; (2) the dialectical nature of life and death; and (3) the discrimination in human affairs. According to Carmichael, Cain’s criminal action fuelled by envy and anger might have been the original hamartiology of Genesis.\(^57\)

Terence Fretheim’s (1994) commentary on Genesis in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* explores the literary aspects of Genesis with an eye on the dynamics of the “theological movement” within the biblical episodes. The major themes of Genesis include the divine blessing, the role of the divine economy, and the human cooperation with/resistance to the plan of God.


Fretheim maintains a proper hermeneutical balance between moralizing and theologizing the narratives of Genesis, and argues for the occurrence of the original sin in the sense of the progressive alienation from God throughout Genesis 3–6. According to Fretheim, the narratives of Genesis 3 and 4 develop from temptation to sin to divine investigation, sentence, and mitigation to expulsion to the east. In his opinion, it is quite natural to read both accounts of sin conjointly.58

Kenneth Mathews (1996) reads the Book of Genesis as literature and theology against the backdrop of the ancient Near East. Mathews traces two theological threads within the primeval history: (1) blessing-Seed-land; and (2) fratricide-violence-uncreation-expulsion. Mathews emphasizes several common literary motifs in the primordial accounts of sin: (1) the punishment of the ground; (2) a breach in relationship between God and humans; (3) an interpersonal conflict between male and female; and (4) the deprivation of mastery over human life.59

In his study on the fractures in the Book of Genesis, David Carr (1996) separates the P and non-P sources (the J-source), and sketches the intratextual fractures in the Book of Genesis, tracing the history of the transmission of Genesis from hypothetical pre-texts to the later written layers. In his detailed research, he analyzes the fractured whole of the croscurrents in


the P and non-P materials: an account, a counteraccount, and a combination of both within Genesis 1–3. According to Carr, the orderly P creation account merges with the J counter account. In his view, there are striking correspondences between Adam and Noah (2:4b–3:24; 6:5–8:22), their sons (4:1–16; 9:18–27), the genealogical accounts (4:17–26; 5:29, 10), and the description of the sinful state of humankind (6:1–4; 11:1–9).60

In his fresh translation of the Pentateuch supplemented with introductions, commentary, and notes, Everett Fox (1997) unfolds the *peshat* of Genesis 1–11 as leading to Israel’s Patriarchs. Mesopotamian mythological counterparts are compared to the epics of biblical primeval history. Fox reads Genesis 3 as the story of the loss of divine presence, viewing Adam as representing “everyman.” He looks at the relative insignificance of the serpent, the sexual overtones, and the expulsion from Eden interpreted as an act of divine benevolence rather than jealousy (after Martin Buber). According to Fox, the narratives of sin in Genesis 3 and 4 share common motifs of divine choice, dismissal of divine warnings, and disruption of the blessed bond between humankind and soil from Genesis 2.61

Shamai Gelander (1997) cogently argues for an ultimate conflict between God’s benevolence and human freedom of choice, and explains that the abuse of the freedom granted by God to humans occupies the theological core of primeval history. The Lord’s goodness toward his

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entire creation is coupled with the classic Israelite notion of YHWH as God the Redeemer. However, Gelander refrains from casting the essential paradigms of creation, fall, and recreation upon the rest of the Pentateuch. According to Gelander, Genesis 1–11 is a self-contained, complete unit within Genesis. In his book, Gelander brings his theological analysis to bear on Genesis 2–4. Prior to making a case for a particular interpretation of these primeval narratives, Gelander echoes Westermann’s lament over the theological truncation of Genesis 1–3 to the exclusion of chapter 4. According to Gelander, Genesis 2–3 might be read differently than in the Christian history of Genesis interpretation. Next, in his literary analysis of the Tower Babel episode, Gelander argues for the unity of the stories of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel against the backdrop of primeval history. God’s virtue of goodness is theologically balanced with the uncompromising virtue of free will and the freedom of choice. Gelander contends that Eve’s joyful exclamation expressing the joy of motherhood in Gen 4:1 is a linear development from Gen 3:22–24. The *casus beli* leading to the fratricide derives from the spiritual tension between the concept of worship and the slavery to the power of sin.62

In another study on Genesis, Gelander (2009) makes a number of significant conclusions regarding Genesis 4. First, the fratricide deals with the issue of divine justice. Second, Cain is granted God’s guidance and protection. Third, the familial bond has been broken as a result of human defiance against God. Fourth, God as the prosecutor convicts the offender Cain prior to passing a judgement. Fifth, Cain’s criminal offence is worse than Adam’s

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disobedience to the divine word. Sixth, Genesis 4 carries the idea of an ethical conflict between divine justice and freedom of choice.\footnote{See Shamai Gelander, *Genesis* (Ra’anana: Open University of Israel, 2009), 211–29 (Hebrew).}

Michael Fishbane’s (1998) *Biblical Text and Texture* takes a holistic stance on reading the unit of Genesis 2–4. Fishbane holds that internal theological tensions are inherited within Genesis 3. In particular, Fishbane explains the source of a theology of evil as follows: “The serpent is with us in the world, without us in the world, and within us in the world. Insofar as this force exists within God’s creation, the text hints—however mutely—at a theology of evil at the same time as it emphasizes man’s responsibility for the existence of evil.”\footnote{Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture*, 23 (italics in the original).} Internal and external sources of evil are detected within the primeval narrative of Genesis 3. According to Fishbane, while man’s subversive inclination toward evil is internal in nature, the external source of temptation is the serpent. Fishbane adduces that ethical issues such as evil, will, and choice are reinterpreted within the contours of the fratricide. The literary pattern within chapters 3 and 4 includes the following elements: temptation, desire, conflict, crime, punishment, and exile.\footnote{Ibid., 26–7.} Fishbane notes that Cassuto did not treat the accounts of sin as a “deliberate intertextuality.”\footnote{Ibid., 145 (n. 9).} While this critique might be reasonable, one does wonder why Fishbane excludes Gen 4:1–16 from his thematic-structural discussion of primeval texts related to the testing of divine-human boundaries (Gen 3:1–24; 6:1–4; 11:1–9).\footnote{Ibid., 32.}
According to Fishbane, the primordial narratives and genealogies are correlated by means of repeated motifs, themes, and symbols. First, there is the theme of creation and work, divided into four phases, namely: creation of world, post-Eden, post-flood, and the human activity in the plains of Shinar. Second, symbolism of sacred space is traced in Eden, Ararat, and the plains of Shinar. Third, the figures of Adam, Cain, Noah, and the builders of the Babel Tower represent proactive humanity. Fourth, the narratives of Eden, the fratricide, the sons of God, and the builders of Babel share similar hamartiological concerns. Fifth, the divine council manifests itself in the creation of man, the exile from Eden, the sons of God, and the dispersal from Babel. Sixth, the exile, destruction, and dispersion found its expression in God’s decision to expel Adam, Cain, the builders of the Tower of Babel, as well as the divine verdict to flood the world. Seventh, the geography of the expelled characters in the narratives of Eden, Cain, and the Tower builders is oriented toward the east. Eighth, a time period of ten generations elapses from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abram.68

In Moshe Weinfeld’s (1998) commentary on the Book of Genesis, the reader finds useful introductions to philology, history, and the ancient Mediterranean background to the biblical literature (specifically, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic sources). In his view, the primeval traditions of creation and offence were combined in Genesis 2–4 insofar as the story of Adam and Eve proceeds to the story of their progeny. In particular, chapters 3 and 4 expose the psychological delicacy of the dialogues between God and his creatures.69

68 Ibid., 38–9.

Rabbi Mordechai Breuer (1999) has authored a Jewish commentary on the Book of Genesis. According to Breuer, the first book of the Tanak reflects on God’s providence and other divine attributes. Reading the plain sense of the Bible from a rabbinic stance on the primeval and patriarchal narratives, Breuer harmonizes biblical verses at odds with one another, expands the rabbinic tenet “The Torah speaks in human language,” and maintains the divine origin of the Torah though the language is human. Consider, for example, Breuer’s interpretation of the creation stories in Genesis 1–2. While Genesis 1 reveals the divine attribute of justice (elohim), Genesis 2 embodies the divine attribute of mercy (the Tetragrammaton).70

According to Breuer, the narratives of sin in Genesis 3 and 4 are to be read against the backdrop of the Mosaic postulations of the Pentateuch. These early Genesis accounts warn against the violation of divine postulations like those prescribed to Adam and Cain. At the same time, Breuer interprets the text of Genesis 4 paradigmatically as though the whole tribe of Cain was judged on his behalf. Thus, since Cain’s punishment is individual and collective alike, Breuer likens Cain’s punishment to Adam’s: “For whole humankind has been punished on behalf of Adam’s sin; therefore, the whole humankind that sprang from Cain was punished for his sin. Thus, Cain’s punishment is likened to Adam’s.”71

70 Mordechai Breuer, Pirqi Bere’shit (vol. I: Genesis 1–17; Alon Shevut: Tevunot, 1999), i-xiv (Hebrew).

In his commentary on Genesis, John Hartley (2000) fastens on a structural analysis of Genesis and its palistrophic (chiastic) structure in the primeval history and in the patriarchal narratives. In this commentary, Hartley seeks to connect the Book of Genesis to the New Testament (hereafter NT) and, rather than deal with source-critical conjectures, he underscores the final form of the text. In his opinion, Genesis was authored by the proto-author Moses and edited by later editors. Hartley considers the striking parallels between the accounts of sin under study.72

Another recent Genesis commentary written by Laurence Turner (2000) scrutinizes the foreground plot of Genesis that consistently moves from exposition to complication and to final resolution as shown in the stories of Cain, Abraham, and Joseph. According to Turner, the narratives of Genesis 1–3 are concerned with holy time and holy space: “Chapters 1–3 are cocooned in holiness; the action of chs. 4–11 will inhabit a very different world.”73 Genesis 3 complies more with the action of chapters 4–11. Nonetheless, Turner thus comments on the sequence of chapters 3 and 4: “The sum of these connections shows that despite the fact that the Man and Woman appear only in Gen 4.1–2a, the story of 4.1–16 has a vital connection with what has preceded.”74


74 Ibid.
John Walton (2001) suggests three hermeneutical circles in his first Genesis commentary: (1) the original meaning; (2) the literary context; and (3) contemporary application. Walton undertakes to explain the ancient Israelite communal view of sin in its ancient cultic context without suppressing Christian hamartiology, and discusses numerous polemical issues such as the figure of the serpent, the role of the woman in the temptation, and the interpretation of the ‘seed’ of the woman. In his view, Cain’s lack of familial responsibility challenges the ancient Israelite perception of the family as a sacred institution. Walton thus states: “The episode not only shows an increased level of depravity, but it also shows the effects of sin infiltrating into new areas. In chapter 3, the blessing was affected by obstacles that interfered with procuring both family and food. In chapter 4, family (the result of procuring children) is disrupted by murder and exile. Just as Cain is cut off from his family, he is also cut from food supply.”

In his latest commentary on Genesis, Walton (2009) explores the historical and cultural context of Scripture by providing a running commentary on selected texts against the ancient Near Eastern background. The historical and cultural background of Genesis is explored by means of tracing the historico-political currents in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan. The geographical setting of the primeval and patriarchal histories is another point of interest for the present commentator. While some of the primeval stories might be compared to the ancient Near Eastern myths, many other texts in Genesis lack those textual parallels. As for the literary qualities of Genesis, Walton unfolds some of the most prominent genres, including cosmogony, genealogies, ancestors’ narratives, familial blessings/curses, conflict

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tales, and battle accounts. Significantly, the fratricide is classified as a conflict tale alongside the stories of the sons of God, the flood, the tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the violent conflict between the sons of Simeon and Levi and the Shechemites.  

In Walton’s commentary, the focus is on ancient Near Eastern motifs, words, and episodes spotted in selected verses in Genesis. It is no wonder, then, that Walton does not tackle various literary questions and theological difficulties stemming from the hamartiologies of Genesis. First, a few comparative lines are drawn so as to illustrate the mythopoeic parallels between Genesis 3 and the ancient Near Eastern myths: (1) the association of the serpent motif with life, death, wisdom, and disorder (Gilgamesh Epic, Story of Adapa, Egyptian and Canaanite literatures); (2) the distinct sapiential idea of godlikeness (Enkidu, Gilgamesh, and Adapa); (3) the elements of the curse against the serpent like crawling on the belly, eating dust, and striking the head (Egyptian myths); (4) the garments of skin for the human pair; and (5) the cherubs (various forms of griffins or sphinxes).

Second, Walton brings to the fore a few other parallels between Genesis 4 and the ancient Near Eastern literature: (1) the fratricide of Genesis 4 is likened to the Sumerian tale of Dumuzi and Enkimdu; (2) some ancient blood rites from across the Middle East resemble the offering of the fat portions by Abel; (3) the rabīṣu of Gen 4:7 may be interpreted as a Mesopotamian demon; (4) the conflict of the brothers is likened to the Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers; (5) Cain as a wild man resembles the figure of Enkidu in the Gilgamesh Epic;

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77 Walton, Genesis to Deuteronomy, 33–8.
and (6) the ancient custom of blood vengeance in Cain’s story is a widespread motif in the ancient Near Eastern literature.\(^{78}\)

In another commentary on Genesis, Bruce Waltke and Cathi Fredricks (2001) hold to the following hermeneutical presuppositions: (1) the fall is considered central to Christian hamartiology; (2) Cain himself is regarded as the epitome of tokenism and libertarianism; (3) sin escalates in Cain’s line; and (4) Cain’s story can be read as a direct divine warning against Israel’s blatant ignorance of God’s postulations.\(^{79}\)

In his innovative commentary on Genesis, Thomas Brodie (2001) tackles the first book of the Bible in the Primary History (Genesis–2 Kings). In Brodie’s opinion, source-criticism is not a viable alternative for unlocking the authorship and dating of the Pentateuch. Brodie contends that Genesis pertains to the genre of Greek historiography to be dated back to the Persian period. In this commentary, Brodie unfolds the following aspects in the Book of Genesis: (1) the combination of literature and religion; (2) the dialogic arrangement of twenty-six diptychs (e.g., two creation stories, two hamartiologies, and two genealogical lists); and (3) the incorporation of traditions from the ancient Near East, Judean prophetic sources, and Homer’s Odyssey. In particular, the diptychs are essential to the Primary History. According to Brodie, the Book of Genesis is divided into four parts: (1) Adam–Noah (Genesis 1–11), (2) Abram–Abraham (12:1–25:18), (3) Jacob (25:19–37:1), and (4) Joseph

\(^{78}\) Walton, 38–42.

(37:2–50:26). In Brodie’s opinion, the story of Genesis flows “from womb to tomb.”80 The second diptych structure introduces the reality of sin (chapters 3 and 4). While the sin of Genesis 3 is of the “higher level” (vertical), the offence of Genesis 4 is of the “lower level” (horizontal). These hamartiologies are classified as “narratives of crime and punishment” (so Westermann).81 Therefore, Brodie concludes that Genesis 3 and 4 construe a “radical continuity”.82 According to Brodie, this “beast factor” is articulated in the narratives of Genesis 3 and 4 with a view to the lying serpent and the crouching sin.83 Brodie’s analysis of the diptych pattern contributes to a holistic reading of the texts under study.84

Dominic Rudman (2001) primarily deals with the theme of knowledge in the narratives of sin (Genesis 3–4). The purpose of his study is to examine the alleged new status emerging as a result of appropriating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. “The fruit of the field” Cain offers to the Lord evokes the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. On the one hand, humans are promised to be “like gods,” but in fact “they knew that they were naked.” On the other, Adam “knew” his wife Eve who bore two sons, Cain and Abel. In Rudman’s opinion, the name of Cain evokes a provocation against God, while Abel’s name implies human fragility. The root ‘to do well’ (טב) used in Gen 4:7 recalls again the same Edenic tree so that Cain can make a god-like decision. Cain’s answer “I do not


81 Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 143.

82 Ibid., 144.


84 Brodie, 154.
know” betrays his intentional rejection of the divine summons to “do well.” Rudman explains that by rejecting the knowledge offered by God and acting without taking due responsibility, Cain escalates the situation by throwing back the question “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9). In his view, Cain lacked the ability to appropriate Godly knowledge for his own benefit.\(^85\)

A few other biblical theologians refer to the literary relationship of the narratives of sin, arriving at somewhat similar conclusions. According to Charles Scobie (2003), the cost of the alienation between God and humans is crucial to chapters 3 and 4.\(^86\) In his concise notes on Genesis in *The Jewish Study Bible*, Jon Levenson (2004) comments on the text of Gen 4:7: “The end of the verse is strikingly reminiscent of the words of God to Eve in 3.16, just as Cain’s punishment in 4.11–12 recalls Adam’s in 3.17–19. It is possible that the story of Cain and Abel itself once served as an account of the primal sin and the expulsion from paradise.”\(^87\)

*The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* is another innovative philosophical commentary on Genesis written by Leon Kass (2003) who tackles the first book of the Torah as a moral guide to post-modern Western culture. Though Kass is definitely not a biblical scholar but admittedly a bioethicist and scientist, his stance on Genesis might be useful to the present

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discussion. Kass is interested in the order of the stories, the used words, textual juxtapositions, and the ethics of Genesis. The reader is advised that an intelligent reading of the Book of Genesis involves an approach that is naïve, philosophic, and reverent. The primeval stories of Genesis are paradigmatic in the sense of providing a social roadmap for human interactions in society. Kass nurtures a philosophical approach to the interpretation of Genesis: “Is it possible to find, institute, and preserve a way of life, responsive to both the promise and the peril of the human creature, that accords with man’s true standing in the world and that serves to perfect his god-like possibilities?”

Kass opts for the sexual complementarity as foundational to Genesis 2–3 with its transcendent and eternal institution of marriage and its destabilization after the act of primeval defiance against God in Eden. According to Kass, Genesis 4 is mostly concerned about brotherhood and the heroic survival of Cain after the divine curse was imposed upon him. For this reason, the two stories of Genesis are to be held together since the post-Edenic survival episodes address “what unregulated human life is really like.”

In his commentary on Genesis 1–4, C. John Collins (2006) contends that the conventional delimitation of Genesis 1–3 cannot be sustained since chapters 2–4 are originally interwoven and assigned to the J-source. Collins draws a number of linguistic, literary, and theological connections between the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel. In his view, the primeval

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characters were all real persons who transgressed, and the events narrated in the primeval history are of historical value for modern readers of Scripture.  

Kristin Swenson (2006) and Dennis Olson (2006) examine the unit of Genesis 2–4 with an eye on particular exegetical issues. First, Kristin Swenson (2006) discusses the issue of care and keeping east of Eden in Gen 4:1–16 in relation to Genesis 2–3. The focus falls on the question addressed by Cain to God, “Am I my brother’s keeper (מָרַשֶׁהוּ)?” (Gen 4:9). Swenson probes the verbal form “to keep” (שמר) and “to work” (עבד) in the unit of Genesis 2–4. According to Swenson, these two verbs are associated with the divine purpose of the creation of human beings. In her opinion, there is a three-way relationship of human beings, the earth, and God in Genesis 2–4. The verb שמר in Genesis 4 implies that “keeping” should not be neglected even outside of Eden. Swenson draws three ethical implications. First, care for the earth cannot be separated from care for other people. Second, such care for the earth has to be undertaken even in a fractured world full of injustice, misunderstanding, and challenges. Third, God’s presence among humans is dependent upon such caretaking. The conclusion of Swenson is that Genesis 4, like chapters 2–3, lays out the relationship between human beings and the earth.

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Second, Dennis Olson (2006) contends that questions of masculinity and violence are crucial to the unit of Genesis 2–4. As an alternative to androcentric readings of the Edenic narrative, Olson argues for a masculist pro-feminist interpretation of the narratives of creation and sin. According to Olson, Genesis 2 presents various kinds of humble, subservient, and passive forms of masculinity. At the same time, this creation narrative presents lifted up, active, and empowered forms of masculinity. In Olson’s view, Genesis 3 also presents an ambiguous picture of masculinity. On the one hand, the man takes initiative and responsibility; on the other, the man allows the woman to take the lead. Instead of raising his voice against the verbal attack of the serpent, the first man remains silent when he should have spoken. Olson raises his voice against the one-sided exegetical focus on Genesis 3 and the traditional disjunction of chapter 4. Olson thus claims: “The shame, distrust, suspicion, conflict, and distortions in power relationships begun in Gen 3 now spill over into bodily violence and bloodshed in Gen 4.” Bearing on the primeval and patriarchal histories of Genesis, Olson makes the following apt conclusion in respect to the motif of masculinity and violence deriving from Genesis 2–4:

From beginning to end, the images of males in Genesis are marked by this continual seesaw between violence and reconciliation, community building and community disintegration, hope and despair, harsh realities and glimmers of a new and more peaceful way. Realism about the pervasiveness of male violence coexists with periodic moments of reconciliation and peace that point to the possibility that the


complex knot that has bound masculinity and violence so tightly together from biblical times to our own day is not forever resistant to untying. The vision remains hopeful and powerful, even if partial and distant.94

In his two recent books on Genesis, André Lacocque (2006, 2010) sheds new light on the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel. The first book, *The Trial of Innocence: Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist*, addresses the sin of hubris in the narrative of Eden (Gen 2:4b–4:1). Lacocque considers chapters 2–3 as myths representing dialectical anthropology (e.g., divine breath and dust, male and female). He considers rabbinic, theological, and psychological juxtapositions that are attached to these primeval narratives. Lacocque undertakes the historical exilic context of the Yahwist dated to the sixth century B.C.E. In his view, as the final redactor of primeval history, the Yahwist is regarded as contemporaneous with the Priestly editor and the Deuteronomist.95 Moreover, after the act of disobedience in Eden, humans are still capable of goodness and justice. In his view, Genesis 3 reflects the exilic Judean community that felt uprooted from their homeland. For this reason, Lacocque is not overly fond of the theological expressions characterizing Genesis 3 as ‘original sin’ or ‘the fall.’ Genesis 3 points to the eschatological *Endzeit*, and broadens the Babylonian exile to universal parameters.96

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94 Olson, 85.

95 Cf. Jan Christian Gertz, “The Formation of the Primeval History,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed., Craig A. Evans, et al., VTSup 152; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 107–35, who has recently argued that the non-P primeval history should be dated to the seventh century B.C.E. (Gen 2:4b–8:22). This argument is sustained by recourse to the observed genre boundaries within the ancient Near Eastern literature like the Atrahasis myth and the Sumerian narrative of the flood. In his view, the story of the dispersion at Babel and the union of the sons of God with the daughters of Adam are possibly post-P additions.

In his second book *Onslaught against Innocence: Cain, Abel, and the Yahwist*, Lacocque (2010) reads the fratricide narrative in Genesis 4 through the lens of classics, the NT, rabbinic theology, contemporary philosophy, psychology, and literature. Lacocque argues that Genesis 4 is about Cain’s violence and his criminal attack on innocence. An Oedipus complex is traced in the words of Eve at the birth of Cain (Gen 4:1). In his view, the reader of Genesis is expected to side with Abel and his God because Cain took offense at Abel’s innocence. While Abel is casted as the primeval model of innocence, Cain is seen as the epitome of evil. Lacocque firmly believes that God gave Cain the power to do well. Cain’s accountability to God, Abel, and the world is the core issue at stake.\(^97\) As for the relationship between accounts of creation and sin, Lacocque traces the essential paradigms of human behaviour in Genesis 2–4:

J has inserted into the initial genealogy the story of two brothers’ relationship. Its purpose is to pursue and prolong the anthropology started in Genesis 2–3. In those episodes, J showed that the transgression of the divine will has made dysfunctional the relationship with spouse and world. In the new development on Cain and Abel, the reader is introduced into the human family life. . . . On the model of the Adam and Eve story, J again uses his amazing skill of understatement and economy of means. . . . As Adam and Eve represent the whole of humanity throughout history, so too are Cain and Abel specimens of humankind. As Genesis 2 and 3 are not to be read only diachronically but also synchronically (Genesis 3 does not supersede Genesis 2), so Cain and Abel can be said to be the *figurae* of the human condition.\(^98\)

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\(^98\) Lacocque, *Onslaught against Innocence*, 3, 13, 14 (italics in the original).
Konrad Schmid (2008) discusses the state of mankind as reflected in Genesis 2–3 against the backdrop of the deuterocanonical texts, Philo, and Paul. According to Schmid, the Christian assumption of primeval immortality is alien to the Edenic narrative. Schmid shows that the plot develops from a glorious ambivalent state to another ambivalent state. As well, the first man who knew good and evil is contrasted with Solomon’s discernment of good and evil (1 Kgs 3:9).

In his dissertation “The Book of Ecclesiastes as a Derash of Genesis 1–4: A Study in Old Testament Literary Dependency,” Maurer Bernard (2007) argues for a holistic reading of Ecclesiastes against the backdrop of Genesis 1–4, and holds to a literary interdependence of this sapiential book on the first four chapters of Genesis based upon verbal repetitions, common themes, and stylistic and conceptual repetitions. In his view, Ecclesiastes should not be read as though dependent upon Greek philosophy or other ancient Near Eastern works. If read as an intertextual composition, Bernard contends, Ecclesiastes becomes a theological treatise reflecting a literary awareness of the fall narrative.

On a different note, James McKeown (2008) contributes to the flowering of theological interpretation in biblical scholarship far beyond philological and historical matters. Following a review of conventional introductions to Genesis, McKeown addresses in his commentary

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verbal and thematic repetitions. While the rhetorical device is the verbal repetition of a Hebrew root, the alternating motif of offspring, blessing, and land is the thematic repetition throughout the Book of Genesis. In this commentary on Genesis, the reader is exposed to a close analysis of reoccurring words, phrases, motifs, and themes germane to the final form of Genesis. McKeown bears on the literary and cultural contexts of the ancient Near East with an eye on the Babylonian myths of *Enuma Elish*, the Gilgamesh Epic, and the Atrahasis Epic. Moreover, the Book of Genesis is placed in the exilic era since Adam, Cain, and the temple-builders all experienced some sort of an exile in primordial history.

McKeown asserts that the act of disobedience of the first couple is paradigmatic for future generations. In his perspective, the story of Cain-Abel intensifies sin from disobedience to fratricide. As a result of Adam’s defiance against the Lord, the tripartite bond of human-land-God was broken, and as the landlord the Creator evicts his tenants from their residence. Mark Boda (2009) traces the theme of sin and its remedy in the HB. Boda begins his discussion with the structure of Genesis and the breakdown of the *toledot* formula, and posits that Genesis 4 recounts the effects of the primordial disobedience in chapter 3.

Bill Arnold (2009) offers an accessible reading of primeval history comprising Israel’s proto-historical stories set against the background of Mesopotamia. Arnold proposes to date the Book of Genesis to the prexilic period, believed to be compiled by an editor of the Holiness School, and holds that Genesis 1–11 lays the ground for God’s relationship with the entire universe in light of Israel’s history of salvation. In Arnold’s view, chapters 1–3 are to be

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delimited as foundational to biblical anthropology. In accordance with numerous biblical scholars, Arnold explains that the doctrine of original sin derives from Second Temple Jewish and Christian theologies; however, Genesis 3 and 4 share the ethical concern for human responsibility.\(^{103}\)

In his recent monograph on Genesis theology, Walter Moberly (2009) tackles the stories of Eden and fratricide through the lens of the Christian canon and theology. In Moberly’s view, the Edenic narrative is foundational, not necessarily because of its traditional weight in Christianity, but due to its location at the outset of the Bible. Moberly first scrutinizes James Barr’s *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immorality* (1993), and then proposes another possible reading of the Edenic fall in continuity with the Christian tradition. In Moberly’s perspective, the core problem of the relationship between God and humans lies in the question of genuinely trusting God. Thus, according to Moberly, Genesis 3 reflects on the hardships of human life from a sapiential standpoint.\(^{104}\) Contra Schwartz, Moberly contends that it is wrong to rationalize the divine preference in Genesis 4.\(^{105}\) According to Moberly, Cain stands in contrast to Esau who overcame his bitterness against his brother Jacob.\(^{106}\)

\(^{103}\) Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (NCBC; Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19, 72.


\(^{105}\) In her book, Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) undertakes to read Genesis 4 along the lines of the polarity between the principles of scarcity and plenitude. According to Schwartz, the violent legacy of monotheism goes as far back as Genesis 4 with its destructive potential to divide peoples and communities.

In his theological interpretation of Genesis, Russell Reno (2010) assumes that the Nicene tradition is the proper foundation for interpreting the Bible as the Christian Scripture. This commentary on Genesis is conversant with history of pre-modern exegesis, including Rabbinic Targums, Origen, Augustine, and Rashi. In this commentary, the Book of Genesis is divided into five portions as follows: “Creation” (chapters 1–2), “Fall” (chapters 3–4), “Dead Ends” (chapters 5–11), “Scandal of Particularity” (chapters 12–33), and “Need for Atonement” (chapters 34–50). Reno posits that the offences of Adam, Eve, and the firstborn Cain are tantamount to primeval sin, reading chapters 3 and 4 together as an original and continuous thread. In Reno’s words, “The order of transgression and expulsion in Gen. 3 is not simply recapitulated. Because the fall is a trajectory and not a singular event, it is intensified. Obedience to the lie has a dark future, a future of death.”

In his recent monograph on Genesis 1–3, Seth Postell (2011) offers an entirely different approach to the first three chapters of Genesis. Postell argues that if the methodology of canonical intertextuality is applied to Genesis 1–3, the creation of Adam and his fall from grace foreshadow Israel’s failure to keep the Mosaic law and their exile from the land, as well as the prophetic realization of the divine command to conquer the whole earth (Gen

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1:28). As such, this is an inner-biblical anticipation of the future of Israel through the lens of primeval episodes. To substantiate his argument, Postell draws numerous parallels between the primeval history of Genesis 1–3 and the biblical history of Israel. In his own words, “Genesis 1–3, when read as integrally related to the Pentateuch and the Tanakh as a whole, is not meant to encourage Israel to keep Sinai; rather, it forthrightly admits that Israel did not (and will not) keep it, and therefore prepares the reader to wait expectantly in exile for a new work of God in the last days (just as Jacob and Moses did).”¹¹⁰ Postell purposely retains the old traditional delimitation of Genesis 1–3 as crucial to biblical theology. While an exegetical priority should be reasonably given to the relationship between the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel, Postell is rather keen on the textual relationship between the narratives of Adam and Noah: (1) planting of a garden (2:8; 9:20); (2) partaking of the fruit which results in nakedness (3:6–7; 9:21); (3) covering the nakedness (3:21; 9:23); and (4) the act of cursing (3:14–15; 9:25).¹¹¹

Cynthia Edenburg (2011) compares the stories of Eden and Cain as exhibiting a close relationship in structure and language. Edenburg claims that both two primordial tests end with exile and isolation. In her view, the primeval history was added at a late stage in the composition of the Book of Genesis. Accordingly, Genesis 2–4 was added to a Genesis scroll at the pre-P stage or prior to the addition of Gen 1:1–2:4a. Edenburg holds these chapters 2–4 as coherent narratives sharing common language and structure. The two hamartiologies from Genesis 3 and 4 establish a narrative pattern of Genesis–2 Kings (Enneateuch) with the

¹¹⁰ Seth D. Postell, Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh (Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2011), 4 (italics in the original).

¹¹¹ Postell, Adam as Israel, 104–5.
inclusio of the historiographical account of the Babylonian conquest and exile (2 Kgs 24:1–25:21). The primordial scheme of sin and exile construes a paradigmatic narrative that enters into a dialogue with the conclusion to the Deuteronomistic History (hereafter DtrH).¹¹²

Joseph Blenkinsopp’s (2011) discursive commentary on Genesis 1–11 analyzes the reoccurring pattern of creation, un-creation, and re-creation. Blenkinsopp emphasizes that the act of divine creation in the primeval history coheres with the narratives of un-creation and re-creation. The notion of the innocent, primeval era clashes with the post-Edenic era, which is marked by constant exposure to hostility, aggression, and division. Blenkinsopp utilizes primary ancient Judeo-Christian sources and classic philosophical insights aiming to shed new light on the enigmatic texts of Genesis. The Christian interpretations of stories of Eden and fratricide are not binding for Blenkinsopp. On the contrary, he uses source-critical conjectures and the history of interpretation primarily for the purpose of presenting a wider spectrum of opinions and approaches taken over the past two millennia.¹¹³ Blenkinsopp grapples with several penetrating questions:

This narrative form was chosen as a way of articulating troubling questions of a religious nature. In a world created by a benevolent deity and declared — seven times — by that same deity to be good, how did humanity go so wrong as to bring an annihilating judgment on itself? How did evil infiltrate into humanity blessed by God? How is it that humanity, created in God’s own image, so easily deviated from the moral order laid down in creation? How — this especially — do we account for gratuitous evil, evildoing for its own sake? Why is the history of humanity — in Edward


Gibbon’s summary statement — largely a history of crimes, follies and misfortunes?\textsuperscript{114} Blenkinsopp appeals to common sapiential motifs, deceit, bloodshed, and forbidden sexual affairs in Genesis 3 and 4 with a view toward the Succession History and the Ezekielian prophecy addressed to the King of Tyre (2 Sam 11–20; 1 Kgs 1–2; Ezek 28:11–19).\textsuperscript{115} Blenkinsopp posits that Genesis 3 is the first un-creation text having chapter 4 as its natural sequel. In his view, the narrative of Cain-Abel was an independent hamartiological myth: “Most importantly, Gen 4:1–16 presents a more explicit account of the origins of moral evil than the story of ‘man’s first disobedience,’ introducing for the first time, as it does, the language and the paradigmatic example of sin, the taking of an innocent human life (Gen 4:7).”\textsuperscript{116} Interestingly, Blenkinsopp translates Gen 4:7 as follows: “If you do not do well, Sin is a demon crouching at the entrance, its desire is for you, but you can rule over it.”\textsuperscript{117} The appearance of the demon-like sin corresponds to the cunning serpent in relation to the deceived woman in Eden.\textsuperscript{118} The provision of clothes for the first human couple and the mysterious sign for Cain is another significant correspondence.\textsuperscript{119}

In his commentary on Genesis, Miguel De La Torre (2011) applies liberation theology and social care for the poor and the marginalized. Drawing on a wide spectrum of Christian traditional forms like liturgy, theology, and art, De La Torre avers that one should extract the

\textsuperscript{114} Blenkinsopp, \textit{Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation}, 9.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 58–64.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 93.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 94.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 97.
message of Genesis to tackle various forms of injustice, oppression, sexual abuse, and other social issues. De La Torre suggests reading Genesis through the lens of Christian theology and social studies. Given the differences between the book’s original meaning and its context, De La Torre suggests taking Genesis as an instructive roadmap for dealing with social matters and challenges. As a liberation theologian, De La Torre accepts the JE source for the Book of Genesis, taking the narratives of Genesis as lively testimonies of those who encounter the God of the Bible in the past and in the present.120

According to De La Torre, the testimonies of numerous personages teach the readers about the pre-fall vision of human society. In particular, Gen 2:4b–4:16 consists of ten testimonies: (1) the testimony of Adam (2:4b–7); (2) the second testimony of the earth (2:8–17); (3) the testimony of the woman (2:18–23); (4) testimonies of the first man and woman (2:24–25); (5) the testimony of the serpent (3:1–5); (6) the testimony about the first rebellion (3:6–11); (7) testimonies about the wages of sin (3:12–20); (8) the testimony about women’s domination by men (3:16); (9) the testimony about expulsion (3:21–24); and (10) the testimony about the second rebellion (4:1–16).121

In approaching the narrative of Gen 3:6–11, the testimony about the first rebellion, De La Torre considers it as the case of the first human paradigmatic disobedience (though not as ‘fall’ in its Christian classic interpretation). Apparently, the Edenic narrative becomes essential for the thrust of Genesis 1–11. The testimony about the expulsion from Eden signifies the momentum of a new beginning outside the Garden of Eden. Struggles with


121 De La Torre, *Genesis*, 40–99.
multiple hardships, alienation from a loving God, and bitterness of soul derive from Adam’s disobedience to God’s stipulation. The expulsion from Eden is likened to the galut of the Israelites from their homeland. According to this interpretation, the self-exiled God is willing to communicate with Adam even after the expulsion from Eden.  

As for the story of Cain-Abel, De La Torre unfolds the testimony as the second rebellion in which Cain is the major character who follows the wrong path in life. Cain is the primeval transgressor of Genesis who dared to cross the elementary limits of the social ethos because nobody has the right to take another life. De La Torre regards Genesis 4 as a symbol of envy and violence as much as arrogance, selfishness, and hatred. Cain is likened to his parents:

> Whether Cain intended it or not, he, like his parents, becomes “like God,” wielding the power of life and death over others. When we act out of hatred, we oppose God’s call to love. When we act out of pride, we oppose God’s call to be humble. And when we act out of selfishness, we oppose God’s call of self-giving. All individuals, as well as all institutions — whether they are political, economic, or social — exist under the sway of sinful, if not deadly, behavior.

Graeme Goldsworthy (2012) omits the narrative of Cain-Abel from his theological discourse on prophetic eschatology and Genesis Christology. For example, while Goldsworthy claims that Genesis 3 refers back to Gen 1:2, he plays down the agrarian motif in Gen 3:19 and 4:12.  

Marvin Sweeney (2012) offers a diachronic reading of the primeval texts from the perspective of religious studies. Sweeney explains that the temptation story of Genesis 3 derives from Jerusalemite circles as an independent literary composition, which he ascribes

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122 Ibid., 72, 83–93.
123 Ibid., 96.
to the J-source. In his view, the Hebrew anti-feminist story turns against the female fertility goddesses of the ancient Near East (e.g., Astarte, Qadeshah, and Hathor). Thus, the woman’s nakedness turns out to be a source of shame, childbearing becomes a punishment from heaven, and her firstborn Cain kills his brother Abel. Sweeney holds that the fratricide reflects the tribal conflict between Judah (who, like Abel, was occupied with animal husbandry) and Israel (who, like Cain, was occupied with farm lands).125

Christoph Levin’s (2012) approach is totally different in his interpretation of Genesis 2–3.126 According to Levin, the J creation narrative, namely Genesis 2, can be read independently of Genesis 3, for this interpretation draws on the hypothesis that the temptation narrative is a later textual interpolation that was conjoined with the Adamic narrative. According to Levin, the first human couple was predestined to death from the outset; therefore, the Pauline interpretation of the Edenic fall lacks the theological support of Genesis. As for the origin of mortality and the possibility of eternal life, Levin thus claims, “Being-toward-death belongs together not with sin but with creation.”127

In his recent article, Walter Houston (2012) diminishes the Christian traditional interpretation of Genesis 3 as the key text for establishing the doctrine of original sin. Houston locates the origins of sin in the P narratives of creation and uncreation (Gen 1:26–28; 6:11–13; 9:1–7). Genesis 1–9 accounts for the ‘fall’ from God’s standards of peace and justice. The unit of


127 Levin, “Genesis 2–3,” 98.
Genesis 2–4 is taken together only to the extent of presenting the human rejection of the
divine economy of justice for the creation of God.\textsuperscript{128}

In a recent article on food and family in Eden, Carol Meyers (2012) probes the stories of
Adam-Eve and Cain-Eve against the backdrop of socioeconomic studies.\textsuperscript{129} In her article,
Meyers features the Hebrew root “to eat” (אכל) occurring twenty-one times in Genesis 2–4 as
one of the unifying elements in this coherent textual unit. Israel’s aetiologies expose some
socioeconomic matters in Genesis 2–4 that reflect the highland environment in which the
Israelites lived throughout the Iron Age. She explains that the episode of Genesis 4 stems
from a conflict rooted in the two elements of the “dry-farming subsistence strategy of the
highlands”: (1) field crops and (2) animal husbandry.\textsuperscript{130}

The rivalry between the brothers is rooted in an agrarian territorial division or a similar
socio-economic system rather than in a conflict between a farmer and a nomad. Meyers
contends that the disjunction of chapter 4 from 2–3 is counter-productive.\textsuperscript{131} According to
Meyers, chapters 3 and 4 are aetiologies that contrast the agrarian and migratory lifestyles. In
contrast to these two primeval histories of defiance against God, agrarian prosperity is
guaranteed when the individual obeys God. Meyers avers as follows, “The socio-economic
environment is a powerful factor shaping biblical themes and language; food is thus a major

\textsuperscript{128} Walter J. Houston, “Sex or Violence? Thinking Again with Genesis about Fall and Original Sin,” in
\textit{Genesis and Christian Theology} (eds. Nathan MacDonald, Mark W. Elliott, and Grant Macaskill; Grand

\textsuperscript{129} Carol Meyers, “Food and the First Family: A Socioeconomic Perspective,” in \textit{The Book of Genesis:
Composition, Reception, and Interpretation} (ed., Craig A. Evans, et al., VTSup 152; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 137–
57.

\textsuperscript{130} Meyers, “Food and the First Family,” 151.

\textsuperscript{131} Meyers, 138 (n. 5).
thematic presence not only in the episodes of the first family at the beginning of time but also in images of future time.”

According to Ellen Robbins (2012), Genesis 2–3 should be read as a reflection on the human uniqueness among creatures, emphasizing the qualities and drawbacks common to all humans. Robbins contends that the purpose of the Edenic narrative is allowing human beings to weigh in the balance of morality, fragility, and exceptional rise to the status of full humanness. She is a proponent of an etiological reading of Genesis 2–3 (especially the punishments in Gen 3:14–19). In her understanding, Gen 3:20 and 4:1 are later additions to the biblical narrative. In her view, the Edenic narrative is intended to be read in its own right, in somewhat isolated manner from the surrounding primeval narrative of world creation and the fratricide. Robbins argues that “Genesis 2–3 is only weakly linked to Cain, Abel, and Seth through their identification as the children of Adam and Eve.”

Finally, Christopher Hays and Stephen Herring (2013) discuss the doctrine of original sin, and commence with a summary of Pentateuchal scholarship on Gen 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–3:24. Hays and Herring explain that the historical priority of Genesis 1 (P) to Genesis 2–3 (J) has been replaced by Wellhausen who contended that Genesis 2–3 was compiled prior to Genesis 1. The two authors notice that recent scholars tend to read chapters 2–3 and 1 as contemporaneous literary products of the Babylonian exile. Their essay also deals with Second Temple Judaism and the Pauline hamartiology in Romans 5. Hays and Herring aver that the historicity of Adam is a negotiable issue that should be considered against the

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132 Ibid., 156.
backdrop of Augustinian theology and the eastern Orthodox tradition. These scholars juxtapose Romans 5 with James 1:13–15 rather than Genesis 1–3. The narrative of Cain-Abel is not scrutinized in their essay.\textsuperscript{134}

**Thesis Statement**

The present study contends that two streams of traditions are represented in the history of biblical interpretation. According to one stream of tradition, Genesis 1–3 is a literary-theological unit that can be read apart from chapter 4. The proponents of another hermeneutical trend approach chapter 4 in tandem with chapters 2 and 3. I hold that the first exegetical tradition weakens the textual integrity of chapters 2–4.\textsuperscript{135} While scholars like Westermann, Wenham, and Fishbane uphold the second stream of interpretation, the present study aims to explore the textual relationship between chapters 2–4 as an intentional literary unit against the backdrop of the history of exegesis. To this end, I scrutinize major Jewish and Christian exegetical works from antiquity to the Reformation. Also I would like to consider the implications for the literary relationship of Genesis 2–4 to later episodes in Genesis.

\textsuperscript{134} Christopher M. Hays and Stephen Lane Herring, “Adam and the Fall,” in *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* (ed. Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry; London: SPCK, 2013), 24–54.

In this research, I pursue the following thesis question: why are chapters 2–4 supposed to be read as a literary whole? Another question to tackle is this: how did the early Jewish and Christian exegetes interpret the hamartiologies of Adam-Eve and Cain? That said, within the limits of this study, I pursue three modest objectives: (1) to underscore textual unity of Genesis 2–4 exegetically, (2) to trace early Jewish and Christian exegetical elaborations, and (3) to sketch the implications of the textual unity of Genesis 2–4 to later episodes in Genesis.

In the present study, I intend to read Gen 2:4b–4:16 as a sequential literary unit without a major disjunction in the flow of the text. I do not dismiss what other scholars have done, far from it in fact, but I contend that the hermeneutical detachment of chapter 4 from the preceding narratives should be reconsidered. To this end, I scrutinize the major textual commonalities between chapters 2–3 and 4 (as if the biblical text would evoke: “explain me,” זה אומר דרשו: (1) toledot formula; (2) diptych; (3) the primeval characters; (4) the motifs of silence and voice; (5) the tests of Adam and Cain; (6) the motif of knowledge; (7) the motif of death; (8) the trials; and (9) punishment and hope.

136 Claus Westermann, Genesis 1–11, 2–3, 320, summarizes the issue at hand: “The approach to the problem of Gen 1–11 as a whole had been frustrated and shackled by two presuppositions which had been passed on uncritically from one generation to another. The first was the presumption that the two decisive passages which colored the whole of the primeval story were Gen 1 and 3. A tradition of more than a thousand years had imposed itself; under this influence, and for the most part quite unconsciously, one summed up the basic content of the primeval story under the heading ‘Creation and Fall’. . . As Christians listen to the text of Gen 4:2–16 it is important that they perceive that the tradition of the church has been concerned predominantly or even exclusively with “man” as Adam and Eve, but scarcely ever with “man” as Cain and Abel.” See also Paul Sevier Minear, Christians and the New Creation: Genesis Motifs in the New Testament (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 1; Martin Kessler and Karel Deurloo, A Commentary on Genesis: The Book of Beginnings (New York: Paulist, 2004), 58.
Methodology

Contemporary biblical scholars apply two major methods to the analysis of Genesis: (1) the diachronic study of the world behind the text that engages the putative sources, authorship, and dating; and (2) the synchronic analysis of the world within the text that elaborates on the form, genre, narrative, traditio-historical criticism, and rhetorics. Since the rise of contemporary biblical research, scholars have scrutinized the composition of Genesis and its primeval history through the lens of modern historical-criticism. These scholars explored questions of authorship, dating, genre, historical referentiality, and ancient Near Eastern studies. In order to learn who stood behind the compilation of Genesis and the remainder of the Pentateuchal books, scholars were keen to investigate the use of God’s names, style, vocabulary, narrator’s perspective, wordplays, silences, breaks, chiasms, repetitions, discontinuities, changes, and doublets. Wishing to account for various textual discontinuities and tensions, the majority of biblical scholars in the past one hundred and fifty years opted for the Documentary Hypothesis (hereafter DH), a historical-critical theory positing the existence of recoverable JEDP sources that were ultimately drawn together by a single redactor in the postexilic period of ancient Israel’s history. Those biblical scholars who adopted the classic Graf-Wellhausen theory date the putative sources JEDP as follows:

Yahwistic (J)–ca. 900 B.C.E.; the Elohistic (E)–ca. 800 B.C.E.; Deuteronomistic (D)–ca. 600 B.C.E.; and Priestly (P)–ca. 500 B.C.E.\textsuperscript{138}

For the most part, historical critics viewed the DH as a viable theory explaining the origins of the Pentateuch. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the historical-critical interpretation of the Book of Genesis reached a near consensus on the following matters: 1) the existence of literary sources in the Book of Genesis; 2) criteria by which to detect the sources; and 3) criteria for dating the putative sources relative to the absolute date postulated for D by De Wette though not yet determining the precise date for the identified sources. Building on the work of predecessors, Julius Wellhausen formulated the DH in a way that achieved this consensus. Hermann Gunkel introduced new insights into the literary genres, the \textit{Sitz im Leben}, and the artistic form of Genesis narratives. As a result of the rise of Pentateuchal source-critical interpretation, the traditional delimitation Genesis–Deuteronomy (Pentateuch) competes with other scholarly groupings like Genesis–Joshua (Hexateuch), Genesis–Numbers (Tetrateuch), or Genesis–2 Kings (Enneateuch).\textsuperscript{139}


Jewish and Christian theological conservatives alongside some other scholars have criticized the classical JEDP theory of Graf–Wellhausen. 140 Yet some conservative biblical scholars hold to Pentateuchal source criticism. 141 Consider, for example, Robert Kawashima who has recently written on the topic of sources and redaction in Genesis studies. In his perspective, source criticism is a mature scientific approach to the study of the Pentateuch and Genesis in particular. There is no other legitimate method of dealing properly with the redactional layers in the text. For this reason, Kawashima emphasizes the significance of analysis of sources and redaction for a proper interpretation of Genesis. Although there is no complete consensus over the provenance of the Pentateuchal books, Kawashima proposes to identify the sources JE composed during the Divided Monarchy and combined by the redactor of J and E (RJE) following the conquest of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians (722 B.C.E.). The P-source was written in the aftermath of JE prior to the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.). Another theological response to JE is the D-source written in Josiah’s time (622 B.C.E.). And lastly,


141 The diversity of methodologies in recent Pentateuch scholarship has recently found its niche in the international conference held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, “Convergence and Divergence in Pentateuchal Theory: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Israel, North America and Europe” (May 12–13, 2013). See also Joel S. Baden, The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

In another recent study advocating source criticism, the authors of Opening the Books of Moses, Diana Edelman, Philip Davies, Christophe Nihan, and Thomas Römer discuss the development of the Pentateuch against the backdrop of the Jewish monotheistic cult in the Persian period.\footnote{Diana V. Edelman, Philip R. Davies, Christophe Nihan, and Thomas Römer, Opening the Books of Moses (BibleWorld; Sheffield and Bristol: Equinox, 2012).} In their view, the Torah was written in Jerusalem with the possibility of some theological concessions for the Yahwistic communities outside Yehud. The major concerns of the Pentateuch are questions of ethnicity and geography. The authors argue that the monolatric faith of ancient Israel was shaped under the influence of the Deuteronomist. For example, the recital of the Shema in a familial setting and the public reading of the law as God’s word constitute a suitable replacement for the temple and the sacrifices.\footnote{Idem, Opening the Books of Moses, 11–50.}

Yet despite recent scholarly attempts to revive source criticism in Pentateuchal scholarship, many other biblical scholars opt for the final form of the biblical text utilizing narrative/literary criticism because entering the world of the story, as envisioned by the narrator, allows the reader to engage the inner dynamics and points of view expressed by the ‘implied author’ (e.g., omniscience, scenic narration). The tools of narrative criticism include the study of repetitions, dialogues and direct speech, Leitwortstil, wordplay, themes, characters, narrative voice and viewpoint, narrative time and space, plot, structure, and style.
Among other things, this kind of literary criticism involves the probing of setting, points of conflict/tension, analogy/contrast, flow of story, internal dynamics, and conflict resolution.\textsuperscript{145}

In order to probe the symbiotic relationship of the Hebrew Masoretic Text (hereafter MT) within the narratives of Genesis 2–4, I opt for the world \textit{within} the text as the locus of meaning, for the source-critical method involves too much conjecture. The present thesis utilizes the following methodologies: (1) history of interpretation; and (2) close reading of

the final text (John Sailhamer, Michael Fishbane, and Walter Moberly). First, the current recourse to the history of traditional interpretation gains momentum as biblical scholars embrace old interpretations of Scripture. Recent biblical scholars are keen on the lasting value of history of traditional exegesis. For example, William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard contend that the exploration of the history of exegesis is crucial to the task of interpreting Scripture faithfully today. Likewise, Paul Decock explains that the historical and theological significance of the early church’s use of the Bible addresses rarely preached biblical texts related to violence and abuse, domestic relations, and women in church leadership.

Second, the present research scrutinizes the literary dynamics of the final text. In keeping with John Sailhamer, I opt for the final form of the biblical text as the primary hermeneutical locus of meaning for this analysis. Sailhamer identifies four major types of textual threads: (1) in-textuality (smallest units of a text); (2) inner-textuality (individual texts linked within one composition); (3) intertextuality (linked texts within individual books); and (4) contextuality (semantic arrangement of biblical books). The category of “in-textuality” fits the

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textual relationship between the smallest units of chapters 2–4. Moreover, I would like to interpret this familial saga as possibly echoed in other episodes in Genesis. In his classic _Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel_, Michael Fishbane explores aggadic traditions that encompass non-halachic, legal materials with their focus on theological, reflective, moral, and practical aspects (e.g., Deut 24:1–4; Ezek 18:2–32; Jer 3:1; Ps 8:5–7; Job 7:17–18; 15:14–15). Fishbane’s literary method consists of three major elements: (1) use of technical formulae; (2) comparing parallel texts within the MT; and (3) subjective text-critical analysis based on recurrence of terms. For example, Genesis 1 and 9 share common motifs: the creation of man and life, the divine blessing, fertility, the animal kingdom, and Noah as _Adam Redivivus_ (Gen 1:26–29; 9:1–7). In his view, the text of Genesis 9 was shaped by Genesis 1. Fishbane states, “[t]he narrator has not only taken over language from Gen 1:26–28, but has substantially transformed its original function.” This close reading of the final text is supplemented with Walter Moberly’s call to embrace the theological dialectic between the biblical text, reception, and contemporary context.

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151 Ibid., 321.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the textual relationship of Genesis 2–4 as understood in contemporary biblical scholarship. It has been discovered that while some modern scholars are indifferent to this exegetical question, other interpreters acknowledge the close relationship between the chapters under scrutiny, although some of their conclusions are ambiguous at best. Very few scholars have undertaken a detailed study of the textual relationship between the accounts of creation and sin against the backdrop of the history of exegesis. For this reason, this thesis addresses this scholarly lacuna. To this end, the next chapter examines the pre-modern exegetical elaborations on the textual unity of Genesis 2–4.
Chapter Two: The History of Interpretation from Antiquity to the Reformation

This chapter aims to sketch the traditional exegetical streams for interpreting the accounts of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel in Second Temple Judaism, the New Testament, the Church Fathers, and the reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin. This study considers a representative set of religious text forms, including ancient legends and traditions, biblical commentaries, Christian homilies, and corpora of various sapiential and apocalyptic traditions. These texts provide us with a treasure trove of diverse traditions on the primeval

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1 Recourse to medieval Jewish exegetes and Christian theologians who commented on the narratives of Genesis 2–4 prior to Luther and Calvin lies beyond the scope of this study.

According to some Second Temple Jewish writings, the primeval male and female are identified as the originators of sin and death. Yet according to other religious traditions, Cain is noted as the originator of death. On a different note, however, some other sources equate the originator of sin and death with the cunning serpent of Genesis 3, typically identified with Satan.

Second Temple Jewish Sources

Sirach

The question of mortality and death is probed in Jewish sapiential literature from the late second century B.C.E. The Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) was written in Hebrew by Joshua Eleazar Ben Sirach (198–175 B.C.E.) and translated into Greek by his grandson (132

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According to Sirach, God did not create humans to be immortal. On the contrary, the law of death is imposed on all living creatures (fait accompli): “All living beings become old like a garment, for the decree from of old is, “You must die!”; “With all kinds of living beings he covered its surface, and into it they must return”; “The Lord created human beings out of earth, and makes them return to it again” (Sir 14:17; 16:30; 17:1; 18:9; 41:4).  

Sirach 15 is a theodicy that addresses the issue of free choice in a fictional debate about the human acts from the beginning. This text does not point to Adam as the original sinner who used his free choice badly and died as a result, but rather addresses humans universally. It appeals to their sound comprehension of life. In Sir 15:14, the individual has the right to choose life over death. In this text, the Hebrew root יצר (“free choice”) designates the idea of a “plan” or “scheme.” This root is first used in the creation narrative of Adam from the dust of the ground in Gen 2:7 (“YHWH God formed [יָצֶר] the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul”). The root יצר is used in the primeval context of evil human inclination prior to and following the flood (Gen 6:5; 8:21). The sapiential motif of the “two ways” found in Sir 15:16–17 is appropriated in the Bible and some other religious texts (e.g., Deut 30:19; Prov 28:18; Wis 5:6–7; Matt 7:13–14; Didache 1–6; Letter of Barnabas 18–20).

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6 The topic of death emerges in another sapiential discourse about the wicked people punished by the waters of the flood: “To all creatures, human and animal, but to sinners seven times more, come death and bloodshed and strife and sword, calamities and famine and ruin and plague. All these were created for the wicked, and on their account the flood came. All that is of earth returns to earth, and what is from above returns above” (Sir 40:8–11).

7 This text from Sirach makes the following theological claim: “It was he who created humankind in the beginning, and he left them in the power of their own free choice. If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose. Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given” (Sir 15:14–17).
In his sapiential discourse, Sirach presents the first man and woman in a positive light. According to Sir 17:7, God showed Adam and Eve “knowledge of good and evil” (cf. 4Q504; 4Q303). Sir 17:7 states, “He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil” (cf. Tob 8:6; 1 En. 32:3–6). At the same time, it is stated that Adam never managed to grasp wisdom completely (Sir 24:28). Remarkably, “Praises of the Fathers” in Sirach 44–49 commences with Enoch and honours Adam as the last righteous man: “Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken up, an example of repentance to all generations . . . Shem and Seth and Enosh were honored, but above every other living being was Adam” (Sir 44:16, 49:16; cf. Wis 10:1; Philo, On the Creation of the World, 88; Luke 3:38).

Likewise, some Qumranic texts idealize the eminent figure of Adam. In particular, the expression “the glory of Adam” (כבוד אדם) is attested in two Qumranic texts: “For God has chosen them for an everlasting Covenant and all the glory of Adam (כבוד אדם) shall be theirs” (1QS 4:23); “Those who hold fast to it are destined to live forever and all glory of Adam (כבוד אדם) shall be theirs” (CD 3:20). Another Qumranic reference to Adam is found in 4QFlorilegium known as “Midrash on Last Days” (4Q174), an eschatological commentary that invokes several biblical texts (e.g., Exodus 15; 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 1–2). 4QFlorilegium possibly alludes to a “Sanctuary of Adam” as an epithet for the Garden of Eden: “He has commanded that a Sanctuary of men (see here the Hebrew expression, מקדש אדם, “Sanctuary of Adam”) be built for Himself, that there they may send up [sic]9, like the smoke of incense, the works of the Law” (4Q174, 1, 6).

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9 Correct sentence: “. . . that there they may be sent up.”
Since early patristic exegesis, Sir 25:24 is understood as referring to the first female Eve who seduced Adam in the Garden of Eden. In Sir 25:23–24, the author blames the woman for the sin and death: “Dejected mind, gloomy face, and wounded heart come from an evil wife. Drooping hands and weak knees come from the wife who does not make her husband happy. From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die” (Sir 25:23–24). Since all die because of her (femme fatale), the “woman” from Sir 25:24 is likely to be identified with the first female from Genesis 2–3.11

**Wisdom of Solomon**

The Wisdom of Solomon (first century B.C.E.) is a counter-assimilation sapiential treatise written in Egypt, which presents mortality as the original state of mankind. The following statement is attributed to King Solomon, “I also am mortal, like everyone else, a descendant of the first-formed child of earth; and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh” (Wis 7:1; cf. Philo, *Leg.* 1:105–107; 4Q504). According to other texts from Wisdom of Solomon, although God did not create death, immortality is secured for the righteous (e.g., Wis 1:12–15; 3:4; 5:15; 6:17–20; cf. *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum*, II, XXVII).12 Likewise, in

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his *Jewish Antiquities* (hereafter *Ant.*), Josephus Flavius (ca. 95 C.E.) undertakes the theological question of the primeval mortality of the first human couple. According to Josephus, God did not grant Adam immortality in Eden. In fact, death is a reality that the first man could only delay but not completely avoid.\(^{13}\)

The “devil’s envy” and the emergence of death are connected in Wis 2:23–24: “For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world [θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον], and those who belong to his party experience it.” On the one hand, this text might refer to the spiritual antagonist who envied the human couple in Eden.\(^{14}\) On the other, it could refer to the diabolic envy of Cain toward his brother Abel that resulted in the first death.\(^{15}\) The qualities

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\(^{13}\) *Ant.* 1.46–47 renders as follows, “When he made no reply, as conscious to himself that he had transgressed the command of God, God said, “I had before determined about you both, how you might lead a happy life, without any affliction, and care, and vexation of soul; and that all things which might contribute to your enjoyment and pleasure should grow up by my providence, of their own accord, without your own labor and painstaking; which state of labor and painstaking would soon bring on old age, and death would not be at any remote distance: but now you have abused this my goodwill, and have disobeyed my commands; for your silence is not the sign of your virtue, but of your evil conscience” (*Ant.* 1.46–47), cited in *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), 50. For the reception of Genesis in Josephus, see Thomas W. Franxman, *Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 56–64; Christopher T. Begg, “Genesis in Josephus,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed., Craig A. Evans, et al., VTSup 152; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 303–30.


of wisdom and envy are diametrically opposed one to another: “Nor will I travel in the company of sickly envy, for envy does not associate with wisdom” (Wis 6:23; cf. Prov 3:31; 14:30). In his recent article, Henry Kelly concludes that the Cainite interpretation of Wis 2:23–24 is first attested in Clement of Rome’s Epistle to the Corinthians, 3:4–4:7 (second century C.E.). 16 Theophilus of Antioch (second century C.E.) attests to a similar hamartiological interpretation of the fratricide in Ad Autolycum. According to this text from one of the earliest Christian apologies, Cain killed his brother Abel under the evil influence of Satan who could not kill Adam and Eve. In this text, Cain is seen as the cause of human death.17

The passage in Wis 10:1–14 reflects on the figures of Adam, Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, and Joseph (cf. Sir 44–49 and Heb 11:4–40). In particular, the sin of Adam is mentioned in Wis 10:1–2: “Wisdom protected the first-formed father of the world, when he alone had been created; she delivered him from his transgression, and gave him strength to rule all things.” According to Wis 10:1–2, the feminine wisdom has delivered Adam, and entrusted him to rule over the entire creation (cf. Prov 8:22–31; Sir 24:1–29).

In Wis 10:3–4, the wicked murderer Cain lacked divine wisdom: “But when an unrighteous man departed from her in his anger; he perished because in rage he killed his brother. When


17 This early Christian text comments on the fratricide as follows: “When Satan saw that Adam and his wife not only were alive but had produced offspring, he was overcome by envy because he was not strong enough to put them to death; and because he saw Abel pleasing God, he worked upon his brother called Cain and made him kill his brother Abel. And so the beginning of death came into this world, to reach the whole race of man to this very day” (Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum II, XXIX), cited in Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum (trans. Robert M. Grant; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 73.
the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood.” Wis 10:4 claims that the flood has been caused by the severe transgression of Cain. According to this ancient Jewish tradition, Cain and his descendants perished in the flood (cf. 1 En. 22:7, 85:3–7; Gen. Rab. 22:12). Thus, Wis 10:1–4 contrasts Adam and Cain as two primordial characters. In Wisdom of Solomon, while Adam is perceived as an exemplary sage who was “delivered from his transgression,” his son Cain is taken as the agent of death who perished in his fratricidal anger.18

Apocalyptic Texts

The Life of Adam and Eve (hereafter L.A.E.) is dated to the first century C.E., and it is written in Latin and Greek. For some scholars believe in its Jewish origin, but others argue for its Christian provenance.19 In the Latin version of L.A.E., the devil blames Adam for his being cast down to earth, and this spiritual antagonist envied the first created human being: “And the devil sighed and said, ‘O Adam, all my enmity and envy and sorrow concern you, since because of you I am expelled and deprived of my glory which I had in the heavens in the midst of angels, and because of you I was cast out onto the earth’” (L.A.E. 12:1; cf. Isa 14:12–15; Josephus, Ant. 1.40–51).20

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20 Augustine’s theological mentor, Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340–397 C.E.), comments on the devil’s envy towards the man: “The cause of envy was the happiness of man placed in paradise, because the devil could not brook the favors received by man. His envy was aroused because man, though formed in slime, was chosen
In other texts of *L.A.E.*, the “woman” is identified as the source of sin, toil, and tribulation (e.g., *L.A.E.* 3:1; 5:2; 16:1–3). Likewise, the Greek version of *L.A.E.* (known as the *Apocalypse of Moses*; hereafter *Apoc. Mos.*) attests to Adam who blames his spouse Eve for bringing divine wrath upon the primordial family (*Apoc. Mos.* 21:1–6; 24:1). In one hamartiological discourse from *Apoc. Mos.*, Adam is ready to share the responsibility for the Edenic transgression. In another text from *Apoc. Mos.*, the first woman is considered as the originator of death, and for this reason she readily repents for her sin before God and the elect angels. According to this text, Eve is granted a heavenly vision of Adam’s spirit ascending to God. Fitting with Jewish tradition, only a few righteous persons were privileged to behold such apocalyptic visions. Thus, Eve is presented ambiguously as the carnal source of sin and death, and as a heavenly seer.

Similarly, according to the *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch* (hereafter *2 En.*), dated to the first century C.E., the wife of Adam was created as the agent of death. *2 En.* 30:14–18 states that God has envisioned death from the beginning through the woman. Death is presented as the inhabitant of paradise. The devil began to reflect that man was an inferior creature yet had hopes of an eternal life, whereas he, a creature of superior nature, had fallen and had become part of this mundane existence” (Ambrose, *Paradise* 12), cited in Andrew Louth, ed., *Genesis 1–11* (ACCS; Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 76. On the envy of the devil, see also Theodoret of Cyrus, *On the Incarnation of the Lord* 6.1. Ibid., 96.

21 “Having said these things, the angel departed from them. Seth and Eve came into the tent where Adam was lying. Adam said to Eve, “Why have you wrought destruction among us and brought upon us great wrath, which is death gaining rule over all our race?” And he said to her, “Call all our children and our children’s children, and tell them how we transgressed” (*Apoc. Mos.* 14:1–3).

22 “Then Eve rose up and went out and fell on the ground and said, “I have sinned, O God, I have sinned, O Father of all; I have sinned against your chosen angels, I have sinned against the cherubim, I have sinned against your steadfast throne; I have sinned, LORD, I have sinned much; I have sinned before you, and all sin in creation has come through me.” While Eve was still on her knees praying, behold, the angel of mankind came to her and lifted her up, saying, “Rise, Eve, from your repentance, for behold, Adam your husband has gone out of his body. Rise and see his spirit borne up to meet its maker” (*Apoc. Mos.* 32:1–4; see also *L.A.E.* 33:1–35:3).
punishment for the transgression of the first human couple (see especially 2 En. 30:17). In similar vein, the Testament of Adam (hereafter T. Adam) recounts the testament Adam left to his son Seth regarding the “sins created through Eve.” In this warning of Adam to his son Seth about the impending flood, there is a reference to the conflict between Cain and Abel because of a love affair with Seth’s sister, Lebuda.

Some apocalyptic traditions point to Adam’s sin and its effect on humankind (4 Ezra; 2 Baruch). However, neither composition holds to the theology of hereditary sinfulness. These apocalyptic sources appeal to personal responsibility for sin. The ancient Jewish composition known as 4 Ezra (ca. first century C.E.) blames the first male, Adam, for sin and death in a series of penitential prayers and visions. According to 4 Ezra 3, Adam possessed an “evil heart,” transgressed against the divine will, and brought death to his entire progeny in the flood. Death has been appointed to Adam and his descendants from the beginning (4 Ezra 3:7). Adam’s “evil heart” was inclined to sin prior to the act of defiance against God in Eden (4 Ezra 3:21). Thus, Adam is likened to the nation of Israel in his sinful condition but set in contrast to righteous King David. In this context, Ezra seeks to comprehend the destruction

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23 2 En. 30:14–18 reads as follows: “And I assigned to him four special stars, and called his name Adam. And I gave him his free will; and I pointed out to him the two ways – light and darkness. And I said to him, “This is good for you, but that is bad”; so that I might come to know whether he has love toward me or abhorrence, and so that it might become plain who among his race loves me. Whereas I have come to know his nature, he does not know his own nature. That is why ignorance is more lamentable than the sin such as it is in him to sin. And I said, “After sin there is nothing for it but death.” And I assigned a shade for him; and I imposed sleep upon him, and he fell asleep. And while he was sleeping, I took from him a rib. And I created for him a wife, so that death might come by his wife. And I took his last word, and I called her name Mother, that is to say, Evva.”

24 Consider the following fatherly address of Adam to his son Seth: “You have heard, my son Seth, that a flood is coming and will wash the whole earth because of the daughters of Cain, your brother, who killed your brother Abel out of passion for your sister Lebuda, since sins had been created through your mother, Eve. And after the flood there will be six thousand years (left) to the form of the world, and then its end will come” (T. Adam 3:5; cf. Gk. Apoc. Ezra 2:16).

25 See Levinson, Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism, 156.
of Jerusalem compared to the fatal fate of Adam and the wicked flood generation: “And the same fate befell them: as death came upon Adam, so the flood upon them” (4 Ezra 3:9). In another text, the seer Ezra is shown a transitional apocalyptic oracle by Uriel. In this oracle, Adam’s heart is mentioned again, but this time it is underscored that “a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam’s heart from the beginning” (4 Ezra 4:30; cf. Gen 6:5). Another lament of Ezra blames Adam for the emergence of universal death. While physical death is the fate of all humans, this lament teaches that each individual can avoid Adam’s rebellious course in life.28

26 The prayer from 4 Ezra 3:4–11, 20–27 reads as follows: “O sovereign Lord, did you not speak at the beginning when you planted the earth—and that without help—and commanded the dust and it gave you Adam, a lifeless body? Yet he was the creation, and you breathed into him the breath of life, and he was made alive in your presence. And you led him into the garden that your right hand had planted before the earth appeared. And you laid upon him one commandment; but he transgressed it, and immediately you appointed death for him and for his descendants. From him there sprang nations and tribes, peoples and clans without number. And every nation walked after its own will; they did ungodly things in your sight and rejected your commands, and you did not hinder them. But again, in its time you brought the flood upon the inhabitants of the world and destroyed them. And the same fate befell all of them: just as death came upon Adam, so the flood upon them. But you left one of them, Noah with his household, and all the righteous who have descended from him. Yet you did not take away their evil heart from them, so that your law might produce fruit in them. For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the hearts of the people along with the evil root; but what was good departed, and the evil remained. So the time passed and the years were completed, and you raised up for your servant, named David. You commanded him to build a city for your name, and there to offer your oblations from what is yours. This was done for many years; but the inhabitants of the city transgressed, in everything doing just as Adam and all his descendants had done, for they also had the evil heart. So you handed over your city to your enemies.”

27 The discourse between Ezra and Uriel focuses on Adam’s heart: “He answered me and said, ‘If you are alive, you will see, and if you live long, you will often marvel, because the age is hurrying swiftly to its end. It will not be able to bring the things that have been promised to the righteous in their appointed times, because this age is full of sadness and infirmities. For the evil about which you ask me has been sown, but the harvest of it has not yet come. If therefore that which has been sown is not reaped, and if the place where the evil has been sown does not pass away, the field where the good has been sown will not come. For a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam’s heart from the beginning, and how much ungodliness it has produced until now—and will produce until the time of threshing comes! Consider now for yourself how much fruit of ungodliness a grain of evil seed has produced. When heads of grain without number are sown, how great a threshing floor they will fill!” (4 Ezra 4:26–32).

28 Ezra laments over the sin of Adam: “I answered and said, ‘This is my first and last comment: it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you that sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who
Similarly, the apocalyptic work known as 2 Baruch (ca. first century C.E.) comprises seven dialogues between a human seer and a heavenly angel. Three major passages from 2 Baruch consider Adam (and occasionally Eve) as the cause of human death. In one text, Adam’s prolonged life has not profited him, and he is faulted with bringing death and shortening the lives of his descendants (2 Bar. 16:1–17:4; cf. 2 Bar. 4:3; 18:1–2). In another text, Baruch blames both Adam and Eve for corrupting all of humankind because they obeyed the serpent. Both the man and woman share in the responsibility of violating the prohibition in the Garden of Eden (2 Bar. 48:40, 42–43). In another hamartiologic discourse, “evil inclination” abides in the sinful human heart, and each person is accountable for his own soul (2 Bar. 54:13–19). In this hamartiological text, the author emphasizes that “Adam is,

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29 Baruch and the Lord exchange a dialogue about the shortness of human life: “And I answered and said: O Lord, my Lord, behold, the present years are few and evil, and who can inherit that which is unmeasurable in this short time? And the Lord answered and said to me: With the Most High no account is taken of much time and of few years. For what did it profit Adam that he lived nine hundred and thirty years and transgressed that which he was commanded? Therefore, the multitude of time that he lived did not profit him, but it brought death and cut off the years of those who were born from him. Or what did it harm Moses that he lived only one hundred and twenty years and, because he subjected himself to him who created him, he brought the Law to the descendants of Jacob and he lighted a lamp to the generation of Israel?” (2 Bar. 16:1–17:4).

30 After fasting for seven days, Baruch prayers to God: “For each of the inhabitants of the earth knew when he acted unrighteously. And I answered and said: O Adam, what did you do to all who were born after you? And what will be said of the first Eve who obeyed the serpent, so that this multitude is going to corruption? And countless are those whom the fire devours” (2 Bar. 48:40, 42–43).
therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam” (2 Bar. 54:19; cf. 2 Bar. 19:8; 21:12; 23:4–5; 85:5). 31

Adam, Eve, and Cain

A number of miscellaneous texts refer to the sins of Adam and Cain conjointly in their respective literary-theological contexts (Philo, 2 Baruch, Apocalypse of Abraham, 1QS 3:18–24, and midrashic expositions). Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.) is known as the philosopher of the Jewish Diaspora and the proponent of an allegorical interpretation of biblical narratives and laws. 32 Hindy Najman explains that Philo “generated renewed interest by Jewish scholars and repudiation by some Christian theologians. To this day, some scholars interpret Philo as a proto-Christian, while others view him as a proto-rabbinic

31 Baruch addresses another prayer to God: “For with your counsel, you reign over all creation which your right hand has created, and you have established the whole fountain of light with yourself, and you have prepared under your throne the treasures of wisdom. And those who do not love your Law are justly perishing. And the torment of judgment will fall upon those who have not subjected themselves to your power. For, although Adam sinned first and has brought death upon all who were not in his own time, yet each of them who has been born from him has prepared for himself the coming torment. And further, each of them has chosen for himself the coming glory. For truly, the one who believes will receive reward. But now, turn yourselves to destruction, you unrighteous ones who are living now, for you will be visited suddenly, since you have once rejected the understanding of the Most High. For his works have not taught you, no r has the artful work of his creation which has existed always persuaded you. Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam” (2 Bar. 54:13–19).

32 Consider, for instance, Philo’s typological interpretation of Noah as the second Adam and the flood as the divine act of re-creation in De virtutibus 199–205. See also the encomium from 4 Maccabees 15 praises Noah as the deliverer of the ancient world: “O more noble than males in steadfastness, and more courageous than men in endurance! Just as Noah’s ark, carrying the world in the universal flood, stoutly endured the waves, so you, O guardian of the law, overflowed from every side by the flood of your emotions and the violent winds, the torture of your sons, endured nobly and withstood the wintry storms that assail religion” (4 Macc. 15:30–32). Other encomiums or poems of praise in the Bible are Psalm 119 (in praise of law), Prov 31:10–31 (in praise of the woman of valour), 1 Corinthians 13 (in praise of love), and Hebrews 11 (in praise of faith).
Jew.” As “a proto-rabbinic Jew,” Philo is a Judeo-Hellenistic exponent of the philosophical interpretation of the Torah granted to Israel by the great lawgiver, Moses. Philo’s work *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (hereafter *QG*) interprets the primordial conflict between the siblings as an allegory for the battle between the archetype of evil and the archetype of holiness. In Philo’s view, Abel is the chosen one for future leadership: “Abel’s choice of work as a shepherd is understood as preparatory to rulership and kingship” (*QG* 1:59). According to Philo, Cain was obliged to repent for his wicked sin committed against Abel. In his view, this idea is reflected in God’s question addressed to Cain, “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9).

In his treatise *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, Philo compares the punishments of Adam and Cain: while Adam was banished from Eden involuntarily, Cain separated himself from God’s presence voluntarily. When compared to Adam’s banishment from Eden, Cain’s self-alienation from God looks intensified. In Philo’s philosophical discourse, these

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34 As noticed by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, “The Bible in the Jewish Philosophical Tradition,” in *JSB* (eds. Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane; Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1948–75 here 1950: “For Philo true philosophical life is to be found in the divine law of Moses, which leads its adherents to the attainment of the ultimate end of human life—the seeing of God. Philo’s exposition of Scripture’s truths was meant to prove the uniqueness and epistemological superiority of the Jewish tradition over other intellectual and religious traditions.” See also Gregory E. Sterling, “When the Beginning Is the End: The Place of Genesis in the Commentaries of Philo,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed., Craig A. Evans, et al., VTSup 152; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 427–46.


36 Philo expounds Gen 4:9 as follows: “Why does he who knows all ask the fratricide, ‘Where is Abel, your brother?’ He wishes that man himself of his own will shall confess, in order that he may not pretend that all things seem to come about through necessity. For he who killed through necessity would confess that he acted unwillingly; for that which is not in our power is not to be blamed. But he who sins of his own free will denies it, for sinners are obliged to repent. Accordingly he (Moses) inserts in all parts of his legislation that the Deity is not the cause of evil” (*QG* 1:68), cited in ibid., 1842.
primordial figures are contrasted insofar as the punishments of Adam and Cain are found to reflect their relationship toward God.\(^{37}\)

In 2 Bar. 56:6–9, Ezra is given a vision of the primordial sins from Adam to the mingling of the sons of God with the daughters of Adam likened to the “black waters on the top of the cloud.” The devastating results of human transgressions include death, mourning, affliction, illness, labour, pride, shedding of blood, the conception of children, the passion of the parents, the humiliation of human loftiness, and vanishing of goodness. In this hamartiological apocalyptic passage cited below, three points might be interpreted as alluding to Genesis 4: (1) untimely death; (2) mourning; and (3) shedding of blood. In the juxtaposed fratricide narrative, Cain murders his brother Abel and his innocent blood is shed. The untimely death of Abel shatters the inner world of the first human couple. Humans mourned over the death of their loved ones (2 Bar. 56:6–9). In this primordial context, it is

\(^{37}\) Philo contrasts Adam and Cain as follows: “If it is hard to depart from before the face and out of the sight of a mortal king, how can it be anything but extremely difficult to depart and quit the appearance of God, and to determine no longer to come into his sight? This indeed is to be left without any idea of him, and to be mutilated as to the eyes of the soul, and all those who of necessity have endured this fate, being weighed down by the might of irresistible and implacable power, are objects rather for pity than for hatred; but all those who voluntarily and of deliberated purposes have rejected the living God, exceeding even the bounds of wickedness itself, for what other evil of equal weight can possibly be found? Such men should suffer not the usual punishments of evil doers, but something new and extraordinary. And surely no one could invent a more novel or more terrible penalty than a departure and flight from the presence of the Ruler of the universe. Accordingly God banished Adam; but Cain went forth from his presence of his own accord; Moses here showing to us the manner of each sort of absence from God, both the voluntary and the involuntary sort; but the involuntary sort as not existing in consequence of any intention on our part, will subsequently have such a remedy applied to it as the case admits of; for God will raise up another offspring in the place of Abel, whom Cain slew, a male offspring for the soul which has not turned by its own intention, by name Seth, which name being interpreted means irrigation; but the voluntarily flight from God, as one that has taken place by deliberate purpose and intention, will await on irremediable punishment in all eternity, for as good deeds that are done in consequence of forethought and design, are better than unintentional ones, so also among offences those that are undesigned are of less heinousness than those that are premeditated” (Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, 8–11), cited in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C.D. Duke; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 132–33. Likewise, Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 295–373 C.E.) comments on Cain’s punishment in Gen 4:16: “By means of righteousness we come into God’s presence, as Moses did when he entered the thick cloud where God was. On the other hand, by the practice of evil a person leaves the presence of the Lord. For example, Cain, when he killed his brother, left the Lord’s presence as far as his will was concerned” (Athanasius, *Festal Letters* 8), cited in Louth, *Genesis 1–11*, 110.
likely to think of the first human couple mourning over the innocent death of their son Abel. In another text, Adam is perceived as a danger not just to himself but also to the angels who mingled with women (2 Bar. 56:10–16). \(^{38}\)

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (hereafter *Apoc. Ab.*), the transgressors Adam, Eve, the adversary, and Cain are all faulted with primordial wickedness. This pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book recounts the story of Abraham’s conversion and his visions (chapters 1–8 and chapters 9–32). In the series of the seven sins of the world (*Apoc. Ab.* 24:3–25:2), Abraham is shown a vision of the primordial sinners. In this vision, Abel is shown as the first innocent victim of murder. Thus, as emerges from the text cited below, the agents of sin from Genesis 3 and 4 are handled together.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{38}\) 2 Bar. 56:6–16 addresses Adam’s transgression and its sequel: “And as you first saw the black waters on the top of the cloud which first came down upon the earth; this is the transgression which Adam, the first man, committed. For when he transgressed, untimely death came into being, mourning was mentioned, affliction was prepared, illness was created, labour accomplished, pride began to come into existence, the realm of death began to ask to be renewed with blood, the conception of children came about, the passion of the parents was produced, the loftiness of men was humiliated, and goodness vanished. What could, therefore, have been blacker and darker than these things? This is the beginning of the black waters which you have seen. And from these black waters again black were born, and very dark darkness originated. For he (Adam) who was a danger to himself was also a danger to the angels. For they possessed freedom in that time in which they were created. And some of them came down and mingled themselves with women. At that time they who acted like this were tormented in chains. But the rest of the multitude of angels, who have no number, restrained themselves. And those living on earth perished together through the waters of the flood. Those are the first black waters.” Cf. Damascus Document II, 15–20 (hereafter CD): “Because they walked in the stubbornness of their heart the Heavenly Watchers fell; they were caught because they did not keep the commandments of God” (CD II, 17), cited in Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 130.

\(^{39}\) *Apoc. Ab.* 24:1–5 presents the following apocalyptic vision: “And he said to me thus, “Close to the nations . . . for your sake and for the sake of those set apart after you, the people of your tribe, as you will see in the picture, what is burdened on them. And I will explain to you what will be, and everything that will be in the last days. Look now at everything in the picture.” And I looked and saw there the creatures that had come into being before me. And I saw, as it were, Adam, and Eve who was with him, and with them the crafty adversary and Cain, who had been led by the adversary to break the law, and I saw the murdered Abel and the perdition brought on him and given through the lawless one” (*Apoc. Ab.* 24:1–5; cf. T. Benj. 7:1–5).
A passage from *The Rule of the Community* (hereafter 1QS) could be read in light of the accounts of sin from Genesis. This is an extra-biblical work, discovered in Cave 1 in Qumran, which exposes the idiosyncratic regulations of the ancient Jewish ascetic community, including the admission of new members, ceremonial administration of communal meals, angelology, cosmic dualism, and predestination. A passage from 1QS, “The Treatise on the Two Spirits” (1QS 3:13–4:26), presents an angelic hamartiology in conjunction with the creation of humankind. According to 1QS 3:18–24, the evil spirits seek to divert the man from divine light into darkness. The created man and his progeny are alluded to in this Qumranic text. If so, the creation of man and the division between the children of righteousness and the children of injustice in 1QS 3:18–24 might be interpreted as echoing the fratricide.\(^{40}\)

According to 1QS 3:18, Adam was charged to rule over the world, and two spirits were assigned to him: the spirit of truth and the spirit of injustice. The Angel of Darkness spread injustice, sin, and wickedness. 1QS 3:19 divides humanity into two opposing groups: “Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those of injustice spring from a source of darkness.” A clear spiritual distinction is made in this text between the righteous and the wicked in the theological framework of cosmological dualism. Since 1QS 3:18 refers to the creation of Adam, 1QS 3:19 implies his progeny: Abel was born from the truth and sprang

\(^{40}\) This Qumranic text renders as follows: “He has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness. The Angel of Darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until the end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness, and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God. Even one of their chastisements, and every one of the seasons of their distress, shall be brought about by the rule of his persecution; for all his allotted spirits seek the overthrow of the sons of light” (1QS 3:18–24), cited in Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 101.
from a fountain of light, and Cain was born from injustice and sprang from a source of
darkness.41

The passage in 1QS 3:20–24 develops the motif of the spiritual warfare in its eschatological
context. The war between the “Prince of Light” and the “Angel of Darkness” will last “until
the end.” In 1QS 3:18, the Hebraic expression “the time of his visitation” (מועד פקודתו)
reflects an eschatological expectation of God’s impending judgment. In biblical prophecy,
Jeremiah proclaimed the impending “time of visitation” for the Judean elite (Jer 8:12). Like
Jeremiah, the Gospel of Luke records the prophetic words of Jesus Christ about Jerusalem’s
time of visitation: “. . . They will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did
not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:44). Apart from Jeremiah and Luke, the
“visitation” motif is attested in other biblical texts and numerous theodicies from Second
Temple Judaism (see Ps 104:32; Sir 16:18, 18:20; Wis 3:7, 14:11; 1 Peter 2:12).

The sins of Adam and Cain are treated conjointly in a few midrashic expositions (Pirqe
Rabbi Eliezer, Genesis Rabbah [hereafter Gen. Rab.], and Yalkut Reubeni).42 Pirqe Rabbi
Eliezer 21 comments on the divine prohibition of “carnal intercourse” between man and
woman.43 As a result of violating this divine prohibition, the first human couple gave birth to

41 For a detailed study of 1QS 3:18–24, see recently Miryam T. Brand, Evil Within and Without: The
Source of Sin and its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,
2013), 257–74.

42 On the provenance of midrashic exegesis on Genesis, see Philip S. Alexander, “Pre-Emptive
Exegesis: Genesis Rabba’s Reading of the Story of Creation,” JJS 43 (1992): 230–45; Burton L. Visotzky,
“Genesis in Rabbinic Interpretation,” in The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation (ed.,

from the evil impulse in his guts, for the very first drop that a man puts into a woman is the evil impulse. And
the impulse to do evil is located at the gates of the heart. For it is said, “Sin crouches at the door”’’ (Gen 4:7),’’
their older son Cain, who is called “the ancestor of all the impious generations.” This midrash states that while Adam, Eve, and Cain fell were led astray by Satan, Cain is seen as the ancestor of wicked generations. Another Jewish legend alludes to God’s declaration at the creation of mankind predicting the emergence of sin and death. According to this text, at the time of creation God foresaw the possibility of human sin and the emergence of death as the daunting alternative to life. The reader finds the following words ascribed to God: “I will create man to be the union of the two, so that when he sins, when he behaves like a beast, death shall overtake him; but if he refrains from sin, he shall live forever.”

44 The following theological statement is found in Pirqa Rabbi Eliezer 21: “Wickedness came into the world with the first being born of woman, Cain, the oldest son of Adam. When God bestowed Paradise upon the first pair of mankind, He warned them particularly against carnal intercourse with each other. But after the fall of Eve, Satan, in the guise of the serpent, approached her, and the fruit of their union was Cain, the ancestor of all the impious generations that were rebellious toward God, and rose up against Him. Cain's descent from Satan, who is the angel of Samael, was revealed in his seraphic appearance. At his birth, the exclamation was wrung from Eve, ‘I have gotten a man through an angel of the Lord,’ cited in Louis Ginzberg, Legends of the Bible (vol. 1; Philadelphia: JPS, 2003), 101, 102 (n. 3). Cf. Josephus who labels Cain as the teacher of wickedness, and accounts for his evil progeny: “And when Cain had traveled over many countries, he, with his wife, built a city named Nod, which is a place so called, and there he settled his abode; where also he had children. However, he did not accept of his punishment in order to amendment, but to increase his wickedness; for he only aimed to procure everything that was for his own bodily pleasure, though it obliged him to be injurious to his neighbors. He augmented his household substance with much wealth, by plunder and violence; he urged his followers to procure pleasures and spoils by robbery, and became a great leader of men into wicked courses. He also introduced a change in that way of simplicity wherein men lived before; and was the author of measures and weights. And whereas they lived innocently and generously while they knew nothing of such arts, he changed the world into cunning craftiness. Even while Adam was alive, it came to pass that the posterity of Cain became exceedingly wicked, everyone wicked, everyone successively dying, one after another, more wicked than the former. They were intolerable in war, and vehement in robberies; and if anyone were slow to murder people, yet was he bold in his immoral behavior, in acting unjustly, and doing injuries for gain” (Ant. 1.60–61, 66), cited in The New Complete Works of Josephus, 52.

45 The midrashic text claims: “But man is more than a mere image of this world. He unites both heavenly and earthly qualities within himself. In four he resembles the angels, in four the beasts. His power of speech, his discriminating intellect, his upright walk, the glance of his eye—they all make an angel of him. But, on the other hand, he eats and drinks, secretes the waste matter in his body, propagates his kind, and dies, like the beast of the field. Therefore God said before the creation of man: “The celestials are not propagated, but they are immortal; the beings on earth are propagated, but they die. I will create man to be the union of the two, so that when he sins, when he behaves like a beast, death shall overtake him; but if he refrains from sin, he shall live forever.” God now bade all beings in heaven and on earth contribute to the creation of man, and He Himself took part in it. Thus they all will love man, and if he should sin, they will be interested in his
resemble the divine warning to Cain about the sin crouching as a dangerous beast ready to
attack him (Gen 4:7).

Gen. Rab. 3:8 teaches that the Shekinah distances herself from sinful people. The Shekinah
went to the first heaven after Eve’s sin and to the second after Cain’s. She moves up to the
first heaven when Adam sinned against the divine prohibition and then it moved up to the
second heaven when Cain killed his brother Abel. Cain caused the divine presence to alienate
herself from sinners even further. Rather than just repetitions of sin of a similar magnitude,
there is a pattern of increasing magnitudes of sin.46

Another midrash quotes Cain who grumbles over his punishment, and confesses his sin to be
greater than that of his father Adam: “Cain said to YHWH, ‘My iniquity is greater than I can
bear’” (Gen 4:13). In this rabbinic text, Cain believes his father’s sin is minor compared to
his own transgression because murder is far more serious than the violation of a “minor
religious commandment” (this is a reference to Gen 2:16–17).47 Adam, the unrepentant

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46 Gen. Rab. 3:8 comments on the hamartiological spiral in Genesis 3–19: “Said R. Abba bar Kahana,
‘The word is not written, ‘move,’ but rather, ‘walk,’ bearing the sense that [the Presence of God] lept about
and jumped upward. The principal location of the Presence of God was among the creatures down here. When
the first man sinned, the Presence of God moved up to the first firmament. When Cain sinned it went up to the
second firmament. When the generation of Enosh sinned, it went up to the third firmament. When the
generation of the Flood sinned, it went up to the fourth heaven. When the generation of the dispersion sinned, it
went up to the fifth. On account of the Sodomites, it went to the sixth, and on account of the Egyptians in the
time of Abraham, it went up to the seventh. But, as a counterpart, there were seven righteous men who rose up:
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kahath, Amram, and Moses. They brought the Presence of God down to earth.
Abraham brought it from the seventh to the sixth, Isaac brought it from the sixth to the fifth, Jacob brought it
from the fifth to the fourth, Levi brought it down from the fourth to the third, Kahath brought it down from the
third to the second, Amram brought it down from the second to the first. Moses brought it down to earth,’” cited in Jacob Neusner, Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, a New American Translation (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 206.

47 Gen. Rab. 4:13 records Cain’s dialogue with God: “You have patience for the creatures of the upper
world and for the creatures of the lower world, but you cannot find the patience for my transgression? My sin is
lawbreaker, and Cain, the absolved sinner, exchange a dialogue in another midrash. In this dialogue, Adam asked his son Cain what happened to him at the divine trial. He explains to his father that he had repented and reconciled with God.48

Satan

Apart from the human agents of sin, another stream of hamartiological tradition blames the devil or the “adversary” as the external source of sin and death (e.g., L.A.E. 10–17; 4 Macc. 8:18; Rev 12:9).49 In the HB, the “adversary” (שטן) is perceived as the opponent of God and humans (Job 1:6, 12, 2:1; Zech 3:1–2; 1 Chr 21:1). According to Henry Kelly, the earliest explicit reference to Satan entering Eden is attested in Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho (ca. 160 C.E.). According to Justin Martyr, Eve was deceived by Satan, and as a result of this deception, all humans are subjected to death, including Adam who lived 930 years (Dialogue with Trypho, 81, 88, 100, 124).50 Pseudo-Philo is a fragmentary retelling of the history of greater than the sin of my father. Father violated a rather minor religious commandment and was driven from the garden of Eden. This one, involving the far more serious transgression of murder, how much the more so should “‘My punishment be greater than I can bear’! Behold, you have driven me. Yesterday you drove out father, and today you drive me out. With monotony have you fashioned the world. How so?” cited in Neusner, Genesis Rabbah, 252.

48 The dialogue between Adam and Cain is recorded in Gen. Rab. 4:16: “Where did he got out? R. Aibu said, “He shouted over the shoulder and went away, as if to deceive the ones above.” R. Berekhiah in the name of R. Eleazar: “He away like [the pig] that shows a cloven hoof like one would deceive the creator.” R. Hinena bar Isaac said, “He went away rejoicing, in line with this verse: ‘He goes forth to meet you and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart’” (Ex. 4:14).” Adam met him and said to him, “What happened at your trial?” He said to him, “I repented and am reconciled.” Then Adam began to beat on his face: “So great is the power of repentance, and I never knew it!” He forthwith went and said: “A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day: It is a good thing to confess to the Lord” (Ps. 92:1).” Ibid., 253–54.

49 Other Second Temple Jewish texts attest to the fallen angels seducing humans (e.g., Wis 14:6–7; 4 Macc. 15:30–32; Jub. 5:1–11, 10:1–14; 1 En. 15:1–7; cf. Sir 16:7; Bar 3:24–28).

Israel from Adam to David (known as Liber Antiquitatum Bibliarum; hereafter L.A.B.). L.A.B. 13:8–9 faults Adam, Eve, and the serpent from Genesis 3 as the originators of death. Unlike the Apoc. Ab. 24:1–5, Cain is not mentioned in this vision given to Moses. In L.A.B. 13:8–9, Moses is told about the command regarding the year of the lifetime of Noah, and he is shown the place of creation and the serpent, which is not explicitly identified with Satan.51

In the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (hereafter 3 Baruch), an apocalyptic composition dated between the first to third centuries C.E., Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, laments over the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. To comfort his servant, the Lord sends an angel who guides Baruch through the heavens. The angel shows to Baruch the third heaven that contains a snake, a sea, primal rivers, the Garden of Eden, the sun with the Phoenix, and the moon (chapters 4–9). In a dialogue between Baruch and the accompanying angel, the devil is explicitly accused for becoming envious and leading Adam to stray.52

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51 L.A.B. 13:8–9 mentions the serpent from Genesis 3: “Then he gave him the command regarding the year of the lifetime of Noah, and he said to him, ‘These are the years that I ordained after the weeks in which I visited the city of men, at which time I showed them the place of creation and the serpent.’” And he said, “This is the place concerning which I taught the first man, saying, ‘If you do not transgress what I have commanded you, all things will be subject to you.’” But that man transgressed my ways and was persuaded by his wife; and she was deceived by the serpent. And then death was ordained for the generations of men. And the LORD continued to show him the ways of paradise and said to him, “These are the ways that men have lost by not walking in them, because they have sinned against me” (cf. L.A.B. 16:2; 26:6).

52 3 Bar. 4:8 claims as follows: “And I said, “I pray you, show me which is the tree which caused Adam to stray.”” And the angel said, “It is the vine which the angel Samael planted by which the Lord became angered, and he cursed him and his planting. For this reason he did not permit Adam to touch it. And because of this the devil became envious, and tricked him by means of his vine” (cf. 2 En. 31:1–6).
Conclusion

In summary, the texts reviewed so far comment on Adam, Eve, and Cain, and Satan. In a sapiential discourse from Sirach, the reader is assured of his personal freedom of choice granted to the man in the beginning (Sir 15:14–17). It has been argued that Sirach looks favourably at the figure of the first man (Sir 17:7; 49:16). The expression “wicked woman” possibly points to the first woman in the primeval history (Sir 25:23–24). According to Wisdom of Solomon, the “devil’s envy” is the cause of human death in the world (Wis 2:23–24). I hold to the Cainite interpretation of this hamartiological statement from Wisdom of Solomon. In Wis 10:1–4, Adam and Cain are both mentioned as two contrasting primordial figures. Wis 10:1–2 refers to Adam as the one whom the wisdom rescued from fall. In Wis 10:3–4, Cain, the primordial sinner, is seen as the cause of the flood.


The hamartiological episodes in Genesis 3 and 4 are taken together and compared in a cluster of other ancient Jewish texts. Philo explains that Cain’s self-alienation from God is worse than Adam’s banishment from the Garden of Eden (On the Posternity of Cain and His Exile, 8–11). The sins of Adam and Cain are treated conjointly in numerous midrashic texts (Pirque
Rabbi Eliezer 21; Gen. Rab. 7:11, 12:8; 14:3; Yalkut Reubeni on Gen 1:26; Gen. Rab. 3:8, 4:13, 16). 2 Bar. 56:6–9 considers Adam as the agent of death in direct relation to the fratricide. Apoc. Ab. 24:1–5 focuses on the primordial sinners, viz., Adam, Eve, the crafty adversary, and Cain. In contrast to these lawless antediluvian figures, Abraham is shown a vision of Abel who is the first innocent righteous victim of murder. A Qumranic passage from 1QS 3:18–24 points to the creation of Adam and the two spirits assigned to him: the spirit of truth and injustice. 1QS 3:18–24 alludes to the spiritual warfare and the division of the humanity into “those born of truth” who “spring from a fountain of light” and “those of injustice” who “spring from a source of darkness” (1QS 3:19). In the context of primeval history, Adam’s descendants, Abel and Cain, might be thought of as the first representatives of those two spiritual sources in charge of humankind. While Abel might be perceived as springing from “a fountain of light,” the firstborn Cain might be seen as springing from “a source of darkness.”

The New Testament

Numerous exegetical threads were used to connect the two testaments of the Christian Bible: (1) typology; (2) redemptive-historical progression; (3) promise-fulfillment; (4) analogy; (5) longitudinal themes; (6) citations; and (7) contrast. Some of these literary conventions flourished in the Second Temple period (e.g., promise-fulfillment and citations are widespread exegetical techniques used in Qumranic works). In the early Christian era, the

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Church Fathers applied typology to both Testaments. While this exegetical method is called *theoria* in the East, this rhetorical figure is called *allegoria* in the West. The Church Fathers utilized and compared numerous primordial characters and episodes like Adam’s disobedience and Christ’s obedience, the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the wood of the cross, Eve and Mary, and the door of Noah’s ark and the wound in Christ’s side. According to G.K. Beale, five hermeneutical features make typology a literary phenomenon in the NT: (1) analogical correspondence; (2) historicity; (3) foreshadowing; (4) escalation; and (5) retrospection. Beale defines typology as follows,

> The study of analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God’s special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning... In this regard, typology can be called contextual exegesis within the framework of the canon since it primarily involves the interpretation and elucidation of the meaning of earlier parts of Scripture by later parts.

In biblical typology, the type normally originates in the HB and corresponds to the antitype in the NT. In the Pauline writings, the narratives of Israel are interpreted typologically (see the use of τύπος in Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:1–11). For example, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt corresponds to the ritual of Christian baptism (1 Cor 10:1–2). In Hebrews, the figures of Joshua and Melchizedek are interpreted typologically (Heb 3:7–4:11; 5:6–7:17). The type and antitype are both present in the text of Hebrews. The Joshua typology mentioned in Heb 3:7–4:11 is drawn primarily from Numbers 13–14 and Psalm 95. As stated in Hebrews 3–4,

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54 Louth, Genesis 1–11, xlvi–xlviii.


Joshua foreshadowed the forthcoming Son of God, Yeshua (Ἰησοῦς) who entered the rest of God and opened the way to the heavenly rest for his followers. Other prominent typologies found in chapters 6–10 of Hebrews include the imageries of the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary, and the New Covenant.57

In Paul’s letters to the Romans and Corinthians, Adam as a primeval type corresponds to the Christological antitype, the “New Adam,” Jesus Christ (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22, 45–49).58 Since orthodoxy and orthopraxy merge in the Pauline letters, those early Christian communities were instructed to live in light of the spiritual transformation accomplished by the “New Adam.”59 Paul claims that the Lord Jesus Christ delivers from the chaotic power of sin and death, and as the “New Adam” he creates a new reality that unites the believers.

Michael Goulder thus comments on the early Christian communal experience of the Risen Christ: “The Christian movement was founded upon three experiences: the impact of Jesus of Nazareth, who saw in his work the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God; the repeated visions of him by his followers after his death, which they interpreted as signs of his resurrection;


59 On the narrative context of the NT epistles, see M. Eugene Boring, An Introduction to the New Testament: History, Literature, Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 206: “New Testament letters are written to instruct the readers on how to live in the light of Christian faith. These letters are permeated with pærenesis that seem to present this instruction directly: “Do this.” “Don’t do that.” However, just as Hebrew wisdom materials and the Christian Sermon on the Mount are heard differently when read within their canonical narrative contexts, so paraenetic materials are heard differently when read within their epistolary setting—which is a narrative context.”
and the overflow of emotions, both ecstatic and ethical, which they referred to as gifts and fruits of the Spirit.”

Romans 5

In Paul’s theology, the present evil age and the age to come overlap. In his letter to the Romans (55–57 C.E.), Paul addresses several key theological issues like the origin of sin, justification, redemption, the Abrahamic covenant, the unity of Jew and Gentile in the divine economy, the chosen status of Israel at the post-Resurrection era, eschatology, and the practical aspects of the Christian life. In the letter to Romans, Paul depicts sin as a power that revives, deceives, rules, enslaves, and works (Rom 5:12, 21; 6:6, 12–14, 16–17, 20; 7:9, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23; 8:2). In Rom 5:12–21, a crux interpretum in church dogmatics, Paul contrasts Adam’s disobedience to the divine commandment with Christ’s obedience to God. According to Paul, the effect of the Adamic sin has been nullified by Christ’s death and resurrection. This Pauline text from Romans 5 reads as follows:

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—
13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type

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of the one who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 5:12–21 ESV)

The text in Rom 5:12–21 delineates two archetypal events: (1) all humans share in the universal death stemming from Adam; and (2) Jesus Christ brought redemption from death and sin by his death and resurrection. According to Romans 5, the power of death governs the world since the time of Adam (ὁ θάνατος appears 22 times in Romans). Rom 5:12 relates to the paradigmatic act of defiance against God: “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” This text implies the federal headship of the “one man” as the agent of sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία appears 41 times in Romans 5–8, 48 times in this Pauline letter in total). The words “all sinned” reflect the idea of corporate solidarity (πάντες ἥμαρτον). In Rom 5:14, Ἀδὰμ occurs twice, otherwise represented as ἕνος ἀνθρώπου. While death, condemnation, and disobedience all derive from Adam as the type (Ἀδὰμ ὁς ἐστιν τύπος), Christ the antitype bestows grace, righteousness, justification, obedience, and eternal life. As noticed by M. Eugene Boring, “Jesus is not merely paralleled to Adam; the consequences for humanity resulting from Adam’s disobedience to the will of God are more than counterbalanced by Christ’s obedience to the
will of God; note the repeated “not” in verses 15–16. Where sin abounded, grace superabounded, hyperabounded (v. 20).“\(^6\)

The classic exegetical view of Rom 5:12–21 as corroborating the doctrine of the original sin is far from unanimous.\(^6\) For example, T.H. Tobin contends that Rom 5:12–14 clarifies the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the divine economy.\(^6\) Likewise, Peter Enns argues that while Adam is a universal type for Jews and Gentiles found guilty in God’s sight, Jesus Christ is the ultimate redeemer of Jews and Gentiles alike.\(^6\) Stanley Stowers explains that Paul emphasizes the universality of Adam and Christ as seen in history and redemption of humankind. In his opinion, Paul did not interpret the sin of Adam “from the perspective of a moment in the pre-mundane heavenly realm or in the Garden that changed human nature.”\(^6\)

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1 Corinthians 15

In the 50s of the first century C.E., Paul sent what is called 1 Corinthians to the local churches in Corinth from Ephesus. In this pastoral letter, Paul addresses various theological and practical issues like the unity in the body of Christ, moral sin in the Corinthian church, the Lord’s Supper, and the spiritual gifts. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15 that whereas Adam is the originator of death, Christ is the conqueror of the cosmic powers of sin and death:

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

45 Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Cor 15:20–22, 45–49 ESV)

According to 1 Corinthians 15, death was defeated by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. According to verses 20–22, the transgression of Adam and the subsequent death of humans are presented in contrast to Christ’s bodily resurrection and the resurrection of the believers in the eschaton. In verses 45–49, Paul does not argue for Adam’s original immortality, but rather calls him the man of dust in contrast to Christ who is titled the Last Adam, Second Adam, a Life-giving Spirit, and the Man from Heaven (vv. 45–

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67 For our purposes the unity of 1 Corinthians, that is, whether it might contain other epistolary material of Paul, need not be discussed.
I concur with Karl Barth’s (1886–1968) exegetical perspective on the apocalyptic parallel between the first and last Adams. Barth explains the theological rationale behind the Pauline focus on Jesus Christ as the Last Adam. In his opinion, “Even when we are told in 1 Cor 15 that Jesus Christ is the ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ, this does not mean that in relation to the first Adam of Gen. 3 He is the second, but rather that He is the one first and true Adam of which the other is only a type. It is in relation to the last Adam that this first Adam, the unknown of the Genesis story, has for Paul existence and consistence, and that in what is said of him he hears what is true and necessarily true of himself and all men.”

Other texts from the NT allude to the woman’s role in the Edenic transgression: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:13–14); “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor 11:3; cf. 4 Macc. 18:8: “No seducer corrupted me on a desert plain, nor did the destroyer, the deceitful serpent, defile the purity of my virginity”). According to these texts, Adam is prior to his wife, and she is depicted as the one who was initially deceived by the serpent (cf. Jub. 3:9–12).

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Romans 1

Rom 1:18–25 deals with handing over the sinful Gentiles to the power of wickedness. In the hamartiological discourse of Rom 1:18–25, God judges various types of religious and moral sins. Specifically, the apostle Paul condemns idolatry and sexual perversion subjected to God’s present and future wrath (the expression “wrath of God” appears 153 times in LXX). This hamartiological text exposes the Pauline rhetorical technique to catalogue human vices (see, e.g., 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21; 1 Tim 1:9–10; 2 Tim 3:2–4). Rather than focusing on the origins of sin, Paul describes the moral and spiritual decline of the Gentiles similarly to the long excursus on the foolishness of nature worship and idolatry found in Wisdom of Solomon 13–14 (Rom 1:18–32// Wis 13:1–10; 14:12, 24–27). The texts from Rom 1:18–23 and Apocalypse of Moses are paralleled: the loss of glory (Apoc. Mos. 20:2; 21:6// Rom 1:23); the substitution of glory for death (Apoc. Mos. 21:2; 39:1–3// Rom 1:18–23); the suppression of truth (Apoc. Mos. 21–23// Rom 1:18); and the loss of dominion in the world (Apoc. Mos. 11:2; 24:3; 39// Rom 1:23–25). M. Eugene Boring thus comments on Rom 1:18–32: “For Paul, sin is not the transgression of a list of rules, but the refusal of the creature to have God as Creator, the refusal to honor God as God, the will to power that places human will and understanding in the place of God.”

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and
divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the
creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So
they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they
did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they
became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were
darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and
exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images
resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.
Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to
impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,
because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and
worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who
is blessed forever! Amen. (Rom 1:18–25 ESV)

Hebrews 11 and 1 John 3

Two NT texts point to the righteousness of Abel and the wickedness of Cain. First, Hebrews
11 claims that faith lies at the core of the human relationship with God. The siblings Abel
and Cain are set apart one from another by the criterion of faith: “By faith Abel offered to
God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous,
God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still
speaks” (Heb 11:4). Second, the pastoral text in 1 John 3:10–12 distinguishes between “the
children of God” and “the children of the devil” (v. 10). The latter group is likened to Cain
who “was of the evil one” (vv. 11–12). D.A. Carson elaborates on Cain who “was of the
evil one” (1 John 3:12). According to Carson, the evil one of Genesis 3 now acts to seduce
Cain in the next hamartiology. In his view, it is possible to assert that John had in mind both

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72 See other interpretations of Abel’s offering in Jack P. Lewis, “The Offering of Abel (Gen 4:4): A

73 Cf. Symeon the New Theologian, Discourses 4.2: “Why did Cain become a fratricide? Was it not by
his evil will? He preferred himself to his Creator and followed after evil thoughts and so became abandoned to
envy and committed murder,” cited in Louth, 106.
hamartiological episodes from Genesis 3–4. In his view, the primordial sinners Cain and his father Adam were “of the devil” since both transgressed in Eden and outside of it (1 John 3:7–8). While this interpretation of 1 John 3:12 is possible, I hold that 1 John 3 refers explicitly to Cain only.

Conclusion

In summary, the Pauline texts concerning Adam and his sin reflect an eschatological perspective and invoke typology (Rom 1:18–25; 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22, 45–49). In his hamartiological discourse in Romans 1, Paul rebukes the sinful Gentiles who are handed over to the dreadful power of wickedness. According to Paul in Romans 5, death and sin have entered the world through Adam, contrasting the exemplary obedience of Christ to God the Father with the disobedience of Adam (cf. Phil 2:1–11). The reference to the universal death “in Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15 focuses on the resurrection of Christ and his church. In this text, Paul’s theological argument is hardly drawn from a specific primeval text from Genesis. The texts from 1 Tim 2:13–14 and 2 Cor 11:3 state that the first woman was deceived by the cunning serpent. In two other NT texts, Abel and Cain are mentioned without relating them to the Edenic temptation (Heb 11:4 and 1 John 3:10–12).

The Church Fathers

In this section on the Church Fathers, I opt for selected patristic Alexandrian and Antiochian exegetes who commented on the accounts of creation and sin spanning the period from the late second to the fifth centuries. Thomas Oden, the general editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, highlights three patristic forms of exegesis. First, an intratextual exegesis defines the meaning of the words, the grammatical structure, and the textual connections between its parts. Second, extratextual exegesis seeks to identify the geographical, historical or cultural contexts. Third, intertextual exegesis pursues comparisons between texts.75

Patristic exegesis is anchored in several hermeneutical presuppositions. First, the internal unity and harmony of the Bible is unveiled through the literal and hidden meanings. This is the canonical wholeness of Scripture or the sensus plenior pointing to the mystery of Christ and his Church (allegory), the individual members of Christ’s body (tropology), and the heavenly call in Christ (anagogy). Second, the art of biblical exegesis shapes the tradition of the church, the doctrinal uniformity, and liturgical and sacramental practices. Third, the sacramental communication of the Logos and the revelatory mission of the Holy Spirit are essential for the abundance of Christ’s life in the believer.76

75 Louth, xxxi.

The doctrine of original sin has been accepted as one of the core dogmas in the history of Christian theology. Since its formulation by the Church Fathers, this doctrine was approved and criticized alike by different theologians throughout the ages. In most of these theological discourses, Christian exegetes and theologians have constantly understood the biblical evidence to affirm that the first act of disobedience of Adam and Eve in Eden had been universally transmitted to all humans. The primeval narrative of Genesis 3 and its Pauline interpretation in Romans 5 are considered the “seats” of this fundamental doctrine of sin tightly related to the doctrines of Christology and soteriology. It is widely accepted that Augustine of Hippo (354–430 C.E.) made a theological breakthrough in the doctrine of original sin (see discussion below). Prior to Augustine, Methodius (260–311 C.E.), bishop of Olympus, introduced the term ‘fall’ in its Christian hamartiological sense. Since Methodius, the ‘fall’ has been extensively used to describe the sin of Adam. The expression ‘original sin’ is not attested in the Greek fathers. Following Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 295–373 C.E.),

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the Greek fathers indulged in theological speculations on the cosmic effects of the fall. According to Athanasius, the ‘fall’ ruined the created order.\textsuperscript{78}

Some other prominent early Christian theologians who expound the doctrine of creation and sin are these: Justin Martyr (second century C.E.), Theophilus of Antioch (second century C.E.), Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–202 C.E.), Tertullian (ca. 155–220 C.E.), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215), Origen (ca. 185–254 C.E.), Cyril of Jerusalem (315–386 C.E.), Severian of Gabala (fifth century C.E.), and Bede the Venerable (ca. 673–735). Two medieval theologians who developed the doctrine of sin include Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109 C.E.) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 C.E.).

Irenaeus of Lyons

Several Church Fathers sought to interpret the earliest biblical narratives of the transgression in Eden and outside of it conjointly. Following the historical analysis of those patristic readings of the early hamartiologies in Genesis 3 and 4, the present discussion will proceed with Augustine’s theological delimitation of Genesis 1–3 and the subsequent marginalization of Genesis 4. Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–202 C.E.), the bishop of Lyons and the great Christian anti-Gnostic polemicist, compares the two primordial male characters, Adam and Cain. Irenaeus describes the state of the human couple in Eden prior to their sin as imperfect, childish, and immature (\textit{Proof of the Apostolic Preaching}, A, 14; so \textit{Theophilus of Antioch}:

\textsuperscript{78} Louth, 1-li.
In his opinion, Adam and Eve were created in the image and likeness of God, possessed free will, and distinguished good and evil prior to their transgression (so Sir 17:7). According to Irenaeus, the sin of Adam was not deliberate insofar as he was unfairly tricked by the devil. In Irenaeus’ view, the *proto-evangelium* is the earliest prophecy about Christ and Mary (see his interpretation on Gen 3:15 in *Against Heresies* 5.21.1).

In his apologetic work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus denounces Gnosticism as a threat to the Christian faith. The Pauline recapitulation of Adam is crucial to Irenaeus’ theology. In particular, Irenaeus parallels the first Adam, who was made by the hand of God using virgin earth, to the birth of the new Adam through the Virgin Mary (*Against Heresies* 3.21.10). In his theology, the righteous Mary inverted Eve’s role as Christ inverted Adam’s. While Adam and Eve both become the cause of death, Christ and Mary both become the cause of salvation (*Against Heresies* 3.22.4). Irenaeus remarks that the sin of disobedience of the first woman is perfected by the obedience of Mary (*Against Heresies* 5.19.1). Irenaeus underscores that the Lord did not curse Adam or the woman following their act of disobedience. In Genesis 3 and 4, the serpent, the ground, and Cain were only cursed by God. For this reason, Adam was

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79 “And Adam and Eve . . . were naked and were not ashamed, for their thoughts were innocent and childlike, and they had no conception or imagination of the sort that is engendered in the soul by evil, through concupiscence, and by lust. For they were then in their integrity, preserving their natural state . . . [N]ow, so long as the spirit remains in proper order and vigour, it is without imagination or conception of what is shameful. For this reason they were not ashamed, and they kissed each other and embraced with the innocence of childhood” (Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Teaching*, A, 14), cited in Toews, *The Story of Original Sin*, 52.

80 “As Eve was seduced by the word of a [fallen] angel to flee from God, having rebelled against his word, so Mary by the word of an angel received the glad tidings that she would bear God by obeying his word. The former was seduced to disobey God [and so fell], but the latter was persuaded to obey God, so that the Virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve. As the human race was subjected to death through the act of a virgin, so was it saved by a virgin, and thus the disobedience of one virgin was precisely balanced by the obedience of another” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.19.1), cited in Louth, 78–9.
repentant and pardoned for his sin (*Against Heresies* 3.23.1–5). In his interpretation, the sin of the first man and woman in Eden is not as bad as the sin of their son Cain. While Adam and his wife sinned against God in Eden, Cain was cursed and his transgression could not be perfected later in the history of salvation.81

**Cyril of Jerusalem and Salvian the Presbyter**

Cyril of Jerusalem (315–386 C.E.) and Salvian the Presbyter (ca. 400–480 C.E.) explain that Cain is the most wicked sinner. In their view God’s sentence upon this primordial man is light. In his catechetical lecture, Cyril of Jerusalem focuses on the expression of God’s love and forbearance towards the sinner.82 In the view of Cyril of Jerusalem, although Cain’s “sin was great, the sentence was light.”83 In his comment on Cain’s crime, Salvian the Presbyter designates Cain “as the most wicked and foolish of men.” Cain’s sin was exposed by God who witnessed the first violent act in human history.84

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81 “Cain, not Adam, committed the more serious sin. Adam immediately felt a sense of shame, repented and was not cursed. Cain, on the other hand, persisted in evil and received the curse of God” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.23.3–4), cited in Byron, “Sin and Death in the World,” 16. For a helpful summary of Irenaeus’ hamartiology, see Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 87–92.

82 Interestingly, Cyril of Jerusalem developed the doctrine of sin under the auspices of the doctrine of the incarnation. Unlike many Church Fathers, Cyril contends that children are born sinless. In Cyril’s view, since only adults are prone to sin, adult baptism is God’s remedy for their sins. Rondet, *Original Sin*, 102–3.

83 Cyril of Jerusalem comments on Cain’s sin: “Do you, who have but lately come to the catechesis, wish to see the loving kindness of God? Would you want to behold the loving kindness of God and the extent of his forbearance? Listen to the story of [Cain] . . . . Cain, the firstborn man, became a fratricide, from whose wicked designings first stemmed murder and envy. Yet consider his sentence for slaying his brother. ‘“Groaning and trembling shall you be upon the earth.”’ Though the sin was great, the sentence was light” (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 2.7), cited in Louth, 108.
Origen and Ephrem the Syrian

The catechetical school of Alexandria reached the height of its achievements with Origen (ca. 185–254 C.E.), the compiler of the Hexapla, and one of the earliest Christian exponents of allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Allegory was well regarded at most philosophical schools across the Roman Empire, and Christians utilized this hermeneutical tool to defend the Christian faith among the elite intellectuals. Origen was known for his theological rigour and brilliant apologetics, and he delivered sixteen homilies on Genesis in Caesarea in the early 200s.

Origen developed a form of transcendent hamartiology. In his view, Genesis 3 presents a prehistoric allegory about the collective fall of prenatal souls that rebelled against God in the spiritual realm (On First Principles IV, 1.16, 23; Against Celsus VII.50). In unison with the Greek fathers, Origen interpreted Rom 5:12–21 in relational terms but not ontological. In his view, remission of those prenatal sins is possible only with child baptism. While commenting on the words said to Jacob, “Your son Joseph is living,” Origen alludes to the narrative of the temptation in Genesis 3. In Genesis Homily XV, Origen explains that Adam died spiritually

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84 Salvian the Presbyter condemns the crime of Cain: “Cain was at once the most wicked and foolish of men in believing that for committing the greatest of crimes it would be sufficient if he avoided other human witnesses. In fact God was the primary witness to his fratricide” (Salvian the Presbyter, Governance of God I.6), cited in Louth, 107.

85 Several Second Temple Jewish texts refer to the spiritual existence of pre-created souls (e.g., 2 En. 23:4–5; Apoc. Bar. 23:5; T. Naphtali 2:2). In particular, see Wis 8:17–20: “When I considered these things inwardly, and pondered in my heart that in kinship with wisdom there is immortality, and in friendship with her, pure delight, and in labors of her hands, unfailing wealth, and in the experience of her company, understanding, and renown in sharing her words, I went about seeking how to get her for myself. As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot; or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body.” See a discussion on Origen’s theology of prenatal souls against its philosophico-theological backdrop in Toews, The Story of Original Sin, 55–8; Anthony C. Thiselton, The Hermeneutics of Doctrine (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 275.
on the same day he ate from the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. In *Genesis Homily I*, Origen explains that Cain was unworthy of the divine presence, and his “anger of envy” is seen as a sign for future generations (*Genesis Homily XV*, 211; XI, 361). In his commentary on Gen 3:23, Ephrem the Syrian (fourth century C.E.) features a hamartiological pattern similar to the one encountered earlier in *Gen. Rab*. 3:8. The fall of humankind into sin commenced with Adam and eventually led to the flood. The fratricide is included in the pattern of gradual alienation from God (*Hymn on Paradise* I.10).

John Chrysostom

The Archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407 C.E.) was the proponent of the Antiochene school of exegesis alongside with Diodore of Tarsus (ca. 330–390 C.E.), Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428 C.E.), and Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 393–458 C.E.). Chrysostom preached more than sixty sermons on Genesis. In his *Homilies on Genesis* and

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86 Origen comments on the death of Adam: “But also the judgment revealed by God to the first man contains the same things when he says: ‘But on the day that you shall eat of it you shall die the death.’” For as soon as he has transgressed the commandment, he is dead. For the soul which has sinned is dead, and the serpent which said, “You shall not die the death,” is shown to have deceived him” (Origen, *Genesis Homily XV*), cited in *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (trans. Ronald E. Heine; the Fathers of the Church, 71; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 205.

87 Origen reflects on Cain’s “anger of envy”: “But if anger is agitated irrationally so that it punishes the innocent, so that it rages against those who do nothing wrong, it will be the food of the beasts of the field and the serpents of the earth and the birds of heaven. For the demons also, who both feed on and promote our evil deeds, are nurtured on these foods. For Cain is a sign of this work, who deceived his innocent brother in the anger of envy” (Origen, *Genesis Homily I*), cited in ibid., 70.

88 Ephrem the Syrian laments in the *Hymn on Paradise* I.10: “When Adam sinned God cast him forth from paradise, but in his grace he granted him the low ground beyond it, settling him in the valley below the foothills of paradise; but when mankind even there continued to sin they were blotted out, and because they were unworthy to be neighbors of paradise, God commanded the ark to cast them out on Mount Qardu,” cited in Louth, 101.
Against Judaizing Christians, he underscores God’s benevolence to Adam and Eve. In Homilies on Genesis 17.13 and 18.12, Chrysostom explains that God delayed the punishment of death to Adam and Eve. In his view, the expulsion from Eden is a God-given opportunity to stabilize life after the verdicts imposed on the first couple. In Against Judaizing Christians 8.2.10, Chrysostom explains God’s solicitude for Cain who was spared by God just like his father Adam. In Homilies on Genesis 19.11, Cain is likened to the serpent of Genesis 3. According to this homily, the devil introduced mortality by means of deception in Eden, but the first human deception led to murder. Chrysostom teaches that Cain committed a transgression similar to that of the serpent in Eden. Accordingly, the serpent and Cain are cursed for their wicked actions (Gen 3:14; 4:11).

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89 The first homily unfolds God’s patience toward the transgressors: “See the Lord’s loving kindness and the surpassing degree of his long-suffering. I mean, though being in a position to begrudge such great sinners the right of reply and rather than to consign them at once to the punishment he had determined in anticipation of their transgression, he shows patience and withholds action. He asks a question, receives a reply and questions them further as if inviting them to excuse themselves so that he might seize the opportunity to display his characteristic love in regard to the sinners, even despite their fall” (Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 17.13). Likewise, the second homily refers to the intercourse between Adam and Eve: “After his disobedience, after their loss of the garden, then it was that the practice of intercourse had its beginning. You see, before their disobedience they followed a life like that of angels, and there was not mention of intercourse” (Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 18.12), cited in Louth, 78, 103.

90 The third homily comments on Cain’s punishment: “The punishment of which God spoke seems to be excessively harsh, but rightly understood it gives us a glimpse of his great solicitude. God wanted men of later times to exercise self-control. Therefore, he designed the kind of punishment that was capable of setting Cain free from his sin. If God had immediately destroyed him, Cain would have disappeared, his sin would have stayed concealed, and he would have remained unknown to men of later times. But as it is, God let him live a long with that bodily tremor of his. The sight of Cain’s palsied limbs was a lesson for all he met. It served to teach all men and exhort them never to dare do what he had done, so that they might not suffer the same punishment. And Cain himself became a better man again. His trembling, his fear, the mental torment that never left him, his physical paralysis kept him, as it were, shackled. They kept him from leaping again to any other like deed of bold folly. They constantly reminded him of his former crime. Through them he achieved greater self-control in his soul” (Chrysostom, Against Judaizing Christians 8.2.10), cited in Louth, 108.

91 The fourth homily likens Cain to the serpent: “You see, since Cain perpetrated practically the same evil as the serpent, which like an instrument served the devil’s purposes, and as the serpent introduced mortality by means of deceit, in like manner Cain deceived his brother, led him out into open country, raised his hand in armed assault against him and committed murder. Hence, as God said to the serpent, “‘Cursed are you beyond all the wild animals of the earth,’” so to Cain too when he committed the same evil as the serpent” (Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 19.11), cited in Louth, 109.
Augustine of Hippo

In this section, I consider Augustine’s interpretation of the primeval narratives of creation and sin. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 C.E.) is one of the leading theologians of the Western church. Three of his theological works are to be scrutinized in the present framework: (1) *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* (388/389 C.E.); (2) *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (ca. 401–416 C.E.); and (3) *The City of God* (ca. 416 C.E.). In these writings, Augustine treats numerous topics: time and eternity, body and soul, the *imago Dei*, the fall and redemption, divine providence, and the origins of sin and evil. In two other writings, Augustine treated chapter one of Genesis: *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis* (393–395 C.E.) and *Confessions* (397–401 C.E.).

Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340–397 C.E.) taught the doctrine of Adam’s original heavenly perfection and that his “fall” meant an unpardonable offense against God. As an early Christian exegete mentored by Ambrose, Augustine adopted the Septuagint, interpreted difficult texts in light of clear texts and in agreement with the rule of faith, and viewed the biblical history as pointing to the divine present. Augustine’s proof-texts for the doctrine of original sin are: Job 24:4–5 (LXX); Ps 51:5; John 3:5; Eph 2:3; and Rom 5:12 (this Pauline text is quoted more than 150 times in his writings). Augustine argues for the historical fall of Adam, the transmission of concupiscence or total depravity, and the doctrine of predestination. According to Augustine, since all sinned in Adam, humans are not capable of living righteously. In his theology, pride was the catalyst for the original sin, and all humans inherited sin and death from Adam and Eve (hereditary sin or the so-called “seminal identity”). In his letter to Simplician (397 C.E.), he introduces three key expressions: (1) the
“original sin” (originale peccatum); (2) the “original guilt” (originale reatus); (3) the “lump of sin” (messa peccati). Augustine’s doctrine of original sin became the dogma of the church in the Council of Orange (529 C.E.).

Contrary to Augustine’s doctrine of the original sin, Pelagius (ca. 354–520 C.E.) believed in the capability of the human will to choose either good or evil. The Pelagian heresy was denounced by the Council of Carthage (418 C.E.).

In Augustine’s commentaries on Genesis, there is a hermeneutical progress from allegory to sensus literalis. In section 2.5 of Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, Augustine leads the reader through the paths of four exegetical methods: (1) history, (2) allegory, (3)

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\[92\] See the commentary of Edmund Hill, O.P. on Augustine’s doctrine of original sin in the extract from Revisions (I, 10, 1–3) in Augustine’s On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis (The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century; trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. and ed. John E. Rotelle; Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2002), 38 (n. 5): “Original sin is not a personal sin, not an offense committed against God by any individual, not even by Adam and Eve, but is a ‘sin of nature.’” The expression “original sin,” for which Augustine does bear much responsibility, is an unfortunate one, because “‘sin’ does properly mean an act (or omission) committed by some person or persons; and human nature, not being an individual person or group of persons cannot commit any actual sin, or indeed perform any act—though it is true he says here, very carelessly, ‘In the first human beings it was human nature that sinned.’” But as human nature was at that point concentrated, so to say, in the first couple, it may be said to have sinned through being vitiated by that first sin actually committed by our first parents. So it suffers from an ingrained flaw or vice, and that is what is transmitted to children through their parents, from Adam and Eve on, together with the nature of which it is the flaw or vice. For Augustine this flaw or vice is concupiscencia, the lust inherent in the genital act; for Aquinas and a better, more developed theology, it is the lack of the grace of original justice, with which Adam and Eve were created, and which they forfeited by their actual sin.” (italics in the original) Cf. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109 C.E.) on carnal concupiscence in Kevin A. McMahon, “Anselm and the Guilt of Adam,” SAJ 2 (2004): 81–9.

\[93\] On the historical controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, consider the following summary by D.G. Bloesch, “Sin,” EDT (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1013: “In the fifth century, Augustine challenged the views of the British monk Pelagius, who saw sin basically as an outward act transgressing the law and regarded man as free to sin or desist from sin. Appealing to the witness of Scripture, Augustine maintained that sin incapacitates man from doing the good, and because we are born as sinners we lack the power to do the good. Yet because we willfully choose the bad over the good, we must be held accountable for our sin. Augustine gave the illustration of a man who by abstaining from food necessary for health so weakened himself that he could no longer eat. Though still a human being, created to maintain his health by eating, he was no longer able to do so. Similarly, by the historical event of the fall, all humanity has become incapable of that movement toward God—the very life for which it was created.” See also Howard J. Loewen, “The Use of Scripture in Augustine’s Theology,” SJT 34 (1981): 201–24.
analogy, and (4) aetiology. In her discussion of Augustine’s historical exegesis, Susan Schreiner explains that Augustine’s later exegesis of Genesis was confined to the reality of history in the first three chapters of Genesis. Schreiner states, “To attempt a literal interpretation of Genesis was, in the end, for Augustine, to glimpse even more clearly the reality of revelation and of divine impenetrability, the wonder and the partial darkness inherent in history, as well as the horrible but awesome mystery of time itself.”

In Books I and II of his exegetical commentary *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, Augustine opts for cosmology and anthropology as the means to expound the accounts of creation and sin in Genesis 1–3 that are understood in terms of history (literal) and prophecy (figurative). In Book II, Augustine unfolds the theological purpose of this apologetic work on Genesis 1–3: “How to think about God in a godly way” (Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 29, 34). In his choice of allegory as the key exegetical strategy, this early Christian theologian echoes the mainstream allegorists Philo, Origen, and Ambrose. In *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, Augustine interprets the divine

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94 “We must now consider the things that can be asked about and discussed in this book, in accordance with this faith. *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1). Four ways of expounding the law have been laid down by some scripture commentators, which can be named in words derived from the Greek, while they need further definition and explanation in plain Latin; they are the way of history, the way of allegory, the way of analogy, the way of aetiology. History is when things done by God or man are recounted; allegory when they are understood as being said figuratively; analogy, when the harmony of the old and new covenants is being demonstrated; aetiology, when the causes of the things that have been said and done are presented” (*Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis* 2, 5), cited in Augustine, *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 116 (italics in the original).


97 In the introduction to Book II, Augustine prefaces his commentary with the following exegetical statement: “The listing of the seven days and the presentation of their works is given a kind of conclusion, in which everything that has been said already is called the book of creating of heaven and earth (Gn 2:4), even
command to rule over the animal kingdom figuratively (Gen 1:28). The animals are likened to feelings and emotions to be subjected to reason and will. Augustine omits the connection to Gen 4:7 where the Lord urges Cain to control the sinful impulse likened to a beast.  

According to Augustine, the heretics, especially the Manichees, are prophetically signified by the cunning serpent from Genesis 3. Adam’s fall and punishment for disobedience are interpreted allegorically as a warning to Christians exposed to the danger of heresy. Such an allegorical reading of Genesis 3 seemingly leaves neither room nor reason for making tight connections with the juxtaposed chapter 4. Likewise, Augustine interprets allegorically the

though it is only a small part of the book as a whole. But still it was entirely appropriate to give it this name, because these seven days furnish us with a miniature symbolic picture of the entire span of world history from start to finish. Then it goes on to tell the story of the man in more detail; and this whole account is to be analyzed in figurative, not literal terms, to put the minds of those who seek the truth through their paces, and lure them away from the business of the spirit” (On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees II, 1, 1), cited in Augustine, 69 (italics in the original).

Augustine comments on Gen 1:28: “And as regards their being told: Have authority over the fishes of the sea and the flying things of heaven, and of all crawling things which crawl over the earth (Gn 1:28): granted that it is by intelligence and reason that we clearly lord it over all these animals, this text can still also be properly understood in a spiritual sense, to mean that we should keep in subjection all the feelings and emotions of the spirit which we have in common with these animals, and should lord it over them by self-restraint and moderation. When these emotions, you see, are not strictly controlled, they break out and lead to the filthiest habits, and drag us off through a variety of pernicious pleasures, and make us like every kind of animal. When on the other hand they are controlled and brought into submission, they grow completely tame and live with us in a friendly association” (On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees I, 20, 31), cited in Augustine, 59 (italics in the original).

Augustine comments on Genesis 3 as follows: “For indeed in terms of prophecy that serpent signifies the various heretical poisons, and above all the one of these Manichees, and any others which are opposed to the Old Testament. I am convinced, you see, that nothing is more manifestly foreshadowed in that serpent than this crew—or rather that it is he who is to be shunned in them. There are none, you see, who are more boastful and talkative than they are in promising knowledge of good and evil, and presumptuously assuming that they are going to demonstrate this distinction in the human person, as in the tree which was planted in the middle of paradise. Now let Adam get to work in his own field, and understand that the earth is yielding him thorns and thistles as a punishment, not as a mere fact of nature. And let him put this down to a divine judgment, not to heaven knows what race of darkness, because the golden rule of justice is to grant to each what is his own. Let him give the woman heavenly food, which he has received from his head, who is Christ; let him not receive forbidden fruit from her, the deceitful doctrine, that is, of the heretics with its great promise of knowledge, and the discourse of some marvelous secrets or other, as a kind of seasoning to make the error more attractive—and effective. It is indeed the proud and prying greed of heretics which is crying out in the Book of Proverbs under the figure of a woman, and saying: Whoever is foolish, let him turn aside to me; and inviting in those lacking in sense with the words: Enjoy eating bread in secret, and find stolen water sweet to
divine provision of tunics of skin (Gen 3:21). In Augustine’s view, this clothing of the sinful couple represents the entrance of death into the Godly order of creation. In his opinion, the tunics of skin were made from dead cattle. Thus, in his interpretation, Adam and his spouse were subjected to death even before they were terminally expelled from the Garden of Eden; however, Abel’s death is omitted from this hamartiological discourse.100

The Literal Meaning of Genesis (ca. 401–416 C.E.) refutes Origen’s doctrine of the pre-existence of souls and the Platonic doctrine of transmigration of souls. It addresses Christians, those who are considered heretics, and intellectual pagans. As such, this commentary has proven to be a seminal patristic work merging questions of faith, science, and philosophy. His literal commentary on Genesis 1–3 is pastoral and catechetical in tone as it dwells on the theme of human origins. The Literal Meaning of Genesis consists of XII Books grouped in three sections: (1) Books I–IV, the first account of creation; (2) Book V, theory of the rationes causales (Gen 2:4–7); and (3) Books VI–XII, the second account of creation. According to Augustine, the primordial episodes narrated in the first three chapters of Genesis are no less factual than the historiographical books of Kings. Some of the

drink (Prov 9:16–17)” (On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees II, 25, 38; 27, 41), cited in Augustine, 97–8, 100 (italics in the original).

100 Augustine comments on Gen 3:21 as follows: “This death, you see, which all of us who are born of Adam have owed to nature from the start, and with which God threatened Adam when he gave the command that the fruit of that tree was not to be eaten, so then this death is presented under the figure of the skin tunics. They themselves, you see, had made aprons out of fig-leaves for themselves, and God made them tunics of skin; that is, they set their hearts on the pleasures of lying after turning their backs on the face of Truth, and God changed their bodies into this mortal flesh, in which lying hearts are concealed. But these two continued to remain in Paradise, even though now under the sentence of God’s condemnation, until it came to the tunics of skin, that is, to mortal condition of this life. What more effective indication, after all, can be given of the death, which we are aware of in the body, than skins which are flayed as a rule from dead cattle? And so when the man went against the commandment and sought to be God, not by lawful imitation but by unlawful pride, he was cast down into the mortal condition of monstrous beasts” (On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees II, 21, 32), cited in Augustine, 92–3.
exegetical reflections in this work are excursive. The factual perception of the primordial episodes did not preclude Augustine from interpreting some texts figuratively or allegorically.\textsuperscript{101}

For Augustine, Genesis 4 has virtually no voice in the hamartiological discussion about sin’s repercussions. In \textit{The Literal Meaning of Genesis}, Augustine holds pride and jealousy as two vices in Genesis 3 without reflecting on the expressions of these vices in Cain’s behaviour. In his view, pride emerged in the heart of the first human couple prior to the temptation.\textsuperscript{102}

Before he violated the commandment, Adam was regarded as a prophet who woke up after his ecstasy and proclaimed the prophetic statement in Gen 2:23–24 (\textit{The Literal Meaning of Genesis}, IX, 19, 36). Moreover, according to Augustine, Adam lost his privileged bodily condition as a terminal punishment. In his view, Adam “estranged himself from the life” and “was cut off” from the source of spiritual life. In Augustine’s reading on Gen 3:22–23, there is no glimmer of hope for the first human couple (contra, e.g., \textit{T. Levi} 18:10–11).\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} In Book I of \textit{The Literal Meaning of Genesis}, Augustine unfolds the possible exegetical outcomes when the interpreter grapples with “a vast array of true meanings”: “When we read in the divine books such a vast array of true meanings, which can be extracted from a few words, and which are backed by sound Catholic faith, we should pick above all the one which can certainly be shown to have been held by the author we are reading; while if this is hidden from us, then surely the one which the scriptural context does not rule out and which is agreeable to sound faith; but even if the scriptural context cannot be worked out and assessed, then at least only one which sound faith prescribes. It is one thing, after all, not to be able to work out what the writer is most likely to have meant, quite another to stray from the road sign-posted by godliness. Should each defect be avoided, the reader’s work has won its complete reward, while if each cannot be avoided, even though the writer’s intention should remain in doubt, it will not be without value to have extracted a sense that accords with sound faith” (\textit{The Literal Meaning of Genesis} I, 21, 41), cited in Augustine, 188–89.

\textsuperscript{102} “Since pride, then, is the love of one’s own superiority, while jealousy is the hatred of another’s good fortune, it is easy to see which comes from which. I mean, anyone in love with his own superiority will be jealous of his peers because they are treated as his equals, and of his inferiors in case they should become his equals, and of his superiors because he is not treated as their equal. Thus it is pride that makes people jealous, not jealousy that makes them proud” (\textit{The Literal Meaning of Genesis}, XI, 14, 18), cited in Augustine, 438.

\textsuperscript{103} Augustine comments on Gen 3:22–23 as follows: “Adam, you see, had not only estranged himself from the life he was going to have received with the angels had he kept the commandment, but also from the one he had been living in Paradise in a privileged kind of bodily condition. So he naturally had to be barred
In *The City of God*, comprising 22 books (Parts One and Two), Augustine discusses different philosophical and theological issues in response to the Sack of Rome (410 C.E.) (Part One, Books I–X). Most scholars concur that this work was completed after *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. In *The City of God*, Augustine features the spiritual characteristics of the two spiritual cities. The heavenly (‘City of God’) and the earthly (‘City of Man’) cities represent the Church of Christ (faith) and the sinful world of darkness (unbelief), respectively. Augustine recounts and interprets the biblical history predestined by God from the creation until the first coming of Christ (Part Two, Books XI–XXII). While humility and love of God characterize the City of God, ungodliness and selfish pride represent the City of Man (*The City of God* XIV, 13, 1).  

In Book XV, Augustine interprets the fratricide account through the lens of allegory, conceiving Cain and Abel as representatives of two cities: while Abel is the righteous pilgrim, his wicked brother Cain devoted himself to building the earthly city. In his opinion, Abel possessed an eschatological hope that directed him toward the heavenly city. Unlike his brother, Cain envied his brother, and his heart was attracted to the temporal goods of this world. According to Augustine, Cain builds an earthly city, while Abel’s city is of heavenly nature. Augustine concludes that Cain’s offering was refused because he did not live from the tree of life, whether because it would enable him to continue in that privileged bodily condition through some invisible virtue in a visible thing, or because it was also a visible sign or sacrament of invisible Wisdom. In any case he certainly had to be cut off from it, whether because he was now going to die, or because he was also being in a way excommunicated, as nowadays in this paradise which is the Church people are commonly barred from the visible sacraments of the altar by Church discipline” (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI, 40, 54), cited in Augustine, 460–61.


105 Consider the following two texts from *The City of God* (Book XV) which comment on Cain and Abel. The first commentary states: “Cain was followed by Abel, who was killed by his brother and served as the first prophetic symbol of the City of God. He was like an alien on earth, destined to suffer cruel persecutions at
piously (cf. 1 John 3:10–12). Cain’s unjust attitude toward his innocent brother Abel was a key factor in God’s ultimate rejection of the former brother and his offering.106

Conclusion

In summary, some of the Church Fathers scrutinized the sin of Cain as greater than that of his father Adam. In Against Heresies 3.23.3–4, Irenaeus of Lyons refers to Cain’s wicked offence as harsher than Adam’s. In this text, Irenaeus of Lyons compares the two primordial transgressors in the theological context of Against Heresies. Likewise, Cyril of Jerusalem and Salvian the Presbyter hold that Cain’s great sin does not conform to his light sentence (Catechetical Lectures 2.7; Salvian the Presbyter, Governance of God I.6). According to Origen of Alexandria, while Adam and Eve died spiritually on the day they ate the forbidden

the hands of the wicked men who can properly be called natives of earth because they love this world as their home and find their happiness in the worldly felicity of the earthly city” (The City of God XV.15). Likewise, the following theological claim thus states: “Now, it is recorded of Cain that he built a city, while Abel, as though he were merely a pilgrim on earth, built none. For the true city of the saints is in heaven, though here on earth it produces citizens in whom it wanders as on a pilgrimage through time looking for the kingdom of eternity. When that day comes, it will gather together all those who, rising in their bodies, shall have that kingdom given to them in which, along with their Prince, the King of Eternity, they shall reign forever and ever” (The City of God XV.1), cited in Louth, 104, 111.

106 Augustine comments as follows: “Now, the city of man was first founded by a fratricide who was moved by envy to kill his brother, a man who, in his pilgrimage on earth, was a citizen of the City of God. . . . In the case of the brothers Cain and Abel, there was no rivalry in any cupidity for the things of earth, nor was there any envy or temptation to murder arising from a fear of losing the sovereignty if both were ruling together. In this case, Abel had no ambition for domination in the city that his brother was building. The root of the trouble was that diabolical envy which moves evil men to hate those who are good for no other reason than that they are good. God made a distinction between the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, having respect for the one and disregarding the other, and undoubtedly, making the discrimination clear by some visible sign. God did so because Cain’s deeds were evil and those of his brother were good. God explains why He refused to accept Cain’s sacrifice. It was because Cain should have been rightly displeased with himself rather than wrongly displeased with his brother; God makes clear that, unjust as Cain was in not “distinguishing rightly” (in the sense of not living properly and of being unworthy to have his offering approved), he was far more unjust in hating his brother without provocation” (The City of God XV, 5, 7), cited in Saint Augustine, The City of God (Books VIII–XVI; trans. Gerald G. Walsh, S.J. and Grace Monahan, O.S.U.; New York: Fathers of the Church, 1952), 420–21, 424, 426–7.
fruit, Cain is taken as an epitome of evil deeds (*Genesis Homily* I, XV). Ephrem the Syrian unfolds the pattern of increasing magnitudes of sin in the primeval history from Adam to the flood (*Hymn on Paradise* I.10). John Chrysostom emphasises that Adam and Cain were granted life after they violated the divine warnings (*Homilies on Genesis* 17.13, 18.12; *Against Judaizing Christians* 8.2.10). Chrysostom takes the crafty serpent and the violent Cain as those primordial figures who “introduced mortality by means of deceit” (*Homilies on Genesis* 19.11).

The present discussion has shown that Augustine’s theological attention fell on chapters 1–3 apart from the sin narrative in chapter 4. I concur that Augustine’s hermeneutical approach constitutes a break only with some preceding interpreters in the history of exegesis. In his interpretation, Augustine utilized four exegetical methods: (1) history, (2) allegory, (3) analogy, and (4) aetiology (*Unfinished Literal Commentary*, 116; *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* I, 21, 41). As a result of Augustine’s theological commitment to the doctrine of hereditary sin, Genesis 3 is interpreted through the lens of history and allegory (*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* I, 20, 31; II, 21, 25, 27, 32, 38, 41). The exclusion from the Garden of Eden is taken as a terminal punishment (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI, 40, 54). The righteous Abel and the wicked Cain are regarded as two symbols of the cities of God and man (*The City of God*, XV.1, 5, 7, 15).

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107 I am grateful to Dr. John McLaughlin for nuancing this aspect in the history of interpretation.
Martin Luther

In this section, I scrutinize the commentaries of the reformers Martin Luther (1483–1546 C.E.) and John Calvin (1509–1564 C.E.). Martin Luther’s lectures on Genesis 1–5 took the form of a literal commentary on Genesis supplemented with some allegorical reflections (1535–1536).\textsuperscript{108} In his exegetical work on Genesis, Luther is indebted to Augustine. D.G. Bloesch comments on Luther’s reception of Augustinian theology: “At the time of the Reformation, Luther powerfully reaffirmed the Pauline and Augustinian doctrine of the bondage of the will against Erasmus, who maintained that man still has the capacity to do the right, though he needs the aid of grace if he is to come to salvation. Luther saw man as totally bound to the powers of darkness —sin, death, and the devil. What he most needs is to be delivered from spiritual slavery rather than inspired to heroic action.”\textsuperscript{109}

According to Luther, the paradigmatic nature of the original sin deriving from Genesis 3 manifests itself within the human body and soul, specifically, the loss of a glorified body and mortality, damaged will and reason, and corruption of the sacred institute of marriage. According to Luther, Satan seduced the woman to violate the divine stipulation. Luther’s contemporaneous religious opponents are compared with Adam and Eve who purposefully violated the divine commandment by harkening to the serpent’s manipulative lies.\textsuperscript{110} In his commentary on Genesis, Luther links between the divine stipulations to Adam and Cain:

\textsuperscript{108} Martin Luther, \textit{Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5} (Luther’s Works 1; ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick; Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1955), 232 (n. 77), 233 (n. 80).


“When the Law thus gains control in the conscience, then there is the true knowledge of sin, knowledge which human hearts cannot bear unless comfort comes from God.” Death is understood as the direct aftermath of the human inability to cope with “the true knowledge of sin.” In Luther’s view, Adam was compelled to know his wife Eve on two grounds: (1) passion of his flesh; and (2) the need to achieve salvation through the promised seed (Gen 3:15). Luther explains that Eve, “a saintly woman,” hoped that Cain would crush the head of the serpent; however, the firstborn did not fulfill the maternal expectation expressed in Gen 4:1. According to Luther, Cain was undisciplined and spoiled son: “The sin of the parents, too, plays a part; they give their support to this pride, as the names clearly indicate. Adam and Eve place their hope in their first-born son alone; him they call their treasure. But Abel, they feel, is nothing and will never amount to anything.”

In Luther’s view, Adam the husbandman trained his son Cain to till the ground, while Abel was assigned to tend the flock. Luther believes that Adam sacrificed animals to God, and taught his sons to worship and bring offerings to God. Following Augustine, Luther contends that while Cain began the church of the wicked, Abel initiated the church of the pious. In light of Heb 11:4, Luther comments as follows: “Therefore this passage is an outstanding and clear proof that God does not have regard for either the size or the quantity or even for the value of the work, but simply for the faith of the individual. Similarly, by contrast, God does

111 Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5, 164.
112 Ibid., 242–43.
113 Ibid., 245.
not despise the smallness, the lack of value, or the lowly nature of a work, but only a person’s lack of faith.”\textsuperscript{114}

Adam and Cain are connected by means of another exegetical thread. Luther contends that Gen 4:6–7, 10–12, and 14 are tellingly attributed to Adam, who attempts to bring Cain to his senses. In particular, Adam’s fatherly reproof to Cain is recorded in Gen 4:7: “If you did well, or if you were good, that is, if you believed, you would have a gracious God and there would be a true lifting-up, that is, forgiveness of sins. But because I see that God had no regard for you, it assuredly follows that you are not good and are not freed from your sin; but your sin remains.”\textsuperscript{115} Luther comments on this divine address to Cain in the following manner: “If you hurt your brother and yield to the anger which has arisen in your heart, I tell you, your sin will be quiet. But it will be quiet at the door, that is, in a place which is very much devoid of quiet. Therefore it cannot avoid being roused and falling upon you like an infuriated beast.”\textsuperscript{116} According to Luther, chapter 4 is crucial for sin’s expansion from Cain onward: “Then, just as more serious diseases in the body demand more powerful cures, so also other more severe or more frequent penalties had to be inflicted.”\textsuperscript{117}

Luther makes another connection between Genesis 3 and 4, which concerns the bitterly mourning over the death of Abel. In Luther’s view, the death of Abel was a major blow to the familial relationship between Adam and Eve. The futile hopes of Adam and Eve were

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 258.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 265.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 267.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 206.
crushed when Cain acted like the cunning serpent from Eden (cf. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 19.11). Luther explains that the Edenic pattern of disobedience has reoccurred to Cain who could have acted rightly.  

**John Calvin**

In 1550, John Calvin lectured on the Book of Genesis. His commentary on Genesis was penned in 1554, slightly revised in 1563, and then first translated into English in 1578. Calvin’s life was marked by religious controversies over the Eucharist, the eternal election and providence of God, the doctrine of Trinity, and the plight of Christian non-conformist communities in France. Apart from Calvin’s classic treatise, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin commented on Genesis, a harmony of the Mosaic Law and Joshua, Job, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Synoptic Gospels, John, Acts, the Pauline epistles, Hebrews and the Catholic epistles. In his OT commentaries, Calvin utilized the Hebrew language.

Three theological features characterize Calvin’s interpretation of Genesis: Christological interpretation, anagogy, and moral lessons. In his commentary, Calvin confronts some of the Genesis commentaries written by Origen and Augustine. For this reason, it is interesting to

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118 Luther ascribes the following lament to Adam and Eve: “Behold, this is our sin. In Paradise we wanted to become like God, and through our sin we become like the devil. The same thing has happened to our son. Him alone we loved, and him we regarded most highly. To us the other was righteous compared with this ḫūl, that is, this worthless person. We hoped that he [Cain] would crush the serpent’s head. And behold, he himself has been crushed by the serpent. He has become like the serpent, inasmuch as he has become a murderer. But how did this come about? Was it not because he was born to us and because our sin has made us what we are? Therefore that disaster had its origin in our flesh and in our sin.” Ibid., 281.


consider Calvin’s view of the literary-theological unity of the narratives of creation and sin. Calvin believes that both Adam and his wife were present during the conversation with the serpent. In his commentary, Calvin interprets the fall of Adam and Eve paradigmatically. All men are subjected to God’s curse on labour, and the knowledge of sin entails a complete subjection to human sufferings. In Calvin’s words, “It is, however, to be observed, that they who meekly submit to their sufferings, present to God an acceptable obedience, if, indeed, there be joined with this bearing of the cross, that knowledge of sin which may teach them to be humble.”

According to Calvin, Adam naming his wife is a step toward reconciliation with God — the victory of life over the shadow of death. Contra Augustine, Calvin takes the exile of Adam from Eden as a mitigated punishment rather than as a terminal exclusion from God. He interprets Gen 4:1 as the fulfilment of Gen 1:28 and 3:16. The divine warning in Gen 4:7 is interpreted as referring to the inadequate offering of Cain. In Calvin’s view, Cain lost his human image by claiming the life of his brother. In Calvin’s words, “There was more humanity in the earth than in man himself.”

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121 Calvin, *Genesis*, 137–224.

122 Calvin comments on the nature of sin in Genesis 3: “In the first place, it is to be observed, that punishment was not inflicted upon the first of our race so as to rest on those two alone, but was extended generally to all posterity, in order that we might know that the human race was cursed in their person; we next observe, that they were subjected only to temporal punishment, that, from the moderation of the divine anger, they might entertain hope of pardon.” Ibid., 172.

123 Ibid., 176.

124 Ibid., 181–85.

125 Ibid., 189–224.

126 Ibid., 209.
In summary, the Protestant exegetes Martin Luther and John Calvin sought to interpret the sin narratives in direct relationship one to another. It has been shown that Luther underscores a theological dependency between Genesis 3 and 4. Cain’s transgression is crucial for Luther’s understanding of the origin and growth of sin right up to the flood. In his view, the first human family has been traumatized as a result of Cain’s sin. In Calvin’s view, the desire for life has triumphed over the shadow of the expulsion from Eden (Gen 4:1).

Conclusion

The preceding survey of the history of interpretation from antiquity to the Reformation has fleshed out historical chasms and theological commonalties. Most Christians naturally opt for Genesis 3 as the story of the fall in popular religious discourse. Nonetheless, the history of exegesis on the narratives of creation and sin in antiquity unfolds other theological perspectives on the interpretation of biblical hamartiology. In the history of traditional exegesis, the Edenic narrative of temptation has not been interpreted in the theological sense of hereditary guilt until Augustine in the fifth century C.E.

The diversity and ambivalence of early Jewish and Christian interpretations lends support to the working hypothesis that the language of sin and death has been observed throughout the narratives of Eden and outside of it. In Sirach, Adam is seen as a heroic sapiential figure (Sir 17:7; 24:28; 44:16; 49:16). In Wisdom of Solomon, Cain might be identified as the originator of envy and death (Wis 2:23–24; 10:4). Likewise, Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer 21 presents Cain as the originator of sin. In another Jewish text, Cain admits to his sin exceeding the transgression of his father (Gen. Rab. 4:13). Sir 25:23–24 blames the first woman for
introducing death into the world (cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 14:1–3, 32:1–4). In other apocalyptic works like *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, Adam is sought as the originator of sin and death (sometimes conjointly with Eve). Nonetheless, the Adamic hamartiology reflected in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* is not identical with the Pauline portrait of Adam (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22, 45–49). In particular, the text of *2 Bar.* 56:5–9 echoes the hamartiological episode from Genesis 4. In other early Jewish and Christian texts, Satan is seen as the external source of death (so *3 Bar.* 4:8; *Dialogue with Trypho* 88, 100, 124).

Paul’s discourses on sin and death stemming from Adam were deemed much more influential theologically than those passages mentioning either Eve or Cain. Adam is the one to blame for sin and death most likely in an ontological sense (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22, 45–49). The few NT references to the primeval figures of Eve and Cain appear in pastoral discourses (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:13–14; 1 John 3:10–12; Heb 11:4).

It has been determined that early Christian exegetes like Irenaeus and Chrysostom sought to connect the hamartiological episodes in Genesis 3 and 4 (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.23.3–4; Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 19.11). Augustine’s hermeneutics has contributed to the reception of the stream of tradition which detaches chapter 4 from the preceding Edenic narratives (*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* I, 20, 31; II, 21, 25, 27, 32, 38, 41; *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI, 14, 18, 40, 54; *The City of God* XV, 1, 5, 7, 15). At the same time, not all Christian exegetes and theologians have opted for the hermeneutical disjunction of chapters 2–3 from 4. The exegetical elaborations of Luther and Calvin discussed above serve as a prelude to the next chapter devoted to the study of the textual unity of Genesis 2–4.
Chapter 1 explored the question of textual unity of Genesis 2–4 through the lens of contemporary biblical scholarship. Chapter 2 examined some representative exegetical traditions in the early Jewish and Christian history of interpretation. Two streams of tradition have been acknowledged in early Jewish and Christian history of exegesis, as well as the interpretations of Luther and Calvin. According to one exegetical stream, the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel are read conjointly. In the view of other exegetes, the story of Genesis 4 can be definitely read apart from chapters 1–3.

In the current chapter, I plan to explore the textual unity of Gen 2:4b–4:16. The MT text and its English translation are provided for ease of reference. All translations of the Hebrew biblical text are mine unless otherwise indicated. I will scrutinize the textual connections between the interwoven narratives of Genesis 2–4 with an eye on the literary echoes in other episodes of Genesis. The following nine textual features mark chapters 2–4 as a literary whole: (1) toledot formula; (2) diptych; (3) the primeval characters; (4) the motifs of silence and voice; (5) the tests of Adam and Cain; (6) the motif of knowledge; (7) the motif of death; (8) the trials; and (9) punishment and hope. Finally, I will summarize the findings of this chapter.

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Text and Translation: Genesis 2:4–4:16

בראשית ב:4 • אֵלֶ֖לֶּה תוֹלְדֹ֧ות הַשָּׁמַ֛יִם וְהָאָ֖רֶץ בְּהִבָּֽרְאָ֑ם בְּיֹ֗ום עֲשֹׂ֛ות יְהוָ֥ה אֱ֖לֶ֑לֶּה

כָּלֶ֛ל יֵהָֽבֶ֑ו לְאִשָּׁ֖ה כִּ֥י בְּיֹ֛ום אֲכָלְּתָ֖ו מֵעֵ֣ץ הַדַּ֗עַת טֹ֣ב וָרָ֔ע מִמֶּ֖נּוּ מֹ֥ות תָּמֽוּת׃

וַיִּצֶר֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱ֕לֶ֖לֶּה עַ֣ל־הָאָֽדָם וַיַּנִּחֵ֣הוּ בְגַן־עֵ֔דֶן לְעָבְדָ֖הּ וּלְשָׁמְרָֽהּ׃

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְהוָ֜ה אֱ֖לֶ֑לֶּה לְאִ֧ישׁ לֵאמֹ֛ר מִכֹּ֥ל עֵ֖ץ־הַגָּ֖ן אָכֹ֥ל תֹּאכֵֽל׃

וַיָּבֵא֙ אֶל־הָ֣אָדָ֔ם נֶ֥פֶשׁ חַיָּ֖ה ה֥וּא שְׁמֹֽו׃

וַיֹּ֨אמְרוּ אֶל֖וּ עֵֽרוּמִֽים הָֽאָדָ֗ם וְאִשָּׁ֤ו וְדָבַ֙קְּנְ֔ו בְּאִשָּׁ֖ה וְהָי֖וּ לְבָשָׂ֑ר אֶחָֽד׃

ורָאִ֛יתוּ שְׁנֵ֖יהָ שְׁנֵ֑י אִישִּׁ֥י וְאִ֖ישׁ לֻֽקַּֽשׁוּ׃
וְלָאָדָם אָמַר כִּי־שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקֹל אִשְׁתֶּךָ שָׂדֶה עַל־גְּחֹן וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לָאָדָם וָאֶל־אִשָּׁה מִפְּרִי עֵץ הַגָּן וָאֶל־אֹרְבֵּהֶם מִפְּרִי עֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים שהיָם הֵם יֹדְעֵי טוֹב וְרָע׃ וַיֹּאמֶר הָֽאָדָם הָֽאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתְנָה־לִי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֹכֵל׃

לְבִלְתִּי אֲכָל־מִמֶּנּוּ אָכָלְתָּ׃ כִּי עֵירֹם אָתָּה הֲמִן־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי לָדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע וַתִּקַּח הָֽאָדָם וְאֶל־אִישֵׁי תְּשׁוּקָה בְּעֶ֖צֶב תֵּֽלְדִי בָנִ֑ים וְאֶל־אִישָּ֣ה שָׂדֶ֔ה עַל־גְּחֹן וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָֹ֨ה אֱלֹהִים לָאָדָם וְלָקַח גַּם מֵעֵ֣ץ הַֽחַיִּ֔ים וְאָכַ֖ל וַיֹּ֣אמֶר יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהִים יֹדְעֵ֖י טוֹב וָרָע׃ וַיֹּ֖אמֶר הָֽאָדָם הָֽאִשָּׁ֙ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָתַ֣תָּה עִמָּדִי הִ֔וא נָתְנָה־לִי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֹכֵֽל׃

כִּי עֵירֹם אָתָּה הֲמִן־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי לָדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע וַתִּקַּח הָֽאָדָם וְאֶל־אִישֵׁי תְּשׁוּקָה בְּעֶ֖צֶב תֵּֽלְדִי בָנִ֑ים וְאֶל־אִישָּ֣ה שָׂדֶ֔ה עַל־גְּחֹן וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָֹ֨ה אֱלֹהִים לָאָדָם וְלָקַח גַּם מֵעֵ֣ץ הַֽחַיִּ֔ים וְאָכַ֖ל וַיֹּ֣אמֶר יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהִים יֹדְעֵ֖י טוֹב וָרָע׃ וַיֹּ֖אמֶר הָֽאָדָם הָֽאִשָּׁ֙ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָתַ֣תָּה עִמָּדִי הִ֔וא נָתְנָה־לִי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֹכֵֽל׃

וַיֹּ֖אמֶר הָֽאָדָם הָֽאִשָּׁ֙ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָתַ֣תָּה עִמָּדִי הִ֔וא נָתְנָה־לִי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֹכֵֽל׃

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וַיֹּ֖אמֶר הָֽאָדָם הָֽאִשָּׁ֙ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר نָתַ֣תָּה עִמָּדִי הִ֔וא נָתְנָה־לִי מִן־הָעֵץ וָאֹכֵֽל׃
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Gen 2

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When YHWH God made earth and heaven—

when no shrub of the field was yet on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for YHWH God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground, but a mist would go up from the earth and water the whole face of the ground—

YHWH God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul. YHWH God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground YHWH God made to spring up every tree that is desirable of sight and good for food, along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon.
that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. YHWH God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. YHWH God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” YHWH God said, “For the man to be by himself is not good; I will therefore make him a helper corresponding to him.” YHWH God formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called each living soul, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper corresponding to him. So YHWH God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh under it. YHWH God made a woman from the rib he had taken from the man and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; of this one it will be said ‘Woman,’ because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Gen 3

1 Now the serpent was more shrewd than any of the animals of the field that YHWH God had made. He said to the woman, “Is it true that God said, ‘You must not eat of any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat from the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden God said, ‘You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that good was the tree for food, and that desirable it was to the eyes, and desirable was the tree to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. When the eyes of both were opened, they knew that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. They heard the sound of YHWH God walking in the garden in the daytime breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHWH God among the trees of the garden. YHWH God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” Then YHWH God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” YHWH God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you from among all the cattle and from among all wild beasts of the field; on your belly you shall crawl, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life” I will put enmity
between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the
head, and you shall strike at his heel." 16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your
pain and childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your
husband, and he shall rule over you.” 17 To Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the
voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat
of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By
the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you
were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” 20 The man called his wife’s name
Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 YHWH God made for Adam and for his wife
garments of skins and clothed them. 22 Then YHWH God said, “Behold, the man has become
like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, what if he were to stretch forth his hand and
take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever?” 23 So YHWH God sent him out from
the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man,
and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and the flame of the sword that
turns round and round to guard the way to the tree of life.

Gen 4 1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have
created a man with the help of YHWH.” 2 And she then bore his brother Abel. Abel was a
shepherd of the flock, and Cain was a worker of the ground. 3 And it happened at the end of
days Cain brought to YHWH an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 but, it was Abel who
brought some of the firstborn of his flock, even some of their fat portions. YHWH paid heed
to Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very
angry, and his face fell. 6 YHWH said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face
fallen? 7 If you do well, will there not be a lifting up? And if you do not do well, sin is
crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” 8 Cain spoke to Abel
his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed
him. 9 Then YHWH said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am
I my brother’s keeper?” 10 And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s
blood cries to me from the ground. 11 And now cursed are you from the ground, which has
opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you till the
ground, it will not again give to you its strength. You shall be a wanderer and a fugitive on
the earth.” 13 Cain said to YHWH, “My iniquity is too great to bear.” 14 Behold, you have
driven me today away from upon the surface of the ground, and from your face I shall be
hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”
15 YHWH said to him, “Therefore, if anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him
sevenfold.” Then YHWH put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him should strike
him down. 16 Cain went out from the presence of YHWH and settled in the land of Nod, east
of Eden.
An Exegetical Synthesis of Genesis 2–4

Toledot Formula

In the Book of Genesis, the eleven-fold toledot formula functions both as a heading and literary mechanism to narrow the narrative plot from universal to national (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1, 9, 37:2). The toledot formula divides the Book of Genesis according to the generations of Adam, Noah’s sons, Shem, Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob. The author or redactor of Genesis has positioned the toledot formula at the following five junctures within the primeval history: Gen 2:4 (the creation of heaven and earth); 5:1 (Adam and his lineage); 6:9 (Noah and the deluge); 10:1 (Noah’s three sons); and 11:10 (Shem and his lineage). The first instance of the toledot formula delimits the concise universal stories of creation, the temptation in Eden, and the fratricide (Gen 2:4b–4:26). It is clear that the toledot formula functions as a literary mechanism which delimits chapters 2–4 as a coherent textual unit.²

Diptych

The diptych contributes at a macro-level to the formal unity of the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel. Three diptychs are arranged in Genesis 1–5: (1) two accounts of creation (Gen 1:1–2:4a; 2:4b–24); (2) two accounts of sin (Gen 2:25–3:24; 4:1–16); and (3) two sets of genealogies (Gen 4:17–26; 5:1–32).3 Chapters 6–11 comprise another set of diptychs: two texts of the flood story (chaps. 6–7; 8:1–9:17); two texts about Noah’s sons (9:18–29; 10:1–32); and two texts of human finiteness (11:1–9; 11:10–32). In the first diptych, the first account of creation is paired with the second account of man’s creation. The creation narrative of Gen 2:4b–24 prepares the ground for the next diptych, namely, the two accounts of defiance against God (Gen 3:1–24 and 4:1–16). The diptych is significant because the two accounts of sin reflected in Genesis 3 and 4 belong in the middle of a triad of diptychs. Thus, divorcing chapter 4 from 3 violates the integrity of this clear, overarching structure.4

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3 W. Randolph Tate, Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and Concepts (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 122 explains that “diptych” refers to “two tablets of wood, ivory, or metal hinged together and covered on the inside with wax, used in the Greco-Roman period to write on with a stylus.”

The Primeval Characters

The two pairs of characters, Adam-Eve and Abel-Cain, complement one another within the literary framework of Genesis 2–4. The one pair of characters, Adam and Eve, appears in the juxtaposed narrative of their sons, Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1). These two narratives cannot be read independently one of another. Gen 2:4b–25 draws the attention to the creation of the man and his role in the Garden of Eden. The narrator foretells the process of the creation of man (אָדָ֣ם), the planting of a garden in Eden and its trees, and the duty of the man to till and keep it (vv. 4b–15). Genesis 2 commences with the pre-conditions of the creation of the human being. In Gen 2:7, YHWH God is depicted as a potter molded the man out of the ground (נָשָׁמָה). The divine breath (נָשָׁמָה) is imparted to the man so that he becomes a living soul (see the anthropological associations of נָשָׁמָה in Job 32:8; Prov 20:27; cf. Ezek 37:5–10).

Throughout the first chapters of Genesis, the first man (אָדָ֣ם) is mentioned numerous times (Gen 1:26–27; 2:7–8, 15–16, 18–23, 25; 3:8–9, 12, 17, 20–22, 24; 4:1, 25; 5:1–5). According to Dexter Callender, the convergence of biblical ‘primal human’ traditions lends support to the assumption that the figure of Adam is presented as an intermediary between deity and humanity in royal, priestly, and prophetic roles (Gen 1:26–28; 2:4b–7, 8–14; 3:1–7; Ezek 28:11–19; Job 15:7–16; Prov 8:22–31). In Genesis 2–3, the ‘primal human’ is depicted as a royal farmer and gardener created in the divine “image” and “likeness” against the backdrop of Gen 1:26–28. Four topoi are considered crucial to the man’s relations with God: creation,
location, wisdom, and conflict. This ‘primal human’ is banished from the sacred space to the realm of the profane (Gen 3:23–24).  

The woman plays her significant role in chapters 2–4. In Gen 2:18–25, the woman is created as the man’s helper corresponding to him (עֵ֖זֶר כְּנֶגְדُ). The narrator tells that the woman who was created from the rib becomes one flesh (בָּשָׂ֥ר אֶחָֽד) with the man. In the creation narrative, the marriage union between איש and אשה supersedes any other type of relationship among creatures (Gen 2:23). Variants of the expression עֶ֚צֶם מֵֽעֲצָמַ֔י וּבָשָׂ֖ר מִבְּשָׂרִ֑י appear in the sense of blood kinship in other biblical episodes (Laban and Jacob, Gen 29:14; Abimelech and the Shechemite leaders, Judg 9:2; the tribes of Israel/elders and David, 2 Sam 5:1, 19:12, 13). Richard Davidson notes, “We must emphasize that although in Gen 3 the husband is assigned the role of “first among equals” so as to preserve harmony and union in the marriage partnership, yet this does not contradict or nullify the summary statement of Gen 2:24 regarding the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. As we have already observed, Gen 2:24 is written in such a way as to indicate its applicability to the post-Fall conditions.”  

As the sequel of Genesis 2, the narrative of Adam-Eve in Eden in chapter 3 develops with the woman interacting with another creature of God. In the narrative of temptation, the serpent questions the authenticity of the divine word to the man in Eden (Gen 3:1, 2, 4, 5). Gen 3:1 commences with the description of the serpent as “shrewder than any of the wild animals.”  

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The field (מַר) operates as the territory of, respectively, seduction and murder. The serpent as a field creature cunningly approaches the woman (Gen 3:1). Likewise, Cain killed his brother in the field (Gen 4:8). In Gen 3:1, the serpent questions the truthfulness of God’s word, “Is it true that God said, ‘You must not eat of any tree in the garden’?”7 Kenneth Mathews rightly observes that “the tempter stands outside the human pair and stands opposed to God’s word.”8 The dialogue between the woman and the serpent proceeds without interruption in verses 2–5 until a climax is reached with the sharing of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (in verse 6). The woman is created only after the man is prohibited from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. She has not been the direct recipient of the divine commandment, but only the man. Neither the serpent nor the woman pronounces the divine name of God. In respect of this exegetical element inherent within the temptation narrative, Gordon Wenham writes as follows: “It is because ‘Yahweh Elohim’ expresses so strongly the basic OT convictions about God’s being both creator and Israel’s covenant partner that the serpent and the woman avoid the term in their discussion. The god they are talking about is malevolent, secretive, and concerned to restrict man: his character is so different from that of Yahweh Elohim that the narrative pointedly avoids the name in the dialogue of 3:1–5.”9

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7 The expression הִים אַף כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים ("Is it true that God said") is elliptical. The editorial notes of BHS Gen 3:1 suggest reading הִים.


The woman’s answer to the serpent exposes her personal attitude toward the divine commandment. The language of Gen 2:16 reflects the freedom to eat from all other trees created for the satisfaction of the first human couple: “You may surely eat” (אָכֹל תֹּאכֵל, the infinitive absolute followed by the imperfect). The woman’s omission of the infinitive absolute implies her discontent with what she already has in Eden (Gen 3:2). Also the woman describes the tree of knowledge of good and evil as “the tree that is in the midst of the garden” (v. 3), as well as exaggerates and extends the prohibition of eating from the tree: “. . . neither shall you touch it” (Gen 3:3). 10

Genesis 4 commences with the sexual union and the birth of the firstborn Cain (Heros eponymous). As an extension of the first primal man, the firstborn Cain is declared to be created (qal perfect of נָבר) with the help of YHWH (Gen 4:1). The preposition נָב can be interpreted “with the help of God” (LXX: διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ; so NEB, NIV, NRSV). There is a

10 If Gen 3:3 is read through the lens of Jewish halachic perspective, the woman’s extra proviso (חומרא in rabbinic legal discourses) can be considered as the first “fence around the Torah” (סיג לתורה, as in Mishnah, Pirque Avot 1:1). The principle of building “a hedge for the law” is based upon the divine prescription to build a fence around the roof (Deut 22:8). This practical commandment with its emphasis on the sacredness of human life was interpreted allegorically as a requirement to protect the Mosaic Covenant by adding rabbinic rules and interpretations. The following midrash from Avot of Rabbi Nathan 1:5 comments on Gen 3:3 and puts the onus on the man instead of blaming the woman: “The text says, “And God commended Adam, saying, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”” [Gen 2:17].” But Adam did not choose to tell God’s words to Eve exactly as they had been spoken. Instead he said to her, “God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die”’ [as per Gen. 3:3].” Whereupon the wicked serpent said to himself, “Since I seem to be unable to trip up Adam, let me go and try to trip up Eve.” He went and sat down next to her and started talking with her. He said: “Now you say that God has forbidden us to touch the tree. Well, I can touch the tree and not die, and so can you.” What did the wicked serpent then do? He touched the tree with his hands and feet and shook it so hard that some of its fruit fell to the ground . . . Then he said to her, “[You see? So likewise] you say that God has forbidden us to eat from the tree. But I can eat from it and not die, and so can you.” What did Eve think to herself? “All the things that my husband has told me are lies” . . . Whereupon she took the fruit and ate it and gave it to Adam and he ate, as it is written, “The woman saw that the tree was good to eat from and a delight to the eyes” [Gen 3:6],” cited in James Kugel, The Bible as It Was (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 77. See other rabbinic interpretations of the woman’s statement to the serpent in Shlomo Zalman Elazer Grafstein, Judaism’s Bible: A New and Expanded Translation (Passaic, N.J.: Spirit of the Desert Productions, 1999), 74.
sound play (paronomasia) on the name of the firstborn קַיֵּן and the root קָנִית (root קָנָה “to acquire” and “to create”). Some translate the verb קָנִית in its usual meaning, “to get” or “to acquire” (see Prov 1:5; 4:5, 7; 15:32). The translation “created” for קָנִית is attested in some other biblical texts (Gen 14:19, 22; Deut 32:6; Ps 139:13; Prov 8:22). This meaning is also reflected in extra-biblical materials such as a ninth-century B.C.E. Phoenician inscription and Ugaritic mythopoeic texts. In Genesis 4, Cain is presented as the possession of his mother Eve whom she created with the Lord’s help. As well, this creative role is assigned to Cain who knows his wife and builds a city (Gen 4:17).

While Eve comments on the names of Cain and Seth, the name of Abel remains without her explication. She does not celebrate the birth of Abel (הֶבֶל) whose name means “vanity,” “breath,” or “vapour” (7x) (Gen 4:1, 2, 25). As noticed by Joseph Blenkinsopp, “There is no cry of joy at the birth of the second son; only an ominous silence. The name of this son . . . anticipates his brief existence described in the account of the murder.”

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11 BDB, s.v. קָנִית, 884.
Cain alongside his brother Abel so that the oldest is allowed to kill the beloved youngest and take his place. Abel is not patterned after his parents or his brother. After the murder, Cain refers to Abel as “brother” without even referring to him by name (Gen 4:9). While Abel and his sacrifice are highly regarded by the Lord, Adam, Eve, and Cain have taken him “lightly” (Gen 4:1–5, 25). The narrator depicts Abel as the single figure favoured by God in this post-Edenic drama. Just as the name of his parents and brother bear their own meanings, the name הֶבֶל signals that this sibling is going to live his short life and die soon (Nomen est Omen). At the same time, Abel’s life was not in vain, but Cain’s efforts in fighting him were.

Adam and Cain are the ground-tillers within the familial narrative of Genesis 2–4. The firstborn Cain is patterned after his father Adam who was created to till and keep the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). The brothers are set apart by means of their respective occupations: Abel the shepherd and Cain the tiller of ground (Gen 4:2). According to Chaim Gilead, the primordial narrative of the siblings deals with the relationship between agricultural and pastoral lifestyles that reflect various stages in the development of the ancient Israelite

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14 The word אח is repeated seven times in Genesis 4 (vv. 2, 8, 9, 10, 11).


One could assert that the brothers worshipped YHWH by means of sacrifices even prior to this episode depicted in Genesis 4. A certain period of time (וַֽיְהִ֖י מִקֵּ֣ץ יָמִ֑ים) passes before Cain brings a vegetarian offering to the Lord (see the use of מִנְחָ֖ה in Lev 2:1, 3, 4, 5, 7–15). The language of Gen 4:4 emphasizes the contrast of the offering brought by Abel (בְּכֹרֹ֥ות צֹאנֹ֖ו) and מַעֲלֵֽהֶן (“from their fat portions”). God was pleased because Abel offered the first and the best offering: "(firstborn of his flock”) and מַעֲלֵֽהֶן (“from their fat portions”). Gen 4:4–5 proceeds as follows: “YHWH paid heed for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.”

Anthony T. Perry explains that the narrator in Gen 4:5 casts Cain’s offering more negatively than Cain himself. In his view, it was Cain’s responsibility to understand the ambiguous oracle in Gen 4:7. Other ambiguous oracles recorded in Genesis were addressed to Adam, Hagar, Abraham, and Rebekah (Gen 2:17; 16:12; 22:2; 25:23).
The Motifs of Silence and Voice

The motifs of silence and voice contribute to the textual unity in three ways: (1) a contrast between silence and chatter; (2) a similarity between silence and silence; and (3) the literary overlap between the divine and human voices. These motifs underscore the literary intentionality, allowing the reader to sense the enduring tension in both episodes of defiance against God. First, the striking silence of innocent Abel contrasts the words of the guilty woman and man. The woman misquotes the divine commandment addressed to the man in Eden (Gen 3:2–3). The man blames the woman who gave him to eat from the tree: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:12).

Second, there is a similarity between two similar silences hinting to the reader to fill in the missing information: woman’s tight-lipped action and the omitted words of Cain (Gen 3:6 and 4:8a). In Gen 3:6, the woman’s speechless action is directed toward her spouse (“She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate”). The major ancient versions fill the textual lacuna in the Hebrew reading of MT Gen 4:8, “Now Cain said to his brother Abel. . . .” (so the Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Vulgate, Syriac). These versions add to Gen 4:8: “Let us go out to the field” (so the modern translations, e.g., NJB, NIV, and NRSV). In any case, Cain could not speak peaceably to his brother (cf. Gen 37:4). The elliptical text in Gen 4:8 can be interpreted as a deliberate literary technique that creates tension in the narrative (apostrophe). While the woman shares

the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil without saying anything to her husband, Cain’s speechless act of murder is anticipated by his silent dismissal of God’s admonition to rule over the crouching sin (Gen 4:7).  

And third, the motif of the “voice” overlaps the actions of God and humans in both sin narratives. The man and woman hear the voice of YHWH God (הִים קֹ֨ול יְהוָ֧ה אֱ) (Gen 3:8, 10). This primordial theophany occurs just after the act of eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. This “voice” calls to the man, “Where are you?” (הִים).  

The anthropomorphic motif of the “voice of YHWH God” expresses the primordial ideal of an uninterrupted, harmonious communication between God and humans in Eden (Gen 3:8).  

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21 The whole pericope of Gen 4:6–8 is expanded in the Targums (so Philo, *Gen. Rab.*, and *Tosefta*). Consider, for instance, *Tg. Neof.* Gen 4:6–8: “And the Lord said to Cain: ‘Why, I pray, are you pleased and why has your countenance changed? Surely, if you make your work in this world to be good, you will be remitted and pardoned in the world to come; but if you do not make your work in this world to be good, your sin will be kept for the day of great judgment; and at the door of your heart your sin crouches. Into your hands, however, I have given the control over the evil inclination and you shall rule it, whether to remain just or to sin.’” And Cain said to Abel his brother: “Come! Let the two of us go out into the open field.” And when the two of them had gone out into the open field, Cain answered and said to Abel: “I perceive that the world is not created by mercy and that it is not being conducted according to the fruits of good words, and that there is favoritism in judgment. Why was your offering received favorably and my offering was not received favorably from me?” Abel answered and said to Cain: “I perceive that the world was created by mercy and that it is being conducted according to the fruits of good works. And because my works were better than yours, my offering was received from me favorably and yours was not received favorably from you.” Cain answered and said to Abel: “There is no judgment, and there is no judge and there is no other world. There is no giving of good reward to the just nor is vengeance exacted of the wicked.” Abel answered and said to Cain: “There is judgement, and there is a judge, and there is another world. And there is giving of good reward to the just and vengeance is exacted of the wicked in the world to come.” Concerning this matter the two were disputing in the open field. And Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him” (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 4:6–8), cited in Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1, Genesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 65–7. For further discussion on the reception of the fratricide in the Targums, see Jouette M. Bassler, “Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums: A Brief Note on an Old Controversy,” *JSI* 17 (1986): 56–64; John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry* (TBN 14; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 66–9.

22 *Gen. Rab.* 19:9 points to the question “Where are you?” (הִים, “how”).

The narrative of Genesis 3 develops dramatically to the point of the divine verdict to Adam who obeys the voice of the woman (see the Hebrew phrase הֶעָשָׁה לְרָאָשָׁה in Gen 3:17). The motif of the voice reaches its peak with the crying voice of Abel’s blood: “The voice of your brother’s blood (קֹל דְּמֵי אָחִי) cries to me from the ground” (Gen 4:10). This divine statement unfolds God’s fatherly pity for Abel who perished (see Ps 116:15: “Precious in the sight of YHWH is the death of his saints”). While some English translations omit the word “voice” (קול) in Gen 4:10, such a translation choice blurs the voice motif (e.g., JPS Tanakh Translation, NJB, NRSV).

The literary motif of the voice of Abel’s blood is developed in various early Jewish and Christian texts (see, e.g., Philo, Worse 48; QG 1.70; 1 En. 9:1–10; 22:5–7; Testament of Abraham [hereafter T. Ab.] 13:2–5). Abel’s blood, which cries out for vengeance, is mentioned several times in the NT (Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51; Heb 12:24; cf. Rev 6:9–10). The passage in T. Ab. 13:2–5 states that Abel will judge the world (cf. the Pauline statement in 1 Cor 6:2–3; see also Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Rev 3:21; 20:4).24 The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:5) refers to the Hebrew expression דְּמֵי אָחִי from Gen 4:10 translated as “the bloods of your brother,” a plural form of דם (blood) referring to Abel as well as his progeny.25

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The Tests of Adam and Cain

Two interwoven tests of obedience in Eden and outside of it as complement one another (Gen 3:1–24; 4:1–16). The experimental relationship between God and the first human family lies at the core of these episodes. In the primeval history, Adam and Cain are the two male figures tested by God who attest to the emergence of fear, shame, uncertainty, uncontrolled anger, and the eruption of violence. The first test concerns the prohibition of eating the forbidden fruit in Eden (Gen 2:16–17). The first man is probed within optimal ‘greenhouse conditions’ in the Garden of Eden. Unlike Adam, Cain is tested within another milieu outside the Garden of Eden. In each test of obedience to the divine address, the principle of human freedom is set within God’s limits and encapsulated within a single prohibition to Adam and an admonition to Cain (Gen 2:16–17; 4:7). Yet these anticipatory divine addresses preserve the element of human choice. In Gen 2:16–17, the Lord commands Adam to abstain from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil accompanied by the warning of death in case of its violation. This commandment is the prelude to the

26 The whole narrative of temptation revolves around the act of “eating.” In Gen 2:16–17, the root “eat” (אכֶל) is used four times. As a permanent prohibition, the particle אַל+יִכֶּל (yiqtol) implies that the man was obliged to keep the commandment of God intact and binding. The tactic of the serpent is to urge the woman to break that divine law by eating from the forbidden fruit (3:1–3, 5–6). She admits the fact of eating yet without specifying it was from “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (3:13). The serpent is condemned to eat dust (3:14). The man will eat of the ground with toil (the root אכל appears three times alone in 3:17). Moreover, the man will eat the plants of the field (3:18), and the man’s bread will be eaten at the sweat of his brow (3:19). Finally, the man is prevented from eating of the tree of life (3:22).

27 The tree of knowledge of good and evil (עץ ידעת טוב ורע) appears only in Genesis 2–3. Contemporary biblical scholars have identified three major possible interpretations of this primordial tree: (1) the acquisition of human abilities (discernment of moral values, attaining human maturity, and the ability to make choices); (2) knowledge of sexual relations; and (3) universal knowledge. Apart from the reference to the “Garden of YHWH” (גן יהוה) in Gen 13:10, the garden of God is a reoccurring motif in some late biblical texts (see Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:11–19; 31:2–18; 36:35; Joel 2:3). The tree of life (עץ החיים) appears three times in the story of Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24). In Hebrew wisdom literature, the tree of life is identified with Godly wisdom, which allows
temptation in Genesis 3. The verb צָוָה ("to command"), which is used for the first in the HB, establishes the covenant relations between God and Israel whom Adam might represent.

Just as the Lord addressed Adam prior to the temptation, Cain is warned by God in Gen 4:7: "If you do well, will there not be a lifting up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it" (4:7). According to Joel Lohr, "the enigmatic Hebrew, however, seems to speak of God’s counseling Cain to do the right thing and master sin that awaits in the future." Likewise, John Byron contends that "Cain, therefore, has the distinction of being the first human condemned for an act that is defined as sin. Although the occurrence of sin is only part of God’s warning to Cain about the necessity of resisting sin, it also serves as an introductory commentary regarding what Cain is about to do in the next verse. Cain is the first sinner." Cynthia Edenburg rightly infers that "the idea of the divine test is also fundamental to the story of Cain, for only within the setting of a test is it possible to make sense of the arbitrary dealings of God with Cain." As well, consider the comment of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888): "The text says of sin that ‘its urge is toward the righteous to live a blessed life (see Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). In the Apocalypse of John, the tree of life is made available to the church of Smyrna and the nations in eternity (Rev 2:7; 22:14, 19).


you’ [Gen 4:7]. This implies that sin wants to be conquered by man; but if man fails to conquer it, sin returns to God and accuses man.”

The LXX hints at a retrospective reading of Gen 4:7: "οὐκ ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς ἡμαρτεὶς ἡσύχασον πρὸς σὲ ἡ ἀποστροφὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ σὺ ἄρξεις αὐτοῦ; // “If you offer correctly, but if you do not divide correctly, do you not sin? Be calm; to you will be its turning, and you will rule over it.”

First, this reading implies that the Lord reminds Cain of his incorrect sacrifice in Gen 4:5. Second, the imperative ἡσύχασον translated “be calm” differs from the Hebrew active participle רֹבֵץ (crouching or laying down). This exegetical rendering creates the impression that Cain can calm himself and there is nothing to be worried about. Third, it translates תשוקה as ἡ ἀποστροφὴ (resume="turning” or “return”).

Susan Brayford comments on the ambiguity of the LXX in translating Gen 4:7: “God’s additional comments then appear to be a promise of future success, rather than a warning about Cain’s actions and their consequences.”

Unlike Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, Philo and the Syriac Peshitta support the LXX rendering of Gen 4:7. Ephrem the Syrian expands Gen 4:7 as follows: “But if you do not do well sin is crouching at the first door. Abel will listen to you through his obedience, for he will go with you to the plain. There you will

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31 Cited in Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 49. Cain’s test is also echoed in Num. Rab. 20:6: “God tested three and found them all [deficient, namely, Cain, Hezekiah, and Balaam]: Cain, when God said to him, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ sought, as it were, to lead God astray. He ought to have said, ‘Master of the Universe! Things both hidden and revealed are known to you, yet You are asking me about my brother?’” Instead, however, he said, “I do not know, am I my brother’s keeper?” God said to him: “Such is your answer [when] your brother’s blood is crying out to Me?” Cited in Kugel, 94.


33 Brayford, *Genesis*, 252.
be ruled over by sin, that is, you shall be completely filled with it” (Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 3.4.1–3).³⁴

The Aramaic Targums render Gen 4:7 somewhat ambiguously: Cain is already considered guilty and yet he is advised to overcome sin. The first targumic text renders Gen 4:7 as follows: “If you perform your deeds well your guilt will be forgiven you. But if you do not perform your deeds well in this world your sin will be retained for the day of great judgement. Sin crouches at the gates of your heart, but in your hand I have placed power over the evil inclination. Its desire will be towards you, but you will have dominion over it, whether to be innocent or to sin” (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* Gen 4:7).³⁵ The second targumic text reads along similar lines: “Surely, if you will improve your behavior, your sin will be forgiven; but if you will not improve your behavior, your sin will be sustained for the day of judgment when punishment will be exacted of you, if you will not repent; but if you will repent you sin will be forgiven” (*Targum Onqelos* Genesis 4:7).³⁶

Contemporary biblical scholars have always struggled with the interpretation of Gen 4:7. All the exegetical alternatives cannot be exhausted in the present discussion. For example, Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg explains that Gen 4:7 is an allusion to Cain’s liminal condition in which sin smoothly makes its way to attack him.³⁷ Kenneth Mathews contends that Cain’s |

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³⁴ Cited in Byron, 56.


reaction to God’s correction is far-reaching because he is advised to master sin and recover from it quickly.  

Robert Alter offers another reading of Gen 4:6–7: “Why are you incensed, and why is your face fallen? For whether you offer well, or whether you do not, at the tent flap sin crouches and for you is its longing but you will rule over it.” Everett Fox thus translates Gen 4:7: “Is it not thus: if you intend good, bear-it-aloft, but if you do not intend good, at the entrance is sin, a crouching-demon, toward you his lust—but you can rule over him.”

Michael Fishbane offers another rendering of this text: “If you act well, you can bear it, but if you don’t, sin crouches at the ready.” Joaquim Azevedo contends that the “sin crouching at the door” refers to a purification offering at the door to the Garden of Eden. According to Azevedo, the words “and toward you is its desire and you will rule over it” point to Cain’s ruling over his brother. Recently, Carly Crouch omits חַטָּאת as an interpolative gloss, interpreting רֹבֵץ as the subject of a nominal clause. Crouch renders this text as follows: “Is it not (the case that) if you do well, (your face will) lift, while if you do not do well, a רֹבֵץ will be at the door? Its desire is for you – but you must master it.”

Crouch’s textual proposal eliminates the lack of grammatical agreement between the

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38 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*:26, 270.


feminine singular חַטָּאת and the three masculine singulars in this verse. According to Crouch, the woman’s decision to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil is altered by the divine statement in Gen 4:7.

In Gen 4:7, the conditional clause is introduced with the interrogative plus the negation “is it not” (לָא הֲ). Cain is expected to positively answer the question, “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (Josh 24:15). The word שְׂאֵת appears to be the infinitive construct from the verb “to lift up” (וָאִם תֵיטִיב; cf. Josh 24:15). The word שְׂאֵת appears to be the infinitive construct from the verb “to lift up” (וָאִם תֵיטִיב). The change in Cain’s heart will be reflected in his face. In Job 11:15, Zophar the Naamathite addresses Job: “Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish” (כִּי־אָז תִּשָּׂא פָנֶי). The second conditional clause “and if you do well” presents the dilemma to the recipient of the divine admonition (וְאִם אָ֣י will וב וָרָעט). The Hebrew root טיב (“to do well”) occurs twice in Gen 4:7. For the first time, this Hebrew root occurs in the merism expression וב וָרָעט (“good and evil”).


46 This merism expression appears several times in the Tanak. For example, the prophet Balaam the son of Beor says to Balak king of Moab, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold; I would not be able to go beyond the word of YHWH, to do either good or bad of my own heart. What YHWH speaks, that will I speak?” (Num 24:13; cf. Jer 42:6; Lam 3:37–38). In another episode, the Lord addresses his chosen people as follows: “And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no knowledge of good or evil (אֲפִ֥לּוֹנִי שֵֽׁםָּתָ֖ם), they will go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it” (Deut 1:39). In a somewhat akin manner, the inhabitants of Nineveh are described as those who “do not know to distinguish between their right hand from their left” (Jonah 4:11; cf. Qoh 12:14). In 2 Samuel 14, the wise woman from Tekoa praises David’s wisdom expressed in “hearing good and evil” (לִשְׁמֹעַ הַטֹּב וְהָרָע) and “knowing all that is in the earth” (לָדַעַת אֶֽת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בָּאָֽרֶץ) (2 Sam 14:17, 20; cf. 2 Sam 19:36; 1 Kgs 3:9; Isa 5:20; 7:15–16). For a detailed exegetical discussion on the tree of knowledge and its primeval contours, see See also Howard N. Wallace, The Eden Narrative (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 115–30; G.W. Buchanan, “The Old Testament Meaning of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” JBL 75 (1956): 114–20; Robert Gordis, The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and Qumran Scrolls,” JBL 76 (1957): 123–38; W. Malcolm Clark, “A Legal Background to the Yahwist’s Use of ‘Good and Evil’ in Genesis 2–3,” JBL 88 (1969): 266–78; David J.A Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh,” VT 24 (1974): 8–14.
Unfortunately, Cain dismisses God’s timely warning “to do well” (cf. Sir 7:1–3). It is likely that Cain lacked the humility to accept the revealed divine will.  

In Gen 4:7, sin (feminine רַחֲטָא) is portrayed as a beast crouching and ready to attack Cain who can actively master it (zoomorphism). The fact that the word רַחֲטָא appears here for the first time in the primeval history attaches a theological weight to the fratricide narrative. Another hamartiologic word that goes in tandem with רַחֲטָא is the word עון that can be translated either as sin, guilt, or punishment (Gen 4:13). The Hebrew active participle (רֹבֵץ) is attested elsewhere in biblical Hebrew (see, e.g., Gen 49:9; Ezek 19:2, 29). Some scholars opt for rabiṣu as a Mesopotamian demon. If this interpretation of רֹבֵץ is accepted, then Gen 4:7 can be translated as “sin is the demon at the door.”

The Motif of Knowledge

The concept of knowledge connects chapters 2–4. As a result of violating the divine prohibition, the man and woman “knew (ידעו) that they were naked (עֵירֻמִּים)” (3:7; cf. עֵירֹם in Deut 28:48). The first sexual gaining of “knowledge” (דַעַת) results in the birth of Cain


49 The biblical narrator plays on the root ערם (“cunning”/“naked”). The first humans are naked (עֲרוּמִּים) but not ashamed (2:25). The shrewd (עָרָם) serpent operates as the agent of temptation (3:1; cf. Matt 10:16). This adjective means “crafty, shrewd, sensible” (see Job 5:12; 15:5; Prov 12:23). BDB, s.v. ערם, 791.
The “knowledge” (דעת) motif appears one more time in Gen 4:9. The Lord who knows the whereabouts of Abel addresses the question to Cain “Where is your brother?” so as to liken his situation to that of his parents. In Genesis 3, God questioned the man and the woman: “Where are you?” and “What is this that you have done?” In Gen 4:9, Cain’s answer conceals a verbal irony since he sarcastically answers, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” Cain’s cynical answer, “I do not know” (א ידַ֔עְתִּי), is the first actual lie outside Eden, which expresses an outrageous denial of the tragic reality.51

The Motif of Death

In Gen 2:17, the emphatic expression מֹתָּה יִתְמוּת (“you will surely die”) consists of the infinitive absolute מֹת and the imperfect תָּמֽוּת. This grammatical Hebrew construction intensifies the action. The infinitive absolute also appears in the word of judgment to the

50 The concept of knowledge (דעת) is associated with sexuality in extra-biblical texts. For example, the sexual connotation of the Qumranic expression “to know good and evil” in 1QSa 1:9–11: “(A man) will not approach a woman to have intercourse with her until he has attained the age of twenty when he knows good and evil.”

51 In his commentary on Gen 4:9, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (Rashbi) affiliates the fratricide with the Edenic temptation. In both cases, responsibility for wrongdoing is shifted to another. According to his interpretation of Gen 4:9, Cain blames God for the fratricide like his father does in his daring response to God: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:12). Rashbi comments as follows: “When God asked Cain ‘‘Where is your brother Abel?’’ Cain answered ‘‘Am I my brother’s keeper? You are God. You have created man. It is Your task to watch him, not mine. If I ought not to have done what I did, You could have prevented me from doing it.’” Rashbi is cited in W. Gunther Plaut, Bernard J. Bamberger, and William W. Hallo, The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), 47 (italics in the original). W. Gunther Plaut comments on Rashbi’s midrashic exposition: “This interpretation is appealing not only because it asks questions of great urgency today but also because it allows for a direct continuation of the Eden story. There, man’s choice was essentially between life and death; now, in the post-Eden world, God offers man a new choice, the choice between good and evil. Cain chooses murder, the ultimate evil. And having granted man moral freedom, God, in a sense, shares in man’s transgressions. But though man may ask where God was in the hour of violence, God’s failure to answer does not reduce man’s responsibility.” Ibid., 48 (emphasis is mine).
woman in Gen 3:16, “I will greatly multiply” (הַרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה). Variants of the emphatic expression מֹ֥ות תָּמֽוּת appear in other episodes of divine judgment and human statements on capital punishment (Gen 20:7, 26:11; Num 26:65; 1 Sam 14:44; Jer 26:8).\(^\text{52}\) Exegetically, the divine threat of death does not seem to be realized on the same day. This theological conundrum has perplexed biblical exegetes for centuries. Some early Jewish and Christian sources have suggested that since Adam lived 930 years (less than a thousand years), he died on the same “day” (cf. Ps 90:4; Jub. 4:29–30; 2 Pet 3:8; Gen. Rab. 8:2).\(^\text{53}\) Walter Moberly grapples with the apparent unfulfillment of God’s threat to the first man, and compares the biblical texts speaking about God’s repenting of a particular action. In his view, the threat of death in Gen 2:16–17 should be taken metaphorically.\(^\text{54}\)

Prior to Adam’s actual death reported in Gen 5:5, the reader encounters Abel’s untimely death in Genesis 4. The plague of death foreshadowed by the divine warning to Adam hits the primeval family with the untimely departure of Abel, the first innocent victim of the antediluvian world. The fratricide episode exposes death as a destructive power, an explicative of “you shall surely die.”\(^\text{55}\) In his commentary on Wis 2:24, J.A.F. Gregg

\(^{52}\) See other examples and further linguistic discussion in Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 584–88.

\(^{53}\) See a synopsis of sources in Kugel, 67–9.


\(^{55}\) See John E. Hartley, *Genesis* (NIBCOT 1; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 79 where he notes: “Outside the garden death becomes a part of human experience, but in a very different way than anticipated. The first generation experiences death not as a penalty (2:17) but as a malevolent force destroying the innocent (4:8, 14, 15, 23, 25). The first recorded death is inflicted by one brother against another brother.” Likewise, Ben Cooper, *Must God Punish Sin?* (Latimer Studies 52; London: Latimer Trust, 2006), 12–13 avers: “Once driven from the place of blessing (3:22–24), the first physical death is not directly administered by God at all but at the hands of the murderer Cain (4:8). Adam’s physical death is over 800 years later (5:5).” See also George W. Coats, “The God of Death: Power and Obedience in the Primeval History,” *Int* 29 (1975): 227–39.
explains that “death, as a physical fact, entered into the world not with Eve, but with Cain, who was the first to take human life.”

The reality of Abel’s death is emphasized in Marcus Dods’ commentary as follows: “…The first death is a murder. As if to show that all death is a wrong inflicted on us and proceeds not from God but from sin, it is inflicted by sin and by the hand of man.”

Likewise, Franz Delitzsch examines the primeval narratives of intensifying sin from defiance to murder. The plague of death entered the world and divided the righteous and the wicked in the antediluvian era: “Human sin made a gigantic advance in this act. The first sin was caused by the charms of sense, and in consequence of a cunningly planned temptation; now diabolical hatred and brutal barbarity unite and bring forth murder. Men now for the first time bury their dead, and this first dead man is the first martyr, and his brother is his murderer.”

Likewise, according to Calum Carmichael death has irrupted into the primeval history with Abel’s death. In his view, offering sacrifice is a religious act of knowing good and evil from the perspective of God. By means of Abel’s offering, the Lord closes the gap between himself and humankind. When this gap between God and humans seems to be closed by the ritual of sacrifice offering, death irrupts into the first family.

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59 Calum M. Carmichael, “The Paradise Myth: Interpreting without Jewish and Christian Spectacles,” in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical, and Literary Images of Eden* (ed. Paul Morris and Deborah F. Sawyer; JSOTSup 136; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 57. See also the theological formulation of Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 75–6. Here Levenson notes: “Abel never secures for himself the status of the first-born son that nature has denied him. His is not a story of the beloved son who, by God’s love and his mother’s, overcomes the limitations imposed by nature. Nor is his the story of the beloved son whose death is averted by the intervention of an angel and the sudden, providential appearance of a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. Abel’s, rather, is the only story in Genesis that we have considered to
The Trials

In the Garden of Eden, the trials between the Lord (the interrogator) and humans (the offenders) take place face to face (Gen 3:9–19). God anticipates penitence from the woman and man for their act of disobedience. The man is questioned and then the woman is interrogated (vv. 9–13). Accordingly, the sentences on the serpent and humans come in the following order: the serpent is cursed and the sentences proceed to the woman and man (vv. 14–19). Jerome Walsh argues that each oracle of judgment involved a particular life function and a dynamic relationship.60 In Gen 3:13, the Lord directs the following question at the woman: “What is this that you have done?” (מַה־זֹּ֣את עָשִׂ֑ית). In Judg 2:2, the angel of YHWH asks Israel a similar question: “What have you done?” (מַה־זֹ֥את עֲשִׂיתֶֽם). The woman emphatically blames the serpent: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen 3:13). In Gen 3:13, the noun (subject) “the serpent” (הַנָּחָ֥שׁ) follows the verb “deceived” (אָשָׁנ) with the direct object “me” (הִשִּׁיאַנִי). This verb is widely used in Hebrew prophetic literature to warn God’s people against spiritual and political deception (Isa 36:14; 37:10; Jer 4:10; 29:8; 37:9; 49:16; Obad 3, 7).

In Gen 3:14, the Lord addresses the cunning serpent first: “Because you have done this, cursed (אָר֤וּר, passive participle of אָרַר) are you from among all (מִ) the cattle and from among (מִ) all wild beasts of the field; on your belly you shall crawl, and dust you shall eat all the

which the term “‘tragic’” seems fitting—the story of the son favored by God whose exaltation lasts but a moment and whose humiliation is the ultimate and unending one of death without descendants.”

days of your life.” As the agent of temptation, the serpent is cursed relative to the other animals (partitive ןמ). This curse distinguishes the serpent from all other creatures. The curse affects the serpent in three ways: (1) crawling on its belly as an image of humiliation (cf. Lev 11:42: עלון כל הול); (2) eating dust (עפר) as an image of transience (Gen 3:19; Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17; Ps 103:14; 104:29; Job 10:9; 34:15; Qoh 3:20; 12:7); and (3) establishing enmity (איבה) between the serpent and the woman (Gen 3:15). Just as the serpent is the first creature being isolated from the other creatures, Adam and Cain are being alienated from the ground (האמה). As far as the first man is concerned, the ground is cursed on his behalf.

In Gen 3:16, the woman’s verdict concerns the woman’s suffering at child-bearing: “I will surely multiply (럿אה ארבה, infinitive absolute + imperfect verb; cf. מות תמות) your pain (עצב) in childbearing (עצבה, LXX: καὶ τὸν στεναγμὸν σου = והugeot “[“and thy groanings”]); in pain you (עצבה) shall bring forth children” (Gen 3:16a). The woman is sentenced to bear children in pain as evidenced by the double use of the root עצב in Gen 3:16. The woman bringing forth children in pain becomes a symbol of God’s judgment in the Tanak (see, e.g., Ps 48:6; Isa 26:17–18; Jer 4:31).

The second part of God’s oracle concerns the woman’s desire for the man and his rule over her: “Your desire (תשוקת) shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16b). The Greek rendering of Gen 3:16b deviates from the Hebrew text: καὶ πρὸς τὸν

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61 The words addressed to the woman and man are the first pronouncements of judgment oracles against humans (Gen 3:16–19). In Genesis 3, the curse language (ארר) is applied to the cunning serpent only (v. 14). It is interesting to note that the Gibeonites are presented as those who acted cunningly (בערמה), and for this reason Joshua curses them (ארורים אתם) (Josh 9:4, 23). Gen. Rab. 20:5 connects the curses on the serpent and the Gibeonites.

62 BDB, s.v. עצבון, 781.
ἄνδρα σου ἡ ἀποστροφή σου καὶ αὐτός σου κυριεύσει (= “and your turning will be to your husband, and he will rule over you”). Prior to the woman’s violation of God’s prohibition, the “man’s helper” had not yet experienced a הָעָשָׁה for her husband. The rare Hebrew word הָעָשָׁה occurs 3:16 and 4:7 as an urge to control or dominate somebody or something (cf. Song 7:10: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me”). The woman will desire the man, but he will rule (“יִמְשָׁל”) over her. In Gen 4:7, the imperfect הָעָשָׁה might be understood in an obligatory or potential sense.

Gen 3:16b and 4:7b are supposed to be read together. While some might think of sexual desire of the woman toward the man, Gen 3:16b points to a radical turn in the relationship between the genders. In Gen 4:7, the sin has a desire to control Cain for the sake of wickedness, but he is supposed to be master over it. Karel A. Deurloo suggests interpreting הָעָשָׁה as signifying a social relationship in the sense of dependency. According to Jacques van Ruiten, the fratricide narrative can be understood as an interpretation of הָעָשָׁה Gen 3:16a. In his article on Genesis 3:16, Joel Lohr reviews traditional and modern exegetical trajectories that interpret the word הָעָשָׁה in the sense of sexual desire or intimacy (so Hermann Gunkel, Terence Fretheim, Gordon Wenham, and Everett Fox). However, Gen 3:16 and 4:7 (LXX) translate הָעָשָׁה as αποστροφή (“turning” or “return”). Similar to LXX, the

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63 The root הָעָשָׁה denotes “leg” or “street.” A cognate verb הָעָשָׁה means “thirsty” and “hungry” (see, e.g., Isa 29:8; Ps 107:9).

64 BDB, s.v. הָעָשָׁה, 1003.


Aramaic Targums translate the Hebrew תשוקה in the sense of “turning,” “return,” and “repentance.” Jerome’s rendering of Gen 3:16 deviates from the MT: “Under the power of your husband you will be.” In light of four Qumranic texts using the Hebrew תשוקה, Lohr infers that this word should be taken in the sense of “return” in those specific eschatological contexts (1QS 2:21–22; 1QM 13:11–13; 15:8–11; 17:4–6). In unison with some other scholars, Lohr contends that “תשוקה” in Gen 3:16b could refer to something else other than sexual desire (cf. Gen. Rab. 20:7). I concur with Lohr’s commentary: “Despite increased pain in childbearing, Eve would actively return to the man. Cain was warned that sin (or perhaps Abel) would return to him, but he could master, or rule over it. The woman who waited for her absent lover in Canticles was certain that her lover would return to her.”67 According to Lohr, the exegetical implication of such interpretation is that תשוקה should be read alongside תָּשֽׁוּב (Gen 3:19). The destiny of the woman is no different than that of her husband. Both humans shall return to their original conditions. While the woman returns to her man, the man returns to the ground from which he had been taken.68

The ominous תשוקה plays on the meaning of “desire” and “return” in Gen 3:16 and 4:7. Akin to the oracle of punishment about the woman’s constant desire to return to her husband, Cain is warned about the returning desire to sin as a desirable object. If such interpretation is plausible, then the narrator uses the motif of the mastery of תשוקה from Gen 3:16 in Gen 4:7 so as to relate the two episodes one to another. The oracle of judgment to the woman resurfaces in the divine address to Cain who is given the opportunity to have mastery over

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68 Ibid., 246.
the returning yearning to do the opposite to God’s warning. If he chooses to dismiss the
divine address, his lot will be no better than that of his mother who followed the advice of the
cunning serpent in Eden. So, like the death penalty threatened in chapters 2–3 and fulfilled in
4, the issue of mastery introduced in the narrative of temptation has its conclusion in Eve’s
children.

The verdict on the man emphasizes his primary role in the violation of the divine prohibition
in Eden (v. 17: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the
tree of which I commanded you, ‘you must not eat of it’” . . .). 69 In Gen 3:17, the ground
bears God’s curse on Adam’s behalf: “cursed is the ground because of you” (LXX:
ἐπικατάρατος ἡ γῆ ἐν τοῖς ἐργοῖς σου = “cursed is the ground in your labors”). In Gen 3:17,
we see the first example of the biblical principle of justice “measure against measure” (מידה
כנגד מידה).

70 Since Adam violates the prohibition of the tree, he shall toil on the cursed
ground in pain (עִצָּבוֹן). The unproductive ground will sprout thorns and thistles. The grasses
of the field will become the new diet for the man. There is no hint of human immortality in
the act of the creation from the ground (Gen 2:7). The Adamic punishment to return to dust is
an act of uncreation. The cursed ground becomes the final destination of the man. This notion
is reinforced in the divine verdict: “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen

69 In my reading of Gen 3:17, an association emerges with the rabbinic rule that forbids man to listen to
the woman’s voice in public talking or singing for “woman’s voice is nakedness” (בערווה קול באישה; see
Babylonian Talmud, Berakot 24a). One might think about a dramatic episode from the narrative of Joseph who
refused to listen to the voice of Potiphar’s wife. In Genesis 39, Potiphar’s wife raises her voice in public to
falsely accuse the foreigner Joseph as the Hebrew offender (see the “voice” expressions קול גדול

70 The principle of justice “measure against measure” (the lex talionis) is widely attested in biblical
Rom 11:11). Mishnah, Sotah 1:7 refers to this ethical principle: במידה שאדם ממדד בمصילה ול
(“In the same measure that a man measures, it is meted out to him”). Sotah 1:8–9 lists the names of those characters that were
measured according to their deeds, including Mariam, Moses, Samson, and Absalom.
3:19). As Gerhard von Rad notes in his commentary on Gen 3:17–19: “As for the man, his punishment consists in the hardship and skimpiness of his livelihood, which he now must seek for himself. The woman’s punishment struck at the deepest root of her being as wife and mother, the man’s strikes at the innermost nerve of his life: his work, his activity, and provision for sustenance.”

In Genesis 2–9, the “ground” (אֲדָמָה) constitutes the strongest bond between the Lord and humankind (Gen 2:5, 7, 9, 15, 19; 3:17, 19, 23; 4:3, 10–12; 5:29; 6:1, 7; 7:4, 23; 8:8, 13, 21; 9:20). The expression “toiling the ground” (עבד אדמה) connects the divine sentences on the man and his firstborn son as it becomes a severe challenge to the first primordial family (Gen 3:17, 23; 4:2, 11, 12). The “ground” (אדמה) appears six times in Genesis 4 alone (vv. 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14). Gen 4:11–12 is the first direct curse against an individual in the HB: “And now cursed (רוּראָ) are you from the ground (אֲדָמָה), which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground (כִּי תַֽעֲבֹד אֶת־הָ֣אֲדָמָ֔ה), it will not again give to you its strength. You shall be a wanderer and a fugitive (נָע וָנָ֖ד) on the earth” (cf. Noah’s curse against Canaan in Gen 9:25). Cain is banished from the ground as a source of life, and it will no longer yield its fruit. The direct expression “cursed are you from” (“ארֵרֵא אַתָּה מִ) is found in the oracles against the serpent and Cain (Gen 3:14// 4:11). In Gen 3:17, the ground is cursed on Adam’s behalf. In Gen 4:11, the ground is presented as a sort of ‘partner in crime’ (Gen 4:11).

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The problem with Cain’s offering is the cursed ground from the Edenic narrative of temptation (Gen 3:17–19). All other possible reasons for God rejecting Cain’s offering such as lack of faith, insufficient or inadequate offering, the perennial tension between farmers and shepherds, and divine preference of the younger over the older, lack textual support. Spina rightly explains that the Lord only rejected Cain’s cultic performance: “Yahweh’s exhortation only makes sense on the supposition that Cain had not yet actually sinned, however improper his reaction was. Yahweh’s rejection surely put Cain in a difficult and regrettable position. Nevertheless, the deity did not judge him as reprobate.”

Two other crucial occurrences of the “ground” are related to the episodes in Genesis 2–4. In Gen 5:29, Lamech expresses hope to be relieved from the curse on the ground by means of Noah’s birth: “This one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil (עִצְּבֹ֣ון) of our hands from the ground (אֲדָמָ֔ה) that YHWH has cursed.” The Lord promises not to curse the ground anymore on behalf of the man: “And when YHWH smelled the soothing smell, YHWH said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse (לְכַלּל, from קלל, Piel) the ground because of man, for the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth. I will never again destroy every living creature as I have done” (Gen 8:21). In the view of Rolf Rendtorff, the divine

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72 The following midrash comments on the cursed ground as the key factor in rejecting Cain’s offering: “As though his offence had not been great enough in offering unto God fruit of the ground which had been cursed by God! What wonder that his sacrifice was not received with favour?” Cited in Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible* (vol. 1; Philadelphia: JPS, 2003), 104.

statement in Gen 8:21 launches the era of blessing in the postdiluvian world. This primordial promise of God never again to curse the ground is developed in later biblical literature (e.g. Rev 22:3 anticipates the eternity with God and the Lamb where there will be no curse).

Punishment and Hope

Following the divine trials in Eden, the man calls his wife חוֹוָ֑ה (Gen 3:20). Prior to the Edenic temptation, YHWH God brought all kinds of animals to see what the man would call them (Gen 2:19–20). The naming of Eve (LXX: Ζωή = Life) can be considered as a ray of hope after the gloomy predictions that took place in Eden. The phrase “mother of all living” (אֵ֥ם כָּל־חָֽי) is modelled on her husband who is called “a living soul” (נֶ֥פֶשׁ חַיָּֽה, Gen 2:7). From this point forward, Eve is called to bring life into the world. Eve’s name and her role as mother of children relate directly to events in chapter 4. In Genesis 4, the narrator portrays the woman who gave birth to three sons (Cain, Abel, and Seth). I concur with Gerhard von Rad who aptly notes: “One must see the man’s naming of the woman as an act of faith, certainly not faith in promises that lie hidden, veiled in the penalties, but rather an embracing of life, which as a great miracle and mystery is maintained and carried by the motherhood of woman over hardship and death.” Thus, the woman of Genesis 2–4 can be characterized as the helper of the man, the object of the serpent’s seduction, and the life-giver. While the woman

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75 Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary, 93.
yields to the manipulative lies of the serpent, she readily accepts the divine sentence to bear children in pain, and rejoices when she becomes a life-giver to her firstborn son Cain (Gen 4:1).

In the temptation episode, the reader encounters the human attempt to cover their shame with loincloths from fig leaves. Gen 3:7 states, “And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” Now the Lord covers the nakedness of the first human couple by making garments of skins (Gen 3:21). After the man calls his wife “Eve,” the Lord takes a step toward reconciliation with his creatures. God substitutes their self-made loincloths with garments of skins. This is an act of divine patronage and fatherly care for his disobedient children. Gen 3:21 emphasizes that the Lord provides garments of skin to Adam and his wife alike. This divine act of mitigation reunites the man and the woman as a single unit who experience the care of the Lord for them once again (Gen 2:22–23).76

The displacement of Adam from his place of habitation might be interpreted as a necessary step on God’s part for the benefit of humankind (cf. Gen 11:1–9).77 First, YHWH God restricts the man from stretching out his hand to eat from the tree of life. Second, YHWH

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76 The tradition of Gen 3:21 may be echoed in the following prophetic statement: “I will greatly rejoice in YHWH; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a turban, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10; cf. Isa 64:5). This oracle proclaims the festive clothing of the redeemed Zion. In Gen 3:21 and Isa 61:10, God acts on behalf of the first humans and the returning remnant of Zion. Thus, the Lord’s clothing of the first man and woman is the first token of divine grace in the primeval history (cf. Col 3:10).

77 On the parallel between the Edenic expulsion and the divine intervention at the Tower of Babel, consider Douglas A. Knight and Amy-Jill Levine, The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 232: “At the tower, YHWH voices similar concern to keep humanity human, and, so limited: “Look, they are one people, and they all have one language; . . . nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them” (11:6). In Eden, human disobedience leads to expulsion; at Babel, the diversity of language leads to the inability to forge common cause.”
God expels the man from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. These two divine actions are meant to preserve Adam from making further bad choices. In Gen 3:22, the tree of life is banned since the man became like God in knowing good and evil. The dislocation of the man to till the ground outside of Eden can be read as an extension of the divine command to till and tend it (Gen 3:23// 2:15). On the other hand, this statement in Gen 3:23 brings to mind the curse on the ground (Gen 3:17). Gen 3:24 states that God appointed the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword to guard the way to the tree of life.78

While Adam is prohibited from eating from the tree of life, he and his wife give birth to three sons (cf. Ps 127:3: “Sons are a heritage from YHWH, a reward, the fruit of the womb”). In fact, Genesis 4 unfolds that life continues after the man’s dislocation from Eden. Callender’s pessimistic reading of Gen 3:22–24 does not take into account the birth of the sons in Genesis 4: “Their fate was sealed, and their expulsion from the garden meant certain death. Only in the garden could one live forever, for only there (presumably) was the tree of life. The necessary measure was to allow the first couple to die.”79 Contra Callender, I concur with Russell Reno who reads that the expulsion from Eden created opportunity for God to bless and redeem humans: “As humanity moves away from the presence of God, the conditions emerge in which God can come to humanity.”80

78 Cf. the eschatological promise to restore the Edenic conditions: “And he shall open the gates of paradise; he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam, and he will grant to the righteous to eat of the tree of life” (Testament of Levi 18:10).

79 Callender, 75.

80 Russell R. Reno, Genesis (BTCB; Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 97.
Reno’s theological observation is particularly true in the subsequent narrative of Cain and Abel. In particular, this divine closeness to humans is evident in Gen 4:12b–16. This text unfolds the following elements: (1) divine punishment; (2) confession and an appeal to mitigate the verdict; (3) God’s protective mark; and (4) the dislocation “east of Eden.” In the first part of the oracle of judgment against Cain, the Lord curses him and makes his toil of the ground an unproductive and challenging task (Gen 4:11–12b). “A wanderer and a fugitive” is the new social status of Cain as the restless offender. Cain is destined to be a man without a permanent place of habitation. This sibling shall find no place to settle permanently. In the context of primeval history, the punishment imposed on Cain serves as a communal reminder of the harsh reality of nomadic life. According to Callender, the punishment of Cain to be “a wanderer and a fugitive” is reflected in the Ezekielian oracle against the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:11–19). In his view, this oracle of judgment against the king of Tyre could echo the banishment of both the first man and Cain alike (especially Ezek 28:16). Cain’s sentence is echoed in the sapiential saying: “If one is burdened with the blood of another, he will be a fugitive until the pit; let no one help him” (Prov 28:17).

Cain responds to the divine verdict as follows: “‘My iniquity (עָוֹן) is too great to bear” (4:13). Unlike Adam, Cain confesses his sin (עָוֹן) to be too great to bear, and appeals his divine verdict. The word עָוֹן designates “sin” or “iniquity” (see, e.g., Gen 15:16; 2 Sam

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81 Callender, 125.

82 Similarly, Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5 (Luther’s Works 1; ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick; Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1955), 295: “My iniquity is too great to be forgiven.”
Some modern translations render Gen 4:13 as follows: “My punishment is too great to bear” (so KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, and JPS). Another reading of this text is found in the LXX: μείζων ἡ αἰτία μου τοῦ ἀφεθῆναι με (“My guilt is too great for me to be forgiven”). I agree with Gary Anderson who renders Gen 4:13 as follows, “The weight of my sin is too great for me to bear.” In fact, when Cain “cries out that his sin is beyond bearing, he is referring not to the punishment per se but to the extent of his culpability. The severity of the punishment is an index of the degree of guilt he has incurred for his crime.”

Akin to his father, Cain expresses his concern to be hidden from the Lord like his parents in Eden (Gen 3:8–10; 4:14). The Lord responds and predicts the verdict for the potential murderer of Cain: “Therefore (לָכֵן), if anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold” (Gen 4:15). LXX, Symmachus, and Theodotion translate οὐχ οὕτως (כֵּן לא = “not so”). Other modern English translations prefer the Greek rendering over the MT (so NRSV, NIV, and ESV). The Greek versions render Gen 4:15 in the sense of God contradicting Cain’s plea for protection. I opt for the MT version of Gen 4:15 because this is the divine response to Cain’s plea for protection (so KJV, NKJV, and NASB). Joel Lohr aptly suggests that “God is concerned, yes, with his chosen; but so too does he show utmost concern for the

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83 See BDB, s.v. עון, 730–31. The Hebrew expression לשת עון (“to bear sin”) means “to forgive sin” (Exod 28:43; 34:7; Lev 5:1; Mic 7:18; Ps 32:5).

84 See Brayford, Genesis, 253–54.

unchosen, Cain.” 86 The “sevenfold” vengeance is a typological numerical expression used to intensify the divine statement (see other examples of “sevenfold” in Isa 30:26; Prov 6:31; 24:16). 87 Some early Jewish and Christian sources have interpreted the sevenfold vengeance as affecting seven generations. 88 In the second part of Genesis 4, Lamech, the son of Methushael, refers to the Cainite sevenfold vengeance: “If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech is seventy-sevenfold” (Gen 4:24). While the Lord wishes to limit bloodshed by protecting Cain from vengeance, Lamech wishes to multiply violent episodes. 89

Similar to the clothing of Adam and Eve in the Garden, the Lord makes a divine sign of authentication or protection for Cain (Gen 4:15; cf. Exod 12:13). Some have understood that God made the sign upon Cain’s forehead (cf. Ezek 9:4–6). Others interpreted it as a

86 Joel N. Lohr, Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish–Christian Interpretation (Siphrut: LTHS 2; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 68.


88 Jerome’s Letter to Pope Damascus #36 (384 C.E.) contains a theological retelling of Gen 4:15, and it reflects the LXX and Josephus (Ant. 1.58). It renders as follows: “But God not wishing to do away with him by a quick torturous death, nor handing down a punishment like the same act for [which] Cain was condemned, said ‘Not so!’ That is, ‘It is as you think, that you will die and receive death as a relief, but instead, you will live until the seventh generation and your conscience will torment you with fire, so that whenever someone does kill you (according to the double interpretation), either at the seventh generation or by seven means he will free you from torture’ not because the one who murders has been subjected to seven vengeances, but because the murderer who kills him releases seven punishments which would converge on Cain at such a time as he had become forsaken of life as his punishment,” cited in Byron, Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition, 114.

89 Gen 4:24 is echoed in Matt 18:20–21, where Jesus answers Peter’s question on the forgiveness of sin. In this text, Jesus provides an ethical antidote to Lamech’s words. The disciple of Christ is required to forgive his brother “seventy-seven times.” In the teaching of Jesus, the principle of unlimited forgiveness is a crucial ethical element. C. John Collins, Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2006), 219 comments on the use of Gen 4:23 in Matt 18:22: “Surely, it is to encourage those who follow Jesus to practice the same extravagant excess, but this time of forgiveness. That is, just as it would be foolish to take Lamech’s “seventy-sevenfold” as a literal measure, so it would be foolish to take Jesus’ “seventy seven times” as imposing any limit of forgiveness.”
movement of Cain’s body or a bodily blemish (e.g., blackness of skin, horn, or leprosy). According to Bruce Waltke, a protective tattoo allowed Cain to live his natural life span.\textsuperscript{90} In Lohr’s view, Cain’s mark refers to a city of refuge (Gen 4:17).\textsuperscript{91} Walter Moberly explains that Cain’s sign can be equated with God’s words recorded in Gen 4:15. In his own words, “When one takes these two factors together—that the text implies a non-corporeal mark to protect Cain from being killed, and that YHWH is introducing a general saying about the perilous outcome of killing Cain—then my thesis about the nature of the mark of Cain should, I hope become apparent. It is the saying in the text, ‘Whoever kills Cain will suffer sevenfold vengeance,’ that is itself the non-corporeal sign, which serves to prevent Cain from being killed. YHWH’s words to Cain and the sign are not two different things, however closely related, but one and the same thing: YHWH’s words are first spoken to Cain and are then redescribed as a protective sign.”\textsuperscript{92} Moberly’s reasonable exegetical take on Gen 4:15 aims to explain the theological rationale behind Cain’s mark: “YHWH makes a saying that epitomizes Cain’s violent over-reaction into the sign which protects him and his descendants. YHWH is not giving Cain the right to over-react, but is recognizing this already-existing trait and constituting it as that which protects him from being killed.”\textsuperscript{93} The primeval characters Adam and Cain are contrasted one to one another. While the Lord banishes the first man “east of Eden,” Cain alienates himself from the divine presence on his own initiative and

\textsuperscript{90} See Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, \textit{Genesis: A Commentary} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 99.

\textsuperscript{91} Joel N. Lohr, “‘So YHWH established a sign for Cain’: Rethinking Genesis 4:15,” \textit{ZAW} 121 (2009): 101–3.


\textsuperscript{93} Moberly, “The Mark of Cain,” 24.

In summary, the figure of Cain looms large against the backdrop of the temptation narrative. Cain fails his test, and acts to cut off his brother Abel from “the land of the living” (cf. Ps 27:13). While Cain seems more confident and determined in his relationship with God than his parents, he cannot withstand the test of keeping his bonds of brotherhood intact. The older brother cannot bear the younger. As a result of dismissing the voice of God, Cain claims the life of his brother Abel, and eventually alienates himself from the divine presence.

I agree with Gordon Wenham who concludes that “the parallels between chaps. 3 and 4 are also important for determining the character of the Cain and Abel story. They show that Genesis understands Cain and Abel to be individuals belonging to primeval history, not personifications of tribes or peoples, as sometimes maintained.”

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94 In a similar vein, Philo has interpreted the exile of Cain as a voluntarily, egocentric act of self-alienation from the presence of the Lord (Philo, On the Posterty of Cain and His Exile, 8–11): “Accordingly God banished Adam; but Cain went forth from his presence of his own accord; Moses here showing to us the manner of each sort of absence from God, both the voluntary and the involuntary sort,” cited in The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged (trans. C.D. Duke; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 132.

95 Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 100. Cf. Weinfeld, Genesis, 39 (translation from Hebrew is mine): “The story of Cain and Abel is the first story that describes the relationship between man and his God after the description of the relationship between man and God in chapters 2–3. The story of Cain and Abel describes the most temperamental human emotions: the envy between brothers which cannot be quenched by God’s comforting words (vv. 6–7); the denial of an act which cannot be hidden (vv. 9–10) and the apology of the man to his Creator (vv. 13–14). Thus, the narrative describes the awful murder of a brother and the continuous punishment of exile as its result.”
Implications

In this section, I would like to flesh out a number of implications for (1) the principle of spousal accountability, (2) the episode of Noah and his sons (Gen 9:20–26), and (3) the Abrahamic narratives (Genesis 16, 21, and 22). First, the principle of spousal accountability is demonstrated within the narratives of Genesis 3 and 4. The first couple shares the responsibility for the act of defiance against God.\textsuperscript{96} Gen 3:6a emphasizes the process of the woman seeing, coveting, and taking the fruit: “She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (cf. Josh 7:21 and 2 Sam 11:1–4). This concise description indicates that both the woman and her husband partook in the act of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Susan Foh is correct in asserting that the woman was not inferior to the man or more susceptible to temptation.\textsuperscript{97} In her recent article, Julie Parker traces the word עמה ("with her") in Gen 3:6b throughout the lens of English translations, and shows that this word has not been omitted in most ancient and modern translations of Genesis 3 (except the deliberate omission of “with her” in the Vulgate; so RSV, NJPS).

\textsuperscript{96} This is not merely an attempt to liberate the first female from the traditional misogynistic interpretations imposed on Genesis 3.

\textsuperscript{97} Susan T. Foh, \textit{Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism} (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979), 63. Likewise, see also Susan Niditch, “Genesis,” in \textit{Women's Bible Commentary} (3d ed.; ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 27–45 here 31–32: “What the author of Genesis does reveal is that man and woman share responsibility for the alteration of their status. The man’s self-defense, like his passive act of disobedience, portrays him in a childlike manner. When accused by God of defying his order, the man says comically, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate” (3:12). Whose fault is it? The woman’s? God’s? And yet the woman initiates the act. It is the who first dares to eat of God’s tree, to consume the fruit of the Divine, thereby becoming, as the rabbis say of human beings, like the angels in having the capacity to discriminate and like the animals who eat, fornicate, defecate, and die. The woman herself comes to have the most earthy and the most divine of roles, conceiving, containing, and nurturing new life. She is an especially appropriate link between life in God’s garden and life in the thornier world to which all of us are consigned.”
Parker explains that it is crucial to retain the original Hebrew rendering of Gen 3:6b. In her view, although both partook from the forbidden tree, the man is more accountable for his misdeed than his wife. In her own words, “The burden of responsibility lies with the first human being, who alone hears the divine interdiction.”

Unlike his parents in Genesis 3, Cain alone is blamed for his crime. In his case, he does not have anyone to share the guilt of his transgression. The personal responsibility of Cain for his brother Abel looms large in Genesis 4. As the older brother, Cain had responsibility over his younger sibling. He knew he was supposed to take care of him. Cain’s daring words “Am I my brother’s keeper?” point to his bitterness toward God (as the rabbis would call such insolent behaviour, מתחספ וחממה, “protest against God”). In fact, Cain dares to challenge God as the Creator of the bonds of brotherhood and the sole giver of life (see Deut 32:39: “I kill and I make alive”).

Second, the post-flood episode of Noah and his sons mirrors the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel (Gen 9:20–26). The rabbinic axiom “the actions of the fathers shall be a sign for the sons” (מעשה אבות סימן לבנים) reflects well the episodes narrated within Genesis 2–4 and 9:20–26. This postdiluvian episode of Noah is modelled on the narratives of creation, temptation, and fratricide. The following elements are common to both familial sagas: (1) Adam, Cain, and Noah are ground-tillers (2:8; 4:3; 9:20); (2) conflicts between the brothers in both families (4:4–8; 9:21–23); (3) the nakedness of the first humans and Noah (3:21; 9:20)

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Third, the Abrahamic narratives flesh out the primordial principal that God blesses his creatures amidst trials and challenges (Genesis 3–4; 16, 21, 22). In the temptation narrative, Adam is blamed for listening to his wife’s voice in preference to that of God (Gen 3:17). The man’s adherence to his wife’s voice in place of God results in (1) toiling over unproductive soil; (2) returning to the ground from which he was taken; and (3) expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:17–24). The firstborn Cain is born only after the expulsion from Eden (Gen 4:1). Likewise, as a result of Abram listening to the voice of Sarai, the firstborn son Ishmael is born from Hagar, and later he mocks his brother Isaac (Gen 16:2; 21:8–10). The narrator recounts Ishmael’s behaviour toward his brother Isaac: “But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing (מְצַחֵֽק)” (21:9). The LXX adds that Ishmael was playing “with Isaac her own son” (μετὰ Ισαακ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτῆς). Sarah tells Abraham to banish Hagar and Ishmael, and while her advice sounds harsh, it conforms to God’s plan for Abraham and his progeny (21:12). Thus, the birth of the firstborn Ishmael from Hagar mirrors the birth of the firstborn Cain who are given their life space, personally

100 Seth D. Postell, Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh (Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2011), 104–5 refer to some of these textual parallels in isolation from the question of the thematic and stylistic unity of Genesis 2–4.

101 See James M. Hamilton, God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 85: “Some of these initiatives are direct examples of women seizing the initiative with negative results: Sarah recommends that Abraham go in to Hagar; Lot’s daughters plot to conceive by their father; Tamar puts herself in Judah’s path dressed like a harlot; Potiphar’s wife seeks to seduce Joseph. This is the way that God said things would be in Genesis 3:16, and the narrative bears out the truthfulness of God’s word.”

102 For a derogatory use of the root צחק, see Gen 19:14, 26:8, 39:14, 17.
encounter the Lord or his angel, and they are destined to be wanderers (Gen 4:11–12; 16:12).  

In addition to the parallel between the firstborn Cain and Ishmael, I contend that the familial saga in chapters 2–4 possibly bears on the narrative of Isaac’s binding (Gen 22:1–19). Two men of old, Adam and Abraham, face two tests of obedience. While the first man fails the ‘simple’ test in Eden, Abraham obeys God’s word to sacrifice his son, Isaac. The narrator presents Abraham as the blessed progenitor of Israel who obeyed the Lord (cf. Isa 51:2). In contrast to Abel’s untimely death outside of Eden, Abraham’s obedience to God’s summons to sacrifice his son Isaac leads to his deliverance from death and blessing to Abraham’s offspring (Gen 22:11–14, 15–18).

Conclusion

Much of our understanding of the primordial realities is shrouded in secrecy. At the same time, the interwoven episodes of chapters 2–4 are supposed to be read as a literary whole. In this family saga, the woman, man, Cain, and Abel are interdependent characters. The words and actions of the first parents and their sons pertain to the motifs of knowledge the produce of the ground. Also the motifs of silence and voice connect the narratives of Eden and fratricide. Unlike his parents and his older sibling, Abel’s words are not recounted by the narrator, but Abel’s blood cries from the ground (Gen 4:10). The prohibition to Adam and the admonition to Cain indicate the experimental status of the first human family. The

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probation of the first human couple occurs within the finest conditions of Eden. Cain is tested in a different milieu, outside of the Garden of Eden. In the present study, the divine address of God to Cain is understood as a test involving how Cain will deal with his anger. Like his parents, Cain dismisses the initial divine warning. While Cain’s test is patterned after that of his father, his mother’s punishment from 3:16b is clearly echoed in Gen 4:7b. The theological awareness of sin (חַטָּא) emerges for the first time in chapter 4.

The narratives of Genesis 2–4 demonstrate that the borderline between life and death is fragile. Without Genesis 4, the consequence of the death threat to Adam remains unfulfilled. The first death is that of Adam’s son Abel. I have underscored that the trials of the offenders flow similarly. Only with 3–4 as a diptych, is there a curse on the serpent and Cain, who are alienated to their natural environments (Gen 3:14; 4:11). The ground is cursed on behalf of humans (Gen 3:17; 4:11). Both Adam and Cain are presented as ground-tillers (3:23; 4:2). In the larger literary context, the motif of ground (אֲדָמָה) binds the primeval narratives of Eden and outside (chapters 2–9).

Adam’s naming of his wife “Eve” (“mother of all living”) can be considered in conjunction with the covering of the nakedness with garments of skin (Gen 3:20–21). The dislocation from Eden is a necessary step as the first human couple will not benefit from eating from the tree of life. At the same time, the banishment from Eden should not be taken as an expression of total alienation from God. To this end, after the dislocation from Eden, the first human couple is blessed with children (Gen 4:1, 2, 25). The man partakes of life through generating offspring, much as Eve does by virtue of her role as the “mother of all living.”
As the first cursed human being in the primeval history, Cain is destined to be a fugitive all his life, toiling the unproductive ground in vain. While most exegetes present Cain as an unremorseful sinner, his words recorded in Gen 4:13 can be interpreted as the first confession of sin in the Bible. The Lord mitigates the punishment of Cain by protecting him from anyone who might kill him. To this end, the Lord places an unidentified mark (אֹ֔ות) on Cain (Gen 4:15). This is an act of divine patronage to Cain. The last verse of this episode indicates that Cain alienates himself from the presence of the Lord, and he settles in the land of Nod, east of Eden (Gen 4:16). His father, Adam, was banished from the presence of God, east of Eden (Gen 3:24). Cain distances himself from his God and possibly even from his family. Nonetheless, like Adam, his son Cain finds a wife and begets his son, Enoch (Gen 4:17).

In the second part of this chapter, I have delineated several implications. First, unlike the shared responsibility for the act of defiance against God, Cain is the one blamed for his sin (Gen 3:6; 4:9–12). Nevertheless, God’s grace reaches both the human couple and their son Cain amidst incipient threats and challenges. Second, the episode of Noah’s drunkenness and its aftermath found in 9:20–26 corroborates the literary unity of Genesis 2–4. Third, the firstborn sons Cain and Ishmael are destined to live as fugitives (4:12; 16:12). Abraham’s exemplary obedience to God is set in contrast to Adam’s disobedience to the divine prohibition (22:1–19). In contrast to Abel’s untimely death, Isaac’s life is preserved and Abraham’s descendants are promised to reap the Abrahamic blessing in the future (22:15–19).
Chapter Four: Summary

The thesis has sought to treat the primeval narratives of Genesis 2–4 as a literary whole against the backdrop of the history of reception in Jewish and Christian exegesis from antiquity to the Reformation. Its purpose has been to delineate the textual unity between the Eden and fratricide narratives. I have argued that the narrative of Cain-Abel should not be read independently of the Edenic narrative. This primordial familial saga presents one plot to underscore the experimental setting of the Edenic narrative and its tragic sequel outside of the garden. The present study has also fleshed out a few literary-theological implications.

The first chapter explored the state of research on the textual unity of Genesis 2–4 in contemporary biblical scholarship. I have reviewed major studies in the field from 1883 to 2013. This survey of secondary literature has shown that some source critics at the early twentieth century sought to ascribe the narratives of Eden and fratricide to different redactional layers. Numerous biblical scholars and historians have invested much effort to locate parallel traditions from the ancient Near East. As a result, the narrative of Eden has mostly been taken as an ancient Hebrew myth that is rarely echoed in the remainder of biblical literature. Other scholars have opted for the anthropological interpretation of Genesis 4 as the Kenite aetiology. Moving forward in the history of modern scholarship, a growing number of interpreters have shown keen interest in the final form of the primeval stories. More recently, the narratives of Eden and fratricide have been examined through the lens of confessional, pre-modern history of interpretation. Most recently, some other scholars have moved in the direction of theological interpretations of Genesis. It has been concluded that while the primeval narratives from Genesis have received much attention in miscellaneous
commentaries, monographs, and articles, little work has been done to balance the traditional focus on chapters 1–3 with the alternative holistic reading of Genesis 2–4.

The second chapter sought to unfold the two streams of exegetical tradition in the history of exegesis from antiquity to the Reformation. It has been concluded that while early interpreters are not uniform in associating the sin narratives, some exegetical elaborations scrutinized the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel conjointly. To this end, I have examined numerous sapiential, apocalyptic, pastoral, homiletical, and midrashic texts stemming from the Second Temple period, the apostolic and patristic works, and the Protestant Reformation.

Early Jewish exegetes and sages have sought to delineate the stories of defiance against God so as to reflect contemporaneous crises the nation of Israel had faced in its land and outside of it. These exegetes struggled to understand human suffering amidst judgment, sin and its remedy, and the principles of divine recompense and grace. In some of the reviewed interpretations, the first man and woman are blamed for the violation of the Edenic commandment aside from Cain’s sin. For instance, the apostle Paul has addressed the transgression of Adam apart from Cain’s. In particular, Paul had developed the typology of Christ as the antitype of Adam (Rom 5:12–21). As for Cain, the sinner who performs the works of the evil one is likened to Cain (1 John 3:10–12). In contrast to Cain, Abel was taken as the first righteous martyr in the Second Temple period and the early Christian era. Some other texts consider the narratives of Adam and Cain as closely related one to another. It has been demonstrated that some Church Fathers interpreted Cain’s sin as exceeding that of his father Adam. Augustine’s hamartiology, particularly reflected in his Genesis commentaries, has contributed to the disjunction of chapters 1–3 from 4. Unlike some of their predecessors,
Martin Luther and John Calvin undertook to read the familial narratives in chapters 2–4 conjointly.

In chapter three, I scrutinized the common textual affinities within chapters 2–4 that lent support to the overall argument of this thesis. Within this framework, I particularly focused on the narratives of sin in the larger unit of Gen 2:4b–4:26. I found interdependence of narrative and theology in both accounts of defiance against God. These texts were purposely juxtaposed for the effect they would have early on in the sequence of primeval episodes from Eden to the Tower of Babel. The two test cases in Eden and outside of it are interwoven episodes. The first man is probed within the Garden of Eden. Unlike his father, Cain is tested outside the Garden of Eden. The first test is that of the first man who was warned not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil lest he die (2:16–17). The second test is that of his son Cain whom the Lord admonishes and warns to rule over the turning-desire to sin (4:7). This divine warning to Cain appropriates the divine verdict to the woman from 3:16b. Similar to the woman’s turning-desire to her husband, the lack of a decisive action on Cain’s part will subject him to the cruel dominion of sin (4:7b). The first performance of “sin” is attributed to Cain, who could have acted differently, but he chooses to “miss the target.”

While the man and woman share responsibility, the man is held accountable for the violation of the prohibition in Eden (3:17). In Genesis 4, Abel stands out as God’s favourite individual in this post-Edenic drama, and he becomes the innocent victim of his brother’s frustration. Cain’s narrative implies that failure to manage anger and to control impulses may inevitably result in violent conflict. The motif of death is another literary feature that connects the two narratives of sin. It emerges that the death threat to the first man does not occur on the same
day (2:17). In Genesis, the first reported death is that of Abel (4:8). It has been proposed to connect Abel’s death to the warning of death in Eden.

Cain’s curse encompasses the style of the curse against the serpent and the ground (4:11–12//3:14, 17–19). The trial of the woman is anticipated after the divine oracle of judgment on the serpent (3:16a//4:1–2). It is likely to think of Adam calling his wife Eve as the first act of mitigation. This episode is followed by God’s act of mitigation by making garments of skin for Adam and his wife (3:20–21). The man’s expulsion from Eden should not be interpreted as a terminal verdict (3:22–24). As its sequel, the expelled man is blessed to know his wife Eve who begets three sons (4:1, 2, 25). Likewise, the Lord mitigates the punishment of Cain by making a sign (4:15). The reader might find God’s mitigation extended to Cain problematic.¹ Nonetheless, it is evident that the Lord postponed executing his punishment in Genesis 3 and 4. God’s benevolence expressed toward the first sinners allows further family reunion and procreation. After leaving the divine presence voluntarily, Cain becomes the first city-builder and the father of Enoch (4:16–17). The narrator contrasts the two expulsions. While the Lord banishes Adam from the Garden of Eden, Cain leaves the divine presence wilfully. Both male characters are placed east of Eden (3:23–24//4:16).

In chapter three, I fleshed out four implications for other episodes in the Book of Genesis. These implications lend support to the major argument of this study that the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel are intended to be read as a coherent literary unit within Genesis. This literary endeavour attests to the richness of the narrative art in Genesis. First, the principle of human accountability is present within Genesis 3 and 4. While both partners

have violated the divine prohibition in Eden, Cain alone bears the full weight of responsibility for his sin against his brother and God. Second, the postdiluvian narrative of Noah and his sons mirrors some of the episodes within Genesis 2–4 (9:20–26). Third, the birth of Ishmael mirrors the birth of Cain. Just as Adam should not have obeyed the woman contrary to the divine address, Abram should have believed the divine promise to have the son of promise. As a result of Abram’s listening to the voice of his wife Sarai, Ishmael is born from Hagar who becomes a violent and wandering man just like Cain (3:17; 4:12// 16:1, 2, 12). Fourth, the binding of Isaac possibly echoes some of the literary contours of Genesis 2–4. In contrast to Adam, who failed a single determinative test of obedience in Eden, Abraham passes a single determinative test of obedience at Moriah (22:1–19). While Abel dies outside of Eden, Isaac’s life was spared, Abraham has proven himself as a God-fearer, and the Lord promised to bless his progeny abundantly (22:15–18). It is reasonable to conclude that the narrator compiled the accounts of creation and sin artistically, and shaped some of the subsequent familial narratives in Genesis in light of the narratives of Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel.

In summary, the single familial plot undermines any artificial attempts to bifurcate the narrative of Cain-Abel from the narrative of Eden. For this reason, Christian theologians have to look beyond Genesis 3 if they wish to formulate a sound biblical hamartiology.² It is my contention that this study has strengthened the sense of textual intentionality behind the final form of Genesis 2–4. Other implications stemming from this research are yet to be

explored. The present study calls for more research in study of the compositional unity of chapters 2–4 under study against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern traditions. Another possible area for fruitful research can be the hermeneutical contribution of medieval Jewish exegesis to the literary-theological analysis of the accounts of sin in Genesis 2–4.
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