

ADAM,
THE FALL,
and ORIGINAL SIN

Theological, Biblical,
and Scientific Perspectives

EDITED BY
HANS MADUEME *and* MICHAEL REEVES

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Introduction

ADAM UNDER SIEGE

Setting the Stage

Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves

Adam seems today a figment of ancient imagination. His ghost still haunts the edifice of original sin, but the Augustinian structure is falling apart, crumbling, gone with the wind. Emil Brunner linked its underlying patristic picture of time and space with the centaur of mythology, something like a Brothers Grimm fairy tale; such notions, he wrote, have “irrevocably been swept away, even for the most orthodox people.”¹ Affirming Adam’s historicity in the twenty-first century is thus a quaint, but hopeless, attempt “to place the Augustinian ‘Adam in Paradise’ in a post-Copernican world.” Of course, we can choose to defend the traditional Adamic narrative with the careful rhetoric of anxiety-ridden theological guardians, but all that noise is pathetically “quixotic and reactionary”—much ado about nothing.² So goes the diagnosis of Brunner, a faithful spokesperson for modern theology. After Darwin the doctrines of the fall and original sin have become simply incredible for many people today.

What is perhaps surprising is that even evangelicals are increasingly losing faith in these classical doctrines. They are looking for new ways to make sense of Adam in Scripture. In 2007 Francis Collins, now director of the National Institutes of Health, was awarded a large grant from the Templeton Foundation

1. Emil Brunner, *Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 48.

2. *Ibid.*, 49.

to launch his new organization BioLogos.³ Its mission is to address “the escalating culture war between science and faith” and to model a better way: “the harmony of science and faith” (see www.biologos.org). BioLogos stands on firm ground since this approach embodies a long tradition that stretches back to the natural philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This ground has become slippery, however, and controversy soon followed when BioLogos raised questions about the historical reality of Adam and Eve.⁴

Bruce Waltke, the noted evangelical Old Testament scholar, resigned from Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS, Orlando) after recording an interview explaining how he reconciled his belief in theistic evolution with his interpretation of Genesis 1–3. In an excerpt of the interview, published on the BioLogos website on March 24, 2010, Waltke warned that evangelicals who reject the overwhelming consensus for evolution are in danger of becoming a “cult.”⁵ In Reformed circles and within broader conservative Protestant theology, those were fighting words. Although Waltke eventually clarified his unflinching commitment to Adam’s historicity, the fallout led to his resignation from his position at RTS (however, he was soon hired as distinguished professor of the Old Testament at Knox Theological Seminary).

Not long after, another interview surfaced, this one by evangelical Old Testament professor Tremper Longman. In the video, he cautioned against a “very highly literalistic” reading of Genesis 1–2. He was uncertain whether “Adam” referred to an actual individual or to humankind as a whole; he also suggested that the early chapters of Genesis “do not prohibit the idea that there is an evolutionary process.” The original interview by the Wilberforce Fellowship was recorded in September 2009 and was posted online the following year.⁶ Soon after, RTS released Longman from his adjunct teaching responsibilities. The dominoes were falling.

Already in 2005 Peter Enns had invoked the incarnation to revitalize the doctrine of inerrancy.⁷ He accused the traditional evangelical doctrine of Scripture of docetism and offered instead the *humanity* of the Bible as key to

3. On the origin of the term “BioLogos,” see Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 203–10.

4. More recently, BioLogos has adopted a more inclusive approach that invites dialogue and collaboration among a wide range of theological and scientific perspectives, including those that affirm a historical Adam.

5. For a brief synopsis of the controversy, see “Why Must the Church Come to Accept Evolution?: An Update,” *The BioLogos Forum*, April 2, 2010, <http://biologos.org/blog/why-must-the-church-come-to-accept-evolution-an-update>.

6. See Tremper Longman, “Is There a Historical Adam?,” Wilberforce Fellowship Video, September 16, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8Pk1vXL1WE>.

7. Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

understanding the nature of the Old Testament text. The book proved too hot to handle and, in 2008, he resigned under a dark cloud from Westminster Theological Seminary. He extended his thesis in a sequel volume, claiming that Christian theology can dispense with a historical Adam and Eve with no harm done.⁸ The chips were down, the stakes were raised, and the wider controversy threatened to splinter the already frail bonds within the evangelical coalition.⁹

All this is just the tip of the iceberg. Shipwrecks litter the ocean. Other professors have lost tenured positions under similar circumstances. Some see impending doom, a new fundamentalist inquisition looming on the horizon—if not already knocking at the door. This family quarrel has even caught the attention of the secular media.¹⁰ Are we, perhaps, witnessing another chapter in that unending polemical duel, the conflict between biblicists and evolutionists—creationists and theistic evolutionists facing off, pistols cocked, on opposite sides of the field? Well, surely some connections exist. For one, old-earth and young-earth creationists equally defend the historicity of Adam; demurring Christians are invariably theistic evolutionists.

But the reality is far more complex. So-called creationists agree on the historicity of Adam—yet they often disagree on the mode of his creation as well as the literary significance of the early chapters of Genesis.¹¹ And, of course, a theistic evolutionist *can* affirm a fall in history. One need look no further than early twentieth-century theistic evolutionists like James Orr, Pope Pius XII, and the Old Princeton theologians; they all insisted on Adam's supernatural creation and subsequent fall.¹²

The temptation in this debate is to think that Adam is simply one piece in a puzzle in which the fall and evolution are separate pieces that we can rearrange and shuffle around the board. But such a picture is misleading, too flat and one-dimensional. Adam and the fall do not float free in Scripture like rootless, atomistic, independent ideas. They are central nodes that hold together and are completely enmeshed in a much broader, organic, theological matrix. If we remove

8. Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

9. See Richard N. Ostling, "The Search for the Historical Adam," *Christianity Today*, June 2011, 23–27.

10. E.g., see Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "Evangelicals Question the Existence of Adam and Eve," NPR Morning Edition, August 9, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/08/09/138957812/evangelicals-question-the-existence-of-adam-and-eve>.

11. E.g., see the book symposium, *Journal of Creation Theology and Science Series B: Life Sciences 2* (2012): 27–47, between five young-earth creationists and C. John Collins, old-earth creationist, on his *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

12. E.g., see David Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

Adam and the fall from the architecture of the faith, what will the repercussions be? Something mild, like tossing a pebble into a pond with the ripples absorbed back into the system? Or something more serious, like the great fall of Humpty Dumpty, where all the king's exegetes and all the king's theologians couldn't put the faith back together again? Christians need reliable answers to such questions.

Much of the debate circles around three key areas. The first concerns the epistemological status of natural science for theology. Some argue that traditional beliefs simply have to change, one way or another, before what they see as the assured results of science. Other Christians have become militantly *anti-science* because they sense a growing threat from emerging scientific theories. On the one hand we need to recognize that the noetic effects of sin infect all strata of scientific investigation.¹³ Science should not usurp the authority of Scripture. Yet on the other hand there needs to be a due recognition that the empirical investigations of scientists can glorify God by helping us understand and relish his creation more deeply.

The second area is historical criticism of the Bible. Once we appropriately modify how we understand the nature of Scripture, the controversy loses its sharp teeth and largely vanishes. As Enns remarks, "We have to adjust our expectations of what the Bible can or cannot do; that is, we need to calibrate our genre expectations of Genesis in view of newer historical information."¹⁴ A historical-critical reading calls into question the traditional assumption that Genesis 3 and Romans 5 require a historical Adam. The question that many religious scholars are asking is whether an infallibilist picture of the Bible has held the evangelical mind captive. Biblical scholars operating with historical-critical assumptions have long made their peace with an Adam-less world. But evangelicals have only recently begun wrestling with these questions in a constructive way.¹⁵ The question remains whether evicting infallibilism from the house of evangelical theology will simply open the door to far more devastating historical-critical problems. Will the final condition of evangelical scholarship be worse than the first?¹⁶

13. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

14. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 42.

15. See Christopher Hays and Stephen Lane Herring, "Adam and the Fall," in *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism*, ed. Christopher Hays and Christopher Ansberry (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 24–54. This book continues the conversation started in Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991). See also Noll's related volume, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

16. That case is advanced in Robert Yarbrough, "Should Evangelicals Embrace Historical Criticism? The Hays-Ansberry Proposal," *Themelios* 39 (2014): 37–52. See also Paul Wells, "The

The final area of debate is church tradition, with Galileo as the poster boy. Geocentrism was widely accepted by the medieval church, a position rightly overturned by the heliocentric observations of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler. In the process, the church—both Protestant and Catholic—appeared defensive, reactionary, and woodenly literalistic in its reading of Scripture.¹⁷ Are we today facing another Galileo moment? In defending Adam’s historicity, are conservative evangelicals held captive by tradition? Even the Westminster Confession emphasizes the fallibility of tradition: “All synods or councils, since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err; *and many have erred*. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both.”¹⁸ Some have suggested that the evangelical intransigence is motivated by fear. To rethink the historicity of Adam would be to challenge a certain understanding of biblical authority and thereby threaten the group identity of conservative Protestants. As Enns writes, “For some Christians, therefore, evidence from natural science or archaeology, no matter how compelling, is simply inadmissible. *Too much is at stake*.”¹⁹ In short, what is the positive epistemic and instructional role of church tradition in the dialogue between science and theology, and what can we learn from the older perspectives of the patristic and Reformation traditions?

The book that you hold in your hands speaks into this situation and, while certainly not the final word, offers a measured word that seeks not only to engage important questions for specialists but also casts a wider gaze to more integrating, large-picture concerns. That is, after all, where normal Christians actually live, where the dogmatic rubber meets the existential road. But some have suggested that genuine theological scholarship should avoid any discussion that draws the Christian faith into *apologetics*—for such a situation can distract us from the very particular theological priorities of the faith and can even distort the balanced shape of the gospel (e.g., Karl Barth famously argued along those lines). We heed those concerns gladly. And yet any theology worthy of the gospel cannot shy away from adopting an apologetic orientation whenever extrabiblical factors threaten the integrity of the apostolic tradition handed down to us. Gospel fidelity sometimes demands apologetic instincts.

Lasting Significance of Ernst Troeltsch’s Critical Moment,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 72 (2010): 199–217.

17. See Ernan McMullin, ed., *The Church and Galileo* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) and Maurice A. Finocchiaro, “The Biblical Argument against Copernicanism and the Limitation of Biblical Authority: Ingoli, Foscarini, Galileo, Campanella,” in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 627–64.

18. Westminster Confession of Faith, 31.3, emphasis added.

19. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 146, emphasis added.

Indeed, if apologetics is a component of the *pastoral* function of theology—as we would argue—then it is precisely by engaging such contemporary questions that Christian theology can have a powerful existential and pastoral traction in the lives of believers.

There is no one chapter in this volume that can stand alone like Hercules and single-handedly rescue Adam from his rapidly diminishing theological, cultural, and scientific plausibility. However, when all the chapters are taken together as a unified voice, they offer “one long argument”²⁰ that engages these questions in a comprehensive way. Our basic thesis is that the traditional doctrine of original sin is not only orthodox but is also the most theologically cogent synthesis of the biblical witness.

The first part of this book begins with two chapters on the exegetical evidence for the historicity of Adam in the Old and New Testaments.²¹ The third chapter, written by “William Stone,” places Adam in conversation with crucial evidence from paleoanthropology. Stone is an academic paleontologist, and in his essay he has chosen for professional reasons to work under a pseudonym (neither his guild nor his colleagues will look kindly on what he has written here). We suggest that this curious, if not uncommon, situation is symptomatic of a debate that has become unhelpfully polarizing and politicized. The second part of the book includes four chapters that elaborate on the importance of original sin in patristic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Wesleyan traditions. Serving as a counterpoint, there is also a chapter on the waning prospects of the doctrine in modern theology. In the third part of the book, several chapters examine the doctrine of original sin in its rich biblical, theological, and pastoral dimensions. These important realities turn out to be remarkably resilient, bursting with life-giving theological energy, amid the massive scientific shifts that loom large in a post-Darwinian world. The final part of the book addresses some recurring challenges to the doctrines of the fall and original sin and demonstrates their continuing relevance and vitality.

Christian theology at its best will always be—can only be!—orthodox. Precisely for that reason it is also burdened to minister to the church in a way that always seeks to promote a functional and deep-rooted *confidence* in the great things of the gospel. It is that kind of theology that motivates this book. It is that kind of joyful theology that is worth living and dying for. With that intent we commend these chapters to the reader.

20. Darwin famously summarized his seminal volume as “one long argument” in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (London: John Murray, 1859), 459.

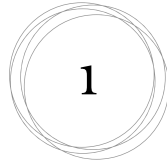
21. See also Ardel Caneday and Matthew Barrett, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

PART 1

Adam in the Bible and Science

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ADAM AND EVE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

C. John Collins

Traditionally Christians, like the Jews from whom they arose, have read the story of Adam and Eve in the opening chapters of the Bible as describing the first human beings, from whom all other humans descend. They have also taken the account of the “disobedience” in Genesis 3 as narrating the origin of all human sin: that is, these readers have supposed that God first made humans morally innocent and that the events of Genesis 3 transformed the moral condition of Adam and Eve, and thus of all humankind after them.¹

Many contemporary scholars have cast doubt on this traditional understanding of the origins both of humans and of sin. For example, James Barr (1924–2006), a biblical scholar of considerable influence in the twentieth century, asserted that the conventional way of reading Genesis “derives essentially from St Paul,” while a close reading of Genesis on its own terms will lead to

1. This essay draws on and develops material found in my “Adam and Eve in the Old Testament,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 15.1 (2011): 4–25, and *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), with those publishers’ permission. In 2009 I participated in a forum on historical Adam and Eve at the annual meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation, with Daniel Harlow and John Schneider arguing that we should *not* take them as historical persons. Our revised papers were published in the journal *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 62.3 (2010). In particular, my entry is “Adam and Eve as Historical People, and Why It Matters,” 147–65; and I will refer to Harlow’s here: “After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science,” 179–95.

different conclusions.² Further, Claus Westermann (1909–2002), another influential scholar, insisted that Genesis 3 (taken as a “fall” story) is of minimal importance in the entire Old Testament: “It is nowhere cited or presumed in the Old Testament; its significance is limited to primeval events.”³ And Peter Enns, an Old Testament scholar with an evangelical background, has carried forward this notion that the Old Testament (as distinct from Paul) does not attribute human sinfulness to Adam’s primal disobedience; indeed, it is a mistake to take Adam in Genesis as the actual first human being: “Paul’s Adam is not a result of a ‘straight’ reading of the Old Testament.”⁴

Several factors in the modern climate of thought make it attractive to reduce the importance of Adam and Eve. First, there is the perennial question of just *how* deeds done by someone else so long ago—even if that someone is my ancestor—can have such a major impact on life here and now.⁵ Second, there are parallels between the stories in Genesis and the tales that come from other parts of the ancient Near East (most notably from Mesopotamia); perhaps Genesis is doing something similar to what these other tales do, and if we do not accord “historicity” to the other tales, why should we suppose that it matters for Genesis?⁶ And third, many take current biological theories to imply that humans arose by way of an evolutionary, natural process rather than by the special action of God; these theories make it difficult to speak of the *first* members of a new species. I will address these climatic factors only in a very cursory way here and defer the larger discussion to another venue.

At first glance, it may seem that “Adam and Eve” do in fact play only a very small role in the whole Hebrew Bible (as distinct from the Apocrypha and New Testament). Victor Hamilton observed,

Apart from its uses in Gen. 1–5, the only other unambiguous occurrence of the proper name “Adam” in the OT is 1 Chron. 1:1. It may occur in Deut. 32:8; Job

2. James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 4. Harlow, “After Adam,” 187, follows Barr on this point. I have provided a critical review of Barr’s book in appendix 3 of *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*

3. Claus Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1974), 89, as cited with approval in W. Sibley Towner, “Interpretations and Reinterpretations of the Fall,” in Francis A. Eigo, ed., *Modern Biblical Scholarship: Its Impact on Theology and Proclamation* (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1984), 72.

4. Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say about Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 80.

5. J. Matthew Ashley, “Original Sin, Biblical Hermeneutics, and the Science of Evolution,” in Jitse van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions*, 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 2:407–36, discusses this impulse in the “modern” period, which leads to a rejection of traditional notions of “original sin.”

6. See, for example, Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 37.

31:33; Hos. 6:7. This is surprising, given the fact that OT literature does not hesitate to recall early heroes of Israel's past such as Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, and thus link the past with the present in one corporate continuum. . . . Unlike the OT, intertestamental literature and the NT have numerous references to Adam. For the former, compare Sir. 17:1; 49:16; Tob. 8:6; Wis. 2:23; 9:2. For the latter, compare Luke 3:38; Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 11:12; 15:22, 45–49; 1 Tim. 2:13–14.⁷

If the citational statistics were all that there is to the discussion, it would indeed be hard to warrant the traditional Christian emphasis on Adam and Eve. But, as I hope to show, these statistics are potentially misleading, and should not control our discussion.

Here is what I intend to accomplish in this essay. Since the explicit references to Adam and Eve occur primarily in Genesis 1–5, I will first show how chapters 1–11 of Genesis have a clear literary unity in their current form (regardless of their compositional history). If the rest of the Bible treats this material as a whole, then echoes of one part may well be evoking the whole. Second, I will examine specific issues within Genesis 1–5 to see how the text portrays Adam and Eve and their significance. Third, I will consider how the rest of the Old Testament refers to, evokes, or presupposes the story of Adam and Eve. Finally, I will briefly sample Jewish writings from the Second Temple period (outside of the New Testament) that show that these authors, from the mainstream of Judaism, saw Adam and Eve in much the same way as I do. Throughout my discussion I will draw attention to how the whole Old Testament story presupposes the historical significance of Adam and Eve as the fountainhead of humanity and as the doorway by which sin came into God's world.

The Unity of Genesis 1–11

Scholars commonly assign the different pericopes in Genesis 1–11 to separate sources. In particular, we often read that Genesis 1–2 presents two *different*

7. Victor P. Hamilton, “*dm* (no. 132),” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. A. VanGemeren, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:264. Generally speaking, I agree with his assessment of the proper name, and am happy to consider the common *ben/b'nê 'adam* as properly “son of man”/“children of mankind,” agreeing with the normal Septuagint rendering υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου/οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (except for Deut. 32:8, which renders *b'nê 'adam* as υἱοὶ Ἀδάμ; ESV “mankind”). Hamilton has probably overstated the situation with Noah, especially as compared with the many references to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses: outside of Gen. 5–10, Noah appears only in 1 Chron. 1:4; Isa. 54:9; Ezek. 14:14, 20; in the Apocrypha, see Tob. 4:12; Sir. 44:17–18; 4 Macc. 15:31: a situation comparable to that with Adam.

creation accounts (1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25), which may even be difficult to reconcile with each other.⁸

If we can establish that the current form of Genesis invites us to read Genesis 1–11 as a coherent whole, then we can say that any reading that fails to incorporate such coherence is inadequate—and that this is so regardless of what we think about the prehistory of the individual pericopes.

Its Setting in the Book of Genesis

The first line of argument is the fact that Genesis 1–11 is now part of the whole structure of Genesis. The organizing function of the *toledot* (“generations”) in Genesis is well known: see Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2. According to the *toledot*, Genesis 1 (really 1:1–2:3) stands as a kind of preface to the whole book, while Genesis 2–4 (2:4–4:26) is the next section, and so on.⁹

I shall argue that Genesis 1–11 (1:1–11:26) has its own coherence, and we can see that it stretches over several sections marked by the *toledot*. At the same time, as R. W. L. Moberly has noted, there is no real grammatical break from Genesis 11 to Genesis 12.¹⁰ The story as a whole progresses smoothly.

Now consider how Genesis 1:28 records God’s “blessing” on the human couple, urging them to “be fruitful and multiply.” These themes run throughout Genesis and beyond. In Genesis 9:1, Noah is a kind of “new Adam”:¹¹ “And God *blessed* Noah and his sons and said to them, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*” In Genesis 12:2–3, the Lord will *bless* Abram and make him a channel of *blessing* for his own descendants, and for the rest of the world. These promises are repeated to Abraham’s heirs: to Ishmael (17:20), Isaac (26:3–4), and Jacob (28:3; 48:3–4). The book of Exodus opens by telling us, “But the people of Israel *were fruitful* and increased greatly; they *multiplied* and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.” Deuteronomy promises that the people of Israel, when they are faithful, will continue to enjoy this blessing (30:16; see also 7:13):

8. See, for example, Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 140; Daniel Harlow, “Creation according to Genesis: Literary Genre, Cultural Context, Theological Truth,” *Christian Scholars Review* 37.2 (2008): 163–98.

9. See discussion in my *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 229.

10. R. W. L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*, Old Testament Theology series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 121.

11. See, e.g., William Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (1984; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 27; Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 117–18; Bruce Waltke and Cathy J. Fredericks, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 127–28.

If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and *multiply*, and the LORD your God will *bless* you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

All of this allows us to see that Genesis focuses on the ways in which God has made new starts after Adam and Eve—with Noah, and then with Abram and his offspring. Hence Noah, Abram, and Israel are “new Adams,” which shows how fully Genesis 1–2 is integrated into the whole Pentateuch.

God’s calling of Abraham is not simply for his own benefit but also for the rest of the world.¹² One of the chief themes of Old Testament messianic hope is the expectation that under the leadership of the Messiah, the people of God will succeed in bringing God’s light to the gentile world. The shape of this biblical story assumes that all human beings have a common origin, a common predicament, and a common need to know God and have God’s image restored in them; this assumption comes from including Genesis 1–11 in the story, with some version of the conventional reading of the “fall” of the whole human family.

Parallels between Genesis 1–11 and Ancient Near Eastern “Myths”

A second avenue for establishing that we should read Genesis 1–11 together comes from the parallels with materials from other ancient Near Eastern peoples, particularly from the Mesopotamians.¹³

12. Here I agree with, e.g., Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 194–221, as over against Moberly, *Theology of the Book of Genesis*, 141–61. Wright’s position does better justice than Moberly’s to: (1) the likely sense of the passive or reflexive verb in Gen. 12:3 (“all the families of the earth shall be blessed/shall find blessing for themselves,” rather than “shall bless themselves”); (2) the context of Gen. 12:1–3 in Genesis, with its evocation of 1:28 and the other “blessing” texts addressed to Abraham’s descendants; (3) the biblical themes of blessing coming to the gentiles by way of Abraham’s family; and (4) the way that Ps. 72:17 echoes Gen. 22:18. On points (2) and (4), see further T. D. Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.2 (1997): 363–67; my “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 54.1 (2003): 75–86. As for the sense of “in you,” Moberly makes no place for covenant inclusion, but this seems to me to be the best explanation of the Hebrew term: people are “in” someone when they are members of the people that the someone represents. This general perspective plays no part in the argument of Enns, *Evolution of Adam*.

13. I have a much fuller discussion of this topic in appendix 1 of my *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 35, claims that the discovery of the relevant texts beginning in the nineteenth century has “for the first time—and irrevocably—placed Israelite religion in a larger context.” This is actually incorrect: Second Temple Jewish and early Christian authors

I noted that we intuitively see a transition between Genesis 1–11 and the rest of Genesis. Even though there is no grammatical shift, nevertheless our intuition finds support in how the narrator slows down in the Abraham story: he has been covering large stretches of time in brief narratives, whereas now he is taking more narration time to cover less elapsed time in more detail.

These other stories from the ancient Near East further confirm our intuition. I see no reason to quarrel with the way in which specialists on the ancient Near East find the chief parallels with Genesis 1–11 to include the Sumerian King List, the Atrahasis Epic, and the Eridu Genesis/Sumerian Flood Tale.¹⁴ (Another story, *Enuma Elish*, or the *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, once seemed a promising source for comparisons as well, and some biblical scholars still turn to it; Assyriologists, however, seem less willing than formerly to endorse much of a comparison.¹⁵)

were aware of this context, although their sources were predominantly in Greek. For example, Theophilus of Antioch (whom Enns mentions in another context, 88) addressed questions about the relation of the Genesis flood story to what he took to be versions of the same story coming from pagan sources. See discussion in my “Noah, Deucalion, and the New Testament,” *Biblica* 93.3 (2012): 403–26. The great contribution of the archaeologists has been to give us these texts in their ancient Near Eastern language forms.

14. See, for example, David T. Tsumura, “Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 27–57, esp. 44–57; Richard Averbeck, “The Sumerian Historiographic Tradition and its Implications for Genesis 1–11,” in *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*, ed. A. R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 79–102; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 423–25; and Anne Drafkorn Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical *Nephilim*,” in *Perspectives on Language and Text*, ed. Edgar W. Conrad (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 39–43. Richard S. Hess, “The Genealogies of Genesis 1–11 and Comparative Literature,” *Biblica* 70 (1989): 241–54 (reprinted in Hess and Tsumura, *I Studied Inscriptions*, 58–72), adds some helpful cautions about the differences between the biblical genealogies and the king lists. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 40.4 (1977): 147–55, supports the parallel between the biblical flood story and Atrahasis over, say, Gilgamesh; at the same time, despite her helpful observations about the contrast between the biblical and Mesopotamian accounts, I do not find all of her specific exegetical points on Genesis to be compelling.

15. W. G. Lambert has argued for a reduced interest in *Enuma Elish*; see his article, “A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis,” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 16.2 (1965): 287–300. He contends (291), “The first major conclusion is that the *Epic of Creation* is not a norm of Babylonian or Sumerian cosmology. It is a sectarian and aberrant combination of mythological threads woven into an unparalleled composition. In my opinion it is not earlier than 1100 B.C.” See also Alan R. Millard, “A New Babylonian ‘Genesis’ Story,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967): 3–18, and Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the OT*, 425. A further argument that the notion of *Chaoskampf* (such as that found in *Enuma Elish*) is absent from Gen. 1 comes from Gordon H. Johnston, “Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165.658 (2008): 178–94; he contends that the Egyptian stories are a promising

There is much to say about the connections, and about the ways in which Genesis 1–11 is both similar and dissimilar to these other sources, which space forbids me to do here. The point of interest for now is that this overarching pattern from Mesopotamia provides a literary and ideological context into which Genesis 1–11 speaks: it is reasonable to conclude that Genesis 1–11 does so *as a whole*.

What does this parallel tell us about the function of Genesis 1–11? The Mesopotamian sources provide what Assyriologist William Hallo calls “pre-history”—the period of human existence before there are any secure written records—and “protohistory”—the earliest stages for which there are records.¹⁶ Another way to put this is to recognize that these materials provide what we can call the front end of the official Mesopotamian worldview story. Further, it appears that the Mesopotamians aimed to accomplish their purpose by founding their stories on what they thought were actual events, albeit told with a great deal of imagery and symbolism. This means that those who think that a text is historically referential *only* if we can read it with a literalistic hermeneutic are making a fundamental mistake: not only are they failing to read the ancient text on its own terms, but they are actually ignoring the way that human communication works.

Thus it is reasonable to take Genesis 1–11 as providing the “official”—divinely approved—version by which God’s people are to picture prehistory and protohistory, expecting similar attention to history without undue literalism.¹⁷

backdrop for Genesis. While I do not doubt the relevance of the Egyptian material, I find the pattern of the Mesopotamian material to provide the best overall parallel. Similarly, John H. Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after *Chaoskampf*,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 43.1 (2008): 48–63, rejects both *Chaoskampf* and “theomachy” but goes on to argue that Genesis 1 is a “temple cosmology,” as in his popular *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009) and in his academic *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011). Nevertheless, Bruce Waltke (see Waltke and Fredericks, *Genesis*, 23) still finds what he considers important parallels in *Enuma Elish*, as does Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, e.g., 38–43. The factors mentioned here seriously weaken both cases. See also the chapter by Noel Weeks in this volume.

16. William W. Hallo, “Part 1: Mesopotamia and the Asiatic Near East,” in *The Ancient Near East: A History*, ed. William W. Hallo and William K. Simpson (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 25.

17. I make this point more fully in “Adam and Eve as Historical People,” 150–53, and even more fully in chapter 2 and appendix 1 of *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Contrast Harlow, “After Adam,”* 185–87, who notices symbolic and pictorial elements in both Genesis and the Mesopotamian stories, and pronounces them both unhistorical. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, makes a similar assumption throughout. These authors are conflating historicity with a literalistic scheme of interpretation, without argument.

Literary and Linguistic Links across Genesis 1–11

My third line of argument for the propriety of reading Genesis 1–11 as a unit comes from the literary and linguistic links between these pericopes.

Well-known links for the whole of Genesis 1–11 include those already noted between Adam and Noah, presenting Noah as a “new Adam.” Further, there are clear links between Genesis 1 and Genesis 5, such as 1:26–27 and 5:1–5 (the life of Adam), and between Genesis 4 and 5, such as 4:25–26 and 5:3–11 (Seth and Enosh). There may be a link between the genealogy descended from Cain (4:17–22) and that from Seth (5:6–32), especially in the names Enoch, Methushael/Methuselah, and Lamech (see 4:18 with 5:18, 21, 25), although this is not entirely certain.¹⁸

Genesis 9–11 is coherent with the previous pericopes, since these chapters record the sequel to the great flood, with the descent of various peoples from the family of Noah (see 10:1), as linked by the genealogies (see 11:10, picking up the line of Shem), with 11:10–19 paralleling 10:21–25 (through Peleg), and 11:20–26 bringing the line down to Abram, Nahor, and Haran (who, with their descendants, will feature in the rest of Genesis).

Within Genesis 1–4 there are also clear linkages. First, Genesis 2–4 is commonly assigned to the J source, with a few redactions; the overall unity is not controversial.¹⁹ Second (see below), Genesis 2:4–25 serves to elaborate the sixth “day” of Genesis 1. Third, the common assertion that the P creation story (Gen. 1) is free of anthropomorphisms is mistaken;²⁰ this story actually depends on an anthropomorphism, namely, the portrayal of God as one who goes through his work week and enjoys his Sabbath rest.²¹ Genesis 2 contributes its own anthropomorphism to this pattern, depicting God as if he were a potter “forming” the first man (2:7), and a worker who “builds” the first woman (2:22). Finally, several verbal links show that, whatever separate origins the individual pericopes might have had, they have been edited in such a way as

18. See my *Genesis 1–4*, 201, where I suggest that maybe the contrast between the two families is prominent. Perhaps as well this indicates that the decline we see in Cain’s family was not an inevitable outcome of being human; rather it flowed from the moral orientation of the members, which in turn was influenced by the orientation of the head member of the list. We might also suspect that the author saw the orientation of Cain’s line as becoming dominant, and perhaps drawing Seth’s descendants away from God, so that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (6:5).

19. See Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), and my discussion in *Genesis 1–4*, 227–28.

20. E.g., Friedman, *Bible with Sources Revealed*, 12; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, Westminster Commentary (London: Methuen, 1904), xxv.

21. I have argued this in a number of places, e.g., in *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003) and *Genesis 1–4*, 77.

to exhibit coherence. For example, in 1:28 we read, “And God *blessed* them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and *multiply*.’” In Genesis 3 the “blessing” (*brk*) has turned to “curse” (*’rr*), the proper antonym. And whereas the blessing was for them to *multiply* by having children, after the disobedience God says to the woman that he will “surely *multiply* your pain in childbearing”—the arena of blessing has turned into one of pain and danger. The genealogical chapter 5 (v. 29) also refers to God’s “curse” on the ground (3:17): “and [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, ‘Out of the ground that the LORD has *curse*d [*’rr*] this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the *painful* toil [*’itstsábôn*, see 3:16, 17] of our hands.’”

Further, three “enigmatic” first-person plurals, by which God addresses “us,” appear through Genesis 1–11: 1:26; 3:22; and 11:7. Many suppose that these (or at least the first) are God addressing his angelic council, although I judge the best explanation to be a “plural of self-address.”²² The specific conclusion here does not matter for my purpose: the point is that this is a distinctive feature of this stretch of material, from supposedly separate sources. Once we recognize how Genesis 1–11 is integrated into the whole flow of the book of Genesis, and how these chapters parallel basic worldview-shaping materials from Mesopotamia, it is no surprise to find that whoever put these chapters together did so in such a way that they display their unity at the literary and linguistic level.

Do Genesis 1 and 2 Give Us Two Creation Accounts?

Now let us focus more narrowly on the two pericopes, Genesis 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25. Do these passages not indeed foil every attempt to read them coherently?

As for whether they come from separate sources, the arguments for and against such sources will forever be indecisive, since none of these putative sources is actually known to exist. The only text that we have is the one that places these two passages together. Further, we have no reason to expect that whoever put these passages together was a blockhead (or a committee of blockheads), who could not recognize contradictions every bit as well as we can. As James Barr—who accepted the common critical breakup of Genesis into putative sources, and a late date for its final composition—points out, it

22. For relevant discussion, see Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 59–61. More recently, Lyle Eslinger, “The Enigmatic Plurals like ‘One of Us’ (Genesis i 26, iii 22, and xi 7) in Hyperchronic Perspective,” *Vetus Testamentum* 56.2 (2006): 171–84, argues that these plurals reflect a heightened focus on the divine-human difference. I am not convinced, and retain what I find to be a simpler, and more exegetically based, explanation.

is reasonable to expect an editor to have smoothed out genuine contradictions between his sources, and tensions that remained would have invited ancient audiences to seek ways to “recognize the truthfulness of *both* narratives.”²³ (Barr himself did not explain how he thought this smoothing actually worked.) Therefore, if literary and linguistic studies point to a way to read the whole production coherently, we do well to pay heed.

My own literary and linguistic studies have led to just such coherence. I support a version of the traditional rabbinic opinion, namely that, far from finding two discordant accounts, we should see Genesis 1:1–2:3 as the overall account of God creating and preparing the earth as a suitable place for humans to live, and Genesis 2:4–25 as elaborating the events of the sixth day of Genesis 1.²⁴ This traditional reading lies behind, say, the way Haydn’s oratorio *Die Schöpfung* (*The Creation*) weaves the two narratives together: on the sixth day, God created man in his “own image” (Gen. 1:27), and “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7).²⁵ More important, it also underlies the way that Jesus read the two passages together, in Matthew 19:3–9 (Mark 10:2–9), combining Genesis 1:27 with 2:24.²⁶ My work supplies a grammatical justification for this traditional approach by showing how Genesis 2:4–7 links the two stories. Further, the validity of this reading does not rest on any view of the authorship and date of Genesis.²⁷

The purpose of Genesis 1:1–2:3 is to celebrate as a great achievement God’s work of fashioning the world as a suitable place for humans to live. “The

23. James Barr, “One Man, or All Humanity? A Question in the Anthropology of Genesis 1,” in *Recycling Biblical Figures: Papers Read at a NOSTER Colloquium in Amsterdam*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Jan Willem van Henten, May 12–13, 1997, Studies in Theology and Religion (Leiden: Deo, 1999), 6. Speaking frankly, as a traditional Christian I am wary of any exegetical gift that Barr might offer; see my critical discussion of his famous 1984 letter to David Watson in my *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?*, 364–66. At the same time, Barr’s contributions to linguistic rigor in biblical studies are substantial, and we ought to acknowledge his positions when he presents arguments to show their validity.

24. See my *Genesis 1–4*, 108–12, 121–22. For examples of the traditional Jewish opinion, see the Hebrew commentary of Yehudah Kiel, *Sefer Bereshit* (Genesis), Da’at Miqra’ (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1997), page 712 (citing “our sages of blessed memory,” with n7 listing some of them).

25. Franz Joseph Haydn, *Die Schöpfung* (Hob. xxi:2), §§23–24. Observe in addition how Ps. 104, widely acknowledged to depend on Gen. 1, alludes as well in v. 14 to Gen. 2, with its mention of “cultivate” (Heb. ‘bd, “work,” in Gen. 2:5, 15; 3:23).

26. Harlow, “After Adam,” 189, mistakenly asserts that Paul “is the only writer to appeal to the story of Adam, Eve, and the serpent,” and he denies that the Gospels or Revelation appropriate the story. This is an astonishing claim, but addressing it is not within my scope here. Similarly, Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, misses the significance of these texts. I refer the reader to chap. 3 of my *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*

27. I argue that the material is substantially Mosaic in *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, appendix 3.

exalted tone of the passage allows the reader to ponder this with a sense of awe, adoring the goodness, power, and creativity of the One who did all this.²⁸

Then comes Genesis 2:4–7:

These are the generations

of the heavens and the earth when they were created,
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.²⁹

The chiasmic structure of 2:4 (a *heavens* | b *earth* | c *when they were created* // c' *in the day that the LORD God made* | b' *earth* | c' *heavens*), looking back to the first pericope and forward to the second, invites us to read the two passages in union. The change in divine name, from “God” (*ʾelohîm*) in 1:1–2:3 to “the LORD God” (*YHWH ʾelohîm*) in 2:4–3:24, functions rhetorically to identify the universal, majestic, transcendent Creator (God) with the covenant God of Israel (the Lord), which in turn grounds God’s purpose for Israel to be a particular people called to be a vehicle of blessing to the whole world.

The action of Genesis 2:7 parallels that of 1:27. The ESV of 2:5–7 shows how verses 5–6 provide the setting for the event of verse 7: in a particular region (“the land,” verse 5), at a particular time of year (at the end of the dry season, before it had begun to rain, when the rain clouds [“mist”] were beginning to rise)—that is when God formed the man. In other words, we read Genesis 1 and 2 together by taking 2:4–25 as filling out details of the “sixth day,” amplifying 1:24–31.³⁰ Specifically, it explains how it was that God created humankind as

28. Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 78–79. Moshe Weinfeld has declared that the passage is “liturgical” in its origin: see “Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord—the Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” in *Mélanges Bibliques et Orientaux en l’Honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor (AOAT 212; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981), 501–12. While I do not agree with all that lies behind Weinfeld’s statement, I do think that it captures the celebratory tone of the passage.

29. The English Standard Version reflects the linguistic arguments given in my “Discourse Analysis and the Interpretation of Gen. 2:4–7,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999): 269–76. The Holman Christian Standard Bible is similar, except for the water source in v. 6; but see Max Rogland, “Interpreting **טל** in Genesis 2.5–6: Neglected Rabbinic and Intertextual Evidence,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34.4 (2010): 379–93, for strong support of the ESV.

30. On the specific question of Gen. 2:19 and the order of events, see my discourse-oriented grammatical study, “The Wayyiqtol as ‘Pluperfect’: When and Why,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46.1 (1995): 135–40. Harlow, “After Adam,” 185, refers to the NIV (and by implication, the ESV)

male and female and equipped them to be fruitful and multiply. We can see this further from the way “it is not good that the man should be alone” in 2:18 jars with the “very good” of 1:31: this shows us that chapter 2 has not reached the point of 1:31 until the man and the woman have become one flesh. Once we get to 2:25, with the man and woman naked and not ashamed, we breathe a sigh of relief: we are now at the point where it is all “very good.”

Hence we have every justification to read Genesis 1–11 as a connected narrative, with Genesis 2 serving as an elaboration of Genesis 1, and chapters 3–11 describing the events that followed the making of the world. Genesis 1–11 thus provides a coherent front end of the Bible’s worldview story for the people of God.

Adam and Eve in Genesis 1–5

Adam and Eve as the First Human Pair

The figure named “Adam” appears unambiguously in Genesis 2–5. The proper name “Adam” transliterates the Hebrew word for “human being, humankind,” *’adam*.³¹ In Genesis 2:20, “the man” is first called “Adam.”³² Genesis 2:5 says “there was no *man* (*’adam*) to work the ground,” and thus in 2:7 the Lord God formed “the man” using dust from the ground. In 2:18 “the man” is alone, and the Lord God sets out to make a helper fit for him. Throughout 2:4–4:26, whether he is called “the man” or “Adam,” he is presented as one person. The man’s one wife is simply called either “the woman” or “his wife” throughout—although once she receives her name Eve in 3:20, that name becomes another option (see also 4:1, where both are used together). The name Adam appears also in the genealogy of 5:1–5.

The divine plan to “make *man* in our image, after our likeness” (1:26) may refer to humankind in general (as most commentators think),³³ or it may refer

rendering with a pluperfect at Gen. 2:19 as “translational sleight of hand,” but shows no awareness of the grammatical issues.

31. It is common to connect “man” (*’adam*) with the “ground” (*’adamâ*, 2:7) from which he was formed. However, since the account goes on to say that the other animals were also formed from the ground (2:19), this wordplay seems less likely. The first-century Jewish writer Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.1.2, line 34) connected the word with the Hebrew for “red” (*’adôm*), which is as likely an explanation as any other (assuming that we have to find a wordplay).

32. The usual rule is that the form with the definite article, *ha-’adam*, is “the man,” the newly formed human being of 2:7. In the received Hebrew text the form in 2:20 lacks the article, so it is rendered “Adam.” Some prefer to insert the article at 2:20 (which would only be the change of a vowel, from *l’adam* to *la’adam*), thus deferring the first instance of the proper name to 3:17 (or even to 4:25).

33. See Richard Hess, “Splitting the Adam,” in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 1.

to *the man* in particular (as Barr argues).³⁴ Whichever we prefer, we can see that 2:4–25 fills in the details of how humankind came to be composed of male and female members, both of whom are in God’s image. Both the title “the human” (“the man”) and the proper name Adam (“human”) are fitted to someone whose actions are in some sense *representative* of all humankind.³⁵

But he might “represent” humankind either as a personification, or as a particular member, or perhaps as both. Which sense fits here? Barr—rightly, I judge—argues the following in regard to 5:1–2: “This text, just here at the start of the genealogy, seems to me to make sense only if the writer intends one human pair, from whose descendants the world will gradually come to be populated.”³⁶

This reading, that Adam and Eve are presented as a particular pair, the first parents of all humanity, is widespread in the exegetical literature, both from writers who have some kind of traditionalist commitment to the Bible’s truthfulness and from those who do not (such as Barr).³⁷ At the same time, this does not exclude Adam from being a *representative* in the sense of being a kind of paradigm through which we learn something about how temptation works.³⁸

At any rate, the man who was once “alone” (2:18) now has a wife; these two disobey God and leave the garden of Eden. They have children, who also have children (chap. 4). The genealogy of Genesis 5 links this pair to subsequent people, leading up to Noah (5:32), from whom came Abraham (11:10–26), the forefather of Israel. It makes no difference for our purposes whether the flood is thought to have killed *all* humankind (outside of Noah and his family); nor does it matter how many generations the genealogies may or may not have skipped. The genealogies of Genesis 1–11 link Father Abraham, whom the people of Israel took to be historical, with Adam, who is otherwise hidden from the Israelites in the mists of antiquity.

34. Barr, “One Man, or All Humanity?,” 9, based on the wording of 5:1–2. Harlow, “After Adam,” 185, insists that Genesis 1 and 2 differ in this respect, without really interacting with any effort to read the two together.

35. See Hess, “Splitting the Adam,” 12; see also Kiel, *Sefer Bereshit*, קב (at Gen. 4:1); and Dexter E. Callender Jr., *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human*, Harvard Semitic Studies (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 32: “There is an obvious and understandable awareness that Adam stands between God and humanity.”

36. Barr, “One Man, or All Humanity?,” 9.

37. See also Barr, “One Man, or All Humanity?,” 5: “We no longer believe that all humanity originated in one single human pair. In respect of our beliefs about humanity the narrative of chapter 1 is closer to what we actually believe”—i.e., under the reading that “man” is just a collective for all humanity, which Barr proceeds to reject.

38. Harlow, “After Adam,” 187, engages in an unnecessary contrast: “not reporting historical events but picturing paradigmatic ones.” Why can it not do *both*?

I say “the mists of antiquity” to remind us that we are dealing with “pre-history” and “protohistory.” As Kenneth Kitchen argues, in the nineteenth century BC, people “*knew already* that their world was old, very old”;³⁹ thus “the mists of antiquity” represents the perspective of the ancients themselves. I have already indicated that Israel’s narrative of prehistory bears a relationship with the narratives of prehistory found in Mesopotamia. This implies that, like those other stories, Genesis aims to tell the true story of origins, but it also implies that there are likely to be figurative elements and literary conventions that should make us wary of being too literalistic in our reading.⁴⁰ That is, the genre identification for Genesis 1–11, prehistoric and protohistory, does *not* mean that the author had no concern for real events; far from it, it implies that real events form the backbone of his story.

At the same time, as is widely known, there are important contrasts between Genesis 1–11 and the Mesopotamian prehistories. The differing ways the stories are told convey very different stances toward the divine, the world, and man’s calling.

Umberto Cassuto saw this clearly. After describing the similarities and differences between the other stories and those of Genesis, he observes the stress in Genesis on the unified origins of humankind: “In another respect, too, the Pentateuchal account differs from those given in the aforementioned texts, namely, in that it speaks of the creation of only one human pair, a fact that implies the brotherhood and equality of man, whereas the pagan texts refer to the mass creation of mankind as a whole.”⁴¹

The ideology of the Genesis prehistory-protohistory is clear from its own literary context as the front end of the book of Genesis: that is, Genesis 1–11 is the backdrop of the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob story, which is the backdrop of the Exodus story. This prehistory grounds the call of Abraham by showing how all human beings are related, and therefore equally in need of God’s blessing, and equally reachable with that blessing. Abraham is God’s answer to this universal need (Gen. 12:1–3): he is to be the vehicle of blessing to “all the

39. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 439.

40. Compare the remark of A. R. Millard on the topic of excessive literalism in general: “The writers were describing unusual riches in phrases that convey the thought clearly enough, *without demanding a literal interpretation*.” “Story, History, and Theology,” in Millard, Hoffmeier, and Baker, eds., *Faith, Tradition, and History*, 49, emphasis added.

41. Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah: Genesis I–VI.8* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961 [1944]), 83. This remark has an extra poignancy when we recall that Cassuto was an Italian-born Jew who emigrated to Israel and wrote this commentary in Hebrew during the Holocaust. It is not entirely clear how Cassuto wanted to reconcile this insight with his general demurral from historical reading, except that he appears to have been looking for timeless lessons (“brotherhood and equality”).

families of the earth” (12:3), starting the family through which all humankind, which is now estranged from God, will come to know the true God.

Once we recognize this, we also recognize that Genesis 1–11 is deliberately shaped with this purpose in mind. Many, for example, have noticed the way in which the garden of Eden becomes a pattern for describing the Israelite sanctuary, and even the land of Israel.⁴² That is to say, the Old Testament views Eden as the first sanctuary, where God is present with his covenant partners (Adam and Eve); the tabernacle, and later the temple, reinstate this Edenic blessing. What makes the Promised Land special is that it too is to be like a reconstituted Eden, whose fruitfulness displays God’s presence to the whole world.⁴³ There is every reason to expect that Genesis has portrayed Adam and Eden with goals like this in mind: that is, Adam is “like” an Israelite, and Eden is “like” Israel and the sanctuary, so that each member of God’s people will see himself or herself as God’s “renewed Adam” in the world. Hence the notion, put forward most recently by Enns, that “some elements of the [Genesis] story suggest that it is not about universal human origins but Israel’s origin,” has things exactly backward, because it takes no account of Israel’s calling to be a vehicle of universal blessing and restoration of properly functioning humanity, nor does it account for the literary impact that calling would have on the Pentateuch’s way of describing Eden and Adam.⁴⁴ (It also overlooks the way Genesis 1–11, in its current coherent form, presents Adam as the ancestor for a whole range of “families of the earth,” not just for Israel.)

These considerations show why the author may well use such devices as “anachronism” if it serves his purpose; “historical verisimilitude” (aiming to get all the details of life exactly as the characters would have known them, even if the audience did not live that way) is not strongly claimed by the text itself.⁴⁵

42. This is the thesis of, for example, Martin Emmrich, “The Temptation Narrative of Genesis 3:1–6: A Prelude to the Pentateuch and the History of Israel,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 73.1 (2001): 3–20. Not all of his points are persuasive, but his suggestion that “the garden of Genesis 2–3 wants to be viewed as the archetype of the land of Israel” (5) is sound. Harlow, “After Adam,” 185, notices this but then concludes that therefore Genesis is not historical. Again, he is confusing historicity with literalistic reading.

43. See, for example, Wright, *The Mission of God*, 334.

44. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 65.

45. Indeed, historical verisimilitude in literary compositions did not arise, at least in the West, until the modern period. This, by the way, is one of the arguments in favor of seeing ancient tradition, rather than free composition, behind the stories of the patriarchs (Gen. 12–50): their manners and customs reflect accurate recollections of the time in which the events occurred, not simply the time of whoever wrote the stories down. On this last point, see A. R. Millard, “Methods of Studying the Patriarchal Narratives as Ancient Texts,” in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, ed. A. R. Millard and Donald J. Wiseman (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1980), 43–58.

The marriage of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:23–25) becomes the paradigm for any sound future marriage of human beings. The comment in 2:24 makes clear that this is programmatic for human life: “Therefore [because of the events of verses 21–23] a man [Hebrew *’ish*, any male human being] shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

And what shall we make of the “death” that God threatens in Genesis 2:17? I maintain that the primary reference is “spiritual death” (alienation from God and one another) as exhibited in Genesis 3:8–13. But that is not all: it would appear that this is followed by their physical death as well (v. 19). For now I simply observe that we should be careful about letting the *distinction* between spiritual and physical death, which is proper, lead us to drive a wedge of *separation* between the two kinds of death: it looks like the author presents them as two aspects of one experience. In other words, physical death is not any more “natural” for human experience than spiritual death is.⁴⁶

In Genesis 3:20 the woman receives a name, “Eve.” This is connected in some way to the Hebrew word for “live,” and the Septuagint renders it as *Zoë*, “life.” The form of the Hebrew name, however—*Khawwâ*, from the root *kh-w-h*, “to live”—probably indicates a causative significance, i.e., “she who gives life,” “life-giver” (see ESV footnote).⁴⁷ This supports the interpretation found in the ancient Jewish Aramaic translation called Targum Onkelos (no later than fourth century AD): “the mother of all the children of man”—that is, all humans descend from her.⁴⁸

Good Literary Reading of Genesis 2–3

To be good readers of Genesis requires that we adapt ourselves to its literary conventions and style. I have already noted that the prehistory and protohistory genre leads us to certain stylistic expectations (namely in regard to both “history” and literalism). Further, since about 1980 there have been enormous advances in the study of narrative poetics for the Bible. The most important result for us is to realize that, in view of the features found in biblical narrative, we should expect that the authors will communicate their point of view by indirect and laconic means, especially emphasizing *showing* (displaying the heart by action and speech) over *telling* (explicitly evaluating

46. See further my *Genesis 1–4*, 116–19, 160–62. In contrast, Barr, *Garden of Eden*, chap. 2, claims that the Old Testament views death as “natural”; but, as I point out in my *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 162–63, this depends on an astounding equivocation on the word “natural.”

47. See my *Genesis 1–4*, 154n22, drawing on Scott C. Layton, “Remarks on the Canaanite Origin of Eve,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59.1 (1997): 22–32.

48. See Kiel, *Sefer Bereshit*, 12 (on Gen. 3:20).

the characters and actions).⁴⁹ Readers must draw the right inferences from the words and actions recorded. To the extent that this literary methodology is valid, scholars who ignore these principles limit their ability to read Genesis for what it is.⁵⁰

Consider the fact that the snake in Genesis 3 talks. The commentator Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) finds this to be a feature of fairy tales and legends, where we expect to read of talking animals; oddly enough, he refers to Balaam’s donkey in Numbers 22 as another of the “Hebrew legends.”⁵¹ This is odd because the narrator in Numbers 22:28 says that the Lord “opened the mouth of the donkey,” which is what enabled it to speak. That is, the writer did *not* portray a world in which donkeys speak; he instead recounted what he thought was a *miracle*.⁵² Hence, the only other example of a talking animal in a biblical narrative attributes that speech to some kind of interference with the animal’s proper “nature.” Besides, when we observe the serpent’s knowledge of what God said in Genesis 2:17 (in 3:4 the serpent echoes the divine “surely die”), in addition to the evil that the serpent speaks (he urges disobedience to God’s solemn command, calls God a liar, and insinuates that God’s motives cannot be trusted), we perceive the firm footing of the Jewish and New Testament interpretive tradition that sees the Evil One (“Satan” or “the devil”) as the agent who used this serpent as its mouthpiece (e.g., Wis. 1:13; 2:24; John 8:44; Rev. 12:9; 20:2).⁵³ In fact, to deny this by insisting that Genesis never *mentions* the Evil One is actually a poor reading, because it fails to appreciate “showing” over “telling.” If we read the story thus poorly, we miss a crucial part of its import.⁵⁴

We can also infer the function of the two trees, the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and the “tree of life.”⁵⁵ The “knowledge of good and evil”

49. Helpful resources include Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); V. Philips Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), esp. his section on “Selected Features of Hebrew Narrative Style,” 21–41.

50. Authors such as James Barr and Peter Enns, who embrace some level of what is called “historical criticism” (and claim to speak for the consensus of biblical scholars), ignore such questions entirely. I take encouragement from C. S. Lewis, “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism,” in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967 [1959]), 152–66, who finds a lack of literary judgment to be a recurring feature of skeptical criticism.

51. Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997 [1910]), 15.

52. On this point see my discussion in *The God of Miracles: An Exegetical Examination of God’s Action in the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 96–97.

53. See further my *Genesis 1–4*, 171–72.

54. See *ibid.*, 173n66, for another example of a leading commentator’s (Westermann) failure to account for showing over telling.

55. See *ibid.*, 115–16.

has received many competing interpretations; I hold that this tree is the means by which the humans were to acquire a knowledge of good and evil—if they stood the test, they would know good and evil from above, as those who have mastered temptation; sadly, they came to know good and evil from below, as those who have been mastered by temptation. This explanation fits well with the fact that God acknowledges that the humans have actually gained some knowledge (3:22); it also fits with the other uses of the expression, “to know good and evil” (and phrases like it), in the rest of the Hebrew Bible, to express the idea of discernment (which is often gained through maturation).

In fact, this interpretation also helps us to appreciate what is going on in the temptation. I have argued that the humans were created morally innocent (“innocence” is not naïveté or moral neutrality), but not necessarily “perfect.” Their task was to mature through the exercise of their obedience, to become confirmed in moral goodness. We cannot say that they were *at this point* necessarily “immortal”; but the narrative does not dwell on what might have been. This, as it turns out, has some similarities to Irenaeus’s reading of Genesis 1–3. By his understanding, the innocence of Genesis 2 was more like that of a child than of a full adult; God’s goal for them was their maturity (a possible sense of “knowing good and evil,” see Deut. 1:39). Their fall broke the process of growth.⁵⁶

But what of the “tree of life”? Does it work “automatically,” which is what most mean by calling it magical? Genesis says very little about it. What it does say (3:22, where God fears that the man might live forever if he takes of the tree of life) should be put together with the other passages that use the same idea. In Proverbs 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4, various blessings are likened to a tree of life: all of these blessings, according to Proverbs, are means to keep the faithful on the path to everlasting happiness. In Revelation 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19, the tree is a symbol of confirmation in holiness for the faithful. This warrants us in finding this tree to be some kind of “sacrament” that sustains or confirms someone in his moral condition: that is why God finds it so horrifying to think of the man eating of the tree in his current state. I call it a “sacrament” because I do not know how it is supposed to convey its effects, any more than I know how the biblical sacrifices, or the washing

56. See Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “The Importance of Genesis 1–3 in the Theology of Irenaeus,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 8.2 (2005), 302–3. It appears that Harlow, “After Adam,” and Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 88, in finding in Irenaeus an ally for their readings, have misunderstood Irenaeus’s actual view of what happened. Further contra Harlow and Enns, I do not know that Western Christianity has uniformly held that Adam and Eve were created “spiritually mature,” so much as morally innocent.

ceremonies, or baptism, or the Lord's Supper work. But they *do* work. Only in this sense may the tree be called "magic," but this sense has moved us away from folklore.⁵⁷

Historical Consequences of Adam and Eve's "Fall"

The disobedience of Adam and Eve has historical import, as its consequences make clear. The hiding from God in Genesis 3:8; the fear and blame game of 3:10–13; the solemn sentences of 3:14–19; the evil deeds of chapter 4: all of these are in jarring discord with the idyllic scene of blessing and benevolent dominion (1:28–29) and innocent enjoyment (2:8–9, 18–25). Some have suggested that, because there are no words for "sin" or "rebellion" in Genesis 3, the text does not "teach" that Adam and Eve "sinned."⁵⁸ Of course, this is absurd: the question of 3:11 (have you done what I told you not to do?) is as good a paraphrase of disobedience as we can ask for. Some have also suggested that, since the text of Genesis does not *say* that humans "fell" by this disobedience, therefore Genesis does not "teach" such a thing.⁵⁹ But the jarring discord we have just noticed is instruction enough on that point. Again, our reading strategy should reckon with *showing over telling*.

The descendants of Adam and Eve (Gen. 4 and onward) exhibit sad and shameful behavior, which contrasts with the exuberant expectation of Genesis 1:26–31: the average Israelite's experience is probably more like Genesis 4 than it is like Genesis 1 or 2. This cries out for an explanation, and we need some version of the traditional reading of Genesis 3 to make sense of these facts. If that were not enough, the storyteller has actually pushed us in that direction: Genesis 5:29 deliberately evokes 3:16–17: "Out of the *ground* that the LORD has *curse*d, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the *painful toil* [*'itstsâbôn*] of our hands."⁶⁰

57. See C. S. Lewis, *Prayer: Letters to Malcolm* (London: Collins, 1966), 105. He describes the sacrament of communion as "big medicine and strong magic," and then defines his term: "I should define 'magic' in this sense as 'objective efficacy which cannot be further analysed.'"

58. E.g., James Barr, *The Garden of Eden*, 6. For more on this matter, see my *Genesis 1–4, 155* and my *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 164–65.

59. See, for example, Harlow, "Creation according to Genesis": "Genesis itself, however, does not propound a doctrine of the fall or original sin" (189); also his "After Adam," 189. See also Towner, "Interpretations and Reinterpretations of the Fall," e.g., 59: "Nowhere is it said [in Genesis] that human nature was irrevocably altered in a fundamental way that afternoon in the garden. . . . That is all that the Biblical account says—it has never said any more than that."

60. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 84, asserts, "The Old Testament portrays humanity in general and Israel in particular as out of harmony with God, *but the root cause of this condition is nowhere laid at Adam's feet*" (emphasis added). His entire section of the book (84–88) exhibits the most wooden reading of the Genesis narrative.

I have heard people object that the disobedience of Genesis 3 is pretty tame in comparison with the violence of Genesis 4, therefore how can the one be the cause of the other? I would not put the relationship between the two sins as simply “cause” and “effect”: I would rather say that the sin of Genesis 3, under the influence of a dark power that has the goal of ruining human life, has opened the door to all manner of evil in the world, and that evil has come rushing through. I might further query whether the disobedience of Genesis 3 is really all that “small”: after all, it came after God had loaded the human beings with blessings and delights, and it resulted from yielding to a subtle and despicable assault on the character of the God who had shown himself so overflowing with goodness. Let Israel, and all who read this, take warning, and never underestimate the power of even the apparently smallest sins.

Does Genesis give us any clues—showing, if not telling—as to *how* sin was transmitted to Cain, to Lamech, and on to others? The details are sketchy; it is surely not enough to say that Adam and Eve set a bad example for their children. Probably the best answer is that of Paul, who uses the expression “in Adam,” implying a way in which human beings are somehow “included” in Adam.

Conclusions

In sum, then, we have plenty of reasons from the text itself to be careful about reading it too literalistically, and at the same time we have reasons to accept a historical core. The genealogies of Genesis 5, 10, and 11, as well as those of 1 Chronicles 1:1 and Luke 3:38, assume that Adam was a real person. Similarly (although the style of telling the story may leave room for discussion on the exact details of the process by which God formed Adam’s body and how long ago) we nevertheless can discern that the author intends us to see the disobedience of this couple as the reason for sin in the world. It explains why the Mosaic covenant will include provisions for the people’s sins: Mosaic religion, and Christianity its proper offspring, is about redemption for sinners, enabling their forgiveness and moral transformation to restore the image of God in them. This story also explains why all humankind, and not just Israelites, need this redemptive, healing touch from God.

Adam, Eve, Eden, and the Fall in the Rest of the Old Testament

For an interpretation of Genesis 1–5 to be adequate, it must account for the details of the Hebrew narrative, the similarities and differences between that narrative and its possible parallels from elsewhere in the ancient Near

East, and the location of that narrative as the front end of the whole book of Genesis—indeed, of the whole Pentateuch, which therefore means of the whole Old Testament.⁶¹ In this section I will show how the themes of Genesis 1–5 play out in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

I have already mentioned Claus Westermann’s claim that the story of Genesis 3 is “nowhere cited or presumed in the Old Testament.” This claim suffers from several difficulties. For example, what exactly constitutes a citation, presumption, or echo? Further: does an allusion to any part of Genesis 1–5 count as one of these echoes? And there is still more: has this perceived rarity of allusion become part of a circular argument—that is, once we think that there are no allusions, do we then dismiss possible allusions because we “know” that such an allusion is unlikely since it is so rare? Finally, does not the presence or absence of allusions depend on the communicative intentions of the biblical writers and their perceptions of the needs of their audiences? That is, a later writer may or may not find an echo of this passage useful to what he is trying to do with his later text—which means that the (perceived) rarity of citation hardly implies that this story has no bearing on the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

Certainly the literary unity of the current text of Genesis 1–5 requires us to qualify any claim of rarity: after all, there are numerous references to creation (e.g., Pss. 8; 104) and to marriage (e.g., Mal. 2:15, using Gen. 2:24). Human rest on the Israelite Sabbath imitates God’s rest after his work of creation (Exod. 20:11, echoing Gen. 2:2–3).⁶²

Genesis 1–5 is well integrated into Genesis 1–11 and into the whole of Genesis. The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 connect the primal pair to subsequent generations, particularly to Abraham. Further, the connection with Mesopotamian stories of prehistory and protohistory comes from the pattern of creation, early generations of people, flood, further generations of people, leading to “modern times”; this makes the first five chapters an inherent part of this pattern, which includes *all* of Genesis 1–11.

We have seen that Genesis presents Noah to us as a new Adam, who receives God’s covenant on behalf of his descendants and also of the animals (6:18–19;

61. In light of this, there are numerous proposed readings of this story, or parts of it, that I need not spend time assessing: for example, Lyn M. Bechtel, “Genesis 2.4b–3.24: A Myth about Human Maturation,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 67 (1995): 3–26, finds here a myth about the process of growing up, but she has not taken account of the story’s themes of obedience and disobedience, the meaning of the “curses,” or of the sequel in Gen. 4, which depicts the increase of sin. Further, her reading does not fit into the rest of Genesis, nor does it explain what later biblical authors have found in the story. When Harlow, “After Adam,” 189, says that “Genesis 2–3 can be read on a certain level as a coming-of-age story,” he too is failing to take enough account of the details of the literary presentation in Genesis itself.

62. I discuss many such “reverberations” in my *Genesis 1–4*.

9:8–17). The call of Abraham is another fresh start on God’s plan to bring his blessing to the human race. The “blessing” idea is explicit in 12:2–3 and is combined with being fruitful and multiplying in 17:20; 22:17–18; 26:3–4, 24; 28:3, 14: these echo God’s blessing on the original human pair (1:28). Another theme that ties Genesis 1–5 with the rest of Genesis is the repeated word “seed” (best translated “offspring,” as in the ESV): see, in Genesis 1–5, 3:15; 4:25; in the rest of Genesis, 13:15–16; 15:3, 5; 17:7–9, 19; 22:17–18; 26:3–4; 48:4. Especially pertinent is the apparently individual offspring referred to in 3:15; 22:17–18; 24:60—who, by the time of Psalm 72, is identified as the ultimate heir of David through whom God’s blessing will finally come to the whole earth (Ps. 72:17, echoing Gen. 22:17–18).⁶³

The call of Abraham to be the vehicle of blessing to the rest of the world presupposes that the other nations need the blessing of God’s light. The story of Genesis 3, and the progression into further moral and spiritual darkness in Genesis 4–11, explains *why* the other nations are so needy.

I have also already observed that the garden of Eden is the pattern for the Israelite sanctuary. Gregory Beale has a book-length argument that this sanctuary in Genesis was intended to be the pattern for the whole earth as a sanctuary.⁶⁴ The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden interrupted the plan but did not deter God from carrying it out eventually. Israel’s sanctuaries, the tabernacle and then the temple, were God’s down payment on the accomplishment of his plan; the Christian church furthers it, and the description of the final state of the world (Rev. 21–22) is the completion. There are details in Beale’s development that I might say another way, but his overall case is sound and persuasive. This means that the image of the sanctuary from Genesis 2–3, from which humans are exiled and to which they need to return—a return that God provides purely by his grace—is a controlling image for the entire Bible story.

Outside of Genesis 1–5, explicit references to Eden as a prototypical place of fruitfulness occur in Genesis 13:10; Isaiah 51:3; Joel 2:3; and Ezekiel 28:13; 31:8–9, 16, 18; 36:35. In particular, Ezekiel 28:11–19 portrays the king of Tyre as having once been in Eden, blameless, who nevertheless became

63. On the matter of the “offspring” in Genesis, see T. Desmond Alexander, “From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 61.1 (1989): 5–19; “Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993): 255–70. On the individual offspring, see my “A Syntactical Note on Genesis 3:15: Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.1 (1997): 141–48; Alexander’s development in “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.2 (1997): 363–67; and further development from my “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?”

64. Gregory Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

proud and violent. That is, Ezekiel has a “fall story” based on Genesis 3. I count it a mistake to call this *another version* of the Eden story; rather, we should think of it as a rhetorically powerful application of that story to the Phoenician king, or, better, to the city that he represented. That we are dealing here with personification becomes clear when we read the prophet’s mention of “your trade” and “your midst” (Ezek. 28:16): “you,” the king, personifies the city. And when the prophet says that his addressee was “an anointed guardian cherub,” we can recognize that we are reading imagery here, not a literal description. The point is that “the extravagant pretensions of Tyre are graphically and poetically portrayed . . . along with the utter devastation inflicted upon Tyre as a consequence.”⁶⁵ The rhetorical power derives from reading Genesis 3 as a fall story; there would be no such power in another reading.⁶⁶

Another likely echo of Genesis-3-read-as-a-fall-story is Ecclesiastes 7:29: “See, this alone I found, that God made *man* [Hebrew *ha-’adam*, humankind] upright, but *they* [Hebrew *hémâmâ*] have sought out many schemes.”

As the Israeli commentator Yehudah Kiel suggests, this is best taken as an allusion to the foolish behavior of Adam in Genesis 3:10.⁶⁷ It is well to appreciate what this says: it gives a historical sequence, in which humankind was once (namely, at the time that God made them) “upright,”⁶⁸ but through their own “seeking out of many schemes” became other than upright—probably, in context, came to have the character described in verse 20: “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins” (see 1 Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9). It also makes good sense to read the notion “return to the dust” (Eccles. 3:20; 12:7) as a deliberate echo of Genesis 3:19 (“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”). By the way, this also implies that sin is a disruptive intruder (see below).

65. David J. Reimer, note on Ezek. 28:11–19, in Lane Dennis et al., eds., *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 1542. See also Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 590.

66. For a similar take, see Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 105–6; A. B. Davidson, *Ezekiel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 205.

67. Kiel, *Sefer Bereshit*, תי (commenting on Gen. 3:10). Expounding Ecclesiastes in the same series (commentaries written by Israelis who are traditional Jews), Mordecai Zar-Kavod seems to agree, contrasting the *’adam* that God created, “in his image and after his likeness” (Zar-Kavod himself uses the terms from Gen. 1), to “the children of man” (plural *they*) who have gone astray: see Zar-Kavod, “Qohelet,” in P. Meltzer et al., *Khamesh M’gillot*, Da’at Miqra’ (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1973), תי–תז.

68. As already noted, this need not be the same as “perfect in every way,” though it does describe moral innocence.

Two other passages deserve our attention, but they are both highly disputed. The first is Hosea 6:7:

But *like Adam* they transgressed the covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly with me.⁶⁹

Others prefer to interpret the words rendered *like Adam* in the ESV as “like any human beings,” or even “at (the place called) Adam.” The ESV, however, is the simplest interpretation of the Hebrew words, *ke’adam*, as Vasholz summarizes:

The hard issue is: to whom or to what does “Adam” refer? Many commentators suggest a geographical locality. The difficulty is that there is no record of covenant breaking at a place called Adam (Josh. 3:16), and it requires a questionable taking of the preposition “like” (Hb. *ke-*) to mean “at” or “in.” “There” represents the act wherein Israel was unfaithful to the covenant (cf. Hos. 5:7; 6:10). “Mankind” is another suggestion for “Adam,” but that would be a vague statement with no known event indicated, and therefore it would not clarify the sentence. It is best to understand “Adam” as the name of the first man; thus Israel is like Adam, who forgot his covenant obligation to love the Lord, breaking the covenant God made with him (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:17). This also implies that there was a “covenant” relationship between God and Adam, the terms of which were defined in God’s words to Adam, though the actual word “covenant” is not used in Genesis 1–3.⁷⁰

This reading makes sense in light of the way that Hosea stresses the abundant generosity of God, who had loaded Israel down with all manner of good things—and Israel had simply repudiated the giver (a running theme in Hosea; see 2:8–13; 7:15; 11:1–4; 13:4–6). That is, Israel’s unfaithfulness toward the Lord was like Adam’s primal disobedience in its ugliness and insanity.⁷¹

69. My former student Brian Habig has promised a full discussion of this passage defending this interpretation, but as his work has not yet appeared in print, I will say enough here to show why I think it is correct.

70. Robert I. Vasholz, note on Hosea 6:7 in Dennis et al., eds., *The ESV Study Bible*, 1631. For a fuller discussion see Thomas McComiskey, “Hosea,” in *The Minor Prophets*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 95. Yehudah Kiel, “Hosea,” in Kiel et al., *T’re ‘Asar, Da’at Miqra’* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1990), 707, prefers the “like any human beings” interpretation, but notes that a number of esteemed Jewish interpreters (“our teachers of blessed memory”) had taken the “like Adam” reading. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 83–84, insists that the place-name interpretation is “certainly correct,” without really engaging the lexical and grammatical difficulties that arise.

71. As we will see in the following section, the much later author Ben Sira could use Eve’s sin as a pattern that an “evil wife” conforms to, so it is at least not out of the question to find something similar here.

Another possible allusion to Adam as transgressor is Job 31:33:

If I have concealed my transgressions *as others do* [margin: *as Adam did*],
by hiding my iniquity in my bosom . . .

There is really no good way to decide between the interpretation of the text (“as others do”) or the margin (“as Adam did”); the Hebrew, *ke’adam*, can go either way.⁷² What we must not do is enforce circular reasoning, to the effect that since references to Adam are so rare, therefore one is unlikely here. We will instead leave this one as an open question.

Further, the Old Testament as a whole seems to assume that sin is an alien intruder; it disturbs God’s good creation order.⁷³ This comes through in how the sacrifices in Leviticus deal with sin: they treat it as a defiling element, which ruins human existence and renders people unworthy to be in God’s presence—and that is dangerous. Genesis makes sense, then, as providing the story of how this intruder came to be a part of human experience, and this also explains why Revelation would portray sin’s banishment as a feature of the fulfillment of the world’s story.⁷⁴

Finally, we have seen that the tree of life receives further mention in the rest of the Bible (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

Adam and Eve in Second Temple Jewish Literature

The Second Temple period, which technically began with the Jews building a new temple after their exile to Babylon (c. 516 BC) and ended when the Romans destroyed that temple (AD 70), was one of severe foment among Jews, as they sought to explain their situation in light of their understanding of

72. The “like Adam” option appears, e.g., in a grammatical-historical commentary by the Israeli Amos Hakham, *Sefer ’Iyyob, Da’at Miqra’* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1984): “the first man, who sinned, and sought to cover over his sin and hid from before God.” John Hartley, in a traditional Christian grammatical-historical commentary, *Job*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), notes another Jewish author (Robert Gordis) who agrees, while Hartley gives a linguistic reason (the mention of the “bosom”) for “like a human being.”

73. Barr, *Garden of Eden*, 92–93, asserts that the imperfections in Adam and Eve make their disobedience completely natural and expected. To Enns’s credit, he does not suggest in his *Evolution of Adam* that the sin of humans was an inevitable consequence of their creation, but without an original transgression (and transgressors), he cannot explain the presence of sin *as an alien intruder*.

74. I have a brief discussion in *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 91–92. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 74, mentions the passage but does not allow it to affect his thinking about Genesis.

the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David. There were still parts of the Hebrew Bible to be produced (such as Ezra and Nehemiah), and many other writings as well (some Christian churches include some of this other material in their canon, though no one includes it all). One must use great discretion in reading this other material since there is no one single form of Judaism, and many of these writings are from very sectarian groups (such as the Qumran community, who produced what we call the Dead Sea Scrolls). At the same time, if there is widespread consistency among these various writings, that will give us some idea both of how people read the Old Testament material they had and of what features of the Jewish world the New Testament writers faced. Of the Second Temple material available to us, the books we call the Apocrypha, together with the writings of Josephus, come the closest to being in the Jewish mainstream. It is therefore worthwhile to give them most of our attention.

A clear statement about Adam and Eve comes in the book of Tobit (from somewhere between 250 and 175 BC).⁷⁵ The character Tobias is taking Sarah to be his wife, and the angel Raphael has instructed him on how to protect himself and his wife from a demon that threatens harm. Following the angel's instructions, Tobias prays these words (8:6): “[O God of our fathers,] You made Adam and gave him Eve his wife as a helper and support. From them the race of mankind has sprung. You said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.’”

As was common in Jewish prayers, Tobias begins with a historical recital of God's good deeds in the past as the basis for hope. This recital agrees with what I find in Genesis itself.

For a reference to the creation and fall of Adam and Eve, consider the Wisdom of Solomon (from some time after 200 BC and before the New Testament), whose aim was to relate Jewish faith to the higher elements of Hellenistic culture in Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandria was one of the most highly cultured cities in the Greco-Roman world, and the writer probably wanted to fortify Jews against assimilating and perhaps also to draw cultured gentiles to Jewish faith. After describing the schemes of wicked people against the “righteous” (faithful Jews), he tells us that the wicked are ignorant of God's secret purposes and do not discern the prize blameless souls receive; in 2:23–24 he says,

75. Ordinarily I use the dates suggested in David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). I cannot say that I agree with all of his assessments, but this will do for our purposes. I cite the English of the Apocrypha from *The English Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), though I have checked the original.

for God created mankind for incorruption,
and made him in the image of his own character,
but through the devil's envy death entered the world,
and those who belong to his party experience it.

Most readers suppose that the author is recounting the story of Genesis 3, seeing the serpent as “the devil’s” mouthpiece.⁷⁶ He takes it as a historical event that shapes contemporary life (see also 1:13–14; 7:1; 10:1).⁷⁷

Jesus Ben Sira was a wisdom teacher in Jerusalem who finished his book in Hebrew somewhere between 196 and 175 BC and whose grandson translated the book into Greek around 132 BC,⁷⁸ giving us the book called Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach, or Ben Sira).⁷⁹ This author mentions the creation of man, and the fall with its consequences, mostly in passing (Sir. 14:17; 15:14; 17:1; 33:10 [Heb. 36:10]; 40:1).

In one passage (25:16–26) he makes use of the “fall story” to explain a current malaise, namely the situation in which one’s wife is evil. In 25:24 he says,

From a woman sin had its beginning,
and because of her we all die.

This sounds misogynistic, and it may be, but Ben Sira does go on to allow that a woman can be virtuous, and a blessing to her husband (26:1–4, 13–18), so we should take his words as portraying evil women as followers of Eve at her worst.⁸⁰ The simplest reading of this is that he took the event as historical.

Undoubtedly Ben Sira did take Adam as historical. In chapters 44–49 he recalls worthies from the history of Israel (“let us now praise famous men,” 44:1), leading up to his contemporary Simon (II), son of Onias (high priest ca. 219–196 BC). He begins with Enoch and Noah as the first named “famous men,” then goes on to Abraham and through biblical history. Just before his extended praise of Simon, he finishes with Nehemiah (49:13), then returns

76. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 99, says that in this book “death entered the world ‘through the devil’s envy,’ not through Adam’s disobedience,” but he never explains why these are exclusive options. Why is it not *both*?

77. Thus the claim that Harlow makes in “After Adam,” 189, that Paul and the church fathers are the earliest to talk about the fall and original sin, seriously needs some nuance.

78. As we learn from his translator’s prologue to the Greek.

79. Parts of the Hebrew text have been discovered, but textual difficulties still remain.

80. Stanley Porter, “The Pauline Concept of Original Sin, in Light of Rabbinic Background,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.1. (1990):3–30, denies that Ben Sira is referring to Eve, but his reading seems to me inadequate; see the Hebrew commentary of Moshe Segal, *Sefer Ben Sira Hashshalem* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1958), קנח, for the connection.

to Genesis, naming Enoch and Joseph (49:14–15). He completes the run-up to Simon in 49:16:

Shem and Seth were honored among men,
and Adam above every living being in the creation.

The way he mentions these men in this context indicates that he took them all as historical figures.⁸¹

Two Jewish writers who are partly contemporary with the New Testament are Philo of Alexandria (roughly 20 BC–AD 50) and Josephus. Philo, with his interest in philosophical allegory, does not say clearly whether he thought Adam to have been historical. In his discussion of Genesis 2:7, he seems to distinguish the man of Genesis 1 from the man of Genesis 2: the heavenly and the earthly man, he calls them.⁸²

Josephus's way of writing is far more accessible to educated Westerners. At times he is unduly literalistic, perhaps writing to connect the Genesis account with the received world picture of the Greco-Roman world (since he aimed to commend Judaism). He calls Adam "the first man, made from the earth."⁸³ He also says that the gracious God of Israel is the one source of happiness for all humankind,⁸⁴ which is connected to his view that all people descend from Adam. This conviction of common humanity doubtless underlies his notion that all people should worship the true God, and his explanation for the admission of gentiles into Jewish worship.⁸⁵ Josephus is more representative than Philo of the Judaism we find in the other Second Temple sources.

Finally, from the Mishnah (compiled in Hebrew, ca. AD 220), we have the same sentiment, in Sanhedrin 4:5:

81. There are other references, in 2 (or 3 or 4!) Ezra and 2 Baruch, all of which follow the same lines. The book called 2 Esdras in the ESV is called 4 Ezra in the Latin Vulgate (where it is an appendix), and 3 Esdras in the Slavonic Bible. It is thought to have been written originally in Hebrew around the end of the first century AD, then translated into Greek, but neither the Hebrew nor the Greek is extant. It has several passages about the fall of Adam as the means by which sin and suffering came into the world, e.g., 3:4–11, 21–22; it is hardly a treatise on "original sin," however. A translation and commentary are available in Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); see 63–66 for an excursus on Adam's sin.

82. *Allegorical Interpretation*, 1.31. On the other hand, apparently Philo can deal with Gen. 1:27 as the creation of the first, earthly, man: see his *On the Creation*, 25, 69, etc. See Jarl Fossum, "Colossians 1.15–18a in the Light of Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism," *New Testament Studies* 35.2 (April 1989): 187–88.

83. *Antiquities*, 1.2.3 (1:67).

84. *Ibid.*, 4.8.2 (4:180).

85. *Against Apion*, 2.23, 37 (2:192, 261).

But a single man was created [first] . . . for the sake of peace among mankind, that none should say to his fellow, “My father was greater than your father.” Again, [a single man was created] to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One, blessed is he; for man stamps many coins with the one seal and they are all like one another; but the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is he, has stamped every man with the seal of the first man, yet not one of them is like his fellow.⁸⁶

In the period that bridges the Old Testament and the New, the Jewish authors most representative of the mainstream consistently treat Adam and Eve as actual people, at the head of the human race.

Conclusion

There are at least four possible ways of taking the material in Genesis:

1. The author intended to relay “straight” history, with a minimum of figurative language.
2. The author was talking about what he thought were actual events, using rhetorical and literary techniques to shape the readers’ attitudes toward those events.
3. The author intended to recount an imaginary history, using recognizable literary conventions to convey “timeless truths” about God and man.
4. The author told a story without caring whether the events were real or imagined; his main goal was to convey various theological and moral truths.

I conclude that option (2) best captures what we find in Genesis. There is an irony about option (1): it is held both by many traditional Christians, especially those who are called “young-earth creationists,” and by many biblical scholars who embrace “historical criticism.” The difference is that the young-earth creationists think that Genesis was telling the truth, and the critical scholars think that Genesis is largely incorrect in its history. Mind you, this does not mean that critical scholars find no value in Genesis; they will commonly resort to something like option (4).

These critical biblical scholars will often (though not always) deny that Adam and Eve were real people, though they agree that the author of Genesis *intended* to write of real people. Those who follow option (3) say that the author never intended for us to think of Adam and Eve as real, while those who

86. Cited from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 388, with comparison of the Hebrew. In the Talmud, see Sanhedrin 38a.

follow option (4) say that it simply does not matter. When a particular scholar denies that Adam and Eve were historical, I cannot always tell which interpretive option he or she has followed; sometimes I wonder if the scholar knows!

When the New Testament authors, and Christian theologians following them, have based their arguments on the presupposition that the human race began with an actual Adam and Eve, and that God made this couple morally innocent, and that evil came into human experience by way of this couple's sin, they were basing themselves upon a good reading of the Old Testament: both as to the specific texts, and as to the logic of the story.