

BEGINNINGS

Ancient Christian Readings
of the Biblical Creation Narratives

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And There Was Evening

A Preface

The biblical creation narratives are evocative, authoritative, and important to people of several great religious traditions, and yet—like much of Scripture—there are debates and disputes among members of the same tradition and between members of different traditions about how they are to be read and what their narrative details mean. It is all the more difficult to understand them or even to take them seriously in our day, given how much baggage has been laid on them over the centuries by both high art and popular culture—from the Sistine Chapel ceiling to *National Lampoon's Adam and Eve*. Then there are the politicized debates that pit “evolution” against “creation,” categories that an increasing number of people consider simplistic. Theological discourse, too, looks to the creation narratives for answers to more questions than they can possibly bear—questions about the cosmos, humanity, gender, theodicy. It would be useful to see how they were read before the accretion of so many layers of interpretation.

Within the Christian tradition alone, the exegesis of Genesis 1–3 has a long and varied history. It is worth inquiring how the creation narratives were read when they were first beginning to be considered authoritative foundational texts, particularly by those instrumental in shaping Christian theology. Although this question may be relevant to anyone studying the history of ideas, it is of particular concern to traditions that vest authority in patristic witness. But the evolution of the early Christian interpretation of Genesis 1–3 is of more than antiquarian interest: like all good history, it has the potential to illuminate the present. In this regard, one feature becomes clear from even a cursory study of this period: we do not find a univocal reading or a single method (which might confound those who would impose a single fixed framework

on these narratives). We do, however, find a consistent and coherent pattern of reading, whose theological character is considerably different from the modern mainstream. And even if this pattern cannot be adopted wholesale by contemporary readers of all predilections, it may at least point them to something more substantive, constructive, and meaningful than the results of either atheological modern criticism or overwrought theological analysis.

The Authors under Review

What do we mean by “ancient Christian” thought or interpretation? A narrow definition of “Christian” in the first centuries after Christ no longer suffices. Recent scholars have made a compelling case for expanding the definition of what properly constitutes early Christian theology and practice and for blurring the lines between orthodoxy and heresy. Yet at least for the purposes and scope of the present study, I am mindful of the undeniable divide between the first- and second-century authors who read the Genesis narratives in terms of the God who sent his Son into the world as its unique Savior and those who took Paul’s spiritualization of the law as license to construct parascriptural accounts of cosmic origins. The lines that separate Irenaeus and Valentinus are not especially blurry, nor are those between Tertullian and Marcion. The tendency of “orthodox” writers to exaggerate or distort the positions of their “heretical” challengers is equally undeniable and significant, but it does not obliterate those categories. Although the study of the totality of the ancient literature is both necessary and fascinating, and although neither mainstream nor marginalized theologies ought to be ignored or short-changed in research, the two still ought to be studied as separate categories. And they generally are: any responsible study of theology in the early Christian centuries will be concerned with hermeneutical questions, their polemical context, and their political and ecclesiastical influences, but we still end up with books on “lost Christianities,” on different stripes of gnostic and Manichaean writers, as well as on the church fathers.

This book focuses on the last group. After looking selectively at the period when the Genesis creation narratives first resurfaced among hellenized Jewish writers and LXX translators, it surveys Paul and the NT. It then primarily explores the early Christian writers who wrote in Greek during the first four Christian centuries. Tertullian—the sole Western author—is included there as well because of the seminal importance of his contribution.¹ These authors—whether through a patriarchal conspiracy or the guidance of the Holy Spirit (or some combination thereof)—were responsible for the early formation of Christian theology and still resonate among contemporary Christians, in

1. Jerome and Augustine are outside our time frame, and Ambrose’s *Hexaemeron* relies so heavily on Basil’s that he does not require separate treatment in this study.

particular those who take early patristic voices seriously: Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and sectors of all the mainline Protestant denominations, Anglicans, free churches, and many evangelicals. Our study ends with the Cappadocian fathers, who represent the first sustained harvest of Origen's exegetical ideas.

So this book covers about four centuries of early Greek patristic reflection. With regret, we must leave for another study the great Antiochene exegetes and rhetoricians who came later, the glorious Syrians Aphrahat and Ephrem (themselves contemporaries of the Cappadocians), and Augustine, whose rich and diverse study of the creation narratives was so influential in the Christian West.

The Questions We Pose

In our time, the text of Genesis 1–3—the six-day creation, God's seventh-day rest, and the drama of Adam and Eve in paradise—is brought to bear on questions about the relationship between God and creation; the origin and logic of evil; death, sin, and the relationship between the two; the nature and vocation of the human person, including human sexuality; the relationship between human and nonhuman creation; and the process and chronology of creation. These and others constitute *our* questions, and the way in which we moderns frame them does not always overlap with how the ancient writers did. Furthermore, each ancient author explores particular facets of the creation narratives that may have nothing to do with original sin, image and likeness, creation out of nothing, the evolution/creation debate, human personhood, marriage, sex, and gender. We must read them in terms of what interested them, or what their context, their readers, oppressors, or ideological challengers elicited from them. Some authors do speak about creation out of nothing, about sin, and about gender, but not all do. This book will take each author on his own terms, which means that the subjects treated will necessarily vary.

In this book I pose one overarching question to the writers I treat: how literally did they read the creation narratives? This question may seem anachronistic since it implies categories like "history," "myth," "parable," and "allegory," whose meanings have evolved over time and moreover at no point acquired a commonly agreed-on meaning. Ancient sensibilities about the relationship between "history" and "story" were different from ours. But how different? Reading the ancients, we find that during any single era perceptions of and concerns about historicity and its relationship to truth vary among contemporaries at least as much as they do across the millennial divides. Some of the ancient authors indeed treat the question explicitly. Not dissimilarly, we witness today a potent and widespread concern as to whether Genesis 1–3 records events that occurred in the physical universe as they are described. Among and within traditions, and even outside fixed

religious traditions, the debate simmers. In my own Orthodox tradition I can testify to different microclimates: some writers insist on the historicity of the narratives (with some variation as to the age of the Earth, the nature of the six “days,” etc.); others insist that they are essentially etiological stories (but are no less true for being so); others hold positions that somehow occupy an intermediate stance; others fail even to be bothered with the question.

When we consider our contemporary situation, it is almost inappropriate to speak of a debate between these views, for scholars tend to talk only to their respective camps. Indeed, one of the main reasons that I will dwell on the question of historicity is that so few studies even bother to address it outright. People are generally so convinced of their own position—and so sure that those who consider otherwise are intellectually or spiritually deprived—that they see no need to argue for it. The other factor muting the debate is more positive: the sacramental and liturgical life of the church does not depend on where one stands on this issue. The language and ethos of worship subsume these questions in a way that is profoundly unifying and affirmative so that all may stand side by side hearing the same Scripture readings, singing the same hymns about them.

But there remains a divide. It has to do with the question of how Scripture works and what it means to say that it is inspired by God. But it also has to do with the question of whether “truth” and “historical facticity” are inextricably interdependent. Some say that if Scripture is inspired by God and Genesis 1–3 does not describe physical history in a literal way, then God lied. Others maintain that God is speaking the truth here through story. Both would agree that a parable or a fable can be true. But can the dynamics that apply to a parable or a fable apply to these narratives also?

I have alluded to the perception that questions about truth and historicity are unique to the modern era, that they were irrelevant to the scriptural authors. The following passage, from an explanation of OT storytelling, is a good example of that attitude:

Twentieth-century Western audiences are at a major disadvantage when approaching biblical narratives. Our philosophical presuppositions demand that a story produce its historical credentials before it is allowed to speak; we impose modern historical methods on traditional narrative and imagine that our questionable reconstruction of events is more meaningful than the value-laden form in which our community has enshrined its vision. In many of the sciences, we are geniuses when compared to the generations gone by; in the area of traditional narrative, however, we have become unappreciative philistines.²

2. McCarthy and Riley, *Old Testament Short Story*, 53. I cited this paragraph in Bouteneff, *Sweeter Than Honey*, 79.

We are thus reminded, very appropriately, that some or most of the biblical authors did not experience cognitive dissonance between truth and story or, in any case, that Scripture neither features nor reflects any expressly literary-critical thinking. But this absence did not extend equally through antiquity and the Middle Ages. It was not universal in the time of the scriptural authors either. Herodotus and Thucydides, for example, indicate their critical consciousness when they assert the *necessity* of historiographic embellishment and the deliberate recasting of accounts to suit the needs of the present. More to the point, the early Christian writers were also concerned with historicity or the relationships between history, story, and truth. In fact several of our writers address the very basic question “Did this actually happen in the physical world?” They pose it of Scripture as a whole but specifically of the Genesis creation narratives.

A study such as ours inherently concerns three broad stages in the history and interpretation of Genesis 1–3. One stage is its composition and redaction. The second (which is our subject here) reads and interprets this text at the outset of Christian reflection. The third is the interpretation of the texts today. Stages two and three are not as far apart as they may seem: both in antiquity and in the present we find a coexistence—albeit a frequently tense one—between critical and precritical readings.³ I suggest that it is between stages one and two that we find the decisive difference. Were the creation narratives, in the form in which they were told and then codified in writing, intended for analyses by a Theophilus, an Irenaeus, an Origen, a Basil?

But analyzed they certainly were. There were a variety of early Christian approaches, however implicit, to the question of historicity, together with a palpable silence on the matter. But the “critical” questions of history, story, truth, and inspiration exploded onto the scene with Origen, who asked them directly. Origen’s brilliance, together with the fierce controversy he ignited, sent wildly uneven shockwaves into the centuries as subsequent generations of theologians grappled with his legacy.

Although “allegory,” “typology,” “myth,” “literal sense,” and so on are slippery categories, it is scarcely possible to describe the early church’s reading of Scripture without them. For even as these terms require thoughtful definition, they help us map out the breadth of exegetical approaches of the fathers, and the aim and scope of their exegesis. Where these terms appear, they will be accompanied by explanations as necessary, paving the way for a more thorough treatment in the conclusion. But I hope that posing the question of historicity and showing where it is meaningful to the fathers and where it is not will help us discern and explore the patterns of the early fathers’ theological and paraenetic reading of the creation narratives, for the

3. Here we are not far from Northrop Frye’s proposed scheme describing “metaphoric, metonymic, and post-critical” phases: cf. *Great Code*. But note that “critical” with a view to history does not mean the “historical-critical method.”

historical-critical method and fundamentalist reading alike often obscure the fruits of their insights.

So, what is the project of this book? It is to listen to what the early Christian tradition has to say about Genesis 1–3. Although it attempts to take the writers on their own terms, it does not pretend to be an entirely disinterested study. Rather it seeks a purposeful discussion that highlights writers selected for their seminal importance in Christian theology and life, in particular within traditions such as my own. Finally, it is impossible to isolate what these authors say about Genesis 1–3 from the question of why and how they arrive at their reading. This study therefore discusses how each author understood and read the Bible—a corpus that was just coming into being during the era here under review. The end result will be the tracing of parallel journeys: generally, the development of early patristic hermeneutics and, specifically, the ways the creation narratives were understood. Although I am convinced that the resulting hermeneutical pattern has much to say to our religious and secular worlds, I will for the most part leave it to the reader to spell out these implications.

A Word about Language

As this book deals with the origins of the world and focuses naturally on the creation and plight of the human person, I have struggled with the question of how best to speak about “humanity” or “man.” There is no simple solution how properly to translate the Hebrew *’adam* or the Greek *ἄνθρωπος*. One of the meanings these terms carry refers simultaneously to humankind and human personhood—as collective and generic—but does so in a way that retains a *particular* and *personal* focus. When the fathers spoke of *ὁ Ἄδამ* or even *ὁ ἄνθρωπος* (rather than *ἡ ἀνθρωπότης*) to mean “humanity,” they retained some of the polyvalence of the Hebrew *’adam*. To them it did not mean “humanity” as a collective or abstract term; it somehow had a concrete and particular meaning. With this in mind, were it not for the serious problem of its gender specificity, “man” would be the best word by far to convey this sense of *’adam* and *ἄνθρωπος*. Yet contemporary society, and with it the wider theological community, has simply outgrown it. We cannot but hear the word “man” as referring in the first instance to a male and only by a stretch, at best, as meaning *ἄνθρωπος*. Respecting this reality, I will use gender-inclusive language in the hope that readers will bear in mind the personal particularity of the Greek and Hebrew original.

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1

And There Was Morning

An Introduction

As this study is concerned chiefly with the early Christian exegesis of biblical texts, our first task is to explore the nature of the texts themselves and then to see how they were used in subsequent biblical and extrabiblical literature before the first Christians came onto the scene. Paul's use of Genesis 1–3 is so sure footed that it can give the impression of being built on long-accepted readings. Yet the Hebrew Bible is nearly silent on the six days of creation and on paradise. Did Paul's reading, then, come out of nowhere? This introduction charts the long and bumpy journey leading to the NT Epistles and beyond.

The Text and Its Journey

The primary text whose early Christian interpretation is examined here comes to us, in the chapters assigned it in the Middle Ages, as Genesis 1–3. The broader context—Genesis 1–11, all of Genesis, the whole Pentateuch—is important, but the first three chapters, narrating the Hexaemeron and the story of Adam and Eve in paradise, have their own integrity and will be our primary focus here. Although an exhaustive critical survey is naturally beyond the scope of this study, we will raise questions about the redaction of the narratives and their respective character, shape, and emphases, as well

as the project of their translation in the LXX, the text used by nearly all the interpreters examined in the chapters to come.

Two Narratives

Genesis 1–3 is unmistakably divided into two parts: that describing the “generations” of the creation and situation of the heavens and the earth (1:1–2:4a) and that focusing on the creation of the human person (2:4b–3:24). Because of this clear division, regardless of their respective provenance or how we may see them as interrelated and complementary, I speak of the creation *narratives* in the plural.

The presentation of creation from perspectives that narrate two different sequences, each invoking God’s making of earth and heaven (1:1 and 2:4b), has been a prime factor in modern hypotheses identifying multiple strands of authorship. The Hexaemeron narrative emerges as the work of the alleged “Priestly writer” (P) and the paradise narrative as that of a less distinct, probably earlier “Jahwist” (J).¹ The particulars of Wellhausen’s Documentary Hypothesis have been debated and challenged,² yet the respective details and narrative styles leave no doubt that we are dealing with two related stories or an overarching event described from two perspectives. There is equally no reason to doubt that an author/redactor saw fit to bring these accounts together, probably adding material to give them coherence (e.g., 2:4a), and to conceive of them as together forming the beginning of the book whose Hebrew title, *bereshit*, means “In the beginning.” The evidence presented below will support the theory that this redaction took place quite late or, at any rate, that its entry into Israelite consciousness as a normative creation account did not take place until the first and second centuries BCE.

The Narratives’ Logic

Let us look at some of the clearest overarching characteristics of what I will here call the Hexaemeron narrative³ (or Gen. 1) and the paradise narrative (or Gen. 2–3). Genesis 1 is a primarily cosmocentric account, whereas Genesis 2–3 is anthropocentric—although it would be truer to say that both culminate in

1. The regnant theory that P is postexilic has been seriously challenged by some scholars who propose an earlier date, possibly even in the eighth century BCE. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 3–34. Regarding the difficulty in dating or even identifying a distinct J, see Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*.

2. For a summary of recent thinking on the Documentary Hypothesis and its particular strands, see Nicholson, *Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*. For other significant challenges, see Whybray, *Making of the Pentateuch*, 75; and Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 110–17.

3. One might also have called it the Heptaemeron, given the significance of the seventh day (which comes in Gen. 2). But the “six-day creation” has established itself in the popular and scholarly lexicon from early on.

a focus on the human person, though in different ways. The creation of the human person—here not simply by the fiat of the divine word “Let there be” but with the conscious deliberation of “Let us make”—is presented as the culmination or crowning point of creation, and the divine image—whatever this is taken precisely to mean—is at the very least an indication of the unique role of the human person within creation.⁴ The movement in Genesis 1 is from chaos to cosmos: from the *tohu wa bohu* of formless void to an ordered creation, crowned by the human person, male and female. Aside from this movement toward the creation of humanity, Genesis 1 reflects the priestly interest in (cultic) order, in placement, and in distinction; the separation into “days” arguably speaks out of this concern rather than functioning as a historical or scientific chronicle.

Genesis 2–3 is not concerned with a first-to-last order; it begins already speaking as from the future, of a “time” when there were yet no plants, and is unconcerned with the heavens, or even very much with the earth except to specify the geographic location of Eden. Its chief subject matter is the human person. In a manner of speaking, we move from a void (no plants and no rain/mist) to cosmos (beautiful and tasty vegetation and finally human personhood, which is complete or “good” only when there is a complementary pair of persons) and back to chaos (the curse and expulsion from paradise).

Far from a redundant retelling, then, the two accounts fulfill different functions and are, for the purposes of subsequent thinking, both indispensable. Many observers have come up with ways of describing the complementary features and functions of the two narratives. Genesis 1 is about “showing”: God’s words are immediately transformed into action. Genesis 2–3 is about “telling”: “In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens . . .”⁵ Genesis 1 is an objective account, culminating in the creation of humanity but defining it from the outside; Genesis 2–3 is a subjective account, beginning with the creation of humanity and defining it from the inside.

This kind of analysis, though utterly foreign to the writers considered in this study, remains useful in underlining for us both the distinction and the complementarity of the Hexaemeron and paradise accounts. The main question—whether the juxtaposition of two evidently distinct narratives is the work of a single author or a single redactor—does not have theological consequences that fit within the scope of this book. The fact is that they are enshrined next to one another in the scriptural canon and were read as such by the Christian interpreters here considered.

4. The idea that the image rests in gender differentiation (given the parallel place the two are given in Gen. 1:27) is unlikely, since the rest of animal creation is also thus differentiated. See Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, 15–16.

5. Hasan-Rokem, “And God Created the Proverb,” 109.

Points of Departure: The Content of the Narratives

Every journey has a point of departure. The journey toward the Christian interpretation of Genesis 1–3 begins (after their composition, compilation, and redaction) with what the narratives seem to be saying as distinct from what was made of them in later imagination. Although it is unrealistic to pretend to a definitive account of the narratives' meaning or to aspire to unlocking authorial intent, we can at least try to return to a reading that ignores some of the later questions posed to the narratives and the interpretations foisted on them: much of the significance and many of the features we take for granted in the paradise narrative are absent from the text itself. The biblical text nowhere says that the serpent is the devil or that Eden is a heavenly garden where the righteous will live eternally; it does not even present itself as describing the fall of humanity. All of this comes from later interpretation, some of which is so powerful—and indeed so ancient—that it is difficult to extricate it from the scriptural narrative.⁶

In this chapter we will try to read the text on its own as a first step in plotting a trajectory of how the later exegesis developed. We will focus on just a few key features within the stages of the story: humanity before the distinction of “Adam” and “Eve,” the result of their transgression vis-à-vis mortality, and their story in its wider context.⁷ The emphasis will be on the human person as described in the paradise narrative (though with reference also to Gen. 1:26–27) because this is what chiefly engaged later interpreters.

The Hexaemeron also generated significant commentaries in the early church, but these neither vary greatly nor are they theologically complex. An observation at the outset, however: the Hexaemeron was not concerned primarily with establishing God as Creator of the world. True, it was significantly distinct from other ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies in that it presented creation as the work of one God, not the outcome of a battle of gods or the work of a series of demiurges. But “Israel had no need expressly to *believe* that the world was created by God because that was a presupposition of their thinking.”⁸ This disinterest also meant that the Hexaemeron did not set out to answer in a fixed way the question of *how* God created the world, because Israel was not terribly interested in this question—which is probably why the Hexaemeron account is unapologetically followed by a paradise narrative that recounts creation in a different sequence and why allusions to creation in the Psalms, Job, and Isaiah vary from it and from each other.

6. See Kugel, *Bible as It Was*, 53–82, which is indispensable reading about the layers of interpretation that accrued from early on.

7. I am particularly indebted to Barr, *Garden of Eden*, esp. 4–20, and the first two chapters of Ricoeur and LaCocque, *Thinking Biblically*.

8. Westermann, *Creation*, 5, emphasis original.

HUMANITY BEFORE ADAM AND EVE

The translation problem posed by the Hebrew *'adam* will be a recurrent theme in this introduction.⁹ This word may refer to human beings generally (“man,” ἄνθρωπος), to any particular person (“a man”), or to a particular person or character named Adam; the author or redactor of Genesis 1–3 exploits this ambiguity. The word first occurs in Genesis 1:26–27:

Then God said, “Let us make *'adam* in our image, according to our likeness. . . . So God created *'adam* in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In 1:26 and 1:27a, it would be impossible to call *'adam* a particular person, and certainly not a male person. This is why the LXX has here ἄνθρωπος and the NRSV says “humankind.” In Genesis 2, where the provenance of female (*išša*) from male (*iš*) is explicit and where the story tells of a particular man (and his mate), the Hebrew again refers to him as *'adam*. Here too the LXX and all English translations—with the notable exceptions of the King James Version and New King James Version—use generic terms. They do not speak of a male (ἄνῆρ). It is clear therefore that before there are male and female, *'adam* does not refer to a particular male human being. Two preliminary observations: humanity is not really humanity—is not properly *'adam*—without sex distinction. Genesis 1:27 is classically understood in this way, although we will see below that, largely under the influence of the LXX translation, some interpreters saw a male, or possibly even an androgynous but particular “Adam,” as preceding multiple, sex-differentiated humanity. The name *'adam* is only bestowed, however, on sex-differentiated humanity, as is all the more evident in Genesis 5:2. The other observation is that little is said about humanity before the description of the transgression. It is as if the transgression is more definitive of the existential human person than is a putative pre-fallen state. Other than the vocation of stewardship, the unashamed nakedness, and the proscriptive command, we have no data about humanity outside the transgression.

THE TRANSGRESSION AND MORTALITY

It follows from the above that the Genesis creation accounts do not suggest that first-created humanity was by nature immortal. The first couple do not die (in the sense of ceasing to exist) upon their transgression, nor is mortality as such a part of the resulting curse. Both omissions are significant. In 2:17, the Lord God says to Adam that he would die the very day that he partook of the tree; Eve displays her cognizance of the threat in 3:3. But they eat and

9. The table in the appendix will be useful in charting the different translations of *'adam*.

do not die.¹⁰ Adam goes on to live to the ripe old age of 930.¹¹ Interpreting the effect of the eating as a “spiritual death” comes far later in the history of exegesis; such a reading is made more difficult in the LXX, which unequivocally says Adam will “die by death” (θανάτω ἀποθανεῖσθε); that is, he will die utterly upon eating of the tree. The disconnect between the divine threat and the resulting punishment struck several ancient authors. One common interpretation rests on the saying that “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years” (2 Pet. 3:8; cf. Ps. 90:4), concluding that Adam, living just short of a thousand years, did in fact die on “the day” he ate the fruit.¹²

The curse leveled on the serpent, the woman, and the man does not entail death as such. Rather, for each, the curse is mortal toil, anxiety, and frustration. Reading the paradise narrative on its own, one may conclude that “death is not the punishment, but is only the *mode* in which the final stage of the punishment works out.”¹³ Humankind does not begin as immortal and then become mortal as a result of the transgression. Their expulsion from paradise explicitly prevents Adam and Eve from becoming immortal by partaking of the tree of life (Gen. 3:22); to become immortal in their new mode of existence would have meant only eternal torture, or at any rate eternal unfulfillment.

But even if “there is no suggestion in the narratives of the creation and fall, nor indeed in the Old Testament as a whole, that man was created immortal and lost his immortality as a result of his disobedience,”¹⁴ neither do the narratives say that human beings were created for death. However one analyzes the threat, the transgression, and the curse, they show that humanity was created *for life* and therefore *for immortality*.

Even before the transgression humanity was not perfect. The first couple did not enjoy an idealized existence. True, once they had been created, God pronounces all of creation “very good” (1:31a), yet *prima facie* this denotes neither immortality nor fully realized human perfection. Naked and unashamed (2:25) they may have been, but fully actualized human persons they were not. In effect, the scriptural account does not portray two sharply contrasted states of the human person, one (perfected, immortal, sinless, united with God) before the transgression and the other (fallen, mortal, sinful, separated from God) after. It describes, rather, a process, whose starting point is not perfection but *nascence*. The separation has begun already with the prohibitive

10. As Barr points out still more clearly in “Is God a Liar?” this is not a “lie” on God’s part but an unfulfilled threat.

11. Barr suggests that the eight-hundred- to nine-hundred-year life spans attributed to the forefathers of Noah (Gen. 5:4–31) may be meant to indicate the near attainment of immortality. If a thousand years signified immortality, these forefathers nearly reached this mark, but all fell short of it; after their era, life spans (and physical size) decreased dramatically. See *Garden of Eden*, 81–82.

12. See *Jub.* 4:29; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 81; and Irenaeus, *AH* 5.23.2.

13. Barr, *Garden of Eden*, 9, emphasis added.

14. Knibb, “Life and Death,” 402, cited in Barr, *Garden of Eden*, 18.

commandment of God, which not only shows an intimacy between God and humanity unique to the whole of creation, but also indicates a distancing. The separation process continues with the temptation. What is in Eve, and Adam, that is already inclined to listen to the alien voice? Is theirs the behavior of fully realized and sinless human persons? The temptation, to which they accede with little hesitation, proceeds to the transgression, then the trial (and the denial and transmission of culpability), then the curse and expulsion.

PARADISE IN LIGHT OF SUBSEQUENT DECLINE NARRATIVES

The above observations lead to another: the transgression of Adam and Eve is not portrayed as an anomalous infraction that uniquely and permanently sullies a theretofore perfect humanity. Not only is there a prehistory to the transgression in Eden; there is a long sequel. Beyond Genesis 3 it becomes increasingly apparent that the paradise story—though justly singled out for concerning the first-formed persons—is just one in a series of decline narratives that find a particular, though not final, culmination in Genesis 6. Indeed, people’s sins after the expulsion from paradise make Adam and Eve’s partaking of the tree seem a petty offense, even if their gross disobedience is indeed terrifying. Cain’s cold-blooded murder of his brother captures the attention of more early Jewish and Christian authors. The very first scriptural occurrence of the word “sin” (Gen. 4:7) regards Cain, not Adam or Eve. A far more convincing portrayal of the “fall of humanity” comes in Genesis 6:1–7, which describes the blasphemous irruption of the Nephilim into the world and God’s dismay over their exclusively wicked acts, evil thoughts, and *violence* of people.¹⁵ The transgressions of the generation of Noah, unlike Adam and Eve’s, do bring on the punishment of near-universal physical death.¹⁶

Although Genesis 1–3 is an utterly remarkable and indelible capsule of Scripture, it needs to be read in context. As Stanley Stowers points out, Genesis 1–11 narrates a whole series of cycles or ages of human decline, ending with the age in which the reader lives. Adam and Eve, Cain, the Nephilim, and Babel all represent humans’ wrongheaded attempts to transcend their natural earthly existence, and all these rebellions stand in contrast to the repentant descendants of Abraham.¹⁷ Richard Clifford likewise notes that Genesis 2:4–11:26 presents “a single cosmogony.” It not only forms a remarkable parallel to the Akkadian Atrahasis story (which shows that the contours of the story were part of the broader culture) but also shifts the focus away from the paradise narrative. It allows the broader story to function as an introduction to “the nations,” with obvious implications for humanity in general. Genesis 1:1–2:3, then, functions

15. Much more is made of the Nephilim’s blasphemy in *Enoch* and *Jubilees*.

16. Barr, *Garden of Eden*, 74, notes that in the Gilgamesh epic the tree (or plant) of life appears with the flood. Thus there seems to have been an ancient Near East tradition of a flood as a turning point similar to the one in the biblical paradise story.

17. Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 88–89.

as the redactor's preamble or overture, foreshadowing the themes developed in 2:4–11:26, if not in the entire Pentateuch.¹⁸

To obtain a larger sense of what the redactor was doing, we must look beyond the paradise narrative. Doing so will prevent us from reading the Pentateuch (or even the whole Bible) as a linear account of “creation-fall-redemption,” a reading difficult to trace before the eighteenth-century notion of *Heilsgeschichte* but one that captured much modern theological and popular reflection. The Pentateuch was intended to show—and this is vital if by no means novel—creation and redemption as one contiguous act.¹⁹ As Israel continued to see it, creation shows that God has the power to save, that creation *is* salvation:

Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
(Ps. 74:12–14)

Salvation is embedded by God in God's act of creation, and the redemption of a particular people is universalized to encompass humankind (Gen. 12:3).²⁰

The transgression, too, is an ongoing reality or activity; Scripture does not present the fall as an event but as humanity gone awry, though this sense is not properly (for Israel, at any rate) identified with the tree in Eden. Scripture points beyond paradise, beyond Genesis 1–11, to existential life. “It is the *ongoing* sin of the human that returns the earth to chaos.”²¹ As we might deduce from Jeremiah 4:22–25 and Hosea 4:1b–3, it is not because Adam sinned that everything is askew; it is because everyone *is sinning*.

A completely detached summary of the paradise narrative, ingrained as it is in our minds, is impossible. But the attempt to do so will be a useful baseline in helping us see what aspect our early Christian authors take up—often in distinction from later widespread readings. The few details sketched above may suggest that some of the eventual readings of it were quite creative—if this is the appropriate word for the often great liberties taken with the evident sense and subsequent OT use of the text.

We must also examine the text that the majority of our authors had before them. The journey that began with the writing and redaction of Genesis and

18. Clifford, “Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation,” esp. 521–23.

19. See also Ricoeur and LaCocque, *Thinking Biblically*, 3–29.

20. This idea is treated extensively in, e.g., Rad, “Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation.”

21. Ricoeur and LaCocque, *Thinking Biblically*, 7, emphasis added.

the Pentateuch and that would continue later with their Christian interpretation took a remarkable turn when the text was translated for a hellenized Jewish audience.

The Septuagint

Nearly all of the authors under discussion in the present study worked primarily in Greek, and their text was the LXX or Septuagint. A few words about the character and history of the LXX may help bring out its significance for our texts and our writers. The word “Septuagint” referred to different collections of texts in different eras, so that it is possible to speak of several “Septuagints.” When the earliest Jewish sources refer to the Greek translation of Scripture, their scope is generally the Pentateuch.²² It was only in later (Christian) reckoning—certainly by the time of Justin Martyr in the mid-second century—that the LXX was taken to include all of the books in Greek accepted by that time. By the fourth and fifth centuries CE, there were several comprehensive LXX manuscripts encompassing the books of the Hebrew canon, each with a varied listing of what came to be called in the medieval West “apocryphal” and “pseudepigraphical” books. Furthermore, the standardized text in use today is a collation of several manuscripts, and we do not always know precisely which recension was being used by an ancient author.²³ The creation narratives are not seriously complicated by these considerations, since the book of Genesis—probably the first to have been translated—was a part of the LXX from its beginnings in the third century BCE.²⁴

What interests us more is the process of translation itself, its effect on interpretation, and therefore its possible repercussions for our Greek-speaking Christian authors. The translators of Genesis were working from a text that closely resembled the (far later) Masoretic Text, although it was not the vocalized Hebrew. One may observe both the attempt at fidelity to the original—complete with occasional awkward Greek phrasings that mirror Hebrew syntax—and periodic departures to accommodate Greek idiomatic usage.²⁵ But to translate is to interpret. There are points where the LXX translators made subtle changes to the sense of the Hebrew original, particularly where it referred to ideas that were rising in prominence during the Hellenistic period (angels, the resurrection of the dead).²⁶ William Loader suggests, for example, that the LXX translation of Genesis 2:3–4 deliberately smoothes out some of the discontinuities between

22. Tov, “Septuagint,” 163.

23. On the manuscript tradition, see Jellicoe, *Septuagint and Modern Study*.

24. Dines, *Septuagint*, 14. It is owing to the LXX that we call the Bible’s first book Genesis—its Greek name—rather than Bereshit, “in the beginning.”

25. See *ibid.*, 57, for an illustration that uses the text of Gen. 1:2. But consult also Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, an encyclopedic work.

26. See Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 7–8.

the Hexaemeron and paradise accounts of creation.²⁷ There are several variations between the Masoretic Text and the LXX in Genesis 1–3, many of them at the syntactic level but carrying significant implications.²⁸

For our purposes, the most important aspect of the process of translation into Greek is how the word *'adam* was translated in its various contexts. The Hebrew word derives from *'adamah* (“the ground,” leading some to translate *'adam* as “earthling”). As mentioned earlier, it can denote the human person or humankind (in Greek ἄνθρωπος), or a particular person with the proper name Adam, or (later on in the Pentateuch and possibly elsewhere) the land of Adamah. *'Adam* represents a brilliant play on words whose ambiguity speaks volumes in the original language. Adam as humanity (ἄνθρωπος), Adam as a character in a story, Adam as forefather of Noah and of the patriarchs—all of these are held together in a kind of flux in the mind of the Hebrew reader. Rendering the text in languages where the pun is lost forces the translators to interpret the sense of *'adam* in each instance.²⁹ It is of interest and significance to note the approaches taken by the LXX and, for that matter, the various English-language translators, whose respective solutions are sometimes at considerable variance with each other.³⁰

The Hebrew uses *'adam* (אָדָם or אָדָמָה) and its cognates from Genesis 1:26 through 5:5 to speak of humanity in general or Adam as a particular person. The LXX uses ὁ ἄνθρωπος for 1:26–27 and for the account of the creation of the human person in 2:7. The first time the LXX uses the personal name Ἀδὰμ in 2:16, it is in a sense quite out of the blue. From this point onward through 5:5 (with the exception of 2:18 and 5:1a), every occurrence of *'adam* is rendered by the Greek (ὁ) Ἀδὰμ, so that an individual person is named.³¹

The LXX's logic is in this sense consistent: when the Hebrew seems to be speaking generically about humanity, it uses ἄνθρωπος; where the narrative appears to concern a particular person, it uses Ἀδὰμ. (The Greek text is also fairly consistent in retaining the articular form of the Hebrew [אָדָם], rendering it with its respective article.) At Genesis 2:16, the LXX makes the decisive move from ἄνθρωπος to Ἀδὰμ probably because this is the first instance where

27. Loader, *Septuagint, Sexuality*, 30–32. He also indicates possible Platonic influences in some of the LXX wording.

28. These are helpfully documented (though with a particular interest in gender/sexuality issues) in *ibid.*, 27–69.

29. Another Hebrew wordplay, between *iš* (“man”) and *iššab* (“woman”), is also effectively lost on the LXX, with results that reverberate. Even the English “woman/man” works better than the Greek, where there is no etymological relation between γυνή and ἀνήρ.

30. The table in the appendix may be of use in charting the various translations of *'adam*. See also the useful chart in Loader, *Septuagint, Sexuality*, 33. For other English-language versions, consult Weigle, *Genesis Octapla*.

31. The NETS follows the LXX and calls him Adam from this point onward, whereas the NRSV refrains from using the name Adam at any point until 4:25. The RSV calls him Adam beginning in 3:17. See table in the appendix.

God is not forming a generic humanity but speaking to a particular (male) character, one who will soon be joined by another particular (female) character. The story has shifted to individual persons—even if some subsequent exegetes interpret these characters as representative of wider humanity.

But the original text maintains the multivalence of *'adam*. And so the LXX translators are forced to revert, in 2:18, to ἄνθρωπος, recognizing that the “not good” status of being alone pertains to *unsexed* (or one-sexed) *humanity*, not to a lonely Adam. More importantly ἄνθρωπος is used at 5:2, which stipulates that God gave humanity the name Adam *when he had created it male and female*. The Hebrew text never allows the reader to understand “Adam” as only the man in the garden, even as it refers to him by that name. The effect of the LXX translation is that even when “Adam” is an individual person, the *descriptive* character of that name (“human being,” or “earthling”) is lost. Eve fares somewhat better, as the LXX takes an entirely different approach with her. The Hebrew original is ignored where she first is named (3:20), and the translation gives her the Greek name Ζωή (life), as she is the mother of all ζώντων (“living things”). Once this wordplay has been established, from 4:1 onward she becomes Ευα, a transliteration of the Hebrew. Had the LXX taken the same approach for Adam, it might have originally called him ἄνθρωπος.

A more significant repercussion of the *'adam* ambiguity rests with how 2:7–24, with its account of sex differentiation, relates to 1:26–27. In the LXX the “Adam” of Genesis 2—the male person out of whose rib Eve is formed—is too easily conflated with the *'adam*/ἄνθρωπος of 1:26–27. The problem already exists in Hebrew but is exacerbated by the Greek translation, which uses ἄνθρωπος for both 1:26–27 and 2:7 but Αδαμ from 2:16 onward, as if they were the same “person.” Read in such a way, the *'adam* that God creates in his image in 1:26 *is* the male Adam, and the female is created in the image of the male. The identification of the male “Adam” with ἄνθρωπος is further suggested where the LXX uses ἄνθρωπος rather than ἀνήρ to translate the gender-specific Hebrew *iš* in 2:24. If, as the LXX has it, ὁ ἄνθρωπος leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, then it is all the clearer that ὁ ἄνθρωπος is somehow essentially male.

Finally, the LXX translation subtly reemphasizes woman’s derivation from man in 3:16–19, which describes its reversal through the curse and punishment. In 3:16, where the Hebrew says that the woman’s “desire” shall be for her husband, the LXX uses ἀποστροφή, “return.” The cumulative effect of the curse is that Eve (woman) will “return,” explicitly in a relationship of subjection, to Adam (man), from whom she derives, and that Adam will return, also in a relationship of servitude, to the earth, from which he derives.³²

At the same time, the interpretation that the ἄνθρωπος of Genesis 1 is the Αδαμ of Genesis 2–3 is negated not only by 1:27 itself but by 5:1–2, specifically

32. Loader, *Septuagint, Sexuality*, 46–49.

in its LXX translation. In 5:1, where the Hebrew speaks of “the list of the descendants of Adam” (anticipating the narrative genealogy leading to Noah in 5:3–32), the LXX changes it to “the book of the origin of human beings,” using the generic ἄνθρωπος in its plural form. In the same verse, the LXX then uses Ἀδάμ as a kind of fulcrum, identifying it/him both with the generic plural that immediately precedes and proceeds as well as with the person who would be the forefather of Noah. Then in 5:2 Ἀδάμ serves as the generic (or possibly even personal) term for a male/female humanity.³³ Here is the Greek text, with its NETS and NRSV translations (the latter evidently working from the Hebrew text):

Αὕτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως
ἀνθρώπων, ἧ ἡμέρα
ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν Ἀδὰμ,
κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν
αὐτόν, ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ
ἐποίησεν αὐτοὺς καὶ
εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς, καὶ
ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν
Ἀδὰμ, ἧ ἡμέρα ἐποίησεν
αὐτούς. (LXX)

This is the book of the origin of human beings. On the day that God made Adam, he made him according to divine image; male and female he made them, and he blessed them. And he named their name “Adam” on the day that he made them. (NETS)

This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them “Human-kind” when they were created. (NRSV)

Given that the LXX constituted the Scriptures for Philo, Paul, and the Greek fathers, the influence of its interpretive choices, whether deliberate or not, was far-ranging indeed.

Silence and Irruption: First References to Genesis 1–3

The LXX translation was clearly a vital part of a vast journey that the Genesis narratives and their interpretation underwent on the way to Christian exegesis. Our study now examines where and when the Genesis narratives appeared within Jewish experience.

Silentium

To the extent that the authority of Genesis 1–3 for theology—or at least its influence in the history of ideas—is accepted unthinkingly, it seems puzzling that neither the primordial Genesis accounts nor most of the theological questions that they addressed (such as the origin of sin and death) play any role of consequence in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

After the expulsion from paradise, Adam’s function is purely genealogical, and he appears only twice. He is an actor in Genesis 4, leading to the narrative

33. *Ibid.*, 50–51, alludes to ancient interpretations of the original male Adam as an androgynous figure and indicates a few Greek and Jewish reference points.

genealogy of Genesis 5, which establishes and fills in the generations leading to Noah. He turns up one last time in 1 Chronicles as the first in the genealogy of the patriarchs, claiming for them a primordial lineage by tracing the Abrahamic line to Noah, one of the line of the *πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος* (“first human being”) himself, *’adam*. (Luke 3:23–38 does the same to show Jesus Christ as being of primordial human lineage.)

When Scripture elsewhere refers to creation, to human disobedience, to agriculture, or to death, we do not find the vivid particularities of Genesis 1–3: the six-day creation, its culmination in the creation of the human person in the image and likeness of God, the disobedience of the primordial couple (under threat of death), and the curse and expulsion from paradise. In other words, Genesis 1–3 does not emerge as the obvious referent, though there may be allusions to it.

THE HEXAEMERON NARRATIVE

Several OT passages mention the creation of the world. The only direct references to the six days of creation appear in the Pentateuch—Exodus 20:11; 31:17—to explain the Sabbath. In Scripture outside the Pentateuch, Psalm 104; Isaiah 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; and Job 38–39 refer in general terms to creation in order to establish the absolute sovereignty of the Lord. While Psalm 103:29 LXX (104:29) seems to harken to Genesis 2:7 when it speaks of God taking away the human’s *πνεῦμα* (“breath”/“spirit”) and of death as return to dust, the likelihood of this reference is lessened because it describes the death not only of human persons but also of all creatures. But the days of the Genesis account are never mentioned, although the Prophets and the Writings explicitly cite other aspects of pentateuchal narrative, for example, the details of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt.

Themes recur, however, such as the chaotic waters brought to order by God in Genesis 1. In the OT, the waters are a powerful instrument of God’s bidding in Noah’s flood, at the crossing of the Red Sea, and in countless passages in the Psalms, Job, and elsewhere;³⁴ their taming is a sign of divine might and authority. When Jeremiah 5:22 speaks of God establishing the sand as bounds of the sea, this too is in the context of the assertion of fearsome divine might. And the theme continues in the Gospel accounts of Jesus subduing the waters (understood as a clear sign of his divinity)³⁵ and may lie at the root of the Revelation images of the sea of glass—utterly subdued by the might of the Lord (Rev. 14:6; 15:2). Genesis 1 is less likely the source for the prevalent water imagery than a key example of it.

The closest we have to a Hexaemeron reference may be Psalm 148:4–6:

34. Psalm 77:17–21 contains a near conflation between the creation narratives and the parting of the waters to deliver Israel.

35. See Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 179.

Praise him, you highest heavens,
 and you waters above the heavens!
 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 for he commanded and they were created.
 And he established them forever and ever;
 he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

It is important, however, to be cautious when seeking such allusions. For example, Psalm 82:6 (81:6 LXX), “I say, ‘You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you’”—a favorite patristic citation in support of the doctrine of *theōsis* (deification) and thus ostensibly a reference to Genesis 1:26—actually refers to the pagan gods who have dashed the psalmist’s expectations.³⁶

In all, the theme of creation functions in the OT mainly as an ongoing (and apparently oft-needed) reminder of the Lord’s absolute sovereignty. The OT authors drew on any of several oral and written sources to make this point. The Hexaemeron does not seem to have captured Israel’s imagination the way the Passover did. The Passover story remains part of the historical and etiological vocabulary for the establishment of Israel and hence a part of OT intertextuality; it would be hard to say the same about the particular details of the P creation narrative.

THE PARADISE NARRATIVE

What about when the Hebrew Bible seeks a progenitor, or first father? Adam plays this role just once after Genesis 5 when he appears at the beginning of 1 Chronicles (at 1:1), and never again. An exception may reside in Ezekiel 28:12–13, where the Lord calls the king of Tyre the “signet of perfection” and says, “You were in Eden, the garden of God.” This glorification of the king—before he fell into violence and pride—seems to be inspired by a vision of the (glorious) first-made man. This at any rate is what both the rabbinic texts and modern scholars have inferred.³⁷ Ezekiel 31 and 36 and Joel 2:3 also appear to refer to the primordial paradise. If so, they would be rare cases of explicit reference to the paradise story outside the Pentateuch and before the second century BCE.³⁸

So once again, searching the Hebrew Bible through the lens of the Pauline concept of Adam as first father, or especially as progenitor of sin and death, would be an exercise in frustration. The Hebrew understanding of death

36. Mitchell Dahood translates the verse as follows: “I had said ‘You are gods . . .’ yet you shall die as men do” (*Psalms II*, 268–70).

37. See, e.g., Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 590–93 (reference to the *midrashim*, p. 590). Of further interest is that the patristic exegesis of Ezek. 28 takes particular notice of its treatment of Lucifer, the pre-fallen Satan. See Anderson, “Ezekiel 28.”

38. Ezekiel wrote during the exile; Walther Zimmerli has suggested additions to the book from a later “Ezekiel school” (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 68–74) but this theory is far from universally accepted. The sole authorship of Ezekiel (and the explicit rejection of the “school” theory) is a basic premise for Greenberg; see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 396.

is not theologically consistent, and there was no unanimity in viewing sin (especially the purported original sin of Adam) as the entry of death into an otherwise immortal humanity. The one time the Hebrew Bible speaks of a “first ancestor [who] sinned” is Isaiah 43:27, and the referent is certainly not Adam: it may be Jacob (see Hos. 12:2–3), or possibly Aaron (who makes the golden calf for Israel in Exod. 32).³⁹

As mentioned earlier, in Hosea 4:1b–3—a passage that might be taken as representative of prophetic sensibilities generally—the cause for the corruption even of the natural world and animal life is not some primordial sin event but the ongoing sin of the people. Hosea 6:7 clearly refers not to the person but to the *land* of Adam, as it is followed by the locative “there” and its adjacent verses refer to other lands.⁴⁰ Since the verse refers to transgressing the covenant, it is tempting to interpret (and translate) it as, “But *as Adam* they transgressed the covenant . . .” But here and throughout Hosea the author consistently and explicitly universalizes sin.

There are other appearances of the Hebrew *’adam*. In Deuteronomy 32:8, for example, it refers to humanity, and *bene ’adam* is translated as “sons of men,” as in the RSV (or “humankind,” in the NRSV), even if the LXX preserves the word/name ἄδᾰμ. Other appearances that may refer to the person of Adam include Psalm 82:7 (81:7 LXX). In his continued disenchantment with the pagan gods (see above), the psalmist says that they will die *ke’adam* in the Masoretic Text, interpreted in the LXX as ὡς ἄνθρωποι and as “like men” in the RSV.⁴¹ It is not impossible, however, to imagine the psalmist saying that the gods “will die like Adam,” who is the representative of all humanity.

Finally, Job 31:33 reads, “I have concealed my transgressions from men, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom” (RSV). The Hebrew text, however, is perhaps more closely rendered, “If I hid my transgressions like Adam, concealing my guilt.”⁴² But if the latter reading is indeed more faithful to the Hebrew (the LXX omits a reference either to “men” or to “Adam”),⁴³ certainly no theological point is being made about Adam, either as father of humanity or as first sinner or the one responsible for human sin and death. It would show a rare instance of a prophet’s being aware of the Adam narrative. Pity, then, that the composition of the Job story is notoriously difficult to date, for it would be useful to suggest when the paradise story was becoming widely known.⁴⁴

39. See McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 59; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 231–32.

40. See Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 432–36.

41. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 270, explains why he does so as well.

42. See Pope, *Job*, 199, 208.

43. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἁμαρτῶν ἀκουσίως ἔκρυψα τὴν ἁμαρτίαν μου (NETS: “and if too, having sinned haplessly, I hid my sin”). The NRSV follows the LXX more than the Hebrew text: “if I have concealed my transgressions as others do, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom.”

44. Informed readers of the past two millennia have proposed dates from the patriarchal period (twenty-first to fifteenth century BCE) to the exilic/postexilic period (sixth to fourth century BCE). See the summary in Pope, *Job*, xxx–xxxvii.

It is difficult to be conclusive about mentions of the person of Adam after Genesis 5 because of the ambiguity in the Hebrew; the more apparently straightforward and obvious characteristics and characters of Genesis 1–3 are also anything but prominent in the Hebrew Bible, and this is significant given other examples of its intertextuality. The creation narratives are not foundational, authoritative etiologies for the world or for Israel until centuries after the exile, nor do they serve to ground a teaching about humanity, sin, or death as they do in later Jewish and especially in Christian thought.

The question then becomes this: if the idea of the creation of the world by God underlies Hebrew Scripture, which creation account, if any, is normative? Many were circulating in the ancient Near East. It has long been shown that Babylonian and Canaanite creation myths had considerable influence on the resurgent interest in, and the content of, the biblical creation narratives, even if the latter broke in significant ways from the other circulating myths. One compelling theory states that the J (preexilic) paradise story was based on the Babylonian myth of Atrahasis—whose flood story was also at the root of the one in the Gilgamesh epic—and that the Priestly author, addressing a battered exilic community, rewrote the J story while probably borrowing from the *Enuma Elish*.⁴⁵ Aside from their direct influence on Genesis 1–3, these and other ancient Near Eastern creation stories circulating in Babylon may well have informed the exilic and postexilic author/redactors in forming the accounts that came to be seen as canonical in the two centuries before Christ.

(Re)appearance

Awareness of the paradise and Hexaemeron narratives rose, first gradually and then sharply, during the second and first centuries BCE. Both the silence and the reappearance may be puzzling, but they are not inexplicable. The earlier silence may owe to the fact that until after the exile Israel did not have a canonical Scripture (or even a sense of scriptural canon) to which to refer. It is the cultic materials, oral and written, that endured in Israel's consciousness. The paradise story—unlike, for example, the deliverance out of Egypt—simply did not figure largely in that material. We know the Hexaemeron and paradise accounts did exist in some form long before, because Ezekiel and perhaps the other texts as suggested above could allude to them. But by the second century BCE, we see an increased codification of writing, an increased sense of "Scripture," and an awareness of particular texts within it. The development of the LXX is vivid testimony to this process. The Second Temple Jewish authors now had something to draw on.

The next portion of our study covers some of the Second Temple Jewish texts, an important part of the journey of Genesis 1–3 on its way to Christian

45. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, summary, 2–3.

interpretation. Readers wishing to go directly to ancient Christian readings may want to skip ahead to the treatment below of Philo (almost an honorary church father) or proceed directly to the next chapter. Of the wealth of texts that exist from the second century BCE to the first century of our era, our discussion here will be necessarily selective and brief, focused on the texts' demonstrable usefulness to Christian commentators. The books of Sirach and Wisdom are part of the LXX; *Jubilees* is not but is referred to by many of the Christian authors and is canonical in some Oriental Orthodox churches. Second Esdras and 2 *Baruch* are authoritative for some of the fathers, as they are in some churches to this day.

EARLY LXX TEXTS

While the silence on the Hexaemeron and Eden is characteristic of the Hebrew Bible; several of the later texts, some preserved in Greek and some eventually becoming a part of the LXX (thus forming a part of the scriptural canon of the Greek fathers), refer explicitly to Genesis 1–3, especially to the paradise narrative. These texts, as well as the LXX itself, were produced during a period characterized in some regions by degrees of linguistic, cultural, and theological hellenization, with concomitant and sometimes violent reactions against it. New thrusts in the Jewish literature of this period include an increased interest in philosophy and theology. Hallmarks of this interest are anthropological dualism, most notably in the sense of a soul that survives the death of the body, and the sense of an awaited general resurrection.⁴⁶ It is within this climate that we witness the reappearance of the Genesis material.

The paradise story, and particularly the person of Adam, is especially important in this literature. Genesis 1 remains unmentioned until the early to mid-second century BCE, where it is prominent in *Jubilees*. Sirach 16:26–27, of the same time period, speaks of the “divisions” and the “order” of God’s creation—possibly an oblique reference to the logic of the six days. Yet more significant is the appearance, in the same book, of an effective prohibition on the discussion of creation. Sirach opens with examples from the created world as testimonies of the mysteries of God, which are impenetrable (Sir. 1:1–5). Coupled with 3:21–24, which cautions against prying into matters beyond human understanding, these verses may anticipate the Jewish sensibility arising later in the talmudic writings, according to which the manner of God’s work in creating the heavens and the earth (*ma’aseh bereshit*, “the work of the beginning”) should not be discussed except with great care and among more than one person of understanding. This prohibition stems from, and especially pertains to, the pre-Kabbalistic

46. Along these same lines, 2 Macc. 7:28 features a passing but possibly significant mention of creation out of nothing.

esoteric teachings on the creation of the universe, which in turn are based on Genesis 1.⁴⁷ It may also help explain the paucity of exploration of the Hexaemeron narratives.

As for Adam and paradise, in the two centuries before Paul we find a varied picture that resists systematization. As John Levison notes, these texts are not only different from each other but are characterized by an internal diversity. He therefore warns not only against treating them systematically but also against reading them through the lens of Pauline theology.⁴⁸ Still, the Jewish literature of the period is indicative of a recently gained awareness of the scriptural creation narratives and constituted a body of texts alongside which Paul produced his own.

The first writings before us, LXX texts of the second and first centuries BCE, form a part of the wider biblical canon of the Orthodox churches. Tobit 8:6 cites Genesis 2:18 in the context of a prayer, naming Adam and Eve as those from whom the race of humankind has sprung. More significant mention is made of the paradise narratives in Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon. These texts also see Adam as the first of the human race, although they also use him to signify all humanity. Sirach 17:1–3 associates human origins out of the dust and in God’s image with the person of Adam, who represents all humans (Sir. 33:10). Adam, though the protoplast and prototypical, is not responsible for sin and death. Ben Sira emphasizes human free will “from the beginning” (15:14 NETS); later in 40:1–11 he asserts that death and suffering are not catastrophes brought on by Adam or by sin but are an integral part of God’s ordering of the created world.⁴⁹

Sirach is also the source of a famous though somewhat anomalous verse that places Adam as primary among the glorious heroes of Israel. Though Sirach 49:16 has been subject to a multitude of interpretations, Levison cautions us to take the verse in its context: it is Israel that is being glorified, and through Israel, Adam, its first father.⁵⁰ All the heroes are glorified (cf. 44:1–2), yet Adam is honored above them all. One must recognize here a nascent tradition of seeing Adam as a being endowed with primordial and royal glory, a tradition with possible reference to Ezekiel 28:13 and continuing through later Jewish literature.⁵¹

47. Biram, “Ma’aseh Bereshit; Ma’aseh Merkabah,” 8:235. This rabbinic caution against the study of the creation passages of Genesis, the beginning and end of Ezekiel, and the Song of Songs is cited by Origen in *In Cant.* prol.1.7, where he refers to these scriptural passages as *deuterōseis*, or matters to be treated secondarily. See Origen, *Song of Songs* (Lawson, 313n7); and Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 34–35.

48. See Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 14–28, 161.

49. On the significance of the phrasing “from the beginning” in reference to Gen. 1:1, see *ibid.*, 34–35; and Skehan and DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 271–72.

50. See Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 44–45.

51. E.g., *Life of Adam and Eve* 12–16.

Still, Ben Sira portrays Adam's function and stature inconsistently. Adam is both all of humanity and a specific person, the founding father of humanity. As an individual, he is either glorious (Sir. 49:16) or ignorant (24:28). His role in the beginnings of sin is neatly sidestepped in the context of the author's misogynistic descriptions of the evils of woman (25:13–26). It is Eve, unnamed but serving nicely to illustrate the author's dim view of women in general, from whom is the "beginning of sin," and "because of her we all die" (25:24 NETS).⁵²

The portrait of Adam in Wisdom of Solomon is similarly erratic. It contains references to a (generally unnamed) πρωτοπλάστος ("first-formed," Wis. 7:1). Of greater interest is 10:1–4, where Wisdom delivers or extricates (ἐξείλατο) the first-formed from his transgression, and it is the unnamed Cain who shuns Wisdom and ultimately brings on the flood through his sin. It was common for the later Jewish and early Christian literature to place greater blame on Cain than on Adam.

Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–24 ties together two themes, the *imago Dei* and the entry of death: "But God created man [ἄνθρωπον] for immortality [ἀφθαρσία], and made him an image [εἰκόνα] of his own proper being; it was through the devil's envy that death entered into the cosmic order, and they who are his own experience him."⁵³ Levison's theory is that "the enemy" (for this is how he translates this instance of ὁ διάβολος) is actually Cain, as is more explicitly the case in 10:3–4.⁵⁴ Such a theory, if correct, supports the absence of any sense that sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's transgression. Likewise, 7:1 does not mention that sin is the cause of death, only that the narrator, as a descendant of the first-formed, is mortal and earthborn like everyone else.

This anthropology is effectively an adjusted version of Genesis 2:7. The paradise narrative is about primordial humanity, earthborn and mortal from the start, falling just short of attaining immortality. Wisdom speaks of the "earthborn" being into which a spirit/soul is breathed (Wis. 15:11), a soul that can be demanded back (15:8). The soul's immortality is potential, or *provisional*, rather than natural (in the Platonic sense).⁵⁵ Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–24, after all, speaks of an *intended* immortality but a clearly unrealized one. We cannot find a consistent, thoroughly worked-out doctrine of sin or death in Wisdom of Solomon. Yet the overarching sense throughout the book

52. Sirach 42:13–14 goes so far as to say, "For from garments comes the moth, and from a woman comes woman's wickedness. Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace." For more on the origins of evil and sin in Sirach, see Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 80–96.

53. Translations are from Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, unless otherwise noted.

54. Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 51–52.

55. See Reese, *Hellenistic Influence*, 64–71.

is that, although mortality and sin are related, one cannot say that Adam's sin is responsible for human mortality.

JUBILEES

Jubilees, though roughly of the same period as Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon, is not part of the LXX,⁵⁶ yet several early Christian writers—for example, Hippolytus, Origen, Epiphanius, Didymus, and Jerome—cite it by name.⁵⁷ The book is part of the wider scriptural canon in the Ethiopian and some other Oriental Orthodox churches.

The author of *Jubilees* recasts the main episodes of the book of Genesis (and parts of Exodus) in a way that reemphasizes the law and the patriarchy of Israel in the face of Hellenistic influence. Thus what began as a trickle of interest and awareness in the Genesis creation accounts in Sirach and in Wisdom becomes a flood in *Jubilees*. From this point on, there is no doubt that the accounts in Genesis 1–3 as we know them are fixed in Jewish consciousness; indeed so is the rest of the book of Genesis. *Jubilees* 2 and 3 retell the Hexaemeron and paradise narratives. This respun account—with some details omitted and many added—traces both the law (*Jub.* 3:8–14) and the line of the patriarchs of Israel (3:27–32) back to the first-formed man, thus universalizing them and their authority. All of creation is shown to have taken place in obedience to the law (15:27). The two biblical narratives (Gen. 1 and 2–3) seem to be taken as a seamless whole: the land created on the third day includes the garden of Eden (*Jub.* 2:7), and the human person (“a man and a woman”) created on the sixth day (2:14) is the very one who turns up exactly one week later, a male, apparently, who names the animals and has a woman fashioned from his rib.⁵⁸ To emphasize this continuity, the Genesis 2:7 account of human creation is omitted in the retelling.

Jubilees, which presents Adam in as flattering a light as possible, omits Genesis 3:8–13 (God's search for Adam and Adam and Eve's transference of culpability). For the *Jubilees* author, Adam is a patriarch, a glorified and priestly figure who makes a priestly offering after his transgressions. Conversely the wrath of God is against Eve and against the serpent, and Cain is considered more cursed than Adam.

The Hexaemeron and paradise accounts were evidently now so firmly ensconced in Jewish canonical Scripture that the author of *Jubilees* was able to draw on them as resonant foundational narratives. The nature of their

56. See Testuz, *Idées religieuses*, 34–39, and VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies*, 214–85. On the possible relationship between *Jubilees* and the Essene community, see Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 383–87. Translations here are taken from Charles, *Book of Jubilees*.

57. See Charles, *Book of Jubilees*, lxxvii–lxxxiii.

58. Testuz, *Idées religieuses*, 45, argues that the original text of *Jub.* 2:14 (the MS tradition is huge) mentions only Adam, not the “male and female,” which was an interpolation of later redactors seeking to harmonize it with Gen. 1:27. See also Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 90.

authority apparently did not prevent him from playing fast and loose with the details: he reordered, augmented, and subtracted from the original texts. When he was done, their etiological function was enhanced and enlarged to incorporate his agenda of reinvigorating the Jewish sense of heritage and the centrality therein of the law. Adam as responsible for human sin and death would have damaged his case.

LATER APOCALYPTIC TEXTS

Two apocalyptic texts are worth examining, both composed just after Paul's own time in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple. As Jewish works, they had (and in some cases continue to have) currency in the Christian world. The first is 2 Esdras. Known in the Latin Vulgate as 4 Ezra, this book is probably of Palestinian Jewish authorship.⁵⁹ Although the author describes the historical line from Adam through Noah and the patriarchs, his depiction of the garden of Eden is parahistorical, planted by God's right hand *before the earth appeared* (2 Esd. 3:6). God names the first-created human Adam, not only before Eve exists, but even before he is infused with divine breath (*nefeš*) and is still a lifeless creature from dust.

The author's portrayal of Adam is anything but royal or priestly. Nor is Adam's blame exonerated or transferred to Cain. Adam is a transgressor and begins the cycle of sin and of death (3:7). Several passages show us Adam before his transgression and its effect. Adam's fall is clearly not one from an erstwhile immortal perfection. Nor did it *cause* sin and death for his descendants, even if it is the first sin and the first death. Adam, "burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him" (3:21). The evil seed, Uriel says later on, was "sown in Adam's heart from the beginning" (4:30). We do not have here a perfect first-formed, and he does not cause universal sin. The evil heart is in Adam's descendants by God's deliberate and providential design, as 3:20 has it. As a result, all his descendants were burdened with an evil heart, transgressed, and were overcome.⁶⁰ The relationship of Adam's sin (and death) to that of his descendants is not one of causality.

In the third episode of the dialogue, however, the author presents Adam from a different angle: as the first-created human person. Drawing now on the Hexaemeron account of the creation of the world and of ἄνθρωπος, the focus in 6:38–59 is the dominion of Adam—not only over the plants and animals but also over the sun and the moon and the stars (6:45–46), indeed over all created things (6:54).⁶¹ The author portrays Israel as the chosen descendant of Adam; it thus ought to be exercising the same rulership but instead is being overrun

59. See Myers, *I and II Esdras*, 119–21; and Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 409–18.

60. Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 118.

61. Perhaps also a reference to Ps. 8:4–9.

by nations that are like “a drop from a bucket” (6:56). And so his outraged grievance before God: “If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so?” (6:59).

In 2 Esdras 7, he continues to vascillate between the universality and the particularity of Israel. This lengthy chapter, concerned mainly with theodicy, seeks to explain that Adam’s transgression forces people—especially Israel—to pass through pain to obtain glory. In the first part, Uriel presents Ezra with a vision of a city full of good things; its entry is narrow and bounded by fire and water. That Israel must pass through danger to obtain the prize is also Israel’s portion. “For I made the world for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged. And so the entrances of this world were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil, full of dangers and involved in great hardships” (7:11–12). The rest of the passage, however, pertains to all “the living.” When Ezra cries, “O sovereign Lord, you have ordained in your law that the righteous shall inherit these things, but that the ungodly shall perish” (7:17), the conflation of Israel with universal humanity reflects the sense that Israel is the only nation that really matters. Israel *is* humanity, properly speaking.

As the chapter proceeds, Ezra’s lament, and his fear of judgment and damnation, deepens. In a dramatic passage we see once again that Adam did not live as immortal before the transgression. Rather, the transgression prevents the attaining of that yet-unattained prize: “For what good is it to us, if an immortal time has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death? And what good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised to us, but we have miserably failed?” (7:119–20). Given that people transgress, mortality mercifully severs the sin cycle. Yet all this is, for Ezra, a pitiful state of affairs: “It would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning” (7:116). Not daring to blame the Creator, he blames the earth. He censures Adam, although he, too, does not link Adam’s sin and that of his posterity: “The fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants” (7:118). Ezra is of two minds, at once blaming Adam and locating the blame with each descendant. His lament knows no bounds.

Uriel’s reply assures that the call to morality pertains to all, that Ezra’s censure of Adam and the earth that produced him is misplaced, and that all will be judged according to how they live:

This is the significance of the contest that all who are born on earth shall wage: if they are defeated they shall suffer what you have said, but if they are victorious they shall receive what I have said. For this is the way of which Moses, while he was alive, spoke to the people, saying, “Choose life for yourself, so that you may live!” But they did not believe him or the prophets after him, or even myself who have spoken to them. Therefore there shall not be

grief at their destruction, so much as joy over those to whom salvation is assured. (7:127–31)

Second Baruch is another apocalyptic text of the same general time period as 2 Esdras.⁶² It was composed in Greek, but the most complete extant MS is the Syriac translation, which serves as the basis for the text as it comes to us, so that it is frequently referred to as the *Syriac Apocalypse* of Baruch. Its similarity to 2 Esdras may indicate that it was based on that book.⁶³ Like 2 Esdras, it features seven dialogues with an angel and reflects the shattered sensibilities of post-70 CE Judaism. That it was written when consolation was sorely needed strongly affects the function of Adam. Before his transgression, Adam is shown the heavenly Jerusalem as an encouragement not to sin;⁶⁴ this Jerusalem (unlike the one that had just fallen) is preexistent and eternal (2 Bar. 4:1–7).

In 2 *Baruch*, Adam has a threefold function: genealogical, moral, and cosmological. As elsewhere, he is the “father of us all” in that he is the first-created human and all necessarily descend from him. But he is also the father of sin: in the present age of sin and death, everyone has a choice to follow this legacy or reject it. Finally, although he is not portrayed as “glorious,” Adam—and all humanity—was created with the vocation of dominion and glory; those who choose to reject the “darkness of Adam” (18:2) and be subject to their Creator will again enjoy this dominion in the age to come. Adam’s sin brought death, which spreads to “all that are born” (23:4). The dead are “guarded” in Sheol as long as this age lasts (23:4–5).

But the question again arises: does Adam’s sin cause the sin of the descendants? Baruch has moments of exasperation—“O Adam, what have you done to all those who are born from you?” (48:42)—but he also says clearly that “Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each of us has been the Adam of his own soul.”⁶⁵ People *become* “descendants of Adam” only by sinning. The free will of each person is the crux of the matter.

What, precisely, has Adam’s sin engendered? This text’s answer in 56:6 is specific. When Adam transgressed, the first repercussion is “untimely death”⁶⁶: not

62. The translations are taken from Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:481–524. For an extensive discussion on the precise date of 2 *Baruch*, see Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*, 1:270–95.

63. See Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*, 1:21–32, 401–5; also Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 25n2, 409n2.

64. See the summary in Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 130–31.

65. Some scholars have remarked on the similarity of this passage to the sense of Rom. 5:12. See Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*, 1:405–9. Bogaert points out that the earliest twentieth-century commentators, basing themselves on the erroneous Vulgate translation of Rom. 5:12 (where “all men sin [*in Adam*]”), describe the relationship between the two passages as one of *opposition*.

66. Cf. also 2 Bar. 54:15.

mortality in itself but death by violence (cf. 73:3–4). The other consequences are anguish, pain, trouble, disease, Sheol’s seeking of blood, the begetting of children, the passion of parents, the bringing down of humanity’s greatness, and the languishing of goodness.⁶⁷ This rephrasing of the curse of Genesis 3:16–19 describes the existential situation of humanity.

Summary

Other texts from this period, including much of the Qumran material and those seminal to rabbinic Judaism, richly reflect on Genesis 1–3. The Enoch material would also fit well with the apocalypses above. The authorship and dating especially of *2 Enoch*—the book with the most relevant material for our study—are, however, mired in uncertainty.⁶⁸

A wealth of other later Jewish material, notably the *Apocalypse of Moses* and the *Life of Adam and Eve* (with which it overlaps), has been the subject of important studies, although its fertilization of Christian literature is not easy to demonstrate.⁶⁹ The Qumran scrolls might be of greater interest in this regard; work on discerning the possible correspondence between these and the Pauline corpus continues.⁷⁰ The texts we have examined were chosen for their relevance to the formation both of the scriptural canon and of ancient Christian exegesis. Several points have already emerged out of the material we have cursorily reviewed.

First, the appearance and prevalence of texts that refer to or retell the paradise narrative (and, to a lesser extent, the Hexaemeron narrative) only emphasize the absence of such references up until the second century BCE, when they begin to trickle in, becoming far more prominent in the first century CE. Whatever allusions to Genesis 1–3 that may have been made in passing in the books of Ezekiel, Job, and Psalms do not approach the fascination that explodes onto the scene in the intertestamental period.

67. In alternative translations in the Greek, the list is “untimely death, mourning, affliction, illness, labor, pride, death’s seeking blood, conception of children, passion of parents, loftiness humiliated, and vanishing of goodness.”

68. The book is unrelated to *1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)*. The earliest surviving manuscript of *2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)* is a late Slavonic translation of a work that scholars date from the first to the tenth century CE.

69. See Stone, *History*; Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*; Anderson, Stone, and Tromp, *Literature on Adam and Eve*. The manuscript tradition of these texts is not simple, and there are Christian additions to, as well as Christian versions of, several of them.

70. Several essays in Davila, *Dead Sea Scrolls* are indicative of the potential fruitfulness of exploring this connection. See esp. Bauckham, “Early Jerusalem Church”; T. Lim, “Studying the Qumran Scrolls”; and Golitzin, “Recovering ‘The Glory of Adam.’” Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 113–16, discusses, without great assurance, the idea that Paul uses the *pesher*-style exegesis characteristic of the Qumran materials.

Second, the authors show themselves quite at liberty to take license with not only the purported “meaning” of Genesis 1–3 but also the detail of the text itself. We see especially in *Jubilees*, but also in other retellings of the narratives,⁷¹ that details are freely omitted and others added to help support the authors’ agendas. This may indicate that the gradually emerging concept of “Scripture” and “canonicity” was not one that fixed a particular reading. Indeed, the authors here reviewed tacitly acknowledged multiple possibilities of meaning in the scriptural texts and dealt with them not only on the level of what might be called their “plain sense” but also on that of implied or derived meaning.⁷² This bivalence of Scripture, implicit for the books reviewed thus far, is made explicit in Philo, as we shall see below.

The variety of readings and interpretations is due in part to the different contexts out of which these texts came and to the authors’ concomitant viewpoints. Some books (e.g., *Jubilees*) were written to reestablish the Torah and place it at the basis of creation itself. Other books (e.g., *Wisdom of Solomon*) show how the Torah may be made amenable to Hellenistic sensibilities. Genesis is plumbed for imagery, or retold and recast, in ways that serve these agendas. A further cause of diversity was the great divide between authors writing before and after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The books written within a generation of this cataclysm bear the marks of the tragedy, either in their apocalypticism or in rethinking the nature of Judaism and its worship and practice.

Third, during the centuries under review, and especially during the first century of our era, several of the key, enduring questions surrounding the creation and predicament of the human person as treated in Genesis 1–3 were already on the table, even if they were not yet receiving clear and consistent answers. In all the diversity of their portrayals of the first-created world and its first-created human beings, the texts we have discussed share an interest, implicit or explicit, in several issues that will continue to captivate Jewish and Christian imagination:

- Who was Adam, and how does the named character who figures in the story of paradise and who begins the genealogy leading to Noah relate to the ἄνθρωπος of Genesis 1:26? The texts so far seem to maintain a certain neutrality on this question, sometimes allowing “Adam” to stand for ἄνθρωπος and sometimes personalizing him, especially when he is seen to be the father of subsequent generations.
- Who was Eve? In the patriarchal culture from which these texts emanated, Eve tends to be invisible, since genealogies, with some notable exceptions in Chronicles 1 and Matthew 1, list only males. Yet she too

71. E.g., Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, composed probably around the time of 2 Esdras and 2 *Baruch*. Cf. Stone, *Jewish Writings*, 210–27.

72. Cf. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 6–35.

plays a role, though rarely, both as first parent of the lineage of human beings (as in Tob. 8:6) and, at least in Sirach (and Philo), as the means of entry of sin into human life.

- What was the state of first-created humanity? The texts, taken as a whole, tend to preserve the ambiguity given in Scripture itself. They speak of Adam as a glorious figure, created in God's image—and in this period of increasing anthropological dualism, the image was often interpreted as denoting the immaterial soul. Adam has the vocation of dominion over most, if not all, creation. But they speak of Adam as a humble or even tragic figure, created from clay, ignorant of wisdom, and the first of all transgressors. Both of these tendencies became strong legacies as the centuries progressed. Although in contrast to the “new Adam,” Adam lives on in much Christian thought as one whose example is emphatically not to be followed, a parallel “glory of Adam” tradition remained in both Jewish and Christian texts of the first four centuries of our era.⁷³
- What is the effect of the first transgression on subsequent humanity? Many ancient authors comment on the legacy of the dominion Adam was given over all creation and how this may or may not be enacted by subsequent generations and nations—notably Israel. But the more general matter of the legacy of sin and death is taken up not in the Wisdom literature but in the apocalyptic texts, where one may find a near unanimity in *denying* the direct causal role of the transgression in paradise. Among the authors we have reviewed, some exonerate Adam and blame Cain. Others see Adam as the first of sinners and progenitor of humanity, much of which will succumb to sin. But especially the apocalyptic texts emphasize the free choice of subsequent human beings and even envisage the possibility of attaining “righteousness.” In these texts, the “sons/children of Adam” are not his descendants because they proceeded from this first parent but because they choose the way of unrighteousness and disobedience.

There is a sense in which these texts, especially 2 Esdras and 2 *Baruch*, agree with the Pauline “Death spread to all, because all have sinned”—a formulation that denies causality but acknowledges the existential fact of sin and death. But their apocalyptic sensibility, emerging from the fall of the temple, represents a context entirely different from Paul's.⁷⁴ Their interpretation of Adam, sin, and death—like Paul's—can already be found in earlier hellenized Jewish texts such as Philo's.

73. See Golitzin, “Recovering ‘The Glory of Adam’”; Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*.

74. See Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 88.

PHILO: A CODA

A study of early Christian exegesis cannot omit a discussion of Philo the Jew, owing to his vital place in the history of ideas, his own development of the same Platonic (and Stoic) legacy that would provide a backdrop for Christian patristic reflection, and his direct influence on Christian writers.⁷⁵ Since Philo was effectively ignored in the Jewish world, it is likely that his writings survived only because of their enduring fascination for Christians. Living from about 20 BCE until about 50 CE, Philo falls squarely within the time period under review in this chapter, but, as he makes no pretense at being either scriptural or historical in his approach, his work is treated separately. He was a prolific author about whom there is an immense corpus of secondary literature; we can touch only on the points most salient to our present study to identify them so they will be familiar when they arise again in our discussion of the early Christian writers.

With Philo we have the first sustained reflection about pentateuchal literature and how it should be read; hence a few words are in order about his hermeneutics. His thought follows on—and elaborates and “theologizes,” if unsystematically—ideas of classical philosophers on the nature of interpretation. Yet Philo’s reading of Scripture often follows (widely varying) Jewish exegetical principles already in place during his time.⁷⁶ In a more Hellenistic mode, he regularly discerns two broad levels of interpretation of Scripture—the literal and the allegorical—and although both have the potential for misuse, it is the latter that takes the higher place in his work.⁷⁷ The literal meaning is, as it were, a concession to people bound to history, and although Philo does not ignore allegory or dispense with it, he views it to be for those initiated in understanding. His objection to literalism is especially strong in the face of the possible anthropomorphization of God, and so this danger appears as one of his main motivations for favoring allegory.⁷⁸ But allegory of widely varying kinds is also invoked wherever the literal reading seems to cause logical or theological problems.⁷⁹ At any rate, his awareness of the senses of Scripture

75. All translations of Philo are taken from Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, except those for *De opificio mundi*, which are from Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*. See the thorough catalog of patristic citations of Philo in Runia, “References to Philo,” 111–21.

76. See Borgen, “Philo of Alexandria”; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 6–35.

77. From among numerous studies, see esp. Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*; Tobin, *Creation of Man*; and Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 73–126. A useful summary may be found in Borgen, “Philo of Alexandria,” 259–64.

78. See Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 36–55.

79. See Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 64: “The tree of life, for example, represents the earth, the seven celestial circles, the ruling part of the soul, etc. Conversely, a single allegorical concept attaches itself to many different biblical figures or features. For example, Adam, Cain, Pharaoh, the tree of life, the sun, etc., symbolize the ‘mind.’ Because Philo does not differentiate these levels of allegory, it is difficult to disentangle his ideas.”

and his view of the allegorical as the elevated sense presages what we will find especially in Origen, not to mention his Cappadocian disciples.

Of crucial importance for Philo's view of Judaism is the fact that he shows so little interest in history. All emphasis is on structural elements, especially the place of the human person in creation and the relation of the human to the divine. He is also interested in the relationship between time and eternity, but he does not consider that an event of shattering importance could take place in the course of time as experienced here on earth; for example, he completely detemporalizes the six days of creation.⁸⁰ This separates him, to a quite marked degree, from other Jewish groups of his day and also from the incipient world of early Christian thought.⁸¹

The Pentateuch, in its LXX translation,⁸² seems to be the only Scripture on which Philo feels the need to comment, and he devotes special attention to the exegesis of Genesis 1–3, particularly in *On the Creation of the World*, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, and *On the Laws of Allegory* (also known as *Allegorical Interpretations of Genesis 2–3*). The first of these books forms part of a corpus—usually referred to as “Exposition of the Laws of Moses” since it follows the chronology of the Pentateuch—within the larger Philonic oeuvre. We have seen other retellings of Pentateuch narratives in *Jubilees*, and they can be found also in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, and Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities*. Other texts would follow over the centuries, such as *Genesis Rabbah* and the overlapping *Life of Adam and Eve* and *Apocalypse of Moses*,⁸³ a common feature of which is the casting of Genesis 1–3 as the primordial history of Israel rather than of all humanity. For his part, Philo does not add plot details so much as his own analysis regarding the existential situation of humanity with an explicit focus on Genesis 1–3's etiological function.

On the Creation of the World

In *On the Creation of the World*, the analyses are idiosyncratic. Philo's explanation of why the narrative has God speaking in the first person plural, “Let us,” in making the human person (Gen. 1:26) is obviously not the trinitarian explanation that would become standard in the Christian patristic tradition. Rather, he writes that when human beings act badly, God is not implicated, since God evidently collaborated with subordinates who botched the job (*Opif.* 75). In his treatment of the Hexaemeron account, Philo does not use the name Adam, nor does he conceive of a particular person. He sees Genesis 1:26–27 as pertaining to the human race—the human being (ἄνθρωπος) as genus (γένος)

80. See Philo, *Leg.* 1.2; *Opif.* 13.

81. Runia, “Philo, Alexandrian and Jew,” 12.

82. See Philo, *On the Life of Moses* 2.37, where he describes the translation of “the laws” and specifically the creation narratives.

83. See Nickelsburg, “Bible Rewritten and Expanded.”

and male and female as species (εἶδη) (*Opif.* 76). When he treats the paradise narrative, he speaks of the “first human being” (ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος) as superior by far to all who would come later, or a noble person (*Opif.* 136). This first human was excellent in both body and soul (*Opif.* 137–39); God clearly took not just any clay to form his body but used the best material there was. He was in effect “the only real citizen of the cosmos” (*Opif.* 142).

Creation—and humanity within it—thus represents an idealized state, and the end-time will be a restoration of that state (*Opif.* 82). Philo focuses on the dominion of the human person over all created things—except the angelic (*Opif.* 84). The transgression is regarded neither as the greatest of sins nor as the cause of subsequent sin. Rather, subsequent sin becomes progressively worse, effecting an ever greater distancing from the noble protoplast (*Opif.* 145). The transgression itself is subject to several levels of interpretation even within the same passage. On one level, the transgression happens through the temptation of pleasure, which comes to the man through the woman. (Philo, perhaps in the tradition of Sir. 25:24, seems to suggest that man was doing fine until woman came on the scene [*Opif.* 151–52], although to him the reason has less to do with female depravity than with sexual expression and the sinful pleasure it engenders.) On another level, “man” comes to represent intellect whereas “woman” is sense perception (*Opif.* 165). In effect (in Runia’s vivid translation), the senses act as “pimps” for the “prostitute” that is pleasure in that they seek opportunities for pleasure to ensnare and enslave the soul (*Opif.* 166). Again, Adam and Eve are neither the progenitors of sin nor the cause of subsequent sin or of death. Rather, they indicate the mechanism by which sin functions in the human soul generally.

Philo’s dualistic anthropology leads to his conclusion (shared by some of the Christian fathers in their own dualistic modalities) that the image of God in the human person is the incorporeal soul (*Opif.* 69–71). This teaching brings us to one of the most commented-on ideas emerging from the *Opif.*: the teaching of the “two men,” which is brought out in a short passage (*Opif.* 134–35) usually taken out of the context of the whole exposition of the creation, temptation, and transgression of human beings. It is an admittedly interesting passage, and the concept of “double creation” has both a noted past and a significant future in the history of thought. At first glance, Philo seems to be talking about the distinction between the first-created *anthrōpos*, the one created in God’s image in Genesis 1:26, and the *anthrōpos* we learn about in Genesis 2:7, made through the breathing of divine spirit (πνεῦμα) into the clay from the earth.

The first *anthrōpos*, as Philo has already said in *Opif.* 76, is the idealized genus, immortal by nature and not yet differentiated between male and female. The second *anthrōpos* (of Gen. 2) is “sense-perceptible, . . . consists of body and soul, is either man or woman, and is by nature mortal” (*Opif.* 134). This is

the *prima facie* interpretation—a clear distinction between the image-bearing generic immortal (ideal) *anthrōpos* and the particular, psychosomatic mortal *anthrōpos*. Such a reading squares with Philo’s broadly Platonic anthropology, and it would not be the only case of distinguishing between the idealized and the sensible *anthrōpos*, linked with the two respective creation accounts.⁸⁴ But another interpretation holds that the “two men” themselves represent the rational and irrational components of the human person.⁸⁵ The passage concludes by envisioning the two united under one overall rubric and states that they reveal that the human being is on the threshold between mortality (in the material body) and immortality (in the immaterial soul). It is easy to see how these refer back to the “two men.” Indeed, *Opif.* 139 also portrays Genesis 1:26 and 2:7 as being the same event.

Much as scholars like to side conclusively with one or another reading, Philo makes it unnecessary to choose definitively between the two interpretations. Levison likewise notes that it is Philo’s nature to merge, rather than distinguish, different readings.⁸⁶ Philo could, in other words, be saying two different things at once. It would, at any rate, be impossible to discount the first interpretation, wherein the two men represent a kind of double creation, the one ideal and immaterial, the other fallen and material. This doctrine, whether through the mediation of Philo or that of other Platonists, would influence several of the Christian fathers.

Finally, this entire treatise, analyzing the Hexaemeron and the drama of paradise, comes down to five lessons that Philo hastily outlines in *Opif.* 170–71: (1) God exists, (2) God is one, (3) the cosmos exists, (4) the cosmos is one, and (5) God cares for the cosmos. We may be surprised to see how rudimentary these are, and perhaps more so since none has to do with sin or death (or even humanity as such), except perhaps the last, by implication. The nature of these summary points is evidently related to Philo’s intended audience, since with each of these lessons he gives examples of people who believed otherwise and ought to have heeded what was written by Moses.

Allegorical Works

Philo thus contributed his own retelling and interpretation of Genesis 1–3, as did other Second Temple Jewish authors who came before and after him. And he revisits the Genesis texts in two somewhat overlapping treatises from among his “allegorical works,” *Questions and Answers on Genesis* and *On*

84. A Qumran text (QG 2.56) espouses the same idea. See Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 69, 85; Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 109–10.

85. See Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 69, who attributes this interpretation chiefly to B. A. Stegmann. For a more detailed treatment, see Philo, *On the Creation of the Cosmos* (Runia, 321–29).

86. Levison, *Portraits of Adam*, 70.

the Laws of Allegory. Here (in *Leg.* 1.31–42 and *Quaest.* 1.4; 1.8; 2.56) we also find a “two men” idea with a potential for different interpretations, one reflecting a kind of “double creation,” the other an anthropological dualism. These are far from mutually exclusive concepts; each can be traced to Platonic thought. We may also discern an ethical reading: the heavenly man represents any person who by his or her very nature lives a right life and the earthly man represents a person who has a capacity for either virtue or vice, and the two men represent “two ways of living: either according to the divine inbreathing or contrary to it.”⁸⁷

Philo’s allegorical works are also of interest because of his explicitly figurative readings of the Hexaemeron. In *On the Laws of Allegory* 1.1–18, he states clearly that the Hexaemeron is not talking about six twenty-four-hour days. Rather, Philo explains the meaning of the six days partly through astronomy and partly through numerology. And Eden was not a garden that one could have walked through: “Far be it from man’s reasoning to be the victim of so great impiety as to suppose that God tills the soil and plants pleasaunces” (*Leg.* 1.43). Likewise in *Quaest.* 1.8 he states that paradise was not a garden but, rather, symbolizes “wisdom.”

Philo also shows an awareness of the problem in translating *’adam*, and of its implications for identity, when he cites Genesis 2:16–17 (the first instance where the LXX translates *’adam* with the proper name Αδάμ):

We must raise the question *what* Adam He commands and who is this; for the writer has not mentioned him before, but has named him now for the first time. Perchance, then, he means to give us the name of the man that was molded. “Call him earth,” he says, for that is the meaning of “Adam,” so that when you hear the word “Adam” you must make up your mind; for the mind that was made after the image is not earthly but heavenly.⁸⁸

Philo concludes that the scriptural redaction deliberately crafted and made canny use of this ambiguity concerning identity. Each reader must negotiate this through the use of the mind (νοῦς), a heavenly, God-like faculty. Philo’s reasoning here reflects his interest in semiotics, manifest in several of his works. He was captivated by the relationship of things to their names (or signifiers) and thus was interested in the name Adam as well as in Adam’s divinely ordained function of naming created things. This in turn plays into Philo’s concept of scriptural language, inspiration, and exegesis.⁸⁹ These areas will also be explored by the Christian authors who are the focus of this book.

87. See *ibid.*, 81–82.

88. *Leg.* 1.90, emphasis original in the translation.

89. Of the many accounts of Philo’s interest in naming and language, see Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 83–113.

Already we have seen that Philo paved several paths that would be further explored by later Christian authors. Implicitly and explicitly he discussed the relationship between literal and allegorical exegesis in a way that would be taken up most clearly by Origen. His thinking—here, too, adapted from Platonism—about two dimensions, registers, or realms of creation would be taken in different directions by Origen, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nyssa. His thought on the divine image and its immaterial character would be denied by some Christian writers (such as Irenaeus) and embraced by others (such as Origen), as would also his ideas about the age to come as a restoration of ideal origins. As one of the earliest writers to take up the biblical creation narratives, he played a seminal role in their later appropriation.