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Out of Paradise

Eve and Adam and their Interpreters

edited by

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and

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
BZAW	Beihefte zur *ZAW*
CCSL	Corpus christianorum: Series latina. Turnhout, 1953–
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*: Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KJV	King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus
OTS	Old Testament Studies
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SSN	*Studia semitica neerlandica*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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INTRODUCTION

Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke

Eve and Adam are generally known as the first human couple. However, what happened to them in the period subsequent to the biblical paradise story being made history, not only in mainstream Christian thought and theology? In what ways has the story about the first two human agents been used through the centuries? How is it that it has come to function as a kind of cornerstone used in the construction of different religious identities? And in what ways have interpreters constructed the specific interaction between religious and sexual identity? How did they manage, for example, the tension between equality and difference, speaking not only about the relationship between the sexes, but also about the relationship between God and wo/man?

For the authors of the present volume, these kinds of questions are the common starting point for research. Another road to be taken would have been the quest for the original meaning of the story. Although we do not deny the possibility that something like 'the original meaning' exists, it seems to us a more fruitful way to approach the story from its *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

Investigating the traces of Eve and Adam through the ages is about discovering a surprising variety in the interpretation of the biblical 'garden story' (Gen. 2–3) and its sibling, 'the creation story', or better 'creation hymn' (Gen. 1). It is interesting to see what roles these primeval narratives have played, and continue to play, in the construction of the dominant or mainstream Christian tradition. It is the conviction of the editors that even mainstream Christian tradition is not a *unisono* theological account. The discovery of variety within Christianity makes it possible to challenge a popular Christian interpretation of a story that has legitimated through the ages—and even today in some parts of the world—the suppression of women by men, and the establishing of a special connection between women and evil/sin, and which has, more generally, produced and sustained a rather depressing view on human possibilities and activities. Moreover, the strategy of challenging a tradition from the inside rather than from the outside helps to undermine the idea that tradition is monolithic. Without any ambition of defending tradition as such, we can nevertheless state that it is wider and gentler than the popular consciousness of being modern admits.

However, of course, investigating the traces of Eve and Adam through the ages is surely not solely the preserve of mainstream Christian tradition. An even broader variety of interpretations is observable both in non-mainstream Christian thought and in the other monotheistic religions. To show this diversity, or at least to give a flavour of it, we decided that it would be appropriate to round off our selection of essays with contributions dealing with non-dominant Christian voices, as well as Jewish and Islamic traditions. We acknowledge that there is scope for a future project, one that follows the traces of Eve and Adam more intensively in popular culture, in arts and music, in literature, and in secularized society.

The present volume is based on a volume published in Dutch in 2005, a work developed and edited by Harm Goris and Susanne Hennecke.[1] In the current version, an opportunity was taken to augment the earlier collection of essays with more interpretations from non-Christian religions, a decision which involved the regretable replacement of some of the earlier contributions. Despite these changes, one thing has not changed—namely, the enthusiastic willingness to cooperate in a common project in spite of inevitable differences in theological interest and personal conviction. As editors, we wish to thank the contributors for making this volume possible.

It was our intention to present an introduction accessible not only to theologians and religious studies specialists, but also to interested readers from other academic and non-academic disciplines. It is our hope that this volume will find its way into the hands of a variety of readers.

The volume begins with an exegetical study of Genesis 2–3 (the garden story) by Bob Becking and a contribution on the reception of the Eve character in the New Testament by Geert van Oyen. The next stop on our way through the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the garden story (and its sibling, the creation story) is the writing of Augustine. Willemien Otten helps us to take a fresh look at Augustine's well-known concept of original sin. Harm Goris shows us how Thomas Aquinas—the *enfant terrible* for every feminist—can sometimes be interpreted with more nuances than was previously been appreciated. Theo Bell draws our attention to the theological changes in the age of Reformation by means of an analysis of Martin Luther's anthropology.

1. Harm Goris and Susanne Hennecke (eds.), *Adam en Eva in het Paradijs. Actuele visies op man en vrouw uit 2000 jaar christelijke theologie* (Utrechtse Studies, 7; Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005).

Approaching modern times in admittedly large steps, Willem van Asselt directs us to the work of a relatively unknown, but especially interesting, theologian of the seventeenth century, Isaac La Peyrère, and his thesis of the existence of Pre-Adamites. The modern age is represented by challenging not only tradition, but also modernity's own constructions of religious and sexual identity. While Heleen Zorgdrager discusses Friedrich Schleiermacher's opinion that sexual difference is a way to God, Susanne Hennecke calls into question Karl Barth's pioneering theory about modern religious identity by giving a postmodern feminist interpretation of a painting by Michelangelo. Anne-Marie Korte's feminist strategy is based on separating Eve from Adam and giving her a religious identity linked to growth rather than sin.

We complete our journey through the centuries via two contributions representing the other monotheistic religions. In his analysis of orthodox views on the three 'women's commandments', Eric Ottenheijm shows that the reading of Eve is not the main battleground over which the issues of women's participation and women's legal standing are fought in orthodox Judaism. Applying Efraim Shmueli's hermeneutical model, Karel Steenbrink shows that Adam and *zauj* have received a wide variety of interpretations in the various symbolic systems within Islam.

If these essays show anything, it is the fact that through the ages women and men have felt themselves invited to read and reread the beautiful stories in the book of Genesis—as building blocks or as stumbling blocks in their religious identity. We hope that our readings will stimulate further study, and that they will contribute to the construction of religious identities in the twenty-first century.

Once in a Garden: Some Remarks on the Construction of the Identity of Woman and Man in Genesis 2–3*

Bob Becking

Introduction

Texts are constructions of identities, or at least mirrors of them. When they are read and interpreted, new identities are construed and constructed, since any text is a collection of signs around which a network of significances is woven. It has been the illusion of the historical-critical approach that by filching away the augmented growth, the *original* meaning of a text could be established. In Gen. 2.4b–3.24, it is narrated that the bare primeval soil received irrigation as well as a cultivator. This cultivator does not remain alone, but receives a partner. Next, a trespass by the first human couple is told, leading to their expulsion from the garden. Even this short summary[1] is not free of interpretative language and additions. The use of the noun 'trespass' to qualify the deeds and doings of Eve and Adam is an evaluative conclusion made by this reader. In the Hebrew text of Genesis 2–3, an equivalent for trespass or even disobedience is absent, as are such words as 'apple' and 'sin', words which so often have been connected with the garden story. Phrased otherwise, the garden story narrates deeds and doings by human agents, by God, and by the serpent in relatively neutral wordings. It is up to the reader to evaluate the actions described and in doing so to construct a view on the relationship between woman and man.

* This essay is an updated translation of an earlier version published in Dutch, which will also appear, albeit in a slightly different form, in a forthcoming Festschrift.

1. Here I mainly follow Ellen van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2–3: A Semiotic Theory and Method of Analysis to the Story of the Garden of Eden* (SSN, 25; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1989); see also the profound analysis in Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 25; Leuven: Peeters, 2000); Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-historical Study of Genesis 2–3* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), pp. 12-41.

The Roots of the Dominant Reading

Reading the garden story, tradition plays an important but interrupting role. Two texts have been decisive for the construction of the classical, traditional interpretation of the garden story. Both texts give an interpretation of the garden story that have been formative for the gloomy and abstruse anthropology both in Judaism and Christianity. The apocalyptic work *4 Ezra*, often called *2 Esdras* or the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, is a writing of Jewish origin[2] stemming from the period after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The book is designed as a profound aid for Jews to cope with the reality of Roman emperors persecuting the pious. In that context, the history of Israel is retold with a particular stress on human inability to fathom the ways of God. This inability is then connected with the concept of evil. In *4 Ezra* 4.30, sin is seen as inevitable:

> For the grain of evil seed has been sown in the heart of Adam from the beginning, and how much ungodliness has it brought forth unto this time? And how much shall it yet bring forth until the time of threshing comes?[3]

Sin is seen not as an act of a freely operating human, but as the inevitable outcome of the sowing of the bad seed. Later, in *4 Ezra* 7.118, a desperate question is raised:

> O Adam, what have you done?
> For though it was you who sinned,
> the fall was not yours alone,
> but ours also who are your descendants.[4]

It is remarkable to observe that Eve is never mentioned in *4 Ezra*. The ideas of the author of *4 Ezra* are not too distant from those of Paul, as found in Rom. 5.12:

> Therefore, just as sin entered into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death passed to all men, because all sinned…

2. The prologue of *4 Ezra* (chs. 1–2), which is sometimes known as *5 Ezra*, as well as the epilogue (chs. 15–16), which is better known as *6 Ezra*, are later Christian additions; see Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 1-51; and Bruce W. Longenecker, *2 Esdras* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

3. Reading with Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, pp. 125-32. See also *4 Ezra* 4.12; 7.48-54.

4. Reading with Alden L. Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of IV Ezra* (SBLDS, 29; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977); Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, pp. 253-61.

The remainder of the Epistle to the Romans makes clear that Paul construes human wrongdoing as original or inherited sin. Here, and elsewhere, Adam is seen by Paul as responsible for the sinful condition of humankind.[5] Eve is only referred to in passing in a remark in 2 Cor. 11.3:

> But I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve in his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.[6]

These Pauline texts, along with *4 Ezra*, have been highly influential in the construction of the dominant Jewish and Christian views on anthropology and sin.[7] Here, the first threads of an interpretative network were woven, a network that remains until this day part of the religious identities of Judaism and Christianity. Although not mentioned in Paul and *4 Ezra*, part of this network is the woman-unfriendly reading of the garden story. Women are too often and too easily blamed for the fall from grace.[8]

The Garden Story

Up till now, I have referred to the textual unit Gen. 2.4b–3.24 as the 'garden story'. Traditionally, introductions to the Old Testament generally discuss the existence of two creation stories in the book of Genesis, each of which is then connected to one of the traditional sources: Genesis 1, from the Priestly source (P); and Genesis 2–3, from the Yahwist source (J). Traditionally, a distinction is made between a Priestly 'creation account' (Gen. 1) and a Yahwistic 'creation story' (in Gen. 2). The classic four-sources hypothesis on the emergence of the Pentateuch has been challenged in the last 35 years. It is interesting to note that P, as an exilic or post-exilic redactor, has survived this challenge, but that J as a tenth-century BCE author has disappeared from the scene. Some scholars have buried him altogether, while others have exiled J to the Babylonian period.[9] I therefore prefer to classify Genesis 2–3

5. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 15.21-22, 45-49.

6. For a discussion of 2 Cor. 11.3 (with 1 Tim. 2.13-14), see the contribution by Geert van Oyen to the present volume.

7. See Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil*; James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 17-20; Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, p. 131; Brian Murdoch, *The Apocryphal Adam and Eve in Medieval Europe: Vernacular Translations and Adaptations of the Vita Adae et Evae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

8. This view is still defended, for example, by Paul F. Scotchmer, 'Lessons from Paradise on Work, Marriage, and Freedom A Study of Genesis 2.4–3.24', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28 (2004), pp. 80-96.

9. Jan C. Gertz, Konrad Schmid and Marcus Witte (eds.), *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (BZAW, 315; Berlin: W. de

as a narrative from the late monarchic era that has been painted using agricultural colours.[10] I would disagree with the view that the book of Genesis contains two creation narratives.[11] While Genesis 1 is more like a beautifully composed poem on creation, Genesis 2–3 cannot be labelled a ‘creation story’. This text is better classified as the ‘garden story’, a text with a narrative structure and theology of its own that contains elements that refer to or are borrowed from creation stories.[12]

I consciously use the classification ‘garden story’ and not the label ‘Paradise story’. The Hebrew noun *pardēs* is a loanword from Avestic. In that Indo-European language, *pairadaēza* refers to a ‘surrounding wall’. In later tradition this noun received the connotation ‘walled garden; pleasure garden’. In Biblical Hebrew the noun *pardēs* has exactly this meaning.[13] The specific religious meaning of the word—the locus of grace, or an existence without transgression—only came in later, for instance in the Old Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew word *gan*, ‘garden’, as used in Genesis 2–3, is rendered in the Septuagint with παράδεισος. That translation is the root of all thinking about a ‘Paradise lost’.

The Hebrew word *gan*, ‘garden’, in Genesis 2–3 refers to a reality that was well known to the original readers. In Ancient Egypt, as well as in Ancient Mesopotamia,[14] and in all probability also in Ancient Israel,[15] kings and other persons of power had to strive to turn a piece of agricultural soil

Gruyter, 2002); John Van Seters, ‘In the Babylonian Exile with J: Between Judgment in Ezekiel and Salvation in Second Isaiah’, in Bob Becking and Marjo C.A Korpel (eds.), *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OTS, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 71-89; Christoph Levin, *Der Jahwist* (FRLANT, 157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

10. I disagree with, among others, Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction à la lecture du Pentateuque. Clés pour l’interprétation des cinq premiers livres de la Bible* (Brussels: Éditions Lessius, 2000), pp. 298-99; Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, pp. 134-35; Konrad Schmid, ‘Die Unteilbarkeit der Weisheit. Überlegungen zur sogenannten Paradieserzählung und ihrer theologischen Tendenz’, *ZAW* 114 (2002), pp. 21-39, and *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), pp. 155-56, who date this story in the post-exilic era.

11. See, for example, Ska, *Introduction à la lecture du Pentateuque*, pp. 82-85.

12. This classification ‘garden story’ parallels Mettinger’s label ‘Eden narrative’; see Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*.

13. Eccl. 2.5; Song 4.13; see also Neh. 2.8.

14. See Manfred Dietrich, ‘Das biblische Paradies und der babylonische Tempelgarten. Überlegungen zur Lage des Gartens Eden’, in Bernd Janowski, Beate Ego, and Annette Kruger (eds.), *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2001), pp. 280-323.

15. See 1 Kgs 21, Ahab is determined to change the vineyard of Naboth into a luxury garden.

into a pleasure garden. Such a garden no longer had an agricultural purpose. Phrased otherwise: the function of such gardens was purely recreational especially for the social elite.[16]

I am of the opinion that the author of Genesis 2–3 wanted to portray the toilsome and hard life of Late Iron Age Palestinian peasants as being in continuity with the origin of the world. The text therefore is no cosmogony; rather, it is a story that constructs religious ideas on the origin of humankind with all its relational complexities—complexities that were present in the 'now' of the author.

The Illusion of Objective Exegesis

'Objective exegesis', in the sense that 'the meaning' (singular!) of a given text can be found, is an illusion. The idea that the original meaning of a given text can be exposed by filching away the network of augmented and grown significances is an act of fooling oneself and a grave misjudging of the role of the reader. Phrased differently: biblical interpretation will never be able to state that '(p) is true', only that 'I think (p) is true and I hope you do too'.

From Want to Fulfilment:
The Main Narrative Programme of the Garden Story

The garden story starts with the description of a situation of want:

> Once, when YHWH-God made earth and heaven,
>   there was not yet a plant of the field on earth
>   and no herb of the field had yet sprung up,
>   since YHWH-God had not caused it to rain upon the earth
>   and there was no human to till the soil—
> a stream would rise from the earth
> and irrigate the whole surface of the soil—
> then YHWH-God formed the human from the dust of the soil.
>   He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life.
>   The human became a living soul.

This need is underscored by the threefold repeated Hebrew word *ṭerem*, 'not yet'. In Gen 2.5, two depictions of features that did not yet exist are given, namely, 'plant of the field' and 'herb of the field'.[17] These two 'wants' are

16. Ferdinand E. Deist, *The Material Culture of the Bible: An Introduction* (ed. with a Preface by Robert P. Carroll; Biblical Seminar, 70; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 156, remarks that Gen. 2 'summarizes the dream of an Israelite peasant'.

17. I disagree with, among others, Udo Rüterswörden, *Dominium terrae. Studien zur Genese einer alttestamentlichen Vorstellung* (BZAW, 215; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1993),

motivated by a twofold clause. This double motivation, too, expresses need, that is, the lack of rain to irrigate the earth and the absence of a human to till the soil. In other words, the earth was not yet as it was in the age of the first readers of this story. At a narrative level, something else needs to be said.

It is the nature of narratives that they describe movements. Quite often these movements have the character of a steady change. A story has, by implication, a beginning and an end. This observation might sound trivial, but there is more at stake. In narratology, the beginning and the end of a story are compared. In the garden story, the beginning is characterized by a want or a need. The earth does not yet have a human to till its soil, no one who will live and draw from the earth and its bounty. At the end of Genesis 3, both of these desiderata are removed. The removal of this need can be labelled as the 'Main Narrative Programme' of the garden story.[18]

In my view, the lacks mentioned are only partially removed at the end of Genesis 3. The next chapters in Genesis relate a set of complications. The removal of the situation of want is only reached when Noah plants a vineyard after the flood. It should be noted, however, that this brief and superficial analysis makes clear that according to the garden story the meaning of human life is to be found in the tilling of acres, and not in dwelling in a luxurious garden while the soil of the earth has no cultivator. In other words, the garden story narrates that the destiny of humans lies outside the garden.

Becoming Human: First Steps

The first step in this process is the formation of the human out of dust and the animation of the new creature by the divine breath. From the available set of synonyms for 'to make, to create', the author has chosen the verb *yāṣār*. This verb has its background in pottery. One would expect as an object to the verb *yāṣār* a word for 'clay' or the like—not dust. Loam, clay, and mud are the slightly watery raw materials for pottery. Dust is simply too dry. This observation from experience is reflected in the Hebrew Bible. The notion of creation from clay is present, for instance in the book of Job:

> Remember that You have fashioned me like clay! (Job 10.9)

The notion of humans being created from or like clay is well known in the ancient Near East, but also from other cultures. Baumann has collected many examples of the presence of this motif in traditional folk-tales in

pp. 10-11, that 5aβ would be a duplicate of 5aα, added later in order to have 'herb of the field' explain the obsolete 'plant of the field'.

18. As argued by Van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2–3*.

sub-Saharan Africa.[19] This observation leads to the suggestion that this concept is a basic motif cross-culturally. This might imply that the concept of humanity being created from or like clay goes back to the very dawn of civilization. This would imply that a simple adoption from Mesopotamian ideas, for instance from *Enuma Eliš* I,[20] or from Egyptian mythological material related to the creator deity Khnum, is not necessary.

In the known representations of this primeval concept of creation, one notion is traditional and almost universally present. The emergence of humans is a twofold process, with humanity's creation taking place in two phases: (1) the formation of clay or earth, and (2) the breathing of the vital spirit into the human. All known traditions stress that the human is to be conceived as more than clay, loam, or dust alone.

How are we to interpret the fact that Gen. 2.7 relates a formation out of dust, instead of the expected clay or loam? It might be that the narrator chose the word *'āfar* to depict the vulnerability of the human. Within the garden story *'āfar* refers forward to Gen. 3.19:

> you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Behind the choice for the word *'āfar* stands the daily life experience of peasants in Ancient Israel. In other words, the author of the garden story adopted the ancient motif, but adapted it to his personal context to refer to the vulnerability and limitation of human life.

Verse 7 narrates two acts of YHWH-God: the formation of the body and the breathing of the spirit of life. At the level of syntax it should be noted that two consecutive acts are described. Both clauses take the *wayyiqtol* narrative form. The third clause—'the human became a living soul'—is in a way the conclusion of the first step in the garden story. I therefore disagree with Karel Deurloo, who construes the two clauses in Gen. 2.7 as an example of *parallellismus membrorum*.[21] Deurloo is of the opinion that the second clause, 'He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life', offers an explanation of the first clause, 'He formed…' In fact, he construes both clauses as a *hendiadys*: 'the gift of the breath of life is the formation'. There might be a theological motif behind this view, since it closes all avenues that might lead to a dualistic anthropology. This reader-oriented reading might be a noble strife based in pastoral motifs. There is, however, too great a distance between text and interpretation.

19. See Herrmann Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit des Menschen im Mythus der afrikanischen Völker* (Berlin: Reimer, 2nd edn, 1964).

20. *Pace* Rüterswörden, *Dominium terrae*, p. 11.

21. Karel A. Deurloo, *De mens als raadsel en geheim. Verhalende antropologie in Genesis 2–4* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1988), p. 34.

Genesis 2.7 makes clear that the author of the garden story had adopted the traditional concept of creation in two phases. The first clause shows a slight correction of the tradition. The second clause follows the tradition. The human is more than dust or clay. The human would not be human without the spirit of life. The final clause in Gen. 2.7 makes clear that these two phases should not be interpreted in a dualistic framework. 'Spirit' does not have the Graeco-Hellenistic connotation. The human is seen as a unity. Accordingly, I would opt for the position that Gen. 2.7 reflects life experience. Humans live in a tragic tension. With every fibre the human is connected to the soil. Phrased in more modern words: we are unable to construe ourselves as apart from the eco-system we share. This implies that a human has to live according to the limits of biology. Nevertheless, there is an eternal unease with these boundaries. This unease, this longing for something else, distinguishes the human from the animal kingdom. The garden story presents the human as a creature that has to live with the never-ending tension between the chthonic and the cosmic.

Walking in the Garden is Not Tilling the Soil

The formation of the first human is not the removal of the observed want in its entirety. The human is placed by YHWH-God in a luxurious garden (Gen. 2.8). The formulation of the story, and specifically Gen. 2.8, implies that there was already a human who could till the soil, though here this human was not yet connected with the soil. The human within the garden is distanced from the soil, and so the kernel of the need remains. A side question emerges: Is living in the luxurious garden the real destiny of the human? I will not answer that question here.

The Human Subjected to God, But Reciprocal to Each Other

The next episode—Gen. 2.10-25—shows an absolute subordination of the human to YHWH-God. In this episode YHWH-God is responsible for all deeds and doings: he creates *'ādām* out of the dust; he places the human in the garden; he concludes contracts with the human; he forbids the human the entrance to the centre of the garden; he supplies the human with the functions of speaking, seeing, eating, enjoying, protecting, and name-giving. Most importantly, he limits the human: *'ādām* is not free in doing. Life in the luxurious garden has its limits, and it is a life lacking freedom.

At the end of this episode the first female is created. Genesis 1.26-27 also relates the coming into existence of the human 'in our image and according to our likeness'. There, *'ādām* is seen as both masculine and feminine. It should be observed that in Gen. 1.27 two adjectives occur that indicate sexual genus. The text should not be understood as if it were telling the creation of ‘a male and a female’. According to Gen. 1.26-27, there are masculine and feminine aspect to *’ādām*. Phrased differently, Gen. 1.26-27 accepts the equality of both sexes. It has often been assumed that Genesis 2 does not relate an equal but an asymmetric relation.[22] Eve, so the argument runs, has been created *after* Adam and formed from Adam’s rib. Against this view, I would note that in the final lines of Genesis 2 clear signs that hint at equality are to be found. This equality comes to the fore in the recognition by Adam that Eve has been created from the same material used to form him:

> This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

Also noteworthy is that neither human was ashamed of their nakedness.[23]

It should be noted that the narrator of the garden story does not give an evaluation of this situation of being subordinated to God while living in a state of mutual human reciprocity. This situation is not presented as the original, unbroken state of the human, as a paradise to be lost through guilt. It is to be interpreted as a stage on the way of becoming human, being human meaning to be subservient to the earth by tilling its soil.

The Reversal

The next episode—Gen. 3.1-7—narrates a reversal. The human here makes use of the given functions of seeing, eating, enjoying, and speaking in order to change autonomously the locale, functions, and limits set by YHWH-God. The human—male and female together—eats and sees and, by so doing, acquires the new functions of opinion and conception. As a result of these new functions the human acquires a degree of sense and a certain knowledge that makes *’ādām*—to borrow the words of the serpent—like God. The human crosses the boundaries set by YHWH-God in Gen. 2.10-25. By implication *’ādām* denies the position of being subordinated to God. The words of *’ādām* are no longer solely an acknowledgment to YHWH-God, as in Gen. 2.10-25; rather, the *’ādām* takes the initiative and speaks in dialogue with others. These changes lead to a change in the relationship between YHWH-God and *’ādām*. It seems as if the acquired autonomy and the found sense make the cosmic aspect of the human dominant. Within the concept of the two components mentioned above, it seems that the spirit of life did gain the upper hand over the more earthly, chthonic side of *’ādām*. Again, the question can be posed whether *’ādām* has now found its destiny, and also how the lack of a cultivator for the soil of the earth could be removed

22. See, recently, Scotchmer, ‘Lessons from Paradise’.

23. See the profound analysis in Van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2–3*, pp. 173-88.

Part of the traditional reading of the garden story is the question of guilt, or original sin, as it is commonly known. Genesis 3.1-7 does not pose this question.[24] Indeed, the description of the reversal is not connected with a religious evaluation. It is, of course, *'ādām* who is cast in the role of the one who initiated the reversal. Notably, it is mentioned that the eyes of both—male and female—had been opened. Finally, v. 7 talks about *'ādām* in the plural: '*They* remarked…' This implies that the consuming of the forbidden fruit had been a common action. Adam and Eve grew mature together.

Concentric Symmetry of Responsibilities

The garden story records that Adam and Eve acquired the competence to speak and to engage in a dialogue. In Gen. 3.9-19, we find a set of dialogues with a variety of speakers. This episode can be summarized in a concentric symmetry:

A	God and Adam (9-12)	account	dialogue
B	God and Eve (13)	account	dialogue
X	God and the serpent (14-15)	curse	monologue
B'	God and Eve (16)	pointing life's work	monologue
A'	God and Adam (17-22)	pointing life's work	monologue

When called to account, Adam blames Eve. When Eve in turn is called to account, she blames the serpent. The abdication of the responsibility to someone else is obviously seen in Ancient Israel as a characteristic human attribute. It is an unwelcome side-effect of the acquired ability to speak.

It is quite remarkable that at the very moment at which God turns his attention to the serpent, the dialogue becomes a monologue. Another remarkable feature is the fact that the words spoken to the serpent are qualified as a curse, while the words to Adam and Eve are not qualified as such. I have therefore labelled these parts as 'pointing life's work' and not as a curse in the above schema. As a result of all this, the human is dissociated from the garden and now connected with the soil of the earth.

In this final episode the human demonstrated both the given functions (e.g. eating, speaking), as well as the autonomously acquired functions. In Gen. 3.9-24, it is YHWH-God who acts decisively, limiting human time, human space, and the character of the connection with the soil of the earth. This episode presents the human as partially autonomous. The human is independent in the spheres of seeing, knowing, and consciousness. The human is relatively autonomous in view of his chthonic dimension that binds

24. Even Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, pp. 49-58, here applies the label 'disobedience'; see also Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, p. 155. Note the slightly witty remarks in Barr, *The Garden of Eden*, pp. 11-14.

him and her to the soil and its cultivation in the service of God. Leaving the garden is not connected with the loss of wisdom, but with its acquisition.[25] At the end of the garden story the intimate connection between God and the human as depicted in Genesis 2 turns out to be only a phase in the process of becoming human.

Garden Story and Primeval History

In the present composition of the book of Genesis the garden story sits pinched between the Ode on creation in Gen. 1.1–2.4a and stories on the dawn of humankind. The question of the connections between these three parts is theologically relevant.[26] This is especially true in connection to the great variety of ways in which these texts have been treated in the history of theology.

In dealing with this question, it is important to observe a few literary lines and theological threads that run through the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis:

- Above I already raised the question as to when the soil received its cultivator. This issue is connected with the question of the real destiny of the human.
- After the creation of the human, Gen. 1.31 records 'and see it was very good'. At the beginning of the story on the great flood 'God repented that he had made humankind on the earth' (Gen. 6.6).
- After the garden story and even after the story on the great flood, the human is still said to have been made in the image of God:

> Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
> by a human shall that person's blood be shed;
> for in his own image God made humankind. (Gen. 9.6)

Within Old Testament scholarship, two positions are defended with regard to the theological coherence of Genesis 1–11. Gerhard von Rad defends the view of cumulative human guilt that finally offends God in such a way that he answers with a great, all-destroying flood.[27] Claus Westermann, on the other hand, argues that the various narratives in Genesis 1–11 should be construed as separate and equal examples of human conduct.[28] Both views are in disagreement with traditional theology, which takes the human actions

25. See thus Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, p. 156.

26. Next to their relevance for the history of religion and the literary-historical perspective.

27. Gerhard von Rad, *Das Erste Buch Mose. Genesis* (ATD, 2/4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 9th edn, 1967), pp. 1-26.

28. Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (BK, I/1, Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974).

in Genesis 3 as the highlight of trespassing, the original sin, and the fall from grace, while everything else is only a repetition. I am inclined to agree with Westermann, since I do not see hints in the text of Genesis 1–11 that one form of human conduct is worse in the eyes of God than another form. On the other hand, I think that such acts as 'murder', 'exogamous sexuality', 'public drunkenness', and 'hybris' are all rooted in the acquired autonomy of *'ādām*. The observation that even after the great flood, *'ādām* is still referred to as the 'image of God' (Gen. 9.6) indicates that the acquisition of autonomy does not imply the loss of the cosmic element in the human and that the responsibility of the stewardship—as implied in Gen. 1.26-27—has an enduring character.[29]

Forfeited Immortality?

One of the oldest reflections on the garden story, Wis. 2.23-24, relates the following:

> God created the human for immortality
> And made him in the image of his own eternity
> But through the devil's envy death has entered the world
> And is experienced by those who have a share in him.[30]

The idea that the human, though created immortal, has become mortal as a result of the fall from grace is absent from the garden story. Nevertheless, this idea has been part of the dominant view throughout the ages. As a result of the more evidence-based thinking that rose to prominence after the Enlightenment, this idea has been shunted into the background. Most modern exegetes of Genesis 1–3 are of the opinion that humans have been mortal from creation.[31] Death is part of life. This view, needless to say, concurs with insights of modern biological science.

Some years ago, James Barr challenged this new consensus.[32] Barr did not want to return to the old idea of human immortality. Instead, he read

29. Rüterswörden, *Dominium terrae*; Manfred Weippert, 'Tier und Mensch in einer menschenarmen Welt. Zum sogenannten *dominium terrae* in Genesis 1', in Hans-Peter Mathys (ed.), *Ebenbild Gottes—Herrscher über die Welt. Studien zu Würde und Auftrag des Menschen* (Biblisch-theologische Studien, 33; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998), pp. 35-55.

30. See, for example, Barr, *The Garden of Eden*, pp. 16-17; Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, p. 131; Mareike V. Blischke, *Die Eschatologie in der Sapientia Salomonis* (FAT, 2/26; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2007), pp. 110-16.

31. See the magnificent survey in Paul Humbert, *Etudes sur le récit du paradis et de la chute dans la Genèse* (Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel, 14; Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1940).

32. Barr, *The Garden of Eden*; see also the critical remarks by Walter Moberly, 'Did the Interpreters Get it Right? Genesis 2–3 Reconsidered', *JTS* 59 (2008), pp. 22-40.

Genesis 2–3 not as a report on the origin of death and evil, but as a narrative whose central theme is the forfeited chance for *immortality*, rather than the quest for *immorality*. I will not repeat Barr's argument here. Instead, suffice it to say that he construes the 'breathing of the spirit of life' as the planting of the possibility of immortality. The cosmic aspect in the human is thus seen by Barr as bordering on the eternal. The *'ādām* has brushed eternity, yet the striving for autonomy resulted in humans letting the chance slip by.[33]

Acceptance of Fractured Vulnerability

Genesis 2–3 is a beautiful narrative, one that mirrors the *condition humaine*. Life, with its limits in time and space, is nevertheless accepted as worthwhile and seen as the destiny of the human. There are signs within the narrative that have induced reactions with other signals. The sum of all these reactions is disharmony. Differing voices can be heard. It is neither the duty nor the task of an exegete to bring order out of that chaos. It should, however, be observed that some voices, when compared with the original narrative, really are in dissonance. One of these reactions is the idea of an asymmetrical relationship between Eve and Adam.

33. See also Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*, pp. 47-49, 130-32.

THE CHARACTER OF EVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11.3 AND 1 TIMOTHY 2.13-14

Geert van Oyen

1. *Introduction*

It is well known that in the New Testament the character of Adam received a lot of attention because of his theological and Christological function as 'first man' (or human being) over against the 'new or last man' (or human being) Jesus: 'for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ' (1 Cor. 15.22); '"The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit' (1 Cor. 15.45). Eve, on the contrary, is only a minor character in the New Testament writings, and any elaborated systematic theological treatise based on Eve is to be avoided. In this contribution we will focus on the minor character Eve. Adam will only be mentioned in order to clarify her role and meaning. The name 'Eve' is mentioned twice in the New Testament, in 2 Cor. 11.3 and in 1 Tim. 2.13, respectively a Pauline and a deutero-Pauline passage. In the NRSV they run as follows:

> I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Cor. 11.2-3)

> Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. (1 Tim. 2.11-15)

In both instances elements of the biblical creation narratives are recalled and each time the first woman, Eve, is presented in a negative way: when man was created she was second in the row (1 Timothy) and she was deceived by the serpent (2 Corinthians; 1 Timothy). In other passages as well, Paul is inclined to give a similar exegesis of Genesis in order to consider women 'inferior' to men (see, for instance, 1 Cor. 11.2-16, especially v. 8),[1] but we

1. On this passage, see, for instance, Jan Lambrecht, 'The Woman's Veil (1 Corinthians 11,2-16', in V. Koperski (ed.), *Understanding What One Reads: New Testament*

will limit ourselves to the two passages which contain the name of Eve. Few people will be surprised to hear about this negative interpretation of the first woman in the New Testament, for Christian theology and culture have been influenced, to this day, by this perception on woman. And in many denominations the position of women within the Church is still determined by this reading.[2] No wonder that simply the presence of such a text within the New Testament provokes a lot of resistance and incomprehension among modern readers. They are challenging theologians by their exegetical, hermeneutical and theological questions. The responses to these questions are a constitutive and influential part of the practical rules and attitudes actual church communities are applying towards women within their communities.[3]

Before explaining the two texts, I would like to make a brief hermeneutical remark. Each interpretation of a biblical text has to take into account that there is a variety of discourses that can be used to approach a text. And this is certainly the case when treating certain ‘problematic texts’ that are used to base a behavior or custom of the present on a specific verse from the past. In this case, before starting to explain the text, one first should discuss overtly the problem of some presuppositions that might play a substantial role in the interpretation. These presuppositions, which can be radically opposed to each other, are often too simple and one-sided, as is the case with regard to the verses on Eve. Some people might have an almost blind trust in the truth of the biblical text, in which case the authority of Scripture becomes the main argument to defend the idea that women should be treated as second

Essays (Annua nuntia Lovaniensia, 46; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 188-195; Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, ‘Man, Woman, and the Angels in 1 Cor 11:2-16’, in Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (ed.), *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretation of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 3; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 76-92. Other texts in the New Testament are 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 and Eph. 5.21-24.

2. On the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of 1 Tim. 2.11-15, ‘die wesentlich mit zu der jahrhundertelangen Diskriminierung und Zurückdrängung der Frau in der Kirche geführt hat’, see Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (EKK, 15; Zurich: Benziger, 1988), pp. 141-47 (147).

3. It is well known that the authorities within the Roman Catholic Church (but even so in other churches) are making an appeal to, among other texts, 1 Tim. 2.12 in order to prohibit women from speaking as official ministers; see the declaration by the Congregation of the doctrine of faith *Inter Insigniores* (15 October, 1976). A commentary upon this text published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (69 [1977], pp. 98-116) admits that the passage is found in a non-authentic Pauline text, but that ‘it is of little importance whether these texts are authentic or not: theologians have made abundant use of them to explain that women cannot receive either the power of magisterium or that of jurisdiction. It was especially the text of 1 Timothy that provided St Thomas with the proof that woman is in a state of submission or service, since (as the text explains) woman was created after man and was the person first responsible for original sin.’

class members (danger of biblical literalism), while other people are convinced that times have changed and that as a consequence the texts are wrong and—as some are pretending—they should not be read any longer within communal gatherings (danger of selective reading). In other words, within this simple paradigm one or both of these constructions is wrong: the time in which the Bible was written, or the time in which we live.

If put in these terms, this discussion is an endless one. Is there a way out? Biblical exegesis is not about judging matters of today right or wrong by using biblical arguments, especially in those cases where the conclusions would have universal value. Neither is it about holding up modern times as the norm by which to evaluate or criticize the value of ancient texts. Therefore, the accurate exegesis of texts can only be done if a twofold distance is respected: first, the distance *vis-à-vis* the text by putting it in the original context; and, secondly, distance *vis-à-vis* oneself by becoming aware of one's own presuppositions and by trying to accept that other starting points are not *a priori* to be excluded. After having taken these distances, the exegete or reader will still have to make some choices and decisions concerning the final appreciation of the text. Yet these decisions will not only be made on the basis of textual analysis. They are also made by several concrete circumstances in which the readers find themselves. But they will have the intellectual advantage that they are aware of the web of questions that are put forward by a concrete text. Thus, exegesis alone is not able to answer the question whether a text has 'eternal' value or not. The first thing we have to do now is to try to improve our appreciation of the role of Eve in the New Testament.

2. *Text, Context and Background of 2 Corinthians 11.3*

Second Corinthians 11.1-15 is part of the larger section comprised of chs. 10–13 in which Paul defends his ministry as an apostle. He has to do this in order to convince the Christians of Corinth that his message and not the message of the opponents—it is not clear in the text who they are—is the true gospel. This apology for his own mission and proclamation gives Paul the opportunity to put Christ in the center. And this is exactly what is happening in 11.1-15. In vv. 1-4, Paul is talking directly to the Corinthians. He is concerned about the fact that they seem to follow too quickly other missionaries: 'For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough' (v. 4). Paul is very sarcastic about those missionaries: 'For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ' (v. 13). They proclaim a different Christ and they do not bring the same gospel as Paul did. In order to give an accurate description of the relationship of the community members with Christ, Paul uses the metaphor of engagement. In this concrete case between the Corinthians and the husband Christ, the engagement was established through the intermediary role of Paul. According to Jewish tradition, engagement means a definitive agreement that the woman (here: the community) is linked to the future bridegroom (here: Christ) until they marry and she finally lives with him in the same house (Deut. 22.13-21). Paul is expressing his fear that the community, which until now is considered to be a true virgin, is facing the danger of not being devoted in the intermediate time (this means until the eschatological encounter, see Eph. 5.27) in a pure and sincere way to her partner Christ. It is at this moment that the comparison with Eve is used: 'as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning' (*hoos ho oofis exèpatèsen en tèi panourgiai autou*, v. 3). This is a clear reference to the Septuagint version of Gen. 3.13: *kai eipen hè gunè ho oofis èpatèsen me* ('The woman said, "The serpent tricked me"').

This notice about Eve is a very short one and the essential point of Paul's argument would still stand without the comparison with Eve. This is certainly the reason why this verse plays only a secondary role, mostly as a complement to 1 Tim. 2.13-14, in the contemporaneous debate about the role of women in Pauline literature.[4] The exegesis of the verse is dominated by the biblical and apocryphal literary influences upon it. But still, we cannot deny that, notwithstanding the marginal form in which Paul has given his comparison, it is linked with a specific perception about Eve and women. The suggestion is created that the portrayal of the community as a group that could be easily deceived is to be compared with Eve alone, and not with Adam and Eve together. Because in his comparison Paul is emphasizing two words (*oofis*, 'serpent', and *[ex]èpatèsen*, 'deceive'; compare Gen. 3.13), he is not taking up the whole context of Genesis 3. In so doing, an important element in the story is lost: the answer of the woman is only a small part of a much longer story in which both the woman and the man are portrayed as being deceived.[5] After the serpent has been cursed (Gen. 3.14-15), both

4. In most of the commentaries or studies on 2 Corinthians the verse is rarely considered from a feminist point of view. A notable exception can be found in Max Küchler, *Schweigen, Schmuck und Schleier. Drei neutestamentlichen Vorschriften zur Verdrängung der Frauen auf dem Hintergrund einer frauenfeindlichen Exegese des Alten Testaments im antiken Judentum* (NTOA, 1; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 41-44. A special aspect in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of 2 Cor. 11.2-3 can be found in the metaphor of the Church as virgin; see Marinus Agterberg, 'L'«Ecclesia-Virgo» et la «Virginitas Mentis» des fidèles dans la pensée de Saint-Augustin', *Augustiniana* 9 (1959), pp. 221-76.

5. The exegesis of Gen. 3 demands a special treatment. Here it is possible to emphasize only that new insights have made clear that the responsibility or even guilt for the sin cannot be accorded to the woman alone. See, among others, Frank Crüsemann,

woman (v. 16) and man (vv. 17-18) hear from God the respective punishments for the act they did in common. In passing, we could mention that the name 'Eve' is only found further on in the text of the Septuagint, namely in 4.1 (in the Hebrew text Eve is already mentioned in 3.20, translated in the Septuagint by *Zooè*: 'life'). As a proper name Eve does not occur in the story of the serpent. The fact that Paul is referring exclusively to Eve is, on the other hand, a very natural thing. The comparison with Eve is in line with the metaphor of the engagement and thus it is more logical to mention only the female person in the creation story as a partner of the bridegroom. But it should not prove difficult for Paul to exclude Adam and focus on Eve, since the Jewish–Hellenistic interpretation of Genesis 3 had already clearly advanced towards setting more and more in suspicion the woman only.[6] The question of blame is less important in 2 Corinthians than in the longer text of 1 Tim. 2.13-14.[7] This makes it very difficult to estimate how much influence these Jewish–Hellenistic texts have had on the clause in 2 Cor. 11.3. Maybe this influence is limited to the fact that the serpent is doing the work of the Satan, as in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 16. But the identification of the serpent with Satan could also have been known through Wis. 2.24.

There is even more uncertainty concerning the presence of a particular nuance related to the theme of 'guilt' in the representation of Eve in 2 Cor. 11.3. Is she represented here as a person who could easily be tempted to commit adultery with the serpent and to deceive Adam in this way? Those, like M. Küchler,[8] who accept this erotic-sexual nuance in the text attach

'Eva—die erste Frau und ihre "Schuld". Ein Beitrag zu einer kanonisch-sozialgeschichtliche Lektüre der Urgeschichte', *Bibel und Kirche* 53 (1998), pp. 2-10; Erich Zenger, 'Die Erschaffung des Menschen als Mann und Frau. Eine Lesehilfe für die so genannte Paradies- und Sündenfallgeschichte Gen 2,4b–3,24', *Bibel und Kirche* 58 (2003), pp. 12-15; Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Die Frau am Anfang. Eva und die Folgen* (Exegese in unserer Zeit, 6; Münster: LIT, 3rd edn, 1999); and the contribution of Bob Becking to the present volume.

6. See Schüngel-Straumann, '"Von einer Frau nahm die Sünde ihren Anfang, ihretwegen müssen wir alle sterben" (Sir 25,24). Zur Wirkungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte der ersten drei Kapitel der Genesis in biblischer Zeit', *Bibel und Kirche* 53 (1998), pp. 11-20; Gérard-Henry Baudry, 'La responsabilité d'Ève dans la chute. Analyse d'une tradition', *Mélanges de Science Religieuse* 53 (1996), pp. 293-320.

7. See Helmut Merkel, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (NTD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), p. 27: 'In 2. Kor 11,3 scheint Paulus auf die genannte jüdische Auslegung von 1. Mose 3 [= Gen 3] anzuspielen, aber dort geht er auf de Schuldfrage überhaupt nicht ein'.

8. Küchler, *Schweigen*, p. 42: 'Der Verlust der "reinen Jungfraulichkeit" Evas war in der Vorstellung des Paulus der Effekt der Verführung durch die Schlange. Zwischen der Schlange und Eva ist somit eine geschlechtliche Handlung vorgestellt, die den Bruch in der ursprünglichen Idealen, ausschliesslichen Beziehung zwischen Adam und Eva mit sich brachte.'

great importance to the influence of one specific element that is found in the non-biblical tradition about Genesis, more specifically in some rabbinic sources (*Abod. Zar.* 22b; *b. Šab.* 145b-46a; *Yeb.* 103b).[9] Although the interpretation is very questionable,[10] a possible argument in favor is the presence of the metaphor of engagement and the expression 'a chaste virgin' (v. 2: *parthenon hagnèv*) which could make the reader think of adultery. On the other hand, however, the fact that Adam is not mentioned (compare 'to [the] one husband' Christ) could be an argument not to overemphasize the idea of adultery: the verb used in the description of the community that will create a distance from Christ ('your thoughts will be led astray', *ftheiroo*)[11] leads one to think that the distance Eve creates *vis-à-vis* God is a more adequate interpretation than the adultery with regard to Adam. Moreover,

9. The three texts are mentioned by (among others) Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB, 32A; New York: Doubleday, 1984), p. 487, and Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC, 40; Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1986), p. 333. The passages are found in different contexts but they have a similar content: 'When the serpent had intercourse with Eve, he injected poison in her'. The common understanding of this passage is that through this action the woman is inclined to passionate desire and indecent sexual behavior. The same idea is found in *1 En.* 69.6; *2 En.* 31.6; *Apoc. Abr.* 23: Satan or one of his companions stimulates Eve (and not Adam) to sin and, as a consequence, it is Eve who causes destruction all over the world. In the New Testament the idea is found in Rev. 12.9; 20.2. See also below (comments on 1 Tim. 2.13-14).

10. Compare the following comments: Martin, *2 Corinthians*, p. 333: 'Paul's primary source is, however, the canonical Genesis chap. 3'; Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina, 8; Collegeville, MA: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 173, is very doubtful about the existence of a haggadic midrash at the time Paul wrote his letter; clearly against such an influence is J.T. Nielsen, *2 Korintiërs* (Tekst en toelichting; Kampen: Kok, 1995), p. 131, who describes it as 'not correct'. There is indeed a rabbinic tradition which has a negative interpretation on the role of the woman in the creation story. But it is not an easy thing to refer to midrashic texts as an inspiration or a source for the writings of the New Testament. Very often it is not possible to say more than that some interpretations of the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament have a parallel interpretation in the midrash. And while there are internal contradictions in the New Testament, it is far more difficult to recognize one unified vision in the midrashim. Dating the interpretations of the midrash remains a difficult issue. With regard to the theme of the sin of Adam and Eve there exists a clear overview (in Dutch) by Marcel Poorthuis, 'Sexisme als zondeval. Rabbijnse interpretaties van het paradijsverhaal belicht vanuit de verhouding tussen man en vrouw' ['Sexism as Primeval Sin: Rabbinic Interpretations of the Paradise Story Commented from the Relationship between Man and Woman'], *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 30 (1990), pp. 234-58.

11. The verb *ftheiroo* combines the ideas of 'to destroy' and 'to trick, to tempt'. It is found, for example, in talking about tempting a virgin (*Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur* [ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 6th edn, 1988], p. 1709, 2b: 'durch Verführung zugrunde richten').

the comparison of possible unfaithful behavior on the part of the community finds its basis in the metaphor of the wedding between the people and their Lord (e.g. Isa. 54.5). And the serpent is told to deceive 'by its cunning' (*en tèi panourgiai autoû*; compare Gen. 3.1, 'crafty', *fronimootatos*; but note Aquila and Symmachus, 'cunning', *panourgos*), which could be a suggestive Pauline expression to describe the way his opponents are acting.[12] If their behavior corresponds to that of the serpent, then Paul can rightly say that 'even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' (v. 14; compare also 2.11).

Let me summarize by answering the question of how one should deal with this text in light of the foregoing data. We have seen that Paul is interpreting the text of Genesis by focusing on the role of Eve, and we can explain this narrowed interpretation by the literary context and background. From the perspective of the rhetoric of the text, seeing the issues of guilt or anti-women policies as the central theme of the passage should be avoided. These items are not on Paul's agenda in 1 Cor. 11.3. The reference to Eve is found in a comparative clause within another comparison, and it is not meant as a description of Paul's ideas on women. The reader should not turn the meaning of the text upside down. Paul's first and most important aim is to criticize the behavior of the pseudo-apostles and more specifically the way in which they are trying to distract the Corinthians from the true gospel. Certainly, Paul is warning the Corinthians, but the comparison is mainly an attempt to portray the opponents as a crafty serpent with satanic plans (vv. 13-14). It is not so much Paul's theory about the role of Eve which inspires him to describe the behavior of the Corinthian community as it is his choice for the elaborated metaphor of the engagement which gives him the occasion to bring a short allusion to Eve.[13] When readers are tempted to look for a negative view on women in 2 Corinthians, this is certainly done under the influence of other Pauline texts[14]—of 1 Tim. 2.13-14 and a series of non-biblical texts which all together have had a 'successful' career through the centuries. And yet those who are guided by those other Pauline texts should not be too selective in their choice of texts. It is not easy to find a coherent perspective in Paul's writings with regard to the responsibility for

12. Poorthuis, 'Sexisme als zondeval', p. 242 n. 25, writes about the rabbinic texts: 'The emphasis here probably is more on the evil influence of the serpent than on sexuality as such' (my translation).

13. Poorthuis, 'Sexisme als zondeval', p. 247 n. 45: 'It is striking that Eve being deceived by the serpent in 2 Cor. 11.3 does not contain a special lesson for the females in the community, but for the whole of the community. The sexual differentiation in the example (biblical story or parable) does not necessarily imply a sexual differentiation in its application' (my translation).

14. See n. 1.

the sin in Genesis, for there are texts where Adam is seen as being responsible (Rom. 5.12-14: 'Just as sin came into the world through one man…'), and in other passages the distinction of male and female disappears in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3.27-28). Instead of resorting to theories of later glosses in the text, it is better to take note of Paul's differing lines of argumentation in his letters, lines of argumentation that change according to the circumstances and the subject.[15]

3. *Text, Context and Background of 1 Timothy 2.13-14*

The 'pastoral letter' 1 Timothy is a pseudonymous writing attributed to Paul (1.1), written in a time (the transition from the first century CE to the second century CE?) in which the formation of the community had witnessed already structural developments in the context of a Hellenized world.[16] The salutation and greeting (vv. 1-2), the introduction and the description of the task Paul wants to give to Timothy (vv. 3-20), are followed by the main body of the letter, with its diverse warnings. Chapter 2 starts with an encouragement to prayer (vv. 1-4) and contains a confession that Christ is the mediator and that Paul is his apostle (vv. 5-7). This is followed by 'gender-specific instructions regarding the roles of men and women'.[17] The text (vv. 8-15) runs as follows:

> I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument; also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

15. To save the 'real' Paul many authors decide 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 'als nicht von Paulus stammender Einschub in den Text anzusehen' (Merkel, *Pastoralbriefe*, p. 27). But for the opposite opinion, see Jan Lambrecht, *1 Korintiërs* (Belichting van het bijbelboek; 's Hertogenbosch: Katholieke Bijbelstichting, 1997), p. 78: 'Maybe it is…better to recognize the pauline authenticity of this passage and to accept it causes problems for the interpretation'. Baudry, *Responsabilité*, p. 306: 'Il ne faudrait pas chercher dans ces écrits de circonstance des commentaires systématiques du début de la Genèse. Quand l'apôtre fait allusion c'est pour les besoins de son argumentation'.

16. This is found in almost all introductions to the letter. For a good recent commentary, see Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (The New Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002).

17. Mark A. Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), p. 398.

After a short comment directed to the men (v. 8) comes a longer passage about how women should behave (vv. 9-10). The passage is to be compared to 1 Pet. 3.1-6. Women should learn in silence with full submission. The prescriptions conclude with a double prohibition for women (no teaching, no authority over a man)[18] and with a commandment to keep silent (v. 12). This is supported by a double exegesis on the role of Eve in the creation story. In v. 13 it is said that Adam was formed first (*eplasthè*; cf. Gen. 2.7a: *kai eplasen ho theos*) and Eve second. In v. 14 the author of the letter says that it was Eve and not Adam who was deceived. The second argument resembles 2 Cor. 11.3: in both instances a form of the composed verb is used (2 Cor. 11.3, *ex-èpatèsen*, and 1 Tim. 2.14, *ex-apatètheisa*). Two differences with 2 Corinthians can be mentioned: the silence about the serpent and the explicit indication that Adam was not deceived (v. 14a). Only childbearing can save the woman, provided she continues in faith, love, holiness and modesty (v. 15). In the Greek text of the description of the role of the women there is a remarkable alternation between the plural (vv. 9-10, 15b) and the singular (vv. 11-15a); this strengthens the idea that the woman Eve is a model for all women.[19] Great emphasis is put on the opposition of Adam and Eve, especially through v. 14a ('Adam was not deceived', *ouk èpatèthè*), and through the compound verb *ex-apatètheisa*, which is used to describe Eve, and through the addition that she 'became a transgressor' (*en parabasei gegonen*). Only Eve was deceived. Adam is absolved.

It is no surprise that this text (vv. 9-15)—together with 1 Cor. 14.33b-36—has been characterized in modern theology as anti-female. Attempts to deny this interpretation are going against both the text and the actual ideas about equality of man and woman. In any case, 1 Timothy 2 has been very influential and one of the practical consequences has been that women were not allowed to fulfill ministerial functions within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The first task, however, will be to try to understand the text within the original context, and to bear in mind that the sensibilities of today are not identical with sensibilities at the end of the first century. When one has more knowledge of the cultural background and of the inter-testamental interpretations of Genesis, one understands that the author of 1 Timothy was not an exception when he wrote how women should behave and when he legitimized it with reference to Genesis.

18. The Greek word *authentein* ('to rule') is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible. It expresses a form of dominance.

19. In v. 11 *gunè* ('woman') is used as a generalizing form for the women in the community and in v. 14 *hè de gunè* ('the woman') is used in opposition to Adam. Compare the singular in v. 15a ('she will be saved') with the plural in v. 15 b: 'Der unvermittelte Wechsel vom Singular zum Plural mag am ehesten mit der Absicht zu erklären sein, deutlich zu machen, dass es nun nicht mehr wie vorher in VV13f um Eva, sondern konkret um die christlichen Frauen in den Gemeinden geht' (Roloff, *Timotheus*, p. 142).

From a socio-cultural perspective, the position of women in those days was not equal to that of men. For each of the prescriptions given to women in 1 Tim. 2.9-12 (including those about clothes and jewels) one can find a similar description without any criticism in Jewish and/or Hellenistic literature.[20] When we focus on the inferiority of women, very important authors could be mentioned. Philo states that the husband has the authority to explain the law and rules, as a master, to his wife who has to obey (*Hypothetica* 7.3.14). Plutarch gives good advice to the married couple Pollianus and Eurydice: 'Whenever two notes are sounded in accord the tune is carried by the bass; and in like manner every activity in a virtuous household is carried on by both parties in agreement, but discloses the husband's leadership and preferences' (*Advice for the Bride and Groom* 11), and 'For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband, and she should not feel aggrieved if, like the flute-player, she makes a more impressive sound through a tongue not her own' (32). Flavius Josephus writes: 'for, says the Scripture, "A woman is inferior to her husband in all things". Let her, therefore, be obedient to him; not so that he should abuse her, but that she may acknowledge her duty to her husband; for God hath given the authority to the husband' (*Apion* 2.201). It is clear that the issue of the relationship between man and woman in society, and husband and wife in private, played an important role and that we can see traces of it in the New Testament (see also Col. 3.18; Tit. 2.3-5): '1. Tim 2,11f. weist der Frau wieder ein Verhalten zu, das ihrer Rolle im Hauswesen entspricht, wie sie in der hellenistischen Ökonomik gesehen wird'.[21] It looks as if in 1 Timothy the social situation evident in the relationship between man and woman is applied to the context of worship.

And what about the exegetical arguments used to support the inferior position of women? In a twofold way a negative value judgment against women is formulated on the basis of the story of the serpent. The first judgment is the fact that the woman has sinned first: 'Die Frau ist erstklassig in der Sündenordnung, aber zweitklassig in der Schöpfungsordnung'.[22] In

20. One can find the references in most of the commentaries; for instance Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy*. Küchler also mentions texts that could make clear that there was a certain emancipation movement going on in Roman-Hellenistic society (*Schweigen*, p. 15 n. 20). For a survey, see Pieter W. van der Horst, 'Notities bij het thema: vrouwen in het vroege jodendom' ['Notes on the Theme of Women in Early Judaism'], *Kerk en Theologie* 43 (1992), pp. 113-29.

21. Michael Wolter, *Die Pastoralbriefe als Paulustradition* (FRLANT, 146; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), p. 45. The author considers the way of thinking about women in the Pastoral letters as a consequence of the reducing of the Spirit in comparison with the authentic early Pauline tradition (p. 43).

22. Schüngel-Straumann, *Die Frau am Anfang*, p. 26, and 'Von einer Frau', p. 19. The chronological argument will not be treated further here (see also 1 Cor. 11); a long

a shorter form this was already mentioned in 2 Cor. 11.3, though of course direct influence of 2 Corinthians on 1 Timothy is uncertain.[23] One rightly refers to Sir. 25.24 to explain that the author of 1 Timothy might have used the biblical tradition to substantiate his opinion: ‘In woman was sin’s beginning, and because of her we all die’. This verse comes at the end of a long passage on the woman, Sir. 25.13-26, which contains very negative statements such as ‘No poison worse than that of a serpent, no venom greater than that of a woman’ (v. 13). Sirach 25.24 stands at the beginning of a process in which the serpent’s action is increasingly interpreted from the perspective of guilt and in which the role of Eve is increasingly isolated by absolving Adam. The new element in this interpretation which originated in the second century BCE is the link between the Paradise story and the theme of guilt and sin. The influence of this theme was so important that even today the text of Genesis 2–3 is mostly read through these lenses. In its most dramatic form, the reasoning has become very simple: Eve is craftier than the serpent; she deceives Adam and in so doing she is the only person who is guilty of the act that impacts so greatly on humanity.[24]

Helen Schüngel-Straumann’s explanation for this cultural shift in the centuries before the turn of the common era is the rise of dualistic thinking. The original biblical stories in Genesis did not intend to *explain* evil but to describe the symptoms of it. And they certainly did not want to accuse God as being the cause of evil. From the second century BCE on, these stories are increasingly interpreted from a negative perspective on the body, and thus on women.[25] The philosophical distinction between body and spirit has had a reinforcing influence on the distribution of roles between man and woman, the latter representing the bodily aspect and the former the spiritual one. Through this connection with the physical, woman became associated

note on the background of this argument and a critical analysis of the use in 1 Timothy is given in Küchler, *Schweigen*, pp. 17-32.

23. Roloff thinks that the theme of 2 Cor. 11 (the deception of Eve as a metaphor for the unfaithfulness of the community towards Christ) differs too much from the one in 1 Tim. 2.14 (*Timotheus*, p. 139).

24. Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 3: ‘So compelling are the views of Eve as reworked in the New Testament, in Rabbinic lore, and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical books, that it is difficult to examine the Eve story without being subtly influenced by the predominant Christian and Jewish interpretations of that story’. I would add that alongside the midrashic texts, which clearly have this interpretation, there are other passages in which there is a more nuanced way of thinking about the role of Eve and in which a plurality of opinions is tolerated (see Poorthuis, ‘Sexisme als zondeval’, pp. 250-52).

25. Schüngel-Straumann, ‘Von einer Frau’, p. 12. I take up some of her ideas about *Jubilees.* She also discusses the pseudepigraphical book of *Enoch.*

with the devil and with temptation. In the book of *Jubilees* (second century BCE), which follows rather closely the storyline of Genesis,[26] there are already the first signs of small changes going in the direction of a degradation of Eve. Thus, it is told that the woman was allowed to enter the garden only after eighty days—which is forty days after Adam. This is clearly a legend serving to explain the woman's period of impurity after she gave birth (*Jub.* 3.9-12). It is also striking that the nakedness of the woman may not be seen by a man: on the one hand, Gen. 2.25 is omitted ('And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed') and only the man's nakedness is mentioned (*Jub.* 3.16), on the other hand, the text of *Jub.* 3.21 differs from Gen. 3.6 in that it is explicitly stated that the woman covers her shame with fig leaves before giving the fruit to Adam. The smooth storyline of the common actions of man and woman is thus interrupted. In *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Pseudo-Philo; first century CE) it is said: 'But he [= the first man] transgressed my ways and was persuaded of his wife, and she was deceived by the serpent. And then was death ordained unto the generations of men' (13.8). The same tendency can be seen in the so-called *Apocalypse of Moses*, as well as possibly the oldest version of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, a Greek work which tells about the devil as the cause of Eve's deception. Adam says to Eve: '"Eve, what hast thou wrought in us? Thou hast brought upon us great wrath which is death, [lording it over all our race]." And he saith to her, "Call all our children and our children's children and tell them the manner of our transgression"' (14.2-3). Here, however, we are most probably already dealing with a Christian interpretation.[27] In several later Latin additions Eve shows even more self-pity, so that she asks Adam to kill her for the sin she has committed: 'And Eve said to Adam: "Wilt thou slay me that I may die?"' (*LAE* 2-3).

In referring to the texts just mentioned above I am not claiming that 1 Tim. 2.9-15 depends on them. My intention is to evoke the religious atmosphere at the end of the first century. The author of 1 Timothy does not

26. See Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, 'The Creation of Man and Woman in Early Jewish Literature', in G.P. Luttikhuizen (ed.), *The Creation of Man and Woman* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 34-62. The following remark of Baudry is exaggerated: 'Le livre des *Jubilées* offre un récit parallèle à Gn 3, n'y apportant aucun développement nouveau sur Ève' (*Responsabilité*, p. 299).

27. Gary Anderson, Michael Stone and Johannes Tromp (eds.), *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays* (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha, 15; Leiden: Brill, 2000). See also Bernhard Heininger, 'Die "mystische" Eva. 1 Tim 2,8-15 und die Folgen des Sündenfalls in der *Apokalypsis Mosis*', *Biblische Zeitschrift* 46 (2002), pp. 205-21; the author is warning against judging too rapidly that 1 Tim. 2.13-14 is based 'on Jewish traditions'.

stand alone with his view on Eve. He shares an existing exegetical trend and he is certainly not going against the spirit of the time, though one must, of course, be careful not to judge a culture in too general a way.[28]

4. *Modern Context and the Authority of the Biblical Text*

Insight into the historical and literary context of the biblical passages we are discussing here leads to new questions about the text and challenges the hermeneutics of reading the Bible as such. With regard to the text, the modern view on the role of women and ministry has led some exegetes to pretend that 1 Tim. 2.8-11 is not as negative as it seems to be at first glance—the negative meaning is read into the text because of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*![29] Proponents of this view not only use the contemporaneous texts on women to clarify why the author of 1 Timothy is being rather anti-female, but they also relativize his opinion by stating that the author deals with a localized problem and that his practical guidelines were not valid outside the particular situation of the local community. He merely wanted to put his house in order, to conform to the customs of the time. According to this modern interpretation, it is not acceptable to accord fundamental theological theories expressing a permanent and universal view on the gender problematic. As a direct cause for the parenesis of 1 Tim. 2.8-11, one mentions that in the community some women (widows, unmarried women?) were influenced by gnostic thinking and were too enthusiastic or passionate (2 Tim. 3.6-7: 'For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth'). The author would oppose such behavior because he strongly believed that the community could only survive when it had adapted to the surrounding culture.[30] This way of understanding 1 Timothy

28. I already mentioned the variety and nuances in the representation of Eve in rabbinic literature. We could add that other positive views on Eve can be found in Jewish writings and pseudepigrapha. See Van der Horst, 'Notities', p. 129: 'It is clear that in early judaism there never was a monolithic exclusively negative view on women. In this sense, Judaism was not really different from early Christianity and Hellenism' (my translation).

29. Just as there is no monolithic view on the role of the woman in Judaism, Hellenism or the New Testament, one should also think in a more nuanced way about the later interpretations of 1 Tim. 2.13-14. In an interesting article G.A. Anderson has shown that some Church Fathers offered an exegesis in which they wanted to weaken anti-female tendencies (expressed by Origen, Ephrem, Augustine): 'Is Eve the Problem?', in Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (eds.), *Theological Exegesis* (Festschrift B.S. Childs; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 96-123.

30. Otto Knoch, *1. und 2. Timotheusbrief. Titusbrief* (Neue Echter Bibel, 14; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988), pp. 26-27; Merkel, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, p. 27; Cora E.

is meant to show that the original strategic intention of the author has been wrongly overestimated at a theological and ecclesiological level which was absent in the beginning. Very few today would question that this text was meant as a guideline for the local community of the author. Yet one may ask if it is not too easy to apportion blame for this ignorance only to the later interpreters. The author of 1 Timothy himself clearly did not want to stop the tendencies of his time. He chose to accept them. And even if one accepts there was a concrete problem in the community, it cannot be denied that in his argumentation the reference to Eve has a universal and almost ontological character. By reminding the readers in a very short notice of the old myth, by changing the role of the woman in a suggestive way and by applying it to the situation in his community, the author acts in an ambiguous way.

The exegetical starting point for a modern treatment of this text will therefore be twofold. First, one has to recognize that it is written against the background of a local problem, and one has to accept that the author is giving a 'conservative' answer in line with the ruling customs of his time. Second, the argument used by the author is too general and too negative *vis-à-vis* women. Due to the reference to Eve, the prescript itself about what women should do and are not allowed to do has received universal attention. As a consequence, it will never be possible to remove the anti-female character from the text, not even by considering it as a non-authentic Pauline writing, or by pointing to other texts which accuse Adam (and not Eve), or by situating it in its own time, or by mentioning those passages in the New Testament which present the woman in a more positive way. The text will always remain an ever difficult reality. Only our own perspective on the text lends itself to change. But how is such change realized? And is this allowed? In my concluding remarks I will pick up again the questions posed at the beginning of this study.

As a matter of fact, the confrontation with 1 Tim. 2.8-11 gives us better insight into something we already knew for a long time: all texts, sacred texts included, are always determined by their time and place. However, the more the contemporary context differs from the original context, and the more the original texts are dealing with tangible ethical and organizational aspects that are unfamiliar with the modern world, the more difficult it is to appreciate the concrete time and place in which the texts originated. For, once this 'immanent' character of the texts is accepted, one is faced with a choice. At that moment the boundaries of neutral and objective research are

Cypser, *Taking off the Patriarchal Glasses* (New York: Vantage Press, 1987), Chapter 6: 'The Perennial Problem of Sin', pp. 97-116. The reconstruction of this conflict within the community remains after all a very hypothetical task and it is questionable if one really needs it to understand the parenesis; see Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy*, p. 70.

reached and the question of ‘engagement’ is on the table. But what do we have to do with such an ‘impossible’ text? Hermeneutical reflection upon the exegetical insights we have reached about 1 Timothy 2 should allow us to say that mental space should be created for liberating ourselves from the anti-female yoke in this text. While recognizing possible anti-female elements in the text, at the same time we accept that they are not binding rules. Christian communities can turn to 1 Timothy in order to become acquainted with the signs of the time—just like the author of 1 Timothy did—concerning the situation of man and woman within the Church and in society, and then ask themselves how within the Church and in society man and woman could work together in a mutually respectful and equal manner.[31] One of the elements one will have to take into account is the exciting pluriformity of views within the Bible. In this palette of opinions 1 Tim. 2.8-15 will remind us that the task of man and woman within the Christian community will always have to be translated in dialogue with the changing concrete situations and the spirit of the time. The author of 1 Timothy was aware of this and hoped to ensure the survival of his community. In his time this was only one of the possible answers to that question. In the twenty-first century his answer is received as a painful reminder, for neither his parenetical advice for women, nor his argumentation about Eve are acceptable today. In this way, the case of 1 Tim. 2.8-11 warns modern readers that their interpretation of a biblical text, though perfectly fitting their own expectations and wishes, does not necessarily have universal and perennial value.

31. Philip H. Towner, *1–2 Timothy & Titus* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 81: ‘We run the risk of misusing 2:8-15 if we make it a proof text in our modern debate. The passage as a whole calls for men and women to relate to one another in the church according to the standards of acceptability, in awareness of the theological realities of the age in which we live… As for the role of women in ministry, the church must continue to wrestle with this issue, and this passage will have its place. But easy answers that *either* simply impose culture on God’s will *or* neglect culture altogether must be resisted’. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy*, p. 75 n. 26: ‘Epistolary context-specific paraenesis cannot be treated as some sort of timeless truth. The modern reader of a text as 1 Timothy must be attentive to the ways in which a contemporary context differs from the context envisioned by the Pastor’.

The Long Shadow of Human Sin: Augustine on Adam, Eve and the Fall

Willemien Otten

Introduction

For anyone remotely familiar with the Christian tradition the name of the Church Father Augustine (354–430 CE) inevitably conjures up associations with the doctrine of original sin. This is even more the case when we put his name in combination with the biblical figures of Adam and Eve, as his doctrine of original sin presents itself in part as a moral tale about Paradise. As is well known, Augustine held that humanity had been deprived of paradisiacal bliss on account of the sin of Adam and Eve, our protoparents, whose fateful act of eating from the tree of good and evil led to their permanent expulsion from Eden. By most accounts of original sin, Augustine's doctrine entails that ever since Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, from which God had commanded them to abstain, they and their offspring down the ages were condemned to lead—or rather, suffer—a joyless and difficult life in the sublunary realm. Following this admittedly slanted rendition of it, the doctrine of original sin seems to have cost Augustine dearly in the sense that not only did it render him infamous, but it also appears to have tainted his reputation. This taint has become even more prominent and especially more theologically oppressive since the Reformation, when original sin cast its long shadows over the issue of predestination, its various positions infamously riddled by the distinction between infra- and supralapsarianism indicating respectively that God chose the reprobate either after or before foreseeing Adam's fall immediately following the latter's creation.

A new element in the twentieth-century debate on Augustine has been the fact that he is considered unsympathetic if not hostile towards women,[1] and

1. In the expanding literature about this subject, Kari Børresen and Constance McLeese do not see Augustine standing out much from his Greco-Roman background. See Zie Kari E. Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence—The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (trans. C. Talbot; Washington: University of America Press, 1981), pp. 1-140, and Constance E. McLeese, 'Augustinian Exegesis and

obsessed with sexuality as well as uneasy with human eroticism. All of this has to do with the fact that for Augustine original sin takes on what amounts to a sexually hereditary character. The current criticism of Augustine seems based on a rather eerie convergence of his perceived distance from actual, historical women, on the one hand, and the strong theological connection he sees between sexuality and sin, on the other. To illustrate his 'blind spot' for the predicament of women, contemporary authors may refer to the biographical detail that he lived together with a partner for years, though neither in the *Confessions* nor elsewhere does he ever mention her name.[2] This is even more remarkable if we factor in that she was the mother of Adeodatus, his dearly beloved son who died at an early age.

Whether his perceived distance from women and the idea of original sin are directly related is a matter on which I will touch below. But the doctrine of original sin has also been criticized on other grounds. With increasing importance attached to the exegetical warrants of systematic positions in contemporary theology, it has become clear that Augustine bases his doctrine of original sin on what is in essence a misreading of Rom. 5.12. The RSV reads the following: 'Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned'. Yet unlike contemporary exegetes Augustine does not read that death spread to all men because all men sinned, as has the Greek original behind the RSV, but 'because all men sinned in this one man'.[3] All emphasis

Sexist Canon from the New Testament', in P. Bright (ed.), *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1999), pp. 283-300. Kim Power faults Augustine for not opposing the cultural norms of his time as a Christian: see her *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 238-39: 'In the case of Augustine, it seems to me that it was not simply individual fears and prejudices, but rather the archetypal symbolism of woman as interpreted by patriarchal culture which Augustine shaped, articulated and sanctioned'.

2. This historical omission is so acutely felt that it has prompted creative alternatives to fill the lacuna. Inspired by this failed love story, the Danish philosopher Jostein Gaarder wrote his *Vita Brevis: A Letter to St Augustine* (trans. Anne Born; London: Phoenix, 1997), in which he gives her the name Flora Aemilia. Garry Wills, *Saint Augustine* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999), refers to her as Una. Peter Brown conjectures that Augustine may not have left his partner to pursue the ascetic life, as is Gaarder's hypothesis, but did so out of an ambition to make a better match, preferring to marry an upscale partner. In an aside, Brown comments: 'A well-bred man would not mention his concubine'. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p. 89. A feminist critique of Augustine is found in Margaret R. Miles, 'Not Nameless but Unnamed: The Woman Torn From Augustine's Side', in Miles, *Rereading Historical Theology: Before, During, and After Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), pp. 129-48.

3. The Vulgate text of Rom. 5.12 reads: *Propterea sicut per unum hominem peccatum in hunc mundum intravit, et per peccatum mors, et ita in omnes homines mors*

is therefore on Adam as the progenitor of the human race, whose role is synecdochical for all humanity. Hence we find the human race thrown or 'lumped' together as a doomed mass (*massa damnata*), as it depends entirely on God's grace for its redemption.[4] If we pursue this line of thought, Calvin's teaching of double predestination, to the effect that before creation God has elected some for salvation and others for damnation, does not seem that far away, given that it operates on a similar idea that the genealogy of the entire human race can be telescoped into the one figure of Adam in Paradise.

If we approach Adam and Eve from the perspective of contemporary systematics, an obvious solution for Augustine's pessimistic anthropology seems to present itself. After all, if his theology of original sin is based on a misreading of Rom. 5.12, can we not simply dismiss it as exegetically unfounded? Would it not subsequently be possible to develop an anthropology based on a more philologically adequate reading of the Paradise story, thereby opening up the possibility of a less male-dominated anthropology shored up by sound exegesis?[5] And could not such a new anthropology put an end to the unholy burden with which Augustine has afflicted Western Christianity?

Given the convoluted history of theology in the Christian West, however, the situation may just not be that simple. Of the many causes that have played a role in this theological-historical development, I want to mention three. First, the first man and his fall through sin have received attention since the beginning stages of Christian theology. While Paul himself saw Christ already as a second Adam (*alter Adam*) restoring the balance between God and humanity, Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 125–c. 203 CE) elaborated this typology in structural fashion, tilting the balance of sin towards the disobedience of Eve, which for Irenaeus is redressed by the obedience of Mary.[6] By placing the responsibility for human sin squarely with Eve rather

pertransiit, in quo omnes peccaverunt. The older Latin versions that Augustine may have consulted seem to use the translation *in quo* in equal measure.

4. For an analysis of Augustine's position on original sin, predestination and grace, see Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, rev. edn, 1986), pp. 370-93. The reading that all men sinned in Adam was known before Augustine from Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 5.12: *Manifestum itaque est in Adam omnes peccasse quasi in massa* ('It is evident that in Adam all have sinned as if in a lump'), cited in Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, p. 373 n. 2.

5. See Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), who rereads Gen. 2 and 3 with precisely this intent.

6. On Adam and Christ, sin and grace, see Rom. 5.12-21. For a treatment of Irenaeus's so-called theology of recapitulation, signifying that Christ repeats, restores and elevates the entire history of humanity, and its particular attention for the relation between Eve

than Adam, his co-apologist Tertullian of Carthage seems to have settled more or less definitively the question of who is to blame for the origin of human sin. In the opening lines of his work 'On the Dress of Women' (*De cultu feminarum* 1.1), a text condemning the use of jewelry and cosmetics among third-century women, Tertullian apodictically states that all women deserve to go around in torn clothes as a sign of mourning. For just as through Christ as the door (cf. Jn 10.6-10) salvation entered into the world, so through Eve death had been ushered in, which is why her daughters should be forever repentant.[7] Compared to Tertullian's accusatory and unapologetic statements Augustine's position on women is the paragon of nuance.

My second point is that we have to be aware of the rather sensitive dialectic between exegesis and doctrine in early Christianity. While exegesis, meaning the careful reading and interpretation of Scripture, was no doubt important, it was not thereby seen as the scientific foundation of theology, as has been the case since the emergence of humanism and the Reformation foreboding the culture of modernity. Just as exegesis could drive doctrine in early Christianity, so doctrine could drive exegesis. After all, the Bible consisted in a collection of texts that were handed down with reverence, but did not thereby contain a coherent set of doctrines. While many clusters of ideas congealed and solidified around the figure of Jesus Christ, thus allowing for the interconnection of the Old and New Testaments through typology and allegory, at no point does theology seem to arise as a straightforward conclusion for exegetical problems. What we are now used to calling Christian doctrine rather developed in fits and bouts during the first few centuries, arising in part as a result of debate with Jewish believers, as in the case of Justin Martyr, in part as a result of intra-Christian debates, as in the polemics of Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria with Marcion and other Gnostic thinkers, and in part as a debate with Hellenistic intellectuals, including Celsus and Plotinus. Scriptural exegesis plays a role in all

and Mary, see Matthew C. Steenberg, 'Children in Paradise: Adam and Eve as "Infants" in Irenaeus of Lyons', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004), pp. 1-22, and Benjamin H. Dunning, 'Virgin Earth, Virgin Birth: Creation, Sexual Difference, and Recapitulation in Irenaeus of Lyons', *Journal of Religion* 89 (2009), pp. 57-88.

7. See Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. IV. *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994 [1885]), p. 14: 'Do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law. You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is death—even the Son of God had to die.' On Tertullian see also n. 33 below.

of them but does not thereby dictate their outcome, although both the creed(s) and the canon of Scripture are among their lasting results. While the partly spontaneous and partly orchestrated interplay of doctrine and scriptural interpretation has famously led to what Frances Young has called 'the formation of biblical culture', it goes too far to see this biblical culture therefore as an exegetically based one in the modern sense. Hellenistic culture and *paideia*, the latter concretized in the tradition of the liberal arts which included the influence of Stoicism, Neoplatonism, and other currents of moral and philosophical teaching, would continue to be a force. In this active cauldron of cultural and exegetical pressures various scriptural texts could suddenly jump to the fore and become prominent and long-time cornerstones of Christian doctrine.

The Paradise story about Adam and Eve in Genesis is one of the powerful vignettes which managed to capture the popular imagination. As a result, this text and its interpretation soon became constitutive of later views of cosmology or anthropology, which have their origin in a single biblical source.[8] The emblematic character of the Paradise story is the third reason why one cannot simply discard Augustine's interpretation of the Fall as somehow beside the point, or rather, beside the intended meaning of either the Romans or the Genesis text. As for its specific role as a myth of origin, it appears that the fourth and fifth centuries show a heightened interest in Genesis commentaries,[9] while this period witnesses at the same time a series of important doctrinal developments culminating in the formulation of orthodox Christology at the councils of Nicea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE). While Augustine's various exegetical attempts at interpreting Genesis must hence be inserted as mere links in a larger chain of provisional and alternative readings, by contrast his doctrine of original sin marks a crucial and before all lasting turning-point in the history of Western Christianity. A thematic but largely associative cluster of thought about sin and guilt, man and woman, sexuality and oppression, holds Augustine's theology of

8. See Gregory A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), especially the contributions by Elizabeth Clark, 'Heresy, Ascetism, Adam, and Eve: Interpretations of Genesis 1–3 in the Later Latin Fathers' (pp. 99-134), and Susan E. Schreiner, 'Eve, the Mother of History: Reaching for the Reality of History in Augustine's Later Exegesis of Genesis' (pp. 135-86).

9. See Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), pp. 98-126 ('The Politics of Paradise'), in which she holds Augustine to be driven more by social-conservative than idealist-theological motives. See also Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 38-50. Elliott states on p. 45: 'As Elaine Pagels has forcefully shown, Augustine took his cue from the temporal order and projected it backward on paradise'.

original sin together, while its rhetorical appeal and integral force of conviction guaranteed its lasting influence down the ages.

Formulated differently, Augustine has definitively shaped the Western image of Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve in Augustine

Because of Augustine's central impact on the historical development of Western Christianity, it is almost impossible to go back behind his position on sin and Paradise to retrieve his unburdened exegetical view of Adam and Eve, if such a fresh position ever existed. Throughout the various phases of his career Augustine commented on Paradise and its original inhabitants in radically different ways. So as not to rush headlong into false syntheticism, I will give a few examples of Augustine's exegesis of Genesis in chronological order, followed by a short analysis of the differences between them.

The first episode to which I want to draw attention is Augustine's interpretation of Adam's expulsion from Paradise in his Genesis commentary against the Manichees (*De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, c. 389 CE). Genesis 3.22-23 (RSV) reads as follows: 'Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever"—therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken'. In this early phase of his exegetical activity Augustine is both optimistic and greatly preoccupied with Christology. Interpreting God's utterance in Gen. 3.22 as ambiguous speech (*ambigua locutio*), he deliberates over two readings, one that interprets the verse as a divine prohibition, and another, more hopeful, that renders the negative import of the particle *ne* (that…not) with a more tentative 'maybe'. Instead of laying down divine law, the phrase 'lest Adam stretch out his hand to the tree of life' now turns out to contain a kind of prophecy. Augustine's interpretation unfolds as follows:

> So then it can appear that the reason the man was sent away to the wearisome labors of this life was in order that at some time or other he might indeed stretch out his hand to the tree of life and live for ever. The stretching out of the hand, surely, is an excellent symbol of the cross, through which eternal life is regained. Though even if we understand *lest he stretch out his hand and live for ever* in that other way, it was an entirely fair punishment that he should be barred from access to wisdom after his sin, until by God's mercy in the course of time the one who was dead might come to life again, and the one who was lost might be found.[10]

10. See *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.22.34 (ed. D. Weber; CSEL, 91; Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), p. 157, translated by

In both readings Augustine tries hard to demonstrate a certain optimism, as if he deems a restoration of the paradisiacal situation still possible. He envisages a spiritual union of man and wife in Paradise before the Fall, in which the wife is submissive to her spouse. Or, as he states in 1.19.30:

> Before that, you see, there was first a chaste coupling of male and female, accommodated to his directing and her complying; and a spiritual brood of intellectual and immortal joys filling the earth; that is to say, giving life to the body and dominating it, that is, holding it in such subjection that the spirit suffered no opposition from it and no vexation.
>
> A good reason for believing this is that they were not yet children of this age before they had sinned. For *the children of this age beget and are begotten* (Lk. 20:34), as the Lord says, when he is pointing out that in comparison with the future life that is promised us this business of sexual reproduction is to be held in low esteem.[11]

Over and against this serene spiritual harmony of a childless Adam and Eve, I want to line up the following robust passage from *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.3.5 (with this part to be dated shortly after 401 CE), in which Augustine gives a complete historical and physical interpretation of the creation of woman according to Gen. 2.18:

> If the question is asked, though, for which purpose it was necessary for this help to be made, no more likely answer suggests itself than that it was for the sake of procreating children—in the same sort of way as the earth is a help to the seed, so that the plant may be born of each of them. This, after all, is what was said at the first establishment of things: *Male and female he made them, and God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply and fill the earth and lord over it* (Gen. 1:27-28). This reason for the setting up and joining together of male and female and this blessing did not fall away after the man's sin and punishment; it is in terms of it, after all, that the earth is full of men and women and being lorded over by them.[12]

Finally, in his famous historical work *The City of God* 14.11 (around 420 CE), we find Augustine elaborating the idea that Adam and Eve inhabited

Edmund Hill in 'On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees', in J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees. Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis. The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (The Works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century, I/13; Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), p. 94. Augustine's reading has an afterlife in the Carolingian thinker Johannes Scottus Eriugena (810–877 CE); see Donald F. Duclow, 'Denial or Promise of the Tree of Life? Eriugena, Augustine and Genesis 3:22b', in G. van Riel, C. Steel and J. McEvoy (eds.), *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), pp. 221-38.

11. See *De Genesi contra Manicheos* 1.19.30 (CSEL, 91), pp. 97-98, translated in Rotelle (ed.), *On Genesis*, p. 58.

12. See *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.3.5 (ed. Joseph Zycha; CSEL, 28; Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1894), p. 271, translated in Rotelle (ed.), *On Genesis*, p. 378.

both a corporeal and a spiritual paradise. He concentrates on what went wrong there and thus begins to reconstruct the former bliss of that paradisiacal situation. Despite Adam's rule over Eve, Augustine maintains that Adam and Eve are equally to blame for the Fall:

> This is what happened to Aaron. He was not persuaded by argument to agree with the erring people to erect an idol; he yielded to constraint. And it is unbelievable that Solomon mistakenly supposed that he ought to serve idols; he was induced to such acts of sacrilege by feminine cajolery. It was the same with that first man and his wife. They were alone together, two human beings, a married pair; and we cannot believe that the man was led astray to transgress God's law because he believed that the woman spoke the truth, but that he fell in with her suggestions because they were so closely bound in partnership. In fact, the Apostle was not off the mark when he said, 'It was not Adam, but Eve, who was seduced' (1 Tim. 2.14), for what he meant was that Eve accepted the serpent's statement as the truth, while Adam refused to be separated from his only companion, even if it involved sharing her sin. That does not mean that he was less guilty, if he sinned knowingly and deliberately. Hence the Apostle does not say, 'He did not sin', but 'He was not seduced'. For he certainly refers to the man when he says, 'It was through one man that sin came into the world' (Rom. 5.12), and when he says more explicitly, a little later, 'by reproducing the transgression of Adam'. (Rom. 5.14)[13]

To analyze and contextualize Augustine's thought about Adam, Eve and original sin, I will comment below in four sections on its different aspects. These sections deal respectively with Augustine's vision of the Bible, his view of man and woman, his view of the Church and his position on human sexuality. In this way I want to try and reconstruct how and why Augustine came to his rather fraught view about human nature as encapsulated especially in the idea of original sin and what he intended with it, after which I will briefly evaluate its theological merits.

The Role and Authority of the Bible in Augustine

As a trained rhetorician Augustine was at first unconvinced that the Bible was of sufficient literary quality to function as the authoritative Christian text *par excellence*. Whereas Virgil's love story of Dido and Aeneas had the ability to move him,[14] he did not experience the same depth of emotion upon reading biblical stories. Only after hearing the allegorical exegesis of various

13. See *De civitate Dei* 14.11 (ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb; CCSL, 48; Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), p. 433, ll. 71-83, translated in *Saint Augustine, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (trans. Henry Bettenson; London: Penguin Books, 1984 [1972]), p. 570. See also Wills, *Saint Augustine*, p. 14.

14. See *Confessions* 1.13.20 (trans. H. Chadwick; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [1991], p. 15).

Old Testament stories by Bishop Ambrose of Milan, whose sermons were an important factor driving his conversion, does he overcome his aversion to Scripture, after which he goes on to reach a deeper insight into its truth.

Augustine's hesitancy towards the Bible was not just caused by its deficient aesthetic and stylistic quality, but especially by its apparent lack of proper solemnity.[15]

When Ambrose leads him finally to overcome his repulsion, there are two immediate reasons for his step, namely, Ambrose's own considerable literary talent, which is especially evident from his novel hymns which Augustine loved, and his allegorical interpretation of Scripture, with which he follows in the Neo-Platonic footsteps of Origen and Philo.[16] In Ambrose we find Adam and Eve depicted as symbolical personages representing the human mind (or *mens*, which gives us Adam as the equivalent of the Platonic *Nous*) or the human senses (with Eve symbolizing *aisthesis*). Their harmonious relation in Paradise suggests an underlying inner human harmony whereby the soul is gently directing the body, but does not presuppose a rootedness in historical reality. When the Fall disrupts this harmony, the relation between soul and senses takes an unexpected and turbulent turn, symbolized in Adam's expulsion from Paradise. Ambrose's allegorical reading of this episode convinced Augustine much more of its essential truth than any literal interpretation could. Following an exegesis that was geared towards the dimension of human interiority, including the soul, the heart, and the will, Augustine slowly but surely expanded his exegetical reach, eliminating the problem of scriptural shallowness in the process.

Augustine's growing intimacy with the Bible and biblical language led him to depart later on from Ambrose's position. Having been baptized by him, Augustine initially seems to have wanted to continue his educational career by writing a series of handbooks on each of the liberal arts. Perhaps as a result of the fact that he became a priest soon after his conversion, followed by his ordination as bishop, he abandoned this project, as he became more and more involved in and committed to the exegesis of Scripture. Arising in part out of the obligation to preach, the combination of exegetical exposure and experience led him to reformulate his educational project. This revised project, as compact as it was ambitious, entailed the combination of various strands of Christian teaching into a single, coherent whole, as he drew on the tradition of the liberal arts, on the truth of the

15. See *Confessions* 3.5.9 (trans. Chadwick, p. 40). See also Wills, *Saint Augustine*, p. 28.

16. On Philo's Genesis allegory compared to Augustine's, see Hedda M. Post, *Metaforen van de ziel. Vrouw en man in de Genesis-exegese van Philo Judaeus en Augustinus* (Leiderdorp: Sinteur, 2003), pp. 265-316.

Christian religion, and on his growing faith in a biblical hermeneutics. Augustine gave it the title *On Christian Teaching* (*De doctrina christiana*).[17]

Started not long after his ordination as bishop, hence written more or less simultaneously with the *Confessions*, Augustine's goal with this work was to reform late antique models of education according to a Christian, more particularly an exegetical, pattern. Any formal need to depend on other sources of knowledge has fallen away in this book, although Augustine does not disqualify them completely. In conformity with his duties as a bishop, he embraces the Bible as the fount and norm of truth and the special source from which to teach others (*doctrina*). Strictly speaking, Christian believers do not need to read Scripture for purposes of their own salvation, for which participation in the sacraments of the Church suffices.[18] Given his interest in conveying Christian truth to the widest possible audience, Augustine emphasizes above all the simultaneous need to develop and follow proper exegetical procedure.

We can draw a number of conclusions about Augustine's engagement with Scripture that bear directly on his thinking about Adam, Eve, and original sin. More pastorally inclined and less intellectualist than his mentor Ambrose, Augustine embraced the Bible wholesale, concentrating on the parameters of correct interpretation. Although the Bible contains divine truth, humans will acquire the right insight only with the aid of proper training and exercise, known as *exercitatio mentis*.[19] Guided by this notion of mental training Augustine comes to treasure the literalness of Scripture, which so bothered him before, as a special token of divine encouragement and guidance. It is as if God is constantly introducing humanity to and familiarizing it with the world of his truth, not unlike the way in which ancient bishops urge on their own congregations. The Bible contains concrete divine

17. For Augustine's position on the liberal arts, see the essays in K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (eds.), *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to Confession*s (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For his educational program in *On Christian Doctrine*, see K. Pollmann, *Doctrina christiana. Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus, De doctrina christiana* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1996).

18. See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 1.39.43.93 (ed. and trans. R.P.H. Green; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 52-53: 'Therefore a person strengthened by faith, hope, and love, and who steadfastly holds on to them, has no need of the scriptures except to instruct others. That is why many people, relying on these three things, actually live in solitude without any texts of the scriptures [desert fathers, WO]'; see also *De doctrina christiana* 3.9.13.31 (trans. Green, pp. 144-47), about the importance of baptism and the eucharist.

19. On *exercitatio mentis* or *animi* as a kind of mental discipline and sense of divine purpose, see Henri I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (repr., Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 1983 [1958]), pp. 299-327.

instructions, but these do not everywhere have the same purpose and intensity, which is why the human mind has to remain concentrated and alert. Augustine considers it his special task to make clear, with the help of a number of rhetorical guidelines, how divine truth can be distilled from the Bible itself.

To that end he makes a distinction in *On Christian Teaching* between *res* (meaning: things or realities, epistemologically the heart of the matter) and *signa* (meaning: signs, referential things).[20] As a good educator Augustine considers it his task to enable his readers to find the right balance between them, making a further distinction between those realities that are to be used (*uti*) and those that are to be enjoyed (*frui*). In the category of things to be enjoyed we find the divine Trinity, who is in fact the only being truly deserving of that qualification. Under the rubric of ambiguous signs (*signa ambigua*), in Book 3, Augustine makes a number of hermeneutical suggestions aimed at establishing greater exegetical clarity. With the Pauline–Ambrosian distinction between letter and spirit (2 Cor. 3.6) as a governing principle in the background,[21] these suggestions show how Augustine is prepared to accept a considerable degree of exegetical liberty. As long as love of God and neighbor is the firm and fixed goal of biblical interpretation, all readings are permitted. Biblical exegesis is thus identified with finding creative interpretive readings of selected biblical passages,[22] as long as they fit Augustine's scheme of the centrality of love.[23] Although he generally attests to the historical truth of the biblical text, Augustine constructs his own version of non-literal scriptural interpretation, which he subsequently

20. See *De doctrina christiana* 1.1.1.1–1.5.5.10 (trans. Green, pp. 12-17).

21. See *De doctrina christiana* 3.5.9.21 (trans. Green, pp. 140-41): 'It is, then, a miserable kind of spiritual slavery to interpret signs as things, and to be incapable of raising the mind's eye above the physical creation so as to absorb the eternal light'.

22. See David Dawson: 'Sign Theory, Allegorical Reading, and the Motions of the Soul in *De doctrina christiana*', in D. Arnold and P. Bright Kannengiesser (eds.), *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), pp. 123-41 (123): 'Ancient allegorical readings of Scripture have often been regarded as the means by which interpreters translated the unique images and stories of the Bible into the abstractions of classical metaphysics and ethics, but Augustine's recommendations concerning how to interpret Scripture suggest that nonliteral translation ought to move in the opposite direction. Rather than dissolving scriptural language into non-scriptural categories, allegorical reading should enable the Bible to refashion personal experience and cultural ideals by reformulating them in a distinctively biblical idiom.'

23. See *De doctrina christiana* 3.10.15.36 (trans. Green, pp. 148-49): 'But scripture enjoins nothing but love, and censures nothing but lust, and moulds men's minds accordingly… But it asserts nothing except the catholic faith, in time past, present, and future. It narrates the past, foretells the future, and demonstrates the present, but all these things serve to nourish and strengthen this love, and to overcome and annihilate lust.'

elaborates in a pastoral–ecclesiological as well as an existential–anthropological sense. In the resulting concentric scheme of interpretation (communal and individual) the story of Adam and Eve plays a central role.

Augustine's Vision of the Relation between Man and Woman

Among theologians and historians alike it seems that Augustine's view of the relation between man and woman, which was ultimately based on Genesis, has earned him a negative reputation. One can ask to what extent that negative reputation is deserved or justified. Clearly one of the main points of irritation is Augustine's acceptance of a reproductive view of marriage and its legitimization with the divine command to go out and multiply.[24] To reach a balanced evaluation it may be useful to contextualize this point, focusing, however, especially on the developments of Western Christianity around 400 CE.

From the rise of monasticism in the Egyptian desert around the middle of the third century, the new ascetic movement kept Church and theology spellbound. It radiated an enthusiasm and vision that inspired the Church with a new vision, capturing first the East before having the same effect not much later in the West. At the end of the day the rise of monasticism can perhaps best be seen as an attempt to recharge the Church's mission in light of its eschatological urgency and to serve as a remedy against the incipient shallowness that threatened to overcome complacent Christians.

In the case of Ambrose of Milan the combination of institutional reform and ascetical thought had already given off powerful signals, thereby countering the influence of Arianism which had been condemned at the council of Nicea in 325 CE. Ambrose's attractive image of the virginal Church as a *hortus conclusus* (the enclosed garden in the Song of Songs) illustrates just how much the fourth-century Church had grown in institutional self-awareness, railing powerfully not just against the influence of the unorthodox Arians, but if necessary also against the imperial court.[25]

In a way this is not unlike what happened to Gnosticism—asceticism as a movement of protest could potentially become a danger to the unity of the

24. For a classic example, see Elizabeth A. Clark, '"Adam's Only Companion": Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 21 (1986), pp. 139-62 (162): 'In sum: while Augustine's insistence that Joseph and Mary enjoyed a genuine marriage led him to posit volitional factors as prime in the definition of marriage, the demands of controversy with extreme ascetics, Manicheans, and Pelagians pulled him in a different direction to stress the physical aspects'.

25. On Ambrose, see Peter R.L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 341-65.

Church when pursuing the development of its own spiritual pedigree, which contained an ingrained radicalism and was highly charismatic. The subversive aspects of the ascetic movement soon became manifest, especially in the realms of body and gender. Since Antony, it became common currency to see the life of the desert fathers as an 'embodiment of Scripture'. Monks and virgins (male and female) were seen as prelapsarian human beings, their lifestyles predating the gender division caused by the Fall. Sin seemed no longer to have a hold on them, as a result of which they, following the martyrs, could intercede directly with God. It was even as if their prayers could give direct access to Paradise. Yet, as much as the emergence of this charismatic movement was seen as inspiring hope, in the long run it could also be seen as posing a threat to the ecclesial hierarchy. It was no surprise, then, that when a stark conflict arose between Jovinian and Jerome about the role of ascetics in the Church various tensions that had been simmering now erupted. Adopting his own mediating strategy on the matter, Augustine's position was to try and preserve the eschatological edge ascetics gave to the Church while encapsulating the movement within the broader ecclesial institution.

How, then, did this conflict unfold? Jovinian, a western monk, had reacted against the arrogant attitude of some ascetics —who perceived themselves as constituting a kind of elite Christianity—with the claim that baptism is what makes the Christian. In a counter-attack Jerome argued that asceticism was a more valuable lifestyle than marriage, which he perceived as a tragic accommodation of human sinfulness. Underneath the overt conflict, however, we find a much more complex and residual problem of Christian identity. Does asceticism indeed capture prelapsarian innocence and is it therefore the lifestyle with the most appeal for all Christians? Or is it chiefly a remedy only to be attained by a few as a way to atone for the sins of the many? And where does this leave marriage? Is it a divinely ordained state with ancient roots in the bond between Adam and Eve, or is it a mere convenience for imperfect Christians? Depending on the ecclesial status one accords asceticism, one can either see marriage as a prelapsarian paradisiacal institution for all humanity, or a secondary, postlapsarian institution designed specifically to rein in sexual wantonness. For Jerome, the choice between marriage and asceticism was an easy one. In opposition to Jovinian (himself a monk) he more or less promoted asceticism from a lifestyle to a sacrament. Jovinian and Augustine opposed his position in different ways.

In the debate that ensued Augustine opposed Jerome's thesis that marriage was bad and virginity good.[26] His episcopal view, which he put

26. For a comprehensive analysis of Augustine's thought on marriage, see Philip L. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 241-311.

forward in two treatises written around 401 CE, namely, 'On the Good of Marriage' (*De bono conjugali*) and 'On holy virginity' (*De sancta virginitate*), is that marriage is good but that virginity is better.[27] In his *De bono conjugali* Augustine discusses marriage as a valuable social institution which, although based on the three goods (*bona*) of faith (*fides*), offspring (*proles*), and sacrament (*sacramentum*) as elements underscoring traditional gender hierarchy, goes back to the underlying friendship between man and wife.[28] Adam and Eve were close friends in Paradise, and their friendship was intensified by their kinship, as God had made woman out of man.[29] Friendship and kinship lie therefore at the basis of all later social bonds between human beings. More than merely reflecting on marriage as a social institution, we find Augustine treating the relationship between Adam and Eve as paradigmatic for all human social relations, with the marital bond seen as normative for the social coherence to which he aspires. But *De bono conjugali* is not without some interesting self-criticism too, as Augustine finds fidelity equally binding in a relationship of unmarried partners, through which statement he implicitly criticizes his own dismissal of his former partner and mother of his son Adeodatus.

Although Augustine comments on the Genesis story in his treatise on marriage, he does not enter into great detail there. Yet it is clear that the relationship between Adam and Eve covers more than sexual propagation alone for him, even if he does not see their friendship as completely equal. Later Augustine would drastically revise this rather moderate position. In *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.5.9, just after the passage discussed above,[30] he defends the subjugation of woman on theo-biological grounds. Focused on the preferred, that is, literal, exegesis of Genesis' creation story and more than ever aware of his responsibility as Church leader, he now states that if God had wanted to make Adam a friend he would have created a second man.

27. The Latin texts of *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate* are found in Joseph Zycha (CSEL, 41; Leipzig: Tempsky, 1900). Both works are translated by Ray Kearney in J.E. Rotelle and D.G. Hunter (eds.), *Augustine, Marriage and Virginity: The Excellence of Marriage. Holy Virginity. The Excellence of Widowhood. Adulterous Marriages. Continence* (The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, I/9; Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), pp. 29-107. For a comparison between these two texts involving also Augustine's *De opere monachorum* ('On the Work of Monks'), see my 'Augustine on Marriage, Monasticism and the Community of the Church', *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), pp. 385-405.

28. For the three goods (*bona*) of marriage, see *De bono conjugali* 24.32 (trans. in *Saint Augustine, Marriage and Virginity*, pp. 56-57).

29. See Otten, 'Augustine on Marriage', pp. 397-402. See *De bono conjugali* 1.1 (trans. in *Saint Augustine, Marriage and Virginity*, p. 33).

30. See n. 12 above.

Because he did not do so, Augustine concludes that the creation of woman is solely a functional consequence of the human need for procreation.[31]

Augustine's initial optimism about a pristine friendship between the sexes in Paradise is permanently eclipsed. But in my opinion it cannot simply be stated that Augustine thereby caves in to ancient views of nature, including the superiority of masculine nature, and the marital and social kyriarchy that it implies.[32] What is at stake for him may in the end be more a matter of time, of eschatological fulfillment centered on the dynamic of incarnation and parousia, than of nature.[33] A deeper reason for this change of position can be found in his vision on the role of the Church in the world.

Augustine's View on the Church

The preceding analysis of the situation around and shortly after 400 CE indicated the accelerated development of Augustine's thought about the institutional Church, in which he became ever more critical *vis-à-vis* asceticism. Although we can still find him making the occasional eschatological comment to the effect that the fewer children born there are, the better it is, as this only shows the end of the world to be imminent,[34] he has now settled on a view in which the Church is more at home in the world. This explains his growing acceptance of marriage and the usefulness of the command to procreate, with the latter related especially to the Church's socio-political mission.

On the last point his experience with the Donatists in North Africa is of paramount importance. With its keen sense of tradition rooted in a lineage of heroic martyrs, the Donatist faithful outnumbered membership in

31. See Otten, 'Augustine on Marriage', pp. 397-402 and p. 399 n. 28. It is not immediately clear whether Augustine's emphasis on procreation should be seen as a direct consequence of his hierarchical view of marriage or as a result of what seems to be a progressively realistic or pessimistic view of society, of which his mini-sociology of marriage is a reflection. The post-reformation view of Augustine which privileges the importance of his exegesis may have led us to err on the side of the first reading.

32. See Bernadette Brooten, 'Nature, Law, and Custom in Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*', in S. Matthews, C. Briggs Kittredge, and M. Johnson-Debaufre (eds.), *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom* (New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 181-93.

33. On this, see my 'Women in Early Christianity: Incarnational Hermeneutics in Tertullian and Augustine', in B. de Gaay Fortman, K. Martens, and M.A. Mohammed Salih (eds.), *Hermeneutics, Scriptural Politics, and Human Rights Between Text and Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 219-36.

34. See, for example, *De bono conjugali* 9.9, 15.17, and 24.32 (trans. in *Saint Augustine, Marriage and Virginity*, pp. 41, 46, 57). Procreation apparently served to bring forth the Savior, but Augustine holds that once he is born, that benefit of marriage has lost its importance, for physical kinship can now be replaced by spiritual kinship.

Augustine's orthodox Church. Given his minority position, it was tempting for Augustine to crack down on this indigenous tradition and impose his brand of universal Catholicism on North-African Christianity with the help of the Roman authorities, both political and ecclesial, and with some reluctance he eventually did. Although Augustine went so far as to condone the use of force in his opposition to the Donatists, on a different level it both made him more critical of the Roman Empire and caused him to rethink his ecclesiology. Under the surprising influence of the former Donatist Tyconius, whose exegetical rules he included in *On Christian Teaching*, he developed a new and far more complex view of the role of the Church in society.[35]

In this newly developed vision he harks back to the idea that baptism rather than the adoption of a particular lifestyle is what marks true Christian identity. The Church is no longer a virginal *hortus conclusus* as claimed by Ambrose but a historical institution of saints and sinners, as Tyconius had tried to demonstrate in his exegesis of various prophecies. Augustine clings to the Church's ideal mission on earth as bride of Christ, but accepts and integrates at the same time the fact that the Church can make mistakes. This thought allows him both to overcome the ascetic triumphalism of Jerome and friends—one might think also of Pelagius here—as well as the cultural pessimism that befell many Church leaders when in 410 the city of Rome was suddenly sacked. Following the sack there was a widespread outcry that this attack would never have happened if Rome had remained loyal to her venerable history and her pantheon, which was nothing else than a thinly veiled attack on Christianity as having caused the attack by Alaric and his Visigoths.

In an attempt to defend Christianity and Rome's embrace of it, Augustine wrote his *City of God* (*De civitate Dei*) between 413 and 426. Conceived as an apology against the vision of cultural doom it brought out in some of his peers, it reads like a magisterial historical narrative about the Church as a community of pilgrims, placed and sometimes torn between two contrary 'loves' or magnetic fields, namely, the *civitas terrena*, the earthly city representing worldly power, and the *civitas Dei*, or heavenly city, to which the Church points.[36] That the heavenly city will finally triumph over the earthly

35. See William S. Babcock (trans.), *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). Augustine cites these rules in *De doctrina christiana* 3.30.42.92-3.37.56.135 (trans. Green, pp. 172-95) without further comment. For an analysis of Tyconius's *Liber Regularum* and his elucidation of difficult prophecies, see Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1988).

36. For a full-scale analysis of this work, see Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

city is clear for Augustine from the beginning, but meanwhile the path toward victory is hidden in darkness. Only the end is basking in certain light, as the heavenly Jerusalem descends from above and pushes out the reign of the earthly city. At that point the reign of the Church can be dispensed with.

Just as the Bible is the domain of ambiguous signs (*signa ambigua*), so the story of history similarly presents itself as a reservoir of mixed messages from which we cannot distil a clear or univocal meaning. The powerful image that Augustine constructs of the Church as a trekking pilgrim ultimately causes her eschatological and charismatic role to fade behind a telltale account of various important historical episodes and a meditation on her social role. With an emphasis on the Church's social role there is need for good organization, in which the clergy occupies a leading role, the sacraments are properly administered, and the laity assumes responsibility for bringing offspring into the world so as to move history forward to its predisposed ending.

Augustine's View on Sexuality and Corporeality

As part of the historical reflections that can be found in the *City of God*, the story of Paradise comes to occupy again a position of central importance, though a different position. Not only is Augustine interested in the story itself, but also his book's very plan receives its prime coloration from the story of Adam and Eve. For at the origin of history we find two contrary 'loves' which symbolically represent two warring cities. Their opposition can be interpreted as representing the contrast between the original paradisiacal situation, which God had intended to continue until it included all of humanity, and the historical situation of life outside Paradise that came into being after Adam's fall.[37] Had humanity stayed in Paradise, history would have unfolded in a completely transparent manner without any countervailing pressures or powers. Augustine seems in this view again to have been influenced by Tyconius whose interpretation of prophecy is driven by the apocalyptic tension between the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas diaboli*. But his vision is increasingly influenced—with tensions becoming ever more polarized—by his dispute with Pelagius, the British monk whose thought about grace was contrary to Augustine's.

The case against Pelagius exhibits certain traits of the Donatist controversy, to the extent that it equally touches on the unity and purity of the Church, with Augustine underscoring baptism as the mark of true Christian

37. See *City of God* 14.28 (trans. Bettenson). This passage about the two loves representing two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, follows on his exposition of Paradise which I have just analyzed here.

identity. What concerned Pelagius especially were the life commitments which baptism imposed on the Christian, which should not only make one's Christianity visible for all but also have a guaranteed success rate in securing their salvation. Pelagius displayed a militant optimism about steeled Christians whose self-exertion could make them live up to great standards of perfection, and he saw the transcendence of human limitation as a demonstration of the power of divine forgiveness. Obviously, only a spiritual elite would be capable of this, causing their separation from other Christians, consequently perceived as inferior.

The rigid optimism of Pelagius and his associates, among whom ranked Julian of Eclanum, manifests itself in an unshakable faith in the freedom of will. However, there is a residual question about how free this will really is, as it seems in constant need of following a set of rigid, self-imposed duties, such as chastity of marriage or care for the poor, thus breeding more a climate of moral austerity than of wholehearted generosity. Pelagius especially rejects any ongoing activity of—and consequently humanity's continued need to depend on—divine grace after the moment of baptism as a way to instill introspection and repentance. Augustine lashes out hard against the arrogance of Pelagius' position, a position which he considers a denial of the complexity of the human will, which is after all capable of thwarting its own intentions. In his pastoral and political eyes human pride (*superbia*) is the root cause of Adam's fall. For it awakened in humanity a lust to dominate (*libido dominandi*) which, once set aflame, is the all-encompassing cause of social and historical evil, and which is nearly impossible to rein in.[38] Ultimately it is not oppression itself, therefore, but the underlying lust that is the problem, as no case of actual oppression can ever satisfy it. Thus we see how Augustine in his *City of God* projects the psychological complexity of the human will in great brushstrokes onto the canvas of world history.

If we look concretely at Books 13 and 14 of *De civitate Dei*, we notice how Augustine's analysis of the story of Paradise reveals the same dynamics that were in essence already present in *De Genesi ad litteram*. Anti-Pelagianism and anti-Manicheism[39] reinforce each other now in the strong

38. For a sophisticated contextual view of Augustine's position regarding embodiment and ascetism focused on the divided human will, see Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 387-427 (Chapter 19: 'Augustine: Sexuality and Society'). See also my 'Tussen verbeelding en vertekening: de moeilijke positie van de erotiek binnen het christendom', in S.R. Haakma (ed.), *Minnen met de zinnen. Opvattingen over erotiek in verschillende culturen* (Utrecht: Prestige, 1999), pp. 69-97.

39. Clark perceptively comments how Manichean ethics is marked by an attitude that is pro-contraception and anti-reproduction. After his conversion Augustine polemically changed this into a Christian attitude that is anti-contraception and pro-reproduction. See Clark, 'Adam's Only Companion', p. 147.

emphasis placed on the historical truth of Paradise coupled with a view of Adam and Eve as spousal partners, for whom sexual intercourse plays an important role. At the same time, their double bond of friendship and kinship remains a key thought for Augustine, which secures humanity's ability to establish social peace (*pax cohabitantium*). Because the sack of Rome is an acute danger for the world's social stability, the question becomes all the more pressing how and why the seeds of evil were sown in Paradise.

In Book 13.2 Augustine proves himself a good student of Ambrose who is not against an allegorical reading of the Paradise story, as long as its historical truth is not overturned. Engaging in further analysis in Book 14.12-16, he reflects on the Fall as an irreversible historical event. His analysis, while largely exegetical, reveals the increasing influence of the Pelagian conflict. This becomes especially clear from his emphasis on the so-called *concupiscentia carnis*, the lust of the flesh, which Augustine sees as a result, and not the cause, of the Fall. Concupiscence of the flesh is not a corporeal but a spiritual matter for Augustine, with grave and direct repercussions for the human experience of corporeality and sexuality. Although Augustine is known as the first major theologian to struggle with sexuality and eroticism, he was also the first Christian author who took his own sexual experience explicitly into account. His keen awareness of the potentially disruptive influence of sexuality on the human will may explain why he came to see sexual desire at the heart of all lust, including the lust to dominate (*libido dominandi*).

Finally, two further matters can help us to complete the picture of Augustine's position on sexuality. Because Augustine bases his reflections on the lived reality of human sexuality, it is understandable that he assigns sexuality a place in Paradise even before the Fall, a place which is intended for, but not thereby confined to, procreation. He suggests that Adam and Eve had sex in Paradise but denies that prelapsarian sex was affected by *concupiscentia carnis*. Illustrating the difference between pre- and postlapsarian sexuality, he points out how Adam and Eve were able to move their sexual organs before the Fall in the same deliberate manner as we still move our other limbs.[40] While this puppeteer-like view of prelapsarian sexual intercourse degenerated into the more lustful version of extra-paradisiacal sex on account of the Fall, it is important to keep in mind that both forms are to some extent provisional in Augustine's overarching conception of history and its consummation. For at the end of time there will be new resurrection bodies, which will make both marriage and sexuality obsolete. In Book 22.17 Augustine reports that women will still have female bodies but, without the need for marriage or sexual intercourse, their bodies will

40. See *City of God* 14.26.

radiate a new beauty. Adam and Eve seem to have been elevated here to the status of powerful allegorical symbols of Christ and the Church, connected to each other in an unbreakable, but also spiritual bond.

Altogether Augustine regards concupiscence of the flesh as a kind of hereditary flaw, a genetic defect which since Adam's fall has been handed down the generations through sexual intercourse, which is the only means of human procreation barring virginal birth.[41] The nature of this flaw remains a spiritual one, however, even if it is transmitted biologically. It is therefore a theological category mistake to see sexual intercourse, and sexuality more broadly, as Augustine's punishment for human sin. The cause of original sin is pride resulting in the lust to dominate, concupiscence being only its punishment. Sexual relations inside marriage and aimed at procreation can, despite all criticisms, still be called a good (*bonum*).

Conclusion

Augustine's complex view of sexuality combined with the paradigmatic significance of the Paradise story makes it difficult to formulate a uniform view of Augustine's divergent thoughts and comments on Adam and Eve. Different views seem to have been dominant in different phases of his life. These range from the serene and quasi-ascetic Adam and Eve in his early Manichean period, to the amicably married Adam and Eve in his early episcopal period, to Adam and Eve as our historical-genealogical but also our fraught social-psychological forebears. Through their fateful fall they did not only wipe out all forms of human innocence, but they also incurred the genes of human sinfulness for themselves, which have since then been transmitted and replicated down the ages.

Many charges have been laid against Augustine, but it seems unjust or at least historically incorrect to fault him for an archetypical aversion to corporeality and sexuality. How contemporary systematic theology should deal with Augustine's interpretation of Adam and Eve is difficult to prescribe. Augustine was neither a biblical fundamentalist nor even a scriptural

41. For a nuanced analysis of *concupiscentia carnis* as a spiritual affair not motivated by a Platonic repulsion of bodiliness, see Matthijs Lamberigts, 'A Critical View of Critiques of Augustine's View of Sexuality', in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (eds.), *Augustine and his Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 167-97. Because *concupiscentia carnis* affects the whole person, in the eyes of Lamberigts it cannot simply be explained as a remnant of Manichean dualism. The opposite view is held by Johannes van Oort, 'Augustine and Mani on *concupiscentia sexualis*', in J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (eds.), *Augustiniana Traiectina: communications présentées au colloque international d'Utrecht, 13–14 novembre 1986* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1987), pp. 137-52.

foundationalist, as he felt free to give his own reading of Scripture. One thing clearly stands out, however. Whereas other thinkers neutralize Adam as an anonymous Everyman, it is Augustine's intention to affix him to us as our psychological and theological shadow, one which no human being can ever shed. Personally, Augustine certainly seems to have been unable to do so. In this sense he seems oddly in defiance of his own rule from *On Christian Doctrine* that Scripture should be used primarily as a text from which to teach others rather than oneself.

Garry Wills, author of a short but accessible biography of Augustine, states there how hard it is to overrate the influence of these first biblical chapters on especially the *Confessions*. 'Genesis haunts the whole work', is how he puts it.[42] Just as Genesis kept haunting Augustine such that he never let it go, so it was equally unavoidable that Adam and Eve would occupy a major role in his portrayal of the human self and the human race. Far from affecting only Augustine personally, his enormous influence secured that this development would impact the entire Christian tradition after him. Both incorporated and internalized in the tradition of Western Christianity, Adam and Eve have assumed roles of such crucial importance that we simply can no longer think about ourselves without them.

42. See Wills, *Saint Augustine*, p. 15: 'To find the Genesis narrative coming alive in his own past is a continuing surprise for Augustine in *The Testimony* [= *Confessions*]. We have seen that already in the story of his father and the public baths, when he was "clothed" in Adam's shame. We shall see it in other key episodes of the book, including the death of his friend and his prayer with Monnica at Ostia. Genesis haunts the whole work.' Wills (pp. 14-15) observes significant parallels between the Genesis story and Augustine's pear theft in *Confessions* 2.4.9–6.14 (trans. Chadwick, pp. 28-32). Thus, while a great many pears are stolen, as in Eden, Augustine speaks only of a single tree.

Is Woman Just a Mutilated Male? Adam and Eve in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas

Harm Goris

Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–1274) is one of the best-known thinkers in the Latin West, and his thought has been particularly influential in the Catholic Church for a long time. With regard to his view on women, Aquinas has a very poor reputation. It is easy to collect a number of quotations from his work that portray Aquinas as an extreme sexist: Eve is only created for the sake of procreation, in which the woman is passive and the man active; Eve is a 'mutilated male', subordinated to Adam; women are not as intelligent as men, and are therefore less fully the image of God, and so on.

One could leave it at that and depict Thomas Aquinas as an icon of medieval clerical misogyny. However, there have also been attempts somehow to exonerate him from the charge of sexism. Basically, two strategies have been developed to argue that Aquinas's ideas about gender are not as bad as the examples given above would suggest at first sight. One strategy is to counterbalance the debated passages with other texts from Aquinas that are more gender egalitarian. The other is to blame the social, artistic, scientific and juridical beliefs of the thirteenth century and argue that Aquinas's androcentrism is only a reflection of what was commonly held at that time. Both strategies are meant to lead to the same conclusion, viz. that the androcentric statements are 'not essential' to Thomistic thought. The first strategy is followed, for example, by Joseph Hartel, while the second is taken by Catherine Capelle.[1] Most common is a combination of both lines of argument, which we find, among others, in Kari Børresen's almost classical study *Subordination et Équivalence*, and in the studies of Otto Hermann Pesch and Isnard Frank. On the one hand, they point at the growing influence of Aristotle's philosophical and biological views on generation and gender in the thirteenth century and its negative impact on Aquinas's ideas.

1. Joseph F. Hartel, *Femina ut Imago Dei in the Integral Feminism of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993); Catherine Capelle, *Thomas d'Aquin féministe?* (Paris: Vrin, 1982).

On the other hand, they refer to Aquinas's properly theological ideas about grace and the order of salvation, where there is equality of the sexes, in contrast with the order of nature.[2]

These strategies are not absurd, but they remain limited and somewhat superficial. In this study I propose to deal directly with some of the contested passages and argue that their meaning is not always what it seems to be at first sight: their textual and theoretical context, developments in Aquinas's thought and the historical background offer clues for alternative readings.

It is not a simple task to reconstruct Aquinas's view on Adam and Eve. Aquinas did not write a commentary on the book of Genesis, nor a separate treatise on gender and sex. Aquinas claimed that the difference between the sexes is of a physical nature and, therefore, not a proper subject for theological inquiry. The theologian's task is to reflect on human beings as regards their souls, he says—the body becomes part of theological discourse only insofar as it is related to the soul.[3]

Nonetheless, Aquinas rejects a dualistic anthropology and assumes that body and soul constitute a fundamental unity. He also thinks that the biblical characters of Adam and Eve are exemplary for every male and female human being in relation to each other and to God. Moreover, reflecting on their condition in Paradise before the Fall enables Aquinas to distinguish clearly the three basic elements of theological anthropology, viz. sin, grace and nature. Besides the classical, Augustinian diachronic dichotomy of sin and grace on the level of the history of salvation, Aquinas uses also the structural, synchronic distinction between nature and grace as it functions within the context of creation. The prelapsarian situation of Adam and Eve gives him the opportunity to elaborate the latter by distinguishing conceptually what is natural in the constitution of humans apart from sin and by articulating what belongs to human nature as such.

2. Kari E. Børresen, *Subordination et Équivalence. Nature et rôle de la femme d'après Augustin et Thomas d'Aquin* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968), published in English as *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (trans. Charles H. Talbot; Washington: University Press of America, 1981); Otto Hermann Pesch, '"Der verhinderte Mann" oder: die nicht unproblematischen Folgen des Südwinds', in Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin. Grenze und Größe mittelalterlicher Theologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 3rd edn, 1995), pp. 208-27; Isnard W. Frank, 'Femina est mas occasionatus. Deutung und Folgerungen bei Thomas von Aquin', in Peter Segl (ed.), *Der Hexenhammer. Entstehung und Umfeld des Malleus maleficarum von 1487* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1988), pp. 71-102.

3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 75 prologue. Unless indicated otherwise, all references to Aquinas are taken from the Leonine edition: *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1882–). Aquinas's works are available in Latin online at www.corpusthomisticum.org.

It is, therefore, useful to discuss Aquinas's view on Adam and Eve, but the material has to be gathered from different works and what is found there does not always seem consistent. Also, rather specific background knowledge about the patristic legacy and, especially, about the reception in the medieval West of Aristotle's theories on gender and procreation is necessary for a correct understanding of Aquinas.

I shall first sketch the historical background of Thomas Aquinas and the context of thirteenth-century academic discussions on gender and the sexes. After that some of Aquinas's best-known, apparently very negative statements about Eve will be discussed: Eve was created for the sake of procreation, with the female passive and the male active in reproduction; Eve was a mutilated male and less of an image of God; the wife is subjected to the husband.

Historical Background

Thomas Aquinas was born on the castle of Roccasecca near Naples to a landed noble family in 1224 or 1225. At the age of five, he was sent to the nearby Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino to receive his first education with the intention that one day he would become the abbot. However, as a young man, Thomas chose a different life. He opted for a life not in the countryside, but in the city; not in the monastery school, but in the university; and he did not choose the old contemplative Benedictine order and its monastic and spiritual formation, but the new mendicant order of the Dominicans, with their scholastic and intellectual training. It was exactly in these three areas that the position of women declined during the thirteenth century.[4]

With the rise of urban society and of universities in the 1200s, the influence and significance of the great abbeys and their schools on the countryside diminished. A consequence of this development was a growing clericalization of education. While women were admitted to monastery schools, they were denied access to the universities. Furthermore, the new mendicant orders of the Dominicans and Franciscans—but also the Cistercians—were rather suspicious about the fast-rising number of female religious. The abbesses of the great Benedictine monasteries, like Hildegard von Bingen in the twelfth century, had a quasi-episcopal dignity, but the female members of the new orders were much less independent. The care for their spiritual and material well-being (*cura monialium*) was in the hands of friars, who often felt this as a burden. Moreover, ecclesiastical authorities

4. For a good survey and an extensive bibliography on the position of women in the (late) Middle Ages, see Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe 1200–1500* (London: Longman, 2002).

attempted to impose strict clausura on nuns, urging them to live a cloistered life away from the world. This was part of a broader strategy to lay down more precisely the distinct roles of men and women in canon law, especially with regard to marriage and celibacy. Most of the stricter canonical regulations were not to the benefit of women.

Of more direct importance for Aquinas's view on gender was the reintroduction—via the Muslim world—of Aristotle's thought in the West. The most important intellectual centre where the newly rediscovered works of Aristotle were studied and integrated into the academic curriculum was the university of Paris, where Aquinas spent a great part of his teaching career. Besides the major works—*Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *Ethics* and *On the Soul*—Aristotle's biological works were also translated into Latin. Part of the latter is the *On the Generation of Animals* (*De Generatione Animalium*). In this work Aristotle offers a methodological exposition of the biology of the male and female sexes, which for him is the foundation for all that is involved in gender issues.

In *On the Generation of Animals* it is said that the two sexes and their differences exist for the sake of procreation. By procreating, mortal living beings can reach as a species what they cannot attain as individuals: everlastingness.[5] In this way Aristotle gives two basic guidelines to medieval thought about man and woman: the central role of procreation and the overall biological context, in which the distinction between human beings and other animals is only secondary.

Methodologically, Aristotle develops his ideas about the sexes in three ways: by direct or indirect empirical observation, by examining critically the theories of his predecessors and by interpreting the data within the systematic-theoretical framework of his philosophy. Often he begins with extensive descriptions of the sexual characteristics, copulation activity and embryo development in different kinds of animals. Next, he criticizes older theories.[6] Among these is the so-called pangenesis theory of Hippocrates, who claimed that sperm originated form all parts of the body of the father and in this way produces the body parts of the offspring. Aristotle also rejects the related 'double seed' theory, which says that what the two parents contribute in procreation is not distinguished according to sex. And he opposed the 'preformationist' or *homunculus* theory, which depicts the (male) semen as containing fully formed miniature persons, waiting to grow in the womb of the mother. Aristotle's main counter-arguments are that these theories do not take into account the immaterial principle of life, viz.

5. Aristotle, *De Gen. An.* II, 1, 731b30-35.

6. See Daryl McGowan Tress, 'The Metaphysical Science of Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* and its Feminist Critics', *Review of Metaphysics* 46 (1992), pp. 307-41 (318-22).

the soul, which animates humans, other animals and plants, and/or that they cannot explain the need for two different sexes in procreation. Finally, Aristotle uses particular natural philosophical and metaphysical concepts to interpret his findings and his arguments. The most important ones are the fourfold division of causes in efficient, formal, material and final, the distinction matter–form and the distinction between action and passion. Matter and passion, and also material causality, are on the side of the female, while form and action, together with formal, efficient and final causality, are associated with the male parent.

However, Aristotle is very careful when applying these philosophical conceptual distinctions. First, he notes that speaking in this context about 'man' and 'woman' or 'the male' and 'the female' is imprecise. What we actually mean is 'the male aspect' and 'the female aspect'.[7] It is more accurate to say that the female aspect is passive than to say that woman is passive. In the background is the notion that the opposition male–female, unlike, for example, the opposition vertebrate–invertebrate, does not lead to separate species of the *genus* 'animal'. But neither is sex merely an accidental property of an animal, like, for example, 'being one meter tall'. From a logical point of view, 'male' and 'female' are proper properties (*propriae passiones*) and *per se* accidents of 'animal', but they are not part of the definition of 'animal'. They belong to the animal by virtue of its matter and the body, not of its form, from which the definition is derived.[8] What man and woman share, being human, is much more essential than what distinguishes them. Second, the terms 'passive' and 'active' are not to be understood in some physical or psychological sense, but metaphysically in the correlation of actuality–potentiality (*actus–potentia*). Third, Aristotle expresses himself often cautiously. He does not identify the male with being active and the female with being passive, but says that male is *like* what acts and gives the form, while female is *like* what undergoes and gives the matter. The (male) semen is not as such the active, form-giving principle, but is only the carrier or vehicle of an immaterial power that is the proper principle of activity and form. According to Aristotle, only the father produces semen and this in a process of boiling down blood by means of

7. *De Gen. An.* I, 2, 716a28-31: 'For even though we speak of the animal as a whole as male or female, yet really it is not male or female in virtue of the whole of itself, but only in virtue of a certain faculty and a certain part'. Translation from Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *Aristotle: The Complete Works: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), I, p. 1113.

8. See Sabine Föllinger, *Differenz und Gleichheit: das Geschlechterverhältnis in der Sicht griechischer Philosophen des 4. bis 1. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), pp. 125-31. Thomas adopts this argument in *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum* (hereafter: *In Meta.*) X lc. 11.

body heat. Next, this semen carries the power that gives the formal principle of the embryo, viz. the soul, and it works on the matter provided by the mother. Because the woman has less body heat, she cannot heat blood so strongly. She can only produce a kind of concentrated menstrual blood, which gives the material basis for the body of the foetus under the influence of the formative activity of the power that is transmitted by the male semen. In the next paragraph we shall see how Thomas further elaborates Aristotle's theory.

Present-day commentators of Aristotle differ as to how one should interpret and evaluate precisely his views on gender. Some give a traditional reading, one which is hostile to women.[9] Others conclude that the biological theory of Aristotle, as explained in *De Generatione Animalium*, is not consistent with the logical and metaphysical view on the sexes found in the *Metaphysics*.[10] Again others think that female passivity is only relative and that Aristotle does accept a proper active power of the mother[11] or that man and woman are more or less equal principles of procreation within a holistically understood unfolding of Nature.[12]

The texts of Aristotle himself turn out not to be so univocal. But when we ask how Thomas Aquinas uses the ideas of Aristotle in developing his own view on gender, there is a second complicating factor, one which is often overlooked. Aristotle is not the only source for medieval scholars in thinking about sex difference. The reception in the Latin West of various medical and biological theories from Antiquity (besides Aristotle, also Hippocrates, Censorinus and Galen), from the Muslim world (in particular Avicenna) and from the Christian (monastic) tradition is complicated and much research still needs to be done in this area.[13] In the eleventh century there was already a great number of texts and compilations on gender and reproduction circulating in the West, and in the second half of the twelfth century Gerard of Cremona translated the *al-Qanun fil-Tibb* (*Canon of Medicine*) of the Persian philosopher-physician Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 973–1037) into Latin. Around 1250 the *Canon* had become known all over Europe and by the end of the century it was the standard work in the curriculum of the medical

9. See, for example, Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC–AD 1250* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1985), pp. 95-103.

10. Marguerite Deslauriers, 'Sex and Essence in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Biology', in Cyntia A. Freeland (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), pp. 138-67.

11. Föllinger, *Differenz und Gleichheit*, pp. 142, 158-59, 176.

12. McGowan Tress, 'Metaphysical Science of Aristotle'.

13. An excellent introduction can be found in Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

schools. However, theologians seem to have been less familiar with the work. For them the most important text was Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium*. Michael Scotus had translated it in around 1220 from an Arabic version into Latin together with two other important biological works of Aristotle, the *De Historia Animalium* and the *De Partibus Animalium*, under the title *De Animalibus*. In 1260 William of Moerbeke produced a new translation, this time directly from the Greek. In his earlier works Aquinas refers to Michael Scotus's translation, but soon after the appearance of William of Moerbeke's version, he prefers to use the latter. This might indicate that Aquinas handled his sources with care, looking for the best texts available, and that he took a special interest in theorizing about gender and procreation. Besides the *De Generatione Animalium* there was another text that was of great influence on thirteenth-century theologians in this area. In 1232 Michael Scotus had translated also Part Eight of the books on physics from Avicenna's encyclopaedic work *Kitab al-Shifa* (*Book of Healing*), which also appeared under the title *De Animalibus*. In this text Avicenna tries to reconcile the oppositions between Aristotle's and Galen's theories of procreation. For theologians, Michael Scotus's translation of this part of the *Kitab al-Shifa* became the major source of knowledge about non-Aristotelian views.

Key questions in thirteenth-century discussions about procreation are (1) the distinct roles and contributions of the father and the mother, (2) sex determination of the foetus, and (3) gender-specific pleasure during intercourse. As we shall see, Aquinas used arguments from non-Aristotelian traditions in discussing each of these questions.

As said before, Aquinas did not write a separate treatise on gender, nor did he comment on Aristotle's biological works. However, he moved in academic circles in which biological theories about sex difference were hotly debated by both medical doctors and theologians. He is also the personal link between the two most important medieval thinkers in this area. Albert the Great, Aquinas's teacher, wrote extensively about the biological differences between the sexes and the functions thereof.[14] Giles of Rome, a prominent student of Aquinas, was the author of *De Formatione Corporis Humani in Utero* (1276), one of the most learned medieval treatises on procreation.[15] From Aquinas's own writings it cannot be concluded with certainty that he was familiar with all of these discussions, yet, as we shall see, he does show evidence of detailed knowledge on certain topics.

14. See, for example, Paul Hossfeld, 'Albertus Magnus über die Frau', *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 91 (1982), pp. 221-40.

15. M. Anthony Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception: A Study of* De formatione corporis humani in utero (London: Athlone Press, 1975).

Eve for the Sake of Procreation?

Following Aristotle, Aquinas thinks teleologically—that is, in terms of final causes. The question of what the purpose or goal of something is, for what reason does it exist, is usually the first one asked when he begins to discuss a topic. That is also the case in Aquinas's systematic treatment of Eve in his major work, the *Summa theologiae.* The starting-point for his discussion in the *Summa theologiae* is the scriptural testimony that Eve was created as a helper for Adam, as Aquinas reads in Gen. 2.18.[16] However, Eve was not to help Adam with every kind of work, Aquinas continues, but only with procreation. After all, in every task a man is better off with the help of another man—only for reproducing himself does he need a woman. Here Aquinas conveys the classical view of Augustine—without explicitly mentioning his name. In his great commentary on Genesis, Augustine had said that in Paradise there was no farming, but that if there had been, a man would have been more useful to Adam than a woman. The same goes for company and comfort in loneliness, because 'for living together and keeping each other company, it is better for two [male] friends to be together than a man and a woman'.[17] Eve was only needed for reproduction, Augustine had concluded.

Next Aquinas says that he will substantiate this (Augustinian) claim by comparing the different ways of reproduction among living beings.[18] He goes on by giving—again without mentioning the name—part of Aristotle's theory about procreation as it is based on the three fundamental powers of the soul: the vegetative, sensitive and rational power. Procreation belongs to the basic, vegetative vital operations. Seed-bearing plants do not have a higher goal in life than reproduction and that is why the male and female reproductive powers and parts (viz. pistil and stamens) are always conjoined in one plant. Animals, on the other hand, aim at a nobler vital operation and must, therefore, not always be engaged in reproduction. Aquinas does not make explicit what that nobler activity is, but what he has in mind is sensory cognition and sensory affective response. Because of this higher goal, the sexes in animals are separated into males and females, which only come together at the time of mating. The argument applies with even more reason

16. *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 92 a. 1.

17. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* IX, c. 5, in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* (Series Latina, XXXIV; Paris: Garnier, 1841), c. 396. See also the contribution of Willemien Otten in the present volume.

18. *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 92 a. 1. Aristotle's argument that the separation of the sexes in (higher) animals follows from the difference in vital operations in *De Gen. An.* I c. 23 (731a25-b7). It is remarkable that Aquinas does not adopt a second argument of Aristotle, found in *De Gen. An.* II c. 1 (732a3-11), which says that it is better for the male as the higher and more divine principle to be separated from the female as the lower, material principle.

(*maiori ratione*) to human beings, who can reach the highest perfection, viz. intellectual understanding and willing (*intelligere*). That is also why, Aquinas says, Eve was not created together with Adam, like the males and females of the other animal species, but, according to Genesis 2, separately (*seorsum*).

Examining Aquinas's argument in the *Summa theologiae* more closely, we see a remarkable shift: tacitly the argument changes from being about woman to being about the distinction of the sexes. Augustine says that Eve, the woman, was created for the purpose of reproduction, but in Aristotle's view it is the distinction as such between the two sexes that serves procreation. Aquinas contends that he wants to explain Augustine's position, but in fact he reinterprets it by means of Aristotle in such a way that Augustine's standpoint is fundamentally altered, if not eroded: not Eve but the sexual distinction, Adam as much as Eve, exists for the sake of procreation.

Aquinas's Aristotelian reading has another consequence. It helps him to integrate the two biblical accounts of the creation of the first human couple: the account in Gen. 1.26-27 with the simultaneous creation of male and female, equal to each other, and the story in Genesis 2 in which woman is created later and seems to be subordinate to man. The whole patristic and medieval exegesis did not want to play the two texts off against each other, but considered them as referring to one and the same event. Aquinas's own way of integrating the two accounts with the help of Aristotle can be seen as a specific elaboration of Augustine's basic view on the sequence of the six days of creation in Genesis 1. According to Augustine, the six days do not signify a chronological succession, but indicate the natural, structural order of the created world, brought as a whole into existence by God simultaneously through one creative act.[19] Though he does not say it in so many words, it seems that Aquinas uses this Augustinian view of Genesis 1 when interpreting the creation of Eve in Genesis 2: in reality, Eve is not created later in time than Adam. The chronological order of the narrative—first there was Adam, then later there was Eve—has to be read as the structural separation of the two sexes. Actually, both are created simultaneously and the sex of each is determined and actualized by the distinction to the opposite sex of the other person.[20] The woman is created separately (*seorsum*)

19. Aquinas discusses the Augustinian interpretation of the six days as non-chronological in order in, for example, *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 74 a. 2. He usually says that the chronological reading of, among others, Basil the Great and Gregory the Great is equally valid, but it seems that personally he prefers Augustine's interpretation: see *Super Epistolam ad Ephesios lectura* l. 3 nr. 160 (ed. R. Cal; editio VIII revisa; Turin: Marietti, 1953).

20. Read in this way, Aquinas's interpretation comes close to the one of Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 72-143. Trible argues on textual grounds that the sexual differentiation into male (Hebrew *ish*) and female (*isha*) within the 'earth creature' Adam (from the Hebrew *adamah*, 'earth') only occurs when Eve is created.

from the man, unlike the couples of the other animals, but this does not signify a real chronological succession nor necessarily a subordination. It only emphasizes the separation of the sexes, which is even more called for in humans than in other animals because humans are destined to a much nobler end than reproduction or sensory cognition and affection.

Another issue for which Aquinas is often criticized regards the role of woman in reproduction as distinguished from the role of man. Here Aristotle seems to play a less positive role. To put it briefly: Aristotle says that woman is passive and man is active. Or, to express it differently: the mother gives the matter (the body), the father gives the form (the soul). Above we already saw that in the texts of Aristotle himself such short formulations have to be read with caution. However, Aquinas qualifies the passivity of the mother and the activity of the father even further. These modifications are partly derived from non-Aristotelian sources and partly motivated by specifically Christian topics, in particular theological reflections on the conception of Christ by Mary.

First, Aquinas claims, contrary to Aristotle, that the mother also produces semen during intercourse—even if it is less powerful and not necessary for conception. This idea may sound odd to us, but it probably reflects the experience of the female orgasm and the production of vaginal fluid.[21]

Secondly, Aquinas emphasizes that the passivity of the mother only regards the conception itself. Before and after the mother is very active. Aquinas emphasizes the active role of the mother especially in his discussions on the pregnancy of Mary, probably in view of defending Christ's real humanity. By means of her natural reproductive power (*virtus generativa*), Mary produces, like any other mother, the appropriate matter on which the power that is present in the male semen can work. Aquinas rejects Aristotle's view that the matter produced by the mother comes from menstrual blood. Menstrual blood, he argues, is by nature impure because it has to do with decay. What the mother contributes as matter from which the body of the foetus is formed is a kind of pure blood that she actively purifies by means of a certain 'digestion'. In addition, the mother is also actively involved in the growth and completion of the foetus.[22]

21. See *Summa theologiae* IIIa q. 31 a. 5 ad 3. The connection between ejaculation and pleasure (*delectatio*)—also in women—was generally recognized by the medievals. Aristotle also admitted that the female can discharge liquid, but denies that it is seminal (*De Gen. An.* I, 20, 727b34-728a10). Some medievals held the Hippocratic theory that female semen is necessary for conception; see Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp. 93-98, 142-50.

22. See *Summa theologiae* IIIa q. 31 a. 5 ad 3 and *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi* (hereafter *In Sent.*) (ed. P. Mandonnet [vols. 1–2] and M.F. Moos [vols. 3–4]; Paris: Lethielleux, 1929–56), III ds. 3 q. 2 a. 1.

Thirdly, Aquinas further moderates the activity of the father during the conception. He modifies the connection between the male and the *forma* in the same way as Aristotle, but he elaborates this in more detail in three ways: (1) The semen produced by the male contributes by itself nothing to the offspring. In the semen is a corporeal life spirit (*corporalis spiritus vitalis*), which is the carrier or vehicle of an immaterial formative power (*virtus formativa*), which is what properly contributes to the conception. That power is tied up with a threefold heat in the life spirit: one heat of the element of air (*spiritus* or *pneuma*), another, life-giving heat coming from the soul of the male, and a third heat from the celestial bodies, which determines the species of the foetus.[23] Only part of the formative power is then derived from the male parent; it also has its origin in the celestial bodies, in particular the sun.[24] (2) Moreover, the *forma* of the offspring, the soul, is only potentially and not actually, in a completely realized status, present in the male semen. The formative power in the semen acts more like a kind of catalyst than that it actually transmits the soul. It is more an instrumental than an efficient or a formal cause.[25] In other words, it is not accurate to say that the father gives the soul. (3) Furthermore, in the case of human reproduction, the final formal principle, that is, the rational soul, does not have its origin in the parents or the celestial bodies, but is directly created by God.[26] The rational, human soul enters the foetus some weeks after the conception by a divine act. The preceding biological and inner-wordly activity of the parents consists actually only in preparing a bodily substrate that is suitable for receiving the rational soul. As in the case of non-rational animals, it is the female which prepares matter for receiving the sensitive soul, though in human reproduction it is both the father and the mother who prepare the matter so that it becomes suitable for receiving the rational soul.[27] In this way Aquinas's Christian theology of creation and theological anthropology modify the Aristotelian view on the activity of the male parent in the process of reproduction.

It is also important not to understand the concept of 'reproduction' in too narrow a sense. It is not only about conception, pregnancy and childbirth, but also involves the raising of offspring. Humans have this in common with

23. *In II Sent.* ds. 18 q. 2 a. 3. See also *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 118 a. 1 ad 2.

24. This is the background of the medieval maxim 'Man and sun generate man' ('Homo generat hominem, et sol'). See Thomas Litt, *Les Corps célestes dans l'univers de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1963), pp. 143-46.

25. See *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 118 a. 1 ad 2 and *In VII Meta.* lc. 8 nr. 1451.

26. See, for example, *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 118 a. 2. Also Aristotle mentions in passing that the rational, human soul comes into the human foetus 'from the outside'; see *De Gen. An.* II, 3, 736b21-29.

27. See *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 118 a. 2 ad 3 and IIa q. 26 a. 10 ad 1.

other animals. However, as Aquinas says following Aristotle, typical of rational animals, of human beings, is that man and woman are also joined 'for the sake of what is necessary for human life'.[28] In contrast with non-rational animals, human beings run a household and form a domestic community (*societas domestica*). The distinction between the sexes serves therefore another goal besides reproduction. We shall come back to this in the section on the marriage between Adam and Eve.

Eve, a Mutilated Male and Less the Image of God?

Probably Aquinas's most infamous sexist statement is that woman or the female animal is a *mas/vir occasionatus*.[29] It is the first argument he mentions in the discussion of Eve's creation in the *Summa theologiae*. She should not have been created, it is said, because Aristotle claims that woman is a *mas occasionatus* and something deficient, and that does not belong in a good creation by a perfect God.

An important, but difficult question is how to translate the Latin *occasionatus*. In modern translations we find a great number of expressions. In French: diminué, manqué, raté, mutilé. In English: mutilated, handicapped, ruined, defective, misbegotten, incomplete, failed. In German: verfehlt, unvollkommen, verunglückt, verstümmelt, misslungen, in der Entwicklung gestört/stehengeblieben. The formula *mas occasionatus* is a commonplace in medieval scholastic literature and is used detached from the original context in Aristotle, from whom the formula is derived. Aristotle says once about the female animal that she is 'as it were an underdeveloped male' (*hoosper pepèromenon arrèn*). Opinions differ as to what exactly Aristotle means by this, but Aquinas explains it as follows: 'With regard to the particular nature (*natura particularis*) the female animal is something deficient and accidental (*occasionatum*). For the active power that is in the male semen intends (*intendit*) to produce something perfect, similar to itself, according to the male sex.'[30] The generation of a woman is not the goal intended by the reproductive power, the *virtus activa* or *formativa*, in the male semen. It does not belong to the teleological orientation of that power, but it comes about by some coincidence. It may be that the power is not strong enough, or that the matter on which it works is indisposed, or it can happen because of external influences like a humid south wind or because one of the parents had a vivid mental image of a girl during sexual intercourse. It is important to see that the 'particular nature' refers to the reproductive power in the male

28. *Sententia libri ethicorum* VIII lc. 12 nr. 1721 and *In II Sent.* ds. 18 q. 1 a. 1 ad 1.

29. Luther also criticizes this statement sharply. See the contribution by Theo Bell in the present volume.

30. *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 92 a. 1 ad 1.

semen and not to the individual person or 'the nature in the individual' as it is often translated, even in the authoritative and popular Blackfriars edition of the *Summa theologiae.*[31]

Aquinas continues that 'with regard to the universal nature (*natura universalis*), the female is not something accidental, but belongs to the intention (*intentio*) of nature'. By 'universal nature' Aquinas does not mean all women as a species, or 'the nature in the species' as the Blackfriars edition has it, but the power of the higher, more universal causes, viz. the celestial bodies.[32] We saw earlier that the celestial bodies and in particular the sun make a crucial contribution to the reproductive power in the semen. Besides that, it turns out that they have another, immediate causal efficacy by which they are the final source of the sexual difference: 'the distinction of the sexes has to be reduced to the celestial powers'.[33] If we broaden our perspective and take all into account, including the more universal causes of reproduction (Nature with a capital N), the 'perfection of the male' is intended in the same way as the 'perfection of the female'.[34] Instead of a mutilated male, the female is a perfection intended by Nature.

And in the end, the finality of Nature depends on God. He created and ordered Nature and guides it by his providence. Ultimately, Aquinas claims, it is therefore God who intends and produces both the male and the female.

According to Gen. 1.26-27 human beings, male and female, are created in God's image. Almost all classical theologians locate the image of God in the human mind (*ratio*, *mens*). The body and therefore also sex is then irrelevant. As scriptural evidence for the irrelevance of sex in this respect, Aquinas refers to Col. 3.10 ('according to the image of its creator'), after which, he erroneously thinks, Paul adds 'where there is no male or female'.[35]

Nonetheless, some medieval theologians did claim that woman was not, or was in some way less than or else only somehow indirectly, an image of God. Peter Abelard (1079–1141), for example, argued in this way on the basis of an incorrect text tradition of 1 Cor. 11.7.[36] And William of Auxerre

31. See the bilingual edition of the *Summa theologiae* vol. 13 (Ia. 90-102): *Man Made to God's Image* (ed. and trans. Edmund Hill O.P.; New York: Blackfriars, 1964). The same erroneous translation is also found, for example, in Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 91, and Monika Leisch-Kiesl, *Eva als Andere. Eine exemplarische Untersuchung zu Frühchristentum und Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992), p. 139.

32. *Quaestio disputata de veritate* q. 5 a. 9 ad 9.

33. *Quaestio disputata de veritate* q. 5 a. 9 ad 9.

34. *Summa contra Gentiles* III c. 94 nr. 10.

35. *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 93 a. 6 ad 2. The addition is not in Col. 3.11, but is taken from Gal. 3.28.

36. See M. Horowitz, 'The Image of God in Man—is Woman Included?, *Harvard Theological Review* 72 (1979), pp. 175-206 (177-79).

(died in 1231) says that Eve was created from Adam's rib and that therefore she was not created directly by God in his image, but only by the mediation of the male. William concludes that accordingly Eve is less God's image.[37] Aquinas rejects both positions: he corrects the textual variant of 1 Cor. 11.7 and emphasizes that Eve was created directly by God.[38]

However, in his earlier works Aquinas uses another argument why Eve is less of an image of God than Adam. Like most of his contemporaries, he is of the opinion that the mental powers of man are stronger than those of woman. In an Aristotelian anthropology this is substantiated by the idea that body and mind in humans are distinct, but that—unlike the Platonic view—they are also intimately conjoined and dependent upon each other. The activity of the spiritual, intellectual cognitive power for example relies on the corporeal, sensory perception. Because the physical constitution of man is better, his mental power is also stronger. From this Aquinas concludes that man is more image of God than woman.[39]

In Aquinas's later works, this argument has disappeared. He does maintain the Aristotelian, philosophical idea that man is more reasonable than woman, but it no longer carries any theological consequences with regard to being God's image. According to Klaus Krämer this change has to do with a more radical conception of grace in Aquinas's later works. In the *Summa theologiae* he no longer locates the image of God in the natural activity or active powers of the human mind as such, but only in a kind of natural aptitude or openness (*aptitudo naturalis*) of the human intellect for a specific supernatural activity, viz. to know and love God. The actual realization of this aptitude has nothing to do with natural abilities, but depends fully on grace, which God gives irrespective of gender. In this way, Krämer says, there is 'a tendency to correct the natural philosophical views about the essence of the female sex on the basis of a theology of creation'.[40]

The Marriage of Adam and Eve

Aquinas describes the social relationship between Adam and Eve as a divinely instituted 'natural' marriage—distinct from legal and sacramental

37. See Elisabeth Gössmann, 'Anthropologie und soziale Stellung der Frau nach Summen und Sentenzkommentaren des 13. Jahrhunderts', in Albert Zimmermann (ed.), *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 12/1; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1979), pp. 281-97 (283-84).

38. See *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 93 a. 4 obi. 1 (cf. ad 1) and Ia q. 92 a. 4.

39. *In II Sent.* ds. 16 q. 1 a. 3 and *Super Primam Epistolam ad Corinthios lectura* c. 9 lc. 2 nr. 607 (ed. R. Cal; editio VIII revisa; Turin: Marietti, 1953).

40. Klaus Krämer, *Imago Trinitatis. Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen in der Theologie des Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), pp. 305-308 (306).

marriage.[41] It is meant for three things: procreation, bringing up children and domestic community. We shall take a closer look at each of these.

The goal of procreation has already been discussed above. With regard to Adam and Eve in particular, we can add a few interesting details that Aquinas elaborates in his speculations about what would have happened in Paradise if the Fall had not occurred—or had occurred later. Like Augustine, Aquinas claims that also in Paradise human reproduction would have taken place by sexual intercourse. In this way, both theologians reject the idea that sexuality and the sex difference as such do not belong to the paradisiacal state as created by God, but rather to the Fall.[42] However, in contrast with Augustine and his aversion to *concupiscentia carnis*, Aquinas says that in Paradise Adam and Eve would have enjoyed more carnal pleasure in sexuality than after the Fall.[43] This is in keeping with a more holistic, Aristotelian anthropology as opposed to Platonic dualism and its latent hostility towards the body. The same view is in the background when Aquinas says that just as many men as women would have been born in Paradise. As we saw above, one of the external causes for the coming into being of a female foetus can be the mental conception (*conceptio animae*) of the parents during the sexual act. Because before the Fall the body was in complete harmony with the soul and all bodily activity was appropriately under its guidance, the sex of the offspring could easily be determined by the will of the parents.[44]

In human beings procreation is intrinsically connected to the rearing of children. Because of the rational nature of humans, the upbringing is not only a matter of feeding the offspring physically, as with other animals, but especially of spiritual nourishment, of education.[45] For this man and woman need to have a joint household.

41. *In IV Sent.* ds. 26 q. 2 a. 2.

42. Through the Jewish-Hellenistic writer Philo of Alexandria, the Greek Church Fathers Origin and Gregory of Nyssa, and the Western theologian Scotus Eriugena, the tradition was handed down that Gen. 1.26-27 (sometimes with the exception of the last part of v. 27) refers to the creation of the paradisiacal, spiritual, asexual or androgynous human being. The account in Gen. 2 would then indicate the distinction and separation of the sexes into two individual persons, that God makes on the basis of his foreknowledge of the Fall. By analogy, the sex difference would disappear at the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. See Horowitz, 'Image of God', pp. 190-99. Aquinas mentions and criticizes Gregory's opinion in *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 98 a. 2.

43. *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 98 a. 2 ad 3. See also the contribution of Willemien Otten in the present volume.

44. *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 99 a. 2 ad 2.

45. See, for example, *Super Primam Epistolam ad Corinthios lectura* c.7 lc. 1 nr. 317.

The common household—in Aristotelian terms the *societas domestica* or *economica*—serves not only the raising of children, but also helps both spouses in providing for each other; it is the cornerstone of the political order in society. The 'economic' order belongs therefore to the natural state of humans and had its place also in Paradise. Aquinas, like Aristotle, describes this social relation between man and wife in different ways. On the one hand, there is equality and complementarity. For example, Aquinas repeats the explanation of Hugh of St. Victor, who borrows it from Rabbinic sources, why exactly Eve was created from the side of Adam. If she had been created from his head, she would have ruled over Adam, and if from his feet, she would have been his slave. Her being created out of his side signifies that Eve is Adam's partner (*socia*). Moreover, against the background of Aristotle's virtue ethics, Aquinas says that when man has the virtue proper to a husband and woman the virtue proper to a wife, there can exist the highest form of friendship between the two, viz. friendship for the sake of virtue.[46] What exactly the difference is between the virtues of the husband as such and of the wife as such, is not very clear in Aquinas, nor for that matter in Aristotle. In the *Politica*, Aristotle claims that both spouses participate in the same moral virtues, but not in the same way. However, the difference in participation is not gradual—as if the one has more of a virtue than the other—but qualitative. This might suggest a relation of equal difference and complementarity between man and wife, but when he elaborates what kind of qualitative difference there is between the virtues of the spouses, Aristotle says that man has the virtues as an 'executive' (*principative*) while woman has them 'in a subordinate way' (*ministrative*).[47] It turns out that there is a form of subordination of the wife to the husband: the domestic subordination (*subiectio oeconomica* or *civilis*) by which a free woman is subjected to her husband for her own good. Aquinas thinks this kind of subordination is natural and therefore also existed in Paradise. Only after the Fall was Eve punished with a servile subjection (*subiectio servilis*), one that meant she must also obey Adam against her own will.

Conclusion

Aquinas's view on Adam and Eve is usually presented on the basis of a number of isolated, misogynistic quotations. However, when we contextualize these statements, analyse them carefully, allow for possible developments in Aquinas's thought and take into account the historical background of medieval philosophies of nature, it turns out that the meaning of the texts

46. See *Expositio in Libros ethicorum ad Nicomachum* VIII lc. 12 nr. 1719-1723.
47. See Aquinas's commentary in *Sententia libri politicorum* I lc. 10, nr. 8-11.

is much more nuanced. That is not to say that Aquinas's view as such is immediately relevant for us today. His ideas are too indebted to scientifically outdated theories and are too heavily dependent on his androcentric standpoint. Nevertheless, some of his ideas might still be useful to us: for example, his idea about the logical status of the sex difference (as subordinate to being human, but also as non-accidental) and his exegesis of the creation of Eve in Genesis 2, which does not imply her subordination. But of more interest to us now, I think, is Aquinas's method. In his interpretation of Genesis 1–3 Aquinas brings in different traditions: patristic exegesis, the works of Aristotle and medieval natural history. He brings them into conversation with one another so that they become living traditions: meanings change and new levels of reading present themselves. This gives a new dynamic to the theological exegesis of Genesis 1–3. Such an approach might also be fruitful today.

Humanity Is a Microcosm: Adam and Eve in Luther's Lectures on Genesis (1535–45)

Theo M.M.A.C. Bell

1. *Introduction*

At the beginning of the first chapter of his explanation of Genesis, Martin Luther (1483–1546) boldly states: 'Until now there has not been anyone in the church either who has explained everything in the chapter with adequate skill'.[1] Commentators from the past, with their countless questions, had confused everything in this chapter. God had reserved his exalted wisdom and the correct understanding of this chapter for himself alone; he had left us two things to know: the general knowledge that the world had a beginning, and that it was created by God out of nothing. For Luther, it is clear that the perfect knowledge, which Adam and Eve once possessed in Paradise, was gone for good. This perspective makes Luther's undertaking a less than easy one. Trying to read Scripture in its literal meaning, Luther embarks on this journey on his own and without a guide: 'We shall, therefore, leave others to their opinion and explain what seems right to us'.[2]

More than the pursuit of knowledge, Luther is concerned with God's wisdom, which can be found in Scripture. He has some meaningful things to say about it in his *Introduction to Genesis*. According to Gregory, Scripture is a river, in which a lamb wades and an elephant floats. It is God's wisdom that makes the wise men of this world fools; and it is the prince of this world who makes children eloquent and eloquent people like children. The one who understands everything or even who has no shortcomings is not the best; rather, it is the one who loves the most. As Ps. 1.2 says, 'Happy is the man, who loves and meditates on the law of the Lord'. It would be more than sufficient, if this wisdom would please us, for this meditated wisdom to be cherished and held day and night.[3] These thoughts about love for wisdom,

1. WA 42.3.22-23. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from WA (= Weimarer Ausgabe) follow Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–93).
2. WA 42.6.10.
3. WA 42.2.5-13.

which can only be gained from meditating on Scripture continually, make us think of Luther's story of his so-called Tower Experience;[4] but even more, it discloses his monastic theological background—exposition of the Scriptures and meditation are intertwined for him.[5]

Luther dedicated an extensive series of lectures to what he called 'my beloved Genesis'. Apart from the Psalms, there is no other book in the Old Testament that is treated by him in such a profound and extensive way. Leaving aside some series of sermons (*Declamationes*) from his younger days (1523–24), we have several academic lectures that remained unfinished, despite the fact that they were worked on for a decade (1535–45). His *Lectures on Genesis* (*Enarrationes in Genesin*)[6] comprise no fewer than three sizeable volumes of the Weimar edition of Luther's works, amounting to more than 2200 pages.[7] And yet, Luther research has not paid the necessary attention that this Commentary deserves. While it is true that we must be very cautious in making use of these *Lectures on Genesis*—primarily due to the fact that they are considered a reworking by editors who were influenced by Melanchthon—we might share Martin Brecht's opinion that 'the bulk of this commentary, with its amazing richness of features and allusions, undoubtedly does come from Luther, and his spirit is evident in it. Despite the subsequent alterations, this monumental work may still be regarded as primarily his work and thus as a useful source.'[8]

What is the significance of these lectures? Quite simply, if we want an ample and detailed description of Adam and Eve by Luther, it is to be found here. Furthermore, in the period around 1535 theological-anthropological

4. WA 54.185.12–186.20.

5. Martin Nicol, *Meditation bei Luther* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), p. 171. Meditation should not be considered as a private activity, but rather as a practice in the Word aiming at teaching and preaching the doctrine therein.

6. The Weimar edition speaks of 'Commentary'. Actually, this is not the right word, but *enarratio*, which means 'to speak, tell, or set forth in detail'. A public context is connoted. Therefore, it means 'to speak in public in detail'; Kenneth Hagen, *Luther's Approach to Scripture as Seen in his 'Commentaries' on Galatians 1519–1538* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), pp. 49-66 (50).

7. WA 42–44. Only the first volume of the *Commentary on Genesis* (of 1544) was published during Luther's lifetime and has a Foreword by him. Further, several editors have worked on the edition. It is not possible to deal here with the complicated *Redactionsgeschichte*. See Erich Seeberg, *Studien zu Luthers Genesisvorlesung: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem alten Luther, Beiträge zur Förderung christliche Theologie* (Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann, 1932), and especially Peter Meinhold, *Die Genesisvorlesung Luthers und ihre Herausgeber* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936).

8. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*. III. *The Preservation of the Church, 1532–1546* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 136.

issues clearly were at the center of his thought.[9] Moreover, the *Lectures on Genesis* are dated from the latter phase of his life, when Luther was living the life of a married man himself, and where his own experiences seemed to have enhanced his own appreciation of marriage and family life. Did his marriage influence his exposition of the creation account somehow?

Premodern exegetes used to read Scripture in a different way than many modern exegetes do. To them, the Bible was a single holy book that fascinated as a whole as well as in its numerous details. It was written by God in order to set humankind on the way back to him. That is the reason why, for Luther, reading Scripture is not in the first instance reading literature, but reading about the history of salvation and doom, in which one finds oneself: 'Like [it happened] to Adam, so to all men. Like [it happened] to Eve, so to all women.'[10] This marks very clearly the central position of the first human beings. At the same time, it expresses the self-identification of the exegetes with both ancestors—what is said of them can be applied to all humans. So the story of the first human beings interprets the present interpreter as well.

For Luther, the story of creation and fall remained a historical reality. In this way, though the creation event had taken place some six thousand years earlier, one was to take the text literally. This was an important argument against philosophers such as Aristotle who tended to teach about the eternity of the world. Yet it is also an argument against Church Fathers such as Augustine and Hilary, who did not want to read Scripture literally and who held that the world was created instantaneously and not successively in the course of six days. The Bible was for Luther the book of the world and the history of humanity from its very beginning. His exegetical method was aimed at finding the proper historical sense of the text. With this he distinguished himself from many of his predecessors, who had tended towards an allegorical interpretation.[11]

The history of the creation of humanity gave the exegete an opportunity to describe the relations between both sexes more precisely. It is clear that Luther as an exegete of the Bible was influenced by the thinking of his time concerning the relationship between men and women. As such, his views may appear somewhat 'dated' to us. However, it is essential for us not to cut ourselves off from this 'strange' Luther, but to hear him out first.

9. Bengt Hägglund, 'Luthers Anthropologie', in Helmar Junghans (ed.), *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), I, p. 68. In this connection reference is made to Luther's *Disputatio de homine* (1536).

10. WA 24.91.1.

11. WA 42.176.21: '…quod relictis Allegoriis historiam et propriam sententiam secuti sumus'. Sticking to the literal sense (*historia*) is also the reason why Luther estimated the exegete Nicolas of Lyra so highly: 'Ego Lyram ideo amo et inter optimos pono, quod ubique diligenter retinet et persequitur historiam…' (WA 42.71.17-18).

Like many theologians, Luther could see in Adam and Eve's habitation of Paradise the reflection of a human ideal, of man and woman living together in a harmonious way. In order to understand better Luther's various perspectives, we will deal first with man created according to the image of God. After that we will look at the relationship of Adam and Eve and their position before and after the Fall. A few select verses from the first chapters of Genesis will receive special attention: Gen. 1.26-27, on the creation of man in the image of God; Gen. 2.16-23, in which the woman is created; and Gen. 3.15, the so-called proto-gospel, in which, for Luther, the history of creation and fall seems to culminate.

2. *Adam and Eve as the Image of God*

The creation of man in God's image is a topic that draws most attention within the first chapter, and no theologian past or present can avoid determining the nature of this image. It is characteristic of Luther that he never deals with man on his own. He is not interested in a philosophical anthropology that first treats man as man before going on to deal with the theological meaning. As Luther asks, 'What advantage is there in knowing how beautiful a creature man is if you are unaware of his purpose, namely, that he was created to worship God and to live with Him eternally?'[12] Human beings can only be defined through their relationship to God and the destination that is intended by him. The most important goal, which Scripture reveals, is to live with God in eternity and to preach God here on earth, to thank him and patiently obey his word. Philosophers know nothing about this and the world in its highest wisdom is most ignorant when it does not take advantage of Holy Scripture or of theology.

Among all others, humans are very special creatures. They are created according to the image of God (*ad imaginem Dei*). This has to be mentioned first since this makes humans a unique work of God.[13] For Luther, this image-character is not identical with certain natural qualities, ones which are owned by all human beings. The theology prevailing in Luther's time, following Augustine, defined the image in terms of the rational powers of the soul and perceived in them the fundamental difference between humans and animals. According to the Vulgate translation of Gen. 1.26, image (*imago*) and similitude (*similitudo*) were distinguished. The image of God would consist in memory, the intellect and the will.[14] These three comprise

12. WA 42.98.11-13.

13. WA 42.46.11: 'opus Dei singulare'. *Singulare* also points to being distinguished from the other creatures.

14. WA 42.45.3-7: 'Doctores autem reliqui fere Augustinum sequuntur, qui Aristotelis divisionem retinet, quod imago Dei sint potentiae animae, memoria, mens vel

the image of God, which is in all of us. Moreover, the theologians stated that the similitude lies in the gifts of grace. Just as a similitude is a certain perfection of an image, so our nature is perfected through grace. Thus, the similitude of God consists in this: that the memory is provided with hope, the intellect with faith, and the will with love. Sometimes other divisions are made, namely, that the memory is the power of God, the mind of his wisdom, and the will of his justice. In this manner Augustine and others after him exerted themselves in thinking out various 'trinities' in humankind. Luther calls these 'not unattractive speculations', ones which point conclusively to keen and leisurely minds, though ultimately, for him, they contribute very little toward the correct explanation of the image of God.

Luther rejected these kinds of interpretations on the basis that the Hebrew text does not justify a distinction between the notions of *imago* and *similitudo*.[15] Naturally, humans did possess these three powers of the soul (memory, will, and mind) in a most perfect way, and they have been the foundation for a perfect knowledge of God and for a perfect love to God and fellow creatures. Yet the image of God is not an active human power in the first place but rather the right relationship of a person to God.[16] Thus, if the *imago Dei* exists in this relationship, then it means that 'Adam in his being not only knew God and believed in His kindness, but also lived in a life that was wholly godly, that is: he was without the fear of death or of any other danger and he was content with God's favor'.[17] According to Luther, God meant to say with this: 'This is my image, by which you are living, just as God lives. But if you sin, you will lose this image and you will die.' Being created in the image of God means to live this fundamental vital relationship with the Creator. At the Fall, humans lost not only the similitude, but also the image, the relationship with God being annihilated.

According to Luther's view, the similitude with God is not to be understood as an additional gift of grace, but belongs to the natural being of Adam and Eve in their original condition. Their perfection consisted in being equipped with qualities in the spiritual as well as the physical realm. In this way, human beings possessed original righteousness by virtue of their being created.[18] At the same time, however, one should not lose sight of the

intellectus, et voluntas; in his tribus dicunt consistere imaginem Dei, quae in omnibus hominibus est'. See Augustine, *De trinitate* X–XI.

15. WA 42.45.11-17, 247.39–248.8.

16. WA 42.86.3-16. See Marc Lienhard, 'Luthers Menschen- und Weltbild', *Luther-Bulletin* 3 (1994), pp. 22-39 (24).

17. WA 42.47.9-11.

18. David Löfgren seems to put the original righteousness of man on the same level with justification by faith (*Die Theologie der Schopfung bei Luther* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960], p. 62). However there is a remarkable difference that does

physical dimension; the personal partnership with God and the certainty of God found expression in the physical condition of the first human beings. They possessed a perfect knowledge of the nature of animals, plants, fruits, and other creatures. Their interior as well as their exterior senses were perfectly pure.

Luther's view of humans as the image of God concerns the whole person, and is not restricted to the spirit only. Such a view would definitively break through in modern Bible studies. Moreover, what draws significant attention is that Luther attributes the image of God equally to men and women. This is an obvious correction to a tradition that saw the image of God reflected only in the male, and that considered the woman only as an image *because of* Adam.[19] Finally, another remarkable point is this: Luther no longer explained the image of God in a directly christological sense, as he had in his earlier sermons on Genesis. The original purity of human nature is stressed much clearer now.[20]

When Luther talks of the image of God, he emphasizes again and again the difference between the original state in Paradise and the one after the Fall. When we talk about it now, we deal with something that has become completely unknown to us. For Luther, this is 'Not only because we don't have any experience of it anymore, but also because we constantly experience the contrary and hear nothing except bare words'.[21] After the Fall, we are not able to imagine what a life in God's image is all about. Death creeps into all our perceptive powers like a form of leprosy, meaning that we cannot even understand that image with our intellect. We are no longer sure of God, but are teased by fear and dismay. However, not everything is lost. Where the gospel is at work, a beginning of the restoration of the *imago Dei* is made. Humanity is born by faith to eternal life, or rather, to the hope of eternal life and is called back to its eternal destination. This new life will realize itself here only fragmentarily. Here on earth humans live between expectation and fulfillment.

not seem to be noted by him sufficiently; the original righteousness in Paradise is not attributed to man, but is created inside within his human being and is therefore his possession. See, for example, WA 42.47.8: 'Quod Adam eam in sua substantia habuerit…'

19. See, for example, William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea* (Paris, 1500), Fol. 58v: '…quia vir immediate factus est ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei, mulier vero mediante vir' (quoted by Elisabeth Gössmann, 'Glanz und Last der Tradition. Ein theologiegeschichtlicher Durchblick', in Theodor Schneider [ed.], *Mann und Frau—Grundproblem theologischer Anthropologie* [Freiburg: Herder, 1989], pp. 25-52 [37]).

20. See, for example, WA 42.66.20-28. The reference to Christ as *the* image of God is called here an allegory or anagogy by Moses.

21. WA 42.47.31-33.

The 'image of God' is the term by which man as a creature in relation to God is defined. In the next section I will examine what being created as a man or as a woman actually means. For such an undertaking a distinction has to be made between the situation before and after the Fall.

3. *Adam and Eve in Paradise*

The exegesis of the creation story provided Luther with the opportunity to describe the relationship of the sexes more precisely. In his sermons on Genesis in the years 1523 to 1527, Luther's understanding of Adam and Eve is still strongly determined by theological tradition, whereas in his *Lectures* his view gained distinct features. The difference between Luther's earlier and later positions is highlighted by comparing Luther's likely responses to the following question: Was the woman already in Paradise subordinated to the man, or was her subordination only a consequence of the Fall? Still completely in line with his predecessors, the young Luther in his sermons on Genesis thought that the woman already in Paradise was subordinated to man.[22] But what was Luther's position in his *Lectures on Genesis*?

Eve appears for the first time in Gen. 1.26. After Luther stated the remarkable difference between humanity and all other creatures by referring to the words *imago* and *similitudo*, he discusses God's mandate to both Adam and Eve to rule 'the earth, the sea and the air'.[23] He stresses that both have heard this mandate with their very own ears. It was not given as an advice, but as a command: *Dominamini* ('You shall rule')—given in the plural. If ruling over other creatures is at stake, Eve is completely equal to her husband and a 'partner in ruling' (*socia gubernationis*). This ruling over everything is, according to Luther, 'part, as it were, of the divine nature', happening without force or effort and coupled with a perfect knowledge of all things and an immediate intellectual comprehension of the good.[24] 'If, then, we are looking for an outstanding philosopher, let us not overlook our first parents while they were still free from sin.'[25]

The phrase 'male and female he created them' in Gen. 1.27 offers the Reformer the opportunity to draw closer attention to the woman as a creature. Not wanting to exclude her from the future life, Moses, who was generally considered as the author of Genesis, has mentioned both sexes

22. WA 24.639.6: 'Ibi ante lapsum iniunctum est Adamo et Evae, ut operarentur, ut Adam praeesset, regeret excoleretque paradisum'.

23. WA 42.49.30: 'rectores terrae, maris et aëris'.

24. WA 42.47.42: '…sicut Adam et Heva Deum agnoverunt Dominum, ita postea ipsi reliquis creaturis in aëre, aqua, terra dominati sunt'. Luther seems to connect the knowledge of God here with the knowledge of the world and the ruling over the creation.

25. WA 42.49.39f.

explicitly. Luther defines the woman as a physical being that is somewhat different (*quoddam diversum*) from man. The word *animal* here clearly points at the physical aspect. This means that, although Eve was a very excellent creature, equal to Adam concerning her being an image of God, she still was physically different. Luther tried to explain this by means of a comparison of two celestial bodies, the sun and the moon. The sun is more excellent than the moon, though the moon as a celestial body is very excellent too.[26] The same applies to the woman; though she is an excellent work of God, she is not equal to the male's glory and dignity. In the first instance, this looks like inequality, but things are not so simple. In the perspective of creation, Luther can put both on the same level. As Moses explicitly states, God created man *and* woman. Woman participates in the divine image and similitude. In this way, the woman still remains a partner of the future life and an heiress of the same grace (1 Pet. 3.7). According to Luther, all this is written with the intention of excluding neither sex from the full honor of human nature, even if the female sex would be lower than the male. In spite of that, Luther rejects Aristotle's view, which was commonly supported by scholastic theologians, that a woman was a 'maimed' man (*vir occasionatus*) or even a 'monster'. He lashes out fiercely against these theologians, whom he calls 'monsters' themselves, for mocking a creature of God that is created by a special decree of God.[27] Again, Luther calls the creation of woman a very excellent work of God. With that he radically rejects the medieval opinion that a woman is an imperfect being by nature.

In the explanation of Gen. 2.18 ('It is not good that man is alone'), one would expect Luther to start with the creation of woman, but surprisingly he starts by mentioning the three estates: Church, household, and government. First, he wants to talk here about the institution of the household (*oeconomia*). This may look somewhat remarkable, but discussing this estate first is important to Luther in order to understand the position of the concrete human being in the world. These are the life connections, in which humans are placed. Though the *ecclesia* is the most important estate, after that comes

26. WA 42.51.39f. The same image is used again in WA 42.52.18.

27. WA 42.53.22f. See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, art. 99.2 ad 1 and 2; Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* I, ch. 20. About Aquinas's view that the woman was a 'maimed man', see, for example, Otto-Hermann Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Grösse mittelalterlicher Theologie: Eine Einführung* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1988), pp. 208-27; Isnard W. Frank, 'Femina est mas occasionatus. Deutung und Folgerungen bei Thomas von Aquin', in Peter Segl (ed.), *Der Hexenhammer. Entstehung und Umfeld des Malleus maleficiarum von 1487* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1988), pp. 71-102. About the, compared to Augustine, much more negative approach of the female by Thomas due to the influence of Aristotle's biology, see Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).

the household, which is set up as a regulation of family life. After exploring this estate Luther turns to the creation of woman. One could also state that with the creation of the woman the household or human community was founded. Like Adam, so also Eve was created according to a well-considered decree. After man was formed from the earth, woman was made from the side of man. God did not do this like a surgeon with a knife, but through his word.[28] Whereas, in all of nature, offspring are created by males and females and born of the female, in the case of Eve's creation, it is the other way around: woman is formed from man, which is a miraculous work, just like Adam's creation from clay. Both are miraculous works, of which a philosopher like Aristotle understood nothing. If it were not written in Scripture, it would be difficult for us to comprehend. Like Adam, so is Eve called to life by a unique decree (*singulari consilio*) of God. This means that this creature too is the companion (*socia*) of eternal life, which is superior to the life of other animals. The destination of human kind is different from the beginning. Man is a unique creature and is suited to be a partner of divinity in immortality. At the same time, Adam and Eve become *pater et mater generationis* for the increase and preservation of the human race.[29]

With the creation of the man before woman, however, a certain order is set. This becomes clearer when Luther deals with the idea that the woman is a helper 'fit to him' (Gen. 2.18). In Hebrew it is stated: 'Because she should be in the presence of him' (כנגדו, *Quod coram eo sit*). With this the woman is distinguished from other female beings (i.e. female animals) that do not always remain in the presence of their male companion. However, the woman is created in such a way that she should always and everywhere be around her husband. Luther does not state the same for the male. This is noteworthy and relates to the situation in Paradise when both were supposed to be equal.

Luther continues with a remarkable sentence: 'If the woman had not been deceived by the serpent and had not sinned, she would have been the equal of Adam in all respects'.[30] And he adds: 'Eve was not like the woman of today'. Her state was much better and more excellent and in no respect subordinated to Adam, whether that be the qualities of the body or those of the mind. This concrete statement has tempted some authors to suppose that Luther changed his views on Eve in Paradise. This would distinguish Luther not only from the exegetes before him, but also from his own previous position in his sermons on Genesis. John Thompson talks here about a

28. WA 42.97.7-12.

29. WA 42.89.16: 'Adae itaque adiutorium fuit mulier, solus enim non potuit generare, sicut nec mulier sola generare potest'.

30. WA 42.87.23-25.

'created equality' of Adam and Eve.[31] Mickey Mattox, too, seems to join this view, though he adds some marginal notes. Mattox is of the opinion that in his later writings Luther leaves no room for domination in Paradise.[32] However, we would like to adjust this interpretation. Compared to the situation after the Fall, the woman has an equal position—yet that does not mean equality in every respect. Mattox is aware that Luther's view on the woman's position is somewhat ambivalent. Equality always means equality only to a certain extent. Besides that, there is also some talk of inequality, even in Paradise, which we have to investigate now.

First, equality exists above all in being created in the image of God. Both sexes are called to communicate with God and to live with him in eternity. Therefore, both are equipped to know God in an equal way. The woman possessed these mental powers in the same degree as the man. Her nature was pure and full of the knowledge of God, meaning that she could understand and perceive the word of God on her own.[33] Can there be any inequality or difference in position? I would argue that there is, and that in order to see it Adam and Eve have to be considered in two different contexts. In the *oeconomia*—that is, the domestic regiment and the ruling over creation—full equality can be assessed. Eve in Paradise was the most free partner in ruling, which now is totally of the male's concern.[34] There was a spontaneous harmony of will between them, which was not affected by sin and egoism. Government (*politia*) for the purpose of protecting the community from evil and the use of force did not yet exist because nature was still 'pure and without sin'.[35] Once in a while Luther mentions *politia* along with

31. John Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Rules in the Exegesis of Calvin, his Predecessors, and his Contemporaries* (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1992), pp. 136-44.

32. Mickey Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs: Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Enarrationes in Genesin 1535–1545* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 101: 'For the young Luther, as for the Christian exegetical tradition generally, there is an order and rule of the male over the female within the unfallen human family. For the elder Luther, this is not so… The spontaneous mutuality of their relationship meant that neither had dominion over the other within the sphere of the home.'

33. WA 42.50.10-11.

34. WA 42.151.23: 'Viri subiecta est, quae antea liberrima et nulla in parte Viro inferior erat, socia omnium donorum Dei'.

35. Bernhard Lohse, *Luthers Theologie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), p. 344. Luther views the existence of the state and the government as a consequence of the Fall and he underlines their provisional character by calling them *regnum peccati*; they will be there as long as there is sin. For *politia* as a postlapsarian institution on behalf of *remedium peccati*, see WA 42.79.7-9, 72.13-15.

oeconomia in Paradise, though when he does this he points to the original human ruling over creatures and not to the ruling of humans over each other.

Concerning the situation in the *ecclesia*, things are somewhat different. For Luther it is clear that preaching is the highest task followed by producing offspring. Concerning preaching, Adam in Paradise is given priority from the beginning. As the first human being, he is privileged to hear the word of God and with it comes the mandate to preach. This mandate is given to Adam personally on the sixth day. For Luther, this implies that Eve, who did not exist yet, did not hear the words directly from God, but had to hear them from her husband who informed her later.[36] The *mandatum Dei* concentrates on public worship (*cultus externus*). Adam was required to worship on every Sabbath and to preach the divine word, which God had spoken to him.

Why was the Sabbath made? First of all, Luther says that God blessed the seventh say and sanctified it for himself. This has the special purpose of making us understand that the seventh day in particular should be devoted to divine worship. 'Holy' is that which has been set apart for God and has been removed from all secular use. God gave his word and command to Adam, who is to occupy himself with the word for the sanctification of the Sabbath and for the worship of God. For humanity, all this clearly proves that there remains a life after this life, and that humans were created not for this physical life only, like the other animals, but for eternal life with God.

The Church is set up as the first estate by God's short sermon: 'Eat from every tree in Paradise, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil do not eat' (Gen. 2.16-17). This little sermon contained all wisdom. According to Luther, 'This sermon would have been like a Bible for him and for all of us'.[37] The tree of knowledge of good and evil was Adam's temple, church, altar, and pulpit.[38] It was established first (before the household) because God wanted to make clear by this sign that humans were created for another purpose, different from the rest of the living beings. Since the Church was established by the word of God, it is certain that humanity was created for immortal and spiritual life. And this Church without walls or without pomp would have stayed the same, if only humans had remained innocent. This means that the Church was completely different in Paradise. Adam and his descendants would have gathered there on the Sabbath day. After refreshing themselves from the tree of life, they would have praised

36. WA 42.80.11: 'Hanc concionem si, ut textus ostendit, Adam solus audivit, sexta die habita est, ac Adam eam postea cum Heva communicavit'. Compare to WA 42.50.10-11. There is a certain tension between Luther's view that the word of God had to be preached to Eve by Adam, and Eve's faculty to perceive the Word on her own.

37. WA 42.80.3f.

38. WA 42.72.20.

God together with all creatures on earth. Adam would have extolled the greatest gift, namely, that he, together with his descendants, was created in the image of God. Adam would also have admonished his descendents to live a holy life and to work faithfully in the garden. Was there a law? Not in the sense we know it now. Adam was righteous; law was not envisaged as a postlapsarian device to him. In Paradise, it only was some sort of exhortation; ultimately, the meaning of the law for Luther is worship in its fullest sense.[39] If law is understood that way, we can say that Luther understands the original purpose of the law was to provide Adam with a means of giving concrete form to his love through his responsive obedience to God's explicit command.[40]

God had given the word to Adam alone on the sixth day, before Eve was created. He informed her later, and she had to subject herself to the word of God (not to Adam!), which was received by him and preached with authority. For Luther, it was still not an issue that a woman should also preach, even though, with the thought of the common priesthood of all believers, he had expressed that it was the task of all Christians to preach.[41] Nevertheless, Eve took part of the priestly task of Adam by teaching the gospel to her children at home. Both parents fulfill their priestly task by teaching their children, as Luther had already argued in *Vom ehelichen Leben* (1522). So, Eve at home shares the task of preaching with her husband.[42]

Luther goes further into the creation of the woman in connection with Gen. 2.23 ('This at last is bone from my bones'). Eve is led to the man by God and is introduced to him. He accepts her 'with the greatest pleasure and

39. WA 42.80.9-14.

40. Bernd Wannenwetsch, 'Luther's Moral Theology', in Donald K. McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 120-35 (125): 'Surprisingly, the law is not envisaged as a postlapsarian device, a makeshift repair provoked by the Fall, but rather as belonging to Adam's original righteousness, and as such, it could not be opposed to his spontaneous love of God'.

41. 'Therefore order, discipline, and respect demand that women keep silent when men speak; but if no man were to preach, then it would be necessary for the women to preach' (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*. XXXVI. *Word and Sacrament II* [ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oslwald, and Helmut T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, American edn, 1959]; WA 8.498.12-14). Elsewhere (in his sermon on 1 Pet. 2.5 from 1523), Luther asserts that the common priesthood does not mean that women should preach (WA 12.308.29–309.10), referring to the submission of the woman to the man. But, as Luther states, there may be situations in which the woman has to preach, even though she is physically less capable.

42. Ulrich Asendorf, *Lectura in Biblia, Luthers Genesisvorlesung (1535–1545*) (Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), p. 323. WA 10.II.301.23-25: 'Denn gewißlich ist vater und mutter der kinder Apostel, Bisschoff, pfarrer, ynn dem sie das Euangelion yhn kundt machen'.

reverence'. In fact, this is for Luther the divine institution of marriage.[43] Adam immediately perceives that the woman is a building that is made from him. That is why he calls her 'bone from my bones', which, according to Luther, are the words of a person who is righteous, wise, and full of the Holy Spirit. God is the *causa efficiens* of the woman and the marriage, with the intention of (*causa finalis*) making the woman a 'mundane dwelling' (*politicum habitaculum*) or 'household building' (*oeconomicum aedificium*) for the man.[44] These metaphors need some explanation. Luther adapts the last figure of speech from Gen. 2.22 in the Vulgate text: 'Et aedificavit Dominus Deus costam…in mulierem'. Here a rib of Adam is made into a woman.[45] According to Luther, many interpreters were anxious to know why Moses talks here about building instead of modeling or creating, and they all tried to explain this allegorically in many ways. Thus, Eve's body as a 'building' would have referred to the Church, which is also a body with limbs. Though Luther thinks this traditional allegory is beautiful, he prefers the historical and proper sense of the text. In Holy Scripture, a married woman is called a building (*aedificium*) because she generates and raises offspring (Gen. 30.3; Exod. 1.21; 2 Sam. 7.11). She serves as a permanent shelter, which means that the man finds a dwelling in her for generating and raising his progeny. Luther likes to compare this with a bird's nest. The word *oeconomicum* specifies the figure of the building; as a household building it offers structure and order to living together as a family and society. For Luther, cultivation of the field, care for home, cattle, and domestic animals are also part of this. To put it in another way: with the creation of the woman, the human species settles as a social and economical being in this world.

Luther relates the notion of *politicum habitaculum* to cohabitation, which literally means that a married couple live together, keep house together, and raise a family. So, the meaning is very much related to the woman as a building. *Habitaculum* has more the sense of a dwelling place than a mansion. The word *politicum* includes a broader meaning, as in the original state a fuller dominion might ring through. In this way the woman, as the center of life, not only makes a home her man and her family, but in the original condition she also offers order and structure, in the sense of ruling everything. For Luther, the woman as a building and a home is implied in Gen. 2.22. However, the form that this habitation took in Paradise can no longer be imagined—it was lost to us through sin.

43. WA 42.100.22-26: 'Quod addit Moses: Et [Deus] adduxit eam ad Adam, est descriptio quaedam sponsalium imprimis digna observatione… Est enim legitima coniunctio masculi et foeminae ordinatio et institutio divina.'

44. Politicum habitaculum (this is the only place in Luther's works where it can be found): WA 42.102.22; oeconomicum aedificium: WA 42.99.13.

45. For this subject, see WA 42.98.30–99.36.

For Luther, no word in Scripture has been written without any reason. That Luther places value on every single word in Scripture becomes clear when he pays attention to the word הפעם, which means ‘now’, ‘at last’, or ‘this time’. According to Luther, ‘This little word indicates an overwhelmingly passionate love’.[46] It expresses most beautifully the affection of a husband for his wife, who feels the need for her company and for living together in both love and holiness. Though this purity and innocence have disappeared today, the joy of the groom and the affection for his bride still remain.

Eve is called wo-man (*vira*), because she is taken from man (*vir*).[47] *Vir-vira* is a Latin play on the Hebrew words איש and אישה. Eve is a ‘she-man’ indeed, denoted in the Vulgate as a *virago*, a heroic woman (*mulier heroica*) who performs manly matters. With these manly matters, Luther points to a complete equality in the ruling of domestic and public affairs (*gubernatio aequalis*). They share children, food, bed, and house—they are of one will.[48] Even after the Fall, when the woman is subjected to man, there are still remnants of this shared ruling. The woman can still be called a *virago* since she lives in joint property with her man.

I have already noted some difference in assignment of duties between the sexes, but what about the matter with regard to sexual determination? According to Luther, ‘the husband differs from the wife in no other respect than in sex; otherwise the woman is altogether a man’.[49] According to Luther here, sex is the only real difference between the two. What does this mean? In another context, Luther states that Eve as a creature differs somewhat from man insofar as she has different members (*membra*) and a much weaker condition (*ingenium*).[50] The first word clearly refers to the sexual characteristics; the last one can be understood in two ways: it can be applied to her natural condition, or to her rational gifts, but possibly it refers to both. In short, though Eve was a most excellent creature, she was nevertheless a woman. So, was there a real difference? Mickey Mattox tried to solve this problem by distinguishing between ‘qualitative equality’ and ‘quantitative inequality’.[51] With this, he wants to designate equality in a qualitative sense,

46. WA 42.102.25-37 (quote from 102.31f.).

47. WA 42.103.12.

48. WA 42.103.16: ‘Quicquid enim maritus habet, hoc totum habet et possidet coniunx. Sunt communes non solum opes, sed liberi, cibus, lectus, domicilium; voluntates pares sunt.’

49. WA 42.103.18: ‘Ita ut maritus ab uxore secundum nullam aliam rem differat, quam secundum sexum, alias mulier plane est vir’.

50. WA 42.51.35: ‘…videtur enim mulier quoddam diversum esse animal a viro, quod et membra habet dissimilia et ingenium longe infirmius’. The translation of *ingenium* as ‘nature’ is too narrow.

51. Mattox, *Defender*, p. 82. Clearly the author is still saddled with an unsolved problem. ‘Perhaps he (Luther) means that Eve was equal in dignity (i.e., worth before

if Eve's physical, mental, and spiritual gifts are at stake, and a quantitative inequality, if a comparison with the man's power and size is at stake. But this distinction does not really hold, for the physical aspect cannot be equal and unequal simultaneously. In my opinion, it is Luther himself who causes the problem, as his speaking of the relationship between man and woman in Paradise is not always consistent. Sometimes he underlines their equality; other times their inequality. There are passages in Luther's writings that refer to a complete equality. Referring to Gen. 2.18 ('I will make him a helper fit for him'), Luther writes that God made a husband out of Adam, who had been alone, by adding the woman to him, the woman being needed for the increase of the human race. Originally she was not like the woman today; rather, her condition was far better and more excellent, 'because she was in no respect (*in nulla re*) inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind'.[52] And yet in other passages Luther states that 'though she was a most beautiful work of God, she nevertheless was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige'.[53]

Referring to Gen. 3.14, where Luther explicitly rejects the allegorical explication of Augustine and Gregory, he puts a similar opinion forward. According to these Church Fathers a difference should be made between a higher and a lower part of the human reason, in which Adam stood for the higher part, which is engaged in the contemplation of God, and Eve for the lower part, which involves ruling over the house and society. This division between higher and lower is rejected by Luther because Eve was in no part (*in nulla parte*), neither in the body nor in the soul, inferior to Adam. Here the full equality of man and woman is used as an argument against a traditional anthropological division between a higher and lower part in humanity. Luther thinks these absurd allegories have caused much mischief and have misled theology into the formulation of philosophic and scholastic twaddle. Therefore, Luther wants to stick to the simple historical and literal meaning (*simpliciter historicam et literalem sententiam*) of the text itself.[54] According to this meaning, the serpent remains a serpent, the woman a woman, and the man a man. For, so he states not without any irony, not the lower and the higher reason have generated Cain and Abel, but Adam and Eve.

Another question is this: How does Luther deal with the two creation stories? It is clear that he wants to read them as a whole. In contrast to his

God) and in her possession of the virtues with which God had adorned humankind, but not in her social position or status. If that is the case, then Luther is frustratingly obscure about it, for he seems already to have denied even the possibility of differences of social status in an unfallen world' (p. 81).

52. WA 42.87.27-29.

53. WA 42.52.10f.

54. WA 42.138.40–139.5.

sermons on Genesis, here he wants to stick to a literal reading of the text: a creation in six days.[55] In fact, in Genesis 2, the putative biblical author Moses returns to God's work on the sixth day with the intention of describing more closely the creation of humankind.[56] For Luther, it is clear that the man was created first. Eve was created next, towards the end of the sixth day, while Adam slept. On the seventh day God spoke to Adam, mandated and instituted public worship, and forbade him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is rather peculiar that God speaks here to Adam exclusively. Where was Eve? Elsewhere Luther speaks about the fact that Adam had received the law on the sixth day, before Eve was created.[57] Apparently it is important for Luther here in Gen. 2.3 (the blessing and hallowing of the seventh day) to underline the preaching and hearing of God's word as a characteristic task for the seventh day, whereas at the creation of the Church as the first estate (Gen. 2.16), it is the sixth day that comes to the fore. However, this inconsistency does not seem to have bothered Luther at all.

4. *Adam and Eve after the Fall*

Though Scripture does not offer any proof, Luther still thought it most likely that the seventh day was also the day of the Fall. That means that Adam and Eve had hardly spent one full day in the Garden of Eden before their temptation and expulsion. Satan attacks the humans in the weakest area, namely, in the person of the woman. Importantly, though man and woman were created equally righteous, still the man surpasses the woman—just as in the whole of nature—the male power surpasses the female. In this way, so Luther asserts, the male surpasses the female even in the original condition. Satan had understood this very well, and while he noticed that the man was more excellent, he did not dare to beset him. Luther is even of the opinion that if Satan had tried to tempt the man, Adam would surely have been the victor. That is the reason why Satan put Eve's valor to the test—he saw that she put so much trust in her husband that she thought she could not sin.[58]

55. WA 42.91.22: 'Pertinet autem hoc eo, ut firmiter teneamus hanc sententiam, vere sex dies fuisse, quibus Dominus creavit omnia, contra Augustini et Hilarii sententiam, qui uno momento putant omnia esse condita'. Cf. WA 24.62.1 (*Sermons on Genesis* from 1523–27), where Luther still held to Augustine's view.

56. WA 42.63.15: 'Hic redit Moses ad opus sexti diei, et ostendit, unde cultor terrae venerit'.

57. WA 42.77.18-19: 'antequam Heva esset condita, Adae data lex sit'. Note that Luther here calls it a 'law', whereas elsewhere he calls it an 'exhortation' (WA 42.80.9-14).

58. WA 42.114.10-11: '[Satan] videt enim eam sic confidere viro, ut non putet se posse peccare'. In the American edition of *Luther's Works* (ed. George V. Schlick and

The mistake that Eve made was that she was not satisfied with the wisdom she possessed. She was not satisfied with the word of God alone and wanted to climb higher and to know God in another way than he had intended. Luther states, ‘So this is the Fall, that Eve after giving up the true wisdom, threw herself into the deepest blindness’.[59]

This, however, does not clear the man from blame. Both of them were equally righteous before the Fall; both of them are equally guilty now. Luther does not agree with the ‘nearly all’ who assume that Adam would not have been seduced, but had only sinned knowingly (*sciens*),[60] not wanting to disappoint his beloved and putting the love for his wife above his love of God. Luther is not willing to accept this whitewashing. Adam is seduced as well as not seduced. It is true that this happened not because of the serpent, but because of his wife and himself, since he had convinced himself that no punishment would follow, this despite the fact that God had announced a punishment directly (i.e. they would die). Both human beings fall from faith into unbelief; their sin was that they did not believe in the word of God. Here we notice a remarkable difference with the theological tradition that was shaped by Augustine. To Luther, the first humans did not sin out of lust, but out of disbelief, which is the refusal to listen to God and his mandate. Luther treats lust more as a consequence than as a cause of the Fall.

With the Fall, the possibility of being an image of God and the promise of immortality was lost, as was the immediate knowledge that Adam and Eve had of God.[61] The original purity and immediacy stand in sharp contrast to the situation of fallen humanity. According to Luther, both sexes are dependent upon each other for procreation, but since the Fall the mutual relations are totally changed. Now there is inequality between the sexes and the man is now the head of the woman. The woman is submitted to the man and is no longer able to carry the burden of the ruling, though she is grumbling about her unequal situation.[62] Still she has an important task; she does not serve

Jaroslav J. Pelikan; St Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Muehlenberg/Fortress Press, 1959), I, p. 151, this passage is translated too suggestively: ‘[Satan] puts her valor to the test, for he sees that she is so *dependent* on her husband that she thinks she cannot sin’.

59. WA 42.121.17-18.

60. WA 42.136.3-5. This view was based on 1 Tim. 2.13-14, which Luther reads somewhat differently than ‘nearly all’. Concerning *sciens*, see further Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Liber* II, dist. 41 (PL 192.751), with a reference to Augustine, *Retractiones* lib. 1, c. 15.

61. That does not mean that the knowledge of God, which Adam and Eve originally possessed, had been completely immediate. In that original situation too, there is some talk of the word of God as a medium of communication, which had to be preached by the man.

62. WA 42.151.37. Submission after the Fall does not come very easily to all women. There are references here to her murmuring (*murmur*) and impatience (*impatientia*).

only as a partner in the procreation and preservation of the human race, but is also needed for the community of life and the protection of it. An additional element after the Fall is the defence of life in threatening situations. So, the *oeconomia* needs the *ministerium* of women.[63]

Also the place of sexuality and marriage is different from now on. In Paradise Adam met Eve without any passion of lust or sense of shame. If Eve had not sinned, she would not only have given birth without pains, but also her union with her husband would have been just as honourable (*honesta*). Adam would have 'known' her with full confidence and an obedient will to God, without any evil thought. The woman was needed as a kind of 'medicine' against sexual sin (1 Cor. 7.2). Luther also refers to a well-known statement of Peter Lombard that marriage in Paradise was established as a duty (*officium*), but now, above all things, it serves as an antidote (*remedium*).[64] Therefore men are compelled to make use of intercourse with their wives in order to avoid sin. According to Luther, there are very few who marry solely as a matter of duty. For most people marriage is of all things a remedy serving to restrain lust. The role of sexuality has been changed drastically. After the Fall, lust rages in man, who is infected by the poison of the devil. Death has crept into all our perceptive powers like leprosy, and nobody knows yet how much passion rules in the flesh.[65]

In Paradise the order of society was not deduced from the ruling of one person over another. By excluding the civil government from the prelapsarian institution of the estates, Luther rejects the notion that the original human society would have known a social order that was based on a difference in dignity. *Politia* as the exercise of power of men over men belongs to the situation after the Fall. However, the state as an institution can be deduced from the will of God, who wants to preserve his world, which is threatened by selfish desires of human beings. Herewith belongs the law with coercive power, which is needed to protect life from destructive forces. The ruling of all three estates is entirely the concern of males after the Fall.[66] Women cannot perform the functions of men, such as teaching and ruling, any longer. Their functions become fully situated now in the domestic

63. WA 42.88.4-6.

64. WA 42.88.10-14, 89.34-37. Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Liber* IV, dist. 2 (PL 192.842): 'Fuit autem Conjugium ante peccatum institutum; non utique propter remedium, sed ad sacramentum et ad officium; post peccatum vero fuit ad remedium contra carnalis concupiscentiae corruptelam…' In other contexts different from sin and fall, Luther can underline marriage and sexuality as good gifts of creation. See, for example, *Von ehelichem Leben* (1522).

65. WA 42.46.28–47.2.

66. WA 42.151.25: 'Regnum itaque manet penes maritum, cui uxor mandato Dei parere cogitur'.

domain (*oeconomia*). In procreation, feeding, and nurturing their offspring, they are the masters.

Because the woman sinned first, she also is the first one to hear her penalty. Therefore, she also received the heavier penalty. Nevertheless, Luther ventures to call this penalty 'gladsome and merry' (*laeta et hilaris*),[67] for she receives as the first to sin the promise of hope; she is promised personally that her offspring will crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3.15). The punishment of childbearing in pain will remain as a heavy burden on her body, but in spite of the penalty she gets the honor of motherhood, retains her sexuality, and remains a woman.[68] She notices that she is not separated from her husband and that she does not have to live in isolation. With this Luther wants to express the creaturliness and dignity of Eve as a woman.

The penalty of the man consists in the increase of lust in his body and the increased difficulty of his tasks, such as supporting his family, ruling, and teaching. Henceforth, all this will involve the highest efforts. The field, once fertile, can now be plowed in sweat and tears only. Also, the man can maintain only with difficulty the obedience imposed on the woman. This applies even more strongly to the ruling over humans. For, as Xenophon observes, it is easier to rule wild animals than human beings.[69] Also, man's relation to wild animals has been changed radically; he has been alienated from those that no longer wish to be subjected to him. Only the care for domestic animals remains to him.

Thus the ruling over creation is badly disturbed. With the penalty of sin, also the creation itself comes into an ambivalent position. While it is true that the earth is innocent and that it has not sinned, it is forced to endure the curse. On the one side, nature remains the reality created by God; on the other side, it becomes a hostile reality and a tool of God's anger in regard of human sin. After the Fall, man is called to acknowledge how wonderful the world, nature, and life are. The earth remains a kind, gentle, and forbearing mother, one that is the perpetual servant of the need of mortals.[70] At the same time, the earth feels the curse about which Paul had written in Rom. 8.21. In the first place, it does not bring forth the good things it would have produced had man not fallen. In the second place, it now produces many harmful plants. With the increase of sins, not only weeds, nettles, thorns, and thistles will multiply, but also nature will turn against man, a turning manifested in cold, lightning, poisonous plants, floods, and earthquakes.

67. WA 42.148.4 and 23.
68. WA 42.148.27: 'Videt se retinere sexum suum et esse mulierem'.
69. Xenophon, *Cyropaed.* 1.1.3, quoted in Greek in WA 42.152.18.
70. WA 42.152.29. This is a quotation taken from Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis* 1.63.

According to Luther, the number of contagious and fatal diseases increases visibly too.[71] Though all this is not described in the Bible, Luther explains this as a consequence of the increase of sin in the world and with that the increase of its penalties.

5. *The Promise that Remains*

In spite of the extensive elaborations on penalties, the center of Genesis 3, v. 15, is for Luther the proto-gospel. In this verse Luther finds the promise of a saviour and of eternal life. This message seems to pervade the whole history of the first people. God is no tyrant, but a merciful God, who, in spite of the penalties, shows man the way to eternal salvation and worldly prosperity and happiness, 'because He has given a wife, home and children and preserves and increases this all by blessing it'.[72]

However important the arrangement of this worldly life as a defense from chaos and protection against evil may be, most significant nevertheless is the beginning of the history of eternal salvation. While it is true that people are still subjected to death as a penalty for sin, one day they will be resurrected to immortality. This promise is seen by Luther as a reality. God transfers the death, which humans deserved, to another and insignificant part of them, namely, the flesh, whereas the spirit lives in righteousness because of faith. According to the flesh, they deserve death; but according to the hope, they are already liberated from death now. Humans are already justified by the faith in this world, and the expectation of eternal life tempers the weight of the inflicted penalties. In this way, faith is put in a central position in Luther's *Commentary on Genesis*; Adam and Eve put trust in God's promise. By doing so, they became the archetypes of justification by virtue of the promise, which effects what it announces. 'It is the Word', according to Luther, 'which has made Adam and Eve alive and has awakened them from death to life'.[73] As life in Paradise had been, life now is surrounded by God's mercy and kindness. The Last Day will be no return to a Paradise lost, but a much more exalted state, one which will be given to humankind. This promise is actually fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who, for Luther, removed sin, swallowed up death, and restored obedience to God. That is the

71. WA 42.154.35–155.10. Luther mentions here the rise of the 'French disease' or syphilis, which in his youth still was unknown, and the 'English sweat disease', which spread in Germany (1529) and notably in Wittenberg too.

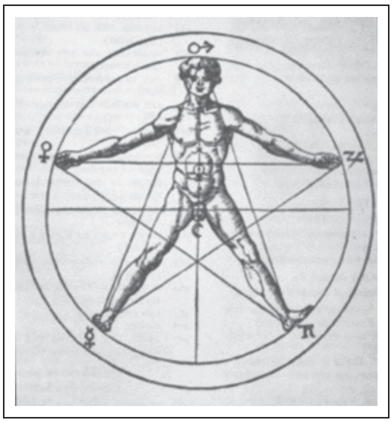
72. WA 42.149.12-17.

73. WA 42.146.18-20. Here a line can be discerned with Luther's *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (1515–1516), in which he deals with man as 'iustus ex reputatione et promissione Dei certa' (WA 56.272.3-19).

reason he remains a pledge for us: 'These treasures we possess in Christ, but in hope. In this way like Adam, like Eve, all who believe until the Last Day live and conquer by that hope'.[74]

6. *Epilogue*

In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther deals extensively with the history of creation and fall and the special position of the first human beings in it. It is possible to consider in other creatures, as it were, God's footprints, but it is in humanity, with its original wisdom, righteousness, and knowledge of all things, that God may truly be recognized. It is for that reason that the first man is described by Luther as a 'microcosmos'.[75]



Symbolic Representation of Man as Microcosmos.
Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535)

This image had its philosophical background in antiquity and was developed and was still vivid in Renaissance. There is an analogy between the cosmos and man; and the arrangement of the world can be traced back within man. This world *en miniature*, the summit of God's creation, contains an understanding of heaven, earth, and the entire creation. Originally, in human beings the knowledge of God, man, and creation were present in full harmony. According to Luther, through the Fall this perfect knowledge of all things was lost for good, which means that man as a microcosmos is disordered. Humanity's view of itself and the world is troubled, like the image in a broken mirror. In this opinion, Luther distinguished himself from

74. WA 42.147.5-7.

75. WA 42.51.22-26. It is remarkable that Luther applies this image on Adam especially (*praesertim*).

many Renaissance thinkers, including Leonardo da Vinci, who considered 'man as the measure of all things'. The divine–human shape represents the lasting harmony between the macro- and the microcosmos.

In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther stresses that man and woman are permanently dependent upon each other, and that, in this, the foundation of marriage is found. Human beings contribute, according God's mandate, to the planning of life in view of the preservation of humanity and creation. Definitely, in later life Luther had an eye for the original equality of man and woman in Paradise, but this does not necessarily imply another view on the situation after the Fall. Certainly there is some talk of 'created equality' (in the image of God), but this equality does not extend itself to the concrete life in the three estates in the present time. On the one side, in his description of the relations between man and woman, he still was a tributary to the views of his time in many ways; on the other side, he emphasizes their partnership and common responsibility for the preservation of creation. Undeniably, Luther has provided marriage with a higher social respect by appreciating it as a created institution and, thus, as the highest human estate of life.[76] This was an explicit correction of an overemphasis of celibacy by the Church of Rome. According to Luther's opinion, the papacy had tarnished marriage and had exalted celibacy to the highest estate.[77] Contrary to this self-chosen way of life, which does not comply with the original mandate to preserve the human race, the Reformer emphasizes marriage as a divine institution.[78] At the same time, the Reformation movement of the sixteenth century profiled marriage more strongly as a mutual contract based on freedom and mutual respect. For the legal status of women, it certainly meant some progress—forced marriages were disapproved of, as was the forced sending of young women into cloisters. They were even encouraged to leave them behind. From a sixteenth-century point of view, cloisters could only be seen as women-unfriendly, because the woman was kept away from her real tasks and responsibilities in society.[79]

76. See Lyndal Roper, 'Gender and the Reformation', *Archiv für Reformations-geschichte* 92 (2001), pp. 290-302; Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

77. WA 42.100.36–101.34. Here Luther mentions his own negative memories from his youth concerning marriage as a sinful state of life by definition (101.13-15). See Gerta Scharffenorth, 'Im Geist Freunde werden. Die Beziehung von Mann und Frau bei Luther im Rahmen seines Kirchenverständnisses', in Scharffenorth, *'Den Glauben ins Leben ziehen…': Studien zu Luthers Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1982), pp. 122-202 (128-31).

78. See, for example, WA 42.101.3-33, 101.27-28: '…praeterquam quod coelibatus sine verbo Dei institutus est, Imo, sicut praesens historia testatur, contra verbum Dei'.

79. See further Steven E. Ozment, 'Luther on Family Life', in Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 151-68. 'Among the leaders

In spite of the fact that the Reformation movement acquired a stronger appreciation for marriage as an earthly institution of God, it did not immediately mean an improvement of the concrete position of the woman. Now that an independent development within the cloister was denied, all that remained for them was the traditional tasks and duties required by marriage and family life. It is obvious that Luther was no proto-feminist. We would do well to bear in mind that proposals for the praxis of marriage and family do not come from general, doctrinal statements, but that they are dependent to a much higher degree on social structures, models of acting, and the horizon of thinking in a certain time. Definitely, while the older Luther showed greater appreciations for the original equality of man and woman in Paradise, this did not necessarily mean another view on the situation after the Fall.

How equal had the situation in Paradise been? Even when some authors underline 'created equality' in Luther's Lectures on Genesis, it does not mean equality in every respect. There remains a certain ambiguity in Luther's statements. Sometimes he stresses equality, especially when there is talk of man and woman created in the image of God. Other times, however, he can also stress a certain inequality from the beginning of creation. This inequality has to do with a division of the sexes and their different positions in the Church. Man and woman are equal for God as creatures, but at the same time they are different from the very beginning—and not only after the Fall. However, emphasizing the equality of the woman as a full-fledged creature of God already represents a remarkable departure from the medieval scholastic theology, in which the woman by nature was considered an imperfect being. Luther was able to bring back the discussion from a philosophy of nature, which was strongly determined by Aristotle, to proper theology; from scriptural insights, he reinterpreted the creation of man and woman theologically. The creation of both sexes is equally wonderful, and therefore both are destined to eternal life with God. Beside that, men and women have their own functions and responsibilities for the preservation of creation and for the protection of it against chaos. Although subject to change through time, these are fundamental insights upon which every theology of creation should be prepared to reflect, again and again.

of the Reformation, it was widely believed that in most cases women had been placed in cloisters against their will and without full understanding of the consequences' (p. 154).

Adam and Eve as Latecomers: The Pre-Adamite Speculations of Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676)*

Willem J. van Asselt

Introduction

Were Adam and Eve really the first people to live on earth? Although this question has been answered affirmatively for centuries by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, other views did at times circulate. Within the Christian camp we can point to the ex-Calvinist Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676) from Bordeaux.[1] Around the middle of the seventeenth century he advanced a theory by which he wanted to demonstrate there were already people—both men and women—in existence before Adam and Eve. These he called the 'Pre-Adamites',[2] and La Peyrère thus considered Adam and Eve as latecomers. The present essay traces the reasons behind the Frenchman's theory, what arguments he employed when defending it and how it was received. The theme of this collected volume, 'Adam and Eve', is thus somewhat transcended. Yet the Pre-Adamite theory without doubt illustrates the wide variety of ways in which the story of Adam and Eve has been interpreted over the course of history.

Isaac La Peyrère: Milieu, Life and Work

In the Preface to his *Systema theologicum ex Prae-adamitarum hypothesi* (published in English as *A theological systeme upon that presupposition, that men were before Adam*) from 1655, La Peyrère notes that already when he as a young boy heard or read from Genesis, he was hit with deep doubts

* Translated by Albert Gootjes.

1. For a good overview of La Peyrère's life and work, as well as relevant secondary literature, see Klaus Grünwaldt, 'La Peyrère', *Biografisch-Bibliografisch Kirchenlexikon* 4 (Herzberg, 1992), pp. 1145-55 (online version: http://www.bautz.de/bbkl).

2. For Pre-Adamite speculations in Islam, see the contribution from Karel Steenbrink in the present volume.

concerning what was for all others in his time an established fact, namely, that Adam and Eve were the first created human beings. These doubts were instigated when he learned of ancient cultures and about recently discovered, unknown parts of the world. His suspicion that Adam and Eve could not have been the first people was strengthened by the story of Cain in Genesis 4. He wrote:

> I had this supposition also being a Child, when I heard or read the History of *Genesis*: Where *Cain* goes forth: where he kills his brother when they were in the fields; doing it warily, like a thief, least it should be discovered by any: Where he flies, where he fears punishment for the death of his Brother: Lastly, where he marries a wife far from his Ancestors, and builds a City. Yet, although I had this doubt in my mind, yet durst I not speak any thing of it, which did not relish of that received opinion, concerning *Adam* created first of all men…[3]

La Peyrère, who made his living as secretary to the French Calvinistic prince Henry II de Condé (d. 1646), and later to his son, Louis II de Condé, continued his argument by remarking that he could no longer keep silent when he read the vv. 12-14 of the fifth chapter from Paul's letter to the Romans. Everyone with a sound mind, he thought, could conclude from these verses that people already existed before the creation of Adam. He decided to write a book about the issue, a work which he finished around 1641 in Paris. For several years he circulated the work only in manuscript form, until he managed to have it published in 1655 with financial help from others. The work contains a lengthy explanation on the passage from the epistle to the Romans, and was printed under the following title, in which the term 'Pre-Adamites' was used for the first time: *Praeadamitae, sive exercitatio super versibus 12, 13, 14 cap. V Epistoli Pauli ad Romanos* (*Pre-Adamites, or Exercise on the Verses 12, 13 and 14 of Chapter 5 of Paul's Letter to the Romans*). Fearing ecclesiastical censure, he published the work anonymously and without indication of place of publication. In some fifty pages he laid out his remarkable theory and used arguments based on (1) Scripture, (2) (classical) antiquity and (3) the important journeys of

3. *Systema theologicum ex Prae-adamitarum hypothesi*, s.l., 1655, Prol., 3: 'Illa eadem & mihi inciderat suspicio; cum puer adhuc vel audirem, vel legerem historiam Geneseos. Ubi Cainus fores egreditur; ubi occidit fratrem suum, cum essent in agro; nempe illud more latronum, caute; ne a quopiam arbitro proderetur: Ubi timet, ubi fugit poenam fatricidii: ubi denique longe a patribus suis uxorem ducit & civitatem aedificat. Sed quamvis haec animo meo insideret dubitatio; nihil tamen de illa audebam proferre, quod non saperet receptam opinionem de Adamo primo omnium hominum creato.' An English translation of the *Systema theologicum* was published as *A theological systeme upon that presupposition, that men were before Adam* (London, 1655). The citation can be found in this 1655 edition, p. Fr°-v°.

exploration that were being undertaken in his time. On the basis of these three kinds of arguments he presented a polygenetic account of the origin of humankind. He considered his *Systema theologicum* a continuation of the work on the Pre-Adamites, for he himself said of it that he there presented a dogmatics in which 'the Doctrine of the Gospel, upon presupposition of men before *Adam*, may be laid open more at large'.[4]

Both books—whether printed separately or together in one binding—flew off the bookkeepers' shelves throughout Europe. In 1655 the Latin edition went through no fewer than five printings. Three of these came from the press of Elzevier in the Netherlands, another from a printer in Basel, while the printer of the remaining one has not been identified. The following year (1656) saw the publication of two English translations,[5] while in 1661 also a Dutch translation appeared on the market.[6] La Peyrère's work was welcomed readily in the intellectual circle of the Prince of Condé, who had a great interest in philosophy, theology and heterodox literature. This circle included, among others, the Swedish Queen Christina, who resided in Antwerp after her abdication and there converted to Roman Catholicism. She greatly admired La Peyrère's work and probably supplied the financial means for its publication in the Republic.[7]

The popularity of La Peyrère's work is evidenced not only in the sales, but most of all in the scope of the polemics it aroused. During his lifetime and long thereafter, La Peyrère was incessantly attacked by prominent Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. In 1656 the parliament of Paris had his work burned, and La Peyrère himself was arrested in Brussels by the vicar-general to the archbishop of Mechelen and thrown into prison. Only the intervention of his benefactor, the Prince of Condé, kept him from the stake. After promising to retract his book and not to publish on this subject any more, he was given his freedom, whereupon he went to Rome. Under Pope Alexander VII's very eyes he signed an act of retraction of his Pre-Adamite views. Although he thought that no definitive proof had been brought against his theory, he submitted himself to the authority of the

4. *Systema theologicum*, p. 5 (*A theological systeme*, p. F2r°).

5. The title of the English translation is: *Men before Adam or a discourse upon the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the fifth chapter of the Epistle of the apostle Paul to the Romans: by which are prov'd that the first men were created before Adam* (London, 1656).

6. The title of the Dutch translation is: *Praeadamieten of oeffening over het 12. 13. en 14. vers des vijfden capittels van den brief des apostels Pauli tot den Romeynen. Waer door geleert wort datter menschen voor Adam geweest zijn* (n.p., 1661) [in the library of the University of Groningen].

7. On the relationship between Queen Christina and La Peyrère, see Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère: His Life, Work and Influence (1596–1676)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), pp. 12-13.

Church and went over to Roman Catholicism.[8] In spite of the Pope's invitation to stay in Rome, he rejoined the Prince of Condé who at the time was residing in the Republic. In 1660 La Peyrère returned to France with the prince, he joined the Oratorians at Aubervilliers outside Paris, as a lay member, and became librarian to their seminary. He died there in 1676 without ever—as he himself claimed—completely abandoning his ideas.

There are numerous different views on the origin and influence of La Peyrère's Pre-Adamite theory. In their overview of the history of historical-critical biblical scholarship, Klaus Scholder and Hans-Joachim Kraus both give attention to La Peyrère and consider him to be a forerunner of modern criticism. His views on the authorship of the Pentateuch gained a firm place in biblical scholarship over the course of the seventeenth century.[9] Richard Popkin emphasized La Peyrère's background as a Messianic Jew and gave an elaborate description of his politically coloured chiliasm which reserves for the Jewish nation a large role at the end times. According to Popkin, La Peyrère combined this with a French nationalist Messianism which would extend through into Napoleonic times. La Peyrère considered that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land would be undertaken from out of France under the leadership of a Messianic French king who was yet to come.[10] Other scholars have pointed to the influence the Pre-Adamite theory came to have among defenders of slavery and even of racist theories.[11] In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the opponents of Darwinism appealed to La Peyrère's theory in order to defend a polygenetic origin of the human race. The Pre-Adamite theory was also used to help promote the superiority of the white man. Blacks and Indians were, so it was said, of Pre-Adamite origin.[12]

8. Secondary literature is divided on the 'sincerity' of La Peyrère's retraction. See Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 14-15.

9. See Klaus Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der historisch-kritischen Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1966), pp. 98-104; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), pp. 59-61.

10. La Peyrère recorded his views in a work entitled: *Du Rappel des Juifs*. Because of the criticism that arose against the manuscript of the *Preadamitae*, La Peyrère decided in 1643 to publish only the section that dealt with the role of the Jews in the near future. This was the *Du Rappel des Juifs*, which was nevertheless published without an indication of the publisher or the place of publication; see Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 13-15, 60-68. Cf. Ira Robinson, 'Isaac de la Peyrère and the Recall of the Jews', *Jewish Social Studies* 40 (1978), pp. 117-30 (123-27).

11. For an analysis of the influence of the Pre-Adamite theory on nineteenth-century views on the question of slavery, see Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 146-76.

12. S. Morton, *Types of Mankind: or Ethnological Researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon their Natural Geographical, Philological and Biblical History* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1854).

Jean Oddos and Dino Pastine have published most extensively on the life and work of La Peyrère.[13] They reject the hypothesis that La Peyrère's origin was in Messianic Judaism, and argue that his views must be explained against the background of French Calvinism together with the Reformed philosemitism that was so widespread at the time in both England and the Netherlands.

It is not my intention in this essay to foray into these debates concerning the origin and influence of La Peyrère's thought. I will limit myself to a brief overview of his view on the first two chapters of Genesis and on related matters. Next, I will outline several implications for his view of history and then consider the opposition to La Peyrère that arose within Reformed Orthodoxy. Particular attention will be given to Samuel Maresius (1599–1673) of Groningen and his Geneva colleague, Francis Turretin (1623–1687). With his *Refutatio fabulae prae-adamiticae* (1656), Maresius was the first orthodox theologian to attack La Peyrère's theory.[14] At the end of this study several reflections will be given on the relevance of La Peyrère's work.

La Peyrère and the Bible

La Peyrère came from a Calvinist milieu at Bordeaux and was probably of Messianic-Jewish descent, that is, from Jews who were converted to Christianity, and, in this case, to Calvinism.[15] According to Popkin, there is some evidence he belonged to the so-called Marranos, converted Jews who traced their ancestors back to Spain and Portugal. These Marranos gravitated to that circle of (late) French humanists who had a great interest in Judaism. His fellow countryman and compatriot in the Reformed religion, Samuel des Marets (Maresius), called him a learned man, but added—not without some disdain—that in spite of his great learning, La Peyrère knew neither Hebrew

13. Jean-Paul Oddos, 'Recherches sur la vie et l'oeuvre d'Isaac de La Peyrère (1596[?]–1676' (unpublished dissertation, Université des sciences sociales, Grenoble, 1971–74). Dino Pastine, 'La Origini del poligenismo e Isaac La Peyrère', *Miscellanea Seicento* 1 (1971), pp. 7-234.

14. Most scholars pay little attention to the arguments based on the content of La Peyrère's views that were assembled against him by theologians of Orthodoxy. Thus Popkin treats Maresius's criticism of La Peyrère only on the basis of the latter's response to Maresius. See Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 81-83.

15. See Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 22-23. Cecil Roth, Leo Strauss, Hans Joachim Schoeps, Léon Poliakov, as well as Popkin defend the position that La Peyrère was a Marrano and that his theology was a 'Marrano theology', that is, a theology for Jews who became—in this case, Calvinist—Christians. Such a theology gave considerable attention to the role of converted Jews in the end times. For an overview of the secondary literature, see Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 60-68.

nor Greek. Maresius was further struck by the fact that La Peyrère cited few Christian sources and seemed unaware of the work of earlier exegetes. Maresius did not note, however, that La Peyrère was very well informed and up-to-date on scholarship, as well as on the studies of classical antiquity from the likes of Joseph Justus Scaliger and Claude Saumaise (Salmasius), the experts of the day.[16]

Nevertheless, as La Peyrère himself claimed, it was the interpretation of Rom. 5.12-14 that formed the decisive factor for the development of his Pre-Adamite theory. What was it that La Peyrère discovered in these verses? In the English Standard Version (ESV) they read as follows:

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

In this passage the apostle Paul draws a parallel between Adam and Christ. For La Peyrère the justification through the one man Jesus Christ here raised a question concerning the fall of the 'first' man Adam. According to Paul, Adam fell by transgressing the law. La Peyrère asked himself what law this might be. As he saw it, this could not have been the law of Moses for then sin would not have begun with Adam. From Gen. 4.13-15 and 26.5 it further appears that already before Moses different laws and ceremonies had been given to the people of Israel. These verses must, he concluded, pertain to the law that was given to Adam in Paradise. On its basis transgression of that law was reckoned to him as sin.

In v. 14 Paul goes on to say that there were people 'whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam'. Where do these people fit in? For La Peyrère, right reason teaches that these words pertain to people who were created before Adam. This also makes it clear why it was only beginning with Adam that sin came to have the character of a transgression of the law. Before Adam people committed only natural sins (*peccata naturalia*). Unlike Adam, they had not sinned against a positive law (*peccata contra legem*). For that reason the sins that were committed before the law (*ante legem*) were not counted, and thus did not resemble the sin of Adam. Yet those sins committed after the giving of the law (*post legem*) were taken into account, and so resembled Adam's sin.[17]

16. For these influences on La Peyrère, see Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 47-48.

17. *Praeadamitae*, p. 34 (*Men before Adam*, p. 39): 'Peccata facta ante legem, neque imputata, neque facta ad similitudinem transgressionis Adami. Peccata facta post legem, imputata, & facta ad similitudinem transgressionis Adami.'

These considerations according to what La Peyrère calls 'right reason' (*recta ratio*) first of all led him to the conviction that the traditional explanation of the Genesis account contained only half the truth. As he saw it, two different creation accounts must be distinguished. The first is that of the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest; the second is the creation of Adam and Eve. The second account is not, as supposed in the traditional interpretation, a further development of what occurred on the sixth day of creation,[18] but it describes the creation of the first Jews, Adam and Eve. La Peyrère's view was that after the sixth day of creation but before the creation of Adam and Eve, other people, both men and woman, had lived on earth for many generations.[19] La Peyrère also thought that the creation of male and female in the first chapter of Genesis took place simultaneously as *one* act (*uno actu marem et foeminam simul creaverit*), while the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 was successive in nature (*non potuerit Adami & Evae productio nisi successive fieri*). After all, between the formation of Adam out of dust and the creation of Eve out of Adam there had to be, so La Peyrère argued, an interval of time before Eve was formed in order for the animals to be brought to Adam.[20]

La Peyrère's next step was to apply all that followed the second creation account only to that part of the human race that originated from Adam, that is, to the Jews. They were the ones who had survived the flood which was further local in nature, limited to Palestine, and did not extend to the other nations. Jews alone died in the flood.[21]

18. Cf. the interpretations of Thomas Aquinas (on which see the article by Harm Goris in the present volume) and of Luther (see the contribution of Theo Bell in the present collection).

19. *Systema theologicum*, Liber III, cap. 2, pp. 114-18 (*A theological systeme*, pp. 135-40). La Peyrère here gives a list of ten arguments for distinguishing the first and second creation accounts temporally. The sixth argument runs as follows: God brought all animals to Adam. It is unlikely that this occurred on that half day of which the first creation account speaks. After all, the elephants had to come all the way from India and Africa, and the different birds that came from America could never have made the crossing to Mesopotamia in a single day.

20. *Systema theologicum*, Liber III, cap. 2, p. 114 (*A theological systeme*, p. 136): 'Impossibile sed enim est, transacta fuisse illa omnia quae narrantur capite secundo, ab Adamo formato usque ad Evam aedificatam, per id temporis quod potuit adhiberi a vespere ad mane unius diei: Ergo multo minus per dimidium diei illius sexti, quo Deus creavit primum animalia omnia, deinde hominem.'

21. *Systema theologicum*, Liber IV, cap. 7, p. 206 (*A theological systeme*, p. 243): 'Diluvium illud, Iudaeorum terrae, non toti mundo, ingruisse, manifestum est. Tum ex causis diluvii ipsius, quas dudum attigi, quasque peccata fuisse Iudaeorum ostendi. Tum ex Noë Iudaeo, & filiis ejus, Iudaeorum reliquis. Tum denique ex loco in quo arca stetit, corrivatis aquis diluvii: super montes Armeniae, ait Genesis… At, certe diluvium illud peculiare Iudaeorum fuisse, intellexit Josephus, ubi contra Appionem Libro 2, auctores omnes gentilitios recenset, qui Iudaeorum meminissent.'

The implications of such a view easily come into view. La Peyrère no longer considered the history of the Bible to be a description of world history, but only of Jewish history. Nevertheless, La Peyrère was firmly convinced that his theory of the Pre-Adamites could explain a lot without in the process destroying a single article of the Christian faith and without changing anything in Scripture. In fact, as far as he was concerned this theory could play a large role in the reconciliation of Jews and Christians. In his *Apologie*, published after his retraction, he described the most important goal of his work in the following words:

> The most important goal that I had set before myself in the entire work on the Pre-Adamites was the unification of Christians and Jews; by forcing the Christians to persuade the Jews of Christianity, and the Jews to accept the Gospel of the Christians. To force the Christians to this love with respect to the Jews.[22]

La Peyrère was quite ready to draw a comparison between his theory and that of Copernicus. Copernicus did not change anything in the physical reality, but his theory was able to account better for many things than the Ptolemaic theory had. For that reason La Peyrère did not think his views to be in any way in conflict with the gospel, far less that they should undo the mysteries of the Christian religion.[23]

However, in respect of the critical questions that had been raised by others before him concerning Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, La Peyrère did follow suit. Particularly in the fourth book of the *Systema theologicum* did he develop methodologically precise investigations into the Pentateuch. According to La Peyrère, the first five books of the Bible contain many obscure and confused matters, while repetitions, omissions, misplaced passages and even contradictions were to be found in them without number. After making a lengthy inventory of these features he asked whether one could still claim that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. He answered his own question as follows:

22. La Peyrère, *Apologie de La Peyrer*[*e*] (Paris, 1663), p. 26: 'Le principal dessein que ie m' estois proposé dans l'ouurage total des Preadamites, estoit, l'union des Chrestiens & des Iuifs: En obligeant les Chrestiēs à persuader le Christianisme aux Iuifs: Et les Iuifs, à receuoir l'Evangile des Chrestiens. Pour obliger les Chrestiens à cete charité enuers les Iuifs.'

23. La Peyrère, *Praeadamitae*, 18 (*Men before Adam*, p. 20): 'Pari eventu, sive credimus Adamum fuisse creatum solum, & primum omnium hominum, sive ponimus alios homines ante Adamum fuisse genitos: stabit semper suo loco, & suis mysteriis religio omnis christiana. Summa enim & fundamentum redemtionis nostrae, quae Religio Christiana est, in eo consistit, ut credamus homines damnatos in Adamo, innocentos probatos in Christo.'

> I do not know by what author it is found out, that the Pentateuch is *Moses* his own copy. It is so reported, but not believ'd by all. These Reasons lead [?—word illegible in copy consulted] me to believe, that those Five Books are not the Originals, but copied out by another. Because *Moses* is there read to have died. For how could *Moses* write after his death?[24]

From this quotation it is clear that La Peyrère raised questions concerning the authenticity of the *textus receptus* of the Scripture, and doubted the accuracy of the biblical chronology. This criticism, together with the theory of the Pre-Adamites, formed for his contemporaries the heretical core of his books and immediately aroused sharp opposition. After all, La Peyrère had dared to question the framework of biblical history which in turn lost its reputation as historically accurate. By the Roman Catholic inquisition this was even considered a crime, and for that reason La Peyrère was put in prison in Brussels. Even so, in the *Prae-Adamitae* and *Systema theologicum* La Peyrère gave expression to views that would exercise great influence on the Jewish thinker Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) and on the Roman Catholic priest Richard Simon in his *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1678). Although Spinoza and Simon rejected the theory of the Pre-Adamites, they did share La Peyrère's critical approach to the Pentateuch.[25]

La Peyrère and World History

In Chapter 40 of his monumental *City of God*, Augustine qualified the pagan claims on chronology as fables and myths. Of the Egyptians' conviction, for example, that their wisdom stretched back more than one-hundred thousand years he wrote that it was based on lies and deception. According to the biblical narrative, the world was not even six thousand years old.[26]

Augustine's view of world history held out for centuries. It also did not collapse from one moment to the next. In fact, the revival of interest in history during the time of humanism and the Reformation even strengthened the place of the Bible rather than weakened it. Luther relied unconditionally on the Bible as a source for historical information.[27] In the writings of his friend and colleague Melanchthon, pagan history and biblical history are almost seamlessly joined together. According to Melanchthon, Herodotus

24. *Systema theologicum*, Liber IV, cap. 1, p. 174 (*A theological systeme*, pp. 204-205).

25. For these lines of influence, see Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 87ff.

26. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 43.40, whose caption reads: 'About the most mendacious vanity of the Egyptians, in which they ascribe to their science an antiquity of a hundred thousand years'.

27. M. Luther, *Supputatio annorum* (1541), in *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 53 (Weimar, 1920), pp. 22ff.

began his historical accounts precisely at the point where the prophet Jeremiah ended, namely, with Pharaoh Apries (in the Old Testament: Hophra) who killed Jeremiah.[28]

It was only at the end of the sixteenth century that things began to change. New developments in history writing and, parallel to it, discoveries in geography—partly with the recent journeys of exploration—put an end to the convergence of Bible and secular history.[29]

Also La Peyrère made a considerable contribution to the new developments in historiography and geography. In 1644 he accompanied the French ambassador Matthieu de la Thuillerie to Copenhagen in order to mediate there in a conflict between Sweden and Denmark, which efforts led to the Peace of Brömsebro (1645). La Peyrère used his stay in Denmark to collect material for his books on Greenland and Iceland and their original inhabitants.[30] With that he involved himself in a dispute that crossed international boundaries concerning the origin of the Indians of America who, according to Hugo de Groot (Grotius), descended from the Norsemen. La Peyrère rejected this theory because his research revealed that the Norsemen already encountered Eskimos on Greenland. Where had these then come from? La Peyrère used the material he had collected about the Eskimos to respond to de Groot, who in turn attacked the theory of the Pre-Adamites.[31] Aside from the above, there were in the seventeenth century also disputes on the origin of the inhabitants of Australia and New Zealand. What was their origin? Also in those places there could have been people who lived before Adam. Could there in fact not have been two Adams: one for Australia and Asia, and one for Europe?[32]

These observations raise the question how these 'new' peoples are to be integrated into the geographical and chronological framework of the Bible. According to La Peyrère, this could only be accomplished by means of a polygenetic theory of origin. As he saw it, the theory of the Pre-Adamites

28. *Corpus reformatorum*, XII, p. 714: 'Et considerent iuniores, fere ibi Herodotum ordiri suam historiam, ubi Hieremias desinit, videlicet in rege Aprie, qui Hieremiam interfecit'.

29. See Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme*, pp. 92-98.

30. *Relation de Groënland* (Paris, 1647); *Relation d'Islande* (Paris, 1663). The latter work is dated 18 December 1644, but was not printed until 1663. A German translation of the former was published in 1674. See Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 11ff.

31. See H. Grotius, *Dissertatio altera de origine gentium Americanarum adversus objectatorem* (s.l., 1643), pp. 13-14. De Groot considered the theory of the Pre-Adamites a threat to religion and defended a monogenetic view with respect to the inhabitants of North and South America.

32. See O. Zöckler, *Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen Theologie und Naturwissenschaften*, I (Gütersloh, 1877), p. 340, and 'Peyrère's (gest. 1676) Präadamiten-Hypothese nach ihren Beziehungen zu den anthropologischen Fragen der Gegenwart', *Zeitschrift für die gesammte Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 39 (1878), pp. 28-48.

gave greater insight into the first chapters of Genesis. This book of Scripture could now be brought in line with recently discovered pagan documents, such as those of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Scythians and Chinese. La Peyrère then continued his argument as follows:

> that most ancient Creation which is set down in the first of Genesis is reconciled [conciliatur] to those of Mexico, not long ago discovered by Columbus; It is likewise reconciled to those Northern and Southern Nations which are not known, All whom, as likewise those of the first and most ancient creation, were, it is probable, created with the Earth itself in all its parts thereof, and not propagated from Adam.[33]

Clearly La Peyrère could no longer bring his newly acquired knowledge into harmony with the traditional biblical view on the Adamic or monogenetic ancestry of the human race. The framework within which the biblical narrative had been placed up to that time therefore had to be revised so as to offer room for the new view of world history. The Pre-Adamite interpretation of the biblical narrative offered itself as a serious alternative to explain the origin and progress of world history. Around the middle of the seventeenth century it represented one of the most substantial critiques that drastically changed the traditional Christian view of world history.[34]

La Peyrère and Reformed Orthodoxy

Striking is the fact that La Peyrère published an *Apologie* in 1663, after his retraction in Rome, in which he emphatically argued that his views on the Pre-Adamites were a result of his Calvinist stance:

> It was when I was still a Calvinist that the thought on the Pre-Adamites came up in me and I could do little but follow the movement of my particular spirit which was inspired by that of Calvin who imbued me with this conviction. And I could and had to develop that idea that came up in my imaginative faculty, provided only that I believed it to be based on Holy Scripture… And even if Calvin had a view opposed to that of the Pre-Adamites, I nevertheless fought Calvin with Calvin himself.[35]

33. *Praeadamitae*, cap. 8, p. 19 (*Men before Adam*, p. 22): 'Adde, quod ex positione hac, quae statuit primos homines ante Adamum creatos, clarior multo apparet historia Geneseos. Conciliatur eadem cum seipsa. Conciliatur item miris modis cum monumentis omnibus prophanis, sive antiquis sive recentioribus: Chaldeis puta, Aegyptis, Scythis, & Sinensibus. Conciliatur vetustissima rerum creatio, quae exponitur capite primo Geneseos, cum hominibus Mexicanis quos non ita diu Columbus penetravit. Conciliatur eadem cum hominibus Australibus & Septentrionalibus, qui nondum cogniti sunt. Quos omnes, sicut & illos primae & vetussimae creationis rerum, quae enarratur cap. 1 Geneseos; probabile est creatos fuisse cum terra ipsa in terris omnibus, neque ab Adamo propagatos.'

34. Cf. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung*, p. 75.

35. *Apologie*, pp. 3 and 5: 'Ou' estant Caluniste lors que la panseé me vint des Preadamites, ie ne pouuois moins faire que de suiure le mouuement de mon esprit parti-

This appeal to Calvin (against Calvin, if need be), together with the theory of the Pre-Adamites, was more than most Reformed theologians of the time could stomach. The most comprehensive refutation from the Orthodox Reformed party, to which many other authors would later appeal, came from the pen of the Groningen professor Samuel Maresius.[36] According to Nauta, Maresius had already learned of La Peyrère's *Praeadamitae* while it still circulated in manuscript form.[37] After its printing and public diffusion—as noted above, there were no fewer than five printings in *one* year (1655)![38]—Maresius received a copy sent to him by his cousin Johannes le Long, pastor of Middelburg, who also urged him to respond. After some hesitation—since it seemed to him to be worthy of contempt rather than response—Maresius wrote a refutation entitled *Refutatio fabulae prae-adamiticae* (1656).[39] Although La Peyrère's book had already been proscribed by the States General that very same year,[40] Maresius thought that it ought to be refuted with solid arguments in order to prevent these views of his compatriot being considered Reformed. In seven chapters, drawn up in the form of scholastic *quaestiones*[41] and counting some 266 pages in quarto, Maresius presented an

culier, inspiré de celuy de Caluin, qui m' auoit imbu de cette croyance; que ie pouuais & deuois pousser tele opinion qui me viendroit dans la fantasie, pourueu que ie la crûsse fondeé sur l'Escriture sainte… Si bien, que' encore que Caluin eust esté d'un auis contraire à celuy des Preadamites, ie combatois neanmoins Caluin par Caluin mesme.'

36. See Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, pp. 80-82. For the life of Maresius (Des Marets), see *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse protestantisme*, part 1 (Kampen: Kok, 1978), pp. 158-60.

37. Doede Nauta, *Samuel Maresius* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1935), pp. 328-30.

38. See Jacobus I. Doedes, 'Vijf drukken van Is. de la Peyrère's Praeadamitae, uit het jaar 1655', in *Studien en Bijdragen op 't gebied der historische theologie* (collected by W. Moll and J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, IV; Amsterdam: G.L. Funke, 1880), pp. 238-42.

39. The full title is: *Refutatio fabulae Prae-adamiticae, absoluta septem primariis quaestionibus, cum praefatione apologetica pro authentiai Scripturarum*, Groningae, typis Francisci Bronchorstii, civitatis Groninganae ord. typogr. Anno MD.C.LVI [in the library of the University of Amsterdam]. In the same year, the same publisher printed an *Editio altera* of this work in duodecimo format (689 pp.). It would thus appear that the demand for Maresius's refutation was high. This edition is the same as the earlier one, with the exception of differences in the *errata*. For the present study all references are to *Editio altera* of Maresius's *Refutatio.*

40. See Willem P.C. Knuttel, *Verboden boeken in de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden. Beredeneerde catalogus* (Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Ned. boekhandel, XI; 's-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1914), p. 93. Knuttel dates the resolution to 10 February 1656. Nauta, *Samuel* Maresius, p. 328, gives the correct date of 26 November 1655. For the text and date of the resolution in question, see Maresius, *Refutatio*, pp. cix-cxv.

41. For an explanation of the use of the scholastic *quaestio*, see Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (eds.), *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 24-28.

abstract of his arguments against La Peyrère. According to him, the basic error in the Pre-Adamite theory was that it adopted an ambiguous position with respect to Scripture because it denied divine authority to passages in the Bible that conflicted. This assumption, so Maresius thought, undermined the authority of Scripture and relativized the divine truth. He further argued that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, even if the existence of additions was not to be excluded. But even then these additions were incorporated by an inspired author.[42]

That La Peyrère considered Maresius's arguments significant is evident from the fact that, out of all the writings that were directed against him, he composed a defence only against Maresius. It was never published, however, and circulated only in manuscript form.[43] The fact that the response to Maresius was never published may have been related to the promise La Peyrère made at his retraction not to publish anything further on the Pre-Adamites.

After Maresius many other Reformed authors viciously attacked La Peyrère. Some took over—literally at times—the arguments of Maresius, including Antonius Hulsius, who was Walloon pastor at Breda from 1644 to 1648 and who from 1646 onwards also served as professor at the *illustre* school there. Hulsius called the Pre-Adamite man a *non-ens*.[44] Louis Cappel (1585–1658), Professor of Hebrew and Theology at the Reformed Academy of Saumur, corresponded with La Peyrère several times on this matter, while the Groningen professor Martinus Schoock (1614–1669) defended the universal character of the flood against him. Other prominent theologians from the second half of the seventeenth century who took up arms against the Pre-Adamites included Johann Heinrich Heidegger (1633–1698), Professor of Theology in Zürich, and Friedrich Spanheim Jr. (1632–1701), professor at Leiden.[45] In the eighteenth century orthodox theologians such as Johannes à

42. See Maresius, *Refutatio*, praefatio, pp. xxxvi-xli.

43. See Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 330. In the Museé Condé at Chantilly (Ms. 193) is held: *Réponse aux calomnies de Des Marais, ministre á Groningue.* The Bibliothèque municipale of Dôle (Ms. 107) houses: *Réponse de la Peyrère*, *aux calomnies de Des Marais, ministre á Groningue.*

44. Antonius Hulsius, *Non-ens prae-adamiticum, sive Confutatio vani et socinizantis cujusdam somnii, quo S. Scripturae praetextu incautioribus nuper imponere conatus est quidam anonymus figens ante Adamum primum homines fuisse in mundo* (Lugduni Batavorum [= Leiden]: Elsevier, 1656).

45. Louis Cappel, *The Hinge of Faith and Religion*; *or, A Proof of the Deity against Atheists and Profane Persons, by Reason, and the Testimony of Scripture, the Divinity of which is Demonstrated* (trans. Philip Martinel; London, 1660); Martinus Schoockius, *Diluvium Noachi universale sive vindiciae communis sententiae quod Diluvium Noachicum universae terrae incubuerit* (Groningen, 1662); Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Historia sacra patriarchum* (Amsterdam, 1667); Friedrich Spanheim, *Disputatio*

Marck (1656–1731) and Bernardinus de Moor (1709–1780) still challenged extensively the Pre-Adamite hypothesis.[46] The nineteenth-century Reformed dogmatician Herman Bavinck likewise gave a negative judgment of La Peyrère's polygenetic views.[47]

A clear overview of the Orthodox Reformed position against La Peyrère was offered by the Reformed professor Francis Turretin in his *Institutio theologiae elencticae* (1688).[48] According to this Genevan theologian, it was the opinion not only of Christians that Adam and Eve were the first human beings, but Jews and Muslims shared this view as well. In the *quaestio*, in which Turretin, in contrast to the vehement Maresius, dealt in a gracious manner with La Peyrère's views—without naming him—he offered six arguments against the Pre-Adamite thesis. Turretin first appealed to the 'voice of Scripture' (*Scripturae vox*) which presents Adam as the first man in the universal sense. In 1 Cor. 15.45 and 47 he is called 'the first man' (*ho prootos anthropos*), while Wis. 7.1 speaks of Adam as the 'first-formed father of earth' (*protoplastos pater tou kosmou*). In the second place, Eve is called the 'mother of all living' in Gen. 3.20. This would not be correct if only the Jews were her descendants. Furthermore, in the third place, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and Lk. 3.23-37 begin or end with Adam, while Paul in Acts 17.26 claims that God 'made from one man every nation of mankind'. If Jews and heathens were to have had a different origin, then Paul's words would be incorrect, something inconceivable in the eyes of this orthodox theologian.

Turretin's three remaining arguments against La Peyrère were more systematic in character. La Peyrère had advanced that Adam, although he was not the first man, still *could* be called the 'first man' in analogy to the fact that Christ, although he was not the last man, was still called 'the second Adam' and 'the last Adam'.[49]

theologica de statu instituto primi hominis, in *Opera*, Tomus III (Leiden, 1703), pp. 1249ff.

46. Johannes à Marck, *Historia paradisi illustrata libris quatuor* (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius, 1705), II, p. 2 §3f.; Bernhard de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Joh. Marckii compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum* (Lugduni Batavorum: Johannes Hasebroek, 1761–78), II, pp. 1001-1005.

47. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; 4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–2008), II, *God and Creation*, pp. 523-24.

48. For Turretin's attack on La Peyrère, see Eginhard P. Meijering, *Reformierte Scholastik und Patristische Theologie. Die Bedeutung des Väterbeweises in der Institutio theologiae elencticae F. Turrettins unter Berücksichtigung der Gotteslehre und Christologie* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf Publishers, 1991), p. 158.

49. La Peyrère, *Praeadamitae*, p. 18 (*Men before Adam*, pp. 20-21): 'Quemadmodum autem non necesse erat, Iesum Christum fuisse ultimum omnium hominum, qui aulea mundi tolleret, ut mundum & omnes homines absolveret: ita neque necesse erat Adamum

To this Turretin responded that Adam was called 'the first' by Paul in 1 Cor. 15.45 not only with respect to Christ, but also in relation to the other human beings who bear his image. The expression 'second Adam' does not mean that Christ is the second created individual of the human race; it pertains to the fact that he is the second root and the second head of the human race (*secunda radix & stirps hominum*). According to Turretin the contrast between Adam and Christ is between *duo capita* or two heads of humanity, of which the first communicates natural life (*vitam animalem*) and thereby also sin and death, while the second communicates spiritual and eternal life. For Turretin, this was precisely what Paul was trying to express in 1 Cor. 15.45. That Christ is called 'the last Adam' does not lie in the fact that he was born as the last, but relates to his position as head of the human race, a position that, after Adam, only Christ could fulfil.

Turretin also rejected the suggestion that Genesis 1–2 speaks of two separate creation accounts. If two different Adams were meant here, the second would not be created after the image of God and the first would not be given the gift of God's spirit, because the former is not mentioned in the second creation account while the latter is not noted in the first. One could further conclude that marriage was not instituted for the first human pair, which would in turn conflict with the teaching of Christ in Mt. 19.4 and 5. La Peyrère's view that the creation of male and female in Genesis 1 was simultaneous, while that of Adam and Eve was successive, depended on two incorrect hypotheses. In the first place, the creation of male and female in Genesis 1 could not be a simultaneous act given that it concerns two substances (male and female), as can also be concluded from 1 Tim. 2.13 and 1 Cor. 11.8 and 9. Secondly, it is incorrect to assume that the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 could not happen on the same day. Although Turretin admitted that Adam and Eve were created one after the other (*successive*), he argued that one could nevertheless not conclude that male and female in Genesis 1 were created at another point in time, as La Peyrère had claimed.

Finally, Turretin countered the distinction La Peyrère had drawn between a natural transgression (and death) of the Pre-Adamites and a legal transgression on the part of Adam where death was not natural but rather a punishment for sin. According to Turretin, sin could never be called 'natural', for that would disqualify God as creator of nature; nor can it be said of death that it is 'natural', for in that case man would die necessarily, even without

fuisse primum omnium hominum, qui mundi proscenia iniret, ut mundum & omnes homines condemnaret. Manent ergo suis locis, primus Adamus & secundus Adamus: remanet semper inter Adamum & Christum, typus ille sanctus, circa quem redemptio nostra, & doctrina omnis christiana reciprocantur; etsi dicimus primos homines fuisse creatos ante Adamum.'

sinning. One can only speak of sin if a law is transgressed: sin is lawlessness (*anomia*). As an orthodox-Reformed theologian, Turretin was very much aware of the consequences to which the theory of the Pre-Adamites could lead. For, if already before Adam and Eve, and so before the Fall, there were people who lived and died, then death is a natural phenomenon and not a punishment for sin. If this were the case, the Socinians and Pelagians would be right.[50]

Relevance of the Pre-Adamite Debates

The Genevan theologian Turretin, and in fact the entire seventeenth-century Protestant world—including such thinkers as Hugo de Groot—looked on La Peyrère's views as a strange heresy that formed a great threat to the Christian religion. All the same, La Peyrère's views did not make him a clear representative of the upcoming religious scepticism[51] or an advocate of modern biblical criticism, and even less a precursor of eighteenth-century liberal deism.[52] After all, La Peyrère emphatically maintained the intervention of divine providence and election in the history of the nation of Israel, and in no way contested the historical veracity of the two creation accounts. All the same, it is justified to posit that he read the first two chapters of Genesis in a 'historical-critical' manner because he distinguished within these chapters of Genesis *duo tempora*, that is, two (historically reliable) creation accounts.

Orthodox critics such as Turretin, who principally attacked La Peyrère's exegetical arguments, thought that they could refute him with little effort. Yet the problem that formed the occasion for La Peyrère's Pre-Adamite

50. Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, pars I, locus 5, quaestio viii, art. 7, p. 506: 'Frustra Praeadamita distinguit hic transgressionem & mortem, naturalem & legalem, ut haec per Adamum introducta sit, ista vero ejus natalia multis seculis praecesserit in gentilibus Praeadamitis, qui obnoxii fuerint peccato & morti naturali, ex innata sibi natura corruptibili & mortali, *Systema Theolog*. lib. 1, caput 1. & 3. Nam nec peccatum potest dici naturale, quin impingatur in Deum ipsum authorem naturae. Nec mors naturalis dici debet, quasi homo moriturus necessario fuerit, etsi non peccasset, quod commentum fuit Pelagii & Socini, a Praeadamita adoptatum, contra expressa Pauli verba, qui mortem per peccatum ingressam esse asserit, Rom. 5, 12. & opsonia peccati esse mortem, Rom. 6, 23.'

51. *Contra* Popkin, 'The Development of Religious Skepticism and the Influence of Isaac La Peyrère's Pre-Adamism and Bible Criticism', in R.R. Bolgar (ed.), *Classical Influences on European Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 271-80.

52. See, for example, D. Rice McKee, 'La Peyrére, Precursor of 18th Century Critical Deists', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 62.2 (1944), pp. 456-85.

theory—the enormous amount of new scientific knowledge and information—was hardly touched at all by the orthodox party within any of the major Christian confessions.[53] The orthodox theologians accepted only the Bible as the source of scientific knowledge and truth because, as they saw it, the Bible was founded on divine truth. Other sources of knowledge (such as nature and history) were pushed aside because they lacked divine authority. Yet with their condemnation of La Peyrère, the orthodox not only rejected all non-biblical sources of knowledge of world history, they at the same time rejected an interpretation of the Bible that departed from the traditional reading according to which Genesis 1 and 2 report the same events.

La Peyrère thus offered an alternative exegetical possibility over and against the traditional reading of Genesis 1 and 2. He was convinced that, in holding to it, he did not place himself outside the bounds of the Christian confession. He maintained the veracity of the Bible, but thought that it should be interpreted in a different way. His followers, who no longer held to the veracity of the Bible, soon secularized his Pre-Adamite theory. Although this was never La Peyrère's intention, his theory contributed in a not unimportant way to the development of the view of humanity and world offered by the Enlightenment. The *textus receptus* of the Bible was no longer considered faithful, and biblical history no longer coincided with world history. Bible, world history and secular historiography no longer formed a unity.

Finally, we should note the remarkable fact that the theory of the Pre-Adamites, which in the past was so emphatically condemned by Protestant theology, is currently used—admittedly in popular form—in Evangelical circles as a strategy for harmonizing modern science and a literal reading of the biblical creation account. John Stott, a leading theologian in the ecumenical wing within the Evangelical movement, declared in 1978: 'my acceptance of Adam and Eve as historical is not incompatible with my belief that several forms of pre-Adamic "hominids" may have existed for thousands of years previously'.[54] According to Stott, it is quite conceivable that God created Adam from these 'hominids', and these 'hominids' could be

53. See Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme*, pp. 98ff. Cf. Fritz Wagner, *Die Anfänge der modernen Geschichtswissenschaft im 17. Jahrhundert* (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil. hist. Klasse, Jahrgang 1979, Heft 2; Munich: C.H. Beck, 1979); See also *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (36 vols.; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1977–2004), XII, p. 634; *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (6 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 3rd edn, 1957–62), IV, pp. 232-33. Curiously, references to the pre-Adamite theory and La Peyrère are absent in the 4th edn of *RGG* (8 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2005).

54. John R.W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible: The Story of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 5.

called *homo erectus* or even *homo sapiens*. Yet Adam was the first *homo divinus*, that is, the first man created in the image of God.

It is all part of the game. What began as heresy can sometimes end up as orthodoxy.[55]

55. For an informative overview of this development, see David N. Livingstone, 'Preadamites: The History of an Idea from Heresy to Orthodoxy', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1978), pp. 41-66.

The Promise of a Salutary Difference: Adam and Eve in the Theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher*

Heleen Zorgdrager

Biographical Background

The theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) began and maintained intensive friendships with many men and women during his lifetime. However, the ties to his three-year younger sister Charlotte were of special importance. They felt drawn to each other from an early age. Both were contemplative in nature, which was also expressed in a youthful passion for a pious and truthful life. To their and their parents' great joy, in 1783 they were admitted within a short time span of each other to the educational institutes of the Moravian Herrnhuter Brethren. Friedrich was enrolled as a pupil at the boys' boarding school at Niesky; Charlotte entered the 'Schwesternhaus' at Gnadenfrei. This common experience of a youth stamped and formed by the warm religious climate of the Moravian community strengthened their relationship and was to become a lifelong frame of reference for recognition and intimate communication.

From their earliest beginnings steps in the Moravian community, a lively and open correspondence developed between brother and sister. Not only did Friedrich and Charlotte correspond about daily life, but they also entrusted each other with personal struggles concerning spiritual and moral matters. The correspondence continued full-force, even after Friedrich dissociated himself from the Moravian Brethren in 1787, following a deep personal crisis. Its religious climate and way of life had become too stifling for him. He wanted to fly out into the world, initially for intellectual reasons, but increasingly in a social sense as well.

Following his theology studies in Halle, and after a period of wandering in temporary jobs, Friedrich was awarded the position of minister to the

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Charité Hospital in Berlin. Here, in the worldly cosmopolitan Berlin, a city where everything was in motion and the spirit of Enlightenment was rife and shook the remains of feudal structures, the world opened up for him. Friedrich was a welcome guest at the salons of cultured Jewish women such as Henriette Herz, Dorothea Veit-Mendelssohn, and Rahel Varnhagen. These women opened their homes to progressive thinkers and poets of the time, and stimulated the intellectual and moral debate. The cultural atmosphere of the salons offered a fertile soil for the emergence of the Early Romantic movement ('Frühromantik'). Men and women met here on the basis of equality and individuality. Modern literature, exciting discoveries in science, stormy political developments since the French Revolution, and the need for an encompassing cultural revolution were all topics of discussion. Fun was made of the 'Philister' (narrow-minded bourgeois) and their fossilized ideas on marriage and love, anchored in a moralistic ideology of 'femininity'. There was free experimentation with alternative relationships between the sexes.

The young clergyman Friedrich Schleiermacher moved within these emancipated circles with striking ease. He made life-long friendships. Openly and confidently he shared thoughts and feelings with Henriette Herz, and he began a love affair with a married woman, Eleonore Grunow. In a theoretical sense he personally contributed to the early Romantic movement with startling publications in which he laid the foundation for a radical new programme for religion and ethics in modern times.[1] It is remarkable how a critical and fundamental reflection on the relationship between the sexes formed a substantial part of his theoretical project. To the young Schleiermacher, transforming thinking about gender-differences and gendered social practices that hindered women—and men—from realizing their humanity to its fullest, was high on the cultural agenda. With verve he called upon women to deliver themselves from the chains of miseducation ('aus den Fesseln der Mißbildung'),[2] and in his writings he confronted those mental representations and opinions that maintained this 'Mißbildung' ideologically.

The Church establishment watched Friedrich Schleiermacher's movements with Argus' eyes. From the 'Schwesternhaus' in Gnadenfrei Charlotte

1. See, among others, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799); *Monologen* (1800); *Vertraute Briefe über Friedrich Schlegels Lucinde* (1800). I discuss these writings extensively in my *Theologie die verschil maakt. Taal en seksedifferentie als sleutels tot Schleiermachers denken* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003) [*Theology that Makes a Difference: Language and Sexual Difference as Keys to Schleiermacher's Thought.* Not available in translation.]

2. 'Ideen zu einem Katechismus der Vernunft für edle Frauen' (1798), in F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, I/2 (Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–99; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1984), p. 154 (hereafter *KGA*).

could also not help but express her concern as to the liberties her brother took in his relationships with the opposite sex. In a letter from 28 December 1798 she warns him:

> …in Berlin you find other entities that together with the excitement of the finest, well-read gracious persons, together with insight into human nature and corporal beauty will chain you, attract you often involuntarily from within, in such an astounding way, that being with the other transforms you as it were—Brother! I speak very clearly—but do not explain it another way—You speak as having no passions—I will believe that it is so—although you contradict yourself in your own letters—the thing is—what I have to say about this is: …—Herz is not a family member and that you are not only alone with her for hours but that you also stay up late with her—that is too much! Will say no more as that in such situations you lower your dignity which otherwise befits a man so well!… [And after a pass at his relationship with Eleonore Grunow:]—just think that you as a man—are dealing with the weaker creatures—with women who as you yourself say, do not always live with their husbands in harmony…[3]

She also asks how this can all be compatible with his calling as a minister.

So, via Charlotte's mirror, we receive an impression, at the very least, of the unconventional way in which Friedrich Schleiermacher entered the thorny field of male–female relationships at the end of the eighteenth century. From her brother's reply, one revealing sentence suffices: 'It is very deeply rooted in my nature, dear Lotte, that I attach myself more closely to women than to men; for there is so much in my soul that men seldom understand'.[4]

This biographical background makes one curious as to the image Schleiermacher develops of Adam end Eve, as the couple that has become

3. *KGA* V/2 (Briefwechsel 1796–98; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988), p. 445: '…in Berlin finden sich wieder andre Gegenstände, die, verbunden mit dem Reiz der feinsten Belesenheit, und Menschenkenntniß, zugleich mit den Feßeln der schönsten körperlichen Bildung—einer Anmuth, die von innen heraus oft unwillkührlich, so erstaunend anzieht und das Wesen des andern, gleichsam, in das seine versezt—Bruder! ich rede sehr deutlich—aber lege mirs nicht anders aus—Du sprichst daß nichts leidenschaftliches hiebei—ich will es glauben—obschon Du Dir in Deinem eignen Briefe auch darüber wiedersprichst—es sei—nur das was ich dabei zu sagen habe ist: …—daß Herz keine Verwandtin ist—und daß Du nicht nur ganze Stunden mit ihr allein sondern auch bei ihr wachst—das ist zu viel! will aber nichts weiter sagen, als daß Du in dergleichen Situationen, Dich heruntersezt von der Würde die einem Manne so wohl steht!…—denke nur daß Du Mensch—und es mit schwachen Geschöpfen zu thun hast—mit Weibern, die wie Du selbst sagst, nicht imer ganz harmonisch mit ihren Mänern leben…'

4. *KGA* V/3 (Briefwechsel 1799–1800; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1992), p. 46: 'Es liegt sehr tief in meiner Natur, liebe Lotte, daß ich mich immer genauer an Frauen anschließen werde als an Männer, denn es ist so vieles in meinem Gemüth was diese selten verstehen'.

traditionally paradigmatic for systematic theological reflection on the relationship between the sexes. In light of his engagement with gender questions, how does he read the biblical narratives of creation and Fall? From which hermeneutics? Does he enter new paths with his imagination and theological interpretations? Is he applying—as in his ethics—a form of iconoclasm? And let us raise the question of theological anthropology: which visions of being human in the image of God does he present to us in his reading of the first stories in Genesis? Which lines lead from there to the main themes in his theology? How liberating or transforming are these visions seen from a feminist perspective?

In the text that follows, I will focus on and discuss the most important passages in Schleiermacher's work in which he refers to the figures of Adam and Eve. We will begin with a short discussion of the fairly problematic place of the Old Testament in the theologian's work. The question that runs as the main theme is whether, within Schleiermacher's fragmentary discussions about the 'first human couple', we can find inspirational elements for a non-patriarchal, liberating, creative way of dealing with sexual difference in systematic theology.

The Place and Meaning of the Old Testament

If we think how little interest the theologian and preacher Schleiermacher generally showed in the Old Testament, in comparison his interest in the stories about Adam and Eve stands out in a positive way. He rarely took subjects from the Old Testament for his sermons, preferring texts 'of a more general nature' from the wisdom literature and related passages from the Psalms. Most of these Old Testament sermons were held on a national holiday, when the sermon text was set by the government, or on the occasion of New Year. Within his many exegetical lectures, Professor Schleiermacher limited himself to the writings of the New Testament.

Theologically speaking, we cannot deny that Schleiermacher awarded a very low status to the Old Testament.[5] In his 1930 encyclopaedia of theological studies, *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums zum Behuf einleitender Vorlesungen* (*Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*), he calls it no more than 'the most general resource' for understanding the New Testament (§141).[6] Indeed, he found knowledge of the 'Jewish codex'

5. See the general article by Rudolf Smend, 'Die Kritik am Alten Testament', in Dietz Lange (ed.), *Friedrich Schleiermacher 1768–1834. Theologe—Philosoph—Pädagoge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), pp. 106-28.

6. Zweite umgearbeitete Ausgabe, in *KGA* I/6 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1998), p. 377: 'Daher sind die alttestamentlichen Bücher zugleich das allgemeinste Hülfsbuch zum Verständniß des neuen Testaments'.

indispensable for understanding images and language in the New Testament, and he did not deny that there was a specific historical connection between Christianity and Judaism. However, in principal, and this is the central point, Schleiermacher opposes the idea that *as a religion* the emergence of Christianity was dependent on Judaism. He was convinced that each religion has its own original, totally free starting point. The central intuition, the 'Grundanschauung' of the Christian religion, is not a continuation or reformation of Judaism. In Christ something truly new has come into history, a new way to view and live the relationship to God. This point, which must be stressed strongly, explains why he hammers away at the idea that living Christianity does not need to lean upon Judaism. As far as faith is concerned, the bridge to Judaism might be broken without any great loss.[7] He awards the Old Testament no canonical status in the Christian Church.[8]

This is not the place to go into such strong statements from Schleiermacher. Caricature distortion stands in the way of the real value of the Old Testament, as seen for example by his extremely legal understanding of the 'law' in Judaism. This disparaging judgment was partially due to the comparably poor body of Old Testament scholarship available in his lifetime. Yet, in part, he also maintains a critical distance. He opposes the ubiquitous use of the scheme of prophecy and fulfilment in which the relationship between Old and New Testament texts used to be cast by most contemporary biblical scholars. Many Christians, he said, are tempted to 'tinker with explaining the Holy Book'.[9] Old Testament texts are taken out of context and explained randomly, just to give them a prophetic meaning for the Gospel. In such cases Schleiermacher prefers to listen to the Old Testament texts in their own sense and meaning—admitting that there are some similarities with the Gospel but also entirely dissimilar and strange elements.[10]

7. *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt, 1830/31* (Glaubenslehre, 2nd abbrev. edn, 1830–31) (ed. Martin Redeker; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1960), §12, pp. 83-86.

8. *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (1. Auflage), Teil II.1, §3, in *KGA* I/6, p. 272: 'Den jüdischen Codex mit in den Kanon ziehen, heißt das Christenthum als eine Fortsezung des Judenthums ansehn, und streitet gegen die Idee des Kanon'. *Kurze Darstellung* (2. Auflage), §115, in *KGA* I/6, p. 369: 'Daß der jüdische Codex keine normale Darstellung eigenthümlich christlicher Glaubenssäze enthalte, wird wol bald allgemein anerkannt sein. Deshalb aber ist nicht nöthig—wiewohl es auch zuläßig bleiben muß—von dem altkirchlichen Gebrauch abzuweichen, der das alte Testament mit dem neuen zu einem Ganzen als Bibel vereinigt'.

9. *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Sämmtliche Werke* (Abt. II [Predigten], Bd. 2; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1834), p. 390: 'an der Auslegung der heiligen Schrift zu künsteln'.

10. *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Sämmtliche Werke*, Abt. II, Bd. 2, p. 389: 'wir finden…neben dem ähnlichsten auch das ganz unähnliche und fremde'.

Now it is true that both the gospels themselves as well as St. Paul's letters contain quotations from Old Testament texts. Schleiermacher felt that these particular texts, which already had been made productive in Christian self-consciousness, were worthy of receiving a fruitful place in Church preaching. It is not that we need them to support our Christian beliefs, but that they help us in providing a richer and more illustrative image of the Redeemer and of life as redeemed human beings. Dogmatic theology may also refer to such Old Testament texts that can be proved to have been referred to either directly or indirectly in the New Testament.[11] This lends them value and scriptural authority.

From this background, Schleiermacher brings up the Adam and Eve stories in Genesis 2 and 3 in his sermons and theological discussions. Note his historic-traditional argumentation: *as* the Apostle Paul calls upon these stories (cf. 1 Cor. 15.21; 2 Cor. 11.3; Rom. 5.12-21; Eph. 5.22-31) and *as* they helped shape dogmatic tenets—having certain relevance for the Christian faith in the Pauline context—*so* the theologian Schleiermacher starts to work on them as well. The stories are not a direct expression of pious Christian self-consciousness. However, a careful explanation of these very stories about 'origins' and 'beginning' may be helpful in demarcating the borders of what belongs to the Christian faith and what does not.

Nowhere does Schleiermacher read Genesis 2 and 3 as literal history (and he leaves the question of whether Paul does so unresolved). He prefers to speak of the stories of creation and Fall as a 'holy saga' or a 'didactical saga' ('Lehrsage'), or refers to them as the Mosaic narrative ('mosaische Erzählung'). In his view these stories have a universal symbolic meaning for all of humanity. Also in his method of interpretation he wants to do justice to the narrative status of these texts. He reads the Adam and Eve stories deliberately as symbolic ('sinnbildlich'), and thus revitalizes the ancient Church practice of allegorical exegesis. His image-filled retelling of the story of creation in the *Reden über die Religion* we could even call—in modern terms—a form of narrative theology.

Adam and Eve and the Source of Religious Consciousness

Schleiermacher provides an original, deep interpretation of the creation story in Gen. 2.18-25, in his famous *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (*On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*) of 1799. In the second *Speech* he develops a new concept of religion. He describes it as that experience in which a human being is affected, in an

11. *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt, 1821/22* (Glaubenslehre, 1st abbrev. edn, 1821–22), §30, Anmerkung b, in *KGA* I/7.1 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1980), p. 103.

inexplicable way, by the motions of the Universe—in and through finite reality. Religion is the intuition and feeling of the Universe ('Anschauung und Gefühl des Universums').[12] In an intensely personal way, a human being is touched by infinite divine reality that lovingly reveals itself to him or her. In the immediate experiences of the being and acting of the Universe, the realization breaks through that one is essentially connected with everything living in the world.

However, the next question is where we find the 'material' ('Stoff') of religion. What really causes this experience to be kindled into life? It is not contemplating visible nature outside, however impressively it may present itself to us. For that outer nature only receives its meaning and expression from one's inner emotion.

'Let me solve a mystery that is hidden in one of the oldest documents of poetry in religion', so begins his allegorical explanation of the biblical story of creation.[13] In the situation of man in Paradise (note that Adam's name is not mentioned), he was alone amid magnificent nature. But the sense ('Sinn') for the world was missing and he was filled with deep loneliness. The Deity spoke to him in many ways but he did not understand Her, for he did not answer. Man was driven by yearning for a world to live in. The Deity saw that the world was 'nothing', was meaningless for man as long as he was alone. She created the 'Gehülfin' for him, a companion, a female opposite, and 'only now did living and spiritual tones start to move within him, only now his eyes opened to the world'.[14]

In this opposite human who touches him sensually, 'in the flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones' he discovers 'humanity' ('Menschheit'), the primal relationship with a fellow human being in which and through which his own existence receives sense and meaning. She releases living and spiritual tones in him, a language that calls out and reaches out to the other, a language that 'transcends'. In discovering the loving solidarity with the female other, the entire world becomes transparent for him. The Universe lights up for him as a meaningful whole, in which the Deity speaks to him: 'from this moment onwards he became capable of hearing the voice of the Deity and he could answer'.[15] The experience of love is the natal hour of everything living in religion. The creature enters an all-sided existence of dialogue. It is this discovery and endorsement of a fundamental solidarity

12. *KGA* I/2, p. 211.

13. *KGA* I/2, p. 227v.: 'Laßt mich Euch ein Geheimnis aufdeken, welches in einer der ältesten Urkunden der Dichtkunst und der Religion verborgen liegt'.

14. *KGA* I/2, p. 228: 'und nun erst regten sich in ihm lebende und geistvolle Töne, nun erst ging seinen Augen die Welt auf'.

15. *KGA* I/2, p. 228: 'von diesem Augenblik an wurde er fähig die Stimme der Gottheit zu hören und ihr zu antworten'.

with one's fellow human being that kindles our awareness of God. 'It is humanity we must approach, there we find material for religion'.[16]

In the third revised edition of *Speeches* (1821), Schleiermacher adds an elucidation ('Erläuterung') to this passage.[17] He notes that his interpretation of Genesis 2 should be considered as a possible application ('Anwendung') of the biblical story. However, he states, this meaning is necessarily included in it. The consciousness of the human race ('Gattung') makes developing a consciousness of God possible. The one, universal humanity discloses itself through loving contact with others who are so different. The consciousness of God and of the human race are intrinsically connected with each other. The human race knows many differences, but the most fundamental one for Schleiermacher is 'male' and 'female'. He reads the story of creation as a love story. However, because it tells of love, of the discovery of humanity in the (sexual) other, for him it also forms *the* story of the birth of our religious consciousness. In Schleiermacher's view, human existence in sexual differentiation is no less than the gate to experiencing God.

Schleiermacher closes his allegory with the words: 'The story of us all is told by this holy saga'.[18] This is the history, which repeats itself uniquely in each human life. *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*. The story is about you, just under another name.

Sexual Difference as a Surprise of Creation

I wish to draw attention to some aspects of Schleiermacher's interpretation. First of all, we immediately notice the theologically *positive* assessment of the given factor of sexual difference. This is not self-evident. In the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, androgynous traditions emerge strongly, especially in Romantic circles.[19] Major interest was paid to the mystical work of Jakob Böhme (1570–1624), whose ideas entered into the pietistic movement by means of the writings of Christoph Oetinger and

16. *KGA* I/2, p. 228: 'Zur Menschheit also laßt uns hintreten, da finden wir Stoff für die Religion'.

17. *KGA* I/12, Über die Religion (2.–) 4. Auflage, Monologen (2.–) 4. Auflage (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1995), p. 141, 14. Erläuterung zur zweiten Rede.

18. *KGA* I/2, p. 228: 'Unser aller Geschichte ist erzählt in dieser heiligen Sage'.

19. See, among others, Richard Critchfield, 'Prophetin, Führerin, Organisatorin: Zur Rolle der Frau im Pietismus', in B. Becker-Cantarino (ed.), *Die Frau von der Reformation zur Romantik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1985), pp. 112-37; Kurt Nowak, *Schleiermacher und die Frühromantik. Eine literaturgeschichtliche Studie zum romantischen Religionsverständnis und Menschenbild am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 54, 121, 256; Bernhard Sill, *Androgynie und Geschlechtsdifferenz nach Franz von Baader. Eine anthropologisch-ethische Studie* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1986).

Gottfried Arnold. The founder of the Moravian Brethren, Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), was also receptive to Böhme's speculative theories.

Jakob Böhme[20] sees the first created Adam as the androgynous primeval human being in which the principles of male and female have not yet been separated. In Adam the male fire-soul was married to the light-body of the heavenly Sophia. Adam as primeval man existed in a pure incarnation of the spirit ('Geistleiblichkeit'). But then the first Fall occurs: the fall from androgyny into the twosomeness of the sexes. According to Böhme, that story is told in Gen. 2.18-25. Upon seeing the animals, Adam is seized by desire for a playmate, to an outside aid in procreation. This desire is fulfilled in the separation of Eve from Adam. Sexual difference then is a fact, as a product of Adam's original sin. With Eve's creation, the marriage with the heavenly Sophia is broken, and through this the original unity of life between God and the creature. Adam and Eve, man and woman, are but a 'fragment' compared to the initial androgynous fullness of the beginning. The existence in sexual differentiation has to be seen as an imperfect situation, a loss of the image of God that existed in androgyny. The second Fall is then the Fall from spiritual embodiment ('Geistleiblichkeit'), which Böhme sees written in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve despise God's commandment, shame emerges, being the awareness of a separation between the initial condition of integrity and the awareness of the present condition of man and woman with outer sexual characteristics.

God, however, creates the way to redemption by means of the twofoldness of the sexes. He does so, in the first place, by placing Eros within the human being, as longing for the original unity between the male and the female, and, in the second place, by sending Christ, as 'restorer and founder' ['Restaurator und Begründer'] of our lost androgynous nature. As a man, Christ carries the female principle of 'Sophia' within himself. He can be the bride for 'former men' ('Männergewesenen') and bridegroom for 'former women' ('Weibergewesenen'). That way Christ repairs what was broken.

Up until this point we have spoken of Jakob Böhme's speculations. If we place Schleiermacher's interpretation side by side, we cannot conclude that he was entirely insensitive to androgynous thinking. In his understanding of humanity ('Menschheit'), which transcends and includes the sexes, he indeed accepts part of it. Just to give one example—for the purpose of comparison—let us look at a quotation from 'Katechismus der Vernunft für edle Frauen' ('Outline for a Reasonable Catechism for Noble Women') of

20. See, among others, Ernst Heinz Lemper, *Jakob Böhme. Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Union-Verlag, 1976); Boudewijn Koole, *Man en vrouw zijn een: de androgynie in het christendom, in het bijzonder bij Jacob Böhme* (Utrecht: HES, 1986).

1798: ‘I believe in infinite humanity, which existed before it assumed the cloak of manhood and womanhood’.[21] Notably, although this quotation seems to suggest something different, Schleiermacher’s speaking of a humanity that transcends the sexes is not carried by ontological speculations on an androgynous nature of primeval man. From the very start, Schleiermacher sees the human being created as man and woman. For there was no sense of even being a real ‘human being’, a creature capable of communication with fellow human beings, with the world and with God, before Eve existed next to Adam, before sexual differentiation was given. That is the line of his interpretation of Genesis 2: a positive valuation of sexual difference as intended by God, a part of his good creation.

At the same time, he opposes—and in so doing marshals the concept of ‘humanity’—fixing sexual difference in pre-set patterns or natures of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. The ‘humanity within me’ we could call a *spiritual* reality, one which opens up a variety of differences for the future. The ‘humanity within me’ is the raw material, the substance from which I may model my own design of being human, my own design of being a woman or a man. It is a quality, a promise, a utopia of humanity that has a critical stance towards social role patterns and images of ‘gender natures’, which are a cause of suffering, especially for women. When Schleiermacher calls to women to believe in ‘infinite humanity’, he incites them to activate their full human potential, without being hindered by the limits of society. He calls it good, ethically good, when women also develop the so-called masculine qualities within themselves. The inverse applies to men.

With this belief in ‘infinite humanity’, in his ethics and theological anthropology Schleiermacher introduces a dynamically active principle that has the potential to trip and break through every fixed order in the male–female relationship. This notion of a ‘humanity’ that transcends the sexes implies and retains a critical transcendental character. In principle, we affirm the goodness of our being created as a man or a woman; nowhere does this deviate from a perfect original condition of creation. In this sense it is telling that in his eschatology Schleiermacher will not hear of cancelling or deleting sexual differences.[22] For him, it is religion that inspires men and women, as *man* and *woman*, freely to interpret and imagine their sexual position in dialogue and exchange with the opposite sex. Thus, drawing from the riches of a multi-faceted creation, people may both individually and creatively shape their characters of being in God’s image. This is at least the main message we receive from the young Schleiermacher. The later Schleiermacher is

21. *KGA* I/2, p. 154: ‘Ich glaube an die unendliche Menschheit, die da war, ehe sie die Hülle der Männlichkeit und der Weiblichkeit annahm’.

22. Glaubenslehre 1821/22, in *KGA I/7*,1, §177.

clearly more attached to conventional gender-role patterns, in which he sees the too sharp differences as 'toned down' ('gemildert') by Christian love that is geared to the equality of the sexes.[23]

Eve's Mysterious Silence

A second point to which I would like to call attention is this: just as in the biblical narrative, in Schleiermacher's re-telling Eve appears on stage as a *silent* figure. In Schleiermacher's narrative, Eve's silence is even more emphasized than in the biblical story, as Adam is so strongly cast as a figure that speaks, communicates, answers. In classical theology, the creation story from Gen. 2.18-25 usually serves to legitimize a hierarchic interpretation of the sexes. This is strongly emphasized by the Apostle's argument: 'For Adam was first created, then Eve' (1 Tim. 2.13). In *Speeches*, does Schleiermacher really escape the subordination of the female to the male? Does he not tend to see the 'feminine'—the silent Eve—as the conduit for a masculine religious consciousness? This is the criticism Katherine Faull directs at Schleiermacher. She interprets: 'the feminine acts as the mediator of the divine, in that through her the male becomes conscious of himself and what he lacks'.[24] According to Faull, the subject of religious consciousness in Schleiemacher's allegory of creation is exclusively masculine. It is Adam who comes to speak, who articulates his alliance with God, fellow human being and world. The figure of the silent Eve serves to give birth to religious consciousness and speech in Adam. Faull interprets Eve's silence as a devaluation of the feminine with regards to language.

Julie Ellison also finds that in Schleiermacher's re-telling, Adam does take the initiative in communicating.[25] Adam 'presides over acts of comprehension and communication'. However, Ellison's assessment of this event is positive with regards to the feminine position in the story. Adam 'operates through language and *as* language, but only after Eve's speechless otherness situates him in a dialogue with a differentiated world'. She finds

23. For example in his 'Predigten über den christlichen Hausstand' (1820), in Otto Braun and Johannes Bauer (eds.), *Schleiermachers Werke*, III (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1981), and in the 'Traureden', in *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Sämmtliche Werke* Abt. II, Bd. 4, pp. 808-20. The virtual absence of a power analysis and a tendency to idealize the 'female' makes Schleiermacher's theory of sexual difference a vulnerable one, as is shown in these sermons.

24. Katherine Faull, 'Schleiermacher—A Feminist? Or, How to Read Gender Inflected Theology', in Iain Nicol (ed.), *Schleiermacher and Feminism: Sources, Evaluations and Responses* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 13-32 (28).

25. Julie Ellison, *Delicate Subjects : Romanticism, Gender and the Ethics of Understanding* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 46ff.

Schleiermacher's interpretation unusual and surprising in that 'neither God's word nor Adam's brings the cosmos into being. Rather, it is the silent but language-provoking presence of Eve…which initiates conversation.' Eve represents no less than 'the mediated entry of the divine into the human sphere, in the guise of divination'. Eve's silence is very forceful, and creates the condition necessary for inter-human communication and understanding through which the world comes into being. In this respect Ellison refers to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory in which he assesses the 'feminine' way of understanding (divination, intuition) as higher than the 'masculine' way of logical-discursive analysis.

I second her vision and also believe that Schleiermacher's imagination of Eve in *Speeches* is all but traditional; instead, it tends towards throwing a new theological light on the figure of Eve. In his view he departs from the classic explanation of Genesis 2 by stressing the awakening of religious consciousness in the meeting with the (sexual) other, and by not steering towards a fixed creation order between man and woman. He tells the story from a masculine perspective, but a little further on he is able to see matters as totally reciprocal by grammatically detaching the object of love from the feminine and even the strictly heterosexual: 'One embraces that person with the utmost heat in whom the clearest and purest in the world is mirrored; one finds the most tender love for the person in whom one believes one finds all compressed what one misses in order to be part of humanity'.[26] The doors swing wide open.

Patricia Guenther-Gleason also notes that Schleiermacher effectively undermines two avenues in the Genesis interpretation that have been exceedingly disadvantageous to women.[27] He does not turn Eve into a scapegoat, the prime culprit for the Fall from Paradise. Far from it: in and through her humanity Eve opens the way for Adam to acknowledge and embrace the good creation and to communicate with God. He also cuts off the way to an idealistic notion of the 'fortunate Fall' that can be found, among others, in his contemporary, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. In Hegel's view, the fall of man into consciousness and human freedom leaves the actual woman behind as nature. In other words, Eve does not join Adam when he becomes a moral subject. Instead, in Schleiermacher's interpretation of the story of creation *both* find their moral and religious subjectivity in each other. If this is the case, however, may we not ask: How does Schleiermacher himself speak of Adam and Eve in the event of the Fall?

26. *KGA* I/2, p. 228: 'Den umfängt jeder am heißesten, in dem die Welt sich am klarsten und reinsten abspiegelt; den liebt jeder am zärtlichsten, in dem er alles zusammengedrängt zu finden glaubt, was ihm selbst fehlt um die Menschheit auszumachen'.

27. Patricia Ellen Guenther-Gleason, *On Schleiermacher and Gender Politics* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 315-17.

Partners in Crime

We proceed to *Glaubenslehre* (*Christian Faith*), Schleiermacher's systematic theology, whose first edition appeared in 1821–22. It is striking that in *The Christian Faith* he does not mention Adam and Eve in the framework of the doctrine of creation, when articulating the sentences on the human being as *imago dei* (§§74-76). This is traditionally the place for considering the relationships between men and women in dogmatics. The fact that the question of sexual differences is conspicuously absent here can hardly be traced back to Schleiermacher's disinterest. This lack of interest contrasts with the attention he gives the subject in the rest of his works. I would rather, hypothetically—regarding the way he deals with the theme in other work such as *Speeches* and ethical texts—explain his reticence as a fear of 'ontologization' of male–female relationships within the framework of a so-called order of creation. He refuses to anchor the essence of sexual difference in creation theology. Sexual difference, in his view, is a phenomenological fact that brands and permeates our consciousness to a high degree without allowing its root and nature to be described and 'grasped'. The affirmation of a sexually differentiated human existence is combined with admitting the radical irreducibility of sexual difference. In this, Schleiermacher shows himself to be almost postmodern. He comes close to Jacques Derrida's thought of a radical difference, which cannot be traced to a common root and which does not allow positions to be traced back to each other in a hierarchical or complementary way.[28]

The question of sexual difference, illustrated by Adam and Eve, does come up in *The Christian Faith* in the paragraphs about the concept of sin (§87 and 94). In it Schleiermacher asks the following question: How could sin have originated? In sin, he finds, we become aware of a weakness of spirit in its relationship to the flesh. The sensual ('sinnliche') self-consciousness (which is the senses, directed relationship of human beings to the world) fights against the consciousness of God. To Schleiermacher, this seems to be an issue of the *condition humaine*. Our experience shows that in human development there is an autonomous activity of sensual life before that of the spirit, before grace becomes active and transforms natural life into an agent of the consciousness of God. In that independent activity of natural life, the difference between the sexes plays a role as well as the incongruence of mind and will. Both are 'innate differences' in each individual. Through the uneven development of mind and will, the human being is prone to mood changes. With these mood changes comes an unevenness

28. It should be noted that Schleiermacher's theory of the sexes is not quite consistent on this point. See my *Theologie die verschil maakt*, especially pp. 109-21.

of willpower, which makes the human being susceptible to sin. It gives a human being a ‘facility’ (‘Leichtigkeit’) to follow his or her desire and to yield to the consciousness of the senses over the higher consciousness. This weakening of willpower manifests itself in sex-differentiated forms. This is because there is an ‘one-sidedness’ connected to sex that makes it the possible prerequisite for causing sin.

Schleiermacher does not speak here of sexual desire as the cause of sin. He emphatically distances himself from St Augustine, who could not conjoin sexual desire with man’s *iustititia originalis* (§76.4). According to Schleiermacher, sexual desire belongs to the good creation. Yet the difference between the sexes as an ‘organic predestination’ steers human development in a certain one-sided direction, which, when combined with the non-simultaneous development of mind and will, may easily lead to sin. Here Adam and Eve come into the picture. Schleiermacher sees this universally symbolized in the story of Genesis 3, as ‘the general history of how sin originates always and everywhere’.[29] He says that it is not a dogmatic imperative that we return to the first man for the question of the origin of sin. We need only look inside ourselves in order to gain knowledge of our needy situation, aside from salvation. To accomplish this we do not need speculations about the first human being. Yet Church tradition founded its dogmatic sentences about the sinfulness of human nature on just that, and many of those sentences have played quite a detrimental role in Christendom. At the very least, it is our dogmatic task to enter into the discussion in order to delineate critically what may and may not be transmitted to the Church of the future.

Schleiermacher especially opposes the dogmatic stance of a state of original justice (*iustitia originalis*), which was lost due to the first sin. Whether one explains this loss as due to Satan’s seduction, or by misuse of free will, one becomes inevitably entangled in untenable argumentation. One wishes to avoid accepting sinfulness (‘Sündhaftigkeit’) before the actual sin, and yet explain sin from a state of full justice. Dogmatically, this necessarily leads to derailment. In the end one does not escape from admitting a fundamental change of human nature through sin. However, such a change of living nature is something we know neither from our world of experience nor is it supported by evidence from Holy Scripture. These assumptions, according to Schleiermacher, are founded on an erroneous, ‘historical’ interpretation of the story of Genesis 3.

Schleiermacher practices a different hermeneutics. He reads the story symbolically, as has been stated. Genesis 3 does not tell about the origin of sin in the first human being, but rather about the emergence of sin at all

29. *KGA* I/7.1, §94, p. 299: ‘die allgemeine Geschichte von der Entstehung der Sünde immer und überall’.

times and places, in everyone. He cites St Augustine: 'What happens now in every one of us, the fall in sin…, that happened then in those three: snake, woman, man'.[30] Only in a hypothetical sense can we refer back to the state of the first human being; the first human being is then taken as a sort of 'compendium of human nature'. In every sense the state of the first human being should be seen as analogous to ours. The same incapacity to do good lies within him, aside from salvation. He knew the same innate sinfulness, the same predisposition to sin. According to Schleiermacher, this does not lessen the innate original perfection of man; but it only comes to light, free of ambiguities, in and through the grace of God as mediated by Christ.

He supposes that the first human being must have been our equal, both in being prone to mood changes as in the one-sidedness of the sexes. Those factors made the transition to sin possible in the first human being, as it does in us. In Scripture, sin only appears when man and woman exist. In Genesis 3 we also find the main shape of sin described in a 'masculine' and in a 'feminine' variant.

Allegorically, we see in Eve an autonomous activity of sensual life ('Sinnlichkeit') that is easily aroused by outside objects and which clouds the consciousness of God. In Adam we see a rash imitation of this behaviour, showing that his consciousness of God had already been soiled. This is demonstrated by the muddled image of God as if he were able to be jealous. Adam suffers from a case of 'forgetting God, be it as just a diversion'.[31] The one is no more guilty of the Fall than the other. As opposed to dominant theological tradition, Schleiermacher describes both main forms of sin as being mutually perfectly parallel and equivalent. Adam and Eve are equal *partners in crime* just as much as they appear in the story of creation in Genesis 2 as equal allies in the good creation. They can live the good life or break it.

Conclusion

Now let us attempt to formulate the results of our investigation. However summary and fragmented Schleiermacher's reflections on the figures of Adam and Eve are, there is a great deal in them. His observations on Adam and Eve are located at crucial points in his theological argument, concerning the sources of religious consciousness in human beings and concerning the origin of sin. In his way of dealing with fundamental questions, we see the innovative way that the theologian Schleiermacher works. He chooses an

30. *KGA* I/7.1, p. 299 n. 29.

31. *KGA* I/7. 1, p. 299; *Glaubenslehre 1830/31*, I, §72, p. 396: 'Gottvergessenheit, sei es auch aus bloßer Zerstreuung'. The names of Adam and Eve only appear from the second edition onwards.

anti-metaphysical stance in dogmatic reflection and eradicates all forms of thinking that tend toward speculation. His hermeneutics of biblical stories may be considered quite modern within his contemporary context. In his hermeneutics of human existence modern features can also be seen. He approaches Christian religious experience as something that is very concrete and corporeal, and, entirely in line with this, he gives the phenomena of sexual differentiation a very meaningful place within his analyses and observations.

Adam and Eve feature in his texts as prototypes for an innovative and liberating view of sexual difference. The main shift in the theological view of the male–female relationship caused by Schleiermacher's representation and interpretation of the 'first human couple' may be summarized as follows. First, his theology of creation attests to a positive endorsement of sexual difference, while at the same time resisting the temptation to set this difference in eternally fixed male and female 'natures' (as in the dominant Christian tradition). Nor does Schleiermacher see human existence in sexual differentiation as an imperfect and regrettable situation, seen in comparison to the original state of being in God's image (as in the androgynous tradition).

Second, for him Adam and Eve are prototypical for being human as existing as a self-in-relation in a dialogical and communicative way. They are prototypical for the promise of a salutary difference. Eve is not portrayed as second-in-line in the order of creation. Man and woman have been created as equal, and they take part in the same 'humanity' ('Menschheit') that relativizes and transcends gender differences. Third, the concept of sin is freed from the long history of negative judgments of female embodiment and sexuality. Schleiermacher speaks of sin in a differentiated and nuanced way and breaks with the stubbornly fixed image of Eve as 'seduction incarnate'.

Perhaps in his vision of Adam and Eve Schleiermacher is not the man of spectacular vistas. Others go far further in the process of deconstructing this loaded heritage in tradition. He is to be positioned somewhere at the beginning of this process of deconstruction. Yet, as such, he may be noted here with honour as a theologian who, in a subtle but effective way, changed the policy of reflecting on the male–female relationship. As a critical-subversive mind from the past, he may still inspire our thinking.

A Different Perspective: Karl Barth and Luce Irigaray Looking at Michelangelo's *The Creation of Eve*[*]

Susanne Hennecke

Introduction

In the famous second edition of his *The Epistle to the Romans*,[1] the young theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) constructed his radical ideas about religion and religious identity in a pioneering way. His reflections are to be found in a concentrated form in the seventh chapter of his book. This chapter is divided into three sections examining the theme of religion: the first section deals with the 'frontier/boundary';[2] the second one with the 'meaning'; and the third one with the 'reality' of religion. The ideas, which Barth developed in this second edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*, form the basis for what he later developed in his well-known §17 of *Church Dogmatics*.[3] But unlike in *Church Dogmatics*, in *The Epistle to the Romans* Barth developed his ideas about religion more experimentally—by giving an interpretation of Michelangelo's famous paintings about the creation of the

* This article is an update of a presentation delivered at the international Barth conference on 'Religion as a Theme in Barth's Theology', held in the Netherlands in 2003. A version of this study was published as 'Zu Evas Ehre. Das Religionsverständnis Karl Barths im Römerbrief in der Herausforderung zeitgenössischer Religiösität', *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 19 (2003), pp. 45-59.

1. Karl Barth published the first edition of *The Epistle to the Romans* in 1919, but revised it completely and republished it in 1922. The 1922 second edition is the best known, and became the starting point of the movement of the so-called dialectical theology. The investigation in the present study is based on the German edition, but for most of the quotations I gratefully used the English translation; see Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. from the 6th edn by Edwin C. Hoskins; London: Oxford University Press, 1968 [1933]).

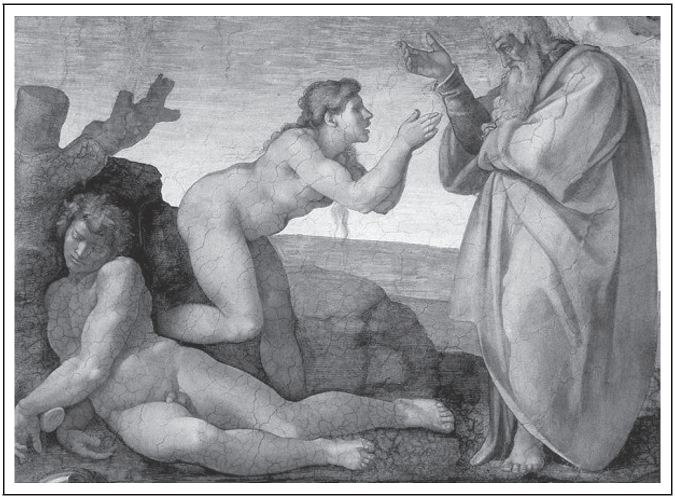
2. While Hoskins prefers to translate the German term 'Grenze' as 'frontier', I prefer to translate it as 'boundary'.

3. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2 (ed. Thomas F. Torrance and Geoffrey Bromiley; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2008).

first couple, Adam and Eve. Interpreting this painting in his own way, he directly linked the theme of religion and religious identity with the 'Adam and Eve motif'.[4]

In the present study I am not so much interested in the exegetical correctness of Barth's reflections on Paul's epistle to the Romans. Instead, I am rather interested in how he develops his theory about religion and religious identities by offering an interpretation of Michelangelo's paintings of the creation of Adam and Eve. Thus, I will restrict myself to Barth's interpretation of these three famous paintings, focusing on the second one, namely, *The Creation of Eve*. I will analyze Barth's interpretation in four points and then discuss it in a fifth one by having a look at Michelangelo's painting from a different perspective. To be more precise, I will introduce some ideas inspired by the postmodern French Feminist Luce Irigaray (b. 1932) in order to challenge Barth's view of religion from a present-day perspective.

But first of all, to remind the reader of what can actually be seen in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, a present a reproduction of Michelangelo's second painting out of three, *The Creation of Eve*:



4. Of course, Barth developed the theme of 'Adam and Eve' in *Church Dogmatics* as well. For those interested in his later approach, I would recommend the pioneering §41 of *Church Dogmatics* III.1. For those who want to know in which way Barth elaborated the affiliated theme of 'man and woman', I recommend a (critical!) look at the first section of §54 of *Church Dogmatics* III.4.

1. *The Creation of Eve, or: A Gesture*

This middle painting is the focus of Karl Barth's (and my) interest. According to Barth, the first painting, called *The Creation of Adam*, shows the paradisiacal situation of men, while the third painting (which is not directly treated in the Epistle to the Romans) shows the Fall. Barth says that the second painting can be seen as a kind of prelude to the Fall. *The Creation of Eve* already points to the painting of the Fall: 'Here, manifestly something is prepared, what should not be', here, 'Adam's titanic capacity for wisdom already existed', as Barth states in his interpretation of the second painting.[5] This quotation is the only direct reference to Michelangelo's painting in *The Epistle to the Romans*. However, my analysis of his comment will point out that the second painting forms the background to the whole seventh chapter and especially to its second section about *The Meaning of Religion*. So, the thesis of my work is that *The Creation of Eve* did not only marginally inspire Barth's reflections, but played a rather structural role for the whole seventh chapter of *The Epistle to the Romans*.

To begin, let us look at Barth's comment on the second painting:

> Look how Michelangelo has depicted the 'Creation of Eve': in the fullness of her charm and beauty she rises slowly, posing herself in the fatal attitude of—worship. Notice the Creator's warning arm and careworn, saddened eyes, as He replies to Eve's gesture of adoration. Here, manifestly something is prepared, what should not be.[6] Eve—and we must honour her as the fist 'religious personality'—was the first to set herself over against God, the first to worship Him; but, inasmuch as SHE worshipped HIM, she was separated from Him in a manner at once terrible and presumptuous. Then, the 'well-known serpent' appears upon the scene. He utters words—the archetype of all sermons—about God; he—the first shepherd of the souls of men—first offers advice concerning the commandments of God. Adam's titanic capacity for wisdom already existed (before *Eve*!) and is turned in tragic reality. Tragic—because when men, knowing good and evil, become *like* God, when their direct relation with Him gives birth to independent action, then all direct relationship is broken off.[7]

A short analysis of this fragment shows that Eve—and to be more precise, the gesture of Eve—forms the centre of the second painting for Barth. According to him, however, the gesture turns out to be fatal: it 'is turned in tragic reality' in the so-called Fall.[8] Paradoxically, just by setting herself *vis-*

5. Barth, *Epistle*, p. 247.

6. In this sentence I modify slightly Hoskins's translation. While in Hoskins's translation Eve's behaviour is the subject that ought not to be, in my translation it is, more concretely, the fatal and honourable gesture of adoration that ought not to be.

7. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 247.

8. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 247.

à-vis God and adoring him, Eve defines herself as being in opposition to him. For already immediately after her creation she does not speak *with* him, but *about* him. By doing so she makes him one object among others. Therefore Eve has to be seen as a religious personality from the very beginning—a qualification that has rather negative than positive connotations in the whole of Barth's thinking or at least in the whole of the dominant reception of his thoughts. As is well known, especially in the second edition of his *Epistle to the Romans*, Barth radically frustrates any positive or sublime understanding of religion. On the contrary, he describes its reality as a place where human life appears 'diseased' and as '[c]onflict and distress, sin and death, the devil and hell' and not least as a fatal 'misfortune' and disharmony.[9]

But let me return to my main topic: Eve is thus seen as a religious personality already from the beginning. Of course, it could be disputed whether this view is in line with the intention of the biblical text or of Michelangelo. But Barth evidently tries to give a *systematic-theological* interpretation of Eve's gesture, one which I would like to analyze in a *literary* way here. I think first of all we must emphasize that Barth does not one-sidedly interpret Eve's gesture only as fatal and potentially tragic, but at the same time as honourable: to her 'honour' Eve has to be seen as a religious personality—in the original German text one finds this word in italics, unlike in the English translation. By stressing Eve's honour of being the first religious personality, I have now come to the main focus of my work. I will point out how Barth speaks about the honourable sides of this first religious personality and then, in a second step, I will develop and re-organize his findings in a different, contemporary way.

2. *The Creation of Adam, or: Home*

It has by now, I believe, become clear that Eve is in the centre of my reflections here. For Barth, Eve represents the embodiment of his concept of religion.[10] To understand the middle painting in more detail—and especially the already suggested ambivalence of the centre of the middle painting, that

9. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 258. Religion is described in a similarly horrible way and turned against the modern, Western idea of religion in other passages, too; see, for example, Barth, *Epistle*, p. 253: 'Religion is not at all to be "in tune with the infinite" or to be at "peace with oneself". It has no place for refined sensibility or mature humanity. Let simple-minded Occidentals (!) retain such opinions as long as they are able.' I am convinced that Barth's contextualization of religion as a modern, Western phenomenon leaves the theological possibility of a different analysis and evaluation of this phenomenon at the margins of or outside this context!

10. Barth uses the expressions 'religion', 'law' and 'commandment' as synonyms.

is, the ambivalence of Eve or of religion—I now have to analyze the first painting a bit more. Or, to be more precise: I will analyze Barth's interpretation of the first painting, *The Creation of Adam*.

This very famous scene embodies the true paradisiacal, the original situation for Barth. This situation is very far away for all of us, somewhere abroad, but—as Barth states—at the same time it is our real 'home'.[11] The original situation is characterized by a unity of all things. According to Barth, however, it is not a unity without any differences, but a two-folded unity, a unity that hides difference. This difference as such is invisible, it exists only 'in the secret of God', as Barth states.[12] So, God secretly hides the unity of oppositions like 'origin and difference',[13] God and men, '"Higher" *and* "Lower"', '"There" *and* "Here"' and 'absolute *and* relative'.[14] In this situation, Adam, the first human being, is indeed only a human being and not God, and indeed he stands only below and not above, and is separated from God. But in this situation the relationship between God and human being still misses any tragic dimension. On the contrary: in this situation the divine–human relationship is qualified by a 'pure' look into each other's faces,[15] and it has to be described as a 'relation in which religion plays no part'[16]—personally, I would like to add the expression 'original, possibly spontaneous solidarity'. So, in the original situation there are oppositions, dualities, hierarchies and separations. But in contrast to the situation after the Fall, God gracefully hides them in himself.[17]

3. *About the Creation of Eve I: An Area with Different Boundaries*

While in the homelike paradisiacal situation we only find hidden oppositions and thus no perceptible boundaries, the situation changes—according to

11. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 250.
12. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 246.
13. My translation. Hoskins translates 'primal state and its contradiction'; see Barth, *Epistle*, p. 247.
14. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 247. Unlike in Hoskins's translation, the 'and' is italicized three times in the German text.
15. Hoskins translates: 'God and Adam looking one another straight in the face'; see Barth, *Epistle*, p. 249.
16. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 249.
17. It would not be inconsistent if Barth had stated that there is neither male nor female with regard to this home. Then the problems of sexual difference could be seen as gracefully hidden by God, too. Yet Barth did not make use of this biblical possibility, probably because he—and not only he, but Michelangelo and the mainstream tradition as well—were fixed on the interpretation of *adam* as clearly male. For a feminist exegesis, see Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 4th edn, 1985).

Barth—with the creation of Eve. If one looks at Michelangelo's second painting from Barth's perspective, one can discover a lot of boundaries, boundaries to which I would like to draw the reader's attention in this section. What I mentioned above becomes clear when these boundaries are discovered: for Barth, the middle painting does not only embody Eve's gesture but it acts as a background to the whole seventh chapter of *The Epistle to the Romans*.

Barth opens this chapter about *The Freedom* by speaking about the boundary of religion in the first section. To be more precise, he treats religion here, in the first instance, in the sense of a *genetivus objectivus*: religion has a boundary; religion is limited by something beyond it. This boundary is the boundary I have just described, between time and eternity, between visibility and non-visibility, between our human life here and the paradisiacal life there. Even if one does not immediately see this boundary in the second painting, it is there nevertheless. For the boundary consists of what God has gracefully given to us with his hand, that is, Jesus Christ. So, on the one side of religion's boundary we find God's possibility and his relationship with us. On the other side we find the human possibilities. They are divided in lower and higher possibilities. In the painting they are represented by the figures of Adam and Eve. If one investigates this area more deeply, looking at the second section of Chapter 7 in particular, then a second boundary appears, namely, the gesture of the higher human possibilities, which is represented by Eve's hand. This is the gesture of religion from the fragment that I have discussed above. So, a second boundary of religion is coming into play now, this time in the sense of a *genetivus subjectivus*: the boundary of religion itself, the relationship of the religious personality to God. This second boundary has to be distinguished clearly from the first one.

The area can be investigated more deeply, however. In that case a third boundary appears before our eyes. For the newly discovered subjective boundary of religion itself can be divided into two parts, as well, one referring to the boundary that is established by God himself in Jesus Christ (i.e. the first boundary), and a second referring to its difference to the lower human possibilities. In other words, this third boundary is the difference between Adam and Eve, the difference between the lower and the higher human possibilities. While Eve and her adoring behaviour represent the higher religious human possibilities, Adam represents the lower, purely human human possibilities. As examples for such purely human human possibilities, Barth mentions alcoholism, eroticism and also intellectualism.[18] It has to be stressed, however, that the two figures of Adam and Eve

18. To quote Barth, *Epistle*, p. 256: 'For what are erotics, alcoholics, intellectualists, mammonites, might-is-right politicians, what are the armies of the Philistines in comparison with one sinner who believes and prays?' It is useful to bear in mind that Barth rather rejects the -isms of these possibilities than the erotic, alcohol or intellect as such.

belong together. Therefore the lower general human possibilities should not be sharply separated from the higher religious human possibilities. But they are to be differentiated.

Having found three boundaries in Michelangelo's painting, one can compare them with each other. This process shows that they differ from each other—and so do the relationships they express, respectively. The boundary of religion in the sense of a *genitivus objectivus*, that is, the place of Jesus Christ, God's possibility and relationship to us, is described as an absolutely steep boundary.[19] Christ's cross functions as a limitation of religion that cannot be overlooked. In contrast to this, the boundary of religion itself, in the sense of a *genitivus subjetivus*, is described as only relatively steep. Barth literally speaks of a 'quite radical cleavage'.[20] Since the boundary of religion itself has to be seen as steep and as a cleavage, too, confusion with the first boundary (i.e. God's possibility for us) cannot easily be excluded. In contrast, the boundary between the different human possibilities (i.e. the third boundary) is in no way qualified as steep. On the contrary, here we find a more or less closed circle that is only interrupted by one very disturbing, disharmonious open point, one which puts the whole system of human possibilities into question. This open point is the sore spot of religion.[21] While Eve's turn towards home has to be seen as the height of human possibilities or, in other words, as the last human possibility, sleeping Adam's turning away from religion remains connected with her—whether he likes this or not and in spite of all remarkable differences with religion. For the last human possibility sheds her (fatal, impossible) light on *all* human possibilities.

4. *About the Creation of Eve II: Ambivalence, Slave-insurrection, Working Capital*

The phenomenon of religion has now been delineated in different regards and defined as a final human phenomenon on the border between two worlds. To follow Barth more precisely, we will now differentiate it into three sub-themes: first, the ambivalence of religion; second, religion as the final human possibility; and third, religion as inevitable possibility.

19. To quote Barth, *Epistle*, p. 240: 'There is no stepping across the frontier by gradual advance or by laborious ascent, or by any human development whatsoever. The step forward involves on this side collapse and the beginning from the far side of that which is wholly Other.'

20. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 245.

21. To quote Barth, *Epistle*, p. 258: 'It closes the circle of humanity completely; so completely that it completely opens it—covertly'.

4.1. *Eve's Ambivalence / The Ambivalence of Religion*

The specific *ambivalence* of religion becomes obvious by comparing its possibility with the possibility of God, that is, the boundary that I described earlier. While God's possibility is completely non-ambivalent and constantly positive, religion appears to be an ambivalent, negative possibility. Its ambivalence consists in the fact that it is at the same time especially promising and especially dangerous, that is, it has both honourable and fatal aspects. According to Barth, the honourable aspect of religion consists in the fact that it refers to the boundary of God, namely, Jesus Christ, who grants the superiority of God's positive 'Yes'. Thus, religion always finds itself already placed in the light of the positive possibility of God and refers to a 'final balance sheet', a cleansing of the border.[22] Referring to the new human being Jesus Christ, it refers to its own positive annihilation (German: 'Aufhebung') by the possibility of God.

Although religion, together with its relatively steep boundary, always finds itself in the positive light of God's possibility and his absolutely steep boundary, and although religion as the final human possibility always refers to this absolutely steep boundary, at the same time it develops the highest human negativity with regard to the reality of God and his possibilities. So, Barth describes religion as the 'negative' of a positive, which is to be compared with an empty remembrance or with a canal without water.[23] What we will find in the shadow of the cross is to be described as not more than a 'vacuum', a 'void' or a 'blankness',[24] and as a 'way'[25] on which we will surely not come to God. In the best case, however, on this way God's Spirit will come to us. According to Barth, the original, non-visible hidden unity of oppositions will, humanly spoken, never become public here. On the contrary, an extreme dualism will break out, that is, God in opposition to something else, the absolute separation between there and here, a 'yes' and a 'no' at the same time, totally disconnected, a place full of disharmony.[26]

We thus find the most honourable reference and the most fatal negativity at the same time! In the next two sub-sections I will show that this specific religious ambivalence also determines the specific meaning of religion. Barth describes it as a final human possibility, on the one hand, and as an inevitable human possibility, on the other.

22. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 234.

23. To quote Barth, *Epistle*, p. 254: 'Placed outside the region of divinity, religion, nevertheless, represents divinity as its delegate or impress or negative'.

24. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 240.

25. To quote Barth, *Epistle*, p. 239: 'The road is most strangely defined almost entirely in negativity: but it is named the "incomprehensible way of love" (1 Cor. XII. 31). Can this be rightly named a road? It is no road—which we can observe or investigate or even enter upon. We can only pass along it.'

26. See, for example, Barth, *Epistle*, pp. 231, 268.

4.2. *Eve's Slave-insurrection / Religion as the Final Human Possibility*

As the first meaning of religion Barth emphasizes the fact that religion represents a *final* human possibility, that is, the height and summit of humanity. This qualification of religion immediately suggests—especially for German ears—mixed feelings: on the one hand, one associates a very high and honourable possibility; on the other hand, there is the connotation of a fatal height of insolence. Let me start with a description of the last one.

Barth speaks of an insolence of the final human possibility with regard to its dynamics from the Here to the There and from the Below to the Above. Because of the similarity between the boundary of religion itself, on the one hand, and God's limitation of religion, on the other hand, the two boundaries can easily be confounded. From a human perspective it is, in other words, difficult clearly to recognize the difference between our relationship to God and God's relationship to us. Michelangelo expresses the similarity, representing both relationships by means of a graphic representation of a hand. God's graceful hand forms a parallel to Eve's adoring hand. While religion tries to suggest the parallelism, proximity and affiliation of both relationships, Barth says that the relationship between both relationships is in reality qualified by distance. The arbitrary self-definition of religion can be unmasked with the help of Feuerbach's criticism of religion as an illusion with regard to God. With Feuerbach, and going further than Feuerbach, it has to be stated that God himself withdraws himself from any human definition. He refuses to be merely one thing among others. So, looking at Michelangelo's painting, in spite of the pretended similarity and proximity, Barth discovers all the difference in the world between the two hands. In reality, there is no gradual transition to the possibility of God. Instead, we will only find disruption and negation—although in a less radical way than regarding the boundary of religion in the sense of a *genetivus objectivus*.

It is, however, just in its negative possibility that religion itself in a sense opens up the way to the step over the border. For it is its incontestable honour to be a negative place of transformation.[27] Just by stopping us and letting us know without any illusion that we will not find God here anyway, it becomes a potential place of transformation, a place where God's 'No' is transformed into God's 'Yes'. Right here it might happen that God meets us instead of us meeting him.

The honour to be a negative place of transformation implies yet another honour, this time with regard to the lower human possibilities. Although Barth qualifies both human possibilities as sin and thus as turning away from

27. Barth describes religion as a final human possibility as a 'transformation of the "No" of religion into the divine "Yes"…in the dissolution of this last observable human thing'; see Barth, *Epistle*, p. 242.

God, there exists a difference between religion and the lower human possibilities, as I have suggested earlier.[28] If one looks at the Adam in Michelangelo's painting once again, it appears that sleeping Adam's turning away can be interpreted in two ways. Following the logic of the painting, turning away from God implies turning away from Eve—and thus from religion—as well. But exactly because religion is, unlike sin, a negative place of transformation, it is, in spite of its affiliation with sin, not simply the same as sin. Nevertheless, in spite of its difference, it has a function with regard to sin: according to Barth, religion makes sin observable and visible.[29] Its negativity brings all other human possibilities into a crisis, both the higher and the lower ones. By doing so, it illustrates the non-visible difference that is originally hidden in God's mystery and makes it perceptible. It is exactly the mystery of God—thus the original situation wherein Adam does not know anything about the possibility of turning away from God—which is destroyed by the religious visualization. Eve's gesture, or religion, exposes and visualizes exactly what has been hidden by God: that man—Adam—wants to be like God, that he likes to be above instead of beneath. In dialectical terminology, religion exposes the 'slave-insurrection' of man,[30] that is, the man who prefers to be the master instead of a slave, who perverts God's relationship to us into our relationship to God and thus secularizes God. Seen from this perspective, it is not perhaps totally inconsistent if Barth interprets Eve's gesture in Michelangelo's painting as a religious gesture from the beginning, for from the beginning Eve embodies the possibility of a disunion that was hidden in God's unity with Adam from the beginning.

So, religion seems to be the highest illusion of man with regard to God, on the one hand, and unmasks and exposes the illusion of all human possibilities, on the other hand. Woe to him who conquers its height totally, where the discovering of heaven turns out to be also the gate to hell![31] With this call I am already introducing my third sub-section.

4.3. *Eve as Working Capital / Religion as Inevitable Human Possibility*

While in the last sub-section I investigated the meaning of religion as its ambivalent inclination towards the higher things, in this sub-section its

28. Barth emphasizes the non-identity of religion (or law or commandment) and sin several times; see, for example, Barth, *Epistle*, pp. 241, 242, 243.

29. Hoskins translates this as: 'Through religion we perceive that men have rebelled against God, and that their rebellion is a rebellion of slaves'; see Barth, *Epistle*, p. 246.

30. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 246; while Hoskins translates 'rebellion', I prefer the expression 'slave-insurrection'.

31. *The Discovery of Heaven* is a well-known novel written by the famous Dutch writer Harry Mulish (1927–2010).

dynamics towards the lower things will be put into the limelight. With regard to these dynamics, an ambivalence is to be stated as well. In the following, I will distinguish two fatal and three honourable points:

One of its fatal aspects is that it demonstrates the power of religion as being *inevitable*. Barth describes religion as the necessary 'working capital' of sin,[32] as a kind of unavoidable 'sluice-gate'[33] and as a 'fulcrum',[34] which serves the Fall from the non-visible situation of unity into the visible world of disunity and oppositions, hierarchizations and objectifications. This is an inevitable process without escape. Barth calls it a dying, a 'passing of eternity into time'.[35] So, the second fatal aspect of religion turns out to be the remembrance of death as a mark of our life in the here and now. Representing by itself our relationship with God and thus contradicting God's relationship to us, Eve—or religion—makes visible the fatal act of reaching for the tree of knowledge.

Let us now look at the honourable aspects of this working capital for the Fall, for which I have traced three different aspects in Barth's presentation. First of all, Barth points out that the fallen human being, as God's creature, remains a reflection of that *life* 'from which we come and to which we move'.[36] So, the religious working capital is to be seen as a reminder that the human being is an *imago dei* and as a reminder of the lost home, that is, both our eternal origin and our eternal destination. Secondly, it turns out that religion has a function of remembrance with regard to its other side, too. While Eve, in her fatal inclination towards eternal life, acts at the very end of human possibilities, she constantly reminds Adam, who is obviously much less interested in this position, of the higher and highest human possibilities. To quote Barth: 'If Adam, easily content with the other, the lower possibilities, should ever forget his proper condition and omit to move to his final possibility, Eve soon reminds him of the possibility of religion, for she is more acutely aware of the loss of direct union with God'.[37] The third honourable function of religion, then, is her ability to keep open an important question about the oppressing situation of the human being.[38] Barth characterizes the human situation as oppressing because of the negativity of religion. With religion we can neither go forward (i.e. to the top) nor

32. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 248.
33. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 247.
34. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 248.
35. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 250.
36. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 250.
37. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 252 (with slight modification to Hoskins's translation).
38. To quote Barth, *Epistle*, p. 254, on this question (with slight modification to Hoskins's translation): 'May the cavity at the cart wheel's centre, which Lao-Tse perceived long ago, be delimited sharply by these questions!'

backward (i.e. to the bottom) nor escape from it by stepping aside. Just by capturing us with its negativity, religion refers to an important question: What do we actually have to do when facing our human situation and our human possibilities? Considering the claustrophobic and oppressing circumstances, Barth's answer to this question is remarkable: we should become better, more radically religious human beings! We should move to the utter final and utter outer height of religion, to its periphery. This means that we should try to reform and to revolutionize religion.[39] This seems to me to be a field in which a lot of things have to be done! But let us not become illusionary in view of this honourable possibility. For even the purest and best religion can never be more than an eye-opener for the non-visible. If we have 'dared' 'everything' with it, we will just stand 'with nothing' in our 'hands'.[40] Then, the un-visible God will be further away than ever and we will be totally dependent on the possibility from the other side, that is, God's possibility. With this thought I would like to close my fourth section and take on the thread once again in a fifth and last section, this time in a different way.

5. *Paradise as Utopia: Luce Irigaray Challenging Karl Barth*

It is not my intention to describe an ideal future world in this last section. As children of the twentieth century we are reasonably warned against the dangers of such a project. I would rather like to investigate some theological possibilities of acting towards a place that is not a place, that is, a utopia. So, I would like to ask the same question as Barth: What do we actually have to do after our definitive fall from Paradise into the here? To answer this question, I would like to take another look at Michelangelo's painting of *The Creation of Eve*. This time, however, I will get my inspiration from the insights of the contemporary French psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray. In the Netherlands her work is quite widely perceived, not only among philosophers but also among theologians.[41] Personally, I became acquainted with Irigaray's work in the context of my dissertation, where I tried to introduce her insights concerning the utopian project of a female religion into a broader discussion of some themes of Karl Barth's *Church*

39. 'Let us be convincedly nothing but religious men; …and above all, let us reform it; nay more, revolutionize it. This labour in the field of the humanities is well worth the vigour of noble and devoted men.' See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 254.

40. See Barth, *Epistle*, p. 256.

41. See, for example, Annemie Halsema, *Dialectiek van de sexuele differentie. De filosofie van Luce Irigaray* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1998); Anne-Claire Mulder, 'Divine Flesh—Embodied Word: Incarnation as a Hermeneutical Key to a Femnist's Theologian Reading of Luce Irigaray's Work' (unpublished dissertation, Amsterdam, 2000).

Dogmatics theology, which I arranged along the themes of the Creed.[42] However, in this work I will neither focus on the project of a female religion as such nor on a feminist interpretation of the Creed, but restrict myself to the question of how one can act toward such a project. More concretely, I will investigate the possibility of a different interpretation of Eve's gesture in Michelangelo's painting. While I will gratefully make use of Irigaray's insights, I will, however, do so here without any detailed introduction into French Feminism in general or Luce Irigaray's position in particular.[43]

My starting points are the three areas I described above as three different boundaries. Inspired by Irigaray's perspective, first of all I would like to propose treating them in an inverted order. I would like to start with the boundary beneath (i.e. the boundary between Adam and Eve), then focus on the boundary in the middle (i.e. the boundary represented by Eve, or religion itself) and finish with the boundary above (i.e. God's relationship to us).

The centre of Luce Irigaray's whole work may be described as the discovering and unfolding of sexual difference. In contrast to traditional forms of difference in the so-called *phallogocentric* order of Western discourse, she develops an alternative form of difference wherein the woman is not seen any longer as only derived from men or as his negative other. Rather, in Irigaray's model, difference is seen as a triangular relationship: there is a space for men and another one for women, and in between these two spaces there is a third space, which at the same time opens and limits the possibility to get in contact with each other, for example by turning to each other's face. This is less taken for granted than it sounds. For 'space' in Irigaray's theory does not only mean a room of one's own, but rather a whole symbolic universe for each sex. It is, in other words, about a different language, religion, genealogy for each sex, about separate traditions for each sex, and even about sexually differentiated human rights and civil rights. Looking at Michelangelo's painting from this perspective inspires me to some corrections of the traditional view: Eve's creation from Adam's rib, for example, should no longer be seen as a derivation of the female from the male. Or, to give another example, the difference between the sexes should no longer be described in terms of a Hegelian master–slave relationship, wherein the female sex is suppressed by the male sex in such a way that it

42. See Susanne Hennecke, *Der vergessene Schleier. Ein theologisches Gespräch zwischen Luce Irigaray und Karl Barth* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001).

43. For an introduction to the interest of French Feminism in religion in general, see, for example, Morny Joy, Kathleen O'Grady and Judith L. Ploxon (eds.), *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002). As an introduction to the work of Irigaray I recommend Margret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991).

would be the only solution for the female sex to come into the same position as the male and also oppress a slave. This scenario of sameness would only be an inversion of hierarchy. It would not imply a different form of relationship. However, according to Irigaray, the most important and as yet unrealized precondition for a triangular form of difference would be the constitution of a female space of its own.

Looking at *The Creation of Eve* from the inspiring perspective of sexual difference, first of all I would like to propose not to interpret Eve's creation from Adam's rib as a derivation, but, more biblically, as an election. Just like *adam* (the human) has been elected from *adama* (the dust from the ground),[44] now *isha* (the woman) is elected from *adam* (the human).[45] So, in the end, both come from *adam* (the human), first *isha* (the woman) and then *ish* (the man).[46] Therefore, in the biblical logic, we find quite the opposite of patriarchal derivation techniques. In the end, the election logic is reconfirmed when we read that the man is to join himself to the woman.[47] If the Adam in our painting turns to Eve for these reasons, he would turn to God at the same time and thus to his original and eternal destination as *imago dei.* As we have learned from Barth, it is to her honour that Eve reminds Adam of this turn. So it may happen that Eve likes to turn herself now to Adam, at least for a while. Doing so, it may not be excluded that Adam and Eve will eventually both discover the way into God's mystery. In any case, the circle of humanity suggested by Barth with regard to the relationship between the lower and the higher human possibilities would be organized in the sense of the triangular form of sexual difference.

What remains, however, is the question of the sore spot of the circle, that is, the question of the function of religion. Let us therefore go on to the next boundary, which is represented by the gesture of Eve.

While for Barth this gesture represents, among other things, the human attempt to objectify God, from Luce Irigaray's perspective it gets a rather more positive function. In her article 'Gesture in Psychoanalysis', Irigaray distinguishes between two forms of body language used by children to enter the symbolic universe and to conquer a space for themselves—one gesture used by boys and one gesture used by girls.[48] Unlike Irigaray, my intention here is not to discuss the possibly different strategies of boys and girls to enter the symbolic universe. I am rather interested in an alternative to the

44. See Gen. 2.7.
45. See Gen. 2.22.
46. See Gen. 2.23.
47. See Gen. 2.24.
48. Luce Irigaray, 'Gesture in Psychoanalysis', in Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* (trans. Gillian Gill; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 89-104.

objectifying form of language as such. Regarding Michelangelo's painting I ask myself whether it is necessary to impute to Eve and her gesture of adoration the intention of objectifying God.

In line with Irigaray's observations, the objectifying form of language is about symbolically attracting and repelling a non-available love object.[49] This happens by using hands and feet to move back and forth a certain substitute with the help of a string while producing language sounds. As will become clear, this linear psychoanalytical setting fits perfectly to the linear gesture that Barth imputes to Eve with regard to God. For this gesture expresses her attempt to make her love object available, that is, either to assimilate God—in Barth's words, to secularize him—or to repell it with the intention to call it back autonomously—in Barth's terminology, to objectify him. Here we are only dealing with the two sides of the same illusionary religious medal.

If one is interested in a different interpretation of the gesture in Michelangelo's painting, Irigaray's suggestion about an alternative to the objectifying form of language comes into play. According to Irigaray, there is the possibility of a totally different, so-called 'female' entrance to the symbolic order. In the 'female' variant, the gesture approaches the love object rather by a circular movement than by a linear one. Apart from that, the little girl is rather interested in an inter-subjective relationship with the substitute than in dominating it like a master. Think of playing with dolls, for example. Moreover, by her circular movement—a kind of dance as Irigaray states—the playing girl creates a space of her own with regard to the love object that is to be substituted. Doing so, she opens a fluent path to it instead of making any contact impossible by either claiming it totally or rejecting it arbitrarily. According to Irigaray's observations and information, all this is frequently accompanied by a rhythm or singing. Playing girls do not only turn toward the love object that is to be approached and speak *with* it, but instead going on in their movement—turn away from it as well. Going on, they are in rotation, speaking with themselves and with each other. In this way they exclude the danger of assimilation.

I wonder what would happen if one interpreted Eve's gesture in Michelangelo's painting as a snapshot of such a rotation that is at the same time a round dance toward God? *En passant*, Eve, now and then, by turning away from God would be backed by *him*, and moreover, now and then, she would turn to Adam, too. Thinking about this interpretation, the following challenges with regard to the organization of the human–divine relationship can be sketched: the slave-insurrection against God that has been made visible

49. Here Irigaray refers to a scene in Sigmund Freud's work, which has become known as the Fort-Da Game. For a more detailed analysis of this game, see studies by Halsema, Hennecke and Mulder mentioned above.

by religion could be corrected by the idea of difference. So, the confrontation of a positive divine and a negative human pole would be replaced by two autonomous persons moving into each other's direction. If Eve indeed constituted her own space with regard to God, the necessity of a slave-insurrection would be superfluous. So, in contrast to Barth, I would like to approach Eve or religion in the first instance not as a pure negation, blankness, vacuum or a canal without water, but as the positive possibility given by thinking in terms of difference instead of only dialectics. In terms of difference, Eve could actually go from her own space into the direction of God by herself. To prevent any identification with God's possibilities, this should happen in a circular movement. It is not my intention merely to cleanse the boundary with reversed premises—for example, in the sense that the boundary that is God should not play a role any longer. I am rather interested in leading the boundary of religion (*genitivus subjectivus*) out of its pure shadow existence. But this still is not an answer to the question of what we actually have to do. For I consciously do not ignore the boundary represented by the cross, that is, the boundary that is constituted by God *him*self. What I do is put the question in other terms, no longer in terms of dialectics but in terms of difference, no longer referring to a vacuum, but following a path, and no longer a path with a relative disruption, but one with a serpentine form. Once well on this path, this serpentine course directed toward God, one last thing could be said for Eve's honour. Seen from the perspective of difference, religion is neither about making God a mere thing among others, nor only about making the fall from eternal life to our life visible and thus reminding us of death—it is rather also a visionary remembrance of the future life.

Paradise Lost, Growth Gained: Eve's Story Revisited—Genesis 2–4 in a Feminist Theological Perspective*

Anne-Marie Korte

Introduction

Eve's deeply ingrained reputation as a temptress, the origin of sin, evil and death, has long made the Eve figure a *pièce de résistance* for feminist theological readings of the story of Paradise. Most people immediately associate Eve with the still life of 'the Fall', the famous image from the Garden of Eden that has so often been depicted, described and commented on in the history of Christianity: a naked woman under a tree, apple already in hand, under the smug and watchful gaze of the serpent.[1] This scene is the setting of numerous classics of Christian art and is still prominent in contemporary culture, as evidenced by its recent use in the opening credits scene of the American TV series *Desperate Housewives*. The scene, a spoof on the Fall from Paradise, shows how Eve's lust and disobedience literally

* Translated by Mischa Hoyinck and Robert Chesal.

1. Recent studies into the reception of the biblical story of Paradise and its influence on Western culture and cultural history include Marion Ann Taylor and Heather E. Weir (eds.), *Let Her Speak For Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on the Women of Genesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006); Ana M. Acosta, *Reading Genesis in the Long Eighteenth Century: From Milton to Mary Shelley* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); Paul Kübel, *Metamorphosen der Paradieserzählung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Anne Lapidus Lerner, *Eternally Eve: Images of Eve in the Hebrew Bible, Midrash, and Modern Jewish Poetry* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press; Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007); Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg (eds.), *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and its Reception History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008); Manfred Kern and Ludger Lieb (eds.), *Genesis—Poiesis: Der biblische Schöpfungsbericht in Literatur und Kunst* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009); Theresa Sanders, *Approaching Eden: Adam and Eva in Popular Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

bring down Adam. As the background music begins, Lucas Cranach's 1526 painting *Adam and Eva* comes to life. The original couple, covered only by fig leaves, stand before the fruit tree. The appearance of the serpent prompts Eve to take the apple from its mouth. At the same time, a giant apple falls from the tree, completely crushing poor Adam.[2]

This image of Eve is only a snapshot, and one which is distorted at that, as we see when we consider the entire story that unfolds in the first chapters of Genesis. The story covers the life of the first woman, beginning with her creation from Adam's rib to the birth of Seth, her third child. The scene under the tree is merely a freeze frame in a much wider life story that spans several generations and eras, a story characterized by growth and development.

Initially, the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden are each other's equal ('bone from my bones, flesh from my flesh', Gen. 2.23).[3] Gradually, however, the woman starts to distinguish herself from the man through her energetic use of every quintessentially human character trait; she listens, speaks, thinks, desires, chooses and acts (Gen. 3.1-7), thus initiating interaction between God and human beings.

And after they have been banished from the Garden of Eden, the woman, now named Eve, 'the mother of all living', is the first biblical figure to undergo moral and religious development in their new environment outside Paradise. In this development, she goes from feeling tremendous pride in her firstborn son Cain ('I have gotten a man from the LORD', Gen. 4.2),[4] to a considerably less enthusiastic reaction to the birth of Cain's brother Abel, whose name literally suggests insignificance,[5] only to arrive—years later—at the recognition that the 'valiant' Cain she bore was a fratricidal and vindictive troublemaker (Gen. 4.3-23). This development is completed by her gratitude at being given another chance with the birth of Seth: 'And she bear a son, and called his name Seth: For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew' (Gen. 4.25).

2. For an analysis of this and other contemporary examples of the Garden of Eden scene in popular Western culture, see Sanders, *Approaching Eden*, pp. 31-90.

3. Biblical citations in this article are taken from the KJV.

4. In the Hebrew text, this birth is described in highly exceptional terms: the text does not state that Eve bore a son, but that she created a (hu)man with God ('I have created a man together with the Deity'). See Carol Meyers, 'Eve', in Carol Meyers *et al.* (eds.), *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), pp. 79-84 (82); Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of the Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), pp. 169-74.

5. In Hebrew, Abel has overtones of 'vaporous' and 'breathlike'.

This ‘reframing’ of Eve is a theological revaluation based on gender-critical biblical interpretations of Genesis 1–4.[6] Drawing on contemporary literary and biblical research methods, this revaluation employs critical research into gender relations and constructs and into the gendering of characters and rhetorical devices. It is also based on a theological interpretation model favoured by many feminist theologians: the idea that the biblical story of Adam and Eve is actually about the opportunity for moral and religious growth. This model was already present in some of the earliest Christian interpretations of the story of Paradise, but it has always remained an undercurrent in Christian theological views on creation, sin and redemption. The model focuses on personal growth and development, and it asks how people can grow spiritually, individually and collectively when facing existential factors such as the givens of their bodily existence, dependence on their natural habitat and the fixed patterns of family life. It is precisely these universal challenges and people’s response to them that are the main subject of the biblical story of Adam and Eve, according to the growth model. The growth model is an alternative to the Judeo-Christian and Islamic theological explanation of the story of Paradise. In this classic view, the central theme is the irrevocable breach of God’s commandments (hubris, disobedience, the Fall and corresponding punishment), usually linked with a strictly hierarchical view of all relationships, including gender relations.

In this essay, I will explore the growth model that has gained such an important place in feminist theological interpretations of the story of Paradise and particularly in theological revaluations of the Eve figure. There are several questions I aim to answer. What are the ingredients in the growth model exactly? Why is it gaining in popularity (and not only among gender-critical exegetes)? What are its biblical and theological underpinnings? Which problems does it solve and which new problems does it pose? In order to explain the appeal of this model, I will first lay out several problems the story of Paradise presents to critics who take a feminist theological approach, as well as a number of earlier solutions to these problems.

Eve’s Evil Legacies

The story of Adam, Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden is certainly the best known story in Genesis, possibly in the entire Bible. In this ‘original

6. See Brigitte Kahl, ‘And She Called His Name Seth… (Gen. 4.25): The Birth of Critical Knowledge and the Unread End of Eve’s Story’, *USQR* 53.1-2 (1999), pp. 19-28; Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 39-59; Lyn M. Bechtel, ‘Genesis 2.4b–3.24: A Myth about Human Maturation’, *JSOT* 67 (1995), pp. 3-26; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 104-30.

drama', people seem destined to live a life of bliss, safe and carefree under the watchful eye of God. But by their own doing, this all goes terribly wrong. The promise of bliss is replaced by pain and toil, a hard life filled with gnawing remorse over a paradise lost.

From a feminist perspective, the story of Paradise is not only a compelling tragedy but a double drama as well. According to feminist theologian Mary Daly, it is no coincidence that the seminal tale of humanity's original downfall put the source of all evil and misery in the hands of a *woman*. This is not accidental, not a random detail, but the—malicious—essence of the story itself: that evil, sin and death were brought into the world by a woman.[7]

Whether this is actually stated in the Bible is a moot point; in the past few decades feminist biblical critics have contributed numerous analyses and interpretations that question or contradict this connection. Already in 1978, for example, Phyllis Trible compiled a long list of unsupported claims regarding the contents of the tale of Paradise. Trible mentions the commonly held notions that Eve's existence derived from Adam's, that she was subordinate because she was a woman, that she behaved like a 'temptress' and that she had an innate tendency toward evil.[8] However closely these ideas have come to be associated with the exegesis and interpretation of Genesis 1–4, none is actually present in the text.

Despite the many movements that have called for us to 'return to the text', there is a long and persistent history of interpretation surrounding the story of Paradise that emphasizes Eve's role as the origin of all evil and her derivative and subordinate position in relation to Adam, the first man. This bias is still absent from the First Testament, which hardly refers to the story of creation in Genesis 2–4. The bias is introduced in the intertestamental period, when reinterpretations and references to the story of Adam and Eve appear in apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings such as Baruch, the Wisdom of Sirach, the *Apocalypse of Enoch*, the book of *Jubilees*, the *Testament of Ruben* and the *Life of Adam and Eve*. This literature is primarily concerned with the origin of evil; in these interpretations there is a tendency to exculpate Adam and to condemn Eve as the source or instigator of evil, while the serpent is identified with Satan.[9]

7. Mary F. Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), Chapter 3.

8. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 73.

9. See also Bernard Prusak, 'Women: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin? Pseudepigraphical Myth and Christian Origins', in Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed.), *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), pp. 89-116; Helen Schüngel-Straumann, 'On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and the Reception of the Text Reconsidered', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic

This interpretative framework is also visible in New Testament epistles, where it is more emphatically linked to the matter of the hierarchy of the sexes, the subordination of women to men (2 Cor. 11.3; 1 Tim. 2.9-15; 1 Pet. 3.1-17). In these texts, the prescription for women to obey their husbands and to remain silent in Christian communities is based on the events that befell Eve. In the texts of the early Church Fathers these representations are elaborated more systematically into a theological view of the inferiority of women and their inherent relationship with evil. This theological view has heavily influenced Christian thinking on sin, evil and redemption.[10]

If we trace the reception and interpretation of the Eve figure and her actions, we notice that the religious representations and myths of various cultures and traditions are entwined and reinforce each other on the point of linking women to evil.[11] Fragments of the biblical story of Paradise itself echo old Near Eastern myths of creation that recount the triumph over a dark, primeval female force. Jewish scholars have emphasized the link between women and evil by repeatedly questioning whether Adam was at all to blame for the existence/creation of evil—a hypothesis further developed by Christian apologists and thinkers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria.[12] Early Christian communities took an approach to the story of Paradise that was informed by their burning questions about sexual relations with a view to Christian redemption. This resulted in a close connection between Eve's sin and female sexuality. Church Fathers such as Origen and Tertullian shared these views and also read the story of Paradise in the context of the Greek myth of Pandora. As we know, Pandora is unlike the woman depicted in the Bible who merely succumbs to evil. Pandora is the very origin of evil, the tempting and deceptive bearer of evil, constructed

Press, 1993), pp. 53-77; Michael D. Eldridge, *Dying Adam with his Multiethnic Family: Understanding the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001); Thomas Knittel, *Das griechische 'Leben Adams und Evas': Studien zu einer narrativen Anthropologie im frühen Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2002).

10. Hanneke Reuling, *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16-21* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). For a critical study of the representation of Eve in mainstream Christian theology, see Monica Leisch-Kiesl, *Eva als Andere: Eine exemplarische Untersuchung zu Frühchristentum und Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992). For a study of alternative interpretations that have not become part of mainstream Christian thought, see Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the* Serpent (New York: Random House, 1988); Karen L. King, 'The Book of Norea', in Elisabeth Schüsseler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures* (2 vols.; New York: SCM Press, 1994), II, pp. 66-85; Elisabeth Gössmann (ed.), *Eva, Gottes Meisterwerk* (Munich: Iudicium, 1985).

11. John Phillips, *Eve: The History of an Idea* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

12. Prusak, 'Women: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin?', pp. 100-103.

with and for malicious intent. Literally speaking, this Pandora analogy, or the idea that Eve—and hence all women—is fundamentally evil, is not present in the story of Paradise. However, the thought pattern has been associated with this story for generations.

Some elements of the story of Paradise are particularly suited to digressions on this issue, such as Eve's origin from the rib of Adam. This detail has given rise to many speculations about Eve's nature and abilities. Although Eve's creation from Adam's rib has also led to noteworthy interpretations stressing the closeness and connectedness between men and women, most interpretations are denigrating: the rib is associated with transitoriness, decay, mendacity and sexual lust. For example, Rabbinic commentaries have made a particularly odd comparison between the properties of pieces of rib and the wicked traits of women (Rabbi Joshua of Siknin).[13] Another example is the explanation given for women's inclination toward witchcraft by witch hunters and Dominicans Kramer and Sprenger in their treatise *Malleus Maleficarum* (1468). Their claim was that women are naturally susceptible to such evil because they are made from a 'bent rib', while the fact that God was incarnated in a member of the male sex made men relatively immune to such evil.[14] There are also Jewish legends and old Christian folk tales that turn Adam's rib into a tail, in some cases meaning the last or lowest rib, whereby the tail is an allusion to either the serpent, sexual lust or both.[15] Thus, Eve's origin has sunk to ever lower and more disreputable depths. Other elements that have been seized upon to prove women's original or natural connection to evil are Eve's link with the serpent/Satan, her curiosity and appetite for knowledge and her (sexual) appetite, of course.

Attempts at Rehabilitation

In light of the dominance of these interpretations and their status and frequent use in religious and theological debates on the nature, position and purpose of women, it is not surprising that several of the women who started reading and commenting on the first chapters of Genesis struck a tone of self-defence and defiance. Remarkably, some women supplied their *own* interpretations of these texts at an early stage in the history of Christianity, criticizing the received explanations with surprising frankness.

According to historian Gerda Lerner, research into the development of a feminist consciousness in Western intellectual traditions has shown that some women apparently assumed the authority and expertise to challenge

13. Phillips, *Eve*, p. 29.

14. Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert Richardson, *Women and Religion: The Original Sourcebook of Women in Christian Thought* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996), p. 123.

15. Phillips, *Eve*, p. 42.

established views through explanations of biblical texts. Without offering extensive apologies, legitimizations or references to direct revelations from God—as female mystics tended to do—these women explained what certain biblical texts said about God's intentions in creating men and women, attempting more or less directly to correct the negative reputation of Eve.[16] The fact that Genesis 2–3 is neither a tract nor a dogma, but a multi-interpretable narrative with a male and a female protagonist, apparently creates an opening for these women to air their opinions. Eve's presence as a female protagonist offers these women an exceptional opportunity to identify with the protagonist and to take a stand.

When we look at the history of women's attempts to reinterpret this text, we discover that many of the ingenious twists and strategies in current feminist exegeses of Genesis 1–4 have been used by women before. Many such readings and interpretations have appeared. Early commentaries by women, such as those by Benedictine Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), who regularly discussed Eve's persona in her writings, tend to favour double-voiced readings of the story of creation. These readings seem at first to go along with the accepted thinking on the hierarchy of the sexes and the 'weakness of feminine nature'. But this model then takes a surprising turn when Eve's weak, feminine nature is used as an apology for her wrongdoing. Adam is the stronger of the first two people on Earth; as a morally better-equipped individual who is in direct communication with God, he bears more responsibility and therefore more guilt for the Fall.[17] Moreover, it is less sinful to long for knowledge of good and evil than it is to disobey a divine commandment; Eve, after all, was not present when God forbade eating from the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2.16; 3.1-6).[18]

A second approach that was already present in early women's commentaries contradicts the usual interpretation of the story of Paradise by emphasizing Adam and Eve's equality; they were created as equals and are therefore equally to blame for the Fall.[19] Genesis 1, with the creation of

16. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 138-66.

17. This line of reasoning can be found in Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), Isotta Nogarola (1418–1466) and Laura Cereta (1469–1499); see Lerner, *Creation*, pp. 142-48. For Hildegard von Bingen's theology, see Barbara J. Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Aldershot: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 89-120, and Lerner, *Creation*, pp. 52-64, 142-43.

18. This is the train of thought present in Judith Sargent Murray (US, eighteenth century). See Lerner, *Creation*, pp. 158-59, and Marla J. Selvidge, *Notorious Voices: Feminist Biblical Interpretation 1500–1920* (London: SCM Press, 1996), pp. 138-43.

19. For example, see Christine de Pizan (1365–1430) and Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678). Hildegard von Bingen has a unique take on this: in one of her visions, she sees Adam and Eve fall down, locked together. Eve has taken on a non-human form;

humankind in the form of man and woman in God's image and likeness, is an important reference point for such egalitarian explanations of the story of Paradise.[20] In this model, the gender aspect is characteristically underplayed or neutralized. Some female authors, such as Dutch theologian Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), elegantly solve the problem by referring to the temptation of 'humans' by 'the serpent' and simply not mentioning Eve.[21] Others, such as Schurman's contemporary Antoinette Bourignon, turn Adam and Eve, before their exile from Paradise, into identical androgynous figures.[22] Bourignon foregrounds Eve as one half of the original human couple and downplays her womanhood.

A third approach, and one that is diametrically opposed to the second, is gynocentric; it consciously strives to put Eve's womanhood in the most positive light. In this interpretation, Eve's origin from Adam's rib is seen as proof of her creation from the noblest, that is to say purely human, materials.[23] Eve's emergence at the very end of God's creative efforts represents nothing less than the crown of creation. Eve's position as the mother of all human beings is accentuated and her actions are associated with those of the woman giving birth from the book of Revelation. Furthermore, this model takes a serious approach to the idea that women, as well as men, were created in God's image. Some female authors see in this a case for adjusting our very image of God.[24]

And finally, humour and irony have also been used by female readers to try and reverse the usual interpretation of Genesis 2–3. Adam's sleepy-headed aloofness and his outright childish excuses to God did not go

Hildegard perceives her as a bright starry cloud in the form of a tender green leaf, pregnant with the whole multitude of humankind (Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, pp. 100-107).

20. For example, see Jane Spegt on Eve's origin from Adam's flank, near his heart, as his equal (Lerner, *Creation*, p. 152), and Sarah Grimké, who stresses the equality of both being created by God (Lerner, *Creation*, p. 161, and Selvidge, *Notorious Voices*, pp. 44-54).

21. Anna Maria van Schurman, *Uitbreiding over de drie eerste capittels van Genesis: Beneffens een vertoog van het geestelijk huwelijk van Christus met de gelovigen* (Groningen, 1732).

22. Lerner, *Creation*, p. 156.

23. In contrast to the persistently negative interpretation of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, Eve's creation from 'nobler material' is stressed by several people, including Christine de Pizan ('Letter of the God of Love', in Kristen E. Kvam *et al.* [eds.], *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999], pp. 236-41) and Jane Anger (Lerner, *Creation*, pp. 150-51). Ester Sowernam combines this with the 'gift of fertility' that characterizes Eve (Lerner, *Creation*, p. 153).

24. Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards; London: Pan Books, 1983), p. 23; Lucretia Marinella, 'La Nobiltà et Eccellenze delle Donni et i Difetti e Mancamenti de gli Huomini', in Gössmann (ed.), *Eva*, pp. 23-45.

unnoticed. In *The Woman's Bible* of 1895 Elisabeth Cady Stanton ironically inverts one of the most infamous 'logical' interpretations: if Eve is inferior to Adam because she was created after him, then what about Adam himself, who was created after the crawling animals?[25]

In the interpretative strategies described here, Eve is rehabilitated in order to break the close connection between woman, the Fall and evil, and to invalidate the biblical legitimization of the hierarchy between the sexes. Although these readings are self-defensive and defiant, they also go further, offering different interpretations of Genesis 1–4. A surprising take on the first meeting between Adam and Eve, for example, is the one in which this meeting is depicted as total ecstasy and physical bliss for both parties, as if it were a scene from the *Song of Songs* (Proba, Hildegard von Bingen).[26] It is moving to read how women—acknowledging the beauty of their own female bodies—draw conclusions about God, in whose likeness their bodies were created (Christine de Pizan, Lucretia Marinella).[27] In some cases, idiosyncratic comparisons are drawn between Eve and Mary as a means of exploring women's contribution to redemption and salvation. Certain types of women's spirituality in the Middle Ages propagated the idea that women—as incarnations of the weak, sinful and suffering Eve—are close to Jesus in his redemptive and 'life-giving' suffering. The Eve figure is thus included in theological views that enable a positive connection between women, salvation and redemption from God.[28]

Genesis 2–4 Interpreted According to the Personal Growth Model

Despite all the individual attempts at alternative interpretation, the close connection between Eve/women, sin, evil, and the biblical legitimization of gender hierarchy remained the dominant exegesis of Genesis 2–3 until the late twentieth century. None of the alternative interpretations mentioned above found a following or made much impact. This is partly due to the almost complete lack of women's theological traditions and schools. Quite the opposite is true of second-wave feminist theological interpretations of

25. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), Part 1, p. 19; Selvidge, *Notorious Voices*, pp. 101-102. A similar reversal is used by Christine de Pizan: unlike Adam, Eve was created in Paradise and is therefore created from nobler material than him. See nn. 23 and 24 above.

26. Elizabeth Ann Clark, Diane F. Hatch and Faltonia Proba, *The Golden Bough, The Oaken Cross: The Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Newman, S*ister of Wisdom*, pp. 130-31.

27. See nn. 23 and 24.

28. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 151-79.

Genesis 1–4 (from 1970 onwards).[29] These interpretations, by Daly, Trible, and many others, have become part of the mainstream theological debate. As a result, the egalitarian explanation of the story of Paradise is no longer a marginal interpretation, but a widely accepted one.

Egalitarian explanations—which were present from the very start, forming an undercurrent or countercurrent in the Christian explanation of creation narratives—are based on the conviction that the creation of the human race did not involve any hierarchy or dominance of one sex over the other. It sees hierarchical explanations as patriarchalizing theological constructs. In support of egalitarian explanations, many exegetes have quoted Gen. 1.26, on the creation of humankind in the image of God and simultaneously as 'male and female'.[30] But the second story of creation also provides support for an egalitarian explanation. In this narrative, it is pointed out that God initially created an undifferentiated 'earth creature' (*ha-adam*) and only later made separate male and female people when creating Eve from the rib or side of this earth creature.[31] Likewise, the fact that Adam and Eve are each exiled from Paradise with their own 'sorrow' to bear is seen to underscore this equality.

Parallel to the growing popularity and acceptance of this egalitarian explanation, we see increasing reference to the growth model as an alternative to the classical theological explanation of the story of Paradise that emphasizes the breaking of God's commandment (hubris, disobedience, fall and punishment) and links women with sin and death. As Erich Fromm pointed out as early as 1966, the story of Paradise—unlike the story of Cain and Abel—does not contain a vocabulary of 'sin' and 'punishment'.[32] This discrepancy between the text and its traditional exegesis has been central to critiques of the dominant explanation and has spurred many critics to seek new interpretative models.

In the early twentieth century, biblical critics such as Hermann Gunkel and S.R. Driver suggested that the story of Paradise (Gen. 2–3) was actually a myth depicting a fundamental stage in human existence, namely, the loss

29. For an overview of various approaches, see Kvam *et al.* (eds.), *Eve and Adam*, pp. 419-81. For discussions of this development, see Reuven Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender', *BibInt* 4 (1996), pp. 1-39. For recent feminist Biblical comments, see Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (exp. edn with Apocrypha; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998), and Meyers *et al.* (eds.), *Women in Scripture.*

30. Kvam *et al.* (eds.), *Eve and Adam*, pp. 340-55, 419-81.

31. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 72-143; Bal, *Lethal Love*, pp. 104-30.

32. Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1966), p. 23.

of childish ignorance and innocence.[33] In this view, the story sketches the transition to a more developed and independent state that is a precondition for living as mature beings. The growth model interprets Eve and Adam's experience—differentiating, longing for the forbidden, making independent choices and feeling ashamed of the consequences—as a sign of personal, social growth that differentiates and elevates the relationship between humans and God, not as a sign of 'sin' or 'apostasy'. Seen in this light, breaking God's commandments is a necessary step towards spiritual growth, human (co)existence, and a mature relationship with God.

Well-known psychologists of religion such as Erich Fromm, Erik Eriksson and Eugen Drewermann[34] have supported this approach and exegetes of various backgrounds have developed it over the course of the twentieth century. Based on textual, literary and cultural history analyses, they identify several 'rites of passage' in the story of Paradise: Adam and Eve's sexual awakening ('and they knew that they were naked', Gen. 3.7),[35] the development of moral awareness ('knowing good and evil'), and the transition of the human habitat from nature to culture ('in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread', Gen. 3.19).[36] This model received support from cultural anthropologists,[37] historians of theology[38] and psychoanalysts.[39] Today, many exegetes and theologians treat it as a valid interpretation.[40]

33. Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), pp. 11, 25, and S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930), p. 96.

34. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*; Erik H. Erikson*, Identity and the Life Cycle: Selected Papers* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); Eugen Drewermann, *Strukturen des Bösen* (3 vols.; Munich: Ferdinand Schönung, 1977–78).

35. See Sam Dragga, 'Genesis 2–3: A Story of Liberation', *JSOT* 55 (1992), pp. 3-13.

36. See Ellen van Wolde, 'Facing the Earth: Primeval History in a New Perspective', in Philip R. Davies and David J.A. Clines (eds.), *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (JSOTSup, 257; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 22-47.

37. Carol L. Meyers, 'Gender Roles and Genesis 3.16 Revisited', in Brenner (ed.), *Feminist Companion to Genesis*, pp. 118-45.

38. Eliane Pagels argues that there has always been a theological explanation along these lines, opposing St Augustine's dominant exegesis. See Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, pp. 100-105.

39. See Anna Piskorowski, 'In Search of her Father: A Lacanian Approach to Gen. 2–3', in Paul Morris and Deborah F. Sawyer (eds.), *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden* (JSOTSup, 136; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 310-18; Kim Ian Parker, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Must We Leave Eden, Once and for All? A Lacanian Pleasure Trip through the Garden', *JSOT* 83 (1999), pp. 19-29.

40. For example, see Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2000); André LaCocque, *The Trial of Innocence: Adam, Eve and the Yahwist* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Thomas Krüger, 'Sundenfall? Überlegungen zur theologischen Bedeutung der Paradiesgeschichte', in Schmid and Riedweg (eds.), *Beyond Eden*, pp. 94-109.

Feminist theologians have always recognized the potential this growth model held to break with the exclusive connection between women and evil and to offer a different view of Eve and the story of Paradise. Mary Daly introduced this approach with her call to 'exorcise evil from Eve' in *Beyond God the Father*. Daly confirms the mythical nature of the story of Paradise and agrees that its central message lies in the need to awaken from the state of innocence and ignorance. However, she disagrees that this leads women and men to true maturity. The mainstream explanation allows men to place the origin of evil outside of themselves, to put it on 'the other', with women serving as the original scapegoat. This explanation keeps women in a permanent state of dependence, self-hatred and self-imposed ignorance.

Daly sees indications in the text of Genesis itself to break with this pattern. 'The projection of guilt upon women *is* patriarchy's Fall', Daly notes, and challenges and subverts the view of woman causing the Fall of man.[41] Daly proposes a different reading of the story of Paradise, beyond patriarchal assumptions about good and evil: one in which a 'liberating fall' takes place. According to this 'prophetic' explanation, women consciously reach out for the tree of knowledge of good and evil and bring themselves and men to eat the forbidden fruit. In so doing, they acquire knowledge of something patriarchal society does not want to know, namely, how to deal with good and evil without blaming sin and guilt on 'the other' (in this case women). 'This will be a Fall from false innocence into a new kind of adulthood. Unlike the old adulthood that required the arresting of growth, this demands a growing that is ever continuing, never completed.'[42]

The idea of seeing Eve as the instigator of growth and development and of assigning a positive value to her role in the story of Paradise has found favour with feminist biblical critics who base their work on detailed text analysis.[43] After rereading Genesis 2–3 from this perspective, Susan Niditch concludes that Eve's openness and curiosity are crucial to the transition to a new, challenging life outside the secluded Garden of Eden:

> And yet the woman initiates the act. It is she who first dares to eat of God's tree, to consume the fruit of the divine, thereby becoming, as the rabbis say of human beings, like the angels in having the capacity to discriminate and like the animals who eat, fornicate, defecate, and die. The woman herself comes to have the most earthy and the most divine of roles, conceiving, containing and nurturing new life. She is an especially appropriate link between life in God's garden and life in the thornier world to which all of us are consigned.[44]

41. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 47.
42. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 67.
43. See, for example, Carol Meyers, 'Gender Roles', *passim*; Susan Niditch, 'Genesis', in Newsom and Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 13-29.
44. Niditch, 'Genesis', p. 14.

The interpretation of the story of Paradise in terms of growth and maturation also sheds a different light on God. Biblical critic Lyn Bechtel strongly backs the mythical interpretation of the story of Paradise; reading it as a myth about human development clarifies many aspects of the story, such as structure, style, language use and symbolism, all of which are disregarded in interpretations of the 'temptation–fall–crime–punishment' variety. Bechtel argues that the story is about confronting the potential and limits of adult human existence in an agrarian culture in which humans, animals and vegetation are directly interdependent for their mutual survival. The first humans, man and woman, both have to face this confrontation and this leads each of them to develop in their own way. In Bechtel's view, God acts as a parent, in both a paternal (judgmental) role and in a maternal (caring) role. Both are needed to guide a child to adulthood.[45]

The growth model not only profiles Eve and God more clearly, but also Adam and the Earth, both as individuals and in their relationships with one another. Literary theorist Mieke Bal rejects, on literary grounds, a dogmatic reading of the story of Paradise and calls for a deconstructionist approach that respects the complexity and the polysemy of the literary text. Based on semiotic and narrative analyses, Ball points to the gradual and mutual differentiation or depiction of all the 'characters' (Earth, man, woman and God) in the story of creation. As a result of this differentiation, Bal argues, the link between Earth and Adam (*ha-adama* and *ha-adam*), on the one hand, and between God and Eve (*YHWH* and *Hawwah*), on the other, becomes increasingly explicit. Made of earth and designed to work the Earth ('to till the ground from whence he was taken', Gen. 3.23), Adam will ultimately return to the Earth and be united with it ('for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return', Gen. 3.19). Woman's development is totally different and much more complex. She starts out as part of the 'earth creature' and in her origin from this creature her consort calls her 'bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh'. But her hunger for knowledge and enterprising spirit set her apart from her consort, to such an extent that he can no longer recognize her as 'his own' and complains to God about her, calling her 'the woman whom thou gavest to be with me'. This distance is ultimately expressed in the name the man gives her, one which clearly points to that which he himself is not: Eve, 'the mother of all living' (Gen. 3.20). With such creative power, Eve comes very close to God, as indicated by her wish to eat from the tree of knowledge. God also notices the change in relationship and feels the need to re-emphasize the difference between God and human: 'Behold, the man is

45. Bechtel also bases her work on the research carried out by Carol Meyers and Ellen van Wolde. See Lyn M. Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2.4b–3.24', in Brenner (ed.), *Feminist Companion to Genesis*, pp. 77-117 (114-15).

become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever' (Gen. 3.22). By banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, the difference is restored and all 'characters' have attained their own distinguishing characteristics.[46]

The growth model offers a new perspective on the roles of Eve and Adam, the actions of God and the interaction between God and humans in the story of Paradise. The model also provides an angle for continued exploration and theological evaluation of the Eve figure. The growth model sheds light not only on Eve's undeniable pioneering role, but also on her personal, inner growth—an element for which we find many pegs in Genesis 2–4, while this is ironically enough not the case for Adam's growth. As we have seen, Mieke Bal points to Eve's development, her growth from earth creature to mother of all living, as the main plot in the narrative. Based on Bal's approach, biblical critic Ilana Pardes focuses on Eve's further development, described in Genesis 4. In this chapter, we encounter Eve as the namegiver at the birth of her children Cain and Seth. In the First Testament, one of the few situations in which women have speaking roles is the naming of newborn babies. The mothers (Leah, Rachel, Hannah and Samson's mother, for instance) are normally the ones who give their children names. In their explanations of these names they refer to their own life story and their relationship with God. Eve explains the names she bestows as follows: for Cain, 'I have gotten a man from the LORD' (Gen. 4.2)[47] and for Seth, 'For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew' (Gen. 4.25). According to Pardes, these namings show a great shift in Eve's self-awareness: from pride and an overestimation of her own importance as a mother, almost God's equal, to a far more modest appraisal of herself and a recognition that God is the giver of life.[48]

The reading of the story of Paradise I referred to at the beginning of this essay belongs to this group of contemporary interpretations that not only rehabilitate Eve but also empower her and give her her own voice. Theological interpretations of the story that take personal growth as their starting point identify Eve as the first person in the Bible to go through a development process with God and testify to this in her own voice.

46. Bal, *Lethal Love*, pp. 104-30. For a critical discussion of this interpretation, see Pardes, *Countertraditions*, pp. 28-33.

47. See also n. 4.

48. Pardes, *Countertraditions*, pp. 39-59. For a similar explanation, see Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis*. I. *From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961), pp. 201-202.

Evaluation: The Potential and Limitations of the Growth Model

In the preceding section I discussed the advantages of the growth model from a feminist theological perspective. An explanation of Genesis 2–4 in this vein does not naively and unambiguously attribute the origin of sin, evil and death to Eve, nor does it link evil to women's supposedly innate moral weakness or their sexuality. Such an approach is not based on a hierarchy of sexes; instead, Adam and Eve are equals and partners, equally burdened by a need to develop (sexually, culturally, morally and religiously), each with their own responsibility for choices and their consequences. The growth model also points to an inclusive image of God. God appears in the story of Paradise as both a father and a mother simultaneously. S/He creates, cares and sets limits. The growth model also enables us to see Eve's wilful actions in a positive light: she takes the initiative for human growth and development. And finally, Eve's own moral and religious development offers a universal identification model and a theological message; her confrontation with the evil inside and around her, and her own complicity in this, ultimately changes her notion of, and relationship with, God.[49]

As positive as these aspects may be, there are also objections to using the growth model as the key to interpreting the story of Paradise. I will deal with these objections in terms of consistency, persuasiveness and theological significance, to the extent that they are relevant to feminist theological interpretations of Genesis 2–4.

The first objection is that the growth model—not surprisingly, considering the complexity of Genesis 2–4 as text—does not do justice to *every* element in the story of Paradise. For example, the role of the serpent is disregarded altogether. The text also contains elements that contradict the growth model. After all, it is only after God's commandments have been broken that Adam starts to act childishly.[50] Similarly, the supposed equality of men and women is difficult to maintain when we take growth and development to be the central premise; while Eve is steadily developing, Adam remains static. All we learn about him is that, after his exile from Paradise, he has intercourse with his wife several times and fathers several sons.[51]

49. See also Kahl's interpretation (discussed above, n. 6).

50. E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB, 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 25; Niditch, 'Genesis', p. 14.

51. Or could we see Cain as a continuation of the Adam character? Some arguments in favour of this reading are the similarity of their speech and actions (cf. Gen. 3.9-11 and Gen. 4.9-11): hiding the crime, being called to account by God ('Where art thou/Where is thy brother?') and the similarity of the punishments God metes out. See also Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve', pp. 28-29.

In addition, the different 'sorrows' that Adam and Eve have to live with (the sorrow of tilling the soil vs. the sorrow of bringing forth children and the announcement that the man shall rule over the woman and that the woman's desire shall be to her husband) are not easily reconciled with the egalitarian growth model, unless these are placed in a much wider context. This is what feminist critics such as Bechtel and Meyers do. They argue that this story should be read against a backdrop of constantly life-threatening situations, in conditions completely different from our overpopulated, individualistic culture. In early agrarian cultures, bearing children and working the land were the most important and interdependent tasks required for survival; the contributions of both men and women were crucial. When this context is invoked, the sorrows that Adam and Eve suffer can be regarded as equal and as an integral part of their growth process.[52]

The latter aspect points to a second objection to the growth model: readers have to identify with an archaic or archetypical view of the world in order to understand and appreciate the story of Paradise in terms of moral and religious growth. We need to let go of our currently differentiated views of gender relations and gender identities in favour of 'human existence before God' in terms of exclusively heterosexual and sex-specific role models: working the land and bearing children are the only viable ways for men and women, respectively, to make a living. Their relationship to each other is characterized by their primary roles: men ruling over women and women longing for men. Does this reading of the story of Paradise weigh up against the problematic anthropological premises that it is based on? Can form and content be thus separated? Is the growth model even half as 'gender sensitive' as many feminist theologians would like to believe?[53]

Another objection is that the growth model is too harmonious and too 'nice' an interpretation model: it is too exclusively focused on human growth and blossoming. This does not do justice to the unyielding nature of the text in Genesis 2–4. It disregards the complex interdependency and power relations between man and woman, humans and God, woman and serpent, God and Cain, and God and Abel. And just like its counterpart, the Fall model, it is based in a certain bias toward the text. Both models construct a monolithic coherence in the text and lose sight of the tensions and contradictions that are present and ought to be incorporated into its interpretation.

52. Bechtel, 'Rethinking'; Meyers, 'Gender Roles'.

53. Beverly J. Stratton, *Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric, and Ideology in Genesis 2–3* (JSOTSup, 208; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 185-213. We can also invert this question and ask whether the Fall model by definition presupposes or implies a misogynist anthropology and theology. See, for instance, Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 21-70.

It might be better to exchange the notion of growth with all its optimistic connotations for the notion of differentiation—a more neutral term that is *a priori* neither positive nor negative and that emphasizes the undecided and unstable nature of difference. The story of Paradise is full of boundaries that are set, questioned and transgressed—boundaries that refer to very meaningful and exciting differences: God/creation, human/divine, human/nature, human/animal, nature/culture, and male/female, masculine/feminine. None of these are self-evident; all need to be questioned, explained and redrawn. Moreover, they are all interrelated and clarify each other. We would probably do more justice to the story of Paradise by reading it in light of multiple differences than by reading it as a model of Fall or growth. We would leave more room for the text to surprise us. We would also be better equipped to resist any ideologized use of the male/female difference because we would see this difference as one of many, that is, not as an *a priori* continuously meaningful difference. There would be a greater stimulus to debate the interpretation of this text and we might be able to free ourselves from a number of stock questions about this story that do not go to its core, such as the issue of who (male/female) is responsible for bringing evil into the world.[54]

I do believe, however, that the current debate on the interpretation of the story of Paradise would benefit most from explicitly incorporating the growth model into the explanation. Historically speaking, it has had an important innovative and corrective influence on the Fall model, with the added advantage that it is a tangible model that unifies all the differences enumerated above. And because it fits in so neatly with the narrative form of the text, it draws us as readers into the story: we find ourselves striving—stumbling, falling and rising—reaching for the fruits of the tree of knowledge.

54. For an attempt at such an interpretation, see Stratton, *Out of Eden*, pp. 169-250; J'annine Jobling, *Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Theological Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 73-86.

Eve and 'Women's Commandments' in Orthodox Judaism Perspective*

Eric Ottenheijm

The participation of women in religious life constitutes a significant issue in present-day orthodox Judaism. The background to this phenomenon is twofold. A large part of the orthodox world in Israel, Europe or the United States (where orthodoxy is mainly located) participates socially, economically and politically in secular society. Thus, traditional evaluations of the role of women in the public and private spheres become less relevant with the rise of feminist values.[1] Besides, women in traditional Judaism want to be part of the very same culture of learning that shaped and saved Judaism throughout the ages. Indeed, the culture of learning in Judaism creates a demand for a higher status and a more active role with the rise of general education and with the changed position of women in economic and social life.[2]

What role does a specific reading of Eve play in this development? Gender issues often find religious legitimacy in a specific reading of the stories of the creation and the fall of humanity in Genesis 2–3. Indeed, readings of these stories are not unconnected with views on the respective roles of men and women in society. Even if the relation between text and social reality is difficult to ascertain, the symbolic reality of religious imagination as expressed in and through the reading of the biblical text, and social reality often interrelate. Moreover, the boundaries between a symbolic order, defined as 'a system of symbols which act to produce powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations' and social reality are easily

* I thank Leo Mock for some references and comments, and Helen Richardson for improving my English. Any errors remain, of course, my responsibility.

1. Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), pp. 3, 6, 158-59.

2. Greenberg, *Women and Judaism*, p. 10; Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), p. 8.

crossed.[3] In traditional Judaism, Eve functions as a catechism of dos and don'ts in female social conduct, especially regarding modest behaviour.[4] In this essay we will focus, however, on the meaning of Eve's story for the three commandments especially associated with women in the orthodox branches of religious Judaism. Although this is only a detail among the many halakhic and ethical topics relevant to women in contemporary orthodoxy, it nevertheless provides a glimpse into the development of halakhic and religious discourse. First, we will discuss some general views on women and the Mosaic commandments.

Halakha and Women

Quintessential for understanding the religious world of Judaism—both ancient and contemporary—is the realm of halakha. Halakha denotes both the Jewish legal tradition and the literary genre of legal texts and legal discourse, including debates and disputes. Talmudic Judaism identifies 613 commandments, both negative (e.g. 'Thou shall not murder') and positive (e.g. 'Keep the Sabbath day'). Performing the commandments enhances the holiness of a person and of the respective communities. Every adult person in Israel is religiously obliged to keep the commandments. There is a discrepancy, however, in the number of obligations incumbent upon men and upon women. This applies, first, to gender-specific commandments such as circumcision for males or menstruation rules for women. Second, women are exempt from the obligation to practice positive, time-bound commandments.[5] So, for example, women are not obligated to perform all prayers, to study Torah or to wear *tefillin* (phylacteries). This principle is stated in the Mishnah (around 200 CE):

> The observance of all the positive ordinances which are time-bound is incumbent on men but not on women, and the observance of all the positive ordinances that are not time-bound is incumbent both on man and on women. The observance of all the negative ordinances, whether they are time-bound or not, is incumbent both on man and on women, except for 'You shall not round (the sidelocks), neither shall you mar (the corner of your beard)' and 'He shall not defile himself to the dead'.[6]

3. Carol Christ, quoted in K.E. Kvam, L.S. Schearing, and V.H. Ziegler, *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 9. The definition is Clifford Geertz's.
4. Leila L. Bronner, *From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), p. 22.
5. But see Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, pp. 12ff.
6. See *m. Kid.* 1.7 and *Kid.* 33b.

With regard to negative commandments, there is no difference between the obligations of men and women, apart from three gender-specific commandments. The amount of obligation differs especially with regard to some of the positive commandments, such as the study of the Torah, recitation of the Torah and liturgical acts such as *lulav* (waving the four species on Sukkoth), blowing the *shofar* (blowing the ram's horn) or *tzitzit* (wearing fringes). The principle stated does, however, not cover halakhic reality, since there are commandments that technically would fall under the category of exempt commandments but are nevertheless obligatory for women as well, such as the commandments to eat unleavened bread at Pesach, to rejoice at Festivals, the obligation to pray the Eighteen benedictions three times a day or the saying of Grace after meals. These discrepancies are discussed but not solved in the Talmud (*Ber*. 20a-b and *Kid*. 33b-34a).[7] Very probably a pre-halakhic, cultural issue is dominant here, namely, sensitivity towards women actively present in the public sphere. The prime obligations for women lie in their home-bound occupations, and Rabbinic legislation limits their halakhic obligations as much as possible to the private sphere.[8] Indeed, in traditional Judaism this perception is visible in the concept of female modesty, for example, in rules on female hair-covering and in reducing public appearance in order to reduce possible sexual seduction (as perceived from a male perspective, of course!). Indeed, the story of Eve does play a significant role in regulating social life by means of the concept of modesty.[9] Recently a group of orthodox female scholars published a volume of studies on feminine issues in the halakha.[10] In none of the issues is the story of Eden of any importance in the halakhic discourse.[11] It does, however, play a role with regard to the three 'women's commandments' not discussed in this book: *challah*, separating dough, *nerot*, kindling Sabbath (and Festival) lights, and *niddah*, keeping the laws with regards to menstrual impurity. These are

7. Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, pp. 15ff.

8. Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p. 20; Greenberg, *Women and Judaism*, p. 84.

9. Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, pp. 31-33.

10. Micah D. Halpern and Chana Safrai (eds.), *Jewish Legal Writings by Women* (Jerusalem: Urim Publishers, 1998).

11. The writers concentrate on study of Torah, divorce, adultery, cosmetics and on women's participation in traditionally male ritual commandments, such as wearing *tzitzit* (fringes) and *tefillin* (phylacteries). The overall conclusion is that the specific male obligation of positive, time-bound commandments does not preclude voluntary women's performance, and in some cases the amount of merit involved is not lessened. The only reference is in the discussion on women wearing phylacteries on a voluntary basis. One commentary, Shevut Ya'akov (1734), refers to Eve's curse in Genesis as a ground for a restrictive ruling. His motivation is, however, not repeated by present-day halakhists who also rule strictly. Indeed, even though according to them there is no halakhic obstacle for women to wear *tefillin*, communal, social concerns still overrule this possibility.

commandments especially incumbent upon women, while *challah* and *nerot* are also incumbent upon men. In the following I will term these as women's commandments, even if this term is inaccurate in light of the discussion above. Given the religious and emotional impact of these commandments, the question of how Talmudic and contemporary, orthodox sources value the connection with Eve, is legitimate.

The Women's Commandments in Talmudic Literature

The midrashic reading of Genesis 2–3 in Talmudic sources does not show doctrinal uniformity on the relation between man and wife.[12] Indeed, rabbinic readings of the story of Eden show a mixture of egalitarian and hierarchic readings, even if there is a tendency to put the blame for lust entering Eden on Eve's shoulders.[13] Talmudic sources, in general, stress the notion of repentance and do not put too much emphasis on the sinful disorder of humanity after Eden. However, a few texts do come very close to the idea of original sin.[14] They are part of the tradition of the ten curses, which describe Eve's penalty and are extant in several sources.[15] These curses refer to the bodily distress with regard to marital relations, issues of procreation and raising children, wearing a headdress (she is considered a mourner) and isolation from the public sphere. No systematic concept is operative here, as both the number of penalties and the contents of them differ in the various sources. Some of the issues mentioned relate to natural processes (sex, birth etc.) or cultural reality (headdress). A peculiar tradition, however, specifies Eve's transgressions as reasons for performing the earlier mentioned women's mitzvot. Our translation shows the composite character of the text:

(A) On account of three transgressions women die during childbirth; because they are not careful about menstrual purity (*niddah*), or about dough offering (*challah*) or about kindling light (*nerot*).

(B) Why is the commandment of *niddah* given to woman and not to man? The first Adam was the blood of the Holy One, blessed be He [wordplay on 'likeness' and 'blood']. Then came Eve and spilled (his blood). Therefore the commandment of *niddah* is given to her in order that she may atone for the blood she spilled.

12. Lieve Teugels, 'The Creation of the Human in Rabbinic Interpretation', in G. Luttikhuizen (ed.), *The Creation of Man and Women: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 126.

13. Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, p. 26; Kvam, Schearing, and Ziegler, *Eve and Adam*, pp. 71-74.

14. Hanneke Reuling, *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16-21* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives, 10; Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 265-66.

15. Reuling, *After Eden*, pp. 296ff.

(C) Why is the commandment of *challah* given to woman and not to man? Because the first Adam was the pure dust of the Holy One, blessed be He [wordplay on 'dust' and 'dough'], and she made him impure. Therefore the commandment of *challah* is given to her in order that she may atone for the dust she made impure.

(D) Why is the commandment of the light given to woman and not to man? The first Adam was the light of the Holy One, blessed be He, and he shone on everything that came into the world. And she extinguished it, therefore the commandment of the light is given to her and she is obligated with regard to the light in order that she may atone for the light she extinguished.

(E) Adam was the blood of the world. Because she caused it to be spilled, she was put under obligation to observe the law of menstrual purity. Adam was the dough offering of the world. Because she caused him to become impure, she was put under the obligation to observe the dough offering.

Adam was the lamp of the world. Because she caused the lamp to be extinguished, she was put under obligation to observe the lighting of the Sabbath lamp.

(F) On the basis of this the Sages said: For three offences women die when giving birth: for carelessness in regard to menstrual purity, the dough offering and lighting the Sabbath lamp.[16]

Three separate traditions account for this composite text: (A) and (F) rephrase a well-known text from the Mishnah (*m. Shab.* 2.6), part of a chapter read at the Friday evening liturgy. Parts (B)-(D) and the overtly repetitive section (E) formulate and motivate a specific set of obligations set out for women. The reference to the biblical narrative of Eve's transgression is clear, even if the text offers no explicit midrash. It confers biblical legitimacy on a traditional exhortation in the women's commandments.[17]

In the Mishnah itself, no reference is made to the topic of Eve's culpability. The reason why women should be specifically careful with regard to these commandments is not given, and only the consequence is outlined. Our text offers an etiology for the three commandments and their special status of obligation for womankind. Indeed, the Palestinian Talmud connects this etiology with the extant Mishnah. Moreover, whereas the Mishnah does not specify these three commandments as especially incumbent upon women, our text presumes this to be the case.

Most remarkable is the view of these three commandments as a means of atonement for Eve's transgression, an element absent in parallels to this tradition (*Gen. R.* 17.8; *Shab.* 2.6; *y. Shab*. 31b-32a and Rashi *ad loc.*).[18] Indeed, even if we concede with Boyarin that the traditions of Eve's curse are a misogynistic anomaly in the Rabbinic positive evaluation of the

16. *Aboth deRabbi Nathan*, version b 9 (ed. Schechter, p. 25); *Tanhuma*, *parashat Noah* (beginning) (ed. Buber, II, pp. 27-29); *Yalqut Shimoni* Gen. 3.31.

17. See also Reuling, *After Eden*, p. 312.

18. Reuling, *After Eden*, p. 313.

feminine body, the association between performing these commandments and punishments is at odds with the general rabbinic emphasis on the privilege of keeping 613 mitzvot.[19]

Women's Commandments as Punishment or Privilege

What happened with this odd tradition in modern Judaism? In their excellent compilation of Christian, Jewish and Muslim texts on the biblical stories of Adam and Eve, Kvam, Schearing and Ziegler note in their discussion of modern, orthodox Judaism that 'hierarchical readings of Eve's story also continued in the twentieth century. While the Reform movement had previously loosened the traditional ties between women's religious lives and Eve's story, the backlash from American and Conservative Jews in the twentieth century *revived* those connections.'[20] The reference is to a book by Rabbi A. Kolatch who quotes the story of Eve's punishments as the prime reason for women's modesty in wearing headscarves (in fact, he comments on the wearing of a *shaytl*, a wig) and the three commandments mentioned above.[21] This view of orthodoxy as a monolithic atavism is inadequate, however. In order to gain a better insight, I will review a set of sources. First, I will review some leading halakhic codes and their reception, following which I will discuss evidence adduced in recent research on women's prayers.

The *Shulhan Arukh* (Joseph Karo, Safed, 1566), the main halakhic cornerstone of traditional Judaism, does not mention the topic of Eve's culpability when discussing the three commandments mentioned above. In the discussion on the Sabbath lights as a commandment incumbent on man as well as on women, women's specific prudence is mentioned and explained:

> Either men or women are obliged to have in their houses a kindled light on the Sabbath, even for those who cannot afford it, he asks at the doors and takes oil and kindles a light, for this is under the rule of the delight of the Sabbath. Women are more careful with this, because they are (usually) at home and busy with the needs of the house.[22]

19. Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 88-94. On the history of Sabbath lights and saying a blessing, see Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 86-89. The sources discussed do not specify it as a women's obligation yet.

20. Kvam, Schearing, and Ziegler, *Eve and Adam*, pp. 373-74 (emphasis mine).

21. Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Jewish Book of Why* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1981). For the initial restraint of orthodox halakhists towards wearing wigs as a fashionable adornment for women, see Leila L. Bronner, 'From Veil to Wig, Jewish Women's Hair Covering', *Judaism* 42 (1993), pp. 453-64.

22. Orah Hayim, *Hilkhot Sabbath* 263.1-3.

The main reason for this commandment is women's prime responsibility in the household. No cautionary words are added; no reference is made to the presumed dangers in observing this commandment lavishly. The *Mishneh Berura* (published in 1884) does, however, mention the topic of Eve's culpability in its glosses on the aforementioned text:

> 'Women are more careful': and even if the husband wishes to kindle the lights himself, the woman comes first… 'Because they are usually': and another reason: because she extinguished the light of the world, for she caused the death of the first Adam. But in any case, it is good that the man repairs (*letaqen*) the lights.

The author of this commentary, called *Beiur Halakha*, is R. Israel Meir Kagan, named after his famous work the Chafetz Chaim (Radin, Poland, 1838–1933). The commentary gained a wide popularity and enjoys great authority in the circles of the strictly orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jewry. Note that he mentions the idea of Eve's culpability almost in passing and does not elaborate on the immediate effects of the fulfillment of this commandment. It appears from the text that he primarily uses it to explain the priority given to the wife in kindling the light even if her husband wants to do it. This does not imply a specific form of egalitarian reading, but it does indicate a non-theological interest in the Talmudic topic of Eve's culpability. The issue is of the gender hierarchy of this specifically religious obligation in the context of one household, as discussed in the immediate context. Indeed, immediately after adducing the reason that 'Eve extinguished the light that was the (soul of the) First Adam', the commentary resumes the topic of male obligation, namely, to repair a light. Many of the Chafetz Chaim's commentaries are concerned with the poor circumstances of Polish Jewry. Oil lamps were used regularly, candles being too expensive for poor Jews. The *Kitsur Shulhan Arukh* of R. Shlomo Ganzfried (edited in Hungary, 1864) is used in many orthodox communities as a prime guide of halakha. Eve is mentioned once, when dealing with Sabbath lights (75.5):

> The commandment of kindling the lights rests upon either men or women, but women are more careful with it (*mezuharot bah*) because they usually are at home. And also, because the wife extinguished the light of the world, for she caused the first Adam to sin and darkened his soul that is called a light, as it is written: 'The light of the Lord is the soul of man (Adam)' (Prov. 20.27). Therefore she is to repair (*letaqen*) this in the kindling of lights in honor of the Sabbath.

In the context of *niddah* or *challah*, it is not quoted. As in the *Mishneh Berura*, the topic of Eve extinguishing the light of Adam is mentioned in the discussion of the hierarchy of obligations. Ganzfried refers to the Mishnaic tradition of being meticulous about it. Furthermore, the reasoning is more explicit: Eve caused Adam to sin and as a result the light to be extinguished.

Finally, the commandment is given to repair (*letaqen*), a motif absent in the older halakhic sources. It shows the influence on halakha of the Zohar and especially of Lurianic cabbala, which considers commandments the means to return the world to a state of communion with the divine, a notion applicable to other commandments as well.[23] Eve's culpability appears in the relevant section on kindling light in the *Arukh HaShulhan*, the influential halakhic commentary of the Shulhan Arukh written and edited over many years by Rabbi Yehiel Halevi Epstein (1829–1908). Women are to be more cautious in the three commandments, because, first, their prime realm is the home and they take care of its needs (quoting Maimonides), second, because of the midrash on Eve who extinguished the light of the world: 'Accordingly, she is commanded concerning the Sabbath light in order to atone (*lekappera*) for the light she extinguished'. Like the *Mishneh Berura*, he continues with the halakhic priority of the wife performing this mitzvah, 'even if the husband wants to do it' (*Hilkhot Sabbath* 263.7).[24] In conclusion, the silence of the Shulhan Arukh on the topic of Eve's culpability shows its relative meaning for orthodox Judaism. When the later halakhists reactivate the topic of Eve's culpability, they discuss it primarily in the context of an extra obligation for women in comparison to man's obligation. The halakhic hierarchy of the priority of woman over man has to be explained. This priority has to do with a special merit. Some designate it as atonement, some as repair. The halakhists are not interested in Eve's culpability as such and do not consider it the prime motivation for this mitzvah concerning women.

Contemporary Orthodox Commentaries

The reactivation by some halakhists of the nineteenth-century perspective has led to a new proliferation of the notion of women's culpability. Rabbi Kolatch's book, quoted above, testifies to this fact. A recent orthodox handbook on female religious obligations, *Halikhot Bat Israel*, mentions the topic in connection with the commandment of *challah* (p. 143) and the Sabbath lights (p. 192), using again the mystic vocabulary of repair (*letaqen*). Indeed, in ultra-orthodox communities the topic of Eve's culpability is still active. In his explanation of the weekly portion of the Torah read in the synagogue (written in 2004) Rav Moshe Aberman, a former Rosh Kollel in Chicago, offers the cabbalistic explanation for the two candles usually kindled on the

23. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946, repr. 1995), pp. 233, 275.

24. For his general halakhic outlooks on women, see Simcha Fishbane, '"In any case there are no sinful thoughts"—The Role and Status of Women in Jewish Law as Expressed in the Arukh Hashulhan', *Judaism* 42 (1993), pp. 492-503.

eve of the Sabbath (halakha in fact requires only one, traditionally Jews kindle two). He then continues with the earlier mentioned issue of the wife's priority in performing this commandment. Having quoted the Shulkhan Arukh's statement on a woman's responsibility for the atmosphere in the home, he adduces the midrashic tradition of Eve's extinguishing the light of Adam:

> Since Adam is viewed as the light of the world, as it is written 'A light of the Lord is the soul of man': the candle of God is the soul of man, by causing man to sin and die the women extinguished the light of God. As penitence women are expected to light the candles for Hashem's holy day—Sabbath.

The notion of penitence, absent in the halakhists discussed above, recurs here. It does not, however, have any clear doctrinal status. Indeed, the commentary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menahem Schneersohn (1902–1994), a leading authority of modern Chassidism, is more ambiguous. On 11 May 1975 he explains in a letter the custom of giving charity (*tsedoko*) just before kindling the Sabbath lights:

> The special relevance of Tsedoko to the lighting of candles before Shabbos and Yom Tov is in the fact that, as our Sages relate, lighting the candles is an act of rectification of a wrongdoing committed by the first woman and mother of all mankind, namely Chava (Eve), who caused 'the candle of G'd which is the soul of man'—of Adam—to be extinguished through the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. By lighting the candles, the Jewish mother and daughter rectify the act of putting out the said 'candle'. It is therefore particularly relevant to associate candle lighting with Tsedoko, for Tsedoko too is an act of lifesaving, as mentioned above.

The addition of the 'daughter' as also having to kindle the lights is already apparent in Ganzfried's code and strengthens the notion of a gender-bound, hereditary culpability. It is unclear whether he alludes to the need for atonement or to the concept of repair, in the cabbalistic sense. Remarkably, this approach does not dominate all branches of orthodoxy. Rabbi Elie Munk's commentary on the Jewish Prayer Book states that

> The Rabbinic ordinances concerning the kindling of the Sabbath lights and the laying of the Eruv…were devised by our sages in order to foster and encourage peace in the immediate family as well as in the larger community.[25]

Moreover, instances of interpreting the notion of Eve's culpability as a common obligation for both man and wife abound as well, in particular where women's voices come to the fore. A prolific internet initiative on Jewish topics offers classes on various aspects of contemporary orthodox Judaism.[26]

25. Rabbi Elie Munk, *The World of Jewish Prayer*. II. *Sabbath and Festival Prayers* (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1961), p. 16.
26. Visit www.Torah.org (accessed November 2009).

Women's issues are discussed by Rebbetzin Jaeger. In her class on the Sabbath lights, she discusses the mystical and psychological qualities of the lights, referring to the repeated words in the creation story 'and HaShem saw that the light was good' (Gen. 1.4). It is revealing how she uses the notion of Eve's culpability:

> Chazall[27] tells us that Chava (the first woman) extinguished the light of Adam (the first man), when she fed him from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge that Hashem told them not to eat from. How did she extinguish his light? Originally Adam and Chava were not supposed to die, it was only when they sinned did death come. Our neshamas (souls) are our light, and when Chava gave Adam the forbidden fruit, then his neshama, his light, also eventually died. We can ignite this light in our homes through ahava (love), oneness with our husbands. When husband and wife work together, there is ahava in the house, and shalom can exist, which is what the Shabbat candles help strengthen.

She adduces the tradition of Eve but explains it in a peculiar manner: the whole enterprise of kindling the lights is meant to strengthen good and peaceful relations within the confines of the Jewish household. Thus she reads this tradition in a mitigating manner, presuming the notion of a shared responsibility between man and wife for the immediate social realm of the home. In so doing she nuances the observation that traditional Judaism primarily presupposes and construes a structural division of the presumed female private realm and the male public realm.[28] A comparable mitigating commentary is presented by Ms. Lisa Katz in her explanation of why women kindle the Sabbath lights.[29] Remarkably, not only the expiatory notion of the commandment but also the cabbalistic notion of repair is lacking here. This is also the case in the Artscroll edition of the Jewish prayer-book, the Siddur. The Artscroll Mesorah Series, located in Brooklyn, NY, entails a long-term project of editing bilingual texts from Jewish tradition, as well as providing commentaries and anthologies. Its philosophy is to provide readers with accessible commentaries on the source texts, which implies making deliberate choices in the extant Jewish sources and printing them in English translation. It primarily aims at an orthodox Jewish public.[30] All blessings relating to women are commented upon in general terms as positive actions, drawing nigh to the divine realm. Nowhere do we find a hint or clue to the performance of the three women's commandments as a punishment for or even as reparation resulting from the damage of Eve's

27. Chazall is an acronymic technical name for the Talmudic Sages.
28. Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p. 258.
29. Visit http://Judaism.about.com (accessed December 2009).
30. F. Skolnik (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), II, col. 534. For the present study, I consulted the second edition of the Siddur (Ashkenasic custom, Sixteenth Impression, Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2003).

transgression. This may seem remarkable, as the prayer-book is not keen on presenting an egalitarian reading of Jewish gender in specific feminine issues such as marriage and the traditional roles ascribed to women. It looks as if the commentary takes great care not to estrange women from performing liturgical acts, using justifications that portray these very acts as atoning for an eternal state of sinfulness. On the contrary, the commentary views these acts as celebrating Jewish existence.[31] We may conclude that the notion of Eve's culpability does feature in orthodox Judaism but plays no doctrinal role in shaping women's participation in the mitzvot. In ultra-orthodox circles the notion of a particular feminine penitence is continued. However, the prime halakhic motivation for priority being given to women, namely, their alleged role in the realm of the home, is apparent here as well.

Women's Prayers and the Women's Commandments

How do Jewish women interpret this special 'privilege' attributed to them? We have already met the mitigating comment of rebbetzin Jaeger. Recent research on women's prayers dating from the eighteenth century up to the twentieth century has shed new light on this question.

The Yiddish word *tkhines* is derived from the Hebrew *tehinna*, plural *tehinnot*, which means 'supplication'. Tkhines are private prayers meant for the use of women in a range of circumstances. The composition and distribution of these prayer texts as little booklets or as addenda to prayer books flourish from the sixteenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth.[32]

Their origins lie in the needs of women, who strove to participate in new forms of piety, resulting from the surge of Lurianic mysticism and the subsequent Chassidic movement in Eastern Europe.[33] Some of these tkhines, especially those from the eighteenth century, were evidently written by women. Others were written by men, but the majority are of unknown origin or reworked by women.[34] They are written in Yiddish because for most

31. Note the commentary of the Siddur on the morning prayers, p. 19.

32. Their usage extends well into the twentieth century. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many of these texts were reedited, and sometimes amplified. New forms also occur, fulfilling the specific needs of the authors, that is, reform thinkers in the nineteenth century or Chassidic communities in the late twentieth century. These new texts testify to social changes from the private sphere of Jewish female worship to a communal sphere; see Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), pp. 150ff.

33. Weissler, *Women Voices*, pp. 12, 181-83. See also the review article by Judith Breger, 'The Prayers of Jewish Women: Some Historical Perspectives', *Judaism* 42 (1993), pp. 504-15.

34. Weissler, *Women Voices*, pp. 7, 9-10; Breger, 'The Prayers of Jewish Women', p. 505.

uneducated women, Hebrew, the holy language of the synagogue liturgy, was not accessible. In contemporary Chassidic communities, the use of Yiddish springs from other, religio-political motifs. Besides, they are not meant for synagogue worship but first and foremost for use in the home, offering flexible formulas, phrased in the first person singular, and allowing for private insertions. How are the women's commandments evaluated and motivated? The topic of Eve's guilt is known, but does not figure prominently. On the contrary, even if communal guilt—not specifically the guilt of women, let alone of Eve—is present as a textual topic, the prayers celebrate the obligations of the woman as sacred acts that bring her as near to the divine as was possible for the priesthood in the days of the Temple:

> Praised are you, God our Lord, the God of our forebears. You have sanctified your people Israel more than all the other peoples on the earth, and have commanded them your commandments. You have commanded them: when we knead the dough for our bread, [we must] separate a portion of it for you, God Almighty. You have required us to give it to the Priest, who is clean of all impurity. For you separated out a portion of the earth and created the human being from it, and gave him a pure soul from the place of the pure, where the High Priest stands; there is no impurity there. Now we have been punished because of our sins and the sins of our forebears, so that Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed, and the holy House in which your name was sanctified by the priests who brought sacrifices to the altar in great purity… I pray you, God, my Lord, that you grant me and my husband and my children the privilege of living to see that the Holy House will be rebuilt and that Jerusalem will be once again as it was of old, and your people Israel will once more dwell in the Holy Land, in which you sanctified your holy Name among them, and will give the separated portion to the priest, who is clean from all impurity, in great joy, with the in-gathering of Israel. May this come true in God's name. And recite the blessing: Blessed are you, Lord our God and God of the Universe, who has sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us to separate *challah*.[35]

The preoccupation with purity is typical of German texts. In the biblical era purity was a prerequisite for priests and other Jews to enter the Temple precincts and participate in the Temple cult. The prayer presumes an implicit but positive connection between the cultic purity of the priests and the sacred action of the women who separate a bit of the dough as a symbolic offering. It enhances the notion of the religious participation of women in the predominantly male cult of the Temple, technically expressed in the comparison of the *challah* with bringing tithes. Indeed, Talmudic literature views the commandments of *challah* as the sole relic of the biblical system of priestly tithes. By performing the commandment, a woman is able to transform her household into a little Temple and to attach holiness to her

35. Translation in Weissler, *Women Voices*, pp. 310-11.

realm, even if the restoration of the Temple is anticipated as an eschatological hope. Finally, the connection between the woman separating *challah* and God kneading man from the dust of the earth compares this commandment to a prime divine act of creation.

Women's Commandments and the Loss of the Temple Service

Prayers such as these lament the loss of the Temple and hope for its eschatological rebuilding, a common theme in Jewish prayer. They suggest that, in the meantime, the sanctification of household practices by the woman performing mitzvot offers a suitable equivalent. This seems to be a common theme in the tkhines, as the connection between the female mitzvot and the cultic practice in Temple times also figures in Eastern European texts:

> May my *challah* be accepted as the sacrifice on the altar was accepted. May my mitzvah be accepted just as if I had performed it properly. In ancient times, the High Priest came and caused the sins to be forgiven: so also may my sins be forgiven with this. May I be like a newborn child. May I be able to honor my dear Sabbaths and holidays. May God grant that I and my husband and my children be able to nourish ourselves. Thus may my mitzvah of *challah* be accepted: that my children may be fed by the dear God, be blessed, with great mercy and great compassion. May this mitzvah of *challah* be accounted as if I had given the tithe. As I perform my mitzvah of *challah* with might and main, so may God, be blessed, guard me from anguish and pain.[36]

The performance of this mitzvah is equated with the offering of sacrifices on the altar and with the High Priest in function. Both are able to expiate for the sins of the community. Note that again, no mention is made of a specific female sin. Second, the action is equated with the mitzvah of tithing, halakhic, a male obligation. Both equations draw on a transfer of Temple-oriented language to the household. In other words: by uttering these words and performing her duties, the wife is transforming her household into a little Temple and connecting her female mitzvot to the meaning of the male obligations as well.

Not all of these texts show an egalitarian discourse. They do not, however, repeat the sharp misogynistic tendencies present in the contemporary ethical treatises. There, women appear as the ultimate other, as everything that man has to abstain from or has to fight against. This ethical literature enjoyed some popularity, as its ideas were also spread by itinerant preachers. The late medieval ethical treatises view menstruation, pregnancy and birth within the lines set out in the earlier mentioned midrash, as an atoning punishment for the transgression of Eve. One author, R. Abraham Benjamin

36. Translation in Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 33.

Solnik (1577), even sharpens this misogynistic view by condensing all women into Eve and attributing to Eve (and all subsequent women!) the act of murder, as she was responsible for the death of all humankind.[37] Therefore, all women need to expiate continuously for this act. Here the notion of a hereditary sin comes to the fore, even if it applies to women only! Apart from the hyperbolic character inherent in the language used in this genre, the topic of Eve as a murderess is an extrapolation from the midrashic tradition of the women's commandments as atoning for the act of leading Adam to sin and therefore attracting death.[38] Nonetheless, the depiction of woman's bodily existence as a threat and of Eve's deed as paradigmatic for all women and their bodily sufferings are manifestly misogynistic.[39] Compared with this approach the tkhines appear as a counter-discourse. They stress the rewards and the joy of the specific commandments, even if this reward in most cases is gender-specific: a pious, scholarly offspring.[40] They also raise the topic of woman's bodily suffering during menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth and discuss and accept God's justice, without, however, referring to a specific women's guilt. Neither is Eve regarded as representative for all women.[41]

Reinterpreting Eve's Guilt in the Prayers on Women's Commandments

In a prayer text on the mitzvah of kindling lights, the topic of priestly service is adduced again:

> We must kindle lights for the holy day, to brighten it and to rejoice on it; therewith may we be worthy of the light and the joy of eternal life… Lord of the world, I have done all my work in six days, and will now rest, as you have commanded, and will kindle two lights, according to the requirement of our holy Torah, as interpreted by our sages, to honor you and the holy Sabbath… And may the lights be, in your eyes, like the lights that the priest kindled in the Temple. And let our light not be extinguished, and let your light shine upon us. Deliver our souls into the light of paradise together with other righteous men and women.[42]

37. Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 70.
38. In *Aboth deRabbi Nathan*, version b 9 (ed. Schechter, p. 25), the text ascribes to Eve that she 'shed blood' and therefore is obligated to the commandment of menstrual purity.
39. Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 74.
40. Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 71.
41. Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 73.
42. Translation in Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 71.

The motif of Eve extinguishing the light is known to us from the midrashic tradition and from the halakhic sources quoted. In the tkhine it does, however, return in a radically modified form: as a prayer to God not to extinguish our light. No reference is made to the issue of the specific guilt of women in this respect. Moreover, performing the commandment of kindling the light is compared to the sacred act of the priest kindling the menorah in the Temple. Again, a woman's household is transformed into a little Temple and women's commandments become Temple rituals. As Weissler notes, only a small number of tkhines for *niddah*, pregnancy and childbirth raise the topic of Eve's sin.[43] It does not occur, or if it does, it appears only in a strongly modified way, with the tkhines for the other two women's commandments, lighting candles and separating *challah*.

Mystical Transformation of the Women's Commandments

The traditional Jewish sources for this transformation are manifold. First, the expiating role of performing mitzvoth is rooted in Talmudic traditions and is generally not gender-specific (apart from the tradition discussed above). As already stated, a general male discourse on religious obligations is applied to women's commandments. Second, cabbalistic notions from the Lurianic system or the Zohar seem to infiltrate compositions as well, even if explicit cabbalistic themes do not frequently occur in the texts.[44] The transformation of the midrashic theme of Eve's culpability to a positive meaning is, however, in at least one instance clearly based on the Zohar. One tkhine, dating from a female writer around 1700 (*Tkhinei Imrei Shifra*, Brody), suggests the real reason for women's obligation to kindle the lights for Sabbath was the honour of the Shekhinah, the sefirah that connotes the dwelling of God among his creation, and which is deemed a female aspect of God:[45]

> When the priest below lit the seven lamps, he therewith caused the seven lamps above to shine. Therefore, by kindling the lamps for the holy Sabbath, we awaken great arousal in the upper world. And when the woman kindles the lights, it is fitting for her to kindle [them] with joy and with wholeheartedness, because it is in honor of the Shekhinah and in honor of the Sabbath and in honor of the extra (Sabbath) soul.[46]

Three new topics are raised in this peculiar text. First, the issue of an extra soul on the Sabbath is classic Talmudic doctrine. Second, the division of a world below and a (divine) upper world is drawing on the cosmology of the

43. Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 71.
44. Weissler, *Women Voices*, pp. 48, 92.
45. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 229.
46. Translation in Weissler, *Women Voices*, p. 62.

Zohar. Third, carrying out commandments with the requisite intention ('joy and wholeheartedness') is predominant in the cabbalistic theurgical doctrine of performing the Torah; the mystical force of these human actions is enhanced by appropriate intention (*kavvanah)*.[47] This makes this specific female obligation into a 'fully-fledged mystical practice'.[48] Indeed, in the latter case, women act like men and receive the appropriate divine merits (it is, however, questionable whether and how this accords with social rewards). In all cases, as with (some of the) specific male mitzvot, women's commandments supply women with appropriate channels to communicate with the Divine.[49]

Conclusions

Women's prayers show that the writers were aware of tradition and did keep in line with the commonplace prayer topics of penitence and expressing feelings of guilt. They also confirm that the prime motivation in halakha of the women's commandments is the alleged women's rule of the household. No specific female guilt is highlighted, however, in most texts. Women's commandments are seen as equivalent to the priestly service in the Temple. In a way, discourse for women proceeds in similar ways to the regular discourse on the qualities and rewards offered by the commandments for men. Women even celebrate these commandments as equal to the specific commandments that are incumbent upon a select group among men, the priests, and in so doing transform their homes into the Temple. Read against the background of misogynistic tendencies in ethical religious sources, the tkhines manifest a counter-discourse. It may be stated that prayers for women to a certain extent convey to women religious self-esteem and communal honour (women's actions affect the fate of the Jewish people as well!), withheld from them in the public sphere of traditional synagogue worship. The prayers do not, however, break with the traditional role ascribed to the woman in Jewish society as such. Women are submissive to

47. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 275.

48. Thus Weissler, *Women Voices*, pp. 61-63, 183.

49. Note the late eighteenth-century prayer book which remained in use for at least one hundred years in an Italian Jewish family and is reedited as *Out of the Depths I Call to You: A Book of Prayers for the Married Jewish Women* (ed. and trans. R. Nina Beth Cardin; Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1995). The prayers, written in Hebrew, are common Jewish prayers for women (p. xii). They do not deviate with regard to the positive meaning ascribed to the women commandments and do not refer to women's culpability (pp. 20, 42, 48). The actions are considered as sanctifying the actual life of the woman and her family and as expressing the hope for final redemption of the Jewish people. Traditional Jewish affiliation is combined with Lurianic imagery (p. xi).

the male religious Jewish discourse because these women want to be Jewish.[50] For example, childbearing and raising children, or the main religious legal responsibilities of women, are not discussed as such.[51]

The concept of Eve's culpability appears as a predominantly male construct to explain the priority given to women in three areas of halakha. It has become clear that this motif is of secondary importance in halakhic codes. Furthermore, women's religious perception of this praxis shows alternative values and meanings. Indeed, there is no direct correlation between halakhic texts and socio-religious reality. Moreover, with the shift of women's economic and social life in modernity from private to public, a new counter-discourse occurs. It claims an enhanced participation by women in Jewish learning, in particular, on issues of halakha. Remarkably, an egalitarian reading of Eve is not necessary here. These two observations merge inasmuch as they testify to the relatively low impact of Eve's story on the participation of women in the world of the mitzvot. Indeed, in traditional Judaism the story of Eve is not the prime battleground on which female religious rights are fought for.

50. Weissler, *Women Voices*, pp. 185-86.

51. On womens personal affiliation and the distribution of honor in communal liturgical acts, see Chana Safrai, 'Vrouwen in de orthodoxe synagoge?', *Ter Herkenning* 23.3 (1995), pp. 146-58. Safrai's study, as far as I am aware, is not currently available in English.

Created Anew: Muslim Interpretations of the Myth of Adam and Eve

Karel Steenbrink

Starting with the two versions of the story of the first human beings in Genesis 1–3, the myth of Adam and Eve has been resumed and retold, expanded and contextualized in the Jewish, Christian, as well as in the Islamic tradition. In this contribution I want to illustrate the Muslim claim of being the legitimate heir to the Jewish and Christian tradition by means of some examples taken from the stories of Adam and Eve. I will not only discuss the Quranic message as a seventh-century rewording of the old myth, but will also show that renewed contact with Jews and Christians took place in later centuries. For modern times we will see these parallel developments in the debates about evolution and feminist readings. Related to personal interest and experiences, special attention will be given to Indonesian examples in the rich and varied Islamic tradition.

Satan's Sin Versus the Mistake of Adam and Eve: The Quranic Stories

We start with the episode that is only mentioned in the margin of the Jewish and Christian Scripture, the fall of the devil (see Jude 6). This story has been developed in the Jewish and Christian traditions, leading to such literary masterpieces as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Vondel's *Lucifer* and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Original sin is not related to Adam and Eve, but to Satan or Iblis, the (chief) devil. He was the first to sin. He denied God's command of bowing for the first human being. Quite a few Muslim theologians and mystics have shown sympathy for this decision of Iblis, because he had some good reasons not to prostrate himself for the human being: bowing should be performed for God alone. Iblis and all the other angels were created from light, while man was created from clay.[1] This story is

1. Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983).

mentioned some four times in the Quran (Q 15.28-37; 17.61-65; 18.50-51; 38.71-80).[2]

The story of Adam and Eve is recorded three times in the Quran. I present here one of the earliest Quran passages about Adam, Q 20.115-25. This whole *Surah* (chapter) is an argument of Muhammad with the citizens of Mecca, the majority of whom do not accept his message. As in the two other long passages about Adam (7.11-25 and 2.30-39) we find here the story of Adam balanced by the story of Moses. Moses is the strong and brave prophet, who has to convince an infidel people and a reluctant ruler. Moses is depicted as another Muhammad. But Adam is among the unresolved, the unsettled, who for some time even made a mistake, but finally came to conversion. The real scapegoat for his mistake is the devil, while Adam has been presented as basically not guilty because of his youth and immaturity. In this translation I include references to the parallel texts and write in italics where all three are fully similar:[3]

> [20.115] And We made covenant with Adam before,
> but he forgot, and We found in him no constancy.
> [116] And when We said to the angels: '*Bow yourselves to Adam*';
> so they bowed themselves, save Iblis; he refused. [7.11; 2.34]
> [117] Then We said: 'Adam, surely this is an enemy to thee and thy wife.
> So let him not expel you both from the Garden,
> so that thou art unprosperous [7.19; 2.35]
> [118] It is assuredly given to thee neither to hunger therein,
> nor to go naked,
> [119] neither to thirst therein, nor to suffer the sun'.
> [120] Then Satan whispered to him saying:
> 'Adam, shall I point thee to the *Tree of Eternity*
> *and a Kingdom that decays not?*' [7.20; 2.36]
> [121] So the two of them ate of it,
> *and their shameful parts revealed to them,*
> *and they took to stitching upon themselves leaves of the Garden.*
> And Adam disobeyed his Lord, and so he erred. [7.22]
> [122] Thereafter his Lord chose him,
> and turned again unto him, and He guided him. [7.23]
> [123] *Said He: 'Get you down, both of you together, out of it,*
> *each of you an enemy to each;*
> but if there *comes to you from Me guidance*,
> then whosoever follows My guidance
> shall not go astray, neither shall he be unprosperous; [7.24; 2.36]

2. See my *Adam Redivivus:. Muslim Elaborations of the Adam Saga with Special Reference to the Indonesian Literary Traditions* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1998), pp. 17-19.

3. Here and elsewhere I follow the translation appearing in Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

> 124 but whosoever turns away from My remembrance,
> his shall be a life of narrowness,
> and on the Resurrection Day We shall raise him blind'. [2.38]
> 125 He shall say: 'O my Lord, why hast Thou raised me blind,
> and I was wont to see?'

Some comments:

(1) This is not a full and chronologically complete story, but rather something like a *midrash*, a reflection on a story that is already well known, with the emphasis on a practical conclusion.

(2) The command of 115 can only be read in 120 and even then not in a clear way. The reader (or hearer) knows the story already and is given only conclusions. Verse 116 relates something which happened before 116: the refusal of Satan to honour Adam.

(3) The devil has two names: Iblis from the Greek (*diabolos*) and Satan from the Semitic. Also in other passages of the Quran we find the two so close that no conclusions similar to Yahwist–Elohist differences can be drawn.

(4) There is no idea of inherited sin or debt connected to this transgression. The Islamic tradition here joins the Jewish and the Eastern Christian heritage. Only Western Christianity has fully developed the concept of the transmission of the original sin.

(5) Even if we should notice something similar to the concept of an original sin, we should accept the fall of Satan as more important than Adam's fault.

(6) Verses 123-24 present the practical implication of the story: when a new guidance comes from God (as in the case of Muhammad), those who follow the counsel are among the good; the devil is blamed for the rise of unbelief, but the unbeliever has to accept his own responsibility.

(7) Eve (in Arabic *Hawwā*) has not been mentioned by name in the Quran, though she is present as the spouse of Adam. Below we will see how Riffat Hassan and Amina Wadud present different interpretations of this relation.

A 'Low' and a 'High' Adamology

In the texts of the Quran Adam is not represented as a prophet. He is first of all the example and even the prototype of an uncertain and ambivalent human being, searching his way, an easy target for the devil, but finally a reconciled person, who received forgiveness for his mistakes. A more specific qualification of Adam is only mentioned in two Quranic passages of the later period of the Quranic revelations. A first special attribute for Adam is given in *Surah* 2.30, where God reveals his plan to the angels: 'I am setting in the earth a viceroy'. The term *khalifa*, 'caretaker' or 'viceroy', becomes a title, which is debated and extended: Adam as caretaker for the business of God in this earth, watchman for the ecological structure and then also the first ruler. Later theology attributes to Adam the first combination of prophet and king.

An even somewhat higher 'Adamology' is connected to the story of Jesus in *Surah* 3. In the beginning of this third *Surah* we find the story of John the Baptist and Jesus, son of Mary. Even more than in the biblical account we find a clear confession of Mary's virginity:

> 'Lord, how shall I have a son seeing no mortal has touched me?'
> He [Gabriel]: Even so, God creates what He will.
> When He decrees a thing He does but say to it 'Be' and it is. (Q 3.47)

At the end of this episode we hear a comparison with Adam:

> Truly, the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness:
> He created him of dust, and then said unto him 'Be' and he was. (Q 3.59)

Together with Jesus, Adam is here put in a special position, as a human being, who has been created by a concrete and individual command of God. Jesus in this context can be considered as a 'second Adam' and in later theology this also has been elaborated.[4] The emphasis here is only on the similarity. The contrasts between Jesus and Adam do not figure in this context.

While looking at the portrayal of Adam in the Quran, Jews and Christians were and are often inclined to measure the similarities between the earlier and later scripture. They want(ed) to look for sources and origins. This was also the great concern of earlier generations of scholars like the Jew Abraham Geiger in his *Was hat Muhammad aus den Judentum aufgenommen?* (*What Did Muhammad Borrow from the Jewish Religion?*)[5] This was followed by a Christian author, Richard Bell, in his Gunning Lectures in Edinburgh on *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*.[6] This approach may be important, but an understanding of the Quranic text first should try to read the passages on Adam and Eve in the whole of the message of the Quran itself and within the perspective of the dynamics of the growth of the new religion as revealed by the prophet Muhammad to its first believers. This message of the Quran should be understood as a *relectura*, a contextual retelling of

4. For example, see my 'Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Writings of Nuruddin al-Raniri', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 1 (1990), pp. 192-207.

5. Abraham Geiger published his work *Was hat Muhammad aus den Judentum aufgenommen?* in Bonn, 1833.

6. Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London: Frank Cass, 1968 [1st edn 1926]).

(excerpts from) the Jewish and Christian scripture within the setting of the message of Muhammad. Adam has not been given the role of a prophet (which is a later development within Islam), but he is also not taken as the origin of sin and evil (which is the case within Western Christianity). Adam is the prototype of a human being, a sinner, who is in need of a forgiving God and who through this gift can have a unique place in the universe, extolled above the angels and the rest of nature; more or less the human being of Psalm 8, humble and modest, but scarcely 'a little lower than the heavenly beings…ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet'. This last element of glory for humankind is stressed in the Quran through the episode, where it is told that Adam not only knew the names of all things, but also taught these to the angels, who full of shame have to confess that they were unknowing (2.31-33).

Adam and Eve in Hadith*: The Legal Traditions*

The style of legal *hadith* can be compared to the Jewish *hallakha*: not a law in the modern positive sense of the word, but rather a series of anecdotes, which results in rules of conduct. The Adam story is here connected with the practical rules for the proper Muslim greeting of *Assalām 'alaikum* ('peace be upon you'):

> From…Abu Huraira. The Prophet said: Allah created Adam, making him sixty cubits tall. When He created him, He said to him: 'Go, and greet that group of angels and listen to their reply, for it will be your greeting and the greeting of your offspring'. So, Adam said to the angels: *Assalām 'alaikum*. The angels said: *Assalām 'alaika wa rahmatullāhi* (peace and God's mercy be upon you). Thus the angels added to Adam's salutation the expression 'and God's mercy'. Any person who will enter Paradise will resemble Adam. People have been decreasing in stature since Adam's creation.[7]

In recent history this tradition has been the subject of long and heated debate among Indonesian Muslims. Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the *Nahdlatul Ulama*, Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, claiming some 30 million followers, began a speech in the early 1980s to an Islamic audience not with the Arabic formula of *Assalām 'alaikum* but with the common greeting in Indonesian, *Selamat Pagi*. He claimed that it was not necessary to show one's Islamic identity by greeting in Arabic. A great number of Indonesian Muslims, however, draw from the text of the *hadith* the conclusion that greetings should be in Arabic, because the text of the original command was also in Arabic.

7. *Sahih Bukhari* (*Book on the Prophets*), ch. 1, IV.342-43 (ed. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1984). The same story is repeated with more emphasis on the proper way of greeting in the *Book of Greeting*, ch. 1, VIII.160, and ch. 18, VIII.176.

Adab: Wisdom, Little Facts and Entertainment of the Storytellers

Religion is not only a matter of life and death, serious debate and quest for truth. Emotion, suspense and jokes are the common tools of the storyteller. The history of Islam honours the names of many individual persons, who could attract the attention of their hearers. Among them are preachers for the Friday sermons, who developed attractive ways of interpreting and applying the text of the Quran and who are partly considered to be the first group of Quran interpreters. Among these are also popular preachers, who accommodated pre-Islamic folklore to the basic teachings of Islam and had probably a great influence in the spread of Islam in broad layers of the population.

These traditions cannot accept that Adam and Eve were naked before eating the forbidden fruit. They usually accept that they were covered with beautiful long hair. After eating the fruit most of the hair disappeared and fig leaves were sought. Sometimes there is here a reference to the first lines of *Surah* 95 of the Quran: ‘By the fig and the olive and the Mount Sinai’.

These stories recount two hundred or even three hundred years of repentance. Eve stayed in Syria and Lebanon, filling Orontes and Jordan with her tears. Adam was for a long time in Sri Lanka and India. They met at Mount Arafat close to Mecca (Arafat meaning ‘recognize each other’). In Mecca Adam built the Ka’aba. Here they gave birth to 23 couples of twins, each time a daughter and a son. Qabil (the biblical Cain) had to marry the ugly twin sister of Abel and to allow his pretty twin sister to be married to Abel. Thereupon Qabil killed Abel. This story can be seen as a record of the ban on incest.[8]

During the twentieth century many Muslim scholars have criticized this *adab* tradition because of the borrowing of these stories from Talmudic and other Jewish sources, but in popular works this style is still often practised.

Political Ideology: Adam as the Perfect Ruler

In many *Mirrors for Kings*, another important literary genre of Islamic and other cultures, Adam is often depicted as the perfect ruler. In the Indonesian literary tradition this is also done in the image of the *raja pandita*, the ‘king-priest’, the monarch who (as in the case of the Buddha) leaves his palace in order to start an ascetic life.[9] While philosophical works often debate the question about the superiority of the prophet vs. the philosopher, the *Mirrors for Kings* place the ruler and the prophet side by side. The perfect being has to unite both qualities. This was the case with Adam.

8. More examples and references in my *Adam Redivivus*, pp. 104-24.

9. Russell Jones, *Hikayat Sultan Ibrahim* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1983), and *Hikayat Ibrahim ibn Adham* (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1985).

Although the principal Mirror for Princes in the Islamic world, *Nasihat al-Muluk* (*Good Advice to Kings*) by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), was known in the Malay world,[10] the most popular work in the archipelago became the *Tajus Salatin* by Bukhari of Johor, a high official at the court of the Johor Sultanate, the residency of the Malaccan Sultans after they were expelled from Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511. The fifth chapter ('On the Nature of Princely Dignity, Ruling, Sovereignty and Similar Topics') has an interesting episode on the first human being. It starts with the command of God to Azrael, the angel of death, to take earth and to place it between the cities of Mecca and Taif. All the angels were surprised about 'this heap of earth, composed of earth, water, fire and air, the four elements which fight each other'. Notwithstanding the protests of the angels, God breathed into Adam and made him *khalifah*, caliph or viceroy, to rule over them:

> During the lifetime of Adam, peace be upon him, his progeny counted forty thousand persons. At that time Adam communicated to them God's commands, taught all virtues and prohibited all evil. This was his service to the right religion. During this period his offspring lived comfortably and enjoyed wealth, prosperity, luxury, elegant clothes and delicious food. Nobody was in distress. Only Adam, the righteous one, peace be upon him, was seated in a lonely place, at a great distance from his offspring, thoughtful and troubled. Through his great anxiety he seldom ate, was always starving. He never wore beautiful clothes and never laughed. He did not speak to anybody about his sorrow. His body became meagre and frail. All his bones, in front and in his back, could clearly be seen like steps of a ladder. His children visited him every day, but he did not accept anything of their provisions. He remained seated alone in sadness and sorrow. One day his children approached him with the question: 'O father Adam, we see that you are not able to live in peace and happiness because of your sadness, please tell us: what and why is your sorrow? Please, tell us, that we may understand.' Adam said: 'My children, what use could it be if I would tell you about my fate and the cause of my sorrow, because none of you ever will be able to cure my distress. In the beginning my abode was in heaven, above the seven layers of the atmosphere and I was expelled from heaven for an error, which I committed through thoughtlessness. Here on earth I fear to commit another fault in my thoughtlessness and to be expelled from earth to the area below the seven layers of the earth into hell. How should then be my fate and who could be a help for me? This is the reason for my misery and my distress. How could I be joyful in this situation?' The offspring of Adam wept because of the fate of their father Adam. In the book *Qisasul Anbiya* (*The Stories of the Prophets*) it is told that he ruled for one thousand and five hundred year in this state of sorrow. He cared for his progeny and when he grew old, he chose two of his offspring, Seth and Gayomart. He gave all the scripture (*suhuf*), which God had revealed to him to Seth and ordered him to instruct all the people and to

10. Patricia Crone, 'Did al-Ghazali Write a Mirror for Princes? On the Authorship of Nasihat al-Muluk', *Jerusalem Studies on Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), pp. 167-91.

> perform the religion. He gave Gayomart the royal dignity and instructed him to restrain the people from doing evil. After that Adam passed away, peace be upon him! He was the first ruler over humankind and after him his son Gayomart became the second king on earth, to rule in justice over all people. It should be known to you that of all the business on earth no duty is heavier than the task of government, unless we should make the exception of prophecy, which is still more demanding.[11]

Besides the hermit-king, Adam is mostly seen as God's image, his representative or his 'shadow on earth', a title used by Muslim rulers following the Persian God-King or *zillulāhi fi'l ard*. The *fuqahā*, the strict Muslim scribes, had some reservations against this title, but from Baghdad to Yogyakarta the princes used this title. The largest Malay Mirror of Kings describes as follows the creation of Adam, immediately following the emanation of the Light of Muhammad from God:

> When He wanted to show His Lordship
> He created the Light of His Beloved
> And from this light he created all prophets
> And established their high position.
>
> And from all these prophets he selected Adam
> To show His beloved light
> And therefore all angels
> Bowed before him.
>
> And he expelled him from heaven.
> That was a lesson for him.
> And He bestowed on him the highest position
> Made him His representative (*khalifa*) on earth.[12]

For modern Muslims this is an image of the past. They only accept Muhammad as the prophet-politician of the ideal state of Medina.

Mystical Speculations

In the Islamic mystical tradition Adam has gradually been put aside as the first human creature. He has been superseded by the Light (*nūr*) or eternal idea of Muhammad. This is the case in the mystical philosophy of Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) and the many that followed him in the Islamic elaboration of

11. P.P. Roorda van Eijsinga, *De Kroon aller Koningen van Djohor* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1827), pp. 46-48 (my translation).

12. My translation of the opening section of *Bustanus Salatin* by Nuruddin ar-Raniri (d. 1658), as published in Malay in my article, 'On Structure and Sources of the Bustanus Salatin', in Wolfgang Marshall (ed.), *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesian and the Malay World* (University of Berne: Institute of Ethnology, 1994), pp. 183-203 (200).

the Neoplatonic model of *Exitus-Reditus* or *tanazzul-taraqqi*. The first emanation from the undivided divinity in this model is the Spirit (*Rūh*) or the Light of Muhammad, the prototype of the material or carnal Muhammad, who is only created in a much later phase. After this and in this Light of Muhammad the rest of creation is generally conceived and conceptualized in concrete ideas, after which it was finally created in material shape. The final purpose of this mystical doctrine is the deep consciousness that anywhere in this material world a divine essence is present. Common human beings can make effective their union with the divinity through concentration in this divine essence in the creature. The modest position and function of Adam in this context is made clear in a saying (*hadith*) of Muhammad: *Adamu abu'l bashari wa ana abu'l-arwah* ('Adam is the father of all men and I am the father of all spirits').[13]

An important figure in the spread of these ideas was Hamzah Fansuri, the first author of Malay poetry (about 1570). As was commonly accepted in mystical thought since Ibn al-Arabi, for Hamzah Fansuri too Muhammad is not only the last or seal of the prophets, he is also the first in the process of creation:[14]

> God is the everlasting One
> His Being is exempt from the six directions
> He is the first, perfect and exalted
> And the last, in eternal brilliancy.
>
> This brilliancy is the essence of the final prophet
> First of all it manifested itself within the deep Ocean
> The entire universe owes its creation to it
> And likewise the progeny of Adam and Eve.

The symbolism of the great ocean (the eternal and unchanging Divinity) and the changing waves on its surface (the ever changing created beings), is here refined into a manifestation *within* the deep divine Ocean, the (light of) the final prophet Muhammad. Adam and Eve have no clear mystical dimensions, but are representations of the common human beings. This is also manifest from the only longer passage in Hamzah's poems in which the image of Adam is elaborated in somewhat more detail:

> Our Lord is the all-wise
> He is the ruler of creation, the supreme authority
> He has created Adam, the pious prophet
> Of beautiful shape and gifted with knowledge

13. From the treatise *Asraru'l-arifin*, in Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970), pp. 258, 378.

14. G.W.J. Drewes and L. Brakel *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1987), pp. 86-87.

Out of love he created Adam
he endowed him with activity and a fine spirit
And sound, unvitiated intellect
'In the image of the Merciful', as the Prophet said

Do not disregard Adam
God's aspect of Beauty fully shows in him
If your love and intelligence are adequate
Your view will be based on sound knowledge.

Our Lord is the lord of the universe
At His behest Ahmad, the final Prophet
Showed us the way to profound knowledge
And converted the unbelievers to save them from disaster.[15]

Although Adam is acknowledged as prophet, he is apparently far below the final Prophet, Muhammad, also indicated here with his Quranic name of Ahmad (cf. Q 61.6), and in fact Adam is placed here close to common human beings. The short phrase 'Do not disregard Adam' (*Akan Adam itu jangan kau-ghafil*) is repeated once again, not after a high praise of Adam but following a reference to his sin:

Adam the mystic was confused by the Devil
In the flower-decked paradise
he came down to the earth on a mountain in Ceylon,
Crazy about Eve, utterly bewildered

Do not disregard Adam
In him God's supreme wisdom becomes apparent
Let all who inquire after him show respect
He was an eminent wave of the Ocean.[16]

In the physical world of human beings Adam has the function that Muhammad has for the spiritual world. Sometimes, however, Adam is also immediately related to God as created after his image, as if within one author several metaphysical constructions may function together. So it is also stated through another *hadith* that 'God has created Adam in his image', and in another extended version that 'God created Adam in the Image of the Merciful (*al-Rahmān*), for the Merciful is like the ocean and Adam is like foam [on its waves]'.[17] In this latter case Adam seems to have regained something of his privileged position as the first human being. Still, also common human beings are compared to foam or waves and therefore this special high position of Adam is not restricted to Adam alone.

15. Drewes and Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri*, pp. 90-91.
16. Drewes and Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri*, pp. 140-41.
17. From the *Sharab al-Ashiqin*, in al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*, pp. 319, 438-39.

The Challenge of Darwin and Modern Science

The Islamic expression of religion, from the articulation of popular religion to the sophisticated wording of philosophy and theology, never developed in isolation from Judaism and Christianity. The interaction between the three religions has known its ups and downs. One of the glorious periods was about 800 when Christians and Muslims translated the heritage of Greek and Hellenistic philosophy into a monotheistic Arabic vision. Through this language (used by Christians, Muslims and Jews) the classical legacy came to the Latin scholastic theology of Western Europe.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the tables were turned and the Muslims had to react to developments that started in the Western and/or Christian world. One of these was the theory of evolution and its challenge for faith and theology. Here we see many similarities with developments within Western and Christian theology, such as the harmonization of the 'six days' of creation into six periods of much longer duration, after the scriptural sayings, that in the eyes of God one day is similar to one thousand years, a sentiment which is expressed both in the biblical Psalms and the Quran (Ps. 90.4; cf. Q 32.5).

There were also unconventional solutions in this matter. It has been proposed that Adam was created by God and put in Paradise some six thousand years ago, not as a first human being, but only as a new generation in a much older human race. How could he be nominated to become caliph (*khalifa*) if there were no people yet to rule? Besides, we find rejections of the theory of evolution also in the Muslim camp, resembling the denials in conservative Christian circles.

The modern Quran commentator from Indonesia, Haji Abdulmalik ibn Abdulkarim Amrullah, usually called by his acronym Hamka, is a prolific writer with special mystical interests. Hamka's mystical interest was born out of pastoral concern. Making his living as a religious journalist, outside the domain of the specialized religious schools and the internal debates of the religious scholars, he noticed that many lay people were in need of a religion, which would incite them to noble feelings, virtuous acts and bright perspectives. They did not want a religion of strict rules and legal commands. In this same society he also met many youngsters who went to modern schools, received training in modern science, but had no profound religious education. For this group, he wanted to explain the teachings of Islam in an appropriated manner.

Quran 4.1: Min nafsin wahidatin*, 'From One Soul'*

In the section 'Question and Answer' of the popular Islamic magazine *Gema Islam*, Hamka explained his view on the problem of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. He recognized that modern medicine had made the difference between man and woman less absolute. Since the middle of the twentieth-century medical science had made it possible to execute trans-sexual operations. How is the doctrine of Islam in this field? Hamka emphasized that there is no account of the birth of Eve from Adam in the Quran. The first verse of *Surah* 4 of the Quran reads: 'O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women'. The Arab word for 'soul', *nafs*, may have the meaning of 'soul', of 'breath' but also of 'body'. The word itself is female and therefore the attribute 'one, single' is found in the female form in the text of the Quran. Not only the modern Egyptian scholar Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905) but also the medieval scholar Fakhruddīn ar-Rāzi (d. 1209) rejected the story that Eve would have been created from Adam's rib. In the proper way of explaining the Quran not through external sources and imaginations, but only through internal evidence, by the text of the Quran itself, we should stick to the equality of man and woman and must leave open all possibilities for the evolution of the sexes. Besides the Quranic stories of the human being created from Adam, we have also to accept the symbolisms and metaphors of the human being, created from semen, blood and similar material (Q 32.6-9; 23.12-14; 75.37-39). The combination of these data shows that the Quran can be accepted also according to modern scientific criteria.[18]

Predecessors of Darwin?

On the question whether the theory of Darwin about the origin of human beings can be accepted by believers, Hamka answered with the example of the philosopher Ibn Miskawayhi (d. 1030) who in a treatise on ethics already sketched the evolution from plants, fishes, animals until human beings. Also, Ibn Khaldun, 'the father of sociology' (1332–1406), is credited with an evolutionist theory. 'Muslim scholars have no objection to accepting the possibility that there have been several thousand different "Adams" before the last Adam, the ancestor of the present mankind. There is already a *hadith*, related by Ibn Abbas, stating that there were a million Adams before the present one.'[19] In the nineteenth century the Christian world experienced a separation of politics and religion as well as a separation or even conflict between science and religion. Muslims should be cautious not to be caught in the same trap as Christians. They should not be fearful or even conservative and reject scientific developments like the one suggested by Darwin.[20]

18. Hamka, *Tanja-jawab* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1967), I, pp. 33-39, reprint from the magazine *Gema Islam* (1 February 1963); for the interpretation of *nafsin wahidatin* by Riffat Hassan, see below.

19. Hamka, *Tanja-jawab*, II, p. 50.

20. Hamka, *Tanja-jawab*, II, p. 51.

At some other places, however, Hamka is quite cautious about accepting an easy harmonization of the doctrine of the Quran and modern science. As a bad example is given Shihāb al-Dīn Al-Alusi (Baghdad, 1802–54),[21] who stated that before the 'present Adam' thirty Adams were created, each with a distance of one thousand year. After the thirtieth Adam, the world would have been empty for 50,000 years. Other scholars easily produce different numbers again and many of them even assert that all these Adams were caliphs of God on earth. But Hamka himself is critical about these efforts to harmonize modern science and the Quran: 'The Quran is not a handbook for the inquiry into fossils and does not debate the theory of Darwin. It does not reject this theory either, but it only incites us to seek knowledge, wherever it can be found, in order to increase our conviction about God's majesty'.[22] In this way, we may find quite different nuances in the answers of one author.

Anti-Christian Polemics and the Debate about Original Sin

The most vigorous modern anti-Christian polemics in the Muslim community are found among the Ahmadi sect. Although this movement is debated and often even considered to be excluded from the Muslim community, the great amount of anti-Christian literature produced by Ahmadis is graciously accepted and used by many Muslims, especially when they do not show too openly their specific identity. One of the topics in this anti-Christian discourse is the denial of original sin. This is sometimes connected with the doctrine of freedom from sin for all prophets, including Adam. This has brought some scholars to deny even the sin of Adam:

> According to the Quran Adam committed no sin. If he indeed broke one of the commands of his Lord, in this case not to eat from a specific tree, this deed cannot be seen as a sin. It is impossible that a prophet may commit a sin or break consciously a command of God, because the prophet is the best and most beautiful example for mankind. It is of course possible, that a prophet in a case of *ijtihad* or pure human calculation may make a mistake, as long as we have to do with uncertain and undefined affairs. But, when the result of this *ijtihad* would be that one of the commands of God could be broken, then it would be no sin. Every human deed must be judged not from an outer appearance, but from the motives and intentions of the actor. Every deed (*'amal*) depends on intent (*niat*). If Adam has committed a transgression it was not on purpose and unintentional.[23]

21. Cf. Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 2nd edn, 1952), p. 78.

22. Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1865), I, p. 217.

23. Saleh A. Nahdi, *Adam Manusia Pertama?* (Surabaya: Raja Pena, 1966), p. 23.

Some Modern Feminist Interpretations: Fatima Mernissi and Riffat Hassan

The late Utrecht scholar of Islam, Dr Ghassan Ascha, concentrated in his academic work on a description of the position of women in Muslim Law, in the past and in the present. He states that there is an imbalance in most representations of Islamic rules, reducing the rights of women in favour of male persons. In his view the best solution here is secularization: reduction of the validity of Islamic rules to the ritual field alone, to the doctrine of God and to general ethics. For rules of economic and social activities we should not consult the Quran and other basic texts of Islam. Ascha suggested that modern Muslims understand the old texts in their historical context. One of the consequences then would be that, in contrast to the common opinion of Muslims, not all verses of the Quran have an eternal validity.[24]

Many modern Muslims do not agree with these radical views, for fundamental or practical reasons. In the field of women's rights there are some modern authors who plead for a feminist interpretation of Quran and *hadīth* (oral traditions from the Prophet) as a basis to improve the legal position of women. The best known are the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi, born in 1940 and a lecturer in social science in Rabat, and the Pakistani Riffat Hassan, born 1943 and since 1974 teaching in the United States. They agree that the message of Islam essentially preaches a full equality of man and woman. However, starting from the first generation after the Prophet Muhammad, a patriarchal set of prejudices introduced all kinds of misogynic texts and interpretations to Islam. Fatima Mernissi here concentrates on *hadīth*, while Riffat Hassan mostly refers to texts of the Quran. Recently Riffat Hassan was joined by Amina Wadud, born in 1952, the daughter of an American minister, and a convert to Islam since 1972.[25]

For this contribution I concentrate on some interpretations of the story of Adam. Quran 20.117 is usually understood along the lines of 'Then We said: "Adam, surely this is an enemy to thee and thy wife (*zauj*). So let him not expel you both from the Garden, so that thou art unprosperous"' (trans. Arberry). Riffat Hassan does not translate *zauj* as 'wife', but gender-neutral as 'partner'.

Instead of Adam and Hawwa, the Quran speaks of Adam and *zauj*. Muslims, almost without exception, assume that Adam was the first human being created by Allah and that he was a man. If Adam was a man, it follows

24. Ghasan Ascha, *Du statut inférieur de la femme en islam* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1989). A quite radical English summary of his thinking appears in Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1995), pp. 290-327.

25. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

that Adam's *zauj* mentioned in the Quran becomes equated with Hawwa (Eve). Neither the initial assumption nor the inferences drawn from it are, however, supported in a clear or conclusive way by the Quranic text. The Quran states neither that Adam was the first human being nor that Adam was a male. The term Adam is a masculine noun, but linguistic gender is not an indication of sex. If Adam is not necessarily a man, then Adam's *zauj* is not necessarily a woman. In fact, the term *zauj* is also a masculine noun and, unlike the term 'Adam', it has a feminine counterpart, *zaujatun*. Here it may be noted that the most accurate English equivalent of *zauj* is not 'wife' or 'husband' or even 'spouse' but 'mate'. The Quran uses *zauj* with reference not only to human beings but to every kind of creation, including animals, plants and fruits.[26]

Another interesting proposal for a new interpretation is again based on Q 4.1, already discussed above by Hamka. It reads: 'Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul [*nafsin wahidatin*, a feminine word word] and from it [also the feminine form] created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women' (trans. Arberry). Many translators and commentators are here not critical about the female form and declare this 'single soul' to be identical with the male Adam. The modern Pakistani commentator Sayyid Maududi mentions that most Muslims accept the story of Eve being created from Adam's rib, but this story is not in the Quran and 'It is thus better that we leave the matter in the same state of ambiguity in which it was left by God, rather than waste our time trying to determine, in detail, the actual process of the creation of man's mate'.[27] Riffat Hassan, however, does not accept that the first creature was male. This traditional interpretation is, according to her, caused by the fact that in the classical tradition all interpreters were men and without further discussion accepted that the first creature was male.[28]

Another reason for the traditional interpretation of the priority of the male person is the process of *Israiliyyāt*, or Jewish stories that found their way into many traditions or *hadīth* that were not really critical about the sources. She quotes one:

> When God sent Iblis out of the Garden and placed Adam in it, he dwelt in it alone and had no one to socialize with. God sent sleep on him then He took a rib from his left side and placed flesh in its place and created Hawwa from it.

26. Riffat Hassan, 'The Issue of Woman–Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition', in L. Grob *et al*. (eds.), *Women and Men's Liberation: Testimonies of Spirit* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 65-82 (72-73).

27. Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, II.5 (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1989).

28. Riffat Hassan, 'Women in Islam and Christianity: A Comparison', *Concilium* 3 (1994), pp. 18-22.

> When he awoke he found a woman seated near his head. He asked her, 'Who were you created?' She answered, 'Woman'. He said 'Why were you created?' She said, 'That you might find rest in me'. The angels said, 'What is her name?' and he said, 'Hawwa'. They said, 'Why was she called Hawwa'? He said, 'Because she was created from a living thing'.[29]

While comparing this and similar *hadīth* with the Quranic text Hassan comes to the following conclusions. According to the story Eve was created from the left rib. Left has also in the Arab world a negative connotation and this certainly was meant here. Further, in the story of Genesis the name Eve is seen as related to the verb for 'to live' because she is life-giving, but here the interpretation of the name is related to her origin, the living male. As in so many texts after the Quran, she notes here a misogynic spirit. This is in sharp contrast to the original equality that Hassan finds in the text of the Quran. In this sense Hassan is supported by Ghassan Ascha, who comments that the Quran in its dogmatic statements and its ritual prescriptions does not make a distinction between men and women and recognizes full equality.[30] For the limited subjects of basic creed and ritual prescripts Ascha and other secular Muslims agree with the feminist interpretation. In other social rulings they are not interested, because according to them, Islam should not issue regulations beyond the strict religious issues. Muslim feminist scholars like Riffat Hassan find this not enough and they want to spread the message of liberation for woman also through a new interpretation of the Quran and a rejection of forged *hadīth* that are at variance with the meaning of the Quran.

Conclusion

This contribution gives only some very striking sketches of the transformation of the interpretation of Adam.[31] As such, it is just an example of the process of change which can be seen in the main doctrines, rituals and ethical adaptations of the old traditions. In this explanation I followed the hermeneutic model developed by the Jewish and Israeli scholar Efraim Shmueli.[32] This learned author has developed a model of seven cultures within a religion, in his case the Jewish religion: (1) Biblical, (2) Talmudic, (3) Poetic-Philosophical, (4) Mystical, and its later offshoot, the Hassidic movement, (5) Rabbinic, (6) The Culture of the Emancipation, (7) The

29. Hassan, 'Woman-Man Equality', p. 75.

30. Ghassan Ascha, 'Moslimvrouwen tussen sjarie'a en de moderne tijd', in Metin Alkan (ed.), *Islam in een ontzuilde samenleving* (Amsterdam: KIT, 1996), pp. 27-56 (55).

31. I offer a much more elaborate discussion in my *Adam Redivivus*, pp. 156-79.

32. Efraim Shmueli, *Seven Jewish Cultures: A Reinterpretation of Jewish History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

National-Israeli Culture.[33] All these cultures can be associated with a certain period and movement in history. They were not extinguished after their first flowering, but continued their influence in the later developments of the Jewish religion. This model not only elucidates the Jewish past, both the beginning of the religion and its earlier developments, but is also functional for a representation of the actual diversity in other religions.

My argument is that with some adaptations, Shmueli's model for the Jewish religion is also useful for the Muslim religion itself, as well as for description of relations between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious traditions. In many respects the mystical cultures of the three religions have more in common with each other than with the legalistic (Rabbinic or Shari'a) traditions, which can also be found in the three great traditions. In this sense the *abu'l-bashar*, or the Father of All Mankind, should not be seen as a dividing figure between Islam and Christianity, but rather as a unifying symbol. Adam and Eve not only experienced different developments in Western Christianity (which made him the cause of original sin) and the Jewish, Eastern Christian and Islamic tradition (which all deny the original sin), but even within the Islamic tradition we see a very rich variety of ideas attached to the first human beings.

Jews, Christians and Muslims are members of one hermeneutic family. They are communities that again and again create new interpretations of the basic myths they share. They share not only the stories from the beginning; in the course of history new interpretations in one community also have influenced new readings in the other community. In this way all three great religions created their distinct religious cultures by establishing new variations around the same themes. In the philosophical and mystical traditions these contacts have been most intense. The mediaeval scholars Averroes, Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas are striking examples of this development. My selection of the developments in the interpretations of the stories about Adam and Eve encourages the study of developments in the Muslim tradition that run parallel with discussions in the Jewish and Christian communities. In the 1960s Abraham was promoted as a connecting figure between Jews, Christians and Muslims. This later developed into the concept of the three Abrahamic religions. It should not be forgotten that all major Jewish and Christian figures have found a reflection in the Quran and later Islamic traditions, starting with Adam.

33. Summary in Shmueli, *Seven Jewish Cultures*, p. 12.

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