

INTRODUCTION

0.1 *The Text and a Translation*

וְאֵיבָה אֲשִׁית	15a	And enmity I will set
בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה	b	between you and the woman
וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ וּבֵין זַרְעָהּ	c	and between your offspring and her offspring.
הוּא יִשּׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ	d	As for him, he will strike you on the head;
וְאַתָּה תִּשּׁוּפֶנּוּ עָקֵב	e	as for you, you will strike him on the heel.

0.2 *Purpose and Method of the Study*

Gen 3:15 has been commonly known as the “first gospel” (or “Protoevangelium,” also spelled “Protevangelium”) since the time of Martin Luther, who gave it this title in a gloss of his Bible translation in 1522, and who also called it the last judgment. Before him Irenaeus had used a similar, two-fold description, calling it an implied promise of salvation, as well as the same thing as “depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire” (Matt 25:41). The designation used in the title, “the curse on the serpent” is descriptive of the verse’s content, while being neutral as to its implications. There can be no disagreement that Gen 3:15 is a curse on the serpent who led Adam and Eve into sin, but there is considerable disagreement even among those who share the view of Scripture held by Irenaeus and Luther as to the relationship of Gen 3:15 to biblical theology. The title also indicates a hermeneutical approach which is more biblical-theological than systematic-theological, and which concentrates first on the development of its interpretation in Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament. I will therefore not begin by trying to “prove” the meaning of Gen 3:15 from New Testament passages commonly related to it, such as Rom 16:20 (“the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet”), Revelation 12 (where the dragon, called “the ancient serpent,” persecutes the offspring of the woman), or Gal 3:16 (where Paul seems to say that the seed of Abraham, which is often equated with the seed of the woman, is just one person, Christ). “Curse on the serpent” is a title of convenience as well, since a fuller and more precise description would be “the second part of the curse on the serpent and its offspring” (the first part being v. 14). Even this title would not fully explain its content since it does not indicate the involvement of the woman and her offspring in the curse. The reader should therefore bear in mind that “the curse on the serpent” is a convenient shorthand description of Gen 3:15.

0.3 *The Theological Importance of Gen 3:15*

It would be difficult to find a verse with a more widely divergent estimate as to its importance in biblical theology. Luther regarded it as the first Gospel in the greatest possible sense: the Gospel was not vaguely present but was well understood by Adam and Eve, who demonstrated this faith, as did other saints of old. It implied even the teaching of the incarnation of the divine Messiah and his virgin birth, though the latter implication escaped Adam and Eve. On the other hand, the verse is today widely interpreted as merely part of a minor nature aetiology in a wider aetiological (and

mythical) narrative, with little or no importance for biblical theology, and whose fulfillment is found only in the common experience of mankind's relationship to snakes.

0.4 *Hermeneutical Considerations*

These are the two opposite theological positions, which generally overlap two opposite hermeneutical positions on Gen 3:15. These opposite positions are based on whether the interpreter sees the literal meaning as the predominant one (if not the only one), or whether he sees a figurative meaning as the predominant one (if not the only one). Most of the "figurative" interpreters acknowledge the literal meaning as well as the figurative, and many of the "literal" interpreters likewise allow for some identity of the snake that goes beyond the natural in the narrative, such as the view that the snake is symbolic of evil present in the creation. Since different interpreters mean different things by the adjective "literal," I will state here that by "literal" I mean the meaning that is suggested by the *ordinary* meaning of words. That is, in the case of a literal interpretation of Gen 3:15, we have a prediction which involves only an actual (natural, physical) snake and its offspring, Eve and her offspring (the human race), and the hostile relationship between them which exists in nature. The literal interpretation in this case is perhaps better called the "naturalistic" interpretation. In this definition I do not overlook the fact that the *ordinary* meaning of "seed" as "offspring" when referring to humans and (rarely) to animals (Gen 3:15; 7:3), is itself a figure of speech, and is not the "literal" meaning according to some definitions of "literal," since human beings and animals are not actual seeds. Under "figurative" I group together various legitimate and illegitimate (in my view) means of interpretation which derive meaning from texts by going beyond what the literal (or ordinary) meaning of the words suggests. These means of interpretation range from symbolic or spiritual interpretation, to *sensus plenior*, and to allegory. Christians have generally tended towards the predominantly figurative interpretation, while differing in details of interpretation. Rabbinical interpretation, though sharing the Christian belief that God actually did pronounce the curse on the serpent as recorded in Genesis, and that he is the author of Scripture, has tended toward the predominantly naturalistic view, as have those who regard the story in Genesis 3 as a myth.

The naturalistic meaning is straightforward and the exposition of it obviously does not require a dissertation. Nor would the passage have much significance for biblical theology or hermeneutics. Figurative interpretation is not so straightforward, however, and brings up other hermeneutical issues. The main issue is one of certainty of figurative meaning. If one allows figurative meanings for the serpent and its offspring, and the woman and her offspring, as well as for the nature of the struggle between them and its outcome, how can one arrive at certainty in his conclusions? This question is most pressing for the use of allegory, in which the symbolic meaning suggested by the interpreter is arbitrary, *ad hoc*, and imposed from without, for example from a philosophical or theological system, rather than derived from the text itself. The allegorical method of interpretation is now generally in disrepute, and will not be defended here. But this judgment only brings up another question: how does one distinguish allegorical interpretation from other, legitimate, figurative interpretation? I have already implied that legitimate figurative interpretation must be suggested by the text itself, but this raises the question of how far away from the text under consideration can we go and still consider ourselves in the same text? Here again, one's view of

Scripture and its authorship will affect how this question is answered. I hope that the examination of how Gen 3:15 is interpreted elsewhere in Scripture will be a case study in arriving at certainty in figurative or symbolic interpretation. Other issues are the legitimacy of *sensus plenior* as opposed to the idea of strictly grammatico-historical exegesis, and the role of historical experience (particularly as recorded in Scripture) in interpretation.

Allowing for the possibility of figurative interpretation, then, the issues for the interpretation of Gen 3:15 are the identity of the four parties involved (the serpent and its offspring, and the woman and her offspring), the nature of the conflict between them, and its outcome. The answers to these questions are necessary to determine whether the passage is an implied promise to humanity, or to part of it, with eschatological and/or messianic implications: indeed, whether it is in fact the “Protoevangelium.” In addition, there are more conventional interpretive issues involved, such as the meaning of the words used. אִי־בָה, “enmity,” and שֹׂרֵף “strike,” “bruise,” “crush,” are comparatively rare words (4 and 1 or 2 occurrences outside of Gen 3:15, respectively), although the root אִי־ב is common due to the frequent use of the word אֹיֵב, “enemy.” There is also doubt as to whether or not שֹׂרֵף means the same thing when done by the serpent to the heel of the woman’s seed as when done by the woman’s seed to the serpent’s head. Other passages that interpret Gen 3:15 may confirm or alter the generally accepted definition of these words, and help decide whether שֹׂרֵף is used in one sense or two. The word זָרַע (“seed”) is very common in the Old Testament, as is its Greek equivalent σπέρμα in the LXX and the New Testament. Both are collectives, but can also refer to one individual. Some have argued on the basis of Gal 3:16 that an individual sense is required for the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15, and our task will include an evaluation of this argument. In addition, “seed” is used in other senses besides that of “offspring,” such as *semen virile*, or moral kind, and its appearance in Gen 3:15 in connection with a woman has at times been taken to imply a miraculous origin for the woman’s offspring (i.e., a virgin birth).

The division of the verse into five lines shown on page 1 will be used consistently throughout, except for the highly embellished *Palestinian Tarums*, and in quotations from other authors, where cross reference to the five part division will be made, if necessary for clarity. The verse may also be divided into two main parts; Gen 3:15a-c being the portion describing the enmity, and Gen 3:15d-e being the portion describing the struggle, conflict, or battle.

Chap. I summarizes the extra-biblical history of interpretation of Gen 3:15, showing not only the range of interpretations given, but also the change in predominant opinion over time. A certain amount of repetition is involved in this chapter since I am not following a topical approach, but rather giving the views of various interpreters. One may wish to read the summary sections (§§ 1.2.4, 1.3, 1.4.15, 1.5.4, 1.6.8, 1.7.2, and 1.10, along with selections from §§ 1.8 and 1.9), and then refer back to this chapter as necessary in the following chapters. Chaps. II-VII follow a biblical-theological (canonical-chronological) approach to the interpretation of Gen 3:15, thus starting with an examination of the initial interpretation of Gen 3:15 in its immediate context; i.e., when first heard by Adam and Eve, and when first read by an Israelite in its canonical form (chap. II). We then examine the first fulfillments of the predicted enmity and battle, and discuss what implications they have for the initial interpretations (chap. III); in many

respects, this is the most important chapter of the dissertation, as all subsequent chapters depend heavily on it. In chap. IV we see that in the rest of the book of Genesis, patterns of fulfillment of the enmity portion of Gen 3:15 develop; this pattern continues into the book of Exodus (chap. V), which also develops a pattern of fulfillment of the battle portion of Gen 3:15. These patterns continue into the history of Israel (chap. VI), and reach their culmination in the New Testament (chap. VII).¹ We will see that it is these patterns of fulfillment which allow us to arrive at certainty in figurative interpretation, and avoid the error of allegorizing, or reading Christian doctrine into the text.

¹Michael Fishbane refers to such patterns as “typologies of an historical nature,” a kind of inner-biblical interpretation (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985], 358-68). The patterns expounded in this dissertation cover considerably more Scriptural ground than those identified by Fishbane.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 3:15

Because of the sheer volume of material available, it is necessary to be selective in the use of material from the time of the earlier Church fathers to the present; the goal is to give representative interpretations from all perspectives.

1.1 *Studies on the History of Interpretation of Gen 3:15*

Tibor (Tiburtius) Gallus has produced an article and seven books on the history of interpretation of Gen 3:15. The article and the first three volumes are in Latin and cover the mariological interpretation of Gen 3:15 up to the issue of the doctrine of immaculate conception (1854), and are not referred to here. The next three volumes are in German and cover the Protestant (principally Lutheran) interpretation of the woman's seed up to the present time.² Hundreds of interpreters are quoted or summarized; lengthy Latin sources are quoted in the notes while a German translation or synopsis is provided in the text; or archaic German is translated into or summarized in modern German. The third of this German series contains Gallus' synopsis, and his answers to the objections against the individual-christological interpretation of the woman's seed. The seventh volume, also in German, focuses on the identity of the woman, and combines a summary of the history of interpretation with Gallus' own arguments for the mariological interpretation of the passage.³

Dominic Unger contributed an article and a book on the subject. The article is on the mariological (or, marian) interpretation among the Church fathers.⁴ The book (which preceded the article) is more comprehensive, dealing both with the history of interpretation from the first Church fathers up to the 12th century, as well as his own analysis and argumentation. A "Bibliographical Appendix" covering the years 1840-1952 lists 334 works by Roman Catholic scholars, most of which are annotated with the authors' conclusions.⁵ I have used Unger's translations for patristic works for which I could not find an English edition, except that I have changed his expression "The-Woman" which he uses in his translations to "the woman."

That Gallus and Unger are Roman Catholic scholars is indicative of the importance of Gen 3:15 for Roman Catholic theology, in which it is an important

²Tibor Gallus, „*Der Nachkomme der Frau*“ (*Gen 3, 15*) in *der Altlutheranischen Schriftauslegung: Erster Band, Luther, Zwingli und Calvin* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1964); *Zweiter Band, von den Zeitgenossen Luthers bis zur Aufklärungszeit* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1973); *ibid.*, „*Der Nachkomme der Frau*“ (*Gen 3, 15*) in *der Evangelischen Schriftauslegung: Dritter Band, von der Aufklärungszeit bis in die Gegenwart* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1976).

³Tibor Gallus, *Die „Frau“ in Gen 3, 15* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1979).

⁴Dominic J. Unger, "Patristic Interpretation of the Protoevangelium," *Marian Studies* 1 (1961): 111-64.

⁵Dominic J. Unger, *The First-Gospel: Genesis 3:15* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1954); hereafter abbreviated as *FG*.

scriptural basis for the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary. The verse's importance for Protestant theology, however, reached its zenith with Luther and 17th century Lutheran theologians, and is of comparatively little importance today. H. Cazelles writes in his study of the contemporary exegesis of Gen 3:15 that he consulted the Scripture index of H. H. Rowley's *The Old Testament and Modern Study* in order to find out what Protestant scholars had written about Gen 3:15, and found no reference to the verse.⁶ While one might not be surprised at this omission in a general work such as Rowley's, I have had the same experience examining many works on Old Testament theology, where such references would be more expected.

Johann Michl (another Roman Catholic) contributed a two part article which begins with the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and concludes with early Christian interpretation (but with little detail after Irenaeus), including the New Testament interpretation.⁷ Protestant Jack Lewis covers this same ground more briefly, with more material from the first millennium (paralleling Michl with some additions), and adds some material from the reformers, and a few modern commentaries.⁸ Charles Feinberg's article on the virgin birth in the Old Testament is primarily a survey of the views of about 15 interpreters of Gen 3:15, mostly from Hengstenberg to the present.⁹

Ken Schurb contributed an essay on the difference between Luther and Calvin on the exegesis of Gen 3:15, and the conflict between their successors Hunnius and Pareus.¹⁰

1.2 Early Jewish Interpretation

1.2.1 Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

The Life of Adam and Eve in Latin (*Adam and Eve*) and Greek (*Apocalypse of Moses*) versions contain some allusions to the passage and/or its interpretation. In *Adam and Eve* 33:3 Adam says "The devil . . . deceived your mother." In *Apoc. Mos.* 16:5 the devil incited the serpent: "Do not fear; only become my vessel, and I will speak a word through your mouth by which you will be able to deceive him." Gen 3:15 is quoted in *Apoc. Mos.* 26:4, agreeing with the LXX in the use of *τηρέω* (watch) for Hebrew *רָשָׁע*. In *Adam and Eve* 37:1 a serpent bites Seth and wounds him, but he does not die; in *Apoc. Mos.* 10:1 it is a wild beast who attacks Seth. This episode may be (at least in *Adam and*

⁶Henri Cazelles, "Genèse III, 15. Exégèse contemporaine," *La Nouvelle Eve* 3 (1957): 91-99; 91.

⁷Johann Michl, "Der Weibessame (Gen 3, 15) in spätjüdischer und frühchristlicher Auffassung," *Bib* 33 (1952): 371-401, 476-505.

⁸Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed (Gen 3:15)," *JETS* 34 (1991): 299-319.

⁹Charles L. Feinberg, "The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament," *BSac* 117 (1960): 313-24.

¹⁰Ken Schurb, "Sixteenth-Century Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict on the Protevangelium," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 54 (1990): 25-47. Schurb notes that as was typical of other Lutheran-Calvinist differences, "Lutheranism has taken a dimmer view of Calvinism than Calvinism has taken of it."

Eve) a fulfillment of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 (viewed literally), and might thus be evidence of a collective interpretation of the seed of the woman.¹¹

There is a possible spiritual interpretation of Cain's seed in *I Enoch* 22:7, where Abel's spirit, in the underworld, "(continues to) sue him until all of (Cain's) seed is exterminated from the face of the earth, and his seed has disintegrated from among the seed of the people."¹² This statement could reflect an understanding of Cain's seed as the cursed seed of the serpent, but again, there is no certain allusion, and in any case the literal seed of Cain might be all that is meant, since his offspring did perish in the flood.

The messianic title "son of man" in the Ethiopic *I Enoch* is often found as "son of the offspring of the mother of all living" (62:7, 9, 14; 63:11; 69:27; 70:1; and 71:17).¹³ Since the "mother of all the living" is Eve, Strack and Billerbeck take this expression as an interpretation of Dan 7:17 (son of man) based on Gen 3:15, therefore reflecting a pre-Christian messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15.¹⁴ Michl agreed that the Enoch expression may be influenced by Gen 3:15 but says that does not prove that the seed of the woman is an individual.¹⁵ Mowinckel, noting that in the Ethiopic New Testament, "Son of the offspring of the mother of the living" is "the regular rendering of the term 'the Son of Man' as applied to Jesus," argues that it would have been natural for the translator to render ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου from *Enoch* with "the expression which he knew from his Ethiopic New Testament."¹⁶

In summary, there is no evidence in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha of an individual, messianic interpretation of the seed of the woman. Some citations are consistent with a collective interpretation of both seeds, but nothing certain can be stated. The serpent is taken either as the devil, or as his mouthpiece.

1.2.2 *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

1QS iv:16-17, speaking of the two ethical classes of people (the good and the evil), says "For God has set them apart until the last time, having put an eternal enmity between their (two) classes." P. Wernberg-Møller notes that the expression "eternal

¹¹*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 2.272-73, 277, 285. In addition, *Jub.* 3:23 says "The LORD cursed the serpent, and he was angry with it forever" (*ibid.*, 2.60), but the curse itself is not related, and there is no clue as to its interpretation.

¹²*Ibid.*, 1.25.

¹³*Ibid.*, 1.43, 44, 49, 50.

¹⁴Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium Nach Matthäus* (Str-B; Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1956), 1.958.

¹⁵Michl, "Weibessame," 385.

¹⁶Sigmund O. P. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 362. McNamara agrees: "Scarcely any argument, then, can be based on the presence of the expression in the Ethiopic version of Enoch" (Martin McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, [AnBib 27; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966], 221, n. 92).

enmity” is taken from Ezek 25:15; 35:5 (enmity between Israel and the Philistines and Edomites), but says that “Considering the close affinity of the whole essay to Gen. 1 ff, it is reasonable to assume that our author, by using this phrase, also alludes to Gen. iii 15, in which passage he appears to have seen an allusion to the irreconcilability of the two opposite classes of mankind.”¹⁷

1.2.3 The LXX and Targums

Other examples of early Jewish interpretation are found in the early Greek translations (such as the LXX) and Aramaic paraphrases of Gen 3:15 (the Targums). *Samaritan Tg.* alone has no expansion on the MT. In rendering *רשע*, the same word is used for the serpent’s action as for that of the woman’s seed, though different words are used in different manuscripts; the equally obscure *קפן* (“bruise;” MS 3 of the Shechem Synagogue) and the general word *קשי* (“press heavily;” MS Or 7562, British Museum), which give the idea of attack rather than merely prepare to attack, or hate.¹⁸

Comparison of the MT Gen 3:15 with the LXX and *Tg. Onqelos* versions shows that the LXX follows MT fairly closely, *Onqelos* less so; and that the LXX and *Onqelos* appear to be related to each other.

*Tg. Onqelos*¹⁹

<p>וְדָבַר אֲשֶׁר־ בֵּנְךָ וּבֵין אִימְתָא וּבֵין בְּנֶךָ וּבֵין בְּנֵיהָ הוּא יְהִי דְכִיר מֵא דְעֵבְדְתָּ לִיה מִלְקַדְמִין וְאַתָּה תְּהִי נֹטֵר לִיה לְסוֹפָא</p>	<p>15a And I will put enmity b between you and the woman, c and between your children and her children; d He will remember what you did to him in the beginning, e and you will preserve (your hatred) for him to the end.</p>
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LXX

<p>15a καὶ ἔχθραν θήσω b ἀνὰ μέσον σου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῆ γυναικός c καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σπέρματός σου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σπέρματός αὐτῆς d αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν, e καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν</p>	<p>And enmity I will set, between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. As for him, he will watch your head as for you, you will watch his heel.</p>
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¹⁷P. Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline: Translated and Annotated with an Introduction (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, Vol. 1; ed. J. Van Der Ploeg; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 27, 84-85, n. 62.*

¹⁸Abraham Tal, *The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch: A Critical Edition (3 vols.; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1980), 1.10-11; 3.81.*

¹⁹Text from CAL, with vocalization modified to the Tiberian system.

The relationship between LXX and *Onqelos* is noteworthy in the use of similar words to translate שׁוּן; LXX uses ὤρηω (watch, keep) in both cases, while *Onqelos* uses נטר (keep) for the second use, and an expansion of נטר for the first use (דכר; keep in mind, i.e., remember, with variant נטר).

The LXX translates the masculine singular Hebrew pronoun הוּא (referring to the woman's seed) with the Greek masculine singular pronoun αὐτός, which agrees with the Hebrew but not with its Greek antecedent σπέρμα which is neuter, thus requiring αὐτό. R. A. Martin studied the 103 cases of הוּא in the LXX Genesis, and found that there are no cases analogous to Gen 3:15. In eight cases the LXX changed the gender to feminine or neuter "due to the requirements of the Greek idiom." Gen 3:15 is the only case where

the LXX literalistically translates the Hebrew masculine pronoun with the masculine Greek pronoun αὐτός, although the Greek idiom would require the neuter pronoun αὐτό. ... In none of the instances where the translator has translated literally does he do violence to agreement in Greek between the pronoun and its antecedent, except here in Gen 3 15.

It seems unlikely that this is mere coincidence or oversight. ... Most likely ... the translator has in this way indicated his messianic understanding of this verse.²⁰

The LXX rendering of Gen 3:15 is therefore "evidence of the intensification of messianic expectations among the Jews in the centuries immediately preceding the birth of Jesus."²¹

Michl noted that the reading αὐτός could be a result of dittography, but that it is unanimously attested in the extant manuscripts, and that it is also attested twice by Philo who used the masculine pronoun for allegorical purposes; it is therefore not likely to be of Christian origin.²² Further against the Christian origin of the reading (not to mention an individual interpretation) is the fact that the earliest complete citation of Gen 3:15 by a Church father corrects the LXX to read αὐτό.²³

Michl noted that αὐτός is also used to refer back to σπέρμα in 2 Sam 7:12-13, another passage with potential messianic implications, for David's seed. Also, in several passages עֲרֵע is translated by υἱός, which leads Michl to suggest that when the translator read עֲרֵע he often thought עֶבֶר.²⁴ He leaves open the question whether this "son" may be collective, and whether such a meaning could apply to Gen 3:15.²⁵ The suggestion that reading "seed" the translator thought "son" or "sons" would have more weight in explaining the LXX version if the translator had translated עֲרֵע with υἱός instead of σπέρμα in Gen 3:15c. But Michl has good reason to hold out for the possibility of a collective,

²⁰R. A. Martin, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3 15," *JBL* 84 (1965): 426-27.

²¹*Ibid.*, 427.

²²*Allegorical Interpretation* 3.65, 188; (*Philo I* [LCL], 344, 428); Michl, "Weibessame," 373.

²³Theophilus, *Ad Autolytus* 2.21; ANF 2.103; *PG*, 6.1084A-1085D. αὐτός is found as a variant reading; *PG*, 6.1085, note.

²⁴Michl "Weibessame," 374-75; 1 Kgs 5:19; 8:19; 1 Chr 22:9; 28:6.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 375.

based on the evident relationship between the LXX and *Tg. Onqelos* due to their similar mis-rendering of שׂוֹרֵךְ by τηρέω and by נטר. The Syro-Palestinian translation of Gen 3:15, itself a translation of the LXX, translates τηρέω with *ntr*, the same word used in *Tg. Onqelos*. *Onqelos* also uses the masculine pronoun in Gen 3:15d, which is the same as the Hebrew but is noteworthy since the Targum has translated “seed” in both instances in Gen 3:15c by the plural “sons.”²⁶ If therefore the Aramaic translator could write “sons” in Gen 3:15c, and then refer back to “sons” with הוּא in Gen 3:15d, it is not inconceivable that αὐτός in the LXX is a collective for “sons,” rather than an individual or messianic interpretation of the identity of the seed of the woman. The alternative would be to suppose that *Tg. Onqelos* takes “seed” as a collective in the first part of the verse, but singular in the second. This seems unlikely, however, since the enmity in *Tg. Onq.* Gen 3:15d-e goes from the beginning to end of time (an interpretation of head and heel).

Vorster denied that the case of 2 Sam 7:12-13 is similar to Gen 3:15 as stated by Michl, noting that the pronoun in v. 13 refers to an individual person: “The translator had no other choice but to render *hw’* by *autos*.”²⁷ Vorster therefore agrees with Martin that the LXX represents a messianic understanding of Gen 3:15.

But the fact that שׂוֹרֵךְ is rendered “watch” in the LXX Gen 3:15d is problematic for the view that the LXX translation is “messianic.” The problem is that, although the pronoun referring to “seed” is masculine singular, the activity described (watching the serpent’s head) is not obviously messianic. Some of those who advocate the view that the LXX is messianic do not address this problem. Martin does not mention it at all. Vorster seems to forget that he noted the LXX translation of שׂוֹרֵךְ by τηρέω, for three paragraphs later he says “the messianic interpretation is connected to an individual in the LXX. The Messiah will crush the serpent finally.”²⁸ Michl, on the other hand, thinks it quite strange that if the individual seed in the LXX was thought to be the Messiah, the Targums would show no trace of this interpretation, and regards the LXX as not clear enough to be called a messianic interpretation.²⁹ I have not found anyone prior to Zwingli who saw a messianic interpretation in the LXX use of αὐτός.

The reason for the use of τηρέω in the LXX is not obvious. A. Schulz noted that שׂוֹרֵךְ is translated by καταπατέω (trample, press down, etc.) in Ps 139 (138):11, and by ἐκτριβώ (destroy) in Job 9:17. שׂוֹרֵךְ in some cases was translated as a by-form of שׂוֹרֵךְ (agreeing with other versions and modern lexicons); thus, καταπατέω in Ps 56:2-3 (1-2; LXX; 55:1-2); 57:4 (3; LXX 56:3); πατέω in Amos 2:7, and ἐκτριβώ in Amos 8:4.³⁰ Aquila

²⁶ Although the *yodh* is missing there is no ambiguity between singular and plural due to the lack of vowels in the Aramaic since the plural stem is בן, and the singular stem is בר.

²⁷ W. S. Vorster, “The Messianic Interpretation of Gen 3:15: A Methodological Problem,” *Ou Testamentiese Werkgenootskap in Suid-Afrika* 15s (1972): 110-11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁹ Michl, “Weibessame,” 377.

³⁰ Alfons Schulz, “Nachlese zu Gn 3, 15,” *BZ* 24 (1938/39): 353.

translated הָשָׁן in Gen 3:15 with προσπίβω (a rare word not found in the LXX, meaning “press against”), and Symmachus with θλίβω (press hard).³¹ It would be surprising, therefore, if the general meaning of הָשָׁן/הָאָש was unknown to the translator of Gen 3:15 (a fact which makes the individual/messianic interpretation of the LXX less likely). But הָאָש also has another translation in the LXX (as in other versions, and listed under a different root than הָשָׁן/הָאָש in the lexicons); to gasp after, long for, etc. Schulz suggests that the LXX translator understood the two meanings of הָאָש to be used for הָשָׁן in Gen 3:15, but that he wanted to use the same Greek word, resulting in a clumsy imitation of the Hebrew pun.³² Two meanings are needed since it does not make sense to describe the snake as crushing the man’s heel. Besides Psalm 56 having הָאָש twice as the action of the wicked (vv. 2, 3), it also has the expression $\text{וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ אַחֲרָי וְיִשְׁמְרוּ אַחֲרָי}$ (“they watch my heels;” v. 7), which could be taken as another link with, or a clue to the translation of, Gen 3:15. Schulz notes that though שָׁמַר is translated with φυλάσσω in Ps 56:7 (6; LXX, 55:6; $\text{τὴν πτέρναν μου φυλάξουσιν}$), it is often elsewhere translated with τηρέω , the word used in Gen 3:15. In Psalm 57 (56) there is another occurrence of הָאָש as the action of the wicked (v. 4 [3]), and a complaint that they lay a snare “for my footsteps” (v. 7 [6]; וַיִּצְמְדוּ לִי). This time, the translator took “trample” as the appropriate meaning of הָאָש . Interestingly, in the next Psalm the wicked are compared to snakes (v. 5 [4]). It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that the translator of Gen 3:15 chose to translate הָשָׁן in Gen 3:15e as a similar context to Ps 56:7, with the sense “lie in wait for,” so that the meaning of τηρέω in Gen 3:15e is that the serpent will lie in wait for, or, in general, persecute the seed of the woman (which is how the Church fathers took it). The sense “lie in wait” may have also been suggested by the fact that the Hebrew word “enmity” is found in Num 35:21-22 in connection with “ambush” (LXX ἐνεδρον). The connection between the LXX of Gen 3:15 and these psalms (in Hebrew, and perhaps Aramaic) may indicate that the seed of the serpent was understood to be wicked men. Presumably, “he will watch/keep/guard your head” is also to be interpreted as some expression of enmity towards the snake. If Schulz is correct, the translator traded the difficulty in the Hebrew (Gen 3:15e, “you will crush his heel”) for a difficulty in the Greek (Gen 3:15d, “he will watch your head”). The result is that instead of having a prediction of the enmity, followed by the battle resulting from the enmity, in the LXX there is a prediction of enmity followed by a paraphrase of that prediction; only the preparation for battle, but not the battle itself.³³

One other implication may be involved in connecting the translation of Gen 3:15 with the psalms cited above; these psalms all begin in the LXX with the title “for the end” (εἰς τὸ τέλος ; for וְעַד אֶחָד), which possibly implied to the translator, as well as to some readers, some eschatological meaning.

³¹ *Septuaginta vol. I, Genesis*, ed. John William Wevers (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 93, note on v. 15.

³² “G hat allerdings das Wortspiel nachzuahmen gesucht — aber es fragt sich, ob mit Geschick” (Schulz, “Gn 3, 15,” 354).

³³ *Ibid.*, 354.

In conclusion, the view that the LXX gives a “messianic” interpretation of Gen 3:15 rests entirely on the use of ἀντός instead of αὐτό, and is contra-indicated by the fact that (1) there is no clearly messianic activity on the part of the seed of the woman in the LXX; (2) no decisive outcome of the conflict is described; (3) the LXX is probably related to or in the same tradition as (though earlier than) *Tg. Onqelos*, which uses the singular איה but does not give an individual interpretation of the woman’s seed, or a messianic interpretation of the passage, even though the passage is given some eschatological application.

Tg. Onqelos follows the MT for the first part of the verse (15a-c); for the second part (15d-e) it reads, “They will remember what you did to them in ancient times, and you will preserve (your hatred) for them to the end (of time)” (see above). The singular pronoun היא, verb יהי and preposition לה are used for the woman’s seed, but the use of “sons” in the first part of the verse shows that this usage is collective,³⁴ or else the collective and individual are put side by side. The latter might also be suggested by the fact that “he” in the beginning is an individual, presumably, Adam. Possibly *Tg. Onqelos* suggests here the unique role of an individual at “the end.” Grossfeld explains *Tg. Onq. Gen 3:15d-e* as follows:

this Targum paraphrase revolves around the Hebrew root שׁפ – “bruise” which was understood as the root שׁׁפ – “long for,” and rendered by the somewhat related roots of “to remember” and “to guard/sustain (in one’s heart).” The Hebrew words for “head” and “heel” are translated into their secondary meaning “beginning (of time)” and “end (of time)” referring to the creation and the Messianic era.³⁵

The “end” may have also been suggested by the similarity between סוף and שוף.

A different explanation for the *Tg. Onqelos* translation of שוף was given by Aberbach & Grossfeld:

TO evidently associates the Hebrew root שוף with נשף – “to hiss” – an action characteristic of the serpent when aroused to anger and hate and about to strike. The connection between נשף and hatred emerges in some Midrashic passages.³⁶

The connection between שוף and נשף was made by Rashi, as we shall see, but it seems unlikely that the LXX and *Tg. Onqelos* arrived at the rendering “watch, keep” for שוף by two completely different and independent routes. The path from שוף to “watch” is more traceable in the case of Schulz’s explanation for the LXX through Psalms 56–57 and Grossfeld’s later explanation for *Tg. Onqelos*, which are consistent with each other, than for Aberbach’s and Grossfeld’s earlier explanation for *Tg. Onqelos*. The Hebrew נטר does have the sense which Grossfeld suggests in the Aramaic, with the object (wrath, enmity)

³⁴ Ibid., n. 12, n. 13.

³⁵ Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onkelos to Genesis* (vol. 6, The Aramaic Bible; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 47, n. 9.

³⁶ Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (New York: Ktav, 1982), 36-37, n. 14; passages cited and explained are *Gen. Rab.* 16.4, and *Esth. Rab.* Proem 5 (*sic.*, 3).

implied or stated elsewhere in the context (Jer3:5, 12; esp. Nah1:2, *וְנוֹטֵר הוּא לְאִיֶּבֶר*,³⁷ and Ps 103:9, where *נוֹטֵר* is parallel to *רִיב*). In Gen 3:15d, *Tg. Onqelos* and the LXX appear to be very close, if we assume (as seems to me likely) that *τηρέω* is being used with the same negative connotation as *נוֹטֵר* in the MT of Nah 1:2.

The *Palestinian Tgs.* contain considerable expansions on MT in the second part of the verse, and also show some influence from *Tg. Onqelos* (or the tradition that produced it).

*Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan*³⁸

<p>ודבבו אשוי בינך ובין איתתא בין זרעית בנך ובין זרעית בנהא ויהי כד יהוון בניהא דאיתתא נטרין מצוותא דאורייתא יהוון מכוונין ומחייין יתך על רישך וכד שבקין מצוות דאורייתא תהוי מתכווין ונכית יתהון בעיקביהון ברם להון יהי אסו ולך לא יהי אסו ועתידין הינון למיעבד שפיותא בעוקבא ביומי מלכא משיחא</p>	<p>15a And I will put enmity b between you and the woman, c between the offspring of your children and the offspring of her children. d And when the children of the woman keep the commandments of the Law, they will take aim and strike you on your head. e But when they forsake the commandments of the Law you will take aim and wound them on their heels. f For them, however, there will be a remedy; but for you there will be no remedy; and they are to make peace in the end, in the days of the King Messiah.</p>
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*Tg. Neofiti*³⁹

<p>ובעל דבבו אשוי בינך ובין איתתה ובין בניך ובין בנה</p>	<p>15a And I will put enmity b between you and the woman c and between your sons and her sons.</p>
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³⁷In Nah 1:2, T. Longman translates *נוֹטֵר*, “rages,” based on the context (Tremper Longman III, “Nahum,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 787-88).

³⁸Text from CAL. Translation from Michael J. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (vol. 1B, The Aramaic Bible; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 27-28.

³⁹Text from Alejandro Diez Macho, *Neophyti I: Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana* (vol. 1; Madrid and Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968), 17. Translation from Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (vol. 1A, The Aramaic Bible; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 61.

ויהוי כד יהוון בניה נטרין אורייתא ועבדין פקודייה יהוון מתכוונין לך ומחיי[ן] לראשך וקטלין יתך וכד יהוון שבקיין פקודי דאורייתא תהוי מתכוין ונכת יתיה בעקבה וממרע יתיה ברם לבריה יהוי אסו ולך הויה לא יהוי אסו דעתדין אינון מעבד שפיותיה בעוקבה ביומא דמלכא משיחא	d And it will come about that when her sons observe the Law and do the commandments they will aim at you and smite you on your head and kill you. e But when they forsake the commandments of the Law you will aim and bite him on his heel, and make him ill. f For her sons, however, there will be a remedy, but for you, O serpent, there will not be a remedy, since they are to make appeasement in the end, in the day of King Messiah.
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These Targums use נטר in a different way than in *Tg. Onqelos*. Like *Tg. Onqelos*, they imply a continuous fulfillment of the verse over time, but add that the outcome of the struggle is dependent on whether or not the woman's sons keep (נטר) "the commandments of the law," and the struggle will have a conclusion in the messianic age. עֲקַב is first translated, then allegorized as the end of time. שׁוּף is apparently taken with a double meaning: "watch, keep" of LXX and *Tg. Onqelos*, expanded to mean keeping the Law, and "strike," which is also expanded to include "aim" (unless aim is derived from the idea of watching). "Bite" in *Tg. Neof. 1 Gen 3:15e* may reflect an interpretation based on the derivation of the verb from the root נָשַׁף, "blow," taken as "hiss" (see above under *Onqelos*), extended to "bite" (cf. Rashi, below). The idea of making peace with the serpent, Maher says, has no rabbinic parallel, and is contrary to *Gen. Rab. 20.5*, which says that in the messianic age, all will be healed except the serpent and the Gibeonite.⁴⁰ McNamara's translation of the similar portion of *Tg. Neofiti* avoids this problem.⁴¹

Several features of the *Palestinian* rendering of this passage are of interest to us.

(1) The sons of the woman are described as prevailing when they keep the law. Such a description is fitting for Israel, so that we see here an apparent equation of the seed of the woman with the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. McNamara noted that similar language is used to describe the seed of the woman (Christians) in John's vision of Revelation 12. The dragon, already identified as "the serpent of old," "went off to make war against the rest of [the woman's] offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:9, 17).⁴² Along with this collective interpretation for both the enmity and victory, multiple fulfillments are implied, with the outcome conditional. (2) The curse is taken as a conditional promise of victory, and the *Palestinian Tgs.* are therefore the first evidence of such an interpretation outside of the

⁴⁰ Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 28, n. 28.

⁴¹ Maher's observation seems to assume that "they are to make peace" means the serpent and the sons of the woman make peace, an idea which would seem to contradict the statement that there will be no remedy for the serpent.

⁴² McNamara, *New Testament and Palestinian Targum*, 221-22.

Bible.⁴³ (3) There is evidently no messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15 in extant rabbinic writings, even though the *Palestinian Tgs.* put the fulfillment of it “in the day(s) of (the) King Messiah.”⁴⁴ The point of interest here is that instead of a further development of a messianic understanding of Gen 3:15 by the Rabbis in the Christian era, there was evidently a drawing away from such an understanding. (4) This passage interprets the seed of the woman collectively, yet places its ultimate working out in the messianic age; therefore we should not make a simple equation between “messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15” and “individual interpretation of the woman’s seed.” While it is possibly true that an individual interpretation of the seed is based on a messianic understanding (as some see in the LXX), a messianic connection of the verse does not necessarily imply an individual interpretation of the seed. (5) The context, implying a long term struggle whose outcome depends on whether or not the woman’s seed keeps the law, infers that the serpent is to be understood in a sense beyond the literal.⁴⁵ (6) Continuing the trend begun in *Tg. Onqelos*, “the Messianic interpretation of the PT is connected with עקב, ‘the heel’, not with ‘the seed’. עקב is first rendered literally and then taken in its transferred sense of ‘final period, end of the days’ which is considered to be Messianic times.”⁴⁶

Tg. Neof. Gen 3:15 generally agrees with *Pseudo-Jonathan*, with some interesting differences. The expression for enmity is not the usual דָּרְבוּ, but דָּעַל דָּרְבוּ (found also in the Peshitta and the *Fragmentary Tg. Paris* manuscript), which is an idiom for “enemy.”⁴⁷ The same expression is found in *Tg. Neof.* Num 35:21-22, so its use here is not particularly remarkable. Still, there is a certain resemblance to the name of the arch enemy Beelzebub (less so to Beelzebul), *zayin* in the Hebrew being often found in Aramaic cognates as *daleth* (not that I am suggesting such a relationship here), and could therefore be a way of identifying the snake with Satan.⁴⁸

Tg. Neofiti adds that after the woman’s seed who keeps the law aims at and smites the snake, they will kill him; but when they (plural) forsake the law the

⁴³That is, assuming that the comparison to Rev 12:17 indicates a first century or earlier origin for the tradition preserved in the *Palestinian Tgs.* (see also next note).

⁴⁴McNamara says “I have been unable to find a Messianic interpretation of Gn 3,15 in rabbinic sources,” and therefore the paraphrase found in *Pal. Tgs.* Gen 3:15 is “probably a very old one and, considered in itself, has every chance of being pre-Christian” (*New Testament and Palestinian Targum*, 220-21).

⁴⁵So McNamara, *ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 219-20.

⁴⁷McNamara, *Targum Neofiti: Genesis*, 61, n. 11; Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 2.7, 46.

⁴⁸Peggy L. Day argues that it is on the basis of this word play that Beelzebub/ul became identified with Satan. She finds support for this position (which she traces back to E. K. A. Riehm, 1893) in the fact that בעל דבא originated in Aramaic as an Akkadian loan word meaning “accuser in court,” which parallels the meaning of Hebrew עֲדָוָן (*An Adversary in Heaven: šātān in the Hebrew Bible* [HSM; no. 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 152-159).

snake will bite him (יִתִּיה; singular) on his heel and make him sick. Nothing messianic is to be inferred, of course, by the switch from plural to singular, since here it is him who is bitten after forsaking the law that is singular.⁴⁹ This addition makes it explicit that the snake's attack is less injurious to the woman's seed (he is made ill) than that on the snake (he is killed).

The *Fragmentary Tgs.* most closely follow *Neofiti* (only the Paris manuscript has 15a-c; it has the expression בעל דבר). Both traditions contain the phrase בסוף עקב יומי"א – "in the final end of days," prior to "in the days of Messiah the King," where סוף may be an interpretation of שוף. They also follow *Neofiti* in adding that the snake will be killed. The long lasting struggle in which the snake is killed whenever God's people are obedient, yet is still present in the days of King Messiah when there will be no remedy for him, is further evidence that the snake is taken as a figure for Satan.⁵⁰

1.2.4 *Philo and Josephus*

In *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.187 Philo explains that the masculine pronoun αὐτός is surprising since God has been talking about the woman. He explains, "He has left off speaking about the woman and passed on to her seed and origin; but the mind is the origin of sense; and mind is masculine, in speaking of which we should use the pronouns 'he' and 'his' and so on." He also explains that "watch" has two meanings: "one like 'shall guard and preserve,' the other equivalent to 'shall watch for to destroy.'"⁵¹

In *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.50-51, Josephus gives a completely naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:14-15.⁵²

1.2.5 *Summary of Early Jewish Interpretation of Gen 3:15*

The Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and Philo give no messianic connection to Gen 3:15. Interpretations of the two seeds are strictly naturalistic (Josephus), philosophical allegorical (Philo), and figurative for the righteous and the wicked (*The Manual of Discipline*, and possibly some of the Pseudepigrapha).

Samaritan Tg. follows the MT so closely that it offers no clue as to its interpretation. The LXX translation in its use of τηρέω may reflect an early form of the tradition later reflected in *Tg. Onqelos* and further developed in the *Palestinian Tgs.* Since in these Targums the singular is occasionally used for the woman's seed, which in context is also clearly plural, we should be cautious about assuming that the LXX reading is "messianic" just because it uses the masculine singular pronoun in "he will watch your head." The targumic tradition (possibly excepting *Samaritan Tg.*, which does not go

⁴⁹McNamara, *New Testament and Palestinian Targum*, 219.

⁵⁰Michael L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums to the Pentateuch According to their Extant Sources* (2 vols.; AnBib 76; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 2.7, 46, 91, 127. McNamara notes that *Tg. Neof.* Gen 3:15 has various marginal readings "almost verbatim as P" (*Targum Neofiti: Genesis*, 61, apparatus n. u).

⁵¹*Philo I* (LCL), 429-30. LSJ is unaware of this meaning; it may reflect Jewish usage based on נטר.

⁵²*Josephus IV, Jewish Antiquities, Books I-IV* (LCL), 23, 25.

beyond translating) sees the verse as applying throughout history, to the end times, and the *Palestinian Tgs.* specifically state that time to be the days of the Messiah. This eschatological sense is derived from a figurative (or allegorical) understanding of “heel,” the end of the body, meaning the end of time, just as “head” means beginning, and possibly also from the similarity of טף to שף. Outside of the LXX, the only possible inference of a singular understanding of the woman’s seed is in *Tg. Onqelos* and would have to be seen not as exclusively singular, but as side by side with the collective. The *Palestinian Tgs.* describe the woman’s seed with terms similar to those used to describe the woman’s seed in Revelation 12, suggesting that John intended us to understand the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15 as the Church. Also in common with Revelation 12, the ancient serpent is more than a snake; probably the devil.

As for the nature of the struggle, *Tg. Onqelos* agrees with the LXX in departing from the literal meaning of שף, but this may not be an entirely deliberate departure from the literal, but one influenced by the difficulty of translating שף consistently in Gen 3:15, and/or the guessing of another meaning from another passage. The *Palestinian Tgs.* are more literal in rendering שף but also add a moral description of the woman’s seed. The New Testament is most like the *Palestinian Tgs.* in correcting the LXX τηρέω to συντρίβω to describe the serpent’s fate (if Rom 16:20 is a reference to Gen 3:15), and in the moral description of the woman’s seed (Rev 12:17).

1.3 Later Jewish Interpretation

Here we consider the Midrashim and some of the medieval Rabbis (and one from the 19th century). Like the fall narrative in general, the curse on the serpent was embellished in Jewish legend. Up to ten punishments were decreed for the serpent:

The mouth of the serpent was closed, and his power of speech taken away; his hands and feet were hacked off; the earth was given him as food; he must suffer great pain in sloughing his skin; enmity is to exist between him and man; if he eats the choicest viands, or drinks the sweetest beverages, they all change into dust in his mouth; the pregnancy of the female serpent lasts seven years; men shall seek to kill him as soon as they catch sight of him; even in the future world, where all beings will be blessed, he will not escape the punishment decreed for him; he will vanish from out of the Holy Land if Israel walks in the ways of God.⁵³

The second part of Gen 3:15; “He will strike you on the head” shows up as “men shall seek to kill him as soon as they catch sight of him.” These embellishments presume a completely naturalistic interpretation, although the snake would continue to be some sort of symbol of evil, which vanishes from the land of a completely obedient Israel. A moral lesson (measure for measure) was also made of the punishments: the serpent was made to be king over the animals, made of upright posture, and made to eat the same food as man; he was not satisfied with any of these, so was cursed above all animals, made to crawl on his belly and to eat dust. He further sought the death of Adam in order to espouse his wife, for which enmity is decreed between him and the woman.⁵⁴ Another Midrash says

⁵³Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1925), 1.77-78. Sources and variations (leprosy was sometimes counted as one of the ten punishments) are cited in 5.100, n. 83.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 1.78; 5.101, n. 84.

that the serpent “is man’s Evil Inclination” which must be crushed *with* the head (of the Academy of Torah): “Only with Torah can the serpent (the Evil Inclination) be crushed. Conversely, the serpent can slay a man only through the heel, that is to say, when one transgresses and tramples God’s commandments under his heel.”⁵⁵

Ginzberg cites *Pirqe R. El.* which “gives the downfall of Sammael and his host as the first penalty of the serpent, in agreement with the view of this Midrash, according to which the real seducer was Satan (= Sammael), who made use of the serpent.”⁵⁶

Such an identification of the serpent is also found in a work outside classical Rabbinic tradition, the *Zohar*, “the fundamental book of Jewish Cabbalism . . . the premier text-book of medieval Jewish mysticism,” which said that the mixed multitude which went up from Egypt with Israel (Exod 12:38) “are the offspring of the original serpent that beguiled Eve,” and variously calls the serpent a literal serpent, evil tempter, Samael’s mount, Satan, and angel of death.⁵⁷ The medieval *Zohar Chadash* called the wicked “בְּנוֹי דְּנִחָשׁ הַקְּדָמְנִי (sons of the ancient serpent), who has slain Adam and all his posterity” (דְּקִטְטִיל לְאָדָם וְלְכָל בְּרִיּוֹ דְאַתְתֵּיּוֹ מְנִיָּה), which Tholuck compared to John 8:44, where Jesus says his persecutors are of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning.⁵⁸ The expression is also consistent with the description “ancient serpent” found in Rev 12:9; 20:2.

Rashi explains the reason for thinking that the serpent wanted to marry Eve: the narrative of temptation immediately follows mention of the nakedness of Adam and Eve, which therefore implies that the serpent was motivated by lust for Eve. “Your sole intention was that Adam should die by eating it first and that you should then take Eve for yourself . . . therefore ‘I shall put enmity.’” Gur Aryeh (commentator on Rashi) explained: the strategy presumes Eve would follow the custom of giving her husband the food first, and would abstain after seeing him die. Rashi did not see an advantage for the man in this struggle: “even at that spot [the heel] you [serpent] will kill him,” and he said that שׁוּף as the action of the snake was derived from שׁוּף, “blow,” from the sound that a snake makes before it bites.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Midrash Hane’lam Zohar B’reshith* 19, cited in Menahem M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation: Genesis*, trans. Harry Freedman (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1953), 1.132. Kasher also lists interpretations such as those cited by Ginzberg, above.

⁵⁶ Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5.100, n. 83.

⁵⁷ Harry Spaulding and Maurice Simon, *Zohar* (5 vols.; London: Soncino Press, 1956), 1. ix, 108, 133-34.

⁵⁸ August Tholuck, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co., 1859), 236, n. 1. The citation is from *Yitro* 39, available online: https://www.sefaria.org/Zohar_Chadash_Yitro.39?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en (accessed 22 January 2018).

⁵⁹ M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann, *Pentateuch With Targum Onkelos, Haphtorah and Rashi’s Commentary: Genesis* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1965), 12, 15. Gur Aryeh cited in A. J. Rosenberg, *The Book of Genesis: A New English Translation of the Text, Rashi, and a Commentary Digest* (Judaica Press Books of the Bible; New York: Judaica Press, 1993), 1.56.

Nachmanides disagreed that the struggle was mutually harmful: “This means man will have an advantage over you [the serpent] in the enmity between him and you for he will bruise your head but you will bruise him only in his heel, with which he will crush your brain.”⁶⁰ Hirsch made a moral lesson of this advantage: “Man is given greater strength over his lusts, than these have over him. Man can stamp his lusts on the head, they can at the most catch him on his heel.” He said that the curse’s primary purpose is not punishment of the snake but education of mankind; “the strong antipathy implanted in mankind towards snakes may be meant to bring home to his mind that it was ‘animal wisdom’ that led him astray, and to remind him of the gulf that separates Man from animal.” Hirsch took נָשָׂא as the sudden darting of the snake which catches one off guard.⁶¹

Rabbinic interpretation is conspicuous for its difference from what we would expect based on the readings found in at least some of the Targums. Instead of a further development of messianic or eschatological ideas connected with Gen 3:15, there seems to be a drawing away from them, to the naturalistic interpretation expressed in Josephus and most of the Midrashim. The verse is interpreted naturalistically and used allegorically for moral lessons.

1.4 *The Church Fathers to the Reformation*

1.4.1 *Justin Martyr, Apologist* (d. ca. 165)

Justin Martyr is the first Church father to leave us a record of his understanding of Gen 3:15. In his *Dialogue With Trypho* he alludes to the verse six times (91:4; 94:1; 100:5-6; 102:3; 103:5; 112:2). The reference in 91:4 is in the context of proving to Trypho (a Jew) that the cross is an Old Testament symbol. A type and sign of a cross was set up by Moses on which to hang the bronze serpent he made (Num 21:8-9), which was meant to save those who believed in the judgment of the serpent (who was cursed from the beginning) through him who would be crucified. Justin then refers to the serpent’s judgment (missing in LXX): “Isaiah tells us that he shall be put to death as an enemy by the mighty sword, which is Christ,”⁶² thus equating the serpent of temptation with Leviathan the dragon whose judgment is predicted in Isa27:1. This interpretation is probably derived from the equation of the dragon with the “ancient serpent” in Revelation 12 and 20, and from the fact that Leviathan in the LXX is translated “dragon.” The substance of this passage is repeated in 112:2.⁶³ In both passages he argues the symbolic significance of the bronze serpent which Moses made in the wilderness from

⁶⁰Charles B. Chavel, *Ramban (Nachmanides): Commentary on the Torah: Genesis* (New York: Shilo Publishing House, 1971), 84.

⁶¹Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch Translated and Explained* (2nd. ed.; London: L. Honig & Sons, 1963), 1.81-82.

⁶²ANF, 1.245.

⁶³Ibid., 1.255. In 94:1 Justin made up for the lack of a decisive defeat of the serpent in the LXX by taking the bronze serpent incident as a sign that the serpent’s power would be broken. He also identified the serpent’s fangs as “wicked deeds, idolatries, and other unrighteous acts” (ibid., 1.246).

the fact that Moses, who himself gave the law against making images, here makes an image and raises it up. This means that the bronze serpent really represents Christ.

In 100:5-6 he makes an analogy between Eve's temptation by the serpent, and the annunciation to Mary by Gabriel of the birth of Christ:

For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her. ... And by her has He been born, to whom we have proved so many Scriptures refer, and by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him.⁶⁴

Justin does not say here that Gen 3:15 is a prediction of Mary fulfilled in Luke 1:26-38, but only uses two texts to make an analogy. Mary corresponds to Eve; Gabriel corresponds to the serpent (a fallen angel). He also speaks of angels and men who become like the serpent, possibly indicating his understanding of the identity of the "seed of the serpent" as both fallen angels and wicked men.

In 102:3 Justin makes a passing reference to the serpent; God could have removed the serpent from existence at the beginning, "rather than have said, 'And I will put enmity between him and the woman, and between his seed and her seed.'" The rest of the verse is not quoted. This citation comes in an exposition of Psalm 22, as does that of 103:5, where he discusses the identity of the lion (v.14): "Or He meant the devil by the lion roaring against Him: whom Moses calls the serpent, but in Job and Zechariah he is called devil, and by Jesus is addressed as Satan." Justin goes on to give a Samaritan Aramaic etymology of Satan (Satanas), which consists of "apostate" (*sata*) and "snake" (*nas*; i.e., ܨܢܐ without the middle guttural).⁶⁵

Justin is clearer about the identity of the serpent and his seed than about the identity of the woman's seed. He does not make any argument from the masculine singular *ἀνθρώπος* in the Greek text to identify the woman's seed as an individual, and he does not make any reference to the crushing of the snake's head (an idea, as we have seen, which is not in the LXX). Rather, he derives the judgment on the snake from Isa 27:1, where Leviathan is called a snake whom God will slay with his sword, and from the equation of the serpent in Isa 27:1 with that of Gen 3:15, who is the devil, and the New Testament teaching that Christ destroys the works of the devil (as depicted by the bronze serpent incident); Christ is therefore the sword, the instrument of Leviathan's destruction. There is therefore no clear answer to the question, "who is the seed of the woman?" in Justin's writings. He speaks both of Christ's victory and the victory he obtains for those who repent of their sins.

1.4.2 *Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons* (d. ca. 200)

⁶⁴Ibid., 1.249.

⁶⁵ANF, 1.250-51, and A. Lukyn Williams, *Justin Martyr: The Dialogue With Trypho, Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (Translations of Christian Literature, Series I – Greek Texts; London: MacMillan, 1930), 216, nn.5, 6.

Irenaeus alludes to Gen 3:15 or expounds on it in his *Against Heresies* in much the same way as did Justin. In 3.22.4, Irenaeus, like Justin, listed analogies between Eve and Mary, but not on the basis of Luke 1:26-38. His analogy was based on his thesis that the events of the Fall had an antidotal recapitulation in the work of Christ. Mary's role is given more prominence than in Justin's analogy: "And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith." In 5.19.1 he again makes analogies between Eve and Mary, giving a prominent role to Mary: "And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin." The context indicates that this rescue is attributed to Mary because she was obedient to the annunciation, thus giving birth to Christ, who is the one who actually rescues us, but there is no identification of Mary as "the woman." He goes on to say that the "harmlessness of the dove" is the recapitulation of "the coming of the serpent."⁶⁶

In 3.23.3 Irenaeus indicates that the fact that Adam himself was not cursed, but only the serpent, implies his salvation. He then quotes the first part of the curse on the serpent (Gen 3:14), and says it is "the same thing" as "depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which my Father hath prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41), and those who persevere in wickedness (who act like Cain) shall also incur the serpent's curse on themselves, perhaps implying that the serpent's seed includes wicked people, as well as fallen angels. Further on he speaks of the serpent as "impeding the steps of man, until the seed did come appointed to tread down his head;" Irenaeus then quotes Ps 91:13 ("Thou shalt tread upon the asp and the basilisk; thou shalt trample down the lion and the dragon") to speak of the serpent's judgment (again, necessitated by the LXX deficiency). He must not mean all men, however, because he has earlier spoken of those who incur the serpent's curse and partake of his fate. Either he views the woman's seed as only the righteous, or he views the woman's seed as a designation of the human race, and the verse is fulfilled because part of that race (the redeemed) partake of the enmity and the victory. In either case, he assigns to Christ a special status, as the one who conquers on behalf of the many. In 3.23.8 Irenaeus says "heretics and apostates from the truth . . . show themselves patrons of the serpent and of death," possibly indicating that the serpent's seed includes heretics.⁶⁷

In 4.40.3, he quotes Gen 3:15, following the LXX, and then says, "The Lord summed up in Himself this enmity, when he was made man from a woman, and trod upon his [the serpent's] head."⁶⁸ Unger calls this "a concise but complete interpretation of the First-Gospel in a Christological and Mariological sense."⁶⁹ However, since it is clear

⁶⁶ ANF, 1.455, 457. Eve was considered a virgin by Irenaeus because the fact that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed shows that they were children (see *ibid.*, 1.455, n. 4).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.456-58. The heresy that Irenaeus speaks of, is Tatian's teaching that Adam and Eve were not themselves redeemed from their fall.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.524.

⁶⁹ Unger, *Patristic Interpretation*, 122.

that Irenaeus interpreted the seed of the woman collectively in both the enmity and victory, this passage might simply mean that the incarnation made Jesus also and pre-eminently “seed of the woman,” in which capacity he experienced the enmity spoken of in the verse (another recapitulation), and also conquered. Irenaeus goes on in the first three sections of the next chapter to expound the fact that though the wicked are by nature (i.e., by act of creation) children of God, they are by imitation children of the devil, and only those “who believe in Him and do His will” are sons of God (4.41.2).⁷⁰ It would be natural to assume that Irenaeus here is explaining how it is that not all men are the seed of the woman but rather some are the seed of the serpent; that the two seeds of Gen 3:15 are the children of God and the children of the devil. But again, he does not explicitly make this equation.

Finally, in 5.21.1 he again quotes Gen 3:15, and connects it to Gal 3:19 (the seed who should come) and Gal 4:4:

He who should be born of a woman, [namely] from the Virgin, after the likeness of Adam, was preached as keeping watch for the head of the serpent. This is the seed of which the apostle says in the Epistle to the Galatians, “that the law of works was established until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” This fact is exhibited in a still clearer light in the same Epistle, where he thus speaks: “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman.” For indeed, the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of a woman who conquered him.⁷¹

If all we had to go by in determining Irenaeus’ interpretation of Gen 3:15 was this section, we might conclude with Unger that he identified the woman’s seed as Christ alone.⁷² This probably explains why Unger discussed it first in his article even though chronologically it is last. But such a conclusion is at variance with what Irenaeus wrote elsewhere. More likely, this section shows us how Irenaeus considered Christ to be the seed of the woman *par excellence* and therefore may be singled out in the exposition of Gen 3:15 in a canonical approach to interpretation. He probably could not resist noting the similarity in language and concept between the prediction of the woman’s seed, and Paul’s mention of the seed who was to come, and his description of Jesus as “of a woman.” But that is not the same as teaching the exclusively christological and mariological meaning of Gen 3:15 as the original intent of the passage.

1.4.3 *Clement of Alexandria* (d. ca. 214)

Clement, after mentioning the death brought to Eve by the devil, evidently alludes to Gen 3:15 when he says that “One and the same, too, is our helper and vindicator, the Lord, who from the beginning foretold salvation in prophecy.”⁷³ Clement is close to calling Gen 3:15 the first gospel here; as a promise of salvation, not specifically the promise of an incarnate divine savior.

⁷⁰ ANF, 1.525.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1.548-49.

⁷² Unger, *Patristic Interpretation*, 120.

⁷³ *Cohortatio ad gentes*, 1 (FG, 104; PG, 8.64A).

1.4.4 Origen (d. 254)

In a sermon on Gen 46:3-4 Origen refers to the conflict of Gen 3:15 as a war, making a clearly collective interpretation, beginning with Cain and Abel: “God did not leave them to themselves when they had been placed in this war, but He is always with them. He is pleased with Abel but reproves Cain.”⁷⁴ A similar interpretation is found in a sermon on Josh 10:21, ascribing our victory to Jesus: “Let us then pray that our feet may be such, so beautiful, so strong, that they can trample on the Serpent’s head that he cannot bite our heel (Gen 3:15). ... So you see that whoever fights under Jesus [Joshua], ought to return safe from battle.”⁷⁵ In a sermon on Jer 20:8, Origen connects the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 to the reproach suffered by Jeremiah: “it must needs be that the friendship of Christ should generate enmities against the Serpent, and the friendship of the Serpent bring forth enmities against Christ.”⁷⁶ Origen seems to consistently identify the woman’s seed as the Church, both in enmity and in victory.

1.4.5 Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (d. 258)

Cyprian wrote, “That this should be the sign of His nativity, that He should be born of a virgin – man and God – a son of man and a Son of God.”⁷⁷ Cyprian then quotes Isa7:10-15, and comments: “This seed God had foretold would proceed from the woman that should trample on the head of the devil. In Genesis: ‘Then God said unto the serpent,’” etc.⁷⁸ If Cyprian were only talking about the virgin birth, we might conclude that he cites Gen 3:15 as a prophecy of it. But Cyprian is also demonstrating the human nature of Christ, “a son of man,” which, if the woman’s seed is an individual, Gen 3:15 would seem to prove. But we have elsewhere in Cyprian evidence of a collective interpretation. In an exhortation based on Eph 6:12-17, he says: “Let our feet be shod with the teaching of the Gospel and armed so that, when the serpent begins to be trampled upon and crushed by us, he may not be able to bite and throw us down.”⁷⁹ The allusion to Gen 3:15 seems clear enough; for Cyprian, the enmity and victory predicted in that passage are still being fulfilled in his own day, in the Church. Similarly, in a letter he describes the victorious suffering of one Celerinus: “and although his feet were bound

⁷⁴ *Homilae in Genesim*, 15.5 (FG, 107; PG, 12.245A).

⁷⁵ *Homilae in librum Jesu Nave*, 12.2 (FG, 106-07; PG, 12.888A-B). Basil the Great also spoke of the enmity of Gen 3:15 as war: “the Lord established for us a war against him [Satan], that when the war had been won through obedience, we might triumph over the enemy” (*Quod Deus non est auctor malorum* 8-9 [FG, 110-11; PG, 31.348-352]).

⁷⁶ *Homilae in Jeremiam*, 19.7 (FG, 105; PG, 13.516D - 517A).

⁷⁷ ANF, 5.515, 519.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.519 (treatise to Quirinius, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews* 2.9).

⁷⁹ *Saint Cyprian Letters (1-81)*, trans. Rose Bernard Donna (vol. 51, *The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation*; Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1964), 170 (“to the people of Thibaris,” letter 58, 9).

with cords, the helmeted serpent was both crushed and conquered” (because he did not deny his faith under torture).⁸⁰ These collective interpretations of the woman’s seed make doubtful the characterization of Cyprian’s interpretation of Gen 3:15 as strictly individual and christological (therefore mariological), and predictive of the virgin birth.

1.4.6 *Serapion, Bishop of Thumis* (Egypt; d. after 359)

Serapion left us perhaps the earliest extant argument for the virgin birth being predicted in Gen 3:15: “But a woman does not have seed, only man does. How then was it said of the woman? Is it clear that it was said of Christ whom the undefiled Virgin brought forth without seed? Certainly, He is a singular seed, not seeds in the plural.”⁸¹

1.4.7 *Cyril of Jerusalem* (d. 386)

To justify his exhortation, “let us hate them who are worthy of hatred; let us turn away from them from whom God turns away,” Cyril quotes Ps 139:21, and goes on: “For there is also an enmity which is right, according as it is written, *I will put enmity between thee and her seed [sic]* for friendship with the serpent works enmity with God, and death.”⁸² This passing reference may be evidence of a collective interpretation of the woman’s seed as the Church (at least in Gen 3:15a-c), but this interpretation is not made explicit.

1.4.8 *Optatus of Mileva* (d. before 400)

Optatus explains the massacre of infants in Bethlehem as another instance of the enmity set in the beginning:

In the very beginning of the world enmity began with the waylaying Devil. It was when God’s sentence had set both seeds against each other in hostile rivalry. He said, “I will put enmity between thy seed and the woman’s seed; she (*ipsa*) shall observe thy head, and thou shalt observe her heel” (Gen.3:15). This enmity . . . sheds holy blood from the beginning. Soon after, the just Abel is murdered by his brother (Gen. 4).⁸³

If the murder of Abel by Cain is considered the first instance of “both seeds against each other in hostile rivalry” then both seeds are collective; at least in the enmity portion of the curse. A collective interpretation does not appear to be consistent if “she” is Mary; some fathers saw “she” as the Church.

1.4.9 *John Chrysostom* (d. 407)

In a sermon on Genesis 3 Chrysostom speaks of the punishment of the visible serpent, and the enmity between snakes and mankind (i.e., a naturalistic interpretation), then says that what is said in Gen 3:15 “must be taken *much more* of the intellectual

⁸⁰ Ibid., 100 (“to the Priests and People;” letter 39, 2).

⁸¹ *FG*, 111 (*Catena in Genesim*); source is cited as from Gallus (Tiburtius Gallus, S. J., *Interpretatio Mariologica Protoevangelii [Gen. 3:15], Tempore postpatristico usque ad Concilium Tridentinum* [Rome: n.p., 1949], 24), who says it was found “by A. Lippomanus (Paris 1546).”

⁸² “Catechetical Lectures,” 16.10; NPNF², 7.117.

⁸³ *In Natale Infantium qui pro Domino occisi sunt*, 5; *FG*, 173-74; Unger cites source for text as A. Wilmart, *RevScRel* 2 (1922), 271-302; 283. Apparently there is some doubt concerning the author of the sermon; see *FG*, 173, n. 166.

serpent [the Devil]. For him, too, God humiliated and made subject under *our* feet and gave *us* the power to tread on his head” (quoting Luke 10:19).⁸⁴ He connects the curse with Luke 10:19 in another sermon, where he also relates it to Rom 16:20, and then says:

No longer, as previously, [is it true that] “He will observe your head, and you will observe his heel.” No, the victory is complete, the triumph perfect, the defeat of the enemy, the slaughter and destruction is total. Eve made you subject to man; but I will make you equal ... to the very angels.⁸⁵

Before they were Christians (being offspring of the serpent), they were subject to (righteous) man (offspring of the woman), but now they are equal to angels; a figurative collective interpretation of both seeds as the righteous and the wicked.

1.4.10 Jerome (d. 419/20)

The translator of the Vg said that a better translation (than the OL) of Gen 3:15 would be “He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel” (*ipse conteret caput tuum, et tu conteres eius calcaneum*). He goes on to say that our steps, too, are impeded by the serpent, then quotes Rom 16:20.⁸⁶ This is at least a collective application to Christians of both the enmity and victory, if not a collective interpretation of the woman’s seed as the Church (or Christ and the Church). In a commentary on Isaiah (58:12), he says that the serpent who is said to bite one who breaks through a wall (Eccl 10:8) is the same one “who deceived Eve in paradise, who [Eve] because she had destroyed God’s precept, exposed herself to its bites, and heard from the Lord: ‘Thou shalt observe his head, and he (*ille-coluber*) shall observe thy heel.’”⁸⁷ The text of Gen 3:15 is changed somewhat, since Eve is addressed, not the serpent. The implication that Eve is the woman in Gen 3:15 is clear, but Unger suggests that Eve could actually be addressed here because she is part of the seed, but the woman is Mary, or that the verse is accommodated to Eve.⁸⁸ Another collective interpretation is made in his commentary on Ezekiel, speaking of the waters which “reach to the ankles, which are near the soles and heel, which are exposed to the bites of the serpent” he quotes Gen 3:15 the same way he did in the Isaiah commentary.⁸⁹

Jerome translated Gen 3:15 in the Vg differently than in his *Quaestiones hebraicae*. For הַיָּהוּה he translated *ipsa* (she) in Gen 3:15d, and for הַיָּהוּה he used *conterere* only for the first instance, and used *insidiaberis* (lie in wait) for the second. The OL used *observare* twice, but Jerome’s terms had already appeared in other fathers’ writings, as

⁸⁴ *Homilae in Genesim*, 17.7 (FG, 123; PG, 53.143).

⁸⁵ *In Genesim, Sermo 5.2-3* (FG, 124; PG, 54.602).

⁸⁶ *Hebraicarum Quaestionum in Genesim*, 3:15 (PL, 23.991).

⁸⁷ *In Isaiam*, 16, 58:12 (FG, 175; PL, 24.572).

⁸⁸ FG, 176-77.

⁸⁹ *In Ezechielem*, 14.47:3 (FG, 177; PL, 25.469B).

had *ipsa*. Tradition, therefore, probably explains why he translated against his better knowledge in a way that supported the hyper-mariological sense of Gen 3:15, which must therefore have been current for some time (or else like others, he takes *ipsa* of the Church). I use the term “hyper-mariological” to distinguish from the mariological interpretation, in which Mary is said to be “the woman” predicted in Gen 3:15. The hyper-mariological interpretation goes beyond this to elevate Mary from her place alongside the rest of the saints, even “blessed among women,” to a role as co-redeemer with Christ, in which she crushes the serpent in a way that other believers do not.

1.4.11 Augustine (d. 430)

Commenting on Ps 36:12-13 (11-12; let not the foot of pride approach me . . . there the workers of iniquity have fallen), he quotes Gen 3:15d-e following OL (using “watch;” *observabit*) and interprets the serpent’s watching as watching for an opportunity occasioned by pride to make us fall (a spiritual interpretation). Our watching his head means to be on guard for the beginning of all sin, pride (an allegorical interpretation of head as beginning; not of time, but of pride).⁹⁰ That the seed of the woman is interpreted collectively is clear. He makes a similar allegorical interpretation in comments on Ps 49:6 (5), which he cites as “And wherefore shall I fear in the evil day? The iniquity of my heel shall compass me” (cf. the MT; עֲוֹן עֲקָבִי), and says that “Our flesh is an Eve within us.”⁹¹

Commenting on Ps 74:13-14 (“Thou hast broken in pieces the heads of the dragons [Hebrew, תַּנִּינִים] in the water, Thou hast broken the head of the dragon [Hebrew, Leviathan]; Thou hast given him for a morsel to the Ethiopian peoples [Hebrew, אֲרָבִיָּאִי]),” he equates the breaking of dragons’ heads with the deliverance of Gentiles from “demons’ pride, wherewith the Gentiles were possessed.” In v. 14, where “dragon” is singular, the devil is indicated, chief over the rest of the dragons (demons). The serpent’s head is again interpreted allegorically; as the beginning of all sin, pride. Eve is the woman of Gen 3:15, and the seed of the woman is the Church.⁹²

In *Against the Manichees*, Augustine struggles with the question of why the enmity was set between the devil and the woman, as opposed to the man.

The seed of the devil signifies perverse suggestion, and the seed of the woman the fruit of the good work by which one resists such perverse suggestion. Thus he watches the foot of the woman so that, if ever it should slip in that forbidden pleasure, he might seize her.

⁹⁰NPNE¹, 8.91.

⁹¹Ibid., 8.170. It is significant that Vg *ipsa* is taken as Eve, not Mary, and allegorized. Similarly, Erasmus wrote in his *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* that we must understand the woman in Gen 3:15 to be “the carnal part of man. For this is our Eve, through whom the most crafty serpent lures our mind to death-bearing pleasures.” Quick reaction to the beginning of temptation allows the Christian soldier to hiss the serpent away, “crushing straightway the head of the plague-bearing serpent. For he is never either easily or completely conquered” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, in *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, ed. Matthew Spinka [LCC 14; ; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953], 297, 363).

⁹²NPNE¹, 8.346.

And she watches his head so that she may exclude him in the very beginning of his evil temptation.⁹³

The enmity here again seems to be remaining sin in the Christian. The woman is the Church, and her seed good works. He later said of this interpretation, “if there is anything that we might have said more carefully and properly, may God help us that we might accomplish it.”⁹⁴

1.4.12 *Syrian Fathers on Genesis*

A ca. 900 Syriac MS of a commentary on difficult texts in Genesis, which was drawn from interpretations of earlier Syrian fathers, such as Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ephrem of Syria, implies that the appearance of the serpent was not real, but visionary. The description of the serpent as an animal in Gen 3:1 is analogous to Gen 18:1; “Abraham saw three men according to his understanding, although they were not men.” The cunning spoken of is therefore the cunning of Satan, and v. 14 of the curse therefore “hints allegorically at the fall of Satan the accuser.” The enmity of v. 15 means, “that there is a great battle” between the seeds “throughout all their generations.” Concerning the head and heel,

this is a figure for the judgement upon Satan, how much lower than us God has placed him. As for us, if we desire the good, through mighty deeds are we able to smite him; but he on the other hand is able to smite us, since he guards our heels i.e. our way, which is our deeds; even as “the iniquity of my heels doth encompass me.”⁹⁵

The use of “us” means that the seed of the woman is interpreted collectively; either of people in general or the Church. The battle is described in much the same way as the *Palestinian Tgs.*, except that there is no resolution in the days of the Messiah. The quotation from Ps 49:6 (5) is reminiscent of Augustine, without Eve as our flesh.

1.4.13 *Abbot Rupert of Deutz* (d. 1135)

Rupert said that the virgin birth was taught in the curse on the serpent: “For about what seed is this said except about the one that is Christ. He, really, alone is the seed of woman in such wise that He is not also the seed of man,” and said the lying in wait for his heel meant that he was attacked at the end of his life.⁹⁶ In another work he identified the woman as Mary principally, but also all elect women, and the woman’s seed as principally Christ, but also all elect men, and the serpent’s seed as the wicked, the children of the devil, based on John 8:44.⁹⁷ In his commentary on Rev 12:3 he said that

⁹³ *Saint Augustine on Genesis*, 2.18.28, trans. Roland J. Teske (vol. 84, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*; Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1991), 123.

⁹⁴ *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.36 (FG, 191; PL, 34.449-50). John Cassian gave a similar interpretation of the serpent’s head as the beginning of sin, while he saw the heel as the end of our lives (*Institutes*, 2.18.28 [NPNF², 11.231]).

⁹⁵ Abraham Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis: From a Syrian MS. on the Pentateuch in the Mingana Collection; the first 18 chapters of the MS. edited with introduction, translation, and notes; and including a study in comparative exegesis* (London: Taylor’s Foreign Press, 1951), 24, 77-78.

⁹⁶ *In Genesim* 2.19 (FG, 214-15; PL, 167.304D).

the woman clothed in the sun was the sign of the whole Church, whose greatest member was Mary.⁹⁸

1.4.14 *Nicholas Lyra* (d. ca. 1349)

Nicholas, who knew Hebrew and studied Rashi, offered 3 interpretations of Gen 3:15 in his commentary on Genesis: (1) the allegorical interpretation of Augustine, Cassius, etc., (2) the christological and mariological interpretation of “other holy interpreters,” and (3) the naturalistic interpretation, which he rejects on the grounds that God would not talk to an unreasonable animal, the snake did not sin, and it never walked upright.⁹⁹

1.4.15 *Summary of Christian Interpretation to the Reformation*

Gen 3:15, although not quoted explicitly in the New Testament, became the object of interest for the Church fathers probably because Revelation 12 and 20 identified the dragon as the devil and Satan, the “ancient serpent” (presumably the serpent of Genesis 3). Thus the identity of the serpent is not an issue with the fathers, and a prediction of enmity between the devil and the woman’s seed would naturally lead to relate the conflict to New Testament experience, even if the LXX (and the OL, translated from it) gave no clear description of the battle or its outcome, but implied merely the idea of lying in wait. The disadvantage of not knowing Hebrew or having a good translation was overcome from the very beginning by finding other Old Testament passages to speak of the serpent’s defeat, consistent with New Testament teaching that Christ had defeated the devil. These were then related back to Gen 3:15, and the conflict explained in Christian terms, whether individually (concerning Christ) or collectively (concerning the Church). A connection between the serpent and the dragon Leviathan in Isa 27:1 and Ps 74:13-14 was also sometimes made, again, beginning with Justin.

Except for uniformity in identifying the serpent as the devil (usually, his instrument), the fathers arrived at varying conclusions. Generally, when the fathers make an application of the verse to Christians, consistent with a collective interpretation of the woman’s seed, they do not say, in so many words, “the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15 is the Church.” Neither do they say, when applying the passage to Christ, “the seed of the woman is Christ and Christ alone.” I have no desire to prove one way or the other what the predominant Church tradition has been; this tradition is of most importance for Roman Catholics, since the papal bull announcing the doctrine of Mary’s immaculate conception appealed to the early Church teaching concerning Gen 3:15 as referring “clearly and openly” to Jesus Christ and “His most blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary.”¹⁰⁰ The mariological interpretation (i.e., Mary is “the woman” in the prophecy) is logically

⁹⁷ *De Victoria Verbi Dei*, 2.17 (FG, 216-17; PL, 169.1256D-1257B).

⁹⁸ *In Apoc.* 12:3 (FG, 216; PL, 169.1042).

⁹⁹ From Gallus’ summary (*Luther, Zwingli, und Calvin*), 26-31; his source is *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria et Postilla Nicolai Lyrani* (Duaci, 1617), I.103-04.

¹⁰⁰ FG, vii. The bull was issued by Pius IX in 1854. Gen 3:15 is used to teach Mary’s complete victory over sin. It is also important for other mariological doctrines such as the co-redemption, and the assumption.

dependent on the exclusively individual interpretation of the woman's seed: if the seed is properly taken as a collective (not just by application), then Mary cannot be the woman (except as an anti-type of Eve).

The woman's seed was taken variously as Christ, the Church, or mankind. The woman was also taken as the Church, or Eve, or Mary. Comparatively less interest was taken in identifying the serpent's seed, which was identified as demons, wicked people, or both. A few fathers recognized themselves as of the serpent's seed before their conversion to Christ, thus it is the natural state of mankind without the new birth. Those who took the two seeds as collective for the Christians and the world sometimes applied the fulfillment of Gen 3:15 to all of human history, beginning with Cain's murder of Abel, and enduring martyrdom could be described as defeating the serpent in terms of Gen 3:15.

Augustine made the conflict between two seeds into a battle with remaining sin in the believer. Probably most would label this interpretation as allegorical, since he assumes that a conflict that he knows of elsewhere is spoken of here, and does not derive his interpretation from the context. We do not see in the Church fathers any discussion with respect to Gen 3:15 on how to determine figurative meaning legitimately, or what constitutes proper exegesis. John Chrysostom, representative of the Alexandrian school of exegesis, begins with the naturalistic interpretation, then justifies the figurative as the more significant one, on the basis of Luke 10:19 and Rom 16:20. This procedure raises the question, what did Gen 3:15 mean to Old Testament believers? Is Chrysostom's figurative meaning any more valid or acceptable than Augustine's?

From the Church fathers, then, we have a wide range of opinion, but little that would help us answer the question raised in the introduction, namely, how one arrives at figurative meaning with any degree of certainty.

1.5 *The Reformation Period: Luther, Calvin, Zwingli*

1.5.1 *Martin Luther*

The great leader of the reformation was also the leading expositor of Gen 3:15 up to his time. Gallus divides Luther's exposition of Gen 3:15 into three phases.¹⁰¹ The first phase is prior to Luther's learning of Greek and Hebrew (1520), and his sources are the Vg and Nicholas Lyra, and he still esteems the allegorical method of interpretation, and gives quite varying interpretations. In this first phase, Luther contributed a unique interpretation of the Vg feminine *ipsa* (she; Gen 3:15d) as the humanity of Christ.¹⁰² He later (1520) spoke of the woman to come who would bruise the serpent, going beyond the earlier hyper-mariological interpretation which usually qualified Mary's role as being accomplished through Jesus.¹⁰³ He identified the seed of the serpent as sin, and the seed

¹⁰¹Gallus, *Luther, Zwingli und Calvin*, 25, 37, 87.

¹⁰²Martin Luther, "Psalm 56," in *First Lectures on the Psalms I*, LWA, 10.262 (from 1513-15).

¹⁰³Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Word and Sacrament II*, LWA, 36.39.

of the woman as the word of God in the Church.¹⁰⁴ The serpent's head could be interpreted as bad passions.¹⁰⁵ He also clearly identified the woman's seed as Christians, rejecting his earlier interpretation. For Ps 112:2 ("His seed shall be mighty upon earth"), he says, "This is the seed spoken of in Gen 3:15. ... And these are the seed and children and descendants of Christ, about whom Is. 53:10 says: 'If He shall lay down His life for sin, He will see a long-lived seed'; and Ps. 22:30-31, 'A seed serving him shall be declared to the Lord.'"¹⁰⁶ We may summarize the first phase of Luther's interpretation as overlapping basically the whole spectrum of interpretation found in the fathers before him.

The second phase covers 1521-1535, in which, after learning Hebrew, he rejects the Vg *ipsa* and *insidiaberis* ("you will lurk," Gen 3:15e), for *ipse* (he) and *conterere* (crush). He also adopted a strictly individual and christological interpretation of the woman's seed, and apparently lost interest in identifying the serpent's seed. In his 1521 sermon guide written during his exile in Wartburg, he translated Gen 3:15d-e "He is to crush your head and you will crush the soles of his feet" and related this promise to Eve's statement at the birth of Cain (Gen 4:1), which he paraphrased, "This will undoubtedly be that man, the seed, who is to fight against the serpent."¹⁰⁷ Luther went on to make an application to Christians:

Likewise in all Christians he [the devil] crushes their soles, thus violating and killing their lives and works; their faith, the head, he must leave alone, and through the head [Christ] their work and life are brought back. But, the devil's feet remain; his strength and fury continue to rage.¹⁰⁸

It is important to understand that to Luther in his second and third phases of interpretation, Christ alone is the seed of the woman, and Christians are involved in both the enmity and victory of Gen 3:15 because of our relationship to Christ, not because we are named there. Perhaps the clearest application of the victory of Gen 3:15 was made in his interpretation of Ps 91:13:

Thus we shall again be the pope's masters and tread him underfoot, as Psalm 91 says, "You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot." And that we shall do by the power and with the help of the woman's seed, who has crushed and still crushes the serpent's head, although we must run the risk that he, in turn, will bite us in the heel.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans: Glosses and Scholia*, 6:10, LWA, 25.314 (from 1515-16). This idea is based on the parable of the sower where the seed is the word of God, and "she" is the Church.

¹⁰⁵Martin Luther, "Ps 101," in *First Lectures on the Psalms II*, LWA, 11.294 (from 1513-15).

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁰⁷Martin Luther, "The Gospel for the Sunday After Christmas," in *Sermons II*, LWA 52.127-28.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁰⁹Martin Luther, "On the Councils and the Church," in *Church and Ministry II*, LWA 41.178.

“That we shall do” is to step on the serpent’s head, as indicated in Psalm 91. Irenaeus related Psalm 91 to Gen 3:15 in order to show that the outcome of the battle (not indicated in the LXX) would be victory. Luther obviously did not need Psalm 91 for that purpose, since he now understood Hebrew. But in his individual interpretation, the victory is only that of the one seed, Christ. So his use of Psalm 91 in connection with Gen 3:15 is evidently for the purpose of showing that Christians also partake of the victory that is promised there (even though they are not the seed spoken of). This point is worth noting because Ken Schurb says (quoting this passage), “Luther did not cast Christians themselves in the role of defeating the devil.”¹¹⁰ It seems clear that Luther’s statement that we run the risk of being bitten *in the heel* implies that Christians are themselves stepping on the snake’s head as mentioned in Gen 3:15, not just Psalm 91.

Luther’s third phase represents his most extensive comments on Gen 3:15 found in his *Lectures on Genesis* and his *Treatise on the Last Words of David*, which features his unique interpretation of Gen 4:1. Luther’s *Lectures on Genesis* were delivered in Wittenberg beginning June, 1535. While lecturing on Gen 3:14, a plague broke out in Wittenberg, apparently interrupting his lectures for several months, until January, 1936.¹¹¹

Gen 3:14-15 “contains whatever is excellent in all Scripture.” V. 14 “is entirely in figurative language; God is speaking with the serpent, and yet it is certain that the serpent does not understand these words. . . . God is not speaking to an irrational nature but to an intelligent nature.” The punishment of the snake as a result of Satan’s sin is comparable to the punishment of the animals who perished in the flood due to mankind’s sin. “Yet, in a figurative sense, Satan’s punishment is meant by the punishment of the serpent.”¹¹²

Speaking of passages like Gen 3:15 which are problematic due to the mixture of figurative and literal meanings Luther wonders why the “fathers and bishops” before him “did not devote themselves with greater zeal to the elucidation of passages of this kind.” He speculates that this neglect was due to “the affairs of office” which “involved them too deeply.” He does not excuse, however, “the villainy of the more recent ones.” He then condemns the change of pronouns in the Latin as a falsification of the passage; “with obvious malice they twisted this passage into a reference to the Blessed Virgin.” Lyra was a good man, but he yielded “too much to the authority of the fathers. And so he allows himself to become involved through St. Augustine in a most absurd allegory.” A lengthy condemnation of this allegory follows.

Luther then amplifies on the serpent:

The serpent is a real serpent, but one that has been entered and taken over by Satan, who is speaking through the serpent. . . . What God is saying to the serpent, the serpent . . . did not understand; but Satan did, and he was the one whom God had especially in mind. Thus I adhere simply to the historical and literal meaning.

¹¹⁰Schurb, “Sixteenth-Century Conflict,” 28.

¹¹¹Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., in introduction to Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, LWA 1.ix.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 183.

. . . God is dealing with Satan, who is hidden within the serpent; the verdict of the Last Judgment is here announced to him.¹¹³

Thus the curse is not only the first gospel, but also the “Last Judgment.” Here Luther sounds like Irenaeus. Luther adds that the grotesque physical change in the serpent is analogous to the change in man’s natural endowments because of Adam’s sin.¹¹⁴ But he disagrees with Lyra and Augustine that “we should allegorically apply to Satan those statements which fit well with the nature of the serpent. . . . The serpent bears only its bodily punishment, while for Satan ... another judgment has been prepared.” It is v. 15 which “pertains properly to the devil.”¹¹⁵

He then expounds v. 15a-c: the curse on the serpent is a comfort to Adam and Eve, both because they hear the serpent being cursed, and because they themselves are not cursed; in fact they are drawn up in battle against their condemned enemy by Christ, the woman’s seed; they enjoy full forgiveness of sins and are set free from Hell; the gift of procreation is made sacred as it is by it that victory over Satan will come, “for here Moses is no longer dealing with a natural serpent; he is speaking of the devil, whose head is death and sin.”¹¹⁶

For the most part, Luther repeats in his Genesis lectures what he has expounded in his post-1520 sermons. We note too, that he continues to make an application of the enmity and victory to Christians, as if he held to a collective interpretation of the seed. We also see here the point which is a hermeneutical issue in the current debate over Gen 3:15: whether a curse can properly be seen as a ground of hope. In Luther’s view, it clearly is: “this comfort springs from the fact that God does not curse Adam and Eve as He curses the serpent.”

He begins the exposition of Gen 3:15d-e by again blasting the hyper-mariological interpretation found in the Latin translations, which even carried away “Lyra, who was not unfamiliar with the Hebrew language.” Mary should be given due honor (“Among all the women of the world she has this privilege from God, that as a virgin she gave birth to the Son of God”), but it is idolatry to suggest that she has destroyed the power of Satan by giving birth to Christ (if that were true, the same could be said of all her predecessors). Gen 3:15d-e are a promise and a threat, but the identity of the woman giving birth to the savior is not known so that Satan is mocked by God and he becomes afraid of all women as potential bearers of the Messiah, and persecutes the people of God in order to prevent his birth. Satan suspects all women, not simply virgins, because the idea of the virgin birth was not made clear until Isa 7:14. But many Old Testament saints did not understand that he would be born of a virgin; they were satisfied with the general

¹¹³Ibid., 183-86. Luther’s use of the word “literal” for his interpretation illustrates why I prefer the term “strictly naturalistic” to describe the interpretation which sees the serpent of Gen 3:14-15 as an animal snake, and nothing more.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 186-87.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 188.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 189-91.

knowledge that he would be born and be victorious over Satan, and by this knowledge and faith they were saved. When Jesus was born, the enmity of the devil was manifest through Herod who tried to destroy him, and was constant until the cross, and now that Christ is at the right hand of God, Satan is filled with wrath against the Church.¹¹⁷ So again we see a collective application of the object of Satan's enmity being made.

Luther said that children born in Old Testament times could not in truth be called the woman's seed, which sounds like he believes that a virgin birth is predicted in Gen 3:15. Such an interpretation would contradict what he taught elsewhere, however, and would leave unexplained how Adam and Eve did not so understand the promise. In fact Luther acknowledged that "the woman's seed" would seem to designate "all individuals in general," but in fact God "is speaking of only one individual, of the Seed of Mary, who is a mother without union with a male." Gen 3:15 is thus "an amazing instance of *synecdoche*." It is not grammar but experience which leads to the identification of the promised seed as Christ; the insufficiency of human nature to accomplish that which is promised in Gen 3:15 is the basis of the inference of Christ. Both Adam and Eve gave evidence of their understanding of and faith in the first gospel. Adam named his wife "Eve" because he was marvelously enlightened after receiving the Holy Spirit, and the name "Eve" was an outward indication of his faith.¹¹⁸

Likewise Gen 4:1 demonstrates the faith of both of them. Adam understood Gen 3:15 as reaffirming the command to be fruitful and multiply: "The blessing, 'Increase and multiply' (Gen. 1:28), had not been withdrawn, but had been reaffirmed in the promise of the Seed who would crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15)." Eve calls Cain a "man" (Gen 4:1) instead of a son because "she had something greater in mind about him, as though Cain would be the man who would crush the head of the serpent. For this reason she does not simply call him a man, but "the man of the Lord."¹¹⁹

Luther says that Seth "is the first to whom was passed on the promise given to his parents in Paradise," as is shown by the fact that Seth is the first one whom Moses calls a son (Gen 4:25). That she recalls the murder of Abel when Seth was born "is also proof that there was bitter enmity between these two churches and that Eve had both observed and suffered many indignities from the Cainites." His use of "enmity" here could be another collective application of the two seeds, but Luther does not explicitly say this. He elaborates on the two churches shown in Genesis 4: "it is [Moses'] purpose to maintain a distinction between the two churches, the one being the righteous one, which has the promises of the future life but in this life is afflicted and poor, the other being the ungodly one, which prospers in this life and is rich." That Eve calls Seth another seed in place of Abel, rather than in place of Cain, is evidence of her piety.

She prefers the slain Abel to Cain, although Cain was her first-born. It is, therefore, the outstanding glory not only of her faith but also of her obedience that she is not provoked at the judgment of God but herself changes her own judgment. ...

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 192-95.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 195-97, 220.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 237, 241-43.

She herself also excommunicates the excommunicated Cain and sends him away with all his descendants. . . .

Thus we have in Seth a new generation, which is born and exists as a result of the promise that the Seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head.¹²⁰ In this most extensive treatment of Gen 3:15, Luther is concerned again and again with the individual-christological interpretation of the woman's seed, and the importance that the promise had for the Old Testament saints. He scarcely discusses "the woman," and never mentions the seed of the serpent. He repeats much that was in his earlier works.

In 1543 Luther completed his study of 2 Sam 23:1-7. The fuller title explains his purpose: *On the Divinity of Christ on the Basis of the Last Words of David*. This treatise was brought on by the need to defend the Christological exegesis of the Old Testament both against Jewish interpreters and against their Christian pupils. Luther acknowledged that he himself had followed the lead of the rabbis too closely in his translation of the Hebrew Bible and even in his interpretation of it, and now he set about to vindicate the Christian explanation of its Messianic prophecies and confessions.¹²¹

In the course of his exposition of 2 Sam 23:1, in which he sees David express his faith in the "Messiah of the God of Jacob," Luther digresses to a discussion of Gen 3:15, in which he again connected Gen 4:1 to his understanding of the promise, but in a new way, which strengthened his insistence that the seed of the woman was an individual, God incarnate:

According to Gen. 4:1, when Eve had given birth to Cain, she perhaps supposed that because he was the first man born on earth he would be the foremost, and she assumed that he was to be the Seed of the woman and that she was to be that woman, or mother. This prompted her to exclaim: "I have the Man, the Lord."¹²²

This new translation of Gen 4:1 is derived by taking the preposition אֶל as the direct object marker. Thus "the Lord" is the co-object of the verb, and explains "a man." He further says,

אֶל, when used alone and without the accompanying word for woman, does not simply designate a male, ... but an ideal and outstanding man. ... Eve means to say here: "I have borne a son, who will develop into a real man, yes, he is *the* Man, God Himself, who will do it, crush the serpent, as God assured us."

Acknowledging the uniqueness of his translation, he says,

If it pleases no one else, it is sufficient that it pleases me. . . . The fact that this little word means "the" and denotes the accusative case has been demonstrated, authenticated, and admitted by all Hebraists, Jews and Christians, in all grammars. However, that it could also mean *ad, de, or cum*, from, with, or by, has not yet been proved and indeed never will be proved.

¹²⁰Ibid., 324-26. Luther believed that a long time elapsed between Abel's murder and the birth of Seth.

¹²¹Martin Luther, "Treatise on the Last Words of David," in LWA, 15.xi.*who is this quoting?*

¹²²Ibid., 315-19.

Thus Enoch and Noah did not walk “with” God, which doesn’t make sense (after all, where did they go with God?). Instead, they “walked God,” which means they lived a life in imitation of God.¹²³

1.5.2 John Calvin

John Calvin referred to Gen 3:15 three times in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Under the section “Assurance of Victory” in the chapter “The Knowledge of God the Creator,” he said that since the promise of crushing Satan’s head belongs to all believers, they may be wounded but never conquered or overwhelmed by him.¹²⁴ Under “the witness of the prophets to immortality” in the chapter “The Knowledge of God the Redeemer” (2.10.20), he calls Gen 3:15 the “first promise of salvation” which “glowed like a feeble spark” and grew in the progress of revelation until “Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, fully illumined the whole earth.”¹²⁵ In chap. 13, under “Against the opponents of Christ’s true manhood” (2.13.2) he says of Gen 3:15:

For the statement there concerns not only Christ but the whole of mankind. Since we must acquire victory through Christ, God declares in general terms that the woman’s offspring is to prevail over the devil. Hence it follows that Christ was begotten of mankind, for in addressing Eve it was God’s intention to raise her hope that she should not be overwhelmed with despair.¹²⁶

In his Genesis commentary he begins by interpreting Gen 3:15 naturalistically: “I interpret this simply to mean that there should always be the hostile strife between the human race and serpents, which is now apparent; for, by a secret feeling of nature, man abhors them.”¹²⁷ Since in v. 14 Calvin has identified the snake as merely the instrument of the devil, who is the primary object of the curse, and since he identifies Satan as the one whose head is to be crushed (see below), the apparent naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:15 which he gives here must apply only to the enmity portion of the curse. He had applied a similar method (identifying different portions of the verse as being addressed to different parties) in interpreting v. 14: “God so addresses the serpent that the last clause belongs to the devil.”¹²⁸ The sight of the serpent reminds us of the fall, but mercy is evident in that the serpent can only reach our heel while his head is subject to wounds:

For in the terms *head* and *heel* there is a distinction between the superior and the inferior. And thus God leaves some remains of dominion to man; because he so places the mutual

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 319-21, 323. Even in Gen 39:2, (the Lord was with Joseph) ׀ is the sign of the accusative, though Luther admitted one had to use “with” in the German translation.

¹²⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.14.18 (LCC, 20.177).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 446.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 478.

¹²⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 167.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

disposition to injure each other, that yet their condition should not be equal, but man should be superior in the conflict.¹²⁹

Calvin goes on to say that Jerome was wrong to translate שָׁחַץ in two different ways; the word means the same thing both times (bruise, or strike), the difference being related only to the head and heel. The word was chosen, however, to allude to the name of the serpent, which is called in Hebrew שָׁפִיפִין. But here there is a transition from the snake to the real author of the mischief, Satan; Calvin calls this an *anagogy*. If only the serpent were being addressed, then men would remain slaves of Satan, who would trample on their heads.

Wherefore, that God might revive the fainting minds of men, and restore them when oppressed by despair, it became necessary to promise them, in their posterity, victory over Satan, through whose wiles they had been ruined. This, then, was the only salutary medicine which could recover the lost, and restore life to the dead. I therefore conclude, that God here chiefly assails Satan under the name of the serpent, and hurls against him the lightning of his judgment. This he does for a two-fold reason: first, that men may learn to beware of Satan as of a most deadly enemy; then, that they may contend against him with the assured confidence of victory.¹³⁰

Calvin goes on to say that while the majority of mankind follow Satan, still, Satan is their enemy. The mention of enmity between the respective offspring means that the conflict is to all generations, as widely as the human race is propagated. The woman is mentioned, since she was the one deceived, and had particular need of consolation.¹³¹ Calvin may be here contradicting his earlier statement that the enmity was “simply” that which exists between men and snakes; now he places Satan in the enmity portion of the passage as well.

Next Calvin expounds “It shall bruise,” beginning with a condemnation of the Vg and those who blindly followed it and used it; “a profane exposition of it has been invented, by applying to the mother of Christ what is said concerning her seed.”¹³² Calvin here writes as if he accepts both the mariological identification of the woman, and the christological-individual identification of her seed (i.e., the Lutheran interpretation). However we must reject this interpretation of Calvin (perhaps he quoted the Lutheran criticism of the Vg without thinking about the fact that he disagreed with the Lutheran interpretation of Gen 3:15), for he has just identified the woman as Eve, and he goes on to explicitly reject the individual interpretation:

other interpreters take the seed for *Christ*, without controversy; as if it were said, that some one would arise from the seed of the woman who should wound the serpent’s head. Gladly would I give my suffrage in support of their opinion, but that I regard the word *seed* as too violently distorted by them; for who will concede that a *collective* noun is to

¹²⁹Ibid., 167-68.

¹³⁰Ibid., 168-69. In a note the editor explains the *anagogy*: “The meaning of Calvin is, that there was an intentional transition from the serpent to the spiritual being who made use of it” (n. 5).

¹³¹Ibid., 169-70.

¹³²Ibid., 170.

be understood of one man *only*? [*apply to his interpretation of Gal 3:16]*Further, as the perpetuity of the contest is noted, so victory is promised to the human race through a continual succession of ages. I explain, therefore, the *seed* to mean the posterity of the woman generally.¹³³

As Luther said the murder of Abel caused Eve to change her interpretation of the first gospel, so Calvin views history as an aid in interpreting Gen 3:15, to arrive at the conclusion that the victory must be obtained by one only; Christ: “experience teaches that not all the sons of Adam by far, arise as conquerors of the devil, we must necessarily come to one head, that we may find to whom the victory belongs. So Paul, from the seed of Abraham, leads us to Christ” (Gal 3:16). The sense is then that the human race (the Church under Christ) would eventually be victorious, and this is what Paul refers to in Rom 16:20; “the power of bruising Satan is imparted to faithful men, and thus this blessing is the common property of the whole Church.”¹³⁴ Apparently, then, Calvin identified the woman’s seed in Gen 3:15c (the enmity portion) as the whole human race, but in Gen 3:15d (the victory portion) limits the race to Christ and those who belong to him, the Church.

1.5.3 Ulrich Zwingli

In his *Commentary on True and False Religion* (1525), Zwingli bases an individual-christological interpretation on the singular pronoun אִיִּה, and the singular direct object suffix in אֶת־רִגְלֵהֶם as the translators of the LXX understood “that there was a mystery underlying these words, and therefore refused to change the gender of the words” and the singular means that “we see it openly foretold in these words of God that from the woman sometime should proceed the seed which should bruise the head of the serpent, *i.e.*, the Devil; and that, on the other hand, the Devil would try to hurt his heel,” the heel being the human nature of Christ. Zwingli goes on to relate Gen 3:15 to the promise of a seed to Abraham, as mentioned by Paul in Gal 3:16 (though he does not mention the argument from the singular).¹³⁵

In an essay “On Original Sin” (1526), he refers to Gen 3:15 as a promise of salvation, and, like Luther, interpreted Gen 4:1 and 5:28-29 as evidence of faith in that promise, and the erroneous expectation of its imminent fulfillment.¹³⁶

In his *Explanations on Genesis* (1527), Zwingli identifies the curse of the snake in v. 14 as entirely the devil’s punishment: as the snake crawls on his belly on the ground and eats dust, so the devil is cast down to earth, banished from heaven, and tears at mortal man. He identifies the seed of the serpent as those who listen to and obey the devil (based

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid., 171.

¹³⁵*Commentary on True and False Religion: Zwingli*, ed. Samuel McCauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1981), 107-08. The opinion of the LXX translators could be given weight because of the legend about its inspired origin.

¹³⁶*Zwingli: On Providence and Other Essays*, ed. William John Hinke (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1983), 17-18. Original date 1526.

on John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil”). The serpent’s victory over the woman will be undone through a woman; through her (singular) seed, which will crush his head (his power and dominion).¹³⁷

1.5.4 Summary of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli

While Luther called Gen 3:15 the first gospel, Calvin called it the first promise of salvation; to the one it was the promise of a savior, to the other a promise of salvation. Both agreed that it was taken by the Old Testament faithful as a promise, and that it gave them hope; though Luther went into much more detail about this aspect. Luther identified the woman as Mary, her seed as Christ (only), but by implication what is said of Christ applies to the Church as well. Calvin identified the woman as Eve, her seed as mankind (a meaning which Luther admitted was the expected one) in the case of the enmity predicted, but, in the case of the victory predicted, Christ and the Church. Both identified the serpent as merely an instrument which was used by Satan. Neither identified Satan’s seed, an omission which is particularly striking in Luther, since he commented on the passage so extensively and gave it such a place of importance in biblical theology. Luther identified the serpent’s head as the devil’s power, while Calvin said that the head/heel contrast shows that the woman’s seed will be superior. Both assigned a role to historical experience (as related in Scripture) to the interpretation of Gen 3:15. With respect to the nature of the victory, Calvin viewed it as a general promise of victory over the devil which applies to this life (believers may be wounded but will recover), and specifically to Christ’s victory over the devil. Luther interpreted the victory christologically, as that which was accomplished at the cross, and which by implication includes believers. There the devil was defeated, though his body still quivers with remaining destructive force. Calvin’s exposition is not entirely consistent, and appears poorly thought out at times, as when he criticizes the Vg in terms which presuppose a mariological and christological-individual interpretation, and when he apparently shifts from a naturalistic to a figurative interpretation of the enmity portion of the curse.

In terms of the application of Gen 3:15 to believers, one wonders what is the difference between Calvin and Luther that provoked such sharp disagreement between Lutherans and Calvinists, since Luther’s individual interpretation contained a collective application to believers, and Calvin identified Christ as the one who would gain victory for the seed? Ken Schurb pointed out that the difference between them is sharpest when we consider the question of the knowledge of the first gospel by Adam and Eve:

The contrast between Calvin’s view and Luther’s, as set forth in their respective commentaries, becomes most apparent when one considers intentionality. Luther thought God intended in Genesis 3:15 to predict the coming of one person, the Seed. Calvin could say that God wanted to predict victory, but the details of the report were sketchy. It stood to reason that God Himself would have to intervene; hence, the verse had an indirect Messianic character. But Calvin arrived at this Messianic significance in part because of a lesson learned from the experience of generations who failed in the struggle with Satan.

¹³⁷Gallus, *Luther, Calvin, und Zwingli*, 149-50. The Latin is found in *Corpus Reformatorum C, XIII*, 28-29 (*Farrago annotationeum in Genesim* [Tiguri, 1527], 37-38).

Calvin gave no indication that Adam and Eve, who lacked such experience as they stood naked before God, could have come to the Messianic meaning.¹³⁸

Even here, however, Luther had to admit that Adam and Eve did not know everything; specifically they did not know about the virgin birth. Commenting on this, Luther sounded much like Calvin: “with this general knowledge they were satisfied, and they were saved even though they did not know how He would have to be conceived and born. This had to be reserved for the New Testament as a clearer light.”¹³⁹

Zwingli’s interpretation of Gen 3:15 adheres closely to that of Luther, while also introducing a number of unique features (the use of the LXX *αὐτός*, the relation of the promise to Gal 3:16, the identification of the serpent’s seed as the wicked, and the application of v. 14 entirely to the devil), some of which he may have read in the fathers. We shall see that these contributions are found repeated (some more than others) in the writings of later Lutheran theologians.

1.6 *Other Reformers, and Post-Reformation Interpreters*

1.6.1 *Philip Melanchthon*

In the foreword of his *Loci Communes* (1555), Melanchthon said that after the Fall Adam and Eve were “consoled with the promise of God’s Son: ‘the seed of the woman will tread on the head of the serpent.’” The giving of this promise marks the reconstitution of the Church and gave Adam and Eve the knowledge that they were received by God.¹⁴⁰

1.6.2 *Heinrich Bullinger*

Bullinger’s work *Antiquissima fides et vera Religio* was translated into English by Myles Coverdale, who published it as *The Old Faith* in 1547. In Chapter 3, “The First and Right Foundation of Our Holy Faith,” Bullinger said that God did not ask the serpent anything, as he had of Adam and Eve, because the serpent as animal does not speak, and the serpent as devil had no truth; therefore he rightly cursed him. The first part of the verse (v. 14) applies to the animal snake; v. 15 to Satan. As the devil used a woman to destroy men, so God would use a woman to bear a child which would break his head (power, kingdom, sin, damnation, death), though his human nature would be trodden down and bitten as he takes on the curse and damnation.¹⁴¹ He then calls this the “first promise, and the first sure evangelion,” and expounded every word: “seed” is used to indicate Christ’s true humanity and true body; “of the woman” is given because of the virgin birth; further, the definite article is used to indicate “some special woman” (who is then connected with Isa 7:14), rather than the demonstrative which would indicate Eve. The heel indicates the lowest part of man; here, the flesh of Christ. The seed is individual,

¹³⁸ Schurb, “Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict,” 31.

¹³⁹ *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5* (LWA, 1.194).

¹⁴⁰ *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine*, ed. Clyde L. Manschreck (New York: Oxford University, 1965), xlvi-xlvii.

¹⁴¹ *Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter; The Old Faith*, ed. George Pearson; (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1854), 19-20.

but what is spoken of him is also true of Christians with respect both to the enmity and the victory. “Yet shall he be trodden down through Christ and his faithful” (he then quotes Rom 16:20). Bullinger then makes an application similar to the moral allegory of Augustine and others.¹⁴²

In the next chapter, “Of the First Faithful Christian, Adam and Eve,” he explains the enmity again, almost as if he held to a collective interpretation of the seed; “that is, he would endue us, which are the seed, that is to say, the children of Adam, if we believe, with another heart and power; that we might become enemies unto the devil’s works, resist his suggestion, and hold ourselves fast by the blessed Seed.” Like Luther, Bullinger interpreted the renaming of Adam’s wife as evidence of his faith in the first Gospel.¹⁴³

1.6.3 *Dietrich Philips*

In his *Enchiridion*, which became to Mennonitism what Melanchthon’s *Loci communes* became to Lutheranism, Philips said that the church began in heaven with the angels, where also the first falling away took place; Adam and Eve’s fall was therefore the second, and was induced by the first. Gen 3:15 is “the first restoration of corrupted man, and the renewal of him in the divine image.” The woman’s seed is principally Jesus Christ, who is called such because he is according to the flesh, born of a woman, and who is “the Crusher and Conqueror of the crooked old serpent.” Gen 3:15 “was the first preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” which led to the rebirth of Adam and Eve.¹⁴⁴

Up to this point Philips sounds almost thoroughly Lutheran. He goes on, however, to say that even though “Jesus is the true promised seed of the woman,” “all believers are the seed of the spiritual Eve, just as the unbelievers are the seed of the crooked old serpent, and that in a spiritual sense,” and the first manifestation of the enmity between them is the murder of Abel by Cain, a fact which “is a clear representation and testimony that from that time on there were two kinds of people ... on earth, namely, ... God’s children and the devil’s children, God’s congregation and the synagogue or assembly ... of Satan.” These two camps continued until the flood, when all flesh except Noah and his family was annihilated. The congregation of Satan began again, however, after the flood, in Ham, and the conflict was renewed, and continues to this day.¹⁴⁵

1.6.4 *English Reformers*

The influence of Luther, Zwingli, and Bullinger is evident in the English reformation, where we see a consistently individual christological interpretation of the woman’s seed in the first gospel. William Tyndale said “Christ is this woman’s seed: he it is that hath trodden under foot the devil’s head, that is to say, sin, death, hell, and all his

¹⁴²Ibid., 21-23; “All they which put their trust in the blessed Seed, take upon them the kind of the Seed, and hate the kind of the serpent, that is to say, sin and blasphemy” (p. 23).

¹⁴³Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁴⁴*Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation*, ed. George Hunston Williams (LCC, Ichthus Edition; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 228-30.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 230-33.

power.”¹⁴⁶ He went on to connect Gen 3:15 with Gen 22:18 and Gal 3:16. Thomas Becon said “for what other thing is it to tread down the head of the serpent, than to vanquish and subdue him, to make his power frustrate and of no strength, yea, and to set those again at liberty which before were his bond prisoners?” The effect of the promise on those who believed was that “so soon as they believed [they] were delivered out of captivity, set at liberty again, and made the sons of God through the faith that they had in God’s promise.”¹⁴⁷ John Hooper followed the individual-christological interpretation of Gen 3:15 and used the verse to prove that Christ took his humanity from the substance of a woman, that Mary was not simply a vehicle for bringing him into the world.¹⁴⁸

A catechism produced under King Edward VI, representing the sense of the Church of England, asks what hope had Adam and Eve after they fell, for which the answer is: “He then cursed the serpent, threatening him, that the time should one day come, when the Seed of the woman should break his head.” The serpent’s head is the tyranny of the devil; the woman’s seed, as indicated in Gal 3:16, is Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁹ Similar words are found in Nowell’s Catechism, ca. 1570, the official catechism of the Anglican Church under Queen Elizabeth and used to assist with her plans of reform. The curse on the serpent is the hope of salvation and deliverance, the seed is Jesus Christ alone, the serpent’s head has the venom and represents the devil’s tyranny, etc.¹⁵⁰

James Pilkington in a commentary on Nehemiah 4:11 compared the actions of Nehemiah’s opponents to the seed of the serpent, without actually calling them such. He said they had two of the properties of the serpent: first, they craftily watch for an opportunity to overthrow man; secondly, they are murderers.¹⁵¹

1.6.5 Lutheran Interpretation after Luther

¹⁴⁶“A Pathway into the Holy Scripture,” *Doctrinal Treatises and Introduction to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1848), 10.

¹⁴⁷“David’s Harp,” *The Early Works of Thomas Becon, Being the Treatises Published by Him in the reign of King Henry VIII*, ed. John Ayre (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1843), 296. He said similar things in “The New-Year’s Gift,” and asked, “who is this seed of the woman? Is it not Jesus Christ, the gift of God?” (ibid., 313).

¹⁴⁸“A Lesson of the Incarnation of Christ,” *Later Writings of Bishop Hooper Together With His Letters and Other Pieces*, ed. Charles Nevinson (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1852), 5-6.

¹⁴⁹“A Short Catechism,” *The Two Liturgies, A.D. 1549, and A.D. 1552: With Other Documents Set Forth in the Reign of King Edward VI*, ed. Joseph Ketley (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1844), xi, 503.

¹⁵⁰Alexander Nowell, *A Catechism Written in Latin*, ed. G. E. Corrie (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1853), vii, 150-51.

¹⁵¹*An Exposition Upon Nehemiah; The Works of James Pilkington*, ed. James Scholefield (The Parker Society Edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1842), 418-19.

Gallus provided quotes or summaries (translated into German) of some seventy Lutheran theologians in his second volume on early Lutheran interpretation, which covers the time from Luther to the enlightenment. Another 23 authors are catalogued whose writings on Gen 3:15 were not long enough to be worth considering.¹⁵² In these writings, many of Luther's themes recur repeatedly, often amplified with Zwingli's contributions, and occasionally, with those of the Calvinist David Pareus: (1) The importance of Gen 3:15 as the first gospel, relating it to other promise passages in Genesis; and especially the argument that if it were not a gospel, it would lead to the absurd result that Adam and Eve, and the whole world before Abraham would not have had any gospel to believe in and be saved by. E.g., "Gott ist der erste Prophet und Evangelist. Diese Weissagung ist der Ursprung und die Quelle aller Weissagungen, und alle Propheten sind Ausleger dieser Weissagung."¹⁵³ "Gen 3, 15 ist wie ein unerschöpfliches Meer, aus dem alle Flüsse hervorquellen (Eccl 1, 7); so strömen aus dieser Verheißung alle Glaubenslehren hervor, die in den Hl. Schriften enthalten sind."¹⁵⁴ That Gen 3:15 is a proto-gospel is proved:

*Aus den absurden Dingen, die man folgern müßte, wenn dies nicht eine Verheißung vom Messias wäre. Einesteils hätten dann weder die Stammeltern noch die Väter des ersten Zeitalters vor der Sintflut irgendein von Moses berichtetes offensichtliches Evangelium gehabt, andernteils wäre, obschon zwar Adam und Eva und natürlich auch der Schlange von Gott Strafe angekündigt wurde, über Satan, den Urheber der verhängnisvollen Verführung, keine Strafe verhängt worden. Beides ist jedoch ganz absurd.*¹⁵⁵

Points (2) through (5) are dependent on (1): (2) The seed of the woman is Christ and only Christ. Gal 3:16 is repeatedly used to prove this, as well as the arguments used by Luther, and sometimes the reading of the LXX. Another argument was made from Gen 3:15 itself: the woman's seed is in combat with an individual (the devil), and therefore must be an individual.¹⁵⁶ Johann Müller said that no man would be so foolish as to intentionally step on a snake's head (a suicidal act); only Christ would do this, knowing he would die.¹⁵⁷ Though the seed of the woman is Christ alone, various interpreters made an application of the verse (as Luther had done) to all believers.¹⁵⁸ (3) The virgin birth of Christ is

¹⁵²Gallus, *Altlutheranischen Schriftauslegung II*, 163.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 24, from Petrus Becker (Artopoeus), *Ex libro Geneseos* (Basileae, 1546), 291.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 82, from Thomas Lang(ius), *ΠΡΩΤΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ sive Orthodoxa et dilucida enodatio Dicti Gen. III. vers. 15* (Wittebergae, 1651), 244.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 104, from Michael Walther, *Officina Biblica noviter adaptata* (Wittebergae, 1668), 590.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 79-80, 102, from Lorenz Rhetius, *Evangelium Primum . . . De Semine Mulieris* (Gedani, 1638), 19, n. 40; and Johann Kunad, *Disputatio Theologica de Inimicitii inter Serpentem et Mulierem, ad Locum Classicum Gen 3, 15 adornata* (Lipsiae, 1662), 13.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 132, from Johann Müller, *Judaismus oder Judenthum, das ist ausführlicher Bericht von des jüdischen Volks Unglauben, Blindheit und Verstockung* (Hamburg, 1707), 86.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 51-52, 60-62, 72.

implied in the fact that the seed is the woman's. (4) The incarnation of God in the woman's seed is implied by the fact that mere humanity is not able to defeat the devil. While Luther thought that his interpretation of Gen 4:1 might please no one else, his successors were quite pleased with it, and used it to show that Eve understood that the woman's seed would be divine. Though no one followed Luther in arguing that *te'* was always the sign of the accusative and could not mean "with," many thought that it was the accusative marker in Eve's statement in Gen 4:1, and Johann Müller argued extensively that it could not mean "with" in Gen 4:1 since it is used with an active verb, and always marks the accusative when it stands between two nouns, and since it marks the accusative eight other times in the context; not to mention the fact that *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan* took it as accusative. Additionally, "with the help of" would be expressed with the preposition *בְּ*.¹⁵⁹ (5) Gen 3:15 predicts the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. (6) Calvin's collective interpretation is attacked as against the apostles and orthodoxy and Calvin is called a judaizer or a synagogue employee (see next section). (7) While Luther in his second phase did not identify the seed of the serpent, his successors identified it variously, using the same three alternatives as were found in the Church fathers: the demons under Satan,¹⁶⁰ or (with Zwingli), wicked people,¹⁶¹ or both.¹⁶²

1.6.6 Lutheran Criticisms of Calvin

In 1593 the Lutheran Aegidius Hunnius published a polemic *Calvinus Judaizans* (Calvin the Judaizer) against Calvin's expositions of key passages such as Gen 3:15 which Hunnius thought drastically weakened the Christian hermeneutical position as opposed to that of Arians and Jews, particularly in the Old Testament. Calvinist David Pareus defended Calvin then and in his 1609 commentary on Genesis (Hunnius died in 1603), and Hunnius responded to Pareus's initial defense with *Antipareus* in 1594 and *Antipareus Alter* in 1599.¹⁶³ Hunnius stressed that the Calvinist position would imply that the ancient world had no clear gospel, and that Calvin's view actually supported the Jews, who interpreted the passage in a strictly naturalistic sense. Pareus affirmed the naturalistic sense in the first part of v. 15, but then indicated that the clue to an individual interpretation for the second part of v. 15, and the clue that the literal meaning was not all that was intended, was found in the singular pronoun "he" in Gen 3:15d. Hunnius sarcastically criticized Calvin for contradicting Gal 3:16: "Listen, apostle Paul, after so many years one has been found in the midst of the Christian Church who might drive a

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 135-36 from Müller, *Judaismus oder Judenthum*, 102-04.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 22, 90, 95.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31, 63, 66, 106, 114.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁶³ Schurb, "Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict," 31. Schurb's sources are Aegidius Hunnius, *Calvinus Judaizans, Opera Latina, Tomus Secundus* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Impensis Iohan. Iacobi Porsij Bibliopolae, 1608), col. 636f; David Pareus, *Commentarius in Genesin, Opera Theologica Exegetica, Pars Secunda* (Frankfurt: John Rose, 1647).

note of absurdity against your exposition, in which you most clearly explain the collective noun ‘seed’ concerning the one man Jesus Christ.” Pareus responded that “seed” was frequently a collective and in fact the “seed of the serpent” was a collective for demons and the wicked (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8, 10), and this seed is opposed to the woman’s seed; the woman’s seed consists of those who are not of the serpent’s seed (otherwise there would be no enmity after Eve until Christ); only in the second part of the verse does seed denote a particular individual from that seed. Here Pareus disagrees with Calvin, by saying that the elect only are the woman’s seed, and in taking the enmity beyond the naturalistic interpretation. Pareus appears to be the first interpreter to explicitly identify the woman’s seed in Gen 3:15a-c as the Church, and in Gen 3:15d-e as Christ alone (though such a view would solve some apparent contradictions in the fathers, no one stated it explicitly). Pareus gave 8 reasons for the singular interpretation: (1) the use of the pronoun “he” instead of the repetition of “her seed;” (2) the LXX reading; (3) the opponent in Gen 3:15d-e is an individual; (4) the verse suggests individual combat; (5) divine strength is required to crush Satan’s reign; (6) Christ is spoken of as “seed” in Gal 3:16 and 1 Chr 17:11 (which does not refer to Solomon); (7) Ps 110:6; 68:22 (21) show that it is Christ who breaks the power of Satan; (8) the New Testament shows the fulfillment of the promise in Christ alone (1 John 3:8, John 12:31; 14:30, Luke 10:18, 1 Cor 15:54-55, Heb 2:14, Rev 20:2). Pareus further defended Calvin against the charge of judaizing by pointing to many of the fathers who interpreted the seed collectively, and differentiating Calvin’s position from that of the Jews, who obviously disagreed that the verse leads (by logic and experience) to Christ. He also pointed to Luther’s own admission that the seed means all men in general. Pareus went on to say that though the woman’s seed in the second part of the curse is Christ, all Christians are involved in the victory described there, appealing to the relationship between Christ and the Church, the fact that Christ has seed (Isa 53:10), and Rom 16:20.¹⁶⁴ Schurb notes that Hunnius considered Gal 3:16 of decisive weight: “the testimony of Galatians 3:16 settled the matter for him.” He answered the appeal to Rom 16:20 by saying that there it says God would subdue Satan, not the Church.¹⁶⁵

Pareus’s defense of Calvin did not stop others after Hunnius from attacking both of them along the same lines. Gallus notes that Albert Grawer says Pareus’s book defending Calvin’s orthodoxy is full of contradictions, and that Calvin contradicts all orthodox theologians, not to mention Paul and Moses; Christophorus Helvicus says Calvin’s opinion that the seed is collective contradicts Gal 3:16, and is disproved by the case of Seth in Gen 4:25; Daniel Cramer likewise took Gal 3:16 as a sufficient argument against Calvin; Justus Feuerborn cites Beza and Masson as defending Calvin’s view, Martyr and Bucanus as having been persuaded by Hunnius; Heinrich Friedlieb lumps Calvin in with Socinians, Jews, and papists as those who distort the excellent testimony of Gen 3:15, and says Calvin almost sounds like a synagogue employee; B. Johann Hülsemann said that the best Calvinists (Junius, Tremellius, Pelargus, Pareus, Rivetus)

¹⁶⁴ Schurb, “Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict,” 33-38; Hunnius, *Calvinus*, col. 654-55. Pareus, *Commentarius*, 102-04.

¹⁶⁵ Schurb, “Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict,” 41-42.

and the Belgians take the literal sense as an individual; Michael Walther similarly says that this prophecy has been abused by those outside the Church (the Jews) and inside (certain fathers, popes, and the judaizing Calvin, who understands Scripture as if he was synagogue trained, and whose argumentation is foolish and absurd), and admits that a proper application of Gen 3:15 sees the Church involved in the enmity, though this is not the proper sense of Scripture; and August Pfeiffer argued against the literal interpretation of the enmity by Cornelius a Lapide, Calvin, Mercerus, Grotius, *et al.*¹⁶⁶

1.6.7 *Lutheran Controversies with Jewish Scholars*

When Luther paraphrases the serpent's attack on the heel as "bite" rather than "crush," he may be indebted to Rashi, who so translated it. By and large, the Lutherans' dealings with the Jews were polemical, and they were not sympathetic with the naturalistic approach of the Rabbis. Johann Müller (d. 1725) listed a number of rabbinic arguments against the messianic sense of Gen 3:15, which I have found in Gallus. A. Ezra says that a natural snake must be in view since the devil does not crawl on his belly, to which Müller replies that the natural snake is a mere tool of the devil, and the natural snake's punishment is a symbol of the devil's punishment. He mentioned elsewhere that a mere snake is an unreasoning animal, which cannot talk, and that this snake talks of divine matters and outwits people made in God's image. Further, the snake as mere animal was a creature under man's dominion and was created good (Gen 1:28), and therefore could not by itself oppose man and lead him into evil. Also, for leading the human race into damnation, crawling on the belly and eating dust are a very small punishment. Finally, the devil is called a snake and sin is called snake's poison often in the Old Testament. Müller also says that various Rabbis have admitted that Satan spoke through the snake. Isaac ben Abraham says that if Gen 3:15 applied to Christ, Christ should not have been killed instead of the devil, who remains very much alive. Müller said that the crushing of the serpent's head cannot be taken literally since the devil is a spirit; it means that his empire and force are taken away. The death of Jesus therefore was not the crushing of Jesus' head, because he lives and has taken away the devil's power. Lusitanus wrote that if it were the devil who deceived Eve, Moses would not have ascribed it to the snake. Müller responds that there are many things Moses does not mention, such as the creation of the angels, or their fall. Further, Moses writes as an historian, not an interpreter, and describes things from the point of view of Eve, who did not know that the devil was speaking through the snake. Even Paul, who certainly knew that the devil was involved, says the serpent deceived Eve (2 Cor 11:3). Lusitanus further wrote that the devil does not have offspring since he is spiritual, therefore the devil cannot be in view. Müller responded that the devil does not have descendants; seed here indicates those who are morally like the devil (demons). Lusitanus further said that if it was really the devil who deceived Eve, then he would have been punished instead of the snake. Müller responds again that what is said to the natural snake in v. 15 is figurative for the devil's punishment. Finally, Müller mentions a general Jewish objection that "seed" or even "seed of the woman" does not designate anything extraordinary, citing Gen 4:25 (Seth), and Isa 57:3 (adulterous seed). Müller responds that Seth is in fact a

¹⁶⁶Gallus, *Altlutheranischen Schriftauslegung II*, 54, 59, 69, 84, 99-100, 101, 117-18, 126.

woman's seed, but the woman is married so nothing is remarkable; the same does not apply to Mary; further, "we do not take our proof only and exclusively from the little word seed, but from the whole text and all the circumstances of the saying about the 'woman's seed.'"¹⁶⁷

Müller also notes that there was a large disagreement with the Jews over Gen 4:1, and it was in this context that Müller listed his arguments (mentioned above) for why נָחַם must be taken as the sign of the accusative in Gen 4:1. Müller says a Rabbi agreed with him in private conversation that the accusative was the correct reading, but said that Eve was quite wrong in this interpretation.¹⁶⁸

1.6.8 Other Non-Lutheran Interpreters, 16th and 17th Centuries

Of the many listed by Gallus, two will be mentioned here because of unique contributions to the debate. Samuel Maresius (d. 1673), German Reformed theologian, called Gen 3:15 a "covenant of grace" (der Bund der Gnade) which was put in place immediately after the fall. Christ is the seed of the woman, who comes into the world as a result of this promise, not as a result of the blessing given in Gen 1:28.¹⁶⁹

Wilhelm Momma (d. 1677), 17th century German Calvinist theologian, said the snake was a real snake, but something more, since it is similar to God, knowing about good and evil, and life and death; it is hateful and hostile to God, and of course snakes cannot talk. His seed refers to both demons and wicked men (Rev 12:7; Matt 25:41). The woman's seed, like the serpent's, is collective, and refers to those who are born of God (John 1:13). The seed which crushes the serpent's head, however, must be divine, since his work is divine. So the whole woman's seed includes Christ and those saved by him. It follows, if he is to free us from sin and death, he must himself be free from sin, therefore born of a virgin.¹⁷⁰

1.6.9 Summary of Post-Reformation History of Interpretation

Based on the views of Luther and Zwingli, as opposed to Calvin, it was perhaps predictable that the individual-christological interpretation of Gen 3:15 would become dominant in Protestantism, although as we have seen, the collective interpretation continued to be found. The view of Pareus may be seen as something of a synthesis of these two views, although it was a synthesis that did not satisfy Lutherans, who continued to argue against Calvin's orthodoxy with respect to his Old Testament interpretation; thus

¹⁶⁷"Nehmen wir unseren Beweis nicht einzig und allein aus dem Wörtchen Same, sondern aus dem ganzen Text und allen Umständen desselben, wo vom „Weibessamen“ die Rede ist;" Gallus, *Alt-lutheranischen Schriftauslegung II*, 129-34, from Müller, *Judaismus oder Judenthum*, 78-90. For R. Isaac ben Abraham Müller cites the source as *Chissuk Haemuna lib. 1. cap. 21*, and for Rabbi Lusitanus as *Colloqu. Mittelburg. fol. 148*.

¹⁶⁸Gallus, *Alt-lutheranischen Schriftauslegung II*, 130, 134-37; Müller, *Judaismus oder Judenthum*, 81, 100-05.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 16; from Samuel maresius, *Systema theologicum cum annotationibus* (Groningae, 1673), 277, 488-89.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 19-20; from Wilhelm Momma, *De varia conditione et Statu Ecclesiae Dei sub Triplici Oeconomia; Patriarchum, ac Testamenti Veteris, et denique Novi, Tomus Prior* (Amstelodami, 1683), 10-13.

the interpretation of Gen 3:15 was made an issue of loyalty to the gospel. While both of these interpretations were found in the fathers, we did not see any argument over them. In the post-Reformation period, we see such arguments are a significant part of the discussion. Meanwhile, for better or worse, some of the interpretations found in the fathers are no longer found in the sons of the Reformers. Surprisingly, the connection between the dragon of Revelation and the Old Testament dragon figure was not followed up on. Little emphasis was placed on the Old Testament understanding and application of Gen 3:15, even by those who maintained a collective interpretation.

Luther should receive the credit (or blame) for introducing debate over the interpretation of Gen 3:15 and for focusing that debate on some issues to the exclusion of others, such as the identity of the serpent's seed. While Luther magnified the importance of Gen 3:15 more than any interpreter before him, the only Old Testament role he saw for it was as an object of faith; only in the New Testament was there fulfillment. Ironically, the focus on Luther's interpretation may have contributed to the abandonment of Gen 3:15 as anything but a nature aetiology.

1.7 *Transition From Orthodoxy to Rationalism*

1.7.1 *Introduction*

Gallus traces the shift from a figurative theological interpretation to a naturalistic interpretation of the curse on the serpent to the rationalism which prevailed more and more from the time of the enlightenment.¹⁷¹ With rationalism came the idea that the Bible was the product of human endeavor rather than divine revelation, and was to be studied as such; similarly, religion was an expression of human thought, to be studied as a sociological phenomenon. The New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament was not considered authoritative, and Moses was replaced by the anonymous Yahwist as the author of the passage we are considering (originally an independent tale, then part of J, before being part of Genesis). Dogmatic exegesis was replaced by scientific exegesis; it follows that the views of those writing in the past (including the apostles) were pre-scientific, and their arguments not worthy of great attention; those maintaining such arguments today are historical curiosities.

While Gallus is probably correct in his assessment of rationalism's effect on biblical interpretation, we will see that interpreters of this period did not necessarily reject the New Testament interpretation of Gen 3:15; in many cases they appealed to the lack of New Testament citation of Gen 3:15 as evidence against its significance. In part, then, they were reacting against Lutheran orthodoxy, claiming to interpret Scripture properly.

Our procedure here will be to summarize a few of these 18th and 19th century theologians, again with Gallus as primary source, then move into the next period beginning with Hengstenberg. Although these names are largely forgotten, their arguments are cited here because of our interest in the debate over the determination of figurative meaning in Scripture, and a desire to see what arguments were successful in changing the predominant interpretation of Gen 3:15. Though there continued to be defenders of the Lutheran or Calvinist positions, only a few will be listed here.

1.7.2 *From Semler to Schumann*

¹⁷¹Gallus, *Gen 3, 15 in der evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, 112-13.

Johann Semler (d. 1791) expressed doubts that Gen 3:15 referred to Christ because neither Christ nor Paul refer to it; Paul especially in Romans 5 should have made some mention of it if it had something to do with the beginnings of God's grace, or in Galatians 3 where he speaks much of Abraham's seed, but not the woman's. Gen 3:15 has the quality of Protoevangelium only by venerable repetition of many interpreters of the past, not by investigation of the literal and historical sense.¹⁷²

Gotthilf Zachariä, according to Gallus composer of the first Biblical Theology, noted that he was on dangerous ground departing from the usual explanation of Gen 3:15, but said that it is certain that God speaks there only of that which is visible and pertains to earthly life. The idea of the devil being in the snake is completely unproven and improbable, an arbitrary explanation. The woman can be no other than Eve. The seed of the serpent cannot be demons because they are not produced by any generation process; it cannot be the wicked among men, because although such are called *children* of Satan, they are never called his *seed*. The interpretation of the snake's attack as the crucifixion of Jesus is likewise completely arbitrary, without exegetical foundation. Gen 3:15 has no theological consequences, as evidenced by the fact that it is not quoted in the New Testament. There are plenty of other messianic predictions in the Old Testament which give comfort and hope – this is not one of them. The argument that a naturalistic interpretation would make the passage insignificant is not decisive – the interpreter's task is to find out what God said, not what he should have said. Eve knows nothing about a devil, and only visible things are mentioned, so how can the conclusion that this is a messianic saying be right? The arguments must be determinative, not the number and respect of interpreters on one side.

Gen 3:15 does give some general hope and consolation, because God shows his indignation at the cause of human misfortune, and punishes it. But it could only be a first gospel if God had given a clear explanation of Gen 3:15 to Adam and Eve. Such would be the subject of a worthy essay, but Zachariä is unable to undertake it.¹⁷³

Johann Döderlein said that the oldest prophecy is in Gen 22:18, and it is neither explicit or clear. There is no trace of a messianic reference in Gen 3:15. He objects that there is no knowledge of evil spirits in the mosaic tradition, and that the woman's seed cannot be just one if opposed to the collective serpent's seed.¹⁷⁴

Johann Crüger (d. 1800) preferred not to decide whether the snake refers here to the devil. He said that the interpretation of Gen 3:15 as a protoevangelium is ingenious

¹⁷²Gallus, *Gen 3, 15 in der evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, 28; from Johann Salomon Semler, *Institutio ad Doctrinam Christianum: liberaliter descenduam Auditorum usui destinata* (Halae Magdeburgicae, 1774), 369-70.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 28-32; from Gotthilf Traugott Zachariä, *Biblische Theologie: oder Untersuchung des biblischen Grundes der vornehmsten theologischen Lehren, zweiter Teil* (Tübingen, 1780), 261-279.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 33; from Johann Christoph Döderlein (d. 1792), *Institutio Christiani in captibus religionis nostris temporibus accomodata, Pars Posterior* (Norinbergae et Altdorf, 1787), 183-84.

and edifying, but that Moses thought this way is as improbable as that Virgil and the Sibyls prophesied of Christ.¹⁷⁵

Wilhelm Hufnagel (d. 1830) said that the idea of an evil spirit in Genesis 3 comes from ignorance of the ancient world – such ideas could only have come to Israelites from the time of their exile. It is not legitimate to look for the first gospel in Gen 3:15: no prophet, evangelist, or apostle, nor Jesus himself appeals to Gen 3:15.¹⁷⁶

Daniel von Cölln (d. 1833) called Genesis 3 a myth, as it contains a typical feature of myths, a talking animal. The purpose of the story is to prevent snake worship; there is no view of an evil spirit here, since the doctrine of Satan is unknown in the time of Moses. It exercises no further influence on Hebrew religion.¹⁷⁷

Christian Kühnöl (d. 1841) noted that the older explanation of Gen 3:15 as protoevangelium was an arbitrary, allegorical explanation by well meaning theologians; the free thinking recently undertaken has raised insoluble difficulties with such an explanation. First, that the devil is the tempter cannot be proven; Paul says the *snake* seduced Eve (2 Cor 11:3); Rev 12:9 is not a conclusive reference to Genesis 3; John 8:44 only talks of the mentality (not the deeds) of the devil, and how the persecutors of Jesus have the same mentality. Secondly, though seed can refer to an individual, it does not follow that such is the case here. The view of the seed of the serpent as wicked men requires a double meaning for seed (once real, once unreal), and is against all rules of exegesis. The seed of the serpent is the brood of snakes, and the woman's seed must likewise be a collective. Finally, there is no New Testament verification of Gen 3:15 as a Protoevangelium.¹⁷⁸

Friedrich Schröder said that Adam and Eve initially only knew of the tool (the snake), not the author of the temptation. They could only have grasped the outer shell of this prophecy (which has the quality of a riddle), not the kernel, which would only speak of a victory over an animal. But their hearts would longingly be led to higher, spiritual blessings, and experience and further meditation would lead them away from the naturalistic interpretation to an understanding of the promised triumph over the empire of darkness.¹⁷⁹

Heinrich Hävernick (d. 1845) said others had erred either by finding too much or too little in Gen 3:15. The woman's seed is not an individual but a line of descent in

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 34; from Johann Daniel Crüger, *Real-Übersetzung der Eilf ersten Capital des Ersten Buchs Mose* (Berlin, 1784), 81-82, 92.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 36; from Wilhelm Friedrich Hufnagel, *Handbuch der biblischen Theologie, Zweiter Teil* (Erlangen, 1789), 165-71.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 37; from Daniel Georg Konrad von Cölln, *Biblische Theologie: Erster Band, Der Sündenfall* (ed. D. Schulz; Leipzig, 1836), 225-231.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 39-40; from Christian Gottlieb Kühnöl, *Messianische Weissagungen des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig, 1792), 1-4.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 40-42; from Friedrich Wilhelm Julius Schröder, *Das erste Buch Mose* (Berlin, 1844), 51-56.

Genesis which leads to the accomplishment of God's goals. The two seeds are both parts of humanity; they are ethically determined.¹⁸⁰

Ad. Schumann said that the view that a Protoevangelium is contained in Gen 3:15 is a product of theological fantasies which dissolve into nothing before a scientific investigation. No one discerns the life and work of the Savior in Gen 3:15 unless he has carried such an understanding in with him; of decisive weight is that the New Testament nowhere uses Gen 3:15 for such purposes. The Jews knew nothing of demonology until they learned of it from the Persians during the exile; this knowledge is read back into the fall narrative to see Satan there. Rev 12:9 only shows that Jews came to believe that Satan was behind the snake in Genesis 3, but this is not the original sense of the Jehovist. One must find the historical-grammatical sense of the words, instead of fitting the passage into dogmatic presuppositions.

1.8 *Recent Commentaries and Theological Studies*

In this section we deal with commentaries on Genesis, Old Testament theologies and studies in messianic prophecy, from Hengstenberg to the present.

1.8.1 *E. W. Hengstenberg*

In the first edition of his *Christology of the Old Testament*, Hengstenberg explained why the supernatural cause behind the fall is not mentioned:

The author related the circumstances as they appeared to our first parents, and ignorant as they were of the invisible cause, they must have ascribed a high degree of cunning to the serpent from the part which he acted. Moses states this fact with the design of leading his more intelligent readers to a right solution of the problem.¹⁸¹

The remaining material is taken from the latest edition. He interpreted the woman's seed collectively as all of those who are righteous, but said that the passage was still rightly called the *protevangelium*. It is "the first Messianic prediction" which "is also the most indefinite," saying that the only thing definite is that victory is promised, with no hint that it is to be accomplished by an individual. Further information comes as Seth, then Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah are designated as bearers or fulfillers of this promise (Gen 49:10).¹⁸²

Hengstenberg takes as his first task the identification of the tempter. He notes that a real serpent is indicated by the comparison to other animals, but that it is without scriptural precedent for an animal to act independently (even if other cultures viewed such a thing as possible) based on the great gulf between humans in God's image and animals in Scripture. He further observes that the serpent incites to evil and is himself evil whereas everything mentioned in the creation account was good, and that in the New Testament Satan tempted the second Adam, and Jesus refers to Satan as a murderer from

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 43-44; from Heinrich Andreas Christian Hävernich, *Vorlesungen über die Theologie des A. T.* (ed. Heinr. Aug. Hahn; 2nd ed; Frankfurt and Erlangen, 1863), 148-49.

¹⁸¹Ernst William Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament, and a Commentary on the Predictions of the Messiah by the Prophets*, (Alexandria: William M. Morrison, 1836), 31.

¹⁸²Ernst William Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament, and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1956), 1.11-12.

the beginning (John 8:44; even if he refers to Cain, the murder could not be attributed to Satan unless he were the author of the Fall, thus the serpent). And in the curse itself, “a higher reference to an invisible author of the temptation shines clearly through the lower reference to the visible one.” He also draws attention to the Persian *Zendavesta* where the evil god Ahriman in the form of a serpent induces the first men to rebel against God.¹⁸³

The designation of the persecutors of Jesus as “of your father the devil” agrees with the *Zohar Chadash* (see § 1.3) which calls the wicked the children of the ancient serpent, and is therefore evidence that the seed of the serpent is to be identified with wicked men. Similarly in the parable of the wheat and tares the tares are the children of the wicked one who sowed them, and Jesus referred to the scribes and Pharisees as snakes, etc. Hengstenberg argues for the possibility that even in Genesis a demonic spirit could be presumed to be behind the narrative, based on the antiquity of the book of Job (a discussion of Satan being in the first chapter), the existence of evil spirits presumed in Isa 13:21; 34:14 (he compares the latter to Rev 18:2), and the figure of the scapegoat (Leviticus 16). The animal snake, therefore, is “doomed to be the visible representative of the kingdom of darkness, and of its head, to whom it had served as instrument,” and the punishments of the animal snake are all tokens of the judgment against Satan, and this judgment is alluded to in Mic 7:17 (the enemies of Israel will lick dust like the serpent), Isa 49:23 and Ps 52:9 (the enemies lick the dust of the feet), and Isa 65:25 (the serpent’s food will still be dust).¹⁸⁴

In v. 15, Hengstenberg takes שָׁרַף as from the same root in both cases, with the sense “crush” in the first use (based on the occurrences in Job 9:7 and Ps 139:11, and on Rom 16:20); and in the second use with the sense of “destroy,” “annihilate,” a derived sense which he compares to Jonah 4:7 where an insect (*sic*, תוֹלְעָת, bite) is described with the word “strike” (וַתִּךְ). He agrees with Calvin that “head” and “heel” are “a *majus* and a *minus*” signifying victory for humankind; they “are a second accusative governed by the verb, whereby the place of the action is more distinctly marked out,” and form a contrast between a part of the body in which a wound is curable, and a part in which it is not (there is no allusion to poison in Gen 3:15). Further indications of a victory are: the curse is strictly on the serpent; if man’s ruin were in view, it would also be a curse on him, but the curses affecting him do not begin until v. 16; and, the inability to attack a man anywhere but the heel is part of the serpent’s cursed degradation (v. 14) – if he could still destroy him, then the curse would be of no effect. “This plain connection between ver. 15 and 14 is evidently overlooked by those who hold the opinion, that this mutual enmity is pernicious equally to man and serpent.”¹⁸⁵

He defends the collective view of the woman’s seed as referring only to the righteous, rather than all of humanity. True, the wicked are also the offspring of the woman, physically, but they have excommunicated themselves by aligning themselves

¹⁸³Ibid., 14-17.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 18-25.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 26-27.

with the enemy of humanity, and thus spiritually are the serpent's offspring, rather than the woman's. As an example, in Gen 21:12, Isaac "is declared to be the true descendant of Abraham," excluding the other sons (he does not discuss v. 13, where Ishmael is also said to be Abraham's seed). Those excluded are the serpent's offspring, which also includes Satan's angels (Matt 25:41 and Rev 12:7-9). That the serpent's seed is collective is further evidence that the woman's seed is a collective, too, as is also indicated in *Pal. Tg. Gen 3:15* and Rom 16:20. The passage still "justly bears the name of the *Protevangelium*," though

it is only in general terms, indeed, that the future victory of the kingdom of light over that of darkness is foretold, and not the person of the redeemer who should lead in the warfare, and bestow the strength which should be necessary for maintaining it. Anything beyond this we are not even entitled to expect at the first beginnings of the human race.¹⁸⁶

The fact that singular (collective) words are used to describe the woman's seed "is not a matter of chance," however, as it depends on the unity which exists between humanity and Christ, "who comprehends within Himself the whole human race." Likewise, the fact that the seed is said to be of the woman, rather than of man, has deeper significance.¹⁸⁷

1.8.2 K. F. Keil

Keil said that the punishment on the serpent was a symbol of the punishment on the evil spirit which used it, and that it is meaningless unless we understand that its shape was altered; he quotes Hengstenberg on the significance for us: "the serpent still keeps the revolting image of Satan perpetually before the eye" (citing Isa 65:25), in order "to prefigure the fate of the real tempter, for whom there is no deliverance," thus the literal meaning is that there will be enmity between the human race and the serpent race. He argues for the sense of "crush" in both instances of *שָׁחַ*, saying it is well attested from Aramaic, Syriac, and Rabbinic usage, and agrees with Rom 16:20. The intent of both parties is to destroy the other; the difference, following Calvin, Hengstenberg, *et al.*, is communicated by the head and heel as superior and inferior. Eventual human triumph is also suggested by Gen 1:28, where Adam is commissioned to rule over the animals. But this is further evidence that the curse involves a higher being; if it dealt only with an animal, it would be redundant with Gen 1:28.¹⁸⁸

We are not to understand the woman's seed to be an individual, but rather the entire human race, but the question of who would crush the serpent's (Satan's) head can only be answered from human history. That history as recorded in Scripture shows a selection process going on, such as when Seth alone was the seed of Adam and Eve by which the human race was preserved. The seed which was promised victory,

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-30. This significance cannot be entirely explained by the fact that the woman is mentioned as the instrument of the curse because she was the first deceived.

¹⁸⁸ Karl Friedrich Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume I, The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 98-100.

was spiritually or ethically determined, and ceased to be co-extensive with physical descent. This spiritual seed culminated in Christ, in whom the Adamic family terminated, henceforward to be renewed by Christ as the second Adam, and restored by Him to its original exaltation and likeness to God. In this sense Christ is the seed of the woman, who tramples Satan under His feet, not as an individual, but as the head both of the posterity of the woman which kept the promise and maintained the conflict.¹⁸⁹

Those who defected from this promise, and who fell under the power of the old serpent, are regarded as his seed, as shown in Matt 23:33; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8. The virgin birth is not predicted by Gen 3:15, but the fact that the promise culminates in Christ causes the prediction of victory to acquire a deeper significance, which is apparent in the virgin birth.¹⁹⁰

1.8.3 *J. H. Kurtz*

Kurtz saw Gen 3:15 as “the first announcement of salvation upon which faith might be exercised, or against which unbelief might harden itself.” As it contains a promise to Adam and Eve, it is “rightly designated as the proto-evangelium or first announcement of salvation.” Kurtz said that they would have reflected on the things that had occurred, and concluded that an evil spiritual agency had been at work, and that this explanation of the fall would have been passed on in tradition along with that of the fall, though it was “mixed up and defaced” by “heathen legend.” This being’s doom is pronounced in the curse on the serpent, following “a long protracted contest, the final issue of which ... is not doubtful” because victory will be secured by the Leader of humanity for us. The narrative was written down without reference to the evil spiritual being who was the author of the fall because of a desire

to present it in all its plainness, and without the addition of any gloss or comment. In fact, the sacred record faithfully presents the *recollections and perceptions of the first man* as preserved by tradition. ... So soon as man had commenced to reflect on this event, he must have gathered from it the existence of a spiritual being opposed to God. For this he did not require the aid of a special instruction or revelation.¹⁹¹

In appearance the curse applies only to the natural snake, but in reality, it was pronounced for our sake, as a promise of victory for all humankind over the author of sin.¹⁹² Kurtz’s interpretation of the woman’s seed is thus collective, as the whole human race, with a special role for Christ in the victory. He does not identify the seed of the serpent.

1.8.4 *Franz Delitzsch*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁹¹ Johann Heinrich Kurtz, *History of the Old Covenant* (3 vols.; Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1859), 1.xlvi-liii, 79.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 79.

Gallus calls Delitzsch the last great defender of the individual-christological view of Gen 3:15.¹⁹³ Similarly, Westermann says “the last weighty exegesis of Gen 3:15 as Protoevangelium is that of F. Delitzsch.”¹⁹⁴ Westermann uses the term in the Lutheran sense, and it would not be an accurate characterization in the wider sense, as we shall see.

Delitzsch discusses Gen 3:15 in his Genesis commentary, in *Messianic Prophecies* (from lectures delivered in winter 1879-80) and in *Old Testament History of Redemption* (from lectures delivered in summer 1880). Delitzsch described three concentric circles of prediction (Old Testament) and fulfillment (New Testament). In the prediction phase, there is a narrowing down as the promise first identifies the savior as Seed of woman, savior of humankind; then Seed of the patriarchs, blessing to the nations; finally, Seed of David, salvation and glory of Israel. This narrowing down is reversed in the New Testament as Jesus is first Seed of David, seeking the lost sheep of Israel; then the Seed of Abraham who is a blessing to the nations through the apostolic preaching; finally, as Son of man over a new human race. Of Gen 3:15 he says “The entire decree of redemption is prefigured in this original word of promise so far as we only maintain, that the serpent as a seducer is intended, and that the curse, which falls upon it, has a background with reference to the author of the seducement.”¹⁹⁵ The human conflict with snakes is only a “natural picture” of the more significant conflict of humans with Satan and his seed (the wicked). The promise of victory is first of all for humankind, but since the victory is primarily over the tempter, “we may consequently infer that the seed of the woman will culminate in One.” The passage is however a riddle (a figure used by Philippi) which only begins to be solved in later Israelite prophecy, and is finally solved in the coming of Christ. Delitzsch argues for the sense of “crush” for $\eta\eta\psi$ based on the use of the double accusative, which he says is only used for “verbs signifying a hostile meeting.” He also says that the Babylonian myth of Tiamat (who is “called preeminently *aibu* (𒀭𒊩) and named exactly as in the Apocalypse *širu maḥru tihâmat* ὁ ὄφις ἀρχαῖος”), like the Iranian tradition of Ahriman, retains “true reminiscences and rational thoughts respecting the origin of evil although in a mythical garb.”¹⁹⁶

In his *Old Testament History of Redemption* Delitzsch says “Man himself, however, is not cursed, but in the midst of the curse that dawn of the promise rises upon him.” Gen 3:15 indicates that “the end of the creation of man, in spite of the fall, is not to remain unfulfilled. ... The Man of salvation is not yet named, but He is the centre of the collective he, the individualization of the human race.” The naming of Eve indicates Adam’s faith in this promise, and the covering of Adam and Eve by God is a prefiguring of his atoning grace.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³Gallus, *Gen 3, 15 in der evangelische Schriftauslegung*, 27.

¹⁹⁴Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 260.

¹⁹⁵Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1880), 26-28.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 29. I have been unable to find the source for this designation of Tiamat.

¹⁹⁷Franz Delitzsch, *Old Testament History of Redemption* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1881), 26-26.

In his commentary, he argues more extensively for the meaning of *conterere* for רָשַׁע in both cases and translates “bruise,” seeing in it the promise of victory. With respect to the virgin birth, the passage does not predict it but “is designed by its form also to concur with its fulfilment” because Jesus is seed of the woman in a miraculous manner.¹⁹⁸

1.8.5 August Dillmann

Dillmann interpreted the curse naturalistically. He derives the sense “seek to come at” for both instances of רָשַׁע from the meaning “pant,” etc., of one root רָשַׁע . He rejects any messianic inference in the passage because a snake’s bite is just as fatal as the trampling of the head, and the verse only speaks of enmity, not victory. However, Dillmann infers from the fact that “a struggle ordained of God cannot be without prospect of success” that there is a general promise of victory for the woman’s posterity (including Christ) over the serpent, which means the destruction of the evil power. “It is easy to understand that by the gospel a new light was reflected on the serpent of ver. 1, and also upon this contest with the serpent; but we cannot with reason affirm that the author was already illuminated by this light.”¹⁹⁹

1.8.6 C. A. Briggs

Gen 3:15 is the second passage Briggs discusses under the heading “Primitive Messianic Ideas,” the first being Gen 1:26-28, which, though not specifically messianic, is “the divine plan for mankind – the divinely-appointed goal of its history,” and is “the condition and framework of all prophecy.” Similarly Gen 3:15 is “the Magna Charta of human history” with which Adam and Eve leave Paradise. “The protevangelium is a divine blessing wrapt in judgments. It predicts the ultimate victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent, after a conflict in which both parties will be wounded.”²⁰⁰

The serpent’s “intelligence, conception, speech, and knowledge higher than that of the man or the woman” show it to be more than an animal; it is an evil spirit which assumed the snake form, just as God had assumed human form. Gen 3:15 predicts that it will inflict wounds “in secret and in treachery, behind the back” whereas the man will openly crush him to dust. “Seed” is generic for the two races; the serpent’s race includes all those derived from him (snakes, demons, and evil men called children of the devil by Jesus), while the woman’s seed includes humans who oppose the forces of evil. Also, “there are those who by birthright belong to the seed of the woman who become by apostasy the children of the serpent. There are also those who are won as trophies of grace from the seed of the serpent and are adopted into the seed of redemption. These two

¹⁹⁸ Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1899), 1. 61-64. Similarly H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis, Volume I, Chapters 1-19* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 162-69.

¹⁹⁹ August Dillman, *Genesis: Critically and Exegetically Expounded* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897), 156-61. Gallus quotes from an earlier edition (1886) in which he rejected the view that the serpent of Gen 3:15 could be related to either the Persian Ahriman or the Babylonian Tiamat on the grounds that the biblical serpent is said to be a mere creature (*Gen 3, 15 in der evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, 72-73).

²⁰⁰ Charles Augustus Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfilment of Redemption Through the Messiah* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1886), 71.

great forces are in conflict throughout history.” In the second part of the verse, it is implied by the fact that the original foe is vanquished that the seed here culminates in one individual champion, a second Adam, the head of the race. It is the head/heel contrast which suggests victory, as the idea of poison in the serpent’s bite is not there, but, “If any one should prefer to think that the victory is gained by the death of the victor, he will not cause any other difficulty to the Messianic fulfilment than that it seems unlikely that the first prediction should be so precise.”²⁰¹

1.8.7 Hermann Gunkel

The curses are, to the narrator, the main thing; Yahweh has uttered a curse, and its effects linger on into the present. But the last one, concerning the man, is the most important, and the curse on the serpent is the least. It is to be understood as a naturalistic aetiology, which answers the question of why humans so loathe snakes, and why the snake crawls on its belly, and (in the opinion of the Hebrews) eats dust. The narrator has not thought of describing the previous form or diet of the snake; he merely sees in its present form the curse of God. It is totally clear that for the narrator the snake is an animal and nothing more; Satan does not crawl on his belly. Because the snake and woman once allied themselves together against God, Yahweh has condemned them to perpetual enmity. Each fights in the best way it can, striking head or heel, as the case may be.²⁰²

Gunkel thinks there is a pun on שׂוּרָה, with the two meanings snap (*schnappen*), and crush, stamp out (*zertreten*). In v. 15 it is clear as well that only a snake is in view; the two seeds are snakes and humanity. As for why such a trivial, childish motif should be found alongside such profound themes as the curses in vv. 16-19, Gunkel says it is typical for paradise histories; but it is also possible that the conflict between snake and man reflects the remnants of a myth such as that of the Greek Hydra. The interpretation of this passage as a Protoevangelium is an allegorical interpretation which lingers on to this day.²⁰³

1.8.8 S. R. Driver

Driver followed the moralistic interpretation of the enmity and said that it is evident that in Gen 3:15 the serpent is the representative of “evil thoughts and suggestions,” the “power of evil,” or “symbolizes the power of temptation.” שׂוּרָה is to be translated “bruise” in both cases; the second use is improper, but was used so that the same word could be used in both instances. The passage is, no doubt, the Protevangelium, “but we must not read into the words more than they contain.” It is not a promise of victory, but only perpetual antagonism in a prolonged and continuous conflict. Only by the inference (quoting Dillmann) from the fact that this conflict is ordained by God does it point to the ultimate triumph over the opponent. Although the verse was fulfilled in a

²⁰¹ Ibid., 72-77.

²⁰² Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966; orig. 1902), 20-21.

²⁰³ Ibid., 21. In the notes (p. 20) Gunkel says Gressmann called his attention to the paronomasia. Paul Haupt notes that he had pointed out the possibility of a word-play in 1883 and several times since (Paul Haupt, “The Curse on the Serpent,” *JBL* 35 [1916], 155).

special way “by Him who was in a special sense the ‘seed’ of the woman ... who overcame once and for all the power of the Evil One,” it should not be so interpreted to exclude the general, less important triumphs of individuals over sin throughout history.²⁰⁴

1.8.9 W. O. E. Oesterly

Oesterly viewed the narrative of the fall and the flood as extensions of the “Tehom myth” of a “primeval cruel monster who was identified with the principle of ‘evil,’ *i.e.*, harmfulness” which is found as an echo in various Old Testament places, such as the creation account of Genesis 1. The fact that “the whole presentation of the Serpent is so emphatically alien to the idea of his being one of ‘the beasts of the field,’” leads him to think that the description of him as a mere creature was added to a story originally about a dragon figure like Tiamat trying to take revenge on God for his defeat in the primeval battle by raising up humans as a rival to God; further evidence for this being that Adam is expelled not for sin, but as a matter of prudence on God’s part because now he could become equal to the gods by eating from the tree of life.²⁰⁵ Oesterly does not fit the curse on the serpent into his discussion, or explain why it is not relevant, an omission which seems quite striking. His only mention of Gen 3:15 is in another chapter, where he says it indicates that the monster *Tehom* was “well able to injure men.”²⁰⁶ It seems that a curse on *Tehom* with the striking of the skull would be of interest, since Tiamat’s skull is crushed in *Enuma elish*.

1.8.10 John Skinner

In his ICC commentary Skinner says that the naturalistic terms of v. 14 do not necessarily exclude the possibility that the serpent is viewed as a demonic character, and that it is viewed as being punished in “each member of the species.” Skinner says that Calvin’s view of a general promise of victory for humankind over the devil is more reasonable than Luther’s view, but “that even this goes beyond the original meaning of the v. is admitted by most modern expositors; and indeed it is doubtful if, from the standpoint of strict historical exegesis, the passage can be regarded as in any sense a *Protevangelium*.” He rejects Dillman’s view based on the fact that there is no clear expression of hope or victory in the context (he thinks Dillman has begged the question in dispute by saying a conflict ordained by God must have prospect of success), and that the serpent, while he may be an evil, even demonic creature, is such only in himself, and does not represent any external power in the mind of the narrator. He thinks the purpose of the curse may be to protest against “the unnatural fascination of snake worship.”²⁰⁷

1.8.11 Otto Procksch

²⁰⁴Samuel Rolles Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 47-48, 57.

²⁰⁵W. O. E. Oesterly, *The Evolution of the Messianic Idea: A Study in Comparative Religion* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), x, 76-79.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 178.

²⁰⁷John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 79-81.

The Hebrew does not justify an individual (therefore messianic) interpretation of the woman's seed. The picture given in Gen 3:15d-e is one where both combatants die together; the man is bitten fatally as he steps on the serpent's head. There is no suggestion here that the human race will prevail against that of the serpents. שָׁרַף in the first instance means "crushing" or "stepping," and in the second, "snap." The question of whether the snake is an animal or a demon is wrong; the snake as an animal consists in something demonic. Therefore the early Church view of the "ancient snake" (Rev 12:9; 20:2) is basically right. Gunkel's aetiological explanation is trivial, so much so that he wondered whether a mythical demon originally stood in the narrative. Skinner's view of a rejection of serpent worship is to be rejected as well, since nothing in the context refers to such practice.²⁰⁸

1.8.12 Eduard König

König interprets the woman's seed as a collective, since it is not individualized, as in 4:25. The meaning of שָׁרַף is partly "press down, crush" and partly "destroy," and these are the two meanings in Gen 3:15d-e, as is consistent with LXX Ps 139:11, and Aramaic and Syriac usage.²⁰⁹ König finds several expressions of hope in the "dismal painting of Genesis 3." These are, first, the fact that there is a delay in execution of the death threat spoken against Adam and Eve for eating the fruit. König cites *Jub.* 4:30 as explaining this delay based on the fact that 1000 years is like a day to God (Ps 90:4); Adam lived not quite 1000 years, therefore died on "the day" that he ate.²¹⁰ The second reason for hope that König sees is that God equipped Adam and Eve with clothes when he expelled them from paradise. Thirdly, victory over the snake is implied in the fact that the snake's head is crushed. This announcement is therefore "the oldest expression of a tendency towards redemption in Old Testament religion," although it is still only an indirect reference to the messianic age, since the woman's seed is collective.²¹¹

In a book on messianic prophecy König said that it would be a misuse of the analogy of faith to equate Satan with the serpent of Genesis 3 based on the New Testament. There is no evidence that the narrator of Genesis 3 wanted to express this idea, and later insights should not be read back into this text. Gen 3:15 indicates that those who were initially overcome will be victorious; many heroes are included under the generic term "woman's seed." The kind of salvation predicted is first of all physical, but it represents moral good and is fully realized only in a renewed partnership of God and

²⁰⁸Otto Procksch, *Die Genesis: übersetzt und erklärt* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), 34-35.

²⁰⁹Eduard König, *Die Genesis* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925), 248-49.

²¹⁰Actually, it appears that this explanation is in Psalm 90 itself; for the expression "1000 years in your sight are as a day gone by" immediately follows a paraphrase of Gen 3:19, "to dust you shall return" (Ps 90:3; "Return to dust, O sons of men"), thus answering the hypothetical question of why Adam and Eve did not die immediately upon eating the fruit, as threatened.

²¹¹König, *Genesis*, 276 (including n. 2), 277; "Diese Ankündigung ist der älteste Ausdruck der Erlösungstendenz der alttestamentlichen Religion."

humans. To all who participate in this salvation it is the first Gospel. König also thinks that the designation of Jesus as Son of Man hints indirectly at Gen 3:15 (but directly at Dan 7:13), and is used by him to describe himself as the one who would defeat the world at enmity with God.²¹²

1.8.13 *Paul Joüon*

Joüon said that the word “snake” could be translated “reptile” in Gen 3:14, so that the reader would not be confused by the fact that snakes as such always went on their bellies; but the translation “dragon” would have the additional advantage of signifying a supernatural being, perhaps even with wings. The Hebrew שָׁחָר has a wider semantic range than the word “serpent,” which Jerome recognized when he translated it by “draconem” in Exod 7:15, and John uses “snake” and “dragon” indifferently in Revelation 12. That the curse in Gen 3:14 is literal is implied by the emphatic word order, “dust shall you eat.” There was an actual change in the body of the “dragon;” the snake is a physically degraded form of the dragon.²¹³

1.8.14 *Benno Jacob*

Jacob said that v. 1 proves that the snake cannot be the devil or his disguise, although it could be symbolic of the evil inclination, which creeps up, apparently harmless but full of deadly poison. The account is allegorical, as the snake represents the human tendency towards lust and malice. We are not to understand that the snake once walked upright, since that would imply God is correcting his own work; the snake’s posture and diet henceforth will point to its curse. The preposition מֵ in v. 14 is to be understood as “among,” as in Exod 19:5 (a treasured possession among all the peoples); Deut 33:24 (blessed among sons is Asher); Judg 5:24 (blessed among women is Jael). The snake’s punishment is measure for measure; the serpent, whose nature is to eat the most disgusting matter, seduced the woman to eat the forbidden fruit. The sense “crush” for שָׁחָר is difficult in v. 15, since a snake could not do anything after its head is crushed, but Delitzsch’s point about the double accusative requiring the sense of bodily contact is valid.²¹⁴

1.8.15 *Paul Humbert*

Humbert interprets the curse naturalistically, and notes a translation by Kurt Sethe of § 284 of the Pyramid Texts: “Geschlagen worden ist der Tausendfuss von dem Hausbewohner, geschlagen worden ist der Hausbewohner von dem Tausendfuss,” which he explains, “der giftige Tausendfuss (Scolopendra) ist *geschlagen*, d.i. verschlagen worden von dem Hausbewohner, den er stechen wollte, und umgekehrt dieser von ihm getötet worden.” Humbert agrees that this is the same idea expressed in Gen 3:15; a

²¹²Taken from summary by Gallus, *Gen 3:15 in der evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, 84-85. Gallus cites the source as *Die messianischen Weissagungen des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: n.p., 1925), 82-89, 312-13.

²¹³Paul Joüon, “«Le Grand Dragon, l’Ancien Serpent»: Apoc. 12,9 et Genèse 3,14,” *RSR* 17 (1927), 444-46.

²¹⁴Benno Jacob, *Das Erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934), 101-02; 112-15.

hopeless and endless struggle to death, which therefore naturally has no messianic significance. Similarly all of the curses in vv. 14-19 leave no hope.²¹⁵

1.8.16 *Walther Zimmerli*

Zimmerli admits the possibility that there is a story with a mythical, demonic snake behind Genesis 3, but says any trace of it has been removed; likewise he rejects the possibility that the snake has any connection with Satan. The description of him in v. 1 prevents us from viewing him as anything but an animal snake. The question of how something in God's good creation can be evil and the source of evil for humankind, is left as a riddle, unanswered. To answer the riddle would simply provide an excuse for the man; something or someone to blame his sin on.²¹⁶

The curse of the snake makes it a hideous, repulsive creature; when seeing it crawling through the dust one sees an example of what happens to those cursed by God, such as the nations who will lick dust like the serpent (Mic 7:17). Further, God establishes enmity in what had been a godless friendship. A careful reading of the text forbids finding a promise of Christ there as the seed of the woman, or Satan as the serpent. Nor is there any intimation of a final victory for the woman's offspring; rather each generation only faces the same enmity, and Gen 9:2 speaks along somewhat similar lines for the other animals. Christians naturally see the picture of a dragon or snake as symbolic of Satan, as seen in Rev 12:9; 20:2, but one must go to other texts beside Gen 3:15 to find the promise of victory over him.²¹⁷

1.8.17 *Geerhardus Vos*

Vos says that the insistence by some that the serpent of the temptation was merely an animal is the opposite extreme of the view which holds the entire account as allegorical. Against it is the fact that Scripture opposes the pantheizing confusion of humans and animals; both a real serpent and a demonic power which made use of it were present, and a close analogy is found in the Gospels where demons speak through those possessed by them. The Old Testament does not speak anywhere of this fact, because "the fall is seldom referred to," and because the whole subject of evil spirits, etc., "is long kept in darkness."²¹⁸

Vos discusses Gen 3:14-19 under the heading "The Content of the First Redemptive Special Revelation," using the term "redemption" by anticipation, since "it does not occur until the Mosaic period." The passage comprises "both justice and grace."

²¹⁵Paul Humbert, *Études sur le Récit du Paradis et de la Chute dans la Genèse* (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1940), 76. Pyramid text citation is given as Kurt Sethe, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den Altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, t. II, p. 192. 193.

²¹⁶Walther Zimmerli, *1 Mose 1-11: die Urgeschichte* (Zürcher Bibelkommentar; Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1943), 162-64.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, 170-72. In his Old Testament theology, Zimmerli says, "Gen. 9:2-3, even without any mention of the serpent, recalls 3:15" (*Old Testament Theology in Outline* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978], 174).

²¹⁸Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 44.

“The justice is shown in the penal character of the three curses pronounced; the grace for mankind lies implicitly in the curse upon the Tempter.” The special revelation contained in this passage is joined to the general revelation which produced “the feeling of shame and fear ... in fallen man.” As for the curse on the serpent, in it “lies a promise of victory over the serpent and his seed. His being condemned to go on his belly enables the woman’s seed to bruise his head, whilst the serpent can only bruise the heel of the seed of the woman.” Vos prefers the meaning of “bruise” for פָּשַׁע, noting that “both in Greek and Aramaic the words for ‘beating’ and ‘striking’ are used of bites and stings.”²¹⁹

Vos objects to a metaphorical identification of the serpent’s seed as wicked men, since then some who are actually the seed of the woman would be called the seed of the serpent. Rather than solve this problem as Hengstenberg did by saying that the wicked do not deserve the name seed of the woman, “it seems more plausible to seek the seed of the serpent outside of the human race. The power of evil is a collective power, a kingdom of evil, of which Satan is the head.” The seed of the serpent is therefore the evil spirits who derive from Satan their nature. Since the seed of the serpent is collective, so must be the seed of the woman: “Out of the human race a fatal blow will come which shall crush the head of the serpent.” There is a shift in contrast from the first half of the verse to the second: in the first the two seeds are contrasted, but in the second it is the seed of the woman and the serpent.

This suggests that as at the climax of the struggle the serpent’s seed will be represented by the serpent, in the same manner the woman’s seed may find representation in a single person; we are not warranted, however, in seeking an exclusively personal reference to the Messiah here, as though He alone were meant by “the woman’s seed.” O. T. Revelation approaches the concept of a personal Messiah very gradually. It sufficed for fallen man to know that through His divine power and grace God would bring out of the human race victory over the serpent.²²⁰

1.8.18 *Umberto Cassuto*

Cassuto affirmed the naturalistic identity of the snake, but acknowledged that “this interpretation also encounters difficulties” (animals do not talk, do not aim to morally destroy humans, do not know the hidden purpose of God). One might think that the serpent is a land version of the dragon associated with the sea, an independent entity hostile to God; but the Torah completely rejects that idea, as is shown in the creation account which studiously avoids the mythical, stressing the fact of the dragons of the sea being good animals made by God. The serpent is here stressed to be only an animal, so that we know it is only symbolic of evil; it is not actually an evil being at enmity with God. It is therefore necessary to allegorize the speech of the serpent; the serpent represents the cunning in Eve, the dialogue only takes place in the woman’s mind. The animal serpent does not speak and has no knowledge of the divine prohibition; only the woman does. The word play between “naked” (עָרֹמִים; 2:25) and “cunning” (עָרִים; 3:1)

²¹⁹ Ibid., 52-54.

²²⁰ Ibid., 53-55.

means that although the human pair was ignorant of good and evil, they were not lacking in cunning.²²¹

Cassuto had an answer quite different from Bullinger for why God does not ask any question of the serpent, as he had of Adam and Eve. Bullinger said that the serpent as animal does not speak, and the serpent as devil had no truth. Cassuto said that the serpent is pictured as silent because of a desire to refute popular beliefs about “the serpent and the monsters as sovereign entities that rise in revolt against the Creator and oppose His will. Here, too, it is implied that the serpent is only an ordinary creature. He quotes *Gen. Rab.* 19.1 about the serpent going from cunning above all to cursed above all, and says there is a play on the assonance between the two words עָרוּם and אָרַוּר. The serpent symbolizes evil, “and shall be a warning to men of the consequence of wickedness. *Whatever goes on its belly* is accounted an *abomination* (Lev. xi 42).” The penalty of eating dust is measure for measure, since the temptation pertained to eating. But there may be a further echo (literary only) of the tradition of the subjugation of the primeval serpent, since this figure is used also of Israel’s enemies (Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; Mic 7:17). The serpent is the man’s enemy, however, not God’s, as v. 15 shows. There may be “also a parable concerning the principle of evil,” which lies in wait for its victim, who should hasten to crush its skull and thus be saved from it, “even as it was said to Cain in regard to sin: *its desire is for you, but you will be able to master it.*” Cassuto takes the first instance of שָׁוַף as “tread upon or crush,” and the second as “to crave, desire,” from the by-form שָׂאף.²²²

1.8.19 Sigmund Mowinckel

Mowinckel adopts the generally held view of those who take the “historical approach to theology” that Gen 3:15 “is a quite general statement about mankind, and serpents, and the struggle between them which continues as long as the earth exists.” He thinks that the “Christian homiletical application” made by Procksch is “in itself justifiable.” Mowinckel was somehow under the impression that “the interpretation of the seed of the woman, in Gen. iii, 15, as the Messiah is derived from the Targums and Jewish theology.”²²³

1.8.20 Gerhard von Rad

“The serpent which now enters the narrative is marked as one of God’s created animals (ch. 2.19). In the narrator’s mind it is scarcely an embodiment of a ‘demonic’ power and certainly not of Satan.” The snake is only mentioned in passing, kept “in a scarcely definable incognito,” in order to keep the focus on man and his guilt. The curses in vv. 14-19 are all to be understood aetiologically, to answer pressing questions man has about his current condition; but one must go beyond this:

The narrator uses not only the commonplace language of every day, but a language that also figuratively depicts the most intellectual matters. Thus by serpent he understands not

²²¹Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part I, From Adam to Noah, Genesis I-VI8* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1961; orig. 1951), 139-43.

²²²*Ibid.*, 158-61.

²²³*Ibid.*, 283.

only the zoological species ... but at the same time, in a kind of spiritual clearheadedness, he sees in it an evil being that has assumed form, that is inexplicably present within our created world, and that has singled out man, lies in wait for him, and everywhere fights a battle with him for life and death.²²⁴

Von Rad seems to be in tension with himself here, saying both that the serpent is not the “embodiment of a demonic power,” yet that he is “an evil being that has assumed form.”

Gen 3:15 is not a protoevangelium, and the picture given in Gen 3:15d-e is not of individual combat but of a generic and completely hopeless struggle between species:

Wherever man and serpent meet, the meeting always involves life and death. ... The terrible point of this curse is the hopelessness of this struggle in which both will ruin each other. The exegesis of the early church does not agree with the sense of the passage, quite apart from the fact that the word “seed” may not be construed personally but only quite generally with the meaning “posterity.”²²⁵

Von Rad is in tension with himself on another point, as well. He says above that both parties “will ruin each other;” yet he also noted that one party to this struggle was not cursed. His comment on v. 16 begins, “the woman and the man are not cursed (it is unthinking to speak of their malediction).”²²⁶ If part of the curse is the ruination of the serpent, and yet the implication is that man and woman are ruined as well, then it would seem to be an implied curse on them as well, a view which he calls “unthinking.”

1.8.21 *Bruce Vawter*

Vawter argues that the only possible interpretation of the serpent is that which sees in it the fallen angel Satan, since it is presented as a rational being of great craftiness and ability to outwit humans. The author probably chose the form of the snake to represent Satan because of serpent-worship which was common among Canaanites and other Gentile peoples. The first part of the curse on the serpent (v. 14) is to be understood as entirely figurative for the humiliating judgment on Satan. “The sense of the divine condemnation of the serpent is, then, a prophecy of Satan’s defeat. It is the corollary of mankind’s hope.”²²⁷

Further revelation by degrees indicated that this victory would be won by a single person, Jesus Christ; because God is the ultimate author this is the intended meaning, even though the human author was unaware of it. By the woman and her seed he meant Eve and the human race; “but as the final fulfillment of the prophecy of the ‘seed’ is verified only in Christ, so ‘the woman’ who bore the seed is finally fulfilled in the Blessed Virgin.”²²⁸

²²⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961; German ed. 1956), 86, 89-90.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ Bruce Vawter, *A Path Through Genesis* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 64, 67.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

1.8.22 Claus Westermann

On the identity of the serpent, Westermann discusses the study of Th. C. Vriezen, who says that the serpent is viewed as an animal of life and wisdom, and belongs to the realm of magic, and is connected to a serpent cult adopted from Canaan and presumed in Numbers 21 and 2 Kings 18:4. He agrees that “this explanation agrees with the data of the narrative,” but rejects it (along with the view that it represents “the oriental-heathen pattern of thought”) because the snake is described as an animal created by God: “the narrator emphasizes explicitly by means of the relative clause that the serpent is not outside the circle of those already mentioned in the narrative; it is one of the animals created by God.” For the same reason he denies that the serpent is a being at enmity with God; also because the text says nothing of such enmity. The fact that his words are directed against God does not disprove this, for “this does not become the theme of the narrative.” The snake’s role in the temptation is inexplicable, as is the origin of evil itself (agreeing with Zimmerli, von Rad).²²⁹

Westermann says that the punishments in vv. 14-19 (which are poetic in form) were missing in an older form of Genesis 2-3, as is indicated by parallels between this narrative and Ezekiel 28, and (following W. H. Schmidt) the fact that the extra punishments in vv. 14-19 bear no direct relation to the offense committed, but rather “describe factually the present state of existence of serpent, woman and man which by way of after-thought are explained as punishments.” He denies therefore that the curses are the high point of, or central to, the narrative (contra Gunkel, von Rad).²³⁰

V. 15 is aetiological, as it explains why there is a perpetual enmity (“all the days of your life” means as long as there are snakes) between snakes and humankind which does not exist in the case of other animals. The parallelism between the offspring of both parties in v. 15 makes it clear that “seed” does not refer to an individual. The enmity appears when men and snakes try to kill each other. רָשַׁע means “crush” for the action by the woman’s seed, and “snap at” for the snake (as a by-form of רָשַׁע).²³¹

Gen 3:15 is not the *protoevangelium*: “the explanation of Gen 3:15 as a promise has been abandoned almost without exception.” The two main reasons for this are that רָשַׁע is undoubtedly collective, and secondly, from a form-critical point of view, “it is not possible that such a form [pronouncement of a punishment or curse] has either promise or prophecy as its primary or even its secondary meaning.” For this pronouncement he offers no supporting evidence, and refers to none. Westermann seems unaware of the view of Hengstenberg, for example, that the woman’s seed is a collective for all who are righteous, yet the passage is still a *protoevangelium* or at least some kind of promise. He likewise rejects the “ethical” view of Dillman, Procksch, Vriezen, and von Rad, that the snake embodies the power of evil against which humankind struggles. He affirms the

²²⁹Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 237-39.

²³⁰*Ibid.*, 256-57.

²³¹*Ibid.*, 259-60.

view of Holzinger that the reference to the snake's offspring proves that it is a mere animal.²³²

1.8.23 *Walter Kaiser*

Kaiser says Gen 3:15 "is of seminal importance." The question whether "he" in Gen 3:15d is singular or collective "is misdirected, especially if the divine intention deliberately wished to designate the collective notion which included a personal unity in a single person who was to obtain victory for the whole group he represented." He agrees with Martin that the LXX οὐτός is based on a messianic understanding of the verse, with which Kaiser agrees: the pronoun "he" is "no doubt a representative person of the human race" (especially if Luther's interpretation of Gen 4:1 is correct). For the outcome of the battle, the lethal blow to the head is to be contrasted with a nip to the heel.²³³

1.8.24 *Gordon Wenham*

Wenham divides Gen 3:15 into six lines (splitting Gen 3:15c into two parts), "four two-beat lines and two three-beat lines." He notes that the saying appears, on the surface, to be a "mere etiology" about literal snakes and humankind. But elements in the story are highly symbolic, ambiguous, and subtle (such as the dialogue between the snake and the woman). The serpent here "symbolizes sin, death, and the power of evil," so that the curse predicts a long term struggle between good and evil. The triumph of humans is implied by the fact that only the snake is cursed, and by the man's tactical superiority in the battle. "Such an interpretation fits in well with 4:7 where Cain is warned of sin lurking to catch him, but is promised victory if he resists." A messianic interpretation may be justified on the basis of further revelation as a *sensus plenior*, but this was probably not the narrator's own understanding. Wenham translates הַשָּׁרֵפֶת in both cases as "batter."²³⁴

1.8.25 *Nahum Sarna*

Sarna takes the naturalistic interpretation, but says "the imprecation may also carry anti-pagan undertones, as if to say that the serpent is neither a fertility symbol, as in Canaan, nor a protective emblem, as among Egyptian royalty, but a hostile object of aversion."²³⁵

1.8.26 *Victor Hamilton*

Hamilton prefers the translation "strike at" for both instances of הַשָּׁרֵפֶת, and thinks that "seed" should be translated with an equivalent collective such as "offspring" or "posterity" which can indicate an individual as well. He says "we may want to be cautious about calling this verse a messianic prophecy. At the same time we should be hesitant to surrender the time-honored expression for this verse – *the protevangelium*, 'the first good news.'" It is good news whether "seed" is individual or collective, and it

²³²Ibid., 260-61.

²³³Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 35-37, 79.

²³⁴Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 79-81.

²³⁵Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (JPSTC; New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 27.

contains both judgment and promise. He is most comfortable with LaSor's view of *sensus plenior*, cited below.²³⁶

1.8.27 Gerard Van Groningen

Groningen takes the definition of curse in its etymological sense of "bind," with application both to the animal snake and to Satan. Royal victory is promised to the woman's seed, while humiliating and crushing defeat is the adversary's fate. It is not incorrect to refer to the passage as a protevangelium, and Eve's statement in Gen 4:1 shows that she considered the seed to be an individual (possibly divine if te' marks the accusative), but the individual interpretation does not come from Gen 3:15 itself, though it does set forth a messianic task, and implies a substitutionary work done on behalf of others.

The flood illustrates one aspect of the messianic task: to execute judgment (crush the head of the serpent's seed), while the existence on the ark for a year illustrates the bruising of the heel of the woman's seed. The call of Abram sets apart the two races as clearly as Gen 3:15 by saying all people would be either blessed or cursed because of him. Ps 110:5 speaks of shattering the heads [*sic*; see v. 6] of the kings of the earth, as predicted in Gen 3:15 and Num 24:16-19. The suffering yet victorious Servant in Isaiah 53 is to be identified with the woman's victorious seed whose heel is bruised. Gen 3:15 looks to the future, thus is eschatological.²³⁷

1.8.28 Meredith Kline

Kline says that the absence of the word "covenant" from the first three chapters of Genesis does not preclude considering God's relationship to humans in those chapters under the covenant concept. That Genesis 1-2 may be considered covenantal is shown by the fact that the post-diluvian re-ordering of the world, spoken of as a covenant with Noah, is a "reinstating of original creation arrangements." This is a covenant of law, whereas Gen 3:15 should be viewed from a systematic-theological point of view "as the earliest disclosure of the 'Covenant of Grace.'" ²³⁸ He put a turn on Paul's question "is the law opposed to the promises of God?" (Gal 3:21), noting that in Genesis 1-3, the promise comes second; "Was the covenant of law established by God at the beginning (Gen. 1 and 2) made of no effect by the subsequent introduction of the promise (Gen. 3:15)? ... 'God forbid.'" ²³⁹ In another work Kline said that Mal 3:21 (4:3), "Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet," is an allusion to Gen 3:15, just as the theme of the day of the Lord in Malachi 3-4 is traced back ultimately to Gen 3:8.²⁴⁰

²³⁶Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 199-200, and n. 20.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 120, 135, 396, 617, 629.

²³⁸Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 26-27.

²³⁹*Ibid.*, 30.

²⁴⁰Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Hamilton, MA: n.p., 1980), 117, n. 71.

Kline's most extensive comments on Gen 3:15 are in his *Kingdom Prologue* ("a biblico-theological analysis of the foundational revelation contained in the book of Genesis").²⁴¹ Kline agrees that Gen 3:15 is the first gospel, as well as the last judgment, but says that Gen 3:16-19 indicate a postponement of that judgment, thus instituting common grace: "The world order continued. The sun was not darkened; the heavens did not pass away; the earth was not consumed. Man was not totally abandoned to the power of sin and the devil; he was not cast into outer darkness." Kline rejects the naturalistic aetiological view, pointing to the mythological stories of the internationally known figure of the dragon as God's enemy, saying that they are mythicized versions of Genesis 3, as perverted and changed by the nations, but which attest "to reverberations in the ancient memory of man of the supernatural dimensions of the primordial event and prophecy."²⁴²

Gen 3:14 is a figurative depiction of the curse "as a humiliating degradation of the utmost degree and of perpetual duration," and v. 15 is an exposition of this judgment. The enmity springs from the renewal of the image of God in Eve, "the reverse side, the repentance side, of her renewed (now saving) faith in the Lord." Her seed consists of those who are like her in having this enmity toward the evil one, those who are the elect of God, while the serpent's seed must therefore be reprobate men who persist in their devil-likeness. Gen 3:15 is a declaration of holy war, instituted to prevent Satan's peace from settling over the earth.²⁴³

Gen 3:15d-e depicts "a climactic battle in the holy war" and must be understood as a decisive victory over the evil one because of the relationship of v. 15 to v. 14 mentioned above. Here the seed is an individual, opposed to the "you" (not the visible serpent, who will have long since passed from the scene, but Satan, who will still be on the scene).

The all-decisive battle is a judgment ordeal by combat, fought by a champion from each of the opposing armies. Mention of a wound to be suffered by the champion of the woman's army does not throw in doubt the decisive victory he was to gain for them. As an historical exposition of the absolute defeat of the devil affirmed in the curse of verse 14, verse 15 must reinforce that idea and such is certainly the intention of the contrast drawn between the blow inflicted on the heel of the woman's seed and the blow delivered to the head of the serpent.²⁴⁴

That this is a contest between champions implies that the respective armies share in the victory and the defeat. This partly collective, partly individual interpretation of the woman's seed is confirmed by Revelation 12, which portrays the individual seed as the

²⁴¹Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Hamilton, MA: n.p., 1993), 1. Genesis is prologue (historical preamble) to the establishment of the old covenant under Moses (ibid).

²⁴²Ibid., 95, 92. In particular, Gen 3:15 was mythologized into the Babylonian creation account (167).

²⁴³Ibid., 82-83.

²⁴⁴Ibid., 83.

Messiah, the federal head in a new administration of God's kingdom, and champion of the rest of the woman's seed, who brings them salvation.²⁴⁵

To this point we see the thought of especially Pareus (perhaps also Irenaeus) in identifying the woman's seed collectively and individually in the two parts of the verse. He also follows Luther in interpreting Gen 3:20 as witness to Adam's faith in this promise: "Adam declared his confessional 'Amen' to the Genesis 3:15 promise of restoration from death to life ... by naming the woman 'Life.'" Eve's naming of Seth (Gen 4:25) is likewise evidence of her faith in the promise, since the verb she uses (God has appointed for me) is the same one God uses in Gen 3:15a (I will set). The clothing of Adam and Eve with skins (עור) has a fuller significance because it continues the word-play between "naked" and "shrewd" (Gen 2:25; 3:1, 7, 10-11); the skins are "the antithetical counterpart of the image of the devil" and "are to be understood as symbols of adornment with the glory of the image of God."²⁴⁶

Kline goes farther than Van Groningen in how he sees Gen 3:15d fulfilled in the Old Testament. Though the final victory in this holy war is obtained by Jesus against Satan, precursors to this event are found in the flood of Noah, the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, and Joshua's conquest of Canaan, all of which involve the destruction of the wicked seed; the conquered Canaanites, representative of the serpent's seed, are "crushed under the heel of the redeemed people of the Lord." These are only token fulfillments, however, "typological act[s] of judgment pointing to the Final Judgment."²⁴⁷

The two seeds are found again after the flood, as the serpent's seed is manifested by the reaction of Noah's sons to his nakedness. Ham, like the serpent in Genesis 3, "maliciously aggravates the shame of his drunken father's nakedness (Gen 9:20-23)," whereas Shem and Japheth are like the Lord in Genesis 3 by providing garments to cover his nakedness. Noah's curse on Canaan, and his blessing of Shem and Japheth (Gen 9:25-27) are to be understood as the outworking of the two spiritual seeds of Gen 3:15 in the post-flood world. In the patriarchal era, the seed of the woman, the seed of promise, becomes the seed of Abraham.²⁴⁸

1.9 *Recent Special Studies in Gen 3:15*

Included in this section are authors who did exegetical studies devoted to Gen 3:15 as a whole, or some aspect of it (except that studies on word meanings will be discussed in the next chapter), as well as authors cited above who wrote works on the history of interpretation of Gen 3:15, and who also gave their own analysis on the

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 89.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 93, 119. He compares this episode to the use of animal skins for the tabernacle coverings.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 174, 163. "Token" is not Kline's word. I mean by token fulfillment one which follows the pattern of the prediction (thus typological) but which is only partial, thus having symbolic significance for the future complete fulfillment. Kline also calls the flood a "sign" of the final judgment (p. 150).

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 150, 161, 165, 205.

exegesis of the passage or its interpretation in the Bible. Martin's essay has been sufficiently discussed in § 1.2.2.

1.9.1 *Johann Michl*

As part of his historical survey of interpretation, Michl included the biblical interpretation. He says there is no obvious allusion to Gen 3:15 in the Old Testament, even in the latest books, and the same applies to the New Testament, and he defends this view by discussing various passages that have been taken as references to Gen 3:15.

Jesus calls Mary “woman” in John 2:4; 19:26. This, however, was certainly not considered as remarkable by the ancients, and no one took notice of it before the 16th century when both Catholics and Lutherans began to see a deeper reference here to the protevangelium.²⁴⁹ Since the address as “woman” is understandable as a custom of the times, no significance should be placed on it.

Paul's expression “made (born) of a woman” in Gal 4:4 (γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός) corresponds exactly to the Rabbinic expression אִשָּׁה לְיִדִּי which is simply a way of saying that someone is a member of the human race. Consequently, the significance of its use in this passage is the same as in Heb 2:17; Paul is stressing that Jesus is fully human and under the Law.²⁵⁰

Rom 16:20 is a possible allusion to Gen 3:15, if Paul followed the *Palestinian Tg.* reading of “crush”* instead of the LXX. If so, he betrays no hint of an individual-christological interpretation. However, Rom 16:20 is only remotely similar to Gen 3:15, and the thought could have been derived from passages such as Luke 10:19.²⁵¹

Michl notes that a number of interpreters have seen the imagery in Revelation 12, of a woman, her child who will rule all nations, the rest of her seed, and a hostile dragon who is called the old serpent, and enmity between them, to be based on Gen 3:15. Michl discusses whether these similarities are a result of merely borrowing an image (which would have no theological implications), or whether the Apocalypse presents the events of Revelation 12 as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15. The woman of Revelation 12 is not the same as Eve; she is a heavenly figure; in all probability signifying true Israel; therefore the picture given in Revelation 12 is not presented as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15, but must only be a utilization of it. In any case, here again there is no individual-christological interpretation.²⁵²

1.9.2 *Jack Lewis*

Like Michl, Lewis surveyed some of the biblical material in his historical study, and his conclusions follow Michl's closely. He says “no further attention is given to 3:15 either in Genesis or in any other OT book,” and “neither Jesus nor his disciples cite Gen

²⁴⁹ Michl, “Weibessame,” 373, 390-91. Michl quotes the Protestant Georg Major (died 1574) and the Jesuit Alfonso Salmerón (died 1585).

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 393-94. אִשָּׁה לְיִדִּי is not strictly Rabbinic, as it appears in Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4 (I thank Gary Rendsburg for this observation).

²⁵¹ Ibid., 395-96.

²⁵² Ibid., 396-401.

3:15.” The phrase “born of woman” does not indicate anything miraculous since it is a common description of humanity. Paul possibly alludes to Gen 3:15 in Rom 16:20, but his wording is not like the LXX and could be influenced by Luke 10:19 and the imagery of subduing enemies under the foot. He notes that some have conjectured that Gen 3:15 is behind the imagery of the woman and her child in Revelation 12, but does not cite any of the evidence for this, or interact with it, which is surprising since he is apparently closely following Michl here.²⁵³

1.9.3 *Tibor Gallus*

Gallus gave his own views on the identity of the woman’s seed in his third German volume. He argues generally against the post-enlightenment view of Scripture as a purely human product based on long oral tradition and the view of Genesis 2-3 as myth, and specifically against the view of Westermann and Schottroff that Gen 3:14-19 are not original to the narrative, and against the naturalistic aetiological view. That verses 14-15 could be considered a naturalistic aetiology does not mean that that is the true meaning (why is there no explanation for the camel’s hump?) – in fact, they are a *heilsgeschichtlichen* aetiology. That vv. 14-19 are original is evident from the fact that death was the threatened punishment for violating God’s command, and this threat is referred to and carried out in these verses.

There have been so many different interpretations of Gen 3:15 because there are so many different principles of interpretation. Gallus’ first exegetical principle is that Genesis 2-3 reports historical realities. His second is that Gen 3:15 is figurative, and the main evidence for this is that the serpent cannot be considered to be a mere animal. He notes that the comparative in Gen 3:1 does not actually say that the snake is an animal because it says that it was “wiser than all of the animals” rather than “wiser than all of the *other* animals.” That the snake is cunning and talks shows it is not a mere animal; that it uses a lying tactic against the woman is sufficient to show that it is used by a demonic spirit. If the designation of the tempter as “snake” is figurative, so might the designation of the “woman” be taken as someone other than Eve; one must look at the rest of the Bible for the answer. God speaks as if he is setting enmity between Eve and the animal snake; actually he wants to punish the devil through a different enmity by another woman. Gallus uses the same arguments for the individual-christological identification of the woman’s seed as Luther and his early successors, but gives more prominence than they did to the mariological interpretation which depends on it. Against Westermann’s statement that a pronouncement of judgment cannot be a promise, he states that if the judgment consists in the defeat of the one who is judged, then it can be a promise for the one who has the victory. Gen 3:15 is not referred to before the New Testament because it is spoken figuratively, and the meaning is unknown before New Testament times (though Gallus agrees with Luther’s interpretation of Gen 4:1).²⁵⁴

1.9.4 *Dominic Unger*

²⁵³ Lewis, *The Woman’s Seed*, 300, 303.

²⁵⁴ Gallus, *Evangelischen Schriftauslegung Gen 3, 15*, 111-61.

Unger argues primarily from the tradition of the Church fathers and official Catholic Church teaching, especially papal bulls, for identifying the woman in Gen 3:15 as exclusively Mary and her seed as exclusively Christ. In interpreting the fathers he lays great stress on the Eve-Mary antithesis; Eve is the “total opposite” of Mary. The serpent’s seed consists of demons (based on Rev 12:7), as well as sinners (John 8:44, etc.), rather than either group by itself, or sin, or the Antichrist. The serpent is crushed by Mary at her immaculate conception (when the enmity began), and by Christ at his incarnation, and by both at Golgotha, though the battle continues even now.²⁵⁵

Unger argues for the singular meaning of the woman’s seed because seed as a collective is never referred to by a singular separate pronoun, whereas there are two cases where a separate plural pronoun is used for the collective (Isa 61:9; Ezek 20:5). Also, when a possessive or object suffix refers back to seed, in 12 out of 14 cases it is plural when seed is collective. Gal 3:16 excludes the collective sense from the promised seed. Revelation 12 associates with the dragon (the serpent of Genesis 3) a very special woman and a male child, and these must therefore be the woman and her seed of Gen 3:15.²⁵⁶

1.9.5 Walter Wifall

Walter Wifall cites the opinion of “recent critical scholarship” such as that expressed by Westermann, von Rad, and Skinner that Gen 3:15 is not a protoevangelium, and Wifall sees “no support . . . for the traditional singular reference of the ‘seed’ to the ‘Messiah’; for identifying the ‘serpent’ with the later Jewish idea of ‘Satan’; or for interpreting the passage as a blessing or a promise rather than as a curse.” However, Wifall connects Gen 3:15 to the concept of messianism as held to by the myth-ritual school, which is oriented to “an elaborate king ideology” rather than an “eschatological messianism,” which did not arise until “the catastrophes of Israelite and Jewish history gradually shifted the emphasis from the historical and national to the eschatological and apocalyptic.” Genesis 2-11 as a whole has been connected with “the Davidic covenant and the ‘Court History of David,’” the latter being a model for construction of the former; being connected with the royal ideology; therefore, these chapters as a whole can be viewed as “messianic” in the royal ideological sense. Wifall applies this approach to Gen 3:15 in particular, and suggests that it is the Yahwist’s *Urzeit* version of 2 Sam 7:12, where God promises David he will raise up his seed after him and establish his kingdom.. Psalm 89 and 2 Samuel 22 speak of David’s seed enduring forever; Ps 89:11 mentions God’s crushing of Rahab, as David and his seed will do to their enemies (Ps 89:24; 2 Sam 22:37-43). The serpent’s humiliation is likewise historically fulfilled when the king’s enemies bow down and lick the dust (Ps 72:9). Likewise, outside of Israel the picture of foes being trod upon by their victors is common (as Haspecker and Lohfink also mentioned). Wifall agrees with Westermann for a denominative meaning of רַגַל from Akkadian *šēpu*, “foot,” and speculates that it had the same dual meaning that the English verb “foot” once had: “to tread upon” and “to seize” (however, it only meant “seize”

²⁵⁵Unger, *FG*, 24-62.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 237-40, 265.

when the foot of a bird of prey was doing the seizing, a meaning obviously unsuitable to Gen 3:15).²⁵⁷

Gen 3:15 is therefore not a direct prediction of the Messiah, but seen with Israel's royal ideology as a background, which is most clearly demonstrated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 (he must reign until he pits all enemies under his feet) and John in Revelation 12 (where the seed has become Christ and the Church), Irenaeus' interpretation of it is vindicated.²⁵⁸

1.9.6 Manfred Görg

In a literary and form-critical study, Görg expressed the opinion that Gen 3:14-15 is an insertion in the text of Genesis 3 which was made in connection with Hezekiah's religious reform, of which the destruction of the bronze serpent played a part (2 Kgs 18:4; Num 21:4-9). That the curse is not original is shown by the fact that no internal connection between Gen 3:14-15 and the rest of the chapter can be recognized; there is no mention of an upright snake in the previous verses. Also, curses do not belong in an aetiological narrative, and v. 16a is an added introduction to the punishment on the woman (v. 13a was obviously the original introduction), necessitated by the insertion of Gen 3:14-15. It is also problematic to introduce enmity in this curse, since enmity already existed on the part of the snake towards the woman. The enmity in Gen 3:15 must be something new. Therefore Görg looks in Israel's history to find the beginning of this enmity towards, or breaking off of friendship with, the snake. Thus the connection with Hezekiah's reform.²⁵⁹

Görg argues for an Egyptian derivation of the root רָשָׁע , saying that there is no satisfactory Semitic derivation. He notes that Akkadian *šapu* with the meaning "mit Füßen treten" is only postulated on the basis of the noun *šēpu*, "foot." He does not discuss other attempts to relate רָשָׁע to other Semitic languages, but says they have not been successful. A satisfactory derivation, however, is found in Egyptian *hf*, or the reduplicated *hfhf*, which is also found as *šp*, and *špšp*, and has the general meaning of damage, or demolish, which would apply well to the action of destroying a statue. Görg says it corresponds well with the Hebrew כָּתַח used to describe what Hezekiah did to the bronze snake, and postulates that this snake was a large bronze statue of an upright cobra, after the Egyptian manner, perhaps with wings. This supposition makes the meaning of Gen 3:15 transparent: Egyptian religious influence, symbolized by the cobra, was a threat to Israelite faith. This snake was friendly with and deceived a "woman" (Pharaoh's daughter, who became Solomon's wife), who was used for the downfall of man (Solomon). This woman is a prototype of the foreign woman, who is seen again in Hezekiah's mother Abi (2 Kgs 18:2; cf. 2 Chr 29:1, Abijah), whom Görg detects in a leading opposition role early in Hezekiah's reign. Hezekiah is therefore the seed of the woman, who destroys the snake statue in fulfillment of Gen 3:15. As for the action of the

²⁵⁷Walter Wifall, "Gen 3:15 – A Protevangelium?" *CBQ* 36 (1974): 361-64. See n. 22, p. 364.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 364-65.

²⁵⁹Manfred Görg, "Das Wort zur Schlange (Gen 3,14f): Gedanken zum sogenannten Protoevangelium," *BN* 19 (1982), 122-131.

snake against the man's heel; the opposition of head and heel alone would not indicate a fatal as opposed to a non-fatal injury, since as others have pointed out, a snake bite is no less life destroying than the crushing carried out by the man. The fact that the snake is pictured as still attacking after its head is crushed (Gen 3:15e follows Gen 3:15d) indicates the figurative meaning of the picture, and shows that even when Nehushtan is smashed, the snake remains a menace. Egypt is the continuation of the seduction force of the snake, as is clear from Isa 27:1, where the three chaos figures (as Gunkel enumerated them) possibly stand for Egypt, as Rahab does elsewhere. Only later readers ignorant of the original historical circumstances could see in this passage, therefore, a protoevangelium, although one could connect Jesus to it by viewing him as another Hezekiah.²⁶⁰

1.9.7 Knut Holter

Holter criticizes the view of von Rad who says we should ignore what the serpent is and concentrate on what it says; it is hard to imagine J using the loaded word שָׁפָן without any symbolical meaning. He suggests that this symbolical meaning is present as representing Israel's neighbors/enemies, and the account is written as a somewhat disguised "criticism against the open internationalism in Solomon's foreign policy." This symbolic meaning is more likely than that which sees the serpent as symbolic of pagan religions, because the snake is viewed as something made by God; he made the nations, even though they are Israel's enemies, but he did not make snake worship. Animals are used to describe peoples elsewhere in J (Genesis 49), and in particular, snakes are used to describe Assyria in Isa 14:29; Egypt in Jer 46:22, and probably enemies preparing an invasion in Jer 8:17 (though literal snakes might also be in view). These texts show that it would be natural for the serpent in Gen 3:15 to metaphorically represent Israel's enemies. That verse describes a prolonged contest as indicated by the reference to offspring and the imperfect (iterative) verbs. The collective usages of the expression "ancient enmity" in Ezek 25:15; 35:5 to apply to Israel's political enemies (Philistia and Edom) shows that the word in Gen 3:15 can have political connotations. Holter thinks that Görg has erred by focussing on Egypt to the exclusion of the other nations around Israel in applying Gen 3:15 to the history of Israel.²⁶¹

1.9.8 Josef Haspecker & Norbert Lohfink

As the title of their article suggests ("Gn 3,15: ‚weil du ihm nach der Ferse schnappst'"), Haspecker & Norbert Lohfink argue that Gen 3:15e is not a prediction of what the snake will do to humans in the future so much as the justification for the curse; it is the *Begründungssatz* for why the snake's head should be crushed. Gen 3:15d-e therefore is not so much a picture of a battle that will take place as a judicial sentence.

The authors note that we could take the initial *waw* joining Gen 3:15e to Gen 3:15d (וַיִּשָּׁח) as an adversative which makes the last clause subordinate to the first. Combining this with the inchoative gives the idea, "he will crush your head, while you will only try (and fail) to bite, etc." This translation, by subordinating the last clause, does

²⁶⁰Ibid., 132-39.

²⁶¹Knut Holter, "The Serpent in Eden as a Symbol of Israel's Political Enemies: A Yahwistic Criticism of the Solomonic Foreign Policy?", *SJOT* 1 (1990), 106-12.

not digress from the curse but rather intensifies it, making the failure of the snake to inflict mortal damage part of his curse, and thus it reinforces the human salvation sense. The main problem for this translation, however, is that it requires the insinuation of the word “only” and the inchoative sense. If we ask what in the context would give this insinuation, the only answer is that which other interpreters have given; namely the head/heel antithesis, which suffers from the fact that a wound from the snake in the heel may be fatal.²⁶²

Haspecker and Lohfink therefore propose understanding the initial *waw* in Gen 3:15e as introducing a causal clause (GKC § 158a; Gesenius notes that as a rule, however, a causal clause is introduced with a causal preposition), “because,” which makes Gen 3:15e an explanation statement put at the end of the curse, explaining the guilt of the snake. In this interpretation, the curse begins and ends with such an explanation: “because you have done this” (v. 14), and “because you attack(ed) his heel.” It also presents the curse more as a judicial pronouncement than as a graphic image of a battle between a man and a snake.²⁶³

The authors note that usually an explanation statement uses the perfect tense, although the imperfect is possible, citing GKC § 158d; Deut 7:12; 8:20; 1 Kgs 8:33 (*sic*, 1 Kgs 8:35). As Gesenius notes, however, all these passages are in the context of a conditional future, where the punishments may be avoided, so they cannot provide a precedent for Gen 3:15. The authors argue, however, that in Gen 3:15e the *waw* is not strictly causal, but also comparative, as it introduces the idea of measure for measure. The English “as,” meaning both “because” and “like,” would suggest this dual sense better than the German “*weil*.”²⁶⁴

The authors then discuss four areas of comparison material which they believe make the case for the sense of “weil;” retaliation thought; a Ugaritic text; form critical studies; and ancient pictorial depictions. The retaliatory idea expressed in Gen 9:6, “he who sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed,” is expressed also in Gen 3:15 if translated “he will crush your head, because/like you tried to snap after his heel.”²⁶⁵

The authors also draw attention to a line in the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat, where El speaks to the goddess Anat after she demands revenge on Danel’s son Aqhat for scornfully refusing to sell her his bow and arrow which were made by Kothar-wa- Hasis. El gives her permission, and says, *dt-ydt-m qbk*, which they translate, “Zertreten, zertreten

²⁶²Josef Haspecker and Norbert Lohfink, “Gn 3,15: ‚weil du ihm nach der Ferse schnappst,‛” *Scholastik* 36 (1961), 359-60.

²⁶³*Ibid.*, 360-61.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 361.

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 362-63; *ANET*, 500.

soll werden, wer dir nachstellt.” Driver translates, “He who hinders you shall be utterly struck down,” while Coogan translates “Whoever slanders you will be crushed.”²⁶⁶

Gen 3:15 follows Westermann’s prophetic judgment announcement type, similarly to Gen 3:17-19; 4:10-12; 49:66-67; Deut 28:15-46, where there is given punishment, and reason for the punishment. Applied to Gen 3:15, the punishment is “he will crush your head,” and the reason is, “you snapped after his heel.” Further, it is typical in these prophetic judgments for there to be a verbal association between guilt and punishment; for example “eat” in Gen 3:17, and this common feature explains the double use of *אָכַל* in Gen 3:15.²⁶⁷

At this point, the authors raise two form-critical problems with their interpretation: judgment comes before the explanation, and the use of the imperfect (they could have added a third, syntactical problem, namely that the causal sense which they find in the *waw* is “as a rule” conveyed with a causal preposition). These exceptional uses are not impossible, but also are not normal. To reduce the number of deviations from the expected pattern, they propose that in fact the imperfect has a present/future connotation: the snake will continue to waylay humans (as the prediction of enmity implies), because it is its nature to do so; therefore the punishment to be inflicted is not only for the original offense, but for all of those which will be committed in the future.²⁶⁸

Finally, Haspecker and Lohfink draw attention to ancient depictions of battle and victory. If the background for Gen 3:15 was the primeval fight between God and the dragon, that would seem to argue for a non-causal translation of Gen 3:15e. Such a background is at most a foil for Gen 3:15, however, because a battle takes place with weapons, not a foot. The crushing of the head is either the end of the fight, or a victory gesture over a dead body. Such a gesture is seen, for example, in *Enuma elish* where Marduk tramples Tiamat’s dead body, and Naram-Sin of Akkad who is depicted after a victory standing on two dead bodies. These and other examples suggest that Gen 3:15 is a picture of complete victory, rather than of a battle.²⁶⁹

1.9.9 *Edouard Lipinski*

Lipinski cites biblical and comparative material which illuminates the humiliation of the curse. The three fates of the serpent (crawling on the belly, eating dust, and having the head crushed) are all images of the conquered enemy or at least expressive of deep humiliation. Crawling on the belly is shown to be an abomination in Lev 11:42; a vassal king (of Tyre) writes to his superior (Pharaoh Akhenaton) that he lies on his belly before him; a bas-relief shows a Syrian crawling on his stomach and

²⁶⁶J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (2nd ed.; original ed. by G. R. Driver; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977), 111 (Aqhat 18.i.19); Michael David Coogan, *Stories From Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 38.

²⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 365-67. Other examples given are, 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Sam 12:12; 1 Kgs 21:19; 2 Chr 12:5; 24:20; Hos 4:5-6.

²⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 369.

²⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 371.

imploing the grace of the king's servant. To eat (or lick) dust is an expression of humility for the snake or for men, in Isa 49:23; 65:12; Mi 7:17; Ps 72:9; and in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Descent of Ishtar*, and the *Pyramid Texts*. The crushing of the head is also an image of victory over an enemy from neo-Sumerian times; an Assyrian text, in particular, says "as that of a snake, I have [struck] your head with my foot."²⁷⁰

All of these parallels show that Gen 3:14-15 is a picture of victory for humankind over the snake, confirming Haspecker's and Lohfink's thesis. Lipinski disagrees with the explanation of these authors, however, for Gen 3:15e. Possibly prompted by Rashi, Lipinski repoints תִּשְׂרֹף as תִּשְׂרֹף from נִשְׂרַף, with the meaning "spit at" for the snake's injection of venom. He finds support for this in Job 9:17-18, where he also repoints the verb שָׂרַף, in which God is compared to a venomous snake who spits at Job in the storm, and leaves him without breath (describing the phenomenon of dispnoea, paralysis of the thoracic muscles, which is the result of the snake's venom). Gen 3:15 therefore depicts alternately victories and defeats for humanity, and is just a naturalistic aetiology. The *lex talion* aspect of the passage mentioned by Haspecker and Lohfink is more properly expressed by the humiliation of the snake as punishment for making Adam and Eve know their nakedness. He regards the eschatological and messianic interpretations of Gen 3:15 as invalid reinterpretations of the text in the Christian era.²⁷¹

1.9.10 Stephen Kempf

Kempf studied Gen 3:14-19 from a discourse grammar point of view. He does not focus on the meaning of Gen 3:15, but his study is of interest in light of the view of some that these verses are not original to the narrative. He concludes that these verses are both the grammatical peak and the climax of the discourse. This conclusion indicates that the whole chapter speaks of the origin of sin and a real fall which affects the future of the human race, not just an example of what can happen to anyone.

Gen 3:8-21 is a complex dialogue, consisting of the setting (v. 8), six conversational exchanges (vv. 9-19), and a closure (vv. 20-21). The exchanges (vv. 9-19) are "an abeyance paragraph" in which the main exchange is held in abeyance until the subdialogue is resolved (the initial interrogation of the man is held in abeyance by his implication of the woman, and in turn by her implication of the serpent, and then by the judgments on the serpent and the woman). The dialogue is "complex" because the man and woman do not simply answer the questions asked of them, but try to shift the focus away from themselves. In vv. 14-19 the Lord takes control of the dialogue, not allowing any further input from those addressed.²⁷²

Gen 3:14-15 are the fourth of the six exchanges. Gen 3:15 is an "Hortatory Paraphrase Paragraph" consisting of a thesis (the enmity portion; I will cause you and the woman to be enemies), and an antithetical paragraph (the battle portion). Kempf says that the "cursed are you" formula is the strongest of decrees issued by an authority, so that the

²⁷⁰Edouard Lipinski, "Etudes sur des textes «messianiques» de l'Ancien Testament," *Sem* 20 (1970), 42-44.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*, 45-47.

²⁷²Stephen Kempf, "Genesis 3:14-19: Climax of the Discourse?" *JOTT* 6 (1993), 358-59.

passive participle must be considered equal to the imperative (“the highest ranking form on the prominence scale of hortatory discourse”); likewise the “imperfect verbs are employed as mitigated imperatives.” He considers Gen 3:15d-e to be chiasmic in structure (relating “he” to “heel” and “head” to “you”), whereas most interpreters would probably see these as parallel contrastive, relating “he” to “you,” and “head” to “heel.”²⁷³

Kempf lists eight features which mark vv. 14-19 as the grammatical peak of Genesis 2-3: (1) there we see the “longest and most detailed account of the ideological and psychological view of the central character” (the Lord); (2) the verses speak to the future of humankind, including to the readers of the narrative; (3) it is the most complex part of the narrative, analytically; (4) rhetorical underlining (paraphrase of previously made points); (5) the phenomenon of the “crowded stage” in which all of the characters appear together at once; (6) heightened vividness; “each of the exchanges is left unresolved until the announcements of judgment” (vv. 14-19); (7) change of pace from “the long paraphrase paragraph in Gen. 3:17b-e to the short sentence in Gen. 3:17f: ‘Cursed is the ground;’” (8) poetic style.²⁷⁴

Gen 3:14-19 is also the climax of the discourse because “it points to the resolution of the narrative problem.” The problem is that the prohibition against eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was violated. “Almost all of God’s direct discourse in Genesis 2-3 constructs a verbal context for inferring punishment” (quoting Susan Lanser). Just as God’s pronounced word in Genesis 1 comes to pass, so does the penalty for disobedience, and the announcement of this penalty releases the tension introduced with the command in Gen 2:17. Identifying these verses as the climax helps answer questions interpreters have raised: God did tell the truth about man’s fate if he disobeyed; the death penalty was instituted. The whole narrative is about the origin of sin and describes a real fall.²⁷⁵

1.9.11 William LaSor

LaSor affirms the importance of the “grammatico-historical method” of exegesis for determining “as precisely as is humanly possible, given the data available to us in our day, what the passage [of Scripture] meant to those who first heard or read the passage.” However if the passage means nothing more to us than it did to the original hearers, “then it has only an antiquarian interest. It is not the word of God *to us*. At most, it may be the meeting-ground where God confronts us, but the confrontation is in the existential moment, and not in the written word.” There is “the ‘something more’ that was given by God in the divine inspiration, that makes the message equally valid as the word of God to succeeding generations.” This “something more” is the *sensus plenior*, and it is a

²⁷³ Ibid., 358-59, 362, 365. Francis I. Andersen says the primary contrast is between the two pronouns, although “head” versus “heel” is contrastive as well (*The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* [Paris: Mouton, 1974], 150).

²⁷⁴ Kempf, “Genesis 3:14-19,” 368-70.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 370-75.

complex problem to determine if the derivation of the fuller sense is in fact the word of God, rather than “just some pet idea of mine that I am imposing on Scripture.”²⁷⁶

LaSor sees the *sensus plenior* as the third level of meaning in Scripture. The first level is the literal, which includes figures of speech, and is that which is arrived at by grammatico-historical exegesis. The spiritual meaning is the second level, and is defined as “the timeless truth in a given passage of Scripture.” Some examples show the difference between the literal and spiritual meanings. The literal meaning of Gen 12:4 is that a certain male named Abram left a place called Haran at the advanced age of 75. In Hos 11:3 (Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk), “the literal meaning is something more than the sum of words.” The speaker is the God of Israel; Ephraim is the northern kingdom, or more likely Israel and Judah. Learning to walk may mean that the Lord had given Israel the necessary training for a young nation to survive, “or it may apply specifically to the revealed will in the Torah.” Interpreters may differ, “but something like this is the literal meaning.”

The context of Gen 12:4 “is God’s sovereign election,” and the spiritual meaning of that verse is “that a man of faith responds in obedience to God’s call, regardless of time or circumstances.” For Hos 11:3 the spiritual lesson is that the Lord’s “sovereign choice is based on his love, and His revelation of His will to His people arises out of that love and looks for a response of loving obedience.” When we arrive at these spiritual meanings, however,

we have something far different, or far less, than the New Testament writers found in the Old Testament. We may have valuable spiritual truths that can be built into a system of biblical theology, but we do not seem to have anything that approaches the significance of the words of our Lord when He spoke of the Scriptures being “fulfilled.”²⁷⁷

There is therefore a third level of meaning, called *sensus plenior*, or “the fuller sense.” LaSor uses Raymond Brown’s definition as a starting point:

The *sensus plenior* is that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a Biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation.²⁷⁸

LaSor notes the surface validity of the objection that grammatico-historical exegesis is frustrated if we cannot discover the meaning intended by the author, which must be the case if the fuller sense is not intended (at least clearly) by the human author. However LaSor says Scripture requires us to understand that in prophecy, there is and must be a fuller sense, which is implied in the very concept of prophecy.²⁷⁹ This fuller sense, then,

²⁷⁶William Sanford LaSor, “Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*,” *TB* 29 (1978), 50-51.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 51-53.

²⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 54. Source for Brown is *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (S.T.D. diss.; Baltimore: St. Mary’s University, 1955), 92. Other articles by Brown are “The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*,” *CBQ* 15 (1953), 141-62; and “The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years,” *CBQ* 25 (1963), 262-285.

²⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 54-55.

“can be discovered by attempting to relate the situation [in which the prophecy is given] and the prophecy to the on-going redemptive purpose of God.” This relationship between prophecy and the on-going history of redemption is the controlling factor which avoids the use of the fuller sense as a means of reading subjective meanings or personal preferences into Scripture interpretation.²⁸⁰

LaSor then discusses Gen 3:15 as his first example of the fuller sense. It is ridiculous to suggest the passage is explaining why women hate snakes. The immediate context (Gen 3:14-19) speaks of future generations as well as judgments, while the larger context “tells of the satanic origin of the temptation (using the word ‘satanic’ in its basic meaning of opposed to God’s revealed will),” and of “the ultimate triumph over the serpent.” In the fuller sense, “I do not find the expression “the seed of the woman” to be a prophecy of the Virgin Mary or the Virgin Birth, but I do find the fullness of meaning in some as-yet-unspecified member of the human race who would destroy the satanic serpent, thus playing a key role in God’s redemptive plan. In that sense, the passage is indeed the first enunciation of the good news.”²⁸¹

1.10 *Summary of Recent Interpretations of Gen 3:15*

Hengstenberg and Kline (first and last in § 1.8) seem to be the two greatest defenders of the last 200 years of the view of Gen 3:15 as a proto-Gospel, though neither would defend the Lutheran view of Gen 3:15. This difference from Luther does not mark a retreat, however, since their views for the most part are found in interpreters from Justin to Pareus. Kline is practically unique in finding Old Testament fulfillments of Gen 3:15d-e, but even here his interpretations are consistent with some of the church fathers who connected the Old Testament dragon figure with the serpent of Genesis 3.

The modern period shows the same basic range of opinions regarding Gen 3:15 as has been evident since the beginning. The major difference in interpretation in the past was that between Jews, who gave a predominantly naturalistic interpretation, and Christians, who consistently regarded it as figurative, and of at least some importance as a promise of salvation. Today the major difference would probably be between rationalists and conservatives (evangelicals or Catholics), although as we have seen from the WBC and NICOT commentaries, and Lewis’s essay published by *JETS*, the latter do not necessarily give Gen 3:15 much more importance than the former.

The history of interpretation of Gen 3:15 would not give confidence to anyone hoping to build a consensus of interpretation. If anything, the range of interpretation today is wider than ever. The essays of Wifall, Görg, and Holter, however, have taken some steps away from the rationalistic naturalistic interpretation in the direction of the figurative collective interpretation of Justin, Hengstenberg, Kline, etc., since they find a figurative interpretation of the woman’s seed as Israel, and of the serpent’s seed as the national enemies of Israel to be reasonable. Similarly, Haspecker and Lohfink and Lipinski have drawn attention to some comparative material which points in the same direction. We will see that the basis for such an interpretation is much stronger than these

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 55-56.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 56-57.

authors have indicated, and we will see that in fact the apostles base the New Testament interpretation of Gen 3:15 on just such an Old Testament understanding of Gen 3:15.

CHAPTER II

INITIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 3:15

2.1 Introduction

We now turn to a more detailed examination of how Gen 3:15 has been interpreted in the Bible itself. Since we will be following a chronological (i.e., biblical-theological) approach, we begin with the interpretation of Gen 3:15 that might have been made from information available to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; the initial interpretation of Adam and Eve. This is admittedly a somewhat speculative endeavor, but speculation is reduced if one finds evidence in the text itself for this initial interpretation, as others (especially Luther) have claimed to find. The next step will be to discuss what the initial interpretation might be for the first “implied readers” of the narrative, namely, the typical Israelite fellow countryman of the author. The reason for distinguishing the interpretation of Adam and Eve from that of the initial readers of Genesis 3 is that Genesis 3 records information in narrative form apart from the spoken dialogue which may (or may not) give additional clues to interpretation. While identification of the first implied readers depends on one’s views concerning the date and authorship of Genesis 3 as it has come down to us, I think it makes little difference, in terms of what these readers would be able to understand, whether one places these readers in the time of Moses (the present author’s view), or at the time when most scholars view the J document as coming together. We will not be dealing with any hypothetical literary prehistory of Genesis 3 in this dissertation, although I assume that the material in it was handed down in some form from our first parents.

2.2 Initial Interpretation of Adam and Eve

2.2.1 Gen 3:15 Examined by Itself

In this section, we deal primarily with the meaning of the words involved in the second part of the curse on the serpent. We discuss these as Hebrew words, and therefore examine the whole Old Testament and comparative material as necessary for their understanding, while keeping in mind that they must be a translation of what Adam and Eve heard, therefore not the exact words themselves.

As for the identity of the tempter, those who have argued that the serpent was a mere instrument of the devil explained the description of him in Gen 3:1 as an animal to be a statement of appearances. That he was a most clever animal is how he appeared to Adam and Eve, who, in their child-like innocence, could not have known that there was a satanic spirit speaking through the snake. The description of him as a mere animal, then, is not the opinion of the author of those words, but a description of how he appeared to Adam and Eve. We will discuss later whether there is precedent for such use of language of appearances by biblical narrators, but for now we note that in this view, the arguments that there was more than an animal involved are arguments from hindsight, or further revelation. This being the case, it must be true that the first interpretation of the curse on the serpent would be a naturalistic interpretation. The serpent is a mere animal, and his offspring are future generations of snakes. The woman can be no other than Eve, and her offspring is the human race. The conflict between them is generic (i.e., commonly and

repeatedly occurring between different members of each race) and enduring, and is to be taken literally.

M. Woudstra objected that animals are never said to have “offspring,” thus v. 15 itself would be against the naturalistic interpretation. He objected against the one example (besides Gen 3:15) given in BDB (Gen 7:3; male and female animals come on the ark in order “to keep alive seed on the earth”) because the animals in question did not have any offspring at that time. He prefers the translation “to keep their kind alive.”²⁸² But the fact that they keep their kind alive by producing offspring in the future would seem to make this objection invalid. The same use of “seed” for preservation of future posterity is seen in the case of Lot’s oldest daughter, who suggested that she and her sister make Lot drunk so that they could lie with him “and keep alive from our father offspring” (Gen 19:32, 34). Obviously the human “kind” is not in view here, but Lot’s posterity, or offspring. In any case, the question is whether the expression “seed of the serpent” would be unintelligible to Adam and Eve in a naturalistic interpretation; such a view seems unlikely. In any case, we do not know the exact words spoken to Adam and Eve, since biblical Hebrew was not spoken in the Garden of Eden, so רָעַץ is a translation, and the nuances of the Hebrew probably should not be stressed.

On the meaning of the word רָעַץ (offspring, seed), we must also address the argument that a virgin birth is somehow implied. Two kinds of arguments have been advanced for this view. The first, offered by a few commentators, takes “seed” as *semen virile*. Since women do not have this seed, “seed of the woman” suggests the miraculous. This view seems very poorly thought out. If the seed is *semen virile*, then “seed of the woman” suggests nonsense, not the miraculous, like “egg of the man.” As Hamilton says, it is “an oxymoron if there ever was one.”²⁸³ It does not suggest offspring at all, therefore not a virgin birth. A second argument acknowledges that seed means offspring, but “seed of the woman” is to be read “seed of the woman only, without participation of man.” Other passages which refer to a woman’s seed (Gen 4:25; 16:10; 24:60) do not suggest a virgin birth because in each of these cases the involvement of a man is implied. Similarly, Luther appeared in some passages to take “seed” as *semen virile*, but his acknowledgement that “seed of the woman” means all her offspring in general shows that he is really relying on the fact that it is an unusual expression, not that it by itself suggests the miraculous. He overstated how unusual it was, by saying that Gen 3:15 was the only place it was found. To take “her seed” in Gen 3:15 as “her seed, produced without the involvement of man” is an assumption, not a translation. Even Luther did not maintain that Adam and Eve held to this view. In fact he may have wanted to, but he could not, since in his view, Eve regarded Cain her first-born as God incarnate in fulfillment of Gen 3:15 (as proved by Gen 4:1), and of course she knew that he was not the product of a virgin birth. The weakness in this second argument is shown in the fact that historically it has developed completely into an argument from hindsight, as expressed by, e.g., Delitzsch, and others, who acknowledge that the concept of the woman’s seed does not

²⁸²Marten H. Woudstra, “Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15,” *CTJ* 6 (1971): 195-96; BDB, 283.

²⁸³Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 199.

suggest the virgin birth, but the phrase was designed to coincide with it. But if that were the case, what are we to infer from the expression “seed of Abraham” and “seed of David”? Perhaps the weakest part of the argument is that it depends on identifying the woman as the mother of Jesus, not Eve, and therefore on an exclusively individual interpretation for the woman’s seed.

Another issue involved in interpreting “seed” is whether Gen 3:15 itself gives any indication that the seed of the woman must be an individual. Luther said that only God could do the work described there (crushing Satan), therefore the seed must be God incarnate, therefore an individual. Adam was marvelously enlightened by God to understand this fact, and Gen 4:1 is the proof of it. The flaw in this argument is that God’s help in defeating the serpent does not require (in terms of Gen 3:15 itself) his incarnation. As for Gen 4:1, we will see there is a more convincing way to refer that passage to Gen 3:15. A second argument for an individual seed is that Gen 3:15 is a picture of single combat (e.g., Pareus, Kline), with “he” (the “seed”) opposed to “you” (the serpent). The serpent is an individual, therefore the seed is as well. Logically, however, one could argue just as easily that because seed is collective, “you” also is collective, standing for the serpent and his offspring, and that the picture is one of generic, repeated combat, not single combat. In any case, Pareus and Kline do not try to show that Adam and Eve understood the verse this way. A third, similar, argument advanced for seeing an individual seed comes from noting the shift in balance in the verse. Vos noted (see § 1.8.17) that in Gen 3:15b we read of the snake and the woman (a, a’); in Gen 3:15c we read of the two seeds (b, b’); but in Gen 3:15d-e, we read of the snake and the woman’s seed (a, b’). Where “the woman” is expected, we find the pronoun “him” instead, which takes the focus off of the woman as head of the race (and thus off of the present), and places it on some one of her descendants in the future. This shift in emphasis is an interesting aspect of the verse. For now, we will note that there are other explanations. Not all who have noticed this shift made an argument for an individual from it (e.g., Vorster).²⁸⁴ Again, one could argue that although the focus does shift from the woman, it does not necessarily go to an individual; the collective “you” for the serpent and his seed would partially restore the balance if the woman’s seed were collective. One could explain the shift in focus away from the woman by the view that fighting snakes will be the man’s role, not the woman’s (generically speaking). Finally, to use the argument consistently, one would have to say that the woman’s seed is collective in the first case (agreeing with that of the serpent), but singular in the second (agreeing with “you”), or that “he” does not really have “seed” as an antecedent. If “seed” is not the antecedent, then Gen 3:15 is in fact a riddle, as some have argued, perhaps pointing to an unspecified individual as opposed to the collective seed in the first part of the verse. But if it is a riddle, then the meaning could not be clear to Adam and Eve. For the initial interpretation, then, the collective meaning of עֶרְוָה as offspring in general, taken literally, not morally, seems certain.

Another word-based objection to a naturalistic interpretation is that animals are never in the rest of Scripture at enmity with humans. Only rational beings can be at

²⁸⁴Vorster says that since this is a curse on the serpent itself, “you” is found in Gen 3:15d rather than “your seed” (“Messianic Interpretation of Gen 3:15,” 114-15).

enmity. But this cannot be an argument against a naturalistic initial interpretation, since it is an argument from hindsight. This snake apparently was rational, and was at enmity with humans; the curse would suggest a continuation of this same enmity; the difference being (as many commentators have noted), that now men will be aware of it and fight back.

The meaning of the word “enmity” is not generally considered problematic because, even though it only occurs four times outside of Gen 3:15 (Num 35:21-22; Ezek 25:15; 35:5), the word is associated with the very common word “enemy” (אֹיֵב), and its general meaning is presumably clear; it is that state which exists between enemies. S. Rosenbaum argued instead that it has a very specific technical and legal meaning in Israelite homicide law. Passages such as Exod 21:12-14; Num 35:6-34; Deut 4:42; 19:4-13; Josh 20:5 distinguish between involuntary manslaughter and premeditated murder. The Numbers passage is the longest of these, where we also find the term for enmity used in Gen 3:15. Rosenbaum notes that enmity seems to be distinguished from common hatred because the latter “is twice qualified by the expression *mitmol silsom* [*sic*; hatred beforehand] while *'eyvah* is not.” He suggests therefore that enmity is “a different *kind* of antipathy than that which arises in the daily course of human events.” This antipathy is one of rivalry, where the antagonist seeks to obtain something that belongs to his victim, or sees his victim as a threat to his position. As examples, he cites the verbal use of the root in Exod 23:22 where God says he will have enmity towards Israel’s enemies, helping them to dispossess the Canaanites; and 1 Sam 18:29, where Saul becomes David’s constant enemy. The use of this word cannot mean that Saul hates David; in fact he loves him (1 Sam 16:21). Instead, it expresses the fact that Saul and David are rivals. “Personal affection takes a backseat to reasons of state.” Likewise the use of enmity in Ezekiel is in the context of national rivalry over land between Israel and the Philistines and Edomites.²⁸⁵

Applying the meaning of “rivalry” or “a state of permanent belligerency” to Gen 3:15, we can see that the reason for such a punishment is not because the serpent deceived Eve; the punishment of enmity for deceit would hardly correspond to the principle of “measure for measure.” Rather, the reason is

broadly speaking, the real fruit of that deception which took place in Eden was murder. By robbing Adam and Eve of immortality the snake and its descendants are the murderers of our ancestors and, by extension, of ourselves as well. Any human death, whatever the apparent cause, is another crime to be laid at the den of the serpent.²⁸⁶

We note first that Rosenbaum overlooks the fact that in Numbers 35 enmity is used synonymously with hatred. “If with hatred (בְּשׂוֹנְאָה) he shoves someone or knowingly throws something at him, or with enmity (בְּאֵיֵבָה) strikes him so that he dies” (vv. 20-21). Similarly for the collective enmity of Edom against Israel in Ezek 35:5, v. 11 expands on the meaning of it, using the words “anger,” “jealousy,” and “hatred” (אֵרָא, קִנְיָה, and שׂוֹנְאָה). Similarly v. 6 indicates that it is not a dispassionate seeking of Israel’s land for

²⁸⁵Stanley N. Rosenbaum, “Israelite Homicide Law and the Term ‘Enmity’ in Genesis 3:15,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 2 (1984): 145-50.

²⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 147, 150.

themselves, but a love of bloodshed, that motivated Edom. Likewise the “ancient enmity” on the part of the Philistines (Ezek 25:15) is exercised with “malice of the soul” (שָׂטָן בְּרָצוֹן). As for Saul and David, the fact that Saul loved David in 1 Samuel 16 does not mean he cannot hate him in 1 Samuel 18. Saul changed his outlook toward David in some way, according to Rosenbaum; why not his attitude as well? In any case, if there were a “technical” definition of enmity, it would not necessarily come into play in Gen 3:15, especially as understood by Adam and Eve. Enmity is simply that state which exists between enemies.

The meaning of the word שָׁוַף is less clear. We have noted the ancient translations, which range from watch (LXX), keep/remember (*Tg. Onqelos*), strike/wound/kill (*Palestinian Tgs.*), crush (Vg, Aquila), lie in wait (Vg), as well as more recent interpretations such as Hengstenberg’s argument that the double accusative requires a verb that involves bodily contact, like “strike” (נָכָה), and more modern versions of Vg’s view that there are two roots (שָׁוַף / שָׂאָף) or at least two meanings involved (such as crush/snap at). We will cite here some recent specialized studies in this area.

P. Haupt related שָׁוַף in Gen 3:15 to an Akkadian denominative verb “crush” from *šēpu*, “foot.” He also noted the Targum rendering of Hebrew דָּכָא (crush; *piel*) in Ps 94:5 with Aramaic שָׁוַף, and that the same Hebrew verb is used for crushing under foot in Lam 3:34. In Gen 3:15, however, Haupt says שָׁוַף does not mean to “tread under foot” but “to tread on the heels of, i. e. to track, stalk, hunt down, waylay, seek to injure, persecute.” Thus the Vg *insidiaberis* for the second use is essentially correct. Haupt thinks the meaning of “persecute” fits both cases of שָׁוַף in Gen 3:15, also in the two other Old Testament cases. Job 9:17 he translates “he would pursue me with a storm,” and Ps 139:11 “if I thought that darkness would stalk me.” The problem with the double accusative is eliminated by removing “head” and “heel” from the verse: “They will persecute thee, thou wilt persecute them.” The meaning is naturalistic.²⁸⁷

G. R. Driver notes that the Old Testament occurrences of שָׁוַף are “insufficient to establish its precise meaning.” He examines the post-Biblical Hebrew usage and notes that שָׁוַף and כָּפַף are “more or less interchangeable,” with the general meaning of “rub,” “polish,” “crush” (שָׁוַף), and “rubbed,” “ground down,” and figuratively, “bowed down” (שָׁפַף); and that שָׁוַף in particular “is used of trampling things under foot: e.g., גִּישׁוּף בְּרַגְלֵי אָדָם וּבְרַגְלֵי בַהֲמָה ‘it (*sc.* filth) is trampled down by the feet of men and by the feet of cattle.” He rejects this meaning for Gen 3:15 since it is unsuitable in its second use there. He notes that in Syriac the same two roots are confused, and says “the underlying idea is clearly that of friction, whether caused by rubbing or polishing or by crawling on the ground.” For *šwp* he gives examples of the sense rub (transitive and intransitive), drag, and crawl, or creep. One sense in Arabic suggests a cloud skimming over the earth.²⁸⁸

Driver applies these meanings to the four Old Testament cases of שָׁוַף: in Gen 3:15 he takes the Syriac meaning and says “it means ‘rubbed’, ‘abraded’ or ‘grazed’

²⁸⁷ Haupt, “Curse on the Serpent,” 155-61. *CAD* suggests “march” as the meaning of the Akkadian verb, but adds a question mark (p. 17:2.307). Similarly W. von Soden suggests “schreiten?”, to walk, step (*AHW*, 1215) for the denominative.

²⁸⁸ Gordon R. Driver, “Some Hebrew Verbs, Nouns, and Pronouns,” *JTS* 30 (1928-29): 375-76.

rather than ‘bruised’, which implies a blow,” giving the translation, “it shall graze thy head and thou shalt graze its heel.” In Ps 139:11 and Job 9:17 he takes the Arabic meaning: “surely the darkness shall sweep close over me” and “for He (*sc.* God) sweepeth close over me in the tempest.”²⁸⁹

A. Schulz’s study has been mentioned already in connection with the LXX translation of Gen 3:15; he thinks there are two homonyms used here, agreeing with the two roots שׁוּף ; “crush,” and “snap after,” and this pun cannot be translated. Schulz agreed with König that the LXX translation of Ps 139:11 with καταπατεῖν is essentially correct, understandable in a figurative sense; “depressing darkness.”²⁹⁰

A. Guillaume discusses Gen 3:15 as an instance of paronomasia. Noting Driver’s rejection of the meaning “crush” as unsuitable in the second use, he says “what is imperatively demanded is a verb which would express not only the action of man and snake, but also, if one is right in finding a *double entente* here, would bring those actions into the orbit, and take up the notion, of *enmity*.” He finds such a meaning from the Arabic noun sometimes spelled *šafah* (as if from šwf) and related verb. The verb means either to hate or to fester (as of a wound), while the noun means “enmity” or “festering wound.” The idea of Gen 3:15 would then be that both parties “inflict swelling and festering wounds” on each other. For the first instance, the crushing of the head would be suggested; for the second, a poisonous bite is implied, since that is what gives the swelling and festering wound.²⁹¹

The paronomasia would be “in the equivalence of שׁוּף and אֵיבָה , which hints at its cognate accusative שִׁפָּה ; ‘wound’ and ‘enmity’.” It is thus like Samson’s riddle in which the double meaning “lion” and “honey” are found in the word אֵרִי , but דָּבַשׁ is written the second time, just as אֵיבָה appears instead of שִׁפָּה ; in Gen 3:15. Guillaume harmonizes his proposed understanding of שׁוּף in Gen 3:15 with the second root שׁוּף given the meaning of “crush,” “trample on” in BDB, by translating five cases with the verb “hate” (Ps 56:2, 3; 57:4; Amos 8:4; Ezek 36:3; in this last case the LXX translates with $\mu\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\omega$). The remaining case where the meaning “trample upon” is found is Amos 2:7: “They trample upon the heads of the poor, as upon the dust of the ground,” which he says “as it stands the verse cannot be translated without misgiving.”²⁹²

Wolfram von Soden said that שׁוּף cannot be explained by relating it to an Akkadian verb. Although the difference between crushing the head and biting the heel might suggest there are two homonyms in Gen 3:15, also in Job 9:17; Ps 139:11, von Soden says there is no interchange of middle *waw* and middle *aleph* fientive verbs in

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 377.

²⁹⁰ Schulz, “Gn 3,15,” 353-55.

²⁹¹ A. Guillaume, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament,” *JSS* 9 (1964): 286-87.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 287-88.

Hebrew, so שׁוּף should not be compared to שָׂאָף. He thinks that one can translate all four instances of שׁוּף with “hart angreifen,” attack hard, assail hard.²⁹³

To see whether שׁוּף could be used in the same sense in both cases in Gen 3:15, as Hengstenberg, von Soden, and others suggest, we might study the semantic range of some “attack” words that involve bodily contact; as Hengstenberg already noted, the very common חָקַן, “smite, strike,” can be used for a worm eating a plant; thus “bite” may be involved. We might also look at דָּכָא / דָּכָה, following Haupt’s observation of the Aramaic rendering of this verb with שׁוּף. But דָּכָא / דָּכָה consistently has the specific meaning to crush or be crushed or broken, with the figurative meaning of oppress(ed) or contrite. There are other words, however, which are sometimes translated “crush,” which also have a more general meaning of wound or attack.

Augustine saw the crushing of Leviathan’s heads in Ps 74:13, 14 as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15 in his moralistic interpretation. The verbs used there are שָׁבַר (break) and רָצַץ (crush; both are *piel*). Besides Ps 74:14, רָצַץ is used of crushing Abimelech’s skull in Judg 9:53.²⁹⁴ The word is also used figuratively for infliction of distress and oppression (e.g., 2 Chr 16:10). Significantly for our purposes, it is also used in the general meaning of attack, as seen in its use for the mutual attacks made by the unborn children Esau and Jacob against each other. The children prefigured their personal animosity, as well as that between the nations descended from them, by striking each other in the womb (Gen 25:22-23; the *hithpolel* is used). As they both were born without injury, the meaning of “crush” is unsuitable, but the violent nature of the attacks is suggested by Rebekah’s concern because of them. These attacks continued through the birth process itself, as Jacob *seized the heel* of his brother. The range in meaning of רָצַץ therefore suggests the possibility that שׁוּף could be used in Gen 3:15 to indicate the strike of a snake’s fangs against the heel of a man (a bite), as well as the strike of a man’s foot against the head of a snake (crushing it).

The range of meaning of the verb מָחַץ is also instructive. This word is used 14 times in the Old Testament, and in at least three of these cases it expresses the crushing of the head: Num 24:17 (prophecy of a star from Jacob crushing the foreheads of Moab, and the skulls of the sons of Seth); Judg 5:26 (piercing Sisera’s temple with a tent peg); and Ps 68:22 (God will crush the heads of his enemies). Hab 3:13 and Ps 110:6 also speak of crushing the head but there some interpret “head” as rulers. This word is also used in a more general sense of attack, or wound. In Num 24:8 it is used for attacking (or piercing) with arrows, so this word meaning “crush” could conceivably be used for the piercing attack of a snake’s fangs against the heel (see also Deut 32:39, “I wound, I also heal;” similarly Job 5:18).

I therefore disagree with those who say that the meaning of “strike” is unsuitable in Gen 3:15d because it is not suitable in Gen 3:15e, and agree with interpreters such as Hengstenberg and von Soden who say that the general meaning of attack (with contact) is implied, and that such a use is suitable for an animal’s bite. The use of the double

²⁹³Wolfram von Soden, “Zum hebräischen Wörterbuch,” *UF* 13 (1981): 160-61.

²⁹⁴“The very peculiar form וְרָצַץ” (*hiphil*) is used here; (GKC § 67p).

accusative seems to also indicate this general meaning of attack, rather than the specific meaning of crush: “he will strike you on the head” (with crushing implied) makes better sense than “he will crush you on the head.” The single accusative (which would be, “he will crush your head”) is used in the passages cited above where *רצד* and *מחך* indicate the crushing of the head directly. The word “strike” is an appropriate English word to use since it not only indicates an attack, but bodily contact as well (thus satisfying the “place of action” function of the second accusative mentioned by Hengstenberg), and it is an appropriate word to describe a snake’s attack. It also has figurative uses, but other words would have to be used to make sense of *רש* in Ps 139:11 (“press upon me”) and Job 9:17 (“buffet me”). The difference in meaning of the verb in Gen 3:15d-e, then, may be based not on the verb itself, but on the subject of the verb and the part of the body that is struck.

It is rather striking that the contention of Hengstenberg that the second accusative is used to specify the place of action of the verb has been unanswered, and in fact unaddressed, by those who argue for meanings such as “lie in wait,” or “snap after,” or “strike at” (which applies to a hit or a miss), except for Haupt, who simply eliminates head and heel from the text. Gesenius says the use of the second accusative in Gen 3:15 “more closely determines the nearer object by indicating the part or member specially affected by the action” and cites as examples Ps 3:8 (strike my enemies on the cheek), Gen 37:21 (let us not smite him in the life [*רש*], i.e., kill him), Deut 22:26 (slays him in the life [*רש*]), 2 Sam 3:27 (he struck him on the 5th rib), Jer 2:16 (they have shaved you on the head), and Deut 33:11 (strike on the loins those who rise against him).²⁹⁵ Spurrell calls head and heel “accusatives of nearer definition” and says “the double accusative after the rendering ‘*lie in wait for*’ is difficult,” and, “the only meaning which can be philologically defended is ‘*crush*.’”²⁹⁶

We will postpone further consideration of the meaning of *רש* until we establish other passages as fulfillments of or allusions to Gen 3:15; meanwhile, we will tentatively use the translation “strike” as in “strike a blow.”

We next turn to the question of whether anything in v. 15 by itself indicates that this part of the curse is a blessing, or promise of victory to Adam and Eve, or to their offspring. In part this would depend on what weight one would attach to the fact that v. 15 is the first intimation that Adam and Eve will not immediately die as one would expect based on the threat “on the day you eat of it you shall die.” God’s second question to Adam (Gen 3:11) would recall this threat to Adam’s mind. When Eve hears of the future enmity between herself and the serpent, it is the first clue she has that she will not immediately die, and when Adam hears “her offspring,” it is his first indication that he will not die that day. Thus the single word (in Hebrew) “her offspring” is Adam’s first clue that the the day of his offence is not the day of his literal death; he shall survive and produce offspring. We might add that this single word is also the serpent’s first clue that he has not been successful in bringing about the end of the human race in the very beginning; instead, that race will be his downfall.

²⁹⁵GKC § 117ll. The SP for Deut 33:11 has “loins” in the construct state, in agreement with the view that the MT form is due to enclitic *mem*, in which case the verse is not an example of the double accusative.

²⁹⁶G. J. Spurrell, *Notes on the Text of the Book of Genesis* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986), 42-43.

In part also this question of whether there is hope in Gen 3:15 itself would seem to depend on whether one focusses on the head-heel antithesis mentioned by Calvin, Hengstenberg, Kline, and others to show man's superiority in the conflict, or on the fact that the snake has the same ability to ruin his opponent as the man has (Rashi, von Rad and others). Consequently we will turn to contextual arguments, beginning with the relationship of v. 15 to v. 14, which tells us that this is a curse on the serpent.

2.2.2 Relationship of Gen 3:15 to Gen 3:14

The condemnation of the snake to crawl on his belly and eat dust, as Lipinski and others have shown, and as one would logically conclude even without the comparative material, is a curse of abject humiliation. V. 15 is a continuation of the curse; the conjunction at the start of the verse introduces another punishment, some have said a heightening of punishment; the reversal of the usual word order makes enmity the emphatic word in the first clause. This enmity which results in the battle scene described in the second part of the verse (whether generic, collective, or individual), is therefore a continuation of the curse. If the outcome of this enmity is that both parties are destroyed, then it would seem to be a logical necessity to conclude that man himself (not just his circumstances, as in vv. 16-19) also is cursed in this verse. Man gains a reprieve, but he (or, generically, many) will survive only to destroy the snake and to be destroyed by it. So when von Rad says "the terrible point of this curse is the hopelessness of this struggle in which both will ruin each other," and yet points out that "the woman and the man are not cursed (it is unthinking to speak of their malediction)," he holds two mutually contradictory views of the curse. If it is not a curse on man (as von Rad correctly points out), then it is a curse only on the enemy of man. If it is a curse on the enemy of man, then logic and common sense dictate that it is a blessing to man. As is stated so well in the Talmud, "From the blessing of the righteous you can infer the curse for the wicked and from the curse of the wicked you may infer the blessing for the righteous;"²⁹⁷ thus a curse pronounced on the wicked one implies a blessing to his enemy, if he is righteous. We recall here Westermann's form-critical pronouncement about curses or announcements of punishment: "it is not possible that such a form has either promise or prophecy as its primary or even its secondary meaning." The question is whether the scientific findings of form critics should be allowed to nullify common sense. If Westermann's view were true, Balak should not have cared whether Balaam blessed or cursed Israel, but he said, "come and curse these people ... perhaps then I will be able to defeat them" (Num 22:6). It seems that Balak was not aware of this strict form-critical limit on the implied meaning of curses, for he thought that a curse on his enemies might help him prevail over them. Similarly, if the enemy of man is cursed in Gen 3:15, might we not expect that man may prevail over him in combat? When Balaam finishes his first oracle, blessing Israel without mentioning any curse on Moab at all, Balak says "what have you done *to me*?" (Num 23:11); following the same line of reasoning, Gen 3:15 is of benefit to those not cursed. When Balaam predicted that a star from Jacob, a scepter from Israel, would crush the foreheads of Moab (Num 24:17), was it not a prophecy and a promise to Israel as well as a curse on Moab? If not, why would Israelites have cared to

²⁹⁷ B. Yoma 38b (*The Babylonian Talmud*, vol. 5: *Yoma* [London: Soncino, 1938], 180).

preserve the account at all? Westermann's pronouncement must therefore be rejected. The problem with viewing the curse on the serpent as a promise to man is not form-critical; rather, the problem is explaining how the curse is a promise if man himself is bitten by the snake. Even if he survives, he is going to die one day anyway (v. 19).

Hengstenberg and Kline stressed that the ability of the snake to only strike at the heel is part of the curse, part of the serpent's degradation to only crawl on his belly; therefore to argue that the snake-bite in the curse is fatal is to argue that the curse is ineffective against the snake. One might respond that it is this degradation that allows man to crush his head; but man too is still destroyed (so we are back to von Rad; both destroy each other). The argument that the limitation to striking the heel is part of the curse and so the serpent's bite would not be fatal therefore only has merit if joined with the idea that a curse on one's enemy is a blessing to man. It seems to me that this combination of arguments is decisive for the view of Hengstenberg and Kline: the serpent is cursed so that he crawls on his belly; when he attacks man, he cannot reach his vital organs, whereas man can deliver a fatal blow. Hengstenberg solved the problem of the fatal nature of the snake's attack by saying that there is no mention of poison here. While this is true, and it is true that the word for snake is generic and does specifically imply a poisonous snake, it is also true that it would not seem to be of any great advantage that a non-poisonous snake could only strike the heel. The possibility that man might die from a snake's bite therefore introduces an element of paradox into the picture, which we will explore further. P. Saydon's argument that שׁוּךְ in Gen 3:15e is a conative imperfect is a possible solution to the paradox,²⁹⁸ although one could object that the symmetry of Gen 3:15d-e would suggest that וְשׁוּךְ אֶת־רֶגֶל and וְשׁוּךְ אֶת־רֶגֶל should be understood in the same sense (so Lipinski, responding to Haspecker and Lohfink). The view of Haspecker and Lohfink that the initial *waw* in Gen 3:15e should be translated "because" is another possible solution, but it suffers from a combination of improbabilities; that an explanatory particle like כִּי (as in v. 14) is usually used to express the idea "because," and that an explanation for the curse usually precedes the curse (or punishment), and in fact has already been given ("because you have done this;" see § 1.9.8).

The same line of reasoning which sees a curse on the serpent as a blessing to man helps us understand the enmity established by God. It is not an enmity by which God intends to destroy both parties, as is the case where a shrewd leader incites his enemies against each other so that they may be destroyed without any effort on his part. Rather this is an enmity by which he intends to destroy the cursed one, which is not man, but the serpent. Man's enmity against the serpent is part of the curse against the serpent, and therefore a blessing to man. Therefore the condition of enmity between man and the serpent implies the condition of peace between man and God.

2.2.3 Relationship of Gen 3:15 to Gen 3:16-24

²⁹⁸“The correct translation is: ‘he will attack you in the head, and you will try to attack him in the heel.’ In other words, the woman’s seed will completely defeat the serpent, while the serpent will only try, but in vain, to bite the heel of his adversary” (P. P. Saydon, “The Conative Imperfect in Hebrew,” *VT* 12 [1952]: 126).

One commentator says there is no hope in any portion of the curses (von Rad; § 1.8.20); another says there is hope in every verse (Brueggeman).²⁹⁹ The difference may reflect in part a different view of hope. It cannot be denied that vv. 16-19, which predict the affliction of woman and man with trouble and futility, and finally, death (evidently the opposite of hope), also presume that Adam and Eve will continue to live instead of facing immediate execution which they might well have expected to (and the snake might have hoped would) come to pass. As the proverb says, “while there is life, there is hope.” Further, as already mentioned, neither Adam nor Eve is here cursed, which implies at least that they are in a better state than their enemy the snake. God’s concern for them is implied in his clothing of their nakedness, and Adam’s naming of his wife “Eve” (because she became the mother of all the living), which some interpreters think is out of place,³⁰⁰ certainly looks to the future, and suggests (as Luther and Kline say) a frame of mind in which he has put the best interpretation that he could on the curses; she will bear in sorrow, but she will bear children, and childbirth is related to the defeat of the serpent. Further, in clothing Adam and Eve, there would seem to be more significance than the fact that the pair would require protective clothing (against thorns, for example) after being expelled from paradise. For the recognition of their nakedness, and the shame resulting from it, were the work of the serpent. When God clothes them, therefore, he is reversing, to some extent, the results of their fall, and he is showing them that their own efforts to do so are inferior and insufficient. This is the most significant implication from this act of clothing, and it is a further sign that the serpent will not succeed in his goal of the annihilation of man. Some commentators have gone further than this to suggest that Adam and Eve also learned the rudimentary knowledge of substitutionary atonement from the fact that an animal had to die for them to be clothed, and point to Abel as having learned this lesson, while Cain did not; this view will be discussed later. Kline may be right that there is a complex word-play with “skins” and “naked” and “shrewd” being developed (§ 1.8.28), but I do not see any more implications from such a word-play than are already there by the thematic association of clothing and nakedness.

2.2.4 Relationship of Gen 3:15 to Gen 1:28

Luther, Keil and some others noted that Gen 3:15 has some implications for the question of whether God’s purpose for the human race expressed in Gen 1:28 will be fulfilled. This verse, often called the “cultural mandate,” or “creation mandate,” or “dominion covenant,” commands Adam and Eve (or more properly, blesses them) to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea,

²⁹⁹Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 49-50. Brueggemann does not discuss Gen 3:15, however.

³⁰⁰E.g., Skinner: “The naming of the woman can hardly have come in between the sentence and its execution, or before there was any experience of motherhood to suggest it” (*Genesis*, 85). But the text does not say Adam named Eve precisely at that moment; it mentions that he named her Eve, and tells why (thus relating it to the previous verses). Also, A. J. Williams: “The position of Gen 3 20 in its present context seems to be highly inappropriate in that it seems to have a more positive view of the position of the woman in the narrative than the events of the previous verses would entail” (“The Relationship of Genesis 3 20 to the Serpent,” *ZAW* 89 [1977]: 357). The “positive view” is justified because vv. 15-19 indicate continued life, not immediate death, for Adam and Eve, and it speaks of their future generations.

and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.” While this verse mentions only the animals of the fifth day of creation, v. 26 indicates that all of the animals are in view. The word “subdue” (שָׁבַד) “is evidently related to Akkadian *kabasu* ‘to tread down,’ and Arabic *kabasa* ‘to knead, stamp, press’ ... In the OT it means ‘to make to serve, by force if necessary.’”³⁰¹ The Bible associates walking, or “treading,” with the idea of possession of the promised land.³⁰² The word is also used of subduing the enemies of Israel, with the enemies as the object of the verb, or, more frequently, the land (same as “earth” in Gen 1:28) is said to be subdued before the Lord and before Israel.³⁰³ The verb is also used for bringing into bondage as slaves (Jer 34:11, 16; Neh 5:5 [*bis*]). The idea of “tread upon” is reinforced by the related noun שֹׁבַד, “footstool.”³⁰⁴ The verb “rule” (רָדָה) also seems to have some connection with the idea of treading upon (Akkadian, Arabic), though this connection only shows up once in the Old Testament (Joel 4:13 [3:13]; treading the winepress).³⁰⁵ Its use in Gen 1:28 is in the absence of moral enemies, since the creation of God is good, so Gen 1:28 would indicate “that creation will not do man’s bidding gladly or easily and that man must now bring creation into submission by main strength.”³⁰⁶ But the fall of man and the curse on the serpent introduces abiding moral enmity into the world. The picture of a man stepping on the head of a snake evoked by Gen 3:15, subduing “with force,” thus suggests the fulfillment, in a modified way, of the creation mandate. This allusion to Gen 1:28 is therefore another indication that Gen 3:15 could be taken as a promise by Adam and Eve. Also, since Gen 1:28 is a “blessing,” an association of Gen 3:15 with that passage would confirm the interpretation of the curse on the serpent as a blessing to Adam and Eve, and their offspring.

I am aware that the procedure of interpreting a J passage in light of a P passage seems naive and pre-critical to adherents of the usual source critical division of Genesis. Our exposition of Gen 3:15 will develop considerable evidence in favor of this procedure of ignoring classical source criticism. In any case, our interest in Gen 3:15 includes the New Testament interpretation, and the apostles obviously viewed Genesis 3 and Genesis 1 as from the same source; as we shall see, their interpretation seems to depend on this relationship between Gen 3:15 and Gen 1:28. We will also see evidence below from the so-called J document that Genesis 1 was part of Adam’s and Eve’s canon (therefore it is

³⁰¹J. Oswalt, *TWOT*, § 951 (p. 430). Similarly S. Wagner, *TDOT*, 7.56-57. BDB notes Aramaic אָבַד, “tread down, beat or make a path, subdue” (p. 460).

³⁰²First in Gen 13:17, perhaps typologically connected to Deut 11:24; Josh 1:3; 14:9.

³⁰³Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1; 2 Sam 8:11; Zech 9:15; 1 Chr 22:18.

³⁰⁴BDB, 461.

³⁰⁵W. White, *TWOT*, § 2121 (p. 833).

³⁰⁶J. Oswalt, *TWOT*, § 951 (p. 430).

legitimate to examine Genesis 1 as part of the canonical context for their initial interpretation of Gen 3:15).

2.2.5 Relationship of Gen 3:15 to Genesis 1

Gen 3:15 has in common with the creation account in Genesis 1 the idea of separation. There the creation of the inanimate universe, the work of the first three days, is presented as a series of separations: light from darkness, the waters above from the waters below, and the dry land from the seas.³⁰⁷ The three pairs only add up to five components since the waters below and the seas are the same or at least overlap considerably. The first two separations in Genesis 1 are expressed with the active verb “separate” and the preposition “between,” with God of course as subject; וַיִּבְרָא . . . בֵּין . . . וַיִּבְרָא (vv. 4, 7). The first and third separations of the components of the universe are indicated another way also; by the use of “indirect objects in chiasmus.”³⁰⁸ After stating that God created light and separated light and darkness, he named them “day” and “night.” After saying that he named the light “day,” we find a *waw* disjunctive and a change in word order: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה (v. 5; “God called the light ‘day,’ while the darkness he called ‘night’”). “Chiasmus” refers to the change in word order from the first half of the sentence (verb, indirect object, direct object) to the second half (indirect object, verb, direct object). The subject in this case “does double duty for both clauses.”³⁰⁹

This syntax is not found for the second day’s work, perhaps because the waters below are not to be named until the third day, where the chiasmus of indirect objects is found again: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַבֶּשֶׁת אֶרֶץ וּלְמַקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים (v. 10; “God called the dry land ‘earth,’ while the gathering of the waters he called ‘seas’”). Thus for the first separation (light from darkness) both the active verb with the preposition and the chiasmic syntax are used to express the separation; for the second separation (waters above from the waters below), only the active verb with preposition is used; for the third separation (dry land from the seas), only the chiasmic syntax is used. The separation of light and darkness is expressed again for the fourth day, where the separation of the primeval light and darkness is carried on by the sun, moon, and stars which we observe to this day. The second separation has a unique feature, namely that there is a specific created thing (the firmament, named “sky”) which maintains the separation.

In Gen 3:15a-c God declared that he would make another separation; divinely placed enmity, like the firmament, will separate the serpent and the woman, and their respective offspring. The two separations announced in Gen 3:15 (serpent opposed to woman, offspring opposed to offspring), like the first two in Genesis 1, are also expressed with an active verb (“set”) and the preposition “between,” again obviously

³⁰⁷“With the description of creation as a series of separations, P is part of a tradition that reaches back into the distant past and across the whole face of the earth. . . . Common to him and the tradition is an understanding of the world in which a state of separation and so of order are basic to its existence” (Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 121).

³⁰⁸ Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 129 (§ 9.4.5).

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

with God as subject: וַיִּבְרָא . . . וַיִּבְרָא . . . וַיִּבְרָא. ³¹⁰ We will see the use of chiasmus in syntax as well, when the new creation is brought about.

If Gen 3:15 is spoken in “creation language,” it is another reason to take it as a promise, and it suggests again that God is going to somehow fulfill his original purpose expressed in the creation mandate. In the naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:15, the new creation would presumably be the literal offspring of the woman. Evidence for such an interpretation is found in Gen 4:1. As we saw in chap. I, this verse was a key proof for Luther that Adam and Eve were wonderfully enlightened by God to understand that Gen 3:15 was a promise of an individual seed, God himself incarnate; no one else could accomplish the saving task predicted there. He took אָח in Gen 4:1 as the mark of the accusative, making the Lord the second direct object, modifying “man.” Thus he translated אֶת־יְהוָה אִישׁ קָנִיתִי as “I have received a man, even the Lord.” Thus, as unlikely as it seems that Adam and Eve could have such New Testament insight, Luther thought that Gen 4:1 is proof of it. In favor of Luther’s interpretation is that the competing translations were grammatically problematic because of the difficulty in translating אָח. Westermann notes that “none of the ancient versions uses the simple equivalent אָח = with; they must have sensed the difficulty.”³¹¹ The LXX translated אֶת־יְהוָה with διὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ (through God); and the Vg, *per Dominum*; similarly Tgs. *Onqelos* and *Neofiti*, מִן דְּקָדָשׁ (as though from Hebrew מִצָּדָת), and *Samaritan Tg.*, מִן. The problem with the simple equivalency is that it implies co-action, making God the co-subject of the verb. The problem is seen when we translate the verse with God as co-subject; “I, along with the Lord, have received a man.” But God does not *receive* children along with the parents. God *gives* the child (Gen 17:16, and many others). The translation “I have received a man with the help of the Lord” is a paraphrase that shifts the idea of co-action to help in an action. For Eve to express the idea that she had received God’s help she would say that the Lord was with her (yTiai hwwhy) when she received, not that she had received with the Lord.

Westermann lists other types of solutions to the problem that have been proposed, including those of Luther and *Tg. Onqelos*. 1. אָח is not the preposition (“man of the sign of [אָח] Yahweh;” pointing to v. 15), or is not original (אָח יהוה is a gloss). 2. “I will win my husband again. Yahweh is with me” (אָחִי יהוה). 3. Luther’s earlier interpretation: אִישׁ אֶת־יהוה is a man bound to God; a man of God. 4. Luther’s latest view of אָח as the accusative marker, used to argue for a mythological background to the story: Cain is regarded as a son of God. 5. אָח is understood as (or emended to) מִצָּדָת; “I have received a man from the Lord.” 6. אָח יהוה is emended to a verb (several possibilities). 7. אָח means “in the sight of.” 8. אָח is used in the sense “together with,” “as well as,” “in the class of.”³¹²

³¹⁰ One can also understand the idea of creation to be in the verb אָשִׁית, both because the verb often has the idea of making something, or someone into something, and because when God says he will set enmity, he obviously is not picking it up from somewhere else and putting it in between the snake and the woman. BDB, 1011; see 1 Kgs 11:34; Isa 5:6; 26:1; Jer 22:6; Ps 104:20, etc.

³¹¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 291.

³¹² *Ibid.*

R. Borger argued for the meaning of #5 above (without emendation) based on the Akkadian preposition *itti* (“with”), etymologically related to the Hebrew תָּעַ, which is found in the idiom *šāmu itti* (to “buy from”), common in contracts. A personal name is found with this idiom which expresses the idea that the child is bought from God (*itti ili*). A similar proper name occurs with another preposition meaning “with,” *istu*. Borger speculates that the “price” paid for the child was a difficult childbirth, which he says would fit in excellently with Eve’s penalty predicted in Gen 3:16.³¹³ Hamilton follows Borger’s suggestion and finds support for it in the parallelism of מִן and תָּעַ in Gen 49:25.³¹⁴ R. Althann noted Gen 49:25 and a few other cases where תָּעַ may have a separative connotation.³¹⁵

While this proposal is attractive because it does not require any emendation, it is somewhat speculative for Gen 4:1. Borger notes that the expression “buy from” with *itti* literally means “buy *at*,” and only idiomatically can mean to buy *from*. The same idiom is not found in Hebrew, a fact which he speculates is due to the relatively small number of examples (but zero out of 17 examples does not help his case).³¹⁶ The meaning of buying a child from God through a difficult labor is also speculative in both the Akkadian and Hebrew, and nothing is said in Genesis 4 of a difficult labor. The example of Gen 49:25 is problematic for a number of reasons. First, the text is doubtful.³¹⁷ Second, it is not clear that מִן in the first word means “from.” Finally, even if the two are in “parallel,” they do not necessarily mean the same thing.

Westermann includes Skinner in #8 above, though his nuance was slightly different; “along with;” i.e., the idea of co-action. Skinner pointed out that the preposition is not really problematic if we take the verb יָבַח in the sense of “create,” and the preposition with the idea of co-action: “If we adopt the other meaning of יָבַח, the construction is perfectly natural: *I have created (or produced) a man with (the cooperation of) Yahwe.*”³¹⁸ The context shows we must take Skinner’s term “cooperation” literally, as “co-action,” “along with,” or else he would just be paraphrasing the idea “with the help of,” which he rejects. He cites Rashi’s paraphrase of Eve’s sentiment: “When he created me and my husband he created us alone, but in this case we are associated with him,” as well as a Babylonian parallel where Aruru (Ishtar) together with

³¹³R. Borger, “GEN. iv 1,” *VT* 9 (1959): 85-86.

³¹⁴Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 221.

³¹⁵Robert Althann, “Does *'et* (*'aet-*) sometimes signify *›from‹* in the Hebrew Bible?”, *ZAW* 103 (1991): 121-24.

³¹⁶Borger, “GEN. vi 1,” 86. To “buy from” is expressed with יָבַח plus מִן in Gen 25:10; 33:19; 39:1; 49:30; 50:13; Lev 25:14, 15, 44, 45; 27:24; Josh 24:32; 2 Sam 24:21, 24; 1 Kgs 16:24; Jer 32:9; Ruth 4:5, 9. None of these examples involve a parent “buying” their child.

³¹⁷A few mss. read לָעַ, as does SP, and as LXX and Syriac presume, if strictly translations (*BHS*, 85).

³¹⁸Skinner, *Genesis*, 102.

Marduk (lit. “with him;” *it-ti-šū*) created the seed of mankind.³¹⁹ It remains to be established that co-action is one of the ideas expressed by תָּשׁ in Hebrew. BDB lists one of the uses of the similar preposition עִם as “actions done jointly *with* another,” (Gen 21:10, inherit; 26:28, make a covenant; Josh 22:8 and Isa 53:12, divide spoil),³²⁰ but does not list such a category for תָּשׁ. No examples are given of co-action with God, but this idea can be seen in 1 Sam 14:45 and Dan 11:39, the two examples given in BDB for the idea “with the help of” (mistakenly, as noted by Skinner, since the preposition “denotes association *in the same act*, and therefore does not go beyond the sense ‘along with’”).³²¹ 1 Sam 14:45 reads “Should Jonathan die, who has brought about (הִצִּילָהּ) this great salvation in Israel? May it not be! As the Lord lives, not a hair from his head will fall to the ground, for it is with (עִם) God that he has acted (הִצִּילָהּ) today.” The word order indicates that “with God” receives the emphasis. The actions Jonathan has taken are not mere human actions; he has done them with God. To kill him for what he did would be to indict God as well, since Jonathan was acting as his accomplice. Although one could argue that the translation “with the help of” has the same implication, it is a confusing paraphrase that does not necessarily suggest the idea of action “along with.”

The question then comes up, whether תָּשׁ is used with this same idea of co-action as עִם. That it can be would follow from the essential equivalency with עִם, as Dillmann argued; so also H. D. Preuss:

In the history of languages, it is extraordinary when two different words belonging to the same chronological period of a language have the same meanings. Yet the OT reflects no essential difference in the meanings or uses of *'eth* and *'im* either as to the historical periods when they occur or as to the genres in which they appear.³²²

In addition, the sense “along with” as co-action is a natural extension of the spatial sense “alongside of.”³²³ Finally, two examples can be given, where the idea of co-action seems to be included along with the literal spatial sense: in Exod 18:22 Jethro tells Moses to appoint subordinate judges so that they might bear the burden of judging along with him (תְּשִׂיָּם אִתְּךָ שֹׁפְטִים), and in Num 8:26 retired Levites are allowed to assist their brother Levites in fulfilling an obligation (וַיִּשְׂרָת אִתָּם-אֶת-הַקָּדָשׁ; he may minister with his brothers).

³¹⁹ Ibid; Rosenbaum and Silbermann, *Rashi, Genesis*, 17.

³²⁰ BDB, 767.

³²¹ Skinner, *Genesis*, 102.

³²² Horst Dietrich Preuss, *TDOT*, 1.449; Dillmann, *Genesis*, 183. Preuss does not discuss the idea of co-action for either preposition. He notes that it is very rare in the ancient Near East to express the idea of the Deity being *with* man, except in the Old Testament, “where it expresses a basic element in the Yahweh faith” (*TDOT*, 1.451), an idea which is relevant to Gen 4:1, the first instance of the name Yhwh being used in speech.

³²³ Bruce Waltke cites Judg 4:11 as an example, saying it is closely related to the idea of making gods “besides me” in Exod 20:23 (Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], § 11.2.4a [p. 195]).

Besides the translation of אָת and קָנָה there is another problem in this short phrase, namely, why Eve calls her new-born “a man” (אִישׁ) instead of a child, or son (solution #2 above avoids this problem by translating “husband,” but it requires emending the consonantal text). Dillmann supported the meaning of generic male child by comparing Gen 4:1 to the use of לְבָר in Job 3:3 (“Let the day of my birth perish, the night in which it was said, ‘a man is born.’”), and וָרַע אֶנְשִׁים as in 1 Sam 1:11 (Hannah: “give to your maid-servant a male child”).³²⁴ Skinner agreed that the use of לְבָר in Job 3:3 showed that the use of אִישׁ in Gen 4:1 was not a serious problem.³²⁵ Cassuto solved all three problems by adopting solution #8 above for the meaning of אָת, taking “create” for the meaning of קָנָה, and following Rashi in relating Eve’s birth of Cain to the creation of man by God, thus explaining her use of אִישׁ. Cassuto understands her statement to be a boast that her giving birth to a man makes her a creator like God: “I have created a man equally with the Lord.”

The first woman, in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power. The Lord formed the first *man* (ii 7), and I have formed the second *man*. ... [literally, ‘I have created a man with the Lord’]: *I stand together* [i.e. *equally*] WITH HIM *in the rank of creators*.³²⁶

Cassuto demonstrated in detail the appropriateness of the translation “create” for קָנָה, citing Ugaritic and Biblical material (the former was unavailable to Skinner, and of course Rashi). The Ugaritic roots *qny* and *knn* are used by the gods to describe the action of El, their father, who made them; likewise we find the Hebrew cognates in Deut 32:6 (along with עָשָׂה) for the creation of Israel with God as father. In Ps 139:13 קָנָה is used with שָׂכַךְ (weave) for God’s creating the psalmist in the womb. That Hebrews would use the same verb for the Lord’s creative acts as the Canaanites used for El is proven by Gen 14:19, 22, where both Melchizedek and Abram use the same expression “creator (קָנָה) of heaven and earth.” Cassuto suggests that possibly “create” is the “original and primary meaning of the root in the ancient Canaanite tongue, and from it developed the connotation *to acquire*, just as the verb עָשָׂה ... is often used in this sense” (citing Gen 12:5 as an example).³²⁷

The problem with Cassuto’s interpretation is that it does not really use אָת to express co-action: instead he sees it as expressing an action in imitation of God. Westermann thinks Cassuto’s solution is the best but points out that we would expect the preposition כְּ (“like”) to be used if Eve was really comparing what she did to what the Lord did.³²⁸ I would solve this problem by retaining Cassuto’s literal translation, similar

³²⁴Dillmann, *Genesis*, 183.

³²⁵Skinner, *Genesis*, 103.

³²⁶Cassuto, *Genesis, I*, 199-202; esp. p. 201.

³²⁷*Ibid.*, 200-201.

³²⁸Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 292.

to Skinner’s (“I have created a man with the Lord”), which expresses the idea of co-action by both Eve and God *in the birth of Cain*. Perhaps the strongest argument for the meaning of “create” in Eve’s statement is not that the verb can mean “create,” but that it removes the problem with translating the preposition תָּנָה.

I would also remove the connotation of boasting inferred by Cassuto by explaining Eve’s statement as evidence of her faith in a naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:15 as a promise of a new creation consisting of her offspring, the first being Cain. She is not boasting of her God-likeness in the act of creation, but recognizing her part (so she thinks) in the fulfillment of the promise of a new creation.

I would explain (with Wenham) the use of וַיִּצְרָא not as an allusion to Gen 2:7, the creation of man out of the dust, but rather to Gen 2:22-23, the creation of woman out of the man.³²⁹ There, הַצֶּמֶת came out of אֲדָמָה; here, וַיִּצְרָא comes out of הַצֶּמֶת. וַיִּצְרָא is thus generic male, as יָצָא in the example from Job 3:3, and Eve is expressing exactly the sentiment of Paul in 1 Cor 11:12, “For as woman came from man (ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός), so also *man* (ὁ ἀνὴρ) is born of woman.” Note also John 16:21; when a woman gives birth to a child (γεννήσῃ τὸ παιδίον), she forgets her pain due to the joy that a human being is born (ἐγεννήθη ἄνθρωπος). We have then another strong argument for the translation of יָצָא by “create,” namely, that such a meaning also helps explain the use of וַיִּצְרָא by relating Gen 4:1 to a creation context in the previous chapter.

It is true that the allusion to Gen 2:22-23 is sufficient to explain the use of the word “create” as well as “man” for the birth of Cain; it is not necessary to get the idea of creation from Gen 3:15, and therefore Gen 4:1 is not proof of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 as the promise of a new creation. Again, as mentioned under the discussion of Gen 1:28, it would seem naive and pre-critical to some to explain the interpretation of Gen 3:15 in light of Genesis 1; referring to Gen 2:22-23 does not have the same problem. In our exposition of Genesis 4 (chap. III) we will see further evidence relating Gen 4:1 to Gen 3:15, making it more likely that the name Cain is related to that verse, rather than to the creation of Eve from Adam. Other chapters will give further evidence for Gen 3:15 being understood as a promise of creation.

2.2.6 Summary of Initial Interpretation of Adam and Eve

The single word (in Hebrew) “her seed” is the first sign that Adam will not die and the human race end as might be expected (by both Adam and the snake). That the enemy of Adam and Eve is cursed would logically imply a blessing to them, an idea which is reinforced by comparing the curse to the blessing found in Gen 1:28. Assuming their familiarity with the basic content of Genesis 1-2, including the idea of creation as a series of separations, Adam and Eve would have further reason to view Gen 3:15 as a promise, as it is spoken in “creation language.” Evidence for such an interpretation by Eve is found in Gen 4:1. This verse also gives evidence of a naturalistic interpretation: the woman’s seed is the human race, so the enmity will exist between the human race and snakes. The fact that this enemy is cursed lets them crush his head, and prevents them from being wounded in their vital organs, thus the verse would seem to be a general

³²⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 101.

promise of victory for them, in spite of the fact that they are then told that one day they will die.

2.3 Initial Interpretation of the “Implied Reader”

In this section we are concerned exclusively with the question of the identity of the tempter, based on the narrative material in Genesis 3 and the general cultural background of the pre-exilic Israelites.

2.3.1 Issues Involved

Three main issues are involved in the question of whether the description of the serpent in Gen 3:1 requires us to understand the serpent in Genesis 3 as an animal and nothing more, or whether the animal snake could be seen as a vehicle, or tool, for an evil supernatural being. This question is not involved in the initial interpretation of Adam and Eve since it is a statement of the narrator. But the question would be involved in the initial interpretation of the implied reader of Genesis 3. For the sake of argument, we will define this implied reader generally as a pre-exilic Israelite. The issues are, first, what are the implications of the inconsistencies between the description of the snake as an animal (therefore part of God’s good creation, irrational, and inferior to man in terms of spiritual and divine matters) and his behavior in the temptation (evil, rational, and superior to man in knowledge of divine affairs). Secondly, there is the question whether Gen 3:1 can be understood as using the “language of appearances,” describing how the “serpent” appeared to Adam and Eve, and not describing the whole picture. Finally, if the picture of the snake as mere animal is problematic, the question is raised as to whether there is any clue to the solution in Genesis 3 itself.

2.3.2 Inconsistencies Between Description and Action

The word עָרוּם is used to describe the serpent in Gen 3:1, and in this quality he is compared to “all the beasts of the field which the Lord God made.” The word itself does not have a negative connotation; one may be “wise” to do good or “shrewd, crafty” to do evil (cf. the use of חָכָם in 2 Sam 13:3 for Jonadab). In Proverbs it is used to denote one who is prudent. The verbal form is used by Saul to describe David’s ability to elude capture (1 Sam 23:22); this reference to survival skills is the closest the root comes to a sense appropriate for describing animals outside of Gen 3:1. To describe an animal as having the ability to act in a manner necessary to getting what it wants would seem to be appropriate, although it is not clear why the snake should be singled out in such a way as superior to the other animals. The description of him as “more crafty than all the beasts of the field” is often (following *Gen. Rab.* 19.1 and others) compared to the beginning of the curse; “you are more cursed than all the beasts of the field,” so this is a story about how the snake goes from being most crafty to most cursed. But many have objected to a comparative sense for מִן in v. 14 because it implies that all of the other animals are cursed as well.³³⁰ Still, vv. 1 and 14 seem to imply that the serpent is a mere animal.

By itself, the description of an animal as “prudent, shrewd, crafty” is not problematic. Four creatures are described as small yet exceedingly wise (חָכָם) in Prov 30:24-28; ants which store up food in the summer, conies which make their homes in the crags, locusts which advance in perfect formation without a king telling them what to do,

³³⁰ For a discussion of the various views, see Unger, *FG*, 11-14. Unger opts for a spatial sense, “among.”

and lizards which elude capture so well that they can live in kings' palaces. So the serpent could be described as prudent or crafty in the sense of its ability to provide for itself; to stalk its prey, elude capture, hide and wait for an opportune moment, strike a swift and deadly blow, etc. The descriptions of animals in Prov 30:24-28 as wise might explain such a description of the snake in Gen 3:1, but only apart from the rest of the chapter. It could be seen as the estimate of Adam prompted by his observation of the various creatures, including the parade of creatures which came before him so that he might name them (Gen 2:19), which implies that he learned something of their characteristics. But none of the characteristics of the snake which could justify the description of it as "shrewd" in the sense that an animal can be shrewd would imply that the snake is rational or can seduce the woman to do evil.

Although Gen 3:1 compares the snake to the animals which God had made, it is clear that in the rest of the narrative a comparison is made with Adam and Eve. This comparison is first made by a word play between "shrewd" (עָרוּם) in 3:1 and "naked" (the plural of עָרוּם) in the previous verse. The nakedness of Adam and Eve, and their lack of shame from it, points to their child-like innocence (Irenaeus thought in fact it meant they were children). It is this innocence that allowed them to be duped by the shrewd snake introduced in 3:1. Because they were nude, they were victims of the shrewd. The craftiness of the snake in this narrative has nothing to do with its animal abilities, but its ability to corrupt man and alienate him from God. As Cassuto pointed out, this word play is intentional as indicated by the fact that the spelling of "naked" in Gen 3:7, 10, 11 is עָרוּם (or the plural form), whereas in Gen 2:25 the alternate spelling (עָרוּמִים; with the *waw* added as if to make it look more like עָרוּמִים) is chosen to agree more closely with the word "shrewd."³³¹ So while Gen 3:1 compares the snake with the other animals, it also invites us to compare him with Adam and Eve; this comparison shows the description of him as an animal to be inconsistent with the description of the animals that God had made. For in Gen 1:31; everything God had made was very good; and Gen 1:28 shows that man alone is created in the image of God, and he is charged with dominion over the animals.³³²

We saw in § 1.8.18 that Cassuto made a different use of the word play. He allegorized the role of the serpent to make it the cunning within Eve; the word play shows that although the human pair was ignorant of good and evil, they were not lacking in cunning. But this verse does not indicate such an interpretation; only if one has already concluded that the serpent is the cunning within Eve could Gen 3:1 be found to refer to Eve and not the snake. Cassuto's allegorical interpretation seems plainly refuted by his naturalistic interpretation of the curse. If the animal snake had no role in the temptation, why was it cursed? How could God be talking to the snake when he said "because you have done this," if the snake did not do anything? What the word play actually does, seen

³³¹ Cassuto, *Genesis I*, 143-44.

³³² M. Kline takes the purpose of the word-play to be to show how Adam and Eve are *like* the serpent (*Kingdom Prologue*, 81). But as their nakedness signifies their child-like innocence *before* they became like the serpent, I do not see how it could at the same time indicate how they were (or would become) like the serpent.

in the light of the following narrative, is to set the serpent apart from the animals, and even man, in his rational and evil nature, his knowledge of good and evil, and of the secret things of God. The comparison to the animals is therefore ironic, because it is, in light of the implied comparison to man, and in light of the following narrative, self refuting; it refutes the natural inference that by comparing the serpent to the animals, it is an animal and nothing more. The serpent was more shrewd than all the animals which the Lord God had made. Question: How shrewd is the serpent? Answer: More shrewd than naked man. Question: How can that be? Answer: It is not a mere animal which the Lord God made. Gallus is correct to point out that Gen 3:1 does not actually say that the serpent is an animal, since it does not say he was more crafty than the *other* animals. When the psalmist says that he is *more prudent* (השכיל) than all of his teachers (Ps 119:99), he does not imply thereby that he is a teacher himself. It is the word שָׂדָה itself, not the comparative, that suggests that the snake was one of the animals. As we shall see, however, Israelites were quite aware of a “serpent” which was not an animal at all.

2.3.3 *The Language of Appearances*

We mention here by way of example Hengstenberg’s statement of the language of appearance as a solution to the problem of the inconsistencies cited above:

The author related the circumstances as they appeared to our first parents, and ignorant as they were of the invisible cause, they must have ascribed a high degree of cunning to the serpent from the part which he acted. Moses states this fact with the design of leading his more intelligent readers to a right solution of the problem (see § 1.8.1).

The Syrian Fathers’ commentary on Genesis cited Gen 18:1 as analogous to Gen 3:1 to argue that the appearance of the serpent was visionary, not real (§ 1.4.12). While I would not press the analogy that far, Genesis 18 is an example where humans were deceived by the appearance of spiritual beings, whose identity only gradually dawned on those with whom they were dealing. In that case, Abraham looked up and saw three men standing by him; yet the truth gradually unfolds that two of these “men” are angels and one is the Lord himself. This truth does not begin to come clear until the “men” start to behave in a supernatural manner; e.g., in v. 10 where one of them says that he will return at the turn of the year, and Sarah will have a son. Then when Sarah laughs to herself, he shows that he can read her mind, and here the narrator first calls him Yhwh as he rebukes her, “why did Sarah laugh?” and says, “is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (vv. 13-14). In vv. 17-19 he deliberates with the other two and says that he is the one who chose Abraham. Finally, in 19:1 the other two are identified as angels. It is true that there are some differences between Genesis 3 and 18; in the latter there is an introductory statement that this was an appearance of the Lord (18:1), whereas no similar statement is found in Gen 3:1. However, Gen 18:1 does not explain why there are three men if this is an appearance of the Lord; only later is this explained. The opening statement in 18:1 may be explained by another difference between the two chapters, if in chapter 3 there was an actual snake involved, whereas in chapter 18 there are no actual “men,” only the appearance of human bodies which may vanish at any time. Similarly with other appearances of angels, or *the* angel of the Lord, as “men.” They are first taken for human strangers (or in one case a burning bush), then sooner or later reveal themselves by word or deed to be the Lord’s messengers, or the angel of the Lord himself (e.g., Gen 32:25-31; Exod 3:2ff; Josh 5:13-15; Judg 6:11-23, esp. vv. 17-22; 13:3-23 [here the man’s appearance is according to Manoah’s wife “awesome like the appearance of the angel of

God,” yet he tells Manoah he is the “man” who appeared to his wife earlier, and Manoah does not know he is the angel of the Lord until he consumes his sacrifice in fire, v. 20]). In some of these cases, there is no introductory statement that an appearance of the Lord, or his angel, follows (Gen 32:25; Josh 5:13), rather his presence is revealed in the course of the narrative.

That angels disguise themselves as men and are taken for men is commonplace in the Old Testament, but such disguises are not identical to the case of animal possession by an evil spirit presumed in the argument from appearances, so they do not prove this argument. They are still valid as analogies, however, and the objection that no clue to the identity of a supernatural tempter is given could be answered by finding such clues in Genesis 3 itself.

2.3.4 *The Cherubim and the Identity of the Tempter*

The inconsistencies pointed to above between the description of the snake as an animal and his behavior in Genesis 3 focus on who it is *not*. It is *not* a mere animal. Are there any positive clues to show us who it is? The “snake” is unlike an animal because it knows of good and evil, and of divine affairs; therefore it is like God himself, and unlike man in his innocence, before his fall. Who else in the created universe has such attributes? We see a clue when God says, “behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:22). Possibly, God could refer to himself in the plural, the plural of majesty, or honorific plural,³³³ but one would expect “like us” (כְּאִנּוֹנֵנוּ); he would hardly use the expression “like one of us” (כְּאֶחָד מֵאִנּוֹנֵנוּ) to mean “like me.” Most interpreters see in the expression the idea of God addressing his heavenly court.³³⁴ “They have become like ‘one of us,’ that is, like the heavenly beings, i.e. God and the angels.”³³⁵ The phrase implies the presence of other created beings who are like God, in knowing good and evil, but not part of the creation mentioned in Genesis 1. The correctness of this interpretation is reinforced when some of these beings are introduced just two verses later, where it is said that God stationed the Cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life. Before the fall, then, those who know good and evil are God himself, the Cherubim, and the serpent; not man. So we might conclude that the identity of the tempter is revealed after all. By way of contrast, he is an anti-Cherub, or evil version of a Cherub. Instead of serving God, as do the Cherubim, he opposes him. Instead of holy and good, he is evil and unclean; morally detestable, just as that which crawls on its belly is physically detestable (Lev 11:42).

³³³For discussion (though not with reference to this verse), see Waltke, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, § 7.4.3 (pp. 122-24).

³³⁴According to Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 272. Westermann himself thinks the question is made void by the history of the motif which is simply “concerned with the point of contact between the divine and the human in the area of wisdom and knowledge” (ibid., 273).

³³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 85. Hamilton resists this interpretation, thinking it has polytheistic connotations. He thinks the use of the plural to refer to oneself does not really require explanation; he sees God only deliberating with himself. Again, I would note that such a view might explain “like us,” but not “like one of us.” On Gen 1:26 he understands the plural as a clue to the plurality within the Godhead (*Genesis 1-17*, 134, 208-09).

By way of excursus, we will turn next to the Book of Isaiah, where I believe the same kind of demonstration is given; namely, Isaiah shows the Seraphim to be the opposite of the serpent of the temptation, thus identifying that serpent. While a passage in Isaiah might seem to have nothing to do with the initial interpretation of the Genesis 3 narrative, the purpose of this excursus is to show that the kind of interpretation I am suggesting for the significance of the Cherubim in Genesis 3 has a more detailed parallel elsewhere, and this fact tends to make this interpretation more plausible.

2.3.5 *The Seraphim and the Identity of the Tempter*

The Seraphim who are part of God's heavenly court in Isaiah 6 are often compared to the Cherubim mentioned in Gen 3:24 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. Both words are transliterations of the Hebrew. The difference is that the word Cherubim (or the singular Cherub) is always transliterated; partly from tradition (since the LXX), and partly because the meaning of the word is obscure.³³⁶ In the case of Seraphim, however, the meaning is not obscure; everywhere else in the Old Testament where this word appears, it refers to venomous snakes; sometimes by itself (Num 21:8, the bronze model Moses is to make of the snakes biting the Israelites; Isa 14:29 and 30:6; flying, or "darting," snakes),³³⁷ and sometimes in apposition to שָׂרָפָה, the common word for snake (Num 21:6, הַשָּׂרָפִים הַנִּשְׁלָחִים, venomous snakes sent to bite the Israelites; Deut 8:15, שָׂרָפִים וְנָחָשׁ; venomous snakes that Israel encountered in the wilderness, along with scorpions). Since the verb שָׂרַף means to burn, the noun is thought to mean venomous snakes because of the burning sensation of a poisonous bite. The meaning of venomous snake seems so out of place in Isaiah 6, however, that the word is usually transliterated. Some deny that it is related to the meaning of snake, instead relating it to the light associated with burning; these are shining beings. Others affirm the sense of venomous serpents and relate the picture of Isaiah 6 to the figure of the rearing cobra (uraeus), sometimes appearing with wings, symbol of royalty for the Pharaoh and the gods.³³⁸ John Day combined these two views and distinguished between form and function; the Seraphim "are winged serpents (uraei) with an ultimately Egyptian origin as regards form but could symbolize the clouds on which Yahweh rode in the manner of the Canaanite god Baal (cf. Ps. xviii 11)," and

³³⁶R. Laird Harris says that derivation from the Akkadian cognate which means "to bless, praise, adore" is suitable; he notes that the Seraphs of Isaiah 6 "seem to be similar creatures" (*TWOT*, § 1036; p. 454-55).

³³⁷"Flying" snakes, like flying squirrels, do not have wings and do not fly, but rather can glide from trees for some distance because of their ability to spread out their body to form an airfoil. It is a mistake therefore to assume that Isaiah supposed that the flying snakes he mentions have wings; "Isaiah clearly conceives of a *saraph* as capable of flying, therefore of having wings" (Karen Randolph Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament: A Linguistic, Archaeological, and Literary Study* [Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974], 43-44).

³³⁸Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament*, 42-54; "The Seraphim are probably winged serpents drawn from Egyptian royal and sacral symbolism. In Egypt winged serpents represent sacral sovereignty whether of the pharaoh or of the gods" (p. 43). She mentions the finding of "winged, erect uraei ... found on the throne of an Egyptian monarch" (p. 49; the monarch is Tut-Ankh-Amen, 14th century B.C.). The great difference is that in Isaiah 6 the Seraphim are agents of redemption; a motif absent from the Egyptian material. Joines explains "the faith of Isaiah makes them also to be agents of purification" (p. 54).

“in *function* the seraphim may be regarded as personifications of the lightning having a Canaanite origin with analogies in Baal’s lightning servants.”³³⁹ I propose to take another course, however, and relate these serpents to their opposite in Scripture: namely, the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

The Seraphim (שֶׁרָפִיִּים) of Isaiah 6:2, 6 are members of God’s court appearing in the temple (v.1), who call to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts” (v. 3), and one of them flies to Isaiah and announces to him the atonement for his sins, as he touches a coal from the altar to his lips (vv. 6-7). Comparison of these creatures to the serpent of Genesis 3 yields rather detailed points of contact that are most suggestive. In both passages, the serpents speak, and by their speech show knowledge of both human and divine affairs, as would be expected from those who are privy to the divine council. There the similarities end, but the contrasts are equally suggestive. Morally, the serpent in the Garden is the agent of the corruption and death of mankind through fruit which is eaten. The serpents of Isaiah’s call in contrast act as the agents of Isaiah’s purification, atonement, and life through burning coals which touch Isaiah’s lips. As holy beings, they call God holy. The Genesis3 serpent, being a liar, calls God a liar. While he is insolent, the Seraphim cover their faces in the presence of God (v. 2).

Physically, the cursed serpent must crawl on his belly because he has no feet or wings with which to walk or fly. But the holy serpents of the divine council have feet, wings, and hands. They do not crawl on their bellies, but stand on their feet or fly (vv. 2,6).

The similarities and contrasts between the Seraphim of Isaiah’s call and the serpent of the Garden of Eden can be summarized in a table as below:

characteristic	Genesis 3 Serpent	Seraphim of Isaiah 6
difference from natural serpents	speaks, shows knowledge of divine and human affairs	speak, show knowledge of divine and human affairs
view of God	he is a liar	he is holy, holy, holy
attitude to God	brazen, insolent	cover their faces
relation to man	agent of corruption, death	agent of purification, life
instrument used	fruit which is eaten	burning coal which touches lips
physical attribute	after curse, must crawl on belly, being without feet or wings	having feet, hands, and wings, can stand or fly

The picture of the flying serpents of Isaiah 6 therefore implies that the serpent of Genesis3 is an evil, cursed version of the majestic members of the divine council seen by Isaiah, who perhaps is shown what the evil serpent in the Garden once was. The kind of interpretation suggested here for Isaiah 6 is really only a more detailed comparison, but

³³⁹ John Day, “Echoes of Baal’s Seven Thunders and Lightnings in Psalm XXIX and Habakkuk III 9 and the Identity of the Seraphim in Isaiah VI,” *VT* 29 (1979): 149-50.

of the same kind, as I suggested for the Cherubim of Genesis 3, and consequently, it tends to confirm that interpretation. Also compare God’s speaking of “us” in both passages and the phrase “one of the Seraphim” with “one of us” (Isa 6:8, 6; Gen 3:22).

It is usually thought that the equation of the Serpent of Genesis 3 with Satan, a member of the heavenly court, is a much later development. Speaking of the serpent of the Garden, Joines said:

[it] is not the embodiment of the Satan, for the Old Testament knows of no such being until after the Babylonian Exile some four centuries after the Yahwist’s edition of Genesis 3. When the Satan does emerge, *he is a member of the Heavenly Court*; in contrast, the serpent is a creature of the dust (emphasis added).³⁴⁰

This view would seem to be invalidated by the implications of the Seraphim in Isaiah’s call, and the Cherubim in Genesis 3, both members of the heavenly court to whom the serpent forms a contrast, or evil version.

2.3.6 The “Dragon” and the Identity of the Tempter

Another issue with the initial interpretation of the narrative (as opposed to the initial interpretation of the curse by Adam and Eve), is whether the image of the crushing of the snake’s head would lead an Israelite reader to an identification of the serpent with the internationally known figure of the dragon who opposes God, is sometimes called a serpent, and is said to have his head(s) crushed.³⁴¹ This possibility is assumed by those authors noted in chap. I who have made the connection between the dragon figure and the snake in Genesis 3, or who have posited a mythological background to the story in which the snake was not an animal but a supernatural foe of God, or who say that the nations embellished the serpent of Genesis 3 into a many-headed dragon. Such a connection is also indicated by the fact that other Old Testament passages which introduce the figure of the dragon, sometimes called “serpent” (נָחָשׁ; the same word used throughout Genesis 3), do so without explanation, as though the figure was well understood to the audience. We will briefly survey here the Old Testament passages where the supernatural serpent is depicted as God’s enemy, in order to show what information would have been available to the implied reader of Gen 3:1, 15; later we will take up the subject again to compare the Biblical passages with the comparative material, and to see if there is any relationship between these passages and Gen 3:15.

Leviathan:

In Isa27:1, the dragon is twice called לְוִיָּתָן (i.e., Leviathan), who is further described as נָחָשׁ עָקֵלְתוֹן, נָחָשׁ גָּדוֹל וְקוֹרֵא, and הַתַּנִּינִן אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם (“on that day the Lord will visit with his sword – the fierce, great, and powerful one – Leviathan the evil (or primeval) serpent; Leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the dragon who is in the sea”). The two descriptions of Leviathan are almost identical to those found in Ugaritic myths to describe the dragon *ltn* (UT 67:I:1-3; *ktmḥš · ltn · bṭn · brḥ / tkly · bṭn · ‘qltn · šlyt · d ·*

³⁴⁰Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament*, 26-27.

³⁴¹The serpent-dragon figure is known from at least the third millenium BC (see below), so we can safely assume he was known to the implied reader of Genesis 3, whenever he is placed.

šb 't · r 'šm; “for all that you smote Leviathan the slippery serpent (and) made an end of the wriggling serpent, the tyrant with seven heads”).³⁴²

The meaning of *'qltn* (corresponding to Hebrew עקלִתוֹן) seems clearly to be “crooked,” or “twisted.” M. Wakeman advocated such a translation to preserve both the physical and moral connotation; two out of three instances of the root עקל outside of Isa 27:1 signify moral crookedness (Hab 1:4; Ps 125:5; Judg 5:6 refers to winding paths or back roads), and the same may be said of the dragon.³⁴³

For the other adjective describing the dragon, *brḥ* (בְּרַחַ), the meaning is not so clear. Many translators use an adjective derived from the idea of flight (the usual Hebrew meaning of ברה; *qal*); thus “fleeing,” “fleeting,” etc. W. F. Albright took the Arabic and Hebrew basic sense of the root to be “to pass,” and related it to past time, translating it “primeval.” Albright also cites an Egyptian cognate expression which he said means “of old.”³⁴⁴ T. H. Gaster said that the Egyptian does not mean “primeval,” but simply “before, previously,”³⁴⁵ while C. Rabin said that the Arabic meaning “past” was “derived and rather rare” and that “a past serpent is hardly the same as a primeval serpent,”³⁴⁶ although one could argue from analogy to the Hebrew בְּרַחַ, which can be used for the relatively recent past as well as for primeval times (Job 29:2; “months of old”). Rabin postulates two basic meanings of the root in Semitic languages; “to twist,” and “to be hairless, smooth, bright.” He prefers the translation “convulsive” or “tortuous” for Isa 27:1 on the basis of the first of these common Semitic meanings and his belief that the constellation Draco is in view in Job 26:13 (the other occurrence of בְּרַחַ; besides Isa 27:1), and notes that this translation agrees with the *Tg.* and *Vg.* in Job.³⁴⁷ Albright responded briefly to Gaster and Rabin and pointed to the expression *'nt · brḥ · p 'lmh / 'nt · pdr · dr* in the Ugaritic Aqhat story, where *brḥ* occurs between the words “now,” and “forever,” and thus might reasonably be said to have some reference to past time; he also noted that such a translation would agree with the designation “ancient serpent” used in Rev 12:9; 20:2.³⁴⁸ The context, however, concerns the immediate and future

³⁴²Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 68.

³⁴³Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 64, n. 1.

³⁴⁴William F. Albright, “Are the Ephod and the Teraphim Mentioned in Ugaritic Literature?” *BASOR* 83 (Oct 1941): 39-40, n. 5. Mitchell Dahood also adopts this translation (*Psalms II: 51-100* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 205.

³⁴⁵Theodor H. Gaster, “Folklore Motifs in Canaanite Myth,” *JRAS* (1944): 47.

³⁴⁶C. Rabin, “BĀRI^AH,” *JTS* 47 (1946): 38.

³⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 39-41.

³⁴⁸William F. Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to T. H. Robinson*, H. H. Rowley, ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 2, n. 9. Albright mentions C. L. Feinberg as calling attention to the similarity with Rev 12:9; 20:2 if *brḥ* means “primeval” (*ibid.*).

consequences for the murder of Aqhat, which would seem to make the sense “now and forever” (but not past) preferable. Gibson translates, “Be a fugitive now and evermore, / now and to all generations.”³⁴⁹ Conceivably there is a pun involved with a common expression meaning “now, then, and forever.”

C. Gordon suggested the translation “evil serpent,” following a suggestion by I. Yasin that בָּרַח is related to Arabic *barḥ* (“evil,” “harm,” or “great pain”).³⁵⁰ Rabin disagrees that the Arabic evidence cited for this meaning is a likely explanation for the Bible, although he seems to have provided some of his own, in documenting the idea that “the basic idea of twisting is never far absent. Another group of meanings implies ‘twisting’ off the right path. One shouts *barḥā* on seeing a shot going amiss.”³⁵¹ This brings to mind the common verb for “sin” in Hebrew (אָטָה) which has the literal meaning “to miss a mark or a way,” which can be seen in Judg 20:16 (those who can sling a stone at a hair and not miss).³⁵²

Further support for the translation “evil” comes from an Eblaite-Sumerian bilingual text discussed by A. Archi, where Sumerian *šà-ḫul-gig* = Eblaite *ba-ri-ù/um*, which Archi renders “*mauvais amour*,” and relates to Arabic *bariḥ*, “*de mauvais augere*” and Ugaritic and Hebrew *brḥ*.³⁵³ E. Zurro cited Archi’s article to support his finding of a “Janus parallelism” in Job 9:25, hinging on two meanings of the verb בָּרַח (“flee” and “be evil”). In such parallelism, one of the two meanings parallels what precedes it, while the other meaning parallels what follows; thus Job says, “My days are swifter than a runner, they flee/they are evil (בָּרַחוּ); they see no good.”³⁵⁴ That this evidence is in Job adds to the probability that בָּרַח means “evil serpent,” since this phrase is also found in Job 26:13, where the serpent’s name is Rahab (see below).

J. Gamberoni is skeptical of Rabin’s “alleged common Semitic original meanings” and wonders if the meaning of the word was still remembered in biblical tradition.³⁵⁵ Possibly, the adjective “ancient” applied to the serpent-dragon in Rev 12:9;

³⁴⁹Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 119 (Aqhat; 19:154, 157, 167).

³⁵⁰Izz-al-Din Al-Yasin, *The Lexical Relation Between Ugaritic and Arabic* (Shelton Semitic Monograph Series, 1; New York: Shelton College, 1952), 45 (on p. 152, however, Yasin translates the relevant Ugaritic text “mischievous serpent”). Cyrus H. Gordon, “Near East Seals in Princeton and Philadelphia,” *Or* 22 (1953): 243-44.

³⁵¹Rabin, “BĀRI^AH” 39.

³⁵²G. H. Livingstone, *TWOT*, § 638 (p. 277).

³⁵³A. Archi, “Les Textes lexicaux bilingues d’Ebla,” *SEb* 2 (1980): 81-89; 87. Archi follows *CAD* in relating the Sumerian *šà-ḫul* to Akkadian *lumum libbi* (“grief, sorrow, distress, anger,” *CAD*, 9.250).

³⁵⁴Eduardo Zurro, “Disemia de *brḥ* y paralelismo bifronte en Job 9,25,” *Bib* 62 (1981): 546-47. I thank Gary Rendsburg for drawing my attention to this article.

³⁵⁵J. Gamberoni, *TDOT*, 2.252. **add article title; and to bibliography

20:2 may reflect another tradition of the meaning of בְּרָהָה, agreeing with Albright's suggestion. In fact, one could view "The great dragon ... the serpent of old ... who deceives" (Rev 12:9) as a Targum-like paraphrase of Isa 27:1: "Leviathan, serpent of old, crooked serpent," taking "crooked" metaphorically (especially since this dragon has seven heads and is master of "the beast" who has seven heads and lives in the sea; Rev 13:1). Favoring the translation "twisted" is that a snake may be said to be twisted or winding, an idea which also underlies the meaning of the Hebrew root לוי which is probably the basis for the name Leviathan.³⁵⁶ But if the name and both adjectives mean "twisted, crooked, winding," and serve to emphasize the physical shape of the dragon, then it seems strange that as depicted on seals, the dragon is not physically twisted at all - if the adjectives and name all mean "twisted," they must be figurative for the dragon's moral character.³⁵⁷ On balance, the evidence at present seems to favor the translation "evil serpent," though an Egyptian connection is also possible. In another chapter, we will discuss the Egyptian figure of Apophis, who is depicted as a huge serpent with numerous coils; thus the description of Leviathan as "crooked serpent" may owe something to very early Egyptian material of which we are unaware.³⁵⁸

Ps 74:13-14 describes God's breaking (שָׁבַר) the heads of dragons (תַּנִּינִים)³⁵⁹ on the waters, and the crushing (רָצַץ) of the heads of Leviathan. Job wishes Leviathan would swallow the day of his birth (3:8).

Rahab:

Isa 51:9 calls the Lord the one who, in days of old, "cut in pieces Rahab (הַמְחַצֵּבֶת) and pierced the dragon" (מְחַלְלֵת תַּנִּין) and dried up the sea to make a path for the redeemed to cross over.³⁶⁰ Ps 89:11(10) says "It was you who crushed (דָּכָא) like a slain one, Rahab; with your strong arm you scattered your enemies." Job 26:12 says God by his power stirred up (רָגַע) the sea, and by his understanding shattered (מָחַץ) Rahab, who, like Leviathan, is נֶחָשׁ בְּרָהָה (v. 13). In Job 9:13 Rahab's "helpers" cower before God.

Tannîn:

In addition to the passages cited above, תַּנִּין (*tannîn*, "serpent, dragon") is used without the names Rahab or Leviathan to refer to the dragon in Job 7:12 ("Am I Sea [ים],

³⁵⁶ John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (New York: Cambridge, 1985), 5.

³⁵⁷ ANEP, pls. 671, 691.

³⁵⁸ For depiction of Apophis (many prefer the spelling Apep) see, for example, George Hart, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 31. Albright's case would obviously be helped by finding Egyptian *brḥ* as "primeval" applied to Apophis or some other deity.

³⁵⁹ The plural form is sometimes explained as a misunderstanding of enclitic *mem*; if so, "dragon" is singular, parallel with Leviathan (so Wakeman, *God's Battle*, 68, n. 5). Dahood puts the final *mem* with the next word (*Psalms II*, 206).

³⁶⁰ Many interpreters see a sharp transition between vv. 9 & 10, seeing v. 9 as a pre-creation event. Rahab in this interpretation is the personification of "the primordial chaos of the sea which Yahweh overcame" (Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament*, 9-10; following Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895], 32; and others).

or תַּנִּין, that you put me under guard?”). With a slightly different spelling, in Ezekiel there are two references to Pharaoh as תַּנִּין (Ezek 29:3, 32:2),³⁶¹ and in Jeremiah a reference to Nebuchadnezzar as “like the תַּנִּין” who “has swallowed us” (Jer 51:34).³⁶² The Canaanite figure Yam (Sea) may be a serpent or dragon, though in the Ugaritic myths he is never called such or pictured with many heads; like *Ltn* he is Baal’s opponent. The extent to which he is referred to in the Hebrew Bible is debated. In addition to the Job 7:12 passage, Ps 74:13 (with תַּנִּין in context) has been cited as a passage in which the dragon Yam is indicated, while others see a reference to the Red Sea. This passage is discussed in detail in another chapter. Unlike Leviathan, we do not see “Sea” described in the Bible with his Ugaritic titles (Prince Sea, Judge River), and the appearance of “sea” in the same context as the dragon may be explained by the fact that the sea is the home of the dragon (as Isa 27:1). Though the Ugaritic Sea (Yam) is not called a dragon, and is (like Baal) one of the gods, sons of El, G. Rendsburg argues that the battle between Baal and Yam seems to be the same as that pictured on the Tell Asmar seal from about 1000 years earlier. The Tell Asmar seal, dated at 2180-2360 BC, depicts a seven-headed fiery dragon under divine attack, with four of its heads slain.³⁶³ Pritchard describes the dragon as being under attack by two gods (the seal shows one attacking the heads, one attacking the back). But Rendsburg argues that the seal is an example of “continuous narrative in one illustration;” two sequential scenes are shown in which one god attacks the back, then the head. Rendsburg relates this sequence to the Ugaritic story of Baal attacking Yam.³⁶⁴ From an earlier (i.e., Sumerian) period at Tell Asmar, a seal impression with a seven-headed snake under divine attack was found, and H. Frankfort argued for the equivalence of this figure with the later seven-headed dragon.³⁶⁵

The possibility that Yam, a son of El, could also be viewed as a dragon figure finds support in the comparison of the Egyptian god Seth and the demonic serpent Apophis. H. Te Velde says that whether fighting Apophis or protecting the sun-god Re, Seth is called an evil being; he is anti-social and homosexual, murderer of his brother, and “the god who brings about abortion.”³⁶⁶ Even though a foe of Apophis, Seth was also

³⁶¹ Elsewhere תַּנִּיִּם is the plural of תַּן, “jackals,” though the *kethib* of Lam 4:3 has תַּנּוּ; the context favors the *qere*. Here the form must be singular agreeing with the adjective and verb.

³⁶² The reference is either a comparison to literal snakes swallowing their prey, or to the dragon figure. תַּנִּין is used as often for one as for the other.

³⁶³ ANEP, 221 (pl. 691).

³⁶⁴ Gary A. Rendsburg, “UT 68 and the Tell Asmar Seal,” *Or* 53 (1984): 4:448-452.

³⁶⁵ H. Frankfort, “Early Dynastic Sculptured Maceheads,” *AnOr* 12: 105-21. Frankfort says both seals were found in connection with the same temple; he also argues that a seven-headed snake on a macehead in the Copenhagen museum represents the same figure (*ibid.*, 119-21); this macehead is also mentioned by Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 108, n. 81, and fig. 15 (back of book).

³⁶⁶ H. Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 29, 31, 40, 101.

identified with him: “Set ... became for later Egyptians the personification of evil. He was identified with Apophis, the serpent of wickedness, against whom the sun-god wages perpetual war.”³⁶⁷ We may add that the fact that gods, i.e., members of the heavenly court, are associated with demonic functions in rather ancient myths refutes Joines’ claim (cited above) that Israelites could only know of a Satan figure from the time of the exile.

δράκων (dragon) is the LXX translation of the Hebrew יָתֵן and Leviathan in these passages. It is also used 13 times in Rev12:3-17; 13:2,4, 11; 16:13; 20:2 to refer to the seven-headed ten-horned dragon, who is twice pointedly referred to as “that ancient serpent (ὄφις) called the devil or Satan” (12:9; 20:2; he is also called ὄφις in 12:14, 15).

These passages, along with the comparative material, will be discussed in another chapter. For now, we note that the figure of a supernatural serpent, or dragon, who is at enmity with God, was well known to the Hebrews and used without hesitation or introduction. This knowledge could have helped the implied reader of Genesis to resolve the inconsistencies apparent between the description of the snake as an animal, and his actions as a rational, evil being. As for the objection that the dragon figure is God’s enemy, whereas the serpent of Genesis 3 is the enemy of man, we saw above that the enemies of Israel are compared to (or called) the dragon, and it is only logical to conclude that the enemy of the one who is made in God’s image is also the enemy of God.

2.3.7 Conclusions

We can see that the initial interpretation of the first implied readers of Genesis 3 could be quite different than that of Adam and Eve themselves. The naturalistic interpretation would have a certain amount of momentum based on the appearance of the snake to be a mere animal, and the statement apparently to that effect in Gen 3:1. Considerable evidence can be seen on reflection (subsequent interpretations) as pointing to a supernaturalistic interpretation of the serpent; as Kurtz said, “So soon as man had commenced to reflect on this event, he must have gathered from it the existence of a spiritual being opposed to God. For this he did not require the aid of a special instruction or revelation” (§ 1.8.3). More of this evidence would be available to the implied reader than to Adam and Eve. But the implications for such an identification would not be obvious. If the serpent were actually an evil angel, a moral opposite to the Cherubim and Seraphim, what would his offspring be? And how would the conflict manifest itself in the future? To these questions we turn next.

³⁶⁷ A. H. Sayce, *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 162. Sayce also notes the role of Apophis in the trials of the deceased in the *Book of the Dead*, which describes “how the soul ... can pass in safety ‘over the back of the serpent Apophis, the wicked’” (p. 187).

CHAPTER III

INITIAL FULFILLMENTS OF GENESIS 3:15

3.1 Introduction

Nothing explains a prophecy like its fulfillment. We saw in chap. I that a significant minority of interpreters throughout the history of interpretation of Gen 3:15 have understood both seeds collectively and figuratively, as the righteous and the wicked. A smaller number of these from Optatus to Origen to Dietrich Philips to the present identified the conflict between Cain and Abel as the first fulfillment of the enmity predicted in the curse, therefore identifying the two brothers as the first representatives of the two seeds at enmity. We shall see in this chapter that the evidence for such a view is considerable, and that this understanding provides a major key to the interpretation of the passage.

3.2 First Fulfillment of the Enmity of Gen 3:15

In Gen 3:15 God says he will put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between their respective offspring. In Genesis 4, God puts enmity between Cain and Abel by approving of Abel and his offering, while disapproving of Cain and his offering. That enmity is the proper word to describe the relationship between Cain and Abel after this rejection is evident from Cain's action – he murdered his brother. We saw that this same word “enmity,” paralleled with such words as hatred, envy, and jealousy, is twice used in the law of Moses (Num 35:21-22) to describe the condition which makes homicide a premeditated murder and therefore makes the murderer worthy of death. There is obviously no question that the murder of Abel was premeditated; “with enmity.” Identifying the enmity which occurs in Genesis 4 as the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 is the key to identifying the two seeds which are at enmity, with the result that the initial interpretation of Gen 3:15 by Adam and Eve, the naturalistic interpretation, is overthrown. Otherwise, we must assume that some amazing coincidence has placed Genesis 4, an episode of enmity, after Gen 3:15, its prediction. By further coincidence, the naturalistic interpretation (though correct) is never referred to again.

The two seeds therefore are not snakes and humans, but two kinds of humans – in fact, here, brothers, so those who argued for a definition of seed as moral or ethical kind are correct. One kind is approved of God, righteous; the other disapproved, wicked. Besides the evidence from the enmity itself, we see that in the narrative, Cain is modelled after the serpent, while Abel is shown to be the woman's seed.

3.3 Cain and Abel, the Two Seeds of Gen 3:15

3.3.1 Cain, Seed of the Serpent

While perhaps most commentators see the murder of Abel by Cain as an evidence of the “intensification” of sin in the early world, such a view only compares Cain's actions in Genesis 4 with those of his natural parents in Genesis 3. It overlooks the fact that Cain's sins are already exemplified in Genesis 3, not by Adam and Eve, but by the serpent. So the point is not simply that sin grows and the effects of the fall become more terrible, but rather that the behavior of the serpent of Genesis 3 is carried on by his spiritual offspring, Cain. Three areas of comparison show Cain clearly like the serpent, but unlike Adam and Eve: (1) lying; (2) murdering; (3) being cursed.

The serpent lied to the woman about God's command and the consequences of transgressing it (Gen 3:1, 4). Cain lied when God asked him "where is Abel your brother?" (Gen 4:9). Cain is thus like the serpent, but unlike his natural parents, who, though trying to mitigate their sin, still answered God's questions truthfully (Gen 3:9-13). The serpent is a murderer because with deceptive words he induced the woman to take an action which he had reason to believe would be immediately fatal.³⁶⁸ Cain is likewise a murderer, using deceptive words to accomplish his goal (Gen 4:8). Again, he is like the serpent, but unlike his natural parents. Cain is cursed by God (Gen 4:11), like the serpent but unlike his natural parents.³⁶⁹ So in these three ways Cain is modelled after the serpent. It is only in physical matters that he is more like his physical parents (his physical appearance as a man, his farming profession). We can probably not imagine the shock with which Adam and Eve realized that the one they thought was the first example of God's new creation, the woman's seed, the first born over all creation, was actually the offspring of their cursed enemy.

Genesis 4 itself has an answer to the objection that a moral or ethical definition of the seed violates all rules of scientific exegesis, as Kühnöl said (§ 1.7.2). At the end of the chapter, the word "father" is used twice in an unusual way; to indicate one who originates certain practices or invents something. Jabal is "the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock," and his brother Jubal is "the father of all who play the harp and lute" (Gen 4:20-21). As "father" is used *twice* this way at the end of the chapter (it could have been used a third time, to describe Tubal-Cain in v. 22), so the serpent is *in two ways* the father of Cain. The serpent originated the two practices of lying and murdering; he is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and Cain is his spiritual or moral son.³⁷⁰ The implications of this identification for the naturalistic interpretation of the serpent are obvious. If Genesis 4 shows the offspring of the serpent mentioned in Gen 3:15 to be a human being, not a snake, then the strictly naturalistic interpretation of the serpent in the curse, which we have already suggested there is reason to doubt from the events of the fall (available for Adam and Eve's reflection) and from

³⁶⁸ Here I agree with Rosenbaum (except for his naturalistic interpretation) about the extent of the serpent's guilt: "By robbing Adam and Eve of immortality the snake and its descendants are the murderers of our ancestors, and, by extension, of ourselves as well. Any human death, whatever the apparent cause, is another crime to be laid at the den of the serpent" (Rosenbaum, "Israelite homicide Law," 150).

³⁶⁹ "After sin so dominated Cain that he killed Abel, the LORD cursed Cain even as he had earlier cursed his spiritual father, the Serpent" (Bruce K. Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," *WTJ* 48 [1986]: 370).

³⁷⁰ Michael J. Maher says that *Tg. Ps. J.* Gen 4:1 is "the earliest text that explicitly identifies Sammael as the father of Cain" (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis*, 31, n. 2). According to Maher, the reason for this identification is that Gen 5:3 says that Seth was in the image and likeness of Adam, but this was not said about Cain. No doubt some of the correspondences between Cain and the serpent mentioned here also played a role in identifying Cain's father as the devil. The great mistake made by such legends (Maher lists the sources in the note cited above) is in assuming that the parentage being spoken of is Cain's physical parentage. The text could not be clearer that Adam is Cain's father. A. Goldbérġ (who also traces these legends in an article) said that it was easy to make Cain the son of the devil on the basis of the account in Genesis 6 of the "sons of God" marrying the daughters of men and having children (A. Goldbérġ, "Kain: Sohn des Menschen oder Sohn der Schlange?", *Judaica* 24 [1969]: 206).

the narrative about it (available for the reader's reflection) is rejected by the immediate (or at least near) context of Gen 3:15 itself.³⁷¹

In addition to Genesis 4 portraying Cain as the seed of the serpent, we can cite other Old Testament passages which compare the wicked to serpents, or their wickedness to snake's venom, just as other Old Testament passages show how the idea of the serpent as a supernatural enemy of God was well known to the Israelites (see § 2.3.6). Comparisons of the wicked to serpents could be in part dependent on Gen 3:15; at the least they show how the implied reader could have been helped to the conclusion suggested here. Some of this material has already been mentioned under the description of K. Holter's views (§ 1.9.7).

נָחָשׁ, the generic Hebrew word for snake, is the most common Old Testament serpent word and the only one used to describe the serpent in the Fall narrative (used five times; vv. 1, 2, 4, 13, & 14); it is found 26 other times in the Old Testament. Other Hebrew words for serpents are (alphabetically), אֶפְסָרָה (3 occurrences), לְוִיָּאֵתָן (Leviathan; 6x), עֵכָשׁוּב (1x), מִתְּוֹן (6x, only poetry), צִפְעָה (1x), צִפְעוֹנִי (4x), רָהַב (Rahab; 7x), שָׂרָף (7x), שִׁפְפוֹן (1x; this is the word from which Calvin explained the use of שׂוּף in Gen 3:15), and תְּנִינִי (14x). Snakes may also be among the “crawling things (זָחָל) of the ground/dust” (Deut 32:24; Mic 7:17). Leviathan and Rahab (as discussed in § 2.3.6) are proper nouns associated with תְּנִינִי, usually a sea creature, supernatural or natural (except that רָהַב is found once in the plural in Ps 40:5), while the rest are common nouns. יָם, the common word for “sea,” is also in Ugaritic myths another proper noun associated with or at least probably based on, the supernatural תְּנִינִי. Aside from יָם, all of the words listed above appear in parallel with the generic נָחָשׁ except אֶפְסָרָה, which is found in parallel with three other words which do appear in parallel with נָחָשׁ (מִתְּוֹן, שָׂרָף, and שִׁפְפוֹן). שָׂרָף (discussed in § 2.3.5) is thought to be so named from the burning sensation of its bite; therefore most probably denotes a venomous snake. This seems especially likely from the fact that the word sometimes is used in apposition to נָחָשׁ to further modify it; “snakes, venomous ones” (Num 21:6; Deut 8:15). This fact further implies that נָחָשׁ need not be a venomous snake. Notably absent from the list of serpent words is the common Semitic *hiwwā*. Because of the interchangeability of the different serpent words, we will consider all the passages referring to snakes of any sort as of interest to our study.

Men or peoples are compared to snakes or their wickedness to snake venom in Gen 49:17 (the tribe of Dan is נָחָשׁ and שִׁפְפוֹן, which bites the heel of the horse); Deut 32:33 (תְּנִינִי, מִתְּוֹן; their wine is the venom of serpents, the poison of cobras); Isa14:29 (נָחָשׁ, צִפְעוֹנִי, and שָׂרָף; Ahaz and Hezekiah as snakes attacking the Philistines); 59:5 (אֶפְסָרָה, צִפְעוֹנִי; the wicked hatch eggs of snakes); Jer 46:22 (Egypt is like the נָחָשׁ), Mic 7:17 (נָחָשׁ, זָחָל; nations share the serpent's humiliation of Gen 3:14), Ps 58:5 (נָחָשׁ, מִתְּוֹן; the venom of the wicked is like the venom of a snake or a cobra), and 140:4 (נָחָשׁ, עֵכָשׁוּב; they sharpen their tongues like a serpent's, the poison of vipers is on their lips; this verse is quoted in Rom 3:13, using ἀσπίς for עֵכָשׁוּב). Ps 40:5 says “blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not look to the רֵהֱבִיּוֹת, to those who turn aside to false gods.”

³⁷¹ According to the generally accepted source criticism, the two passages are from the same primary source document, although Genesis 4 is often said to have two or three separate sources, and is often said to have been originally independent of Genesis 3. More will be said on this later in our study.

This usage continues in the New Testament, as four times the Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, etc. are called γεννήματα ἔχιδνῶν (“brood of vipers,” Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33 [which also has ὄφις]; Luke 3:7). Luke 3:7 (= Matt 3:7) is spoken by John the Baptist in the context of the Pharisaical pride of having Abraham as father. They are offspring of the serpent, not of Abraham. Jesus told his disciples to “be as shrewd as snakes (ὄφις) and as innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16). The first and last references under this category, as well as Isa 14:29, are the only references that could be construed in a positive sense. That Dan is called a serpent on the road which attacks the heel of the horse (Gen 49:17), while taken by some Church fathers as an indication that the Antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan, in context seems to refer to Samson, the judge (thus a play on the name Dan; cf. Gen 49:16) and one man army who single-handedly defeated the Philistines. Likewise Isa 14:29 seems to refer favorably (from Israel’s point of view, at least) to the snake’s destructive ability. This leaves 12 Old Testament figurative usages of serpent terms that are similar to the sense suggested for “seed of the serpent” in Gen 3:15. Two of these (both in Mic 7:17) could be allusions to Gen 3:14. The Old Testament passages cited in § 2.3.6 which portray the serpent as God’s enemy (who now is shown to be Cain’s “father”), constitute another 17 cases; three of these overlap with the category considered here, where Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar are called (or likened to) the dragon (דִּרְגָן; Jer 51:34; Ezek 29:3; 32:2). Together, then, these two categories (serpents as wicked men, or as God’s enemy), account for over a third of the total Old Testament usages (outside of Genesis 3) of words for snakes, serpents, dragons, etc., and both categories have passages which are possible allusions to the curse on the serpent. Naturally, this percentage would be reduced if we eliminated the words for dragon, but, as we have seen, each of these words (including Leviathan and Rahab) appears in parallel with a common word for snake.

While Cain is shown to be the offspring of the serpent, and Gen 4:20-21 illustrates in what sense the serpent could be considered his father, we also note that the narrator avoids calling Cain Eve’s son, in the very verse that Eve celebrates his birth as fulfillment of Gen 3:15: “Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to [a son, and she called his name] Cain, and she said, ‘I have created a man with the Lord’” (Gen 4:1). The words in brackets are “missing” from the text; Nachmanides felt it necessary to explain, “the sense of it is that she gave birth to a son, and she called his name Cain.”³⁷² I refer to this as “missing” text because in Genesis when the reason for the child’s name is given in connection with his birth, or the naming is mentioned, the formula is very stereotypical: thus, in Gen 4:1 it *should* say that Eve bore a son and named him Cain, saying, etc., instead of saying simply that she gave birth to Cain and said, etc. In Gen 4:25 and 26, the naming of Seth and Enosh are described, and there it says Eve bore a “son,” and to Seth was born a “son” (recall that Luther noted that Seth was the first one Moses calls “son”). In the genealogy of Genesis 5, these same two sons are mentioned again; this time, the naming of Seth alone is mentioned. Here a unique formula is used; instead of “Adam begot a son and called his name Seth,” it says “Adam begot in his image, according to his likeness, and called his name Seth” (v. 3). “In his

³⁷²Chavel, *Ramban, Genesis*, 87.

image, according to his likeness” substitutes for “son,” perhaps to explain the repeated refrain throughout the chapter, “and he died.” Since the naming of Enosh is not described, the text simply says “Seth begot Enosh,” not “Seth begot a son, and called his name Enosh” (v. 6). In the rest of Genesis 5, only the naming of Noah is described, and it is the only case where “son” is used for the named individual (v.28). The “table of nations” in Genesis 10 is somewhat different. Here, the expression “the sons of” is commonly used in place of the verb “beget” or “give birth,” though sometimes they are used together (vv. 1, 21, 25). Still, the rule is followed that where the naming of the son is described or explained, he is called “son” (the one case is v. 25, Peleg; cf. 11:16 where his birth is recorded without the naming; “Eber ... begot Peleg”). We see “bear” with “son” (or “daughter,” or “twins”) along with the naming in 16:11, 15 (Ishmael, in promise and in recording the fact); 17:19 (promise of Isaac); 19:37-38 (Moab and Ammon); 21:2-3 (Isaac); 25:22-26 (Esau and Jacob; called “sons” in v. 22, “twins” in v. 24); 29:32 (Reuben); 33 (Simeon); 34 (Levi); 35 (Judah); 30:5-6 (Dan); 7-8 (Naphtali); 10-11 (Gad); 12-13 (Asher); 17-18 (Issachar); 19-20 (Zebulun); 21 (Dinah); 23-24 (Joseph); 35:16-18 (Benjamin; here “son” is used by the midwife, not the narrator); 38:3 (Er); 4 (Onan); 5 (Shelah); 27-30 (twins Perez and Zerah); 41:50-52 (Manasseh and Ephraim). Of these 30 cases where at the birth the name is explained or the naming is recorded, none is reported in the manner that Cain’s is; all use “son,” “daughter,” or “twins” (or a circumlocution in Gen 5:3). A possibility for the unusual report is indicated by the context; the narrator wishes to avoid calling Cain the son of Adam and Eve; not because he is not their son in the physical, naturalistic sense, but because the point of the chapter is to show that Cain is not of the “seed of the woman” in terms of Gen 3:15. That is, he is not of the seed of the woman in the spiritual or moral sense although he is in the naturalistic sense. It appears, then, that both parts of this difficult verse (Gen 4:1) have problems which may be solved by referring back to Gen 3:15. It also appears that Gen 4:1 functions in a similar manner to Gen 3:1. There, I argued that although the verse appears to describe the snake as an animal which God has created (thus inferior to man), the description of him as “crafty,” with its word-play on “naked” (pointing to the innocence of Adam and Eve) shows how it is superior to man, thus not an animal. “Snake as animal” is the perspective of Adam and Eve in Gen 3:1, while “snake as crafty” is the narrator’s perspective, a description which we see towards the end of the chapter is illuminated by comparing the snake to the cherubim. Similarly, we have the same two perspectives in Gen 4:1: in Eve’s view, Cain is the seed of the woman; in the narrator’s view he is not. Eve’s statement is a statement of appearances, and it is just as incorrect as the appearance in Genesis 3 that the snake is only an animal. As Genesis 3 gives us a comparison (with the Cherubim) to see who the snake is, the narrative of Genesis 4 gives us a comparison (with the snake of Genesis 3) to see whose “seed” Cain is – not the woman’s, but the serpent’s.

This interpretation of Gen 4:1 also helps decide the question whether Eve’s reason for describing the birth of Cain as her creation of him is based on Gen 3:15 being a promise of creation, or simply based on analogy with her own creation from Adam. The explanation for the departure from the pattern followed elsewhere in birth and naming reports depends on seeing Gen 4:1 as an allusion to Gen 3:15 in a way that contradicts

Eve's understanding expressed in the same verse. Thus the verse makes most sense if Eve's statement is based on Gen 3:15, not just Gen 2:22-23.³⁷³

The exclusion of Cain as seed of the woman figures in the end of the chapter as well as the beginning. As the narrator avoids calling Cain "son" in Gen 4:1, so Eve avoids calling him her "seed" in Gen 4:25. When Seth is born, Eve says "God has appointed for me another seed in place of Abel, for Cain slew him." We see then that at the end of the chapter Eve has changed her opinion to agree with that of the narrator expressed in the beginning of the chapter.³⁷⁴ Here again we can see an analogy to Genesis 3, which starts off apparently calling the snake an animal, but ends by inferring an angelic identity for the serpent.

3.3.2 *Abel and Seth, Seed of the Woman*

Abel is not called Eve's son in the report of his birth either (v. 2), but that does not violate the rule described above since his name is not explained and it does not say "she called his name 'Abel.'" Additionally, the name itself may have meant "son." "Most of the Hebrew lexicons have connected 'Abel' with the cognate Akkadian word *ablu/aplu* 'son.'"³⁷⁵ Abel and Seth are both identified later by Eve as being her seed in the verse just mentioned, Gen 4:25, "God has granted to me another seed in place of Abel, whom Cain killed" (v. 25). This verse seems to be an implicit denial by Eve that Cain is her seed; Seth replaces Abel as her seed; Cain, still alive, is not her seed.

We see also a contrast in the way Seth is named from the way Cain was named. In Gen 4:1, Eve thought she was privileged to have a part in bringing about the new creation, through child-birth: "I have created a man with the Lord." Now after the naturalistic initial interpretation of Gen 3:15 is overthrown, she understands that the new creation is only God's work, and so she confesses that the woman's seed comes by God's ordination. As Kline noted (§ 1.8.28), she uses the same verb (תַּשׂ) that God uses to describe his own creative work in Gen 3:15, which may explain why the Hebrew has a word in v. 25 which only very rarely has the idea of "give, grant, appoint"³⁷⁶ (or else Eve uses it with the more common idea of "make").³⁷⁷ So the name Seth can be explained as a verbal allusion to Gen 3:15, making Seth, in effect, named after that passage. Therefore I

³⁷³ Gen 4:1 might therefore be described as a formal disproof of the classical source criticism of Genesis, since it shows Eve in the J document interpreting Gen 3:15 (also J) in light of Genesis 1 (part of P, which supposedly did not yet exist, and is in any case quite contradictory to J).

³⁷⁴ Luther's words come to mind: "It is, therefore, the outstanding glory not only of her faith but also of her obedience that she is not provoked at the judgment of God but herself changes her own judgment. . . . She herself also excommunicates the excommunicated Cain and sends him away with all his descendants" (see pp. 41-42).

³⁷⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *TWOT* § 463a (p. 204). If the name corresponds to the Hebrew noun "vapor, breath, vanity," it could be a name given not at birth but after his murder.

³⁷⁶ Out of 85 occurrences, Gen 4:25; Ps 9:21 (20; appoint terror for them); 12:6 (5; appoint, grant safety); 21:7 (6; you grant him blessings). See Victor P. Hamilton, *TWOT* § 2380 (p. 921); BDB, 1011.

³⁷⁷ BDB, 1011.

prefer the translation “set” in Gen 3:15a, since by that word we may happily reproduce the word-play in English that is also reproduced in the Hebrew, between the verb “set” and the name “Seth.”

One might object here that if Eve is thinking of a spiritual seed, she could not have presumed that this son would be an Abel instead of a Cain. I believe this objection is valid, but the verb can also be translated as what Waltke calls “the *precativ perfective* or *perfective of prayer*” (may God appoint for me another seed in place of Abel!).³⁷⁸ In rejecting child-birth as the generative process which makes one the “seed of the woman,” i.e., the seed of promise, Eve gives witness to another generative process which accounts for the difference between the two seeds; a spiritual creation or “birth” from God himself.

Genesis 4 does not give an account of this new creation, only its result (a righteous seed at enmity with the wicked). In Gen 3:15 God says he will separate two seeds, alluding to the separation theme of Genesis 1, thereby giving Gen 3:15 implications of creation. In Gen 4:2b-5a we see the two seeds contrasted in a manner that is again reminiscent of the creation account. This contrast begins with the occupation of the two brothers, then with the two offerings they bring, and finally, with the different responses by the Lord. The three contrasts are given in three chiasmic sentences, where the word order is varied in the second half of the sentence to form a contrast, and the order in which the subjects (or indirect objects in the third sentence) are mentioned is also alternated (Abel-Cain, Cain-Abel, to Abel-to Cain):

(4:2b) וַיְהִי הֶבְל רֵעָה צֹאן וְלֶזֶן הָיָה עִבֵד אֲדָמָה

(4:3b-4a) וַיָּבֵא לֶזֶן מִפְּרֵי אֲדָמָה . . . וְהֶבֶל הֵבִיא גַם־הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֲלִבֵּיהֶן

(4:4b-5a) וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל־הֶבֶל וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ וְאֶל־לֶזֶן וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה

(Literally, following the word order of the Hebrew, “Became Abel a shepherd of flocks; Cain became a tiller of the ground. ... Brought Cain some of the fruit of the ground; ... Abel brought also some of the firstlings of his flock, and some of their fat portions. Looked the Lord upon Abel and his offering; upon Cain and his offering he did not look”). We will discuss the offerings in more detail later. For now, we note that the third of these chiasmic sentences (Gen 4:4b-5a) is the one that is the most like the chiasmus we noted in § 2.2.5 that is used to distinguish light from darkness, and the dry land from the seas, in the creation account. It is most like Gen 1:5, 10 in that it is another instance of “indirect objects in chiasmus,” and in that the Lord is subject of both halves of the sentence (but mentioned only once). Therefore just as in the account of the creation of the universe, so in the creation of the woman’s seed we see the explicit mention of the separation, with active verb, and preposition בֵּין (Gen 3:15), and then after the separation is brought about we see the chiasmic sentence structure identifying the two things separated (Gen 4:4b-5a). We may summarize the comparisons between original and new creations by means of a table (bold face shows the active verb with the preposition [1:4; 1:7; 3:15], or the use of chiasmus of indirect object [1:5; 1:10; 4:4b-5a]):

Separation	verse	indication of separation
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³⁷⁸Waltke, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, § 30.5.4c-d (pp. 494-95). The usual contextual means of identifying the precativ perfective (that it alternates with the imperfect or the imperative) is not available here, since Eve’s statement has only one verb.

light / darkness	1:4	<i>wayyabdēl</i> 'Ēlōhîm <i>bên</i> hā 'ôr <i>ûbên</i> haḥōšek
	1:5	<i>wayyiqrā</i> 'Ēlōhîm <i>lā</i> 'ôr yôm <i>wəlahōšek qārā</i> 'lāylā
waters above / waters below	1:7	<i>wayyabdēl bên</i> hammáyim 'āšer mittáhat <i>lārāqia</i> ' <i>ûbên</i> hammáyim 'āšer mē 'al <i>lārāqi</i> 'a
dry land / seas	1:10	<i>wayyiqrā</i> 'Ēlōhîm <i>layyabbāšā</i> 'éres <i>ûlamiqwēh hammáyim qārā</i> 'yammîm
Abel / Cain	3:15a-c	<i>wə 'éybā 'āšit bênakā ubên</i> hā 'iššā <i>ûbên</i> zar 'ākā <i>ûbên</i> zar 'āh
	4:4b-5a	<i>wayyiša</i> 'Yhwh 'el-Hébel <i>wə 'el-minḥātō</i> <i>wə 'el-Qáyin wə 'el-minḥātō lō</i> 'šā 'û

Abel is syntactically distinguished from Cain like light is syntactically distinguished from darkness, and the dry land from the seas.³⁷⁹ As light shines out of darkness, as the waters above come out of the waters below, and as the dry land comes out of the sea, so the righteous seed comes out of the wicked seed, as God's creation. So Paul says to the Corinthians: "For God, who said, 'light shall shine out of darkness,' is he who has shone in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6), and to the Ephesians, "you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8; also John 12:36; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Thess 5:5; 1 Pet 2:9, etc.).

Westermann notes that Gen 1:4 says that it is the light, not the darkness, that God saw as good. God has a "preference" for the light.³⁸⁰ The creation account statement "God saw the light, that it was good" (it does not say he saw the darkness), has its counterpart in Gen 4:4b-5a, for the verb *רָאָה*, often translated "to have respect," more literally means "to look upon" (BDB, "gaze"), "a frequent synonym" of the word "see" used in the creation account (*רָאָה*).³⁸¹ God "saw" the light, that it was good, he did not

³⁷⁹ "The storyteller intends to contrast Abel's offering with Cain's by paralleling 'Cain brought some' with 'Abel brought some,' by adding with Abel, 'even he' . . . (v 4), and by juxtaposing in a chiasmic construction the LORD's acceptance of Abel and his gift with his rejection of Cain and his gift" (Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," 368). "The chiasmic linkage between clauses in this scene is remarkable" (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 103). Andersen notes that Gen 4:4b-5a is like Gen 1:5, 10 (*Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 129), but I am unaware of any interpreter relating this chiasm to that used in the creation account to infer that Abel is the new creation. Andersen does not list contrast as one of the functions of chiasmus. He says it is used for aesthetic purposes, as well as as an alternative to a series of sentences with the same word order using *waw* consecutive verbs, for the purpose of emphasizing the contemporary nature of the events described (119, 122-23). In fact he goes so far as to say that if a sentence is chiasmic, it is not contrastive (152, comparing Gen 41:13 with Gen 12:12). Since the context of Genesis 4 obviously contrasts Cain and Abel repeatedly, it seems logical to conclude that the chiasmus aids in the contrast here (also in Genesis 1).

³⁸⁰ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 113.

³⁸¹ BDB, 1043; H. J. Austel, *TWOT* § 2429 (pp. 944-45). "The basic idea ... is 'to look at with interest.' It is never a casual or disinterested glance" (*ibid.*, 944).

“see” the darkness; God “saw” Abel and his offering, he did not “see” Cain and his offering. Obviously implied here is that Abel and his offering are, like “everything God made” (Gen 1:31), “good.” So Abel is, like the light, “preferred” by God, as his new creation. Cain is like the darkness, and like the seas; he is fallen man in his un-recreated state. So we see two ways in which Gen 4:4b-5a depends on Genesis 1 for its interpretation: the first is that the same syntax is used (indirect objects in chiasmus, with God as subject), and the second is the idea of God looking approvingly on his new creation, and not looking on that which already existed. We note in passing here again that these findings are clearly inconsistent with, and tend to refute, the classical source criticism of Genesis, according to which the author of Genesis 1 was ignorant of Genesis 2-4, and the author of Genesis 2-4 could not have been aware of Genesis 1 since it did not yet exist. We will see this type of inconsistency again, as the darkness and the waters below are symbolically used in the Exodus narrative to identify the Egyptians as the serpent’s seed, while the light, waters above, and dry land will be used to identify Israel as the righteous seed, God’s new creation, separated out of Egypt. But even believers in orthodox source criticism should be able to see that the figurative, collective interpretation of the two seeds (at least for the enmity portion of Gen 3:15) is established within the J document itself.

3.3.3 *The Concept of Figurehead*

If Seth and Abel, not Cain, are of the woman’s seed, then the woman is spoken of as head of a righteous race, whereas in reality she is head of an unrighteous race; the presence of righteous among her offspring is not due to any generative power on her part. It is the creative act of God which produces the righteous seed, which implies that the progenitor of the righteous seed is God himself, even though Eve (and, by implication, Adam) is the one named. So although the expression “woman’s seed” as the righteous is understandable from the point of view of a moral kind which shares the qualities of faith and righteousness of the first practitioner of such, the idea of a moral (or spiritual) kind does not convey the idea that there is a progenitor, or creator, of the seed. This creator is God himself, because Gen 3:15 is a promise of a new creation, the righteous seed. God is the head of the righteous seed, so when the seed is said to be the woman’s, the woman functions as a “figurehead.” By figurehead I mean one who has the title of head of the race, who symbolically represents the true head of the race, God. She appropriately does so because she herself is part of that seed, and the rest of the seed follows her chronologically and descends from her biologically. She is the spiritual mother of all the spiritual living. But she is not the actual head of the race; she represents symbolically the actual head of the race, God himself.

The concept of figurehead applies to the animal snake as well. It is not the animal snake who is Cain’s father, but the supernatural snake. Yet it is the animal snake who is said to be addressed in the curse. The “you” spoken to in the curse, as many commentators have said, is in part the animal snake (most have said v. 14, which they say also applies to the invisible tempter), in part the supernatural, invisible snake (most say v. 15). For the supernatural snake, there is no actual headship as progenitor, since the serpent’s seed is the natural state of man. Childbirth brings forth the serpent’s seed. His act to produce the seed took place in the corruption of our first parents, and his future activity is directed not at creating the serpent’s seed but at preventing and hindering the

new creation of the righteous seed. The serpent is therefore anti-creator and anti-(new) creation. We can see how pagans, who see no need of this new creation, could corrupt this promise and make from it myths applying the conflict between the creator and the serpent to the creation of the universe. This is essentially how Kline explains myths like *Enuma Elish* (see § 1.8.28). We will see later that there is another factor, Noah's flood, which enters into this explanation of these pagan myths.

3.3.4 Implications of Genesis 4 as Fulfillment of Gen 3:15

The evidence for identifying the murder of Abel as the first instance of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 is conclusive. It proves the figurative collective interpretation of the passage, or at least of the enmity portion (Gen 3:15a-c), and disproves the strictly naturalistic interpretation, as well as the exclusively individual interpretation. It answers the objection of allegory against the figurative interpretation, because the figurative interpretation is not an arbitrary explanation brought into the text, but is given by Scripture itself, immediately after the prediction in question is made; it is thus a striking example of the hermeneutical principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. It also shows the role of history in interpretation, for here the events of Genesis 4 (which occurred in history before they were written down as Scripture) falsified the interpretation that seemed originally to be the obvious one. It is a tragedy that Luther overlooked this clue to the interpretation of Gen 3:15, for by insisting on the strictly individual-christological interpretation of the woman's seed, he set up something of a straw man for modern interpreters to knock down, which resulted in the dismissal of the salvation-promise content of Gen 3:15.

But this brings up the question, if Genesis 4 is a fulfillment of Gen 3:15, are not Cain and Abel on the wrong sides of the outcome of the battle? Was not the serpent's head to be crushed? Not only is Cain unharmed in this battle, but he is given a mark of protection by God so that no one will kill him, and anyone who would take vengeance on Cain is threatened by God with seven-fold vengeance on himself (Gen 4:15). True, Cain is cursed by God and driven into exile away from the presence of God (vv. 11-12). But the curse seems strangely ineffectual. Far from being a vagrant and a wanderer, we see Cain build a city and we see his descendants building a civilization, and introducing technological, agricultural, and cultural innovations (vv. 17, 20-22). We connected Gen 3:15 to Gen 1:28 and said that the creation mandate would be fulfilled in the woman's seed. Under the figurative interpretation now established, the righteous seed (i.e., Abel) should subdue the earth, including the wicked seed (i.e., Cain), trampling them under foot, if necessary. But it appears to be the children of Cain (the seed of the serpent) who are fulfilling the creation mandate by multiplying and subduing the earth and the animals (vv. 20-22). Cain was warned with enslavement to sin as a consequence of failing to turn to do good (Gen 4:7), but we see in the outcome of his life, long lasting dominion, while Abel is cut off. And lest we think Cain's children are morally different from him, as if they had repudiated their father's sins, we have Lamech's song to assure us that is not the case (vv. 23-24).

Deprivation of the Lord's presence would seem to be a real disadvantage. To appreciate this we need to understand how his presence is presumed to be visible to man in Genesis 4, in the same way as is shown in Genesis 3, where the Lord walks about in the garden at a certain time of day, has a visible presence from which Adam and Eve are

afraid in their nakedness, and he literally makes skins for them to clothe them. Genesis 4 is incomprehensible unless we assume that this visible presence continued to be manifested. The brothers brought offerings (gifts of food) to the Lord, presumably a literal meal, and they knew what the Lord's reaction was; it was public, and that is why Cain was so angry – he was disgraced before everyone. The Lord reproved Cain for being angry, and promised him acceptance if he did well. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord (and of Adam and Eve) with Abel so that no one (including the Lord) would see him kill his brother. When he comes back to the Lord's presence, he assumes the Lord did not see what happened. After all, when he asked Adam "where are you," doesn't that show that the Lord did not know, because he could not see Adam? And when he asked Adam and Eve what they did, does not that show that he did not know what they did? Likewise the banishment of Cain from the place where his brother's blood called out to God is interpreted by Cain as a banishment from the Lord's presence, which is therefore not everywhere, but local. Likewise the text says Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, which shows that there was a regular, visible, local, presence of the Lord, in the place where Adam and Eve were. We may further describe it as an ordinary, not awe-inspiring presence – how else could we understand Cain's arrogance in talking to God (v. 9)? Would he talk that way to a thundering voice from heaven? So the narrative makes no sense unless the presence of the Lord spoken of is a visible, regular, local presence, from which Cain and his descendants would be deprived. That this presence is assumed in the narrative without explanation is certainly one of the strongest arguments against the view that this chapter was originally unconnected from Genesis 3, and reflects a later period of time (that Genesis 4 is the first fulfillment of Gen 3:15 is perhaps the strongest argument).

But while deprivation from the Lord's presence would seem to be a great disadvantage to Cain, this advantage is taken away from the righteous as well. For surely that is how we must understand Gen 4:26; in the days of Enosh "men began to call on the name of the Lord." For men do not need to pray when God is among them; they can talk to him. But if he withdraws his presence from the earth, then the godly must pray. Similarly, Jesus told his disciples before he was crucified, that they had not yet asked anything in his name. But since he is going to the Father, then they will ask in his name (John 16:23-28). Many commentators say that Genesis 4 ends on a note of hope by showing that faith has not vanished from the earth, and the origin of the practice of prayer among the Sethites is juxtaposed to the origin of technology and culture among the Cainites (who invented everything else). But it is very ironic that this "expression of hope" implies that the last advantage of the righteous has been taken away!³⁸² That the Lord's presence was removed at this time is consistent with the testimony of the next

³⁸²There is nothing to suggest that to "call on the name of the Lord" means anything different here than everywhere else it is used in Genesis, and practically everywhere else (Isa 41:25 is a possible exception), where it signifies prayer (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1 Kgs 18:24; 2 Kgs 5:11; Joel 3:5 [2:32]; Zeph 3:9; Zech 13:9; Isa 12:4; 64:7; Jer 10:25; Pss 79:6; 80:19 [18]; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17; Lam 3:55). Kline compares it to Isa 44:5, "this one will say 'I am the Lord's,' and this one will call (himself) by the name 'Jacob,'" and says that Gen 4:26 indicates that the godly began to call themselves the Lord's people (Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 117-18). A history of exegesis of the verse is given by Samuel Sandmel, "Genesis 4:26b," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 19-29. He suggests the subtitle, "a history of reading difficulties into a text" (*ibid.*, 19).

chapter, where it is after this time that Enoch was taken away by God (Gen 5:24). We are not told why he removes his presence at this time, but the books of Moses have another occasion where the removal of the Lord's presence is threatened, and an explanation is given: "I will not go up in your midst, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I destroy you on the way" (Exod 33:3; cf. also Mark 9:19).

We see another apparent discrepancy in identifying Genesis 4 as the first fulfillment of Gen 3:15. A number of interpreters indicated that there was some ground of hope in the fact that in Gen 3:15, God is on the side of the woman's seed. The woman's seed is not cursed like their adversary, so by implication they are blessed. They are at enmity with God's enemy, and by implication are at peace with him. If that is the case, then God should be on Abel's side, not Cain's. That would appear to be the case in the matter of the offerings, and the Lord's reproof of Cain. But consider what happens next: Cain says something to Abel, and the two of them go out into the field. The MT does not have the words Cain said. The words "let us go out into the field" are a very ancient and unanimous tradition (against the MT), but it is not clear how the words could have been lost. It could not be a case of *homoeoteleuton*, as Wenham suggests, because that phenomenon would cause the loss of the second phrase ending "field."³⁸³ Westermann says the sense "Cain spoke to Abel" without mentioning what was said is impossible, but there is precedent for such a translation, though it is "very singular."³⁸⁴ It does not mean that Cain told Abel what had happened, which would be contrary to the context; Cain did not need to tell Abel or anyone else what had just happened because it was public – that was why Cain was disgraced and angry. That Cain's words are not recorded may suggest that what Cain said to Abel is not mentioned because it was not audible to anyone but Cain and Abel. It is thus reported from the perspective of an eyewitness to the event, not from the perspective of an omniscient narrator. While v. 8b might seem to be against this idea (as it reports what happened in the field), the information contained there is easily surmised after the fact. I would thus translate it, "Cain said something to Abel." Cain spoke lowly so that no one (including the Lord, he thinks) would hear him entice his brother outside, and he assumed that if he left the Lord's presence so that he couldn't see the Lord, the Lord couldn't see him either. His response to the Lord's question "where is Abel?" proves this. Cain is being portrayed as the offspring of the murderer serpent, who also began by speaking to his victim (3:1). In both cases, the speech is deceitful, and an instrument of attack. Here we evidently have a confirmation of Briggs' observation (see §

³⁸³Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 106. See Wenham (ibid.) and Westermann (*Genesis 1-11*, 302) for emendations to the text that have been proposed.

³⁸⁴BDB, 56; citing Exod 19:25; "Moses went down the mountain and spoke to them." Sailhamer says this case is not parallel because the object (what Moses said) is in the following verse (God spoke all these words). But the context indicates that what Moses said to the people was that they should not come up on the mountain (referring to the previous verses, not the following). Similarly in Gen 22:7 Sailhamer says that the first "and he said" has its object in the expression, "and he said, 'My father'" (John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 2: Genesis-Numbers* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 63). A literal translation shows the difficulty of this view: "And Isaac said to Abraham his father, and he said, 'My father.'" The first verb must be translated as in the NIV; "Isaac spoke up," or something similar, as it marks the beginning of a dialogue.

1.8.6) that the picture of an attack on the heel in Gen 3:15 under the figurative interpretation suggests an attack “in secret and in treachery.”

Adam and Eve watch Cain and Abel go out; they do not know what is going to happen; but God, who is right there, and who knows all things, does. Yet he says nothing to Abel, the one he has just favored and approved. A little warning (“do not go with him”) would have saved his life, yet he says not a word. Is that the action of someone who is on your side? Yet consider what actions this one who would not lift a finger to save Abel takes on behalf of the murderer, the unrepentant wicked one, the offspring of the cursed enemy of God and man. When Cain complains that he will be killed in vengeance, the Lord gives him a sign and guarantees that no one will touch him. While he does nothing to stop the murder of Abel, he does everything to stop the just execution of Cain, threatening seven-fold vengeance on any who would kill him.

What are we to conclude from all this? There is a simple answer, if we just go one step further in our conclusion that Genesis 4 falsifies the naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:15. It not only falsifies the naturalistic identification of the serpent and the two seeds, but it also falsifies the interpretation that the victory of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked are fully attained in this lifetime, the “here-and-now.” For if Cain met an untimely end, by accident or execution, someone might say, “the serpent-seed’s head is crushed.” So although Gen 3:15 is spoken in terms of the visible, the here-and-now, it speaks of things beyond our experience in this lifetime, and no amount of token fulfillments of Gen 3:15 after Genesis 4 can undo this lesson. God let Abel go out to be murdered not because he was not his friend, but because he wanted to establish the precedent that men and women must look ultimately beyond this lifetime both for the reward of the righteous, and the recompense of the wicked. Abel was, in effect, God’s own blood sacrifice at this occasion of offerings. Like a lamb to the slaughter he goes with Cain, and God, by “setting” the enmity, and by not warning Abel, becomes the author of this sacrifice – Cain is only his instrument. Abel is sacrificed so that his martyrdom would speak to all ages. We conclude, then, that the curse of God on Cain (both in Gen 3:15 and Gen 4:11-12) awaits fulfillment after his death: a crushing blow, futility of existence, away from the presence of the Lord (cf. Matt 8:12, “they will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”). The mark (or “sign”) given to Cain is therefore a sign that his fate awaits him after death. Likewise for Abel there awaits a triumph over the wicked one, and a participation in the dominion over creation for which man was made in the image of God. The apparent prospering of the wicked is just that; apparent, and the godly must learn to interpret circumstances not according to appearances.

Other explanations for why Cain’s life was spared fail to take into account the death threat against the one who would kill Cain. His life was not spared so that he would have an opportunity to repent. If that were the reason, why should not the killer of Cain have an opportunity to repent, and have his life spared as well? The reason is not that capital punishment is the role of government as opposed to the family, and is not instituted until after the flood. Special capital punishment (or worse!) is instituted right here by the statement “whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven-fold” (or fourteen-fold, since the form is dual). If God envisages the execution of Cain’s killer under the current dispensation, then he could have envisaged the killing of Cain as well by the same

means, whatever that might be. Perhaps the most imaginative explanation is that by Heyde, who calls Cain “the first Yahweh worshipper,” and says Cain was not killed for the same reason David was not killed after murdering Uriah the Hittite – there was a prior special relationship between God and Cain which we do not know about because the story in its present form only has a few remains of the original context, in which the first man on earth was not Adam, but Cain, the originator of Yahweh worship.³⁸⁵ This kind of exegesis is much like allegory since its conclusions can never be refuted (or proven right). One can explain away every feature of the text that does not fit the theory, and choose which features one wishes to focus on, and change the context, if necessary. If one has to completely change the setting of the story and presume a different plot to make sense out of it, then this is only further evidence that the conventional explanations are defective. Finally, attempts to explain Cain’s punishment as worse than death require us to ignore the rest of the chapter which pictures Cain instead as prospering in every earthly way.³⁸⁶

3.3.5 *Two Seeds, Two Hermeneutics*

I suggested above that Cain interpreted the events of Genesis 3 according to appearances. It appeared that God was not omnipresent or omniscient. He asked Adam “Where are you?” When Adam responded, he appeared ignorant again; “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” When Adam implicated his wife he appeared surprised by the information. “What is this you have done?” Cain interpreted these events (as tradition from his parents, not Scripture) according to appearances, and so assumed that he could get away with murder outside of the visible presence of the Lord. So when the Lord says “where is your brother Abel?” (a natural question from a human point of view, if Cain and Abel left together, and Cain returned alone), giving him a chance to confess, he lies in a most impudent and arrogant manner.

We also saw that according to appearances, God favors Cain and his descendants, and grants them benefits that Abel in particular did not receive. The song of Lamech is a witness to this interpretation according to appearances. Lamech has killed a man for wounding him; a boy for injuring him; “If Cain is avenged seven-fold, then Lamech will be seventy seven-fold” (vv. 23-24). The two-fold message is clear. First, God protects the wicked: if Cain, much more Lamech. Secondly, if you care to live long, fear Lamech, not

³⁸⁵ Henning Heyde, *Kain, der erste Jahwe-Verehrer* (Arbeiten zur Theologie; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1965), 21-23.

³⁸⁶ E.g., Westermann; “Banishment meant the confiscation of the whole basis of life and with it exposure to such danger of death as to be equivalent to surrender to death or worse” (*Genesis 1-11*, 310). Also Wenham; “a premature death would cut short his sentence” (*Genesis 1-15*, 109). Similarly, Hamilton; “In some ways it is a fate worse than death. It is to lose all sense of belonging and identification with a community” (*Genesis 1-17*, 232). Whatever Cain lost in this sense he regained as head of a new community. Under the “Kenite hypothesis” Kugel explains that the seven-fold idea explains why the Kenite tribe is so murderous, which of course does not explain why the Lord would grant permission for such murders, much less how the Kenites survived the flood (James L. Kugel, “Cain and Abel in Fact and Fable: Genesis 4:1-16,” in *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?*, ed. Roger Brooks and John J. Collins [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990], 169).

God. For Lamech will kill you if he is displeased with you. But God will do nothing to you (of consequence) if you are wicked, and he will do nothing for you (of consequence) if you are righteous (witness Cain and Abel).

From Cain to Lamech, then, we see the practice of a particular hermeneutic: the wicked interpret history and Scripture according to outward appearances, disregarding the promise and threat of God by assuming that they only pertain to this life, where in fact they are not fulfilled. Two points should be made here. First, that the hermeneutic of appearances is shown as being practiced by the wicked seed obviously does not commend the naturalistic interpretation (i.e., interpretation according to appearances) of Gen 3:15. Secondly, one must ask if there is anything in Cain's and Lamech's hermeneutics that is contrary to grammatico-historical exegesis. Each seems to have taken into account the meaning of the words and events of history passed down to him by tradition. True, they have not taken into account God's true nature, and have regarded his promises as worthless, but these are theological matters, not matters of grammar and history, and to interpret according to the former and disregard the latter would be to engage in, as Westermann and Schumann say, "dogmatic exegesis" (recall Schumann's words: "one must find the historical-grammatical sense of the words, instead of fitting the passage into dogmatic presuppositions" [see § 1.7.2]). If grammatico-historical exegesis is all there is to biblical hermeneutics, then we would expect the Cainites to excel at it, as they do at all the other cultural endeavors (Gen 4:20-22).

The hermeneutic of appearances predominated by the era of Lamech. Only one man was left (Noah) who served and walked with God. Jesus said that the pre-flood world had a hermeneutical problem: "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ... and they did not understand (οὐκ ἔγνωσαν), until the flood came, and took them all away" (Matt 24:38-39). What did they not understand? The NIV paraphrases, "they knew nothing about what would happen," referring, of course, to the flood. Specifically, however, the flood is the annihilation of the wicked seed, the seed of the serpent, therefore a fulfillment of Gen 3:15 (though as we said before, fulfillments that pertain to this life can only be token fulfillments; so the flood can only be a token of the judgment that awaits the wicked after death). So the world before the flood did not understand that Gen 3:15 would be fulfilled in their judgment, while the righteous seed would be spared. What Westermann said of our own century could be said as well of the world before the flood: "the explanation of Gen 3:15 as a promise has been abandoned almost without exception" (§ 1.8.22); the exception being, in this case, Noah. But as then, it is true now (to turn Zachariä's argument around) the arguments themselves must be determinative, not the number and respect of interpreters on one side (§ 1.7.2).

If the wicked practiced the hermeneutic of appearances, what about the righteous? While Lamech implicitly threatened death on anyone who crossed his will, others called on the name of the Lord (v. 26), knowing that even though he had withdrawn his visible presence, he would still hear them if they called on him, and that it would be right to do so, and would be to their benefit, and thus they rejected the hermeneutic of appearances. Despite all appearances, God's promise to the righteous is worth something, and his threat against the wicked is a real threat. The righteous hermeneutic therefore rejects the hermeneutics of mere appearances, when appearances conflict with the promises of God. The righteous interpret tradition and history according

to the principle not only that God exists (which the Cainites acknowledged), but that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him; that things God promises, though unseen, are real (Heb 11:1, 6). The hermeneutics of the righteous seed, therefore, is a hermeneutics of faith. In the world before the flood, grammatico-historical exegesis by itself is insufficient to arrive at a proper interpretation of history or of the oracles of God. It would only yield two quite opposite possibilities of interpretation: either God will reward the righteous, beyond death if necessary, and therefore his promise is of great value, or he will not and his favor is of less value than the favor of the wicked strong-man (Lamech). The hermeneutics of faith was vindicated by the flood of Noah which eliminated the other possibility. Since the hermeneutics of faith is practiced by the seed of the woman, the new creation, rather than by the seed of the serpent, who “did not understand,” it follows that the hermeneutics of faith is part of that new creation; like Abel’s offering it is a work approved by God (cf. John 6:28-29).

In rejecting the sufficiency of grammatico-historical exegesis as a hermeneutical approach to Scripture (and history itself), I would also reject it as even a sufficient description of the first step in exegesis. Recall that LaSor, while arguing for the concept of *sensus plenior*, says that it must start with the literal sense, and develop out of grammatico-historical exegesis. But taking the “literal sense” of Gen 3:15 in the immediate context yields the naturalistic aetiological explanation of Gen 3:15, which he says is ridiculous (see § 1.9.11). Our exegesis would seem to confirm, however, that LaSor is right that there is a “fuller sense” in Gen 3:15, a sense undetectable by the first hearers of the promise, and that it is revealed through progressive revelation. Here, however, the historical fulfillment shortly after the curse was spoken, rather than a divine oracle in New Testament times, is the first “progressive revelation” which illuminates the meaning of Gen 3:15.

3.3.6 *Two Seeds, Two Offerings*

The different kind of offerings made by the two brothers relate at least in part to their two differing professions. As we have seen, this is the first of three contrasts given in Gen 2b-5a. Abel became a “shepherd of flocks” (רֹעֵה צֹאן) while Cain became a farmer (עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה; “worker of the ground”). In context near or far there is no indication of an inferiority of the farming profession to that of raising sheep. Farming (“to work the ground”) is specifically mentioned as the task that Adam was to follow (3:23), while the legitimacy of shepherding is only inferred from the general decree of humankind’s rule over the animals. Cain was thus presumably following in his father’s footsteps and no blame can be attached to it. There is, however, something in these two occupations of symbolical interest to us. The root רעה, for shepherd, is connected with dominion, rule, while עבד, “worker,” reminds us of עֶבֶד, a slave. We might make nothing of this if we did not see elsewhere the symbolic importance of such attributes. Later in this chapter Cain is admonished that he must rule over sin; he does not, but is enslaved to it, and kills his brother. Cain’s occupation appears to make him like his father Adam, but it actually symbolizes his spiritual servitude to sin. Kline identified the incident of Noah’s nakedness as re-manifesting the two seeds after the flood (§ 1.8.28), and the resulting curse on the descendants of the son of the wicked Ham was consignment to abject slavery (Gen 9:25-27). In later fulfillments of Gen 3:15 we will see that Ishmael corresponds to Cain, as Isaac corresponds to Abel. In Gen 25:19 Isaac is called simply “the son of

Abraham” (v. 19), while Ishmael is called “the son of Abraham, whom Hagar, *the Egyptian*, the *servant girl* of Sarah, bore to Abraham” (as if we did not know already who he was). In Gen 21:9 he is not even named, but is called “the son of Hagar, the Egyptian,” and Sarah says to Abraham, “drive out this slave girl and her son.”³⁸⁷ Paul’s symbolic use of this slave motif is well known (Gal4:21-31). We see the servitude motif also in Esau (25:23; 27:29, 40), and Joseph’s brothers before their repentance (37:8-10; 42:6). Noah, we notice, did not become a “worker of the ground,” but a “man of the ground” (Gen 9:20). “Slave” is an apt designation for one who is the seed of the *serpent*, since the animals are to be ruled over by the seed of the woman. In the first few verses of chapter 4, then, we see the themes of creation and dominion which we used to interpret Gen 3:15 in our preliminary exegesis of that verse.

It has often been suggested that Cain’s offering was rejected because it was not an animal sacrifice, and therefore did not involve the shedding of blood. Against this is the fact that it requires us to assume something of which there is no hint in the text and is contrary to biblical law elsewhere, that God commanded man prior to this time that only animals may be brought as offerings. To cite the slaying of animals to provide skins to clothe Adam and Eve as evidence is circular reasoning, because then Genesis 4 is cited as the only supporting evidence for a connection to sacrifice. Additionally, grain offerings were just as much a part of Israel’s sacrificial system as animals were, and the word for “offering” in the account, מִנְחָה (*minhâ*), is actually used more often for grain offerings than for animal offerings. After a discussion of the use of this word Waltke notes,

The unusual element in the story from a lexical viewpoint is not that Cain’s offering is bloodless but that Abel’s is bloody! ... By using *minhâ*, Moses virtually excludes the possibility that God did not look on Cain’s offering because it was bloodless. ... He could not have used a more misleading term if this were his intended meaning.³⁸⁸

The equal emphasis on the person and his offering (or, “gift”) in vv. 4b-5a (“Abel and his offering ... Cain and his offering”), should caution us about finding a solution that ignores either the person (e.g., Pink: “the ultimate difference, then, between Cain and Abel was not in their characters, but in their offerings”),³⁸⁹ or his offering (e.g., Calvin: the offering was formally acceptable but the heart of Cain was not right),³⁹⁰ and in fact it implies that there is a connection between the character of the person and the character of his offering. This problem cannot be solved by stating that there is a connection between

³⁸⁷ The emphasis on Ishmael’s Egyptian origin may be more significant than his connection to a slave; the latter is not mentioned in Iain Duguid’s discussion “Hagar the Egyptian: a Note on the Allure of Egypt in the Abraham Cycle” (*WTJ* 56 [1994]: 419-21). Duguid notes the contrast between fruitful Egypt and the barren promised land, and between the barren Sarah and fruitful Hagar, the Egyptian. This contrast is much the same as we have seen between the prosperity of the two seeds in Genesis 4. But the slave status of Hagar is emphasized along with her Egyptian origin, so it must have some symbolic significance as well.

³⁸⁸ Waltke, “Cain and His Offering,” 366, 368.

³⁸⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1922), 67.

³⁹⁰ “He not only rejects but abhors the sacrifices of the wicked, however splendid they may appear in the eyes of men” (Calvin, *Genesis*, 194 [similarly, p. 196]).

Cain's impious character and his refusal to conform to a known and objective standard describing an acceptable offering, because there is no evidence that this was an offering brought in response to a commandment (as Waltke notes, there are two kinds of offerings in the law of Moses; voluntary and those that are required by law), much less a commandment to shed blood.³⁹¹

To find out what was unacceptable in Cain and his offering we should note that Abel's offering consisted of the most valuable portions of his flock, while there is no similar indication about Cain's offering. We observe here that if man was not permitted to eat meat at this time (Gen1:29; 3:17-18; 9:2-3), Abel's flocks would be valuable to him for wool, milk, and skins, not for meat, although they could be given to the Lord as meat at a fellowship meal (the Lord ate the meat given to him by Abraham, Gen18:8). Others have suggested that the eating of meat was inaugurated after the fall when the animals were slain to provide skins for Adam and Eve. In any case, to give the "fattest," i.e., those healthiest and best developed, is to give those with more of the products for which they were being raised. To give the first born instead of the youngest is to delay the increase of his herd. Therefore Abel gave what was of greatest value to himself to the Lord, as is in keeping with the later regulations of sacrifice in the law of Moses. Grain offerings were also part of the sacrificial system in the Old Testament, and there is no indication at all from the context that Cain's sin was in not obtaining and bringing the same type of offering as his brother did. What is not mentioned about this offering, is that it was the best that Cain had. Compare Exod 23:19; "Bring the choicest of the firstfruits (רֵאשִׁית) (בְּפִרְיָ) of your soil to the house of the Lord your God." רֵאשִׁית means "choice" in Amos 6:6 (oil), Deut 33:21 (land), 1 Sam 2:29 (offerings), and 15:21 (offerings).³⁹² Hamilton notes that מִנְחַת בְּפִרְיָם (Lev 2:14; an offering of first-fruits) would correspond to Abel's "first-born" as a way of indicating excellence in Cain's offering.³⁹³ Even הֶלֶב (fat), one of the words used to describe Abel's offering, could have been used to describe the "choicest, best part of products of the land,"³⁹⁴ so that the absence of this or some similar word from a description of Cain's gift cannot be without significance. But neither can we go to the other extreme, as in some rabbinical tradition, and infer that Cain offered some of the worst that he had, or that his offering violated some specific command (in which

³⁹¹Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," 365. Waltke notes the "nontheological" use of מִנְחָה as "'gift' from an inferior to a superior person, particularly from a subject to a king, to convey the idea of homage," (e.g., 1 Sam 10:27; 1 Kgs 5:1 [4:21]; *ibid.*, 367). But Genesis 4 in some respects is closer to this "nontheological" context because the Lord was visibly present as the "superior person," and the gift was not to be only symbolically offered to the Lord (by burning, or giving to priests), but actually given to him.

³⁹²BDB, 912.

³⁹³Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 223.

³⁹⁴BDB, 317. Citations are Gen 45:18; Nu18:12, 29, 30, 32; Deut 32:14; Ps 81:17; 147:14. Ibn Ezra noted "There is support for the notion that Cain did not bring his offering from the first of the fruits of the ground in Scripture's stating that *And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof*" (H. Norman Strickman and Arthur M. Silver, *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch: Genesis* [New York: Menorah, 1988], 81).

embellishment would be an implicit criticism of the Lord, saying that the distinction actually made in the text was insufficient grounds for rejection).³⁹⁵ This raises the question, could Cain's offering be rejected if there was no specific command to bring the best of what he had?

We can profit by comparing this story to one of which mention has already been made; the Lord's visit to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18. We see there that the Lord disguises himself as a man, a traveller, with two angels similarly disguised, and stops within sight of Abraham. Abraham pleads with them to stay with him and be refreshed before they continue on their journey. Abraham and Sarah give them "fine flour" (קֶמַח טֹב) and a "choice and tender" (רֶדֶת טוֹב) calf (we therefore see the two components of the Genesis 4 gifts), as well as water for washing, and curds and milk, and then wait on them while they eat (Gen 18:1-8). Although טֹב is not further described by an adjective such as "good," the word itself suggests that it is choice food,³⁹⁶ consequently most usages are in the context of offerings to God. One point of interest here is that Abraham is not responding to some specific command from God about how to show hospitality, though there were certainly societal ideas about such things. The application to the Cain and Abel story is that we need not look for a specific command that Abel obeyed and Cain disobeyed. Secondly, Abraham did not know who his visitors were, thus did not know that he was being tested by God. The occasion demonstrated the nature of his character. Cain and Abel knew to whom they were presenting gifts, but they, too, did not know that they were being tested. It would be an easy thing for Cain to bring his best after being told to, or after being guaranteed that he would receive something of value (to him) in return. In that case, however, the difference in character between the two brothers would not have been manifested in their gifts. The disgrace of Cain and his reaction to that disgrace (his great anger), and his reaction to the Lord's assurance that he would receive favor if he did well (i.e., his murder of his brother), only give further demonstration of that character.

If we take the position that he could not be blamed for not bringing his best when there was no command to bring the best, then we would have a problem with blaming him for murdering his brother, since there was no prohibition against doing so. Cain can be blamed for the same reason Abel (and Abraham in Genesis 18) was commended; Cain did not do as Abel did. Abel brought as a gift what was most valuable to himself, without being told to; Cain did not. If the death of Abel has sacrificial overtones, as mentioned earlier, because God did nothing to stop the murder of Abel, we see that God, too, gives the one who is most valuable to himself, the one whom he prefers. By giving what is most valuable to himself, Abel is therefore like God. This is further evidence that the woman's seed is God's seed; those created by him and therefore morally like him.

It was therefore the righteousness of his brother displayed by his works which showed Cain's offering to be inferior, and this is the grounds for Cain's anger with his brother; the occasion for the manifestation of the divinely placed enmity between the two

³⁹⁵E.G. Rashi, who said Cain offered "of the worst fruits" (Rosenbaum, *Rashi, Genesis*, 17).

³⁹⁶BDB, 701, citing Ezekiel 16:13, 19, where it is parallel to olive oil and honey as signs of luxurious eating; 1 Kgs 5:2, king's food.

seeds (cf. John 7:7). This explains the motivation for eliminating Abel; it was Abel (so he thinks) that caused his rejection by God. The equal emphasis on the offering as well as the offerer further implies that Cain's character was, as his offering, defective.

Cain's wicked nature is seen also in his response to his rejection. His great anger and downcast face (4:5b) are due to this rejection, and to understand it we must recall the likely setting of the story. It is not that Cain has gone to an altar alone and made an offering which was rejected by some sign from heaven. Nor did he notice over time that he did not prosper as Abel did. If the setting was a fellowship meal, then presumably the whole human family was there, and the Lord's presence was visibly manifest. His favoring of Abel and rejection of Cain were by some visible manifestation (including his "look;" perhaps also audible) and therefore highly public. He was disgraced in front of his family. But this rejection is not final. The Lord shows him how he, too, can be accepted: "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen; if you do well, is there not a lifting up?" (vv. 6-7a). Of logical necessity, one must conclude from this question that the reason for Cain's rejection was that he had not done well with respect to his offering. This conclusion is also evident from the comparison noted earlier between God's seeing that the light was good, and God "seeing" Abel and his gift, but not "seeing" Cain and his gift. If we inquire as to what was not done well, we must either decide that the answer is given to us in the text by subtly contrasting the two offerings, or we must conclude that an arbitrary standard is the basis for the Creator's characterization of Cain's works as not done well. The Lord's rejection of Cain was not final – he still had an opportunity to be accepted by him. That Cain chose rather to murder his brother than change his ways demonstrates that the Lord was correct in taking the apparently slight difference in the two offerings as symptomatic of the difference between a good man and a liar-murderer. "Cain's visible behavior confirms the LORD's privileged assessment of his heart."³⁹⁷

Whereas I characterized the hermeneutics of the two seeds as a hermeneutic of faith, and a hermeneutic of appearances, the incident of the two offerings suggests that these two hermeneutics spring from two different theologies; a theology of faith and personal righteousness, and a theology of unbelief and personal wickedness. The New Testament characterization of Abel's offering as motivated by faith (Heb 11:4) has been questioned on the grounds that the text says nothing at all about Abel's faith; in fact, Abel does not speak a word in this account.³⁹⁸ Waltke supplies a partial answer to this objection. Gen 4:4b-5a mentions Abel, his offering, Cain, and his offering. Of these four items, only two are characterized explicitly: "Whereas the text explicitly characterizes Abel's offering, and more or less infers Cain's, it dwells on Cain's character, and more or less infers Abel's."³⁹⁹ We therefore learn about Abel not only from what the text says about Abel, but from what it says about his opposite. As Cain demonstrated his unbelief

³⁹⁷Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," 370.

³⁹⁸E.g., McNamara, who says the New Testament view of Cain and Abel is derived from the *Palestinian Tgs. (New Testament and Palestinian Targum, 156-60)*.

³⁹⁹Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," 370.

in God's promise (if you do well, you will be accepted), and his belief that there was no advantage for himself in giving to God what was of most value to himself, we conclude that Abel's "doing well" (his offering) was motivated by faith, and that he believed that God would reward him for giving up what was most valuable to himself. God's statement to Cain, "if you do well," not only implies that Cain had not done well, but that Abel did well (1 John 3:12), so the text speaks both of faith and good works as characterizing Abel, just as the New Testament says. But there is more information than this with which we may characterize Abel as a man of faith, and that is that (as we have seen), Abel is cast as the seed of the woman in Genesis 4; as being of the same moral and spiritual kind as Eve. We have already seen in Eve the quality of faith in the promise of Gen 3:15, both in v. 1 (in ignorance), and v. 25 (in greater understanding), and therefore we may properly infer that this same quality applied to her spiritual offspring, Abel.

The difference between Cain and Abel starts out as rather small. Cain is actually, in the beginning of the chapter, apparently like his father Adam, a farmer, while Abel is different. In the matter of the offerings the difference is likewise apparently small. Yet at the end of the story we see Cain unlike his natural parents, and quite like his spiritual father the serpent. The apparently small difference in the offerings turns out to be symptomatic of the difference between righteous Abel and lying, murdering Cain. Perhaps this gives us a clue as to why the unacceptable nature of Cain's offering is not emphasized. For this story is not told out of historical curiosity. Faithful Israelite (or Christian) parents reading or hearing this story should realize that they may have a Cain among their children; similarly the priest, Levite, or pastor should realize the same about those under his charge; and that the difference between a Cain and an Abel may appear in the beginning to be small. While no one will have the opportunity to re-live Genesis 4, since the Lord's presence has been withdrawn from the earth, we do have the opportunity of recreating it by telling it. By retelling it in the way it was written (rather than adding details such as saying Cain's offering was the worst he had), the parent or teacher may recreate the test, and use the story as something of a diagnostic tool. If the hearer concludes that God is arbitrary and capricious in rejecting Cain, rather than seeking the reason for his rejection so that he may learn how to have God's favor, or if he sympathizes with Cain for his rage against his brother, or blames the murder on God for rejecting Cain, then the retelling of the story has identified that hearer as another Cain, offspring of the serpent, who needs to be admonished, as Cain was, that if he does not change his ways he may be another murderer, or in any case will share Cain's fate. The reader who says that God is capricious is agreeing with Cain that his offering was good enough, thus taking his side against God, and demonstrating his spiritual kinship to the brother-murderer Cain, and thus to the serpent as well. Here we learn what the human role is in producing the righteous seed. Gen 4:6-7 shows us the possibility of change for the wicked seed. By example, God shows us the human role in bringing about that change. The human role is not childbirth, as Eve once thought, but "the foolishness of preaching," suggesting that, just as in Genesis 1, the new creation is brought about by the word of God.⁴⁰⁰ Even after the murder, God speaks to Cain, and gives him a chance to

⁴⁰⁰Wenham notes the contrast of v. 6 with Gen 3:1; in both cases the questioner knows the answer to his question, but the serpent intends to lead into sin, God questions in order to lead Cain to a change in heart (*Genesis 1-15*, 104).

confess (v. 9). In this fact there is apparently the only difference between Cain and the serpent. As several commentators have noted, God speaks to Adam and Eve, in feigned ignorance of what they had done, giving them a chance to confess, but he does not ask any question of the serpent. That he asks Cain where his brother is, implies that even the murderer is not (yet) as bad off as the serpent, but could turn to God and confess his sins and receive his favor.

3.4 *The Outcome of the Conflict*

3.4.1 *You Will Strike Him on the Heel*

If the murder of Abel by Cain is the first fulfillment of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15, then it would also seem to be the first fulfillment of “you will strike him in the heel.” We need not wonder anymore, then, if the serpent’s bite is poisonous, if his attack against the man is, or may be, fatal. The death of the woman’s seed shows that it obviously can be, and the various attempts to avoid this conclusion are shown to be misdirected. This does not prove von Rad’s point that “both are ruined” in this struggle, for this interpretation is based on a naturalistic view of the curse. If the two seeds are figurative, then so is the battle scene. We have seen overwhelming evidence that Gen 3:15 is a promise to the woman’s seed (the righteous), and Abel’s untimely death at the hands of the wicked one forces us logically to the conclusion that though the battle scene is painted in terms of that which is visible and that which pertains to our earthly existence, it must have its ultimate fulfillment beyond this existence. This is the solution to the paradox of Gen 3:15 being a curse on the wicked, a blessing to the righteous, while at the same time indicating that the righteous may suffer fatal defeat. The head/heel opposition certainly results from the cursed status of the serpent. But in the reinterpretation of Gen 3:15 after the Cain-Abel incident overthrows the naturalistic interpretation, both participants in the battle are men. A snake can “only” reach man’s heel, but Cain is a man and he “rose up” and killed his brother. So Hengstenberg’s point that the most the serpent can do is reach man’s heel is to be rephrased as: “the most the wicked can do is kill the righteous. Something far worse will happen to the wicked” (recall that the Lutherans in the individual interpretation came to a similar conclusion: the attack on the heel is the crucifixion of Christ, which only affected his human nature, and did not touch his “head,” the divine nature). The Cain-Abel incident represents the “worst case scenario” for the righteous – the righteous youth dies at the hand of the wicked, who is secure for the rest of his long and prosperous life. As Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that can do nothing more to you (Matt 10:28).” The death of the righteous at the hands of the wicked, then, is a trifling matter, compared to what is in store for the wicked who do not repent. The Palestinian targumists were therefore right to find eschatological implications in Gen 3:15, not because of an allegorizing of head and heel as the beginning and end of time, but because the historical fulfillment of the curse forces us to reinterpret it with an eschatological solution. Ironically, then, the allegorizing targumists had a better interpretation than most 20th century practitioners of the scientific method!

But Gen 3:15 is not the only promise that has to be reinterpreted. We also have a conditional promise (and warning) in Gen 4:7. This verse is a continuation of v. 6, which does not contain any difficulties: “The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?’” The next verse has several problems. According to Procksch, it is

the most obscure verse in Genesis; but, as Westermann says, one need not solve all the problems to get the general idea (though Westermann does not think vv. 6-7 are original because they imply that Cain, whose reaction to the Lord's rejection of him was normal and justified because he had suffered an incomprehensible and unjust disadvantage from the Lord, did something wrong).⁴⁰¹ NASB translates, "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? [alternatively: 'surely you will be accepted.' Literally, '(is there) not a lifting up?'] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." The problems are: the meaning of "is there not a lifting up?"; the meaning of "sin" personified; the disagreement in gender between the noun "sin" (feminine) and the participle "crouch" (masculine; also the pronoun and possessive suffix in what follows); the exact sense of "crouch;" and the meaning of "at the door."

I would accept the NASB reading of the first part of the verse because it seems most naturally connected to what precedes. This reading takes *שָׂאָה* (lifting up) as an abbreviation for *שָׂאָה פְּנֵיָם* (lifting up of the face; so Hamilton and others).⁴⁰² Cain's face has fallen (because he was rejected and disgraced); if he does well (as Abel did), there is a lifting up (of the face). To lift up the face is an idiom used to express acceptance, often with the idea of granting a request, often accompanied by a gift or an offering (God will lift up Cain's face; i.e., accept, or show favor to him; Gen 19:21; 32:20; Prov 6:35; 1 Sam 25:5; Mal 1:8, 9; Job 42:8, 9), as well as to express a good conscience or attitude of prayer (Cain can lift up his own face; 2 Sam 2:22; Job 11:15; 22:26). The latter does not fit here, since Cain's face is not fallen because of a guilty conscience, but because of his rejection and disgrace. The meaning is therefore, as some versions translate, he can be accepted by God (if he changes). I would therefore not accept Ramaroson's suggestion that the word "sin" was accidentally misplaced from this clause (a "lifting up of sin" would mean forgiveness of sin, another common idiom), even though such an emendation removes the disagreement in gender in the next part, and improves the "beat" (assuming this passage is poetry), from 2 + 1, 2 + 3, 2 + 2, to three clauses of 2 + 2.⁴⁰³ For the same reason I would not prefer interpretations which take "lifting up" (*שָׂאָה*) as a noun unrelated to the idea of lifting up the face, instead of an infinitive construct.⁴⁰⁴

If the first part of v. 7 offers acceptance, then the next two clauses must deal with the alternative of acceptance (if you do not do well). The second of these is clear except for the identity of what desires Cain: "and for you is its desire, but you must rule over it." What desires Cain should be "sin," from the previous clause, except that the gender does

⁴⁰¹Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 298-99, 302. Procksch, *Genesis*, 47.

⁴⁰²Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 227.

⁴⁰³Léonard Ramaroson, "A propos de Gn 4,7," *Bib* 49 (1968): 233-237.

⁴⁰⁴The noun has various meanings: "exaltation, dignity, swelling, uprising" (Walter C. Kaiser, *TWOT*, § 1421j, p. 600). See Wenham for Ben Yashar's interpretation of the word as the dignity of the first-born (Gen 49:3), parallel to "door" which he also interprets as a reference to the first-born (who opens the womb; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 104-05).

not agree. One solution is to translate רִכְּץ as a substantive, “croucher;” “sin is a croucher, etc.”⁴⁰⁵ That the croucher would be an animal is to be expected from the fact that the verb is used almost always with animals as subject, or people figuratively depicted as animals. The idea of the croucher as a demon is derived from Akkadian usage, and might yield a suitable sense, but would be contrary to what is expected based on Hebrew usage.*Speiser?*

The reference to the door could be literal, though there is no need to assume that the building of which this door was a part was a sanctuary.⁴⁰⁶ The building (or tent) would be the structure in which the gifts were presented. “At the door sin is a croucher,” would then have symbolic significance with reference to Cain’s intentions, namely, to go out through this door with Abel in order to escape from the presence of the Lord and kill his brother. “Sin” does not come inside where the Lord is, but waits outside for Cain. Whether “sin” is depicted as a demon or an animal, it would be thus reminiscent of the serpent of Gen 3:15 who tempted Eve away from the visible presence of the Lord. A figurative use of “door” might be suggested by one of the passages cited above, if “door” stands for Cain’s tent door: “If you remove iniquity far from your tent ... you will lift up your face to God” (Job 22:23, 26).

Whatever the exact meaning, it is clear that Gen 4:6-7 speaks of two outcomes, corresponding to the two seeds: one can have acceptance by God as the reward of doing good (implied is dominion over sin), or one can have rejection by God, and enslavement to sin. As mentioned before, these two outcomes are symbolically represented in the two professions that the brothers practiced.

Now we need to ask, with hindsight, after the murder of Abel, of what value is God’s acceptance? For if Gen 4:6 is a promise of acceptance for the one who does good, it applies to Abel, the one who did good. Abel was accepted, of course, but the result was that he was murdered. Of what value, then, is God’s acceptance? Going by the hermeneutics of appearances, one would say it may be of no value. Abel was accepted, but died young precisely because he was accepted, and God did nothing to stop it from happening. Cain was rejected and driven away from the Lord’s presence, but he became the founder of a civilization and enjoyed protection from God for the rest of his life. What more could he have obtained by being accepted?

Those who practice the hermeneutics of faith, however, would be forced to conclude that God’s promise *is* worth more than what Cain received as the outcome of his life of sin. Those who diligently seek God would realize that the promise “if you do well, is there not a lifting up?” must still apply to the one who did well, and he must therefore still have the advantage. For there is another “falling” in Genesis 4 besides Cain’s fall. Common in Hebrew and many languages, to “fall” is idiomatic for, to “die,” especially with violence.⁴⁰⁷ Abel fell, and God, who knows all things, spoke beforehand

⁴⁰⁵E.g., BDB, 308; “sin is a crouching beast.” Also GKC § 132, n. 2.

⁴⁰⁶Referred to in Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 301, as the view of R. Eisler.

⁴⁰⁷Milton C. Fisher, *TWOT*, § 1392 (p. 586).

of a general “lifting up,” (rather than “lifting up of the face”), perhaps so that Adam and Eve might be comforted that there is indeed a “lifting up” of fallen Abel, whatever that might be. Max Wilcox suggests that a similar shift in application of God’s promise to “raise up” the seed of David (2 Sam 7:12), which in its original application applied to the bringing of Solomon to the throne, was made by Peter in his sermon at Pentecost, and by Paul in his sermon at Pisidian Antioch, to apply it to the resurrection of Christ.⁴⁰⁸

3.4.2 *He Will Strike You on the Head*

If the murder of Abel by Cain is the first fulfillment of “you will strike him in the heel,” then it would seem that the flood of Noah, as Kline suggested, is the first fulfillment of “he will strike you on the head.” The fulfillment does not seem to be exact, because in the flood it is God, not the woman’s seed, who destroys the wicked. Yet if interpreters from Origen to Kline are correct in characterizing Gen 3:15 as the institution of holy war, we should take note that the victory in holy war is always ascribed to God, whether the role of man is completely passive (as in Noah’s flood and at the Red Sea), or quite active (as during Joshua’s conquest).⁴⁰⁹ The destruction of the ungodly at the flood was accomplished for the benefit of Noah and his seed, as he is put at the head of a new world and receives again the creation mandate from God. But God himself is the head of the righteous seed; the woman is only the figurehead. In effect, then, the flood could be described figuratively as God crushing the serpent’s seed under the feet of Noah, thus fulfilling Gen 3:15. Noah has no active role in vanquishing the wicked, which here requires God’s power as creator. Noah’s token role was to build an ark, expressing his faith as Abel did (here, faith in the coming judgment), thereby contrasting the two seeds, and thereby condemning the world (Heb 11:7).

We have already learned, however, that fulfillments of Gen 3:15 that pertain to this lifetime cannot be more than token fulfillments. The flood does not touch Cain, for example, and it does not benefit Abel. It does, however, follow the outlines of the battle predicted, and as a partial fulfillment, points to the certainty of the ultimate fulfillment in the future. Heb 11:7 also seems to point to this by describing the flood which God warned Noah about as “things not yet seen,” a general description which applies to the future cataclysm as well.

Taking the flood as a preliminary fulfillment of Gen 3:15 would seem to have an implication for the view that the picture in Gen 3:15d-e was one of individual combat, where a champion from each side fought a battle which would decide the outcome for both sides. If we take the flood as a fulfillment of the prediction of this battle, then it would appear that “you” and “he” in that prediction are collectives for the ungodly world and Noah’s household. If “you” were an individual, it is difficult to see how Gen 3:15d could be fulfilled in the flood since the serpent as a spiritual being, an individual, was not vanquished in the flood. The situation seems actually to be the reverse of what Kline says: instead of an individual (the serpent) doing combat and being defeated, and this

⁴⁰⁸Max Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed’ in the New Testament and the Targumim,” *JSNT* 5 (1979): 6-9.

⁴⁰⁹Discussing “normative holy war,” T. Longman notes, “the central principle is that God is present in battle with his people as a warrior. ... He wins the victory for his faithful people” (Tremper Longman, III and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 47).

defeat then being applied to the serpent's offspring, in the flood the serpent's race is destroyed, and this is interpreted as a defeat of the serpent. Since Kline bases his interpretation of a partly collective, partly individual seed on Revelation 12 (at least in part), perhaps he would say that, as in that chapter, there was also an unseen battle in heaven, preceding the flood, or else that the "individual combat" theme applies only to the battle between Christ and Satan, and that it is this battle (in prospect) which has implications even for the destruction of the ungodly in the flood.

3.5 Summary

In this chapter we have examined the first fulfillment of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15, as well as the first fulfillment of the two outcomes, "he will strike you on the head," and "you will strike him on the heel." The first fulfillment of the enmity we saw as crucial to the identification of the two seeds under a figurative, collective interpretation, and we also saw certain characteristics of the two seeds, as well as some eschatological implications in the promise due to its apparent lack of fulfillment according to the terms of the prediction. We will next examine further fulfillments of Gen 3:15 in the Book of Genesis, and find that all of these findings are reinforced.

CHAPTER IV

GENESIS 3:15 FROM NOAH TO JOSEPH

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will trace further fulfillments of Gen 3:15 from the time of the flood to the end of Genesis. In large part these fulfillments involve the recurrence of the enmity predicted in the curse, primarily between individuals. We will also see the themes of the new Adam, the figurehead, the righteous seed as the new creation, and the characteristics of the two seeds as originally seen in Genesis 4.

4.2 Noah's Flood: New Creation, New Adam

We have already noted that Noah's flood could be considered a token fulfillment of Gen 3:15e, "he will crush your head." Further evidence for this interpretation is that the flood can be seen as a re-creation of the world, and Noah can be seen as the head of a new human race; these are factors that can be connected to our interpretation of Gen 3:15 as a promise of a new creation. The destruction of the old human race and the destruction of the old world in a flood (or, "de-creation," as Wenham describes it)⁴¹⁰ transformed the world into a condition similar to that which prevailed at the beginning of the third day of creation, when the earth was covered with water, before the dry land appeared.

Along with the idea of a new world, we also have a new human race, as the creation mandate of Gen 1:28 is given anew to Noah and his sons (Gen 9:1-7). This fact might lead us to see Noah as the new Adam, the head of a new, righteous human race, which will accomplish God's purpose for humanity expressed in the original creation mandate given before the fall of Adam and Eve. Such an interpretation would seem to be reinforced by the portrayal of Noah as blameless and righteous, completely obedient to God's commands to build the ark; would not his children be like him?⁴¹¹ This interpretation would not be correct, however, for in the new mandate as given to Noah there is a command to exact capital punishment upon murderers (Gen 9:6), which reminds us of Cain and Lamech, and is therefore an allusion to the continuing of the two seeds of Gen 3:15. Noah can therefore only be the father of the righteous in the same sense as Eve is the mother of the righteous: he is father by example, and figurehead for the true father (creator) of the righteous, God himself. Noah cannot transmit righteousness to his offspring by natural generation because he is of the same nature as Adam. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that Noah "fell" in a manner that is reminiscent of the fall of Adam and Eve, and from the fact that both seeds spoken of in Gen 3:15 are found among Noah's children.

⁴¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 180.

⁴¹¹Wenham says of Gen 6:22 ("Noah did according to all that God commanded him; so he did"), "The phrasing 'exactly as,' literally, 'according to all,' and the repetition 'did ... so he did' make this a very emphatic declaration of Noah's total obedience. Similar formulae recur rarely in the Pentateuch. ... Within the context of the primeval history, verbal allusions to the refrain of Gen 1:3, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30 'and it was so' and to Gen 2:16; 3:11, 17 may be detected, implying that Noah's acts were more like God's than Adam's" (*Genesis 1-15*, 176).

4.3 *The Fall of Noah*

If Noah is portrayed as a new Adam, he turns out to be much like the old Adam. In the description of Noah before the flood, we see no fault in him at all: he is blameless and completely obedient to God's command to build the ark and prepare for the flood. After the new world begins, however, we see him "fall" in a manner that is reminiscent of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. "He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and disrobed in the midst of his tent" (Gen 9:21). Here we have two or three reminders of the fall of Adam: fruit, nakedness, and "in the midst of" (Gen 3:3). The parallels are not exact, since there is no command not to eat grapes; he drank, not ate; the nakedness came about because of what he did, and was not his original state. Then again, the parallels between the flood and the original creation are not exact either, but it is still clear that they are typologically related. All of these parallels are highlighted when we examine the structure of the primeval history (Genesis 1-11), as we will do below. After Noah's "fall," we see the differentiation of the two seeds. Again, the parallels are not exact, since Ham does not murder a brother, as Cain did; instead, he shows disrespect for his father. Still, we can see that Ham is acting like the serpent by, in effect, uncovering the nakedness of his father to his brothers, while Shem and Japheth refuse to act like their brother Ham did, not looking at their father's nakedness, but they act like God did toward Adam and Eve, by covering their father's nakedness. The magnitude of Ham's sin can be understood from the consideration that it is only because of the righteousness of his father Noah that Ham was spared the fate which he has just observed befall the whole world. Further, Noah cursed Ham's son Canaan with abject slavery, just as the serpent's seed is cursed to be under the foot of the righteous seed, which here consists of Shem and Japheth (Gen 9:25-27). We see, therefore, that the seed of the serpent was not destroyed in the flood after all.

Just as the curse on Cain appeared not to come true in Genesis 4, but instead we see Cain apparently prosper in every way, so we see in Genesis 10 that the creation mandate appears to be fulfilled particularly in the children of wicked Ham. The only exploits mentioned in this chapter are those of Nimrod, son of Cush, son of Ham; a mighty warrior and mighty hunter; like Cain founding cities in Shinar and Assyria (Gen 10:8-12). Ham has more sons (or nations) listed in Genesis 10 than Shem or Japheth (30, versus 26 and 14, respectively), and 12 out of Ham's 30 are Canaan and his descendants (versus 9 for his brother Cush and his sons, 8 for Mizraim, and Put by himself). Also, as Genesis 4 has a partial genealogy of Adam through Seth which is recapitulated and taken further in Genesis 5, Shem has a partial genealogy in Genesis 10 which is recapitulated and taken further in Genesis 11 (vv. 10-27). We can also see the tower of Babel incident as the post-flood analogue to the incident of the sons of God and the daughters of men, in showing the wickedness and judgment-worthiness of the human race. The reader of Genesis 10 knows, of course, that the Canaanites were later destroyed, as the reader of Genesis 4 knows that the Cainites were destroyed in the flood. But the point here is that it appears in the beginning that the wicked prosper more than the righteous, as God's judgment is long delayed. As we inferred an eschatological implication from this fact in our study of Genesis 4, so must we here.

Gary Rendsburg studied the pre- and post-flood parallels from a thematic and structural point of view. He credits Jack Sasson for noting the parallel development of the

pre-flood and post-flood primeval history.⁴¹² Building on this foundation, Rendsburg presented the following outline of Gen 1:1 to 11:26:⁴¹³

A Creation, God's Words to Adam (1:1-3:24)

B Adam's Sons (4:1-16)

C Technological Development of Mankind (4:17-26)

D Ten Generations from Adam to Noah (5:1-32)

E Downfall: The Nephilim (6:1-8)

A' Flood, God's Words to Noah (6:9-9:17)

B' Noah's Sons (9:18-29)

C' Ethnic Development of Mankind (10:1-32)

E' Downfall: Tower of Babel (11:1-9)

D' Ten Generations from Noah to Terah (11:10-26)

Rendsburg notes that in the post-flood recapitulation, the last two parts are "necessarily out of sequence," noting that "since [D'] brings human history down to the personage of Abram, the compiler really had no choice but to place it after E'."⁴¹⁴

In my opinion, Rendsburg lumps too much varied material together in A and A' (creation of the universe, installation of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and the temptation and fall into sin), and does not use the best descriptive labels for the sections. For example, the real "downfall" is in Genesis 3, not Genesis 6, and is recapitulated in Genesis 9, not Genesis 11. What Genesis 6 and 11 describe is the almost complete disappearance of the righteous seed from the earth. I would basically follow Rendsburg's structure, but modify it as follows, to bring out the themes we are interested in; in particular, dividing Rendsburg's first division (A/A') into three major divisions as described above, and highlighting the role of the two seeds of Gen 3:15:

A Creation (1:1-2:3)

B Paradise (2:4-25)

C Fall of Adam and its Consequences (3:1-24)

D Separation of Two Seeds, Cain and Abel (4:1-4:15)

E Proliferation of Two Seeds; Cain to Lamech, Adam to Enosh (4:16-4:26)

F Adam to Noah & 3 Sons (5:1-5:32)

G The Nephilim Incident; Corruption of the Human Race (6:1-8)

A' Flood (6:9-8:14)

B' New World (8:15-9:17)

C' Fall of Noah and its Consequences (9:18-21)

D' Separation of Two Seeds, Ham & Shem/Japheth (9:22-29)

E' Proliferation of Two Seeds, Sons of Noah, Shem to Peleg (10:1-32)

⁴¹²Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 2-3, 7; Jack M. Sasson, "The 'Tower of Babel' as a Clue to the Redactional Structuring of the Primeval History (Gen. 1-11:9)," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Gary A. Rendsburg (New York: Ktav, 1980), 211-19.

⁴¹³Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis*, 8.

⁴¹⁴*Ibid.*, 8, 19.

G' The Tower of Babel Incident; Corruption of the Human Race (11:1-9)

F' Shem to Terah & 3 Sons (11:10-32)

Division of Rendsburg's A/A' into three parts introduces its own problems. One might argue that the paradise portion (B) does not have a real analogue in the new world (B'), since the way to paradise is closed, and some of the material in B' relates to A, not B (such as the creation mandate). Further, the "fall" of Noah is not a true analogue to the fall of Adam; Noah did not sin "in the likeness of Adam" (Rom 5:14); he was never in Adam's state of innocence. As with the creation and flood, however, there seems to be a similarity in theme. Our main purpose here is not to come up with a perfect parallel structure of Genesis 1-11, but to show that there is a post-flood recapitulation of the pre-flood history, even if the order of events in this recapitulation is not exactly the same, and to highlight the role of the two seeds of Gen 3:15 in this recapitulation; further, that this recapitulation shows that the flood, a new creation, did not in fact result in a perfected human race. Noah is spoken of as a new Adam, but he is like the first Adam, and his natural offspring is therefore not the seed of promise.

If the trend of the post-flood world is the same as that of the pre-flood world, then what would we expect to happen after Genesis 11? We would expect that God would again destroy the wicked world, and start again with a new creation. But God has already said he would never again "destroy all life, as I have done" (Gen 8:21; also 9:11). After the post-flood corruption of the human race we do have another "creation event," however, in which God announces that he will *make* Abram into a great nation, and, rather than destroying all nations, all nations will be blessed through him (Gen 12:1-3).

4.3 *Gen 3:15 in the History of Abraham*

4.3.1 *The Call of Abram and the New Creation*

And the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from the land of your birth and your father's house, to the land that I will show you, that I may make you into a great nation, and bless you, and magnify your name, and you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you; him who curses you (קלל) I will curse (ארר). And all the families of the earth will be blessed in you" (Gen 12:1-3).

Several factors lead to the conclusion that the call of Abram includes a promise of a new creation, the seed of Abram, which is the righteous seed of Gen 3:15. (1) As mentioned above, the post-flood history parallels the pre-flood history, which led to the flood, which is typologically related to the original creation. Thus we expect another "creation event," which however will not be the destruction of the human race because God promised not to do that again. (2) Abraham's call includes the idea of separation, since Abraham is separated out from his own country, and creation is presented in terms of separations, as we saw in chap. II.⁴¹⁵ (3) God says he is going to *make* (עשה) a great nation of Abram. (4) Analyzing the recurring phrase "these are the generations of" in Genesis leads to an interesting observation on the structure of Genesis. In addition to the structure shown by Rendsburg (parallel development in the primeval history, chiasmic

⁴¹⁵I thank Stephen Geller for this observation (private communication). Wenham also notes that separation elsewhere "almost becomes synonymous with divine election," citing (among others) 1 Kgs 8:53, where Israel's separation as a nation from the peoples is traced to their being brought out of Egypt (just as Abraham is brought out of Ur-Kašdīm; *Genesis 1-15*, 18).

development of the Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph cycles, with some “linking material”), one can use the “generations” passages as an outline of the book, noting that the introductions to the two main sections of Genesis (Gen 1:1 and Gen 12:1) do not use the “generations” terminology:⁴¹⁶

1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth

2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created; in the day the Lord God made earth and sky

5:1 This is the book of the generations of **Adam**, in the day God created Adam, in the likeness of God he made him.

6:9 These are the generations of **Noah**. Noah was a righteous man; blameless was he in his generation(s). Noah walked with God

10:1 And these are the generations of the sons of Noah, **Shem, Ham, and Japheth**; children were born to them after the flood.

11:10 These are the generations of **Shem**

11:27 And these are the generations of **Terah**. Terah begot **Abram**, Nahor and Haran

12:1 And the Lord said to **Abram**, “Go forth from the land of your birth and your father’s house, to the land that I will show you, that I may make you into a great nation.”

25:12 And these are the generations of **Ishmael**, the **son of Abraham**, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s servant girl, bore to Abraham

25:19 And these are the generations of **Isaac**, the **son of Abraham**. **Abraham begot Isaac**.

36:1, 9 And these are the generations of **Esau**, who is Edom

37:2 These are the generations of **Jacob**. **Joseph** was 17 years old...

Instead of the conventional formula “these are the generations of Abram” which would be expected in Gen 12:1, Abraham is not put into a *toledoth* formula until the generations of Ishmael and Isaac are introduced (Gen 25:12, 19), a feature which is rather striking since Abraham is arguably the central human character in Genesis.⁴¹⁷ One reason for this

⁴¹⁶William Henry Green used this scheme for his outline of Genesis with Gen 1:1 - 2:3 an introduction, but he made Gen 11:27 - 25:11 one section, so that Gen 12:1 does not appear in the outline at all (*The Unity of the Book of Genesis* [New York: Scribner, 1897], 1).

⁴¹⁷Sol Cohen pointed this feature out to a class which I attended at Dropsie College in 1985/86, and raised the question as to why this variation occurs.

variation might be to compare the call of Abraham to the creation of the universe, because of the typological relationship between the creation of the universe and the new creation promised in Gen 3:15. The history of Abraham is not about the children Abraham produced, but about the righteous seed which God created.

(5) The two seeds of Gen 3:15 may be described as those who are cursed (the serpent's seed) and those who are blessed (by implication; the woman's seed); here we see that the nations will be blessed or cursed, depending on how they act towards Abram. The blessing mentioned here, therefore, would relate back to the creation mandate, as modified by the fall of man, and, together with the preceding statement that God will bless, would thus indicate that the passage is not merely talking about men pronouncing blessings upon themselves, but about God actually blessing them.⁴¹⁸ As Wenham says, the concept of blessing connects the patriarchal narratives with each other and with the primeval history, and the patriarchal blessings "are thus a reassertion of God's original intentions for man."⁴¹⁹ The nation that God will make of Abram is therefore a righteous nation, having the characteristics of the woman's seed as discussed in chap. III. We saw that the word "enmity" outside of Gen 3:15 was always used as a pre-condition of the shedding of blood, either as a condition leading to pre-meditated murder, or hostility between nations leading to war, and that this fact aided in the identification of Abel's murder by Cain as the first fulfillment of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15. But while enmity, or hatred, is a factor in pre-meditated bloodshed, it does not always lead to actual bloodshed. Logically, enmity could be defined more broadly (as we did in § 2.2.1) as the condition that exists between enemies. To curse (root קלל, in the *piel*, used in Gen 12:3; properly, to "make contemptible")⁴²⁰ is also part of that condition, as may be seen from Deut 23:5 (4) ; Josh 24:9; Neh 13:2 (Balaam was hired to curse Balak's enemy Israel), 1 Sam 17:43 (Goliath cursed his enemy David), 2 Sam 16:5-13, 19:21; 1 Kgs 2:8 (Shimei cursed David), Ps 62:5 (4; David's enemies bless with their mouths, but curse in their hearts), and 2 Kgs 2:24 (Elishah cursed the mocking youths). We are therefore justified in seeing the two seeds of Gen 3:15 as identified in the call of Abram as those who are blessed and those who are cursed because of Abram. The connection to the blessing of the creation mandate in Gen 1:28 is still clearer in the verbal parallels to that verse in Gen 17:2, 6, 7 ("I will greatly multiply you, ... I will make you very fruitful, ... kings will come forth from you"). The command to Abraham to "walk before me and be blameless" (Gen 17:1) recalls the description of Noah as one who walked with God and was

⁴¹⁸Therefore it makes no difference in meaning whether the *niphal* (or *hithpael* in other passages) of בָּרַךְ is passive (LXX), middle (Wenham; "find blessing" [*Genesis 1-15*, 277]), or reflexive ("bless themselves"), or indirect reflexive ("obtain blessing for themselves"). Westermann opts for a reflexive translation but says, "the reflexive translation is saying no less than the passive or receptive [middle]. When the 'families of the earth bless' themselves 'in Abraham,' ... then the obvious presupposition is that they receive the blessing. Where one blesses oneself with the name of Abraham, blessing is actually bestowed and received" (*Genesis 12-36*, 152).

⁴¹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275.

⁴²⁰BDB, 886.

blameless (Gen 6:9). The traditional interpretation equating the seed of the woman with the seed of Abraham evident in the *Palestinian Tgs.*, Luther, etc. is therefore justified, and those who identified this seed as exclusively Christ are at least correct in equating the two, though wrong in limiting the seed to Christ only.

The call of Abram, considered in its context, would therefore seem to identify Abram as another new Adam, as was Noah. The history of his life would seem to bear this out. He obeyed the call of God to go to a new land. Like the sons of Seth, he called on the name of the Lord (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33). Abraham had faith in God which was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6). Abraham risked his own life to rescue his nephew Lot (Genesis 14), and rescued him again by interceding for him before the destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:16-33; 19:29). Abraham and Sarah showed themselves to be like righteous Abel, giving to God (even unknowingly) the best that they had (Gen 18:1-15). Adam failed his test in the Garden of Eden, but Abraham passed his test (Genesis 22).

But while we observe the qualities of faith, righteousness and obedience to God in Abraham, we also observe that the same two factors that disqualified Noah as the genuine new Adam apply to Abraham as well. (1) Both seeds of Gen 3:15 are found among Abraham's immediate descendants, and (2) Abraham "fell" like the first Adam and Noah.

4.3.2 *Abraham's Two Seeds*

The enmity between Ishmael and Isaac is not as dramatic as that between Cain and Abel; Ishmael, along with his mother, was driven away because he mocked Isaac at the feast made to celebrate his being weaned. I have argued elsewhere, following clues noticed by Rashi (and other Rabbis) and the Syrian Fathers' commentary on Genesis, that the content of this mocking, though not stated explicitly, is implied by the fact that in Gen 21:2-5, it is indicated *seven times* that Isaac is Abraham's son (four times with the verb בָּרָא [bear/be born] and preposition לְ [to], three times with the noun and possessive suffix "his son"), and that this redundancy implies that it was being asserted that someone else was the father. The someone else would of course be Abimelech, since Sarah had just been in his harem.⁴²¹ The identity of those making the accusation is implied in the following context, where Ishmael mocks Isaac, and then he and his mother are driven away at God's command (Gen 21:8-12). To call Isaac the son of Abimelech would be to further Ishmael's own claim as first born and heir, thus directly rejecting the oracle of God by which Isaac had been identified before his birth as the one through whom God's covenant would be fulfilled (Gen 17:19), and denying God's oracle to Abimelech, that Sarah had not been touched by Abimelech (Gen 20:4-6). His punishment (exile, loss of inheritance) also befits his offense (trying to usurp Isaac's role as heir). An accusation of

⁴²¹ John Ronning, "The Naming of Isaac: The Role of the Wife/Sister Episodes in the Redaction of Genesis," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 17. As 16th century Rabbi Obadiah Sforno put it, "He [Ishmael] derided the whole business, suggesting that Isaac was not Abraham's child at all, but Abimelech's" (Kasher, *Genesis*, 3.111). See also Levene, *Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis*, 92-93, and Rashi on Gen 25:19: "The cynics of that time said 'Sarah became with child of Abimelech. See how many years she lived with Abraham without becoming with child'" (Rosenbaum, *Rashi, Genesis*, 114). The redundancy of Gen 21:3 was too much for the NIV translators, who changed "Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac" to "Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him."

illegitimacy would also bring disgrace on Isaac (as well as Sarah), which is an effect of a curse (לָלַל), as shown by Nehemiah's "curse" on those who married foreign women, followed by his public disgrace of them (Neh 13:25).⁴²² To "curse" Isaac, the designated heir of Abraham, would identify Ishmael as the cursed seed, in terms of Gen 12:1-3 and Gen 3:15. In acting this way, Ishmael identifies himself spiritually as the child of the Egyptian slave Hagar, not of Sarah, who was despised by Hagar (לָלַל, *niphal*) when Hagar became pregnant with Ishmael (Gen 16:4). We are justified therefore in seeing this episode as another fulfillment of the enmity predicted in the curse on the serpent. The enmity is not mature and fully developed, as was the case of Cain and Abel – in fact Ishmael's exile prevents it from developing further.

We also see some patterning of Ishmael after Cain, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Cain is a "worker" of the ground, a word-play on his servitude to sin mentioned in Gen 4:7, and demonstrated by his actions. Ishmael's status as son of the slave girl Hagar is emphasized both by Sarah ("drive out this slave girl and her son;" cf. Gal 4:21-31), and by the "generations" statement listed above (Gen 25:12), which is unique in the amount of descriptive material added, and which is emphatic (by repeating well known facts) as to Ishmael's origin from the Egyptian slave Hagar ("and these are the generations of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant girl, bore to Abraham"). Ishmael's punishment by exile also parallels that of Cain. This punishment has a further parallel in that in terms of outward appearances and matters of this life, neither Cain nor Ishmael suffered. Indeed, God said he would bless Ishmael in answer to Abraham's prayer (Gen 17:20), so that, paradoxically, the one who should be cursed is blessed in terms of worldly prosperity. As Cain and his children prospered and appeared to be the ones fulfilling the creation mandate, so God tells Abraham that Ishmael will prosper in this same area: Ishmael will indeed become fruitful (Gen 16:10; 17:20; 21:13; he will be fruitful and multiply greatly, into a great nation, of innumerable descendants), and will exercise dominion (Gen 17:20; 25:12-16; he will be the father of 12 princes). The emphasis on Ishmael's slave origin, therefore, can have nothing to do with slavery as a relationship between men or nations, but rather as symbolic of the enslavement to sin that is the nature of the seed of the serpent. The emphasis on Ishmael's Egyptian origin is relevant to Gen 3:15 as well, since Egypt became a nation at enmity with Israel, and the apparent prosperity of Egypt, descended from the wicked Ham, as opposed to the apparent barrenness of the promised land, parallels the apparent prosperity of the descendants of Cain as opposed to the descendants of Seth, as well as the apparent fruitfulness of Hagar as opposed to the barrenness of Sarah.⁴²³

The enmity between Ishmael and Isaac is mild compared to that between Cain and Abel, since there is a big difference between being called illegitimate and being murdered. Still, Isaac almost died young as well – not at the hands of Ishmael or some other persecutor, but at the hands of his righteous father, at God's command (Genesis 22). We saw that in Genesis 4, although the plan to kill Abel was entirely Cain's, there

⁴²² *TWOT*, § 2028, 2.800.

⁴²³ Duguid, "Hagar the Egyptian," 419-21. She also obtained an Egyptian wife for Ishmael (Gen 21:21).

was a passive involvement by the Lord, who was visibly manifest at the occasion, and who could have easily warned Abel and kept him from being killed, and who provided the occasion for Cain's anger by favoring Abel over Cain. We saw that Abel was, in effect, God's blood sacrifice, and we also saw that it was this sacrifice which forced us to an eschatological interpretation of Gen 3:15, and that it transformed God's promise of a "lifting up" of Cain's face if he did well, into a promise of a "lifting up" of the fallen Abel, who is the one who did do well. So here too Isaac is faced with an untimely death by God's decree, whereas Ishmael (like Cain) had been saved from death by God's intervention (Gen 21:19) and so here too we are forced to the conclusion that in order for God's promise to be fulfilled, since Isaac as the appointed heir does not have offspring, there must be a resurrection. And so Abraham says to his servants (on the third day), "we will return to you" (Gen 22:4-5; cf. Heb 11:18-19).

Genesis 22 can be related to Gen 3:15 in another way. The promises given to Abraham after he offers up a ram in place of his son repeat, for the most part, promises already made (Gen 22:16-18). But a new promise is given: "Your seed shall possess the gates of his enemies" (v. 17). Given that Abraham's seed is the righteous seed, the blessed seed, which will be found among all the nations of the earth, then the enemies of this seed would be the cursed serpent's seed; again, found among all the nations of the earth. This promise therefore goes beyond a promise to inherit the land of Palestine, but must extend to possession of the whole earth, as implied in the original creation mandate given to Adam and Eve (cf. Rom 4:13). As in the case of Gen 3:15, God says here what the promised seed will do, without mentioning his own involvement in carrying out the promise. Kline said of Gen 3:15 that God could have said "*I* will strike you on the head" instead of "*he* will" (§ 1.8.28). God had already indicated his involvement at the start of the verse, where he says that he is the one who will put enmity between the two seeds. In this case, too, God has already indicated his involvement in fulfilling the promises to Abraham, for he said "I will curse those who curse you." The evident connection of Gen 22:17 to Gen 3:15 is a further indication that the latter is a promise and a blessing to the righteous, and a judgment and a curse on the wicked.

A further parallel with Cain and Abel is the manner of the birth of Abraham's first two sons. Under the naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:15, the seed of the woman would be the human race, the process of producing this seed would be natural birth. But Genesis 4 showed that both Cain and Abel had such an origin, yet only one of them was the seed of the woman. Therefore, there must be another kind of "birth," from the creator of the woman's seed, God himself. As Paul observes, Ishmael (like Cain), was "born in the ordinary way" (Gal 4:23; κατὰ σάρκα). Isaac's birth was miraculous (Gen 18:11, 14). But Isaac's miraculous birth does not explain the origin of the righteous seed, since it is unique, and the others who are righteous have an ordinary birth. Isaac's miraculous birth therefore could only have symbolic meaning, as pointing to a "birth" involving the direct intervention of God to accomplish what cannot be accomplished by the ordinary course of nature.

We therefore conclude that Ishmael and Isaac are analogous to Cain and Abel as representatives of the two seeds of Gen 3:15. The murder of Abel and the prosperity of Cain leads logically to an eschatological interpretation of the curse on the serpent. Likewise the prosperity of Ishmael is predicted in terms almost identical to that which

was fulfilled in Israel (a great nation, innumerable offspring, 12 tribes), which leads logically to the conclusion that there must be something beyond earthly fruitfulness and dominion that is included in the covenant which was passed on to Isaac, not Ishmael. Put another way, there must be some advantage in the promise “I will be their God” (Gen 17:7-8) beyond earthly prosperity, since this promise is not given to Ishmael, but Ishmael enjoyed earthly prosperity. “God’s blessing is manifested most obviously in human prosperity and well-being; long life, wealth, peace, good harvests, and children.” But, “the presence of God walking among his people is the highest of his blessings (Lev 26:11-12).”⁴²⁴ The examples of Abel and Enoch demonstrate that this blessing must transcend death, or it is no blessing.

We also must conclude that since Abraham fathered both seeds mentioned in Gen 3:15, he, like Noah, cannot in fact be the new Adam, the father of the righteous through physical fatherhood. The actual father (in terms of creation), as we have already learned, is God himself. Abraham can only be father of the righteous seed as a figurehead; he is father by example of his righteousness, representing the true head of the righteous, God himself.

Is it in this sense of figurehead that he is also the father of many nations (Gen 17:4-5)? These many nations are often identified with the children of Isaac, Ishmael, and the six sons of Abraham by Keturah (Gen 25:1-2).⁴²⁵ This interpretation seems obvious but it is impossible because the promise that Abraham will be the father of many nations is connected with the covenant and with the son of Sarah (not Hagar or Keturah): “As for me, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of many nations” (Gen 17:4); “I will bless [Sarah] so that she will become nations; kings of peoples will come from her” (Gen 17:16); “I will make [Ishmael] into a great nation but I will establish my covenant [by which Abraham becomes a father of many nations] with Isaac” (Gen 17:20-21). Neither can the many nations be the Edomites along with the Israelites, since the covenant is passed on to Jacob, excluding Esau (Gen 35:11; among many obvious parallels to Genesis 17, a company of nations will come from Jacob). As von Rad said,

One does not grasp the meaning of this promise if one thinks primarily of the Ishmaelites, Edomites, and sons of Keturah (ch. 25.1 ff.); for the descendants about whom these words speak are not to be sought among those who are outside God’s covenant, even less since later the same promise is made to Sarah (v. 16). In that case, one would think rather with B. Jacob of the proselytes.⁴²⁶

Von Rad goes on to connect the many nations with the “universal extension of God’s salvation beyond the limits of Israel” in Gen 12:1-3.⁴²⁷ Paul explains the identity of the many nations and Abraham’s relation to them by equating the promise of many nations to the promise of Gen 15:5, “So shall your offspring be” (as innumerable as the stars),

⁴²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275.

⁴²⁵E.g., Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 158; Skinner, *Genesis*, 291.

⁴²⁶Von Rad, *Genesis*, 194-95.

⁴²⁷*Ibid.*, 195. Von Rad, of course, sees Genesis 12 and 17 as two separate traditions.

which Abram believed and this faith was credited to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:18). Paul's point is understandable by relating the promise of many nations to the promise that all nations would be blessed in Abraham, so that the many nations are those from all nations who bless Abraham and thus are blessed themselves. That is, they are those from all nations, who, like Abraham, believe God, which is credited to them as righteousness. The difference between Noah and Abraham is that Noah was physically father of all who came after him, including those who are spiritually his children. In the case of Abraham, he will be spiritual father to those not descended from him at all. The use of the word "father" as "exemplar" in Gen 4:20-21 in a story that portrays Cain as the offspring of the serpent (thus explaining in what sense the serpent is Cain's father), shows that Paul's interpretation of Abraham as spiritual father of the righteous seed (first spoken of in Gen 3:15), whether Jew or Gentile, is not an *ad hoc* explanation.

A similar analysis would indicate that the "kings of peoples" to come from Sarah (Gen 17:16) would not include the Edomite kings, and the kings to come from Abraham (v. 6) would not include Ishmaelite, Midianite, etc., kings, but only those through Jacob. Both David and Solomon could be described as "kings of peoples," ruling over other peoples.

4.3.3 *The Fall of Abraham*

Abraham is spoken to as if he is the new Adam, father of the righteous seed. That both seeds are found among his offspring disqualifies him as the actual father (creator, progenitor) of the righteous; if he were, all of his children would be righteous. The other disqualifier is that, like Noah, he "falls" in a way that reminds us of the first Adam, showing us that he is not by nature any different than him.

Werner Berg analyzed Gen 16:1-6 (Sarah's "Hagar solution" to her barrenness) from a literary-critical perspective as "the fall of Abraham and Sarah," patterned after the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.⁴²⁸ Berg argues against the view that since Sarah's action conforms to contemporary legal custom, there can be no fault in it (similarly von Rad; "the narrator probably sees a great delinquency precisely in this"),⁴²⁹ comparing Gen 3:6 to 16:3. In both cases the initiative came from the woman, who took (לקח) and gave (נתן) to her husband, who passively accepts. This response by the husband is also described similarly: "because you have listened to the voice of your wife" (Gen 3:17), and "Abram listened to the voice of Sarai" (Gen 16:2). Berg also notes that alienation is the result of this action (between Sarah and Hagar, and Sarah and Abraham), as it was in Genesis 3, which is further evidence that what they did was wrong. He also notes Hagar's despising of Sarah, and its connection to Gen 12:1-3, as we mentioned above in connection with Ishmael's mocking of Isaac.

I would mention some additional thematic parallels to Genesis 3 which show that indeed Gen 16:1-6 is about a "fall." (1) The offense involves wanting to become like God

⁴²⁸Werner Berg, "Der Sündenfall Abrahams und Saras nach Gen 16, 1-6," *BN* 19 (1982): 7-14. Berg followed H. Werner's observation that "der Sündenfall, wie er uns von dem Jahwisten Gen 3 erzählt wird, wiederholt sich sozusagen auf der ungleich viel kleineren Bühne von Mamre" (*ibid.*, 8). Wenham agrees with Berg that Genesis 16 "clearly alludes to Gen 3" (*Genesis 16-50*, 7).

⁴²⁹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 186.

in a wrong way; i.e., to usurp his role. As Jacob said to Rachel, “am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” (Gen 30:2). (2) It involves a desire for something that God has withheld, but which he is going to give at a later time, and it implicitly accuses God of withholding something good. (3) The offense is against an ordinance put in place in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:24). (4) It involves forbidden knowledge; in this case, carnal knowledge.

If we are to see an external tempter of Sarah in this chapter, in a role analogous to that of the serpent in Genesis 3, we would have to assign that role to the culture of the nations which legitimized the practice followed by Abraham and Sarah. Since the nations are the serpent’s seed, this gives us another connection to the original fall narrative. So Abraham and Sarah are following the practice of the heathen nations, the serpent’s seed.

Berg subsequently analyzed Gen 12:10-20, where Abraham went to Egypt and lost Sarah for a time to Pharaoh, as another “Sündenfall” of Abraham.⁴³⁰ As there is a crisis of childlessness in Genesis 16, here there is a crisis of famine in the promised land, for which Abraham finds his own solution (by going to Egypt, leaving the land to which God had brought him), but which brings about another danger, for which Abraham finds again his own solution (having Sarah pose as his sister, and letting Pharaoh take her). As in chap. 16, the plan succeeds. Abraham seems to be acting reasonably by leaving the promised land (so too by human standards the actions in chap. 16 were reasonable), yet no command of God told him to leave the land to which he had been sent (Gen 12:1). Berg notes that the further independent action of giving Sarah to Pharaoh endangered the promise of descendants, so to save himself Abraham puts in jeopardy the promise of land and offspring.⁴³¹ He also subjected his wife to potential defilement, to save his own life. We might also note that Abraham’s actions concerning Sarah indicate unbelief in the promise of God to bless those who bless Abraham, and curse those who curse him.

Since these promises are related to the portrayal of Abraham as the new Adam, we again see a tension in this portrayal because of Abraham’s actions which follow the first Adam. Berg notes that the “accusation formula” of Pharaoh (Gen 12:18; “What is this that you have done”), parallels that of God to Eve (Gen 3:13), and the lack of answer to Pharaoh’s two accusation questions (vv. 18-19) is an indication of Abraham’s guilt. Pharaoh further acts for God by sending Abraham back (אָז; cf. 12:1) to the place God had told him to go, and Abraham reverses his steps, so to speak, until he again is in the promised land and again calls on the name of the Lord between Bethel and Ai (Gen 13:1-4).⁴³²

Many commentators have noted that since Hagar was Egyptian, and “servant-girls” were part of Abraham’s Egyptian booty (Gen 12:16), Hagar may have become part of the household at this time, a fact which would make his troubles in chap. 12 part of the

⁴³⁰Werner Berg, “Nochmals: Ein Sündenfall Abrahams – der erste – in Gen 12, 10-20,” *BN* 21 (1983): 7-15.

⁴³¹*Ibid.*, 1-10.

⁴³²*Ibid.*, 12-15.

cause of his troubles in chap. 16. This is in part speculation, but it supports a link between the two chapters as “fall” narratives.

Berg does not discuss the similar incident with Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech, probably because he sees these fall narratives as a pattern in J, whereas Genesis 20 has been ascribed by source critics to E. But since we are not interested here in the theology of hypothetical sources, but of the book as a whole, we must view this lapse in the same light as the first. “The postcovenant Abraham, for all his spiritual maturation (e.g., Gen. 15:6), is still much like the precovenant Abraham.”⁴³³ In fact, certain mitigating circumstances present in Gen 12:10-20 are not present in Gen 20:1-18, making the latter morally worse.⁴³⁴ In the first case, even though Abraham had been given a promise that he would be a great nation, nothing was mentioned as to Sarah being the mother, so the promise could not necessarily be taken as a promise to preserve Sarah as his wife. Similarly, if he had concluded that Lot would be his heir, which may be implied by the fact that he took Lot with him when he was told to leave his father’s house, he might have concluded that the promise to make him a great nation did not necessarily imply a promise to keep him alive, for the great nation could come from Lot. But by the time of the incident in Gen 20:1-8, Abraham had received the additional revelation that in another year Sarah would in fact bear a child through whom the promise would be fulfilled (Gen 17:19), and he had also been told that he would die in peace at a good old age (Gen 15:15). Further, he had already experienced the intervention of God in the first incident; he either lacked faith that God would intervene again, or was testing him. Taken from this perspective, this “fall” is worse than the first.

So although Abraham and Sarah are father and mother of the righteous seed by way of example, we see that this example is not perfect. The “falls” of Abraham and Sarah show their children that they must look ultimately to God for their righteousness, not to their ancestors. We might mention here also their practice of lying, which was one of the identifiers of the serpent’s seed in Genesis 4. Or at best they used half-truths to deceive (the portrayal of Sarah as sister [Gen 12:13; 20:2, 12] is half right but deceptive; Sarah denied laughing when she heard God’s promise, which is in part right because she did not laugh out loud; she did however laugh “within her” [Gen 18:12-15]). And yet God says after Abraham’s death that “Abraham obeyed my voice, and observed my requirements, my commandments, my statutes, and my instructions” (Gen 26:5).

4.3.4 *The Two Seeds of Abraham and the Two Hermeneutics*

We saw in the previous chapter that there are two hermeneutics, or means of interpreting God’s promises, corresponding to the two seeds: one of faith, and one of appearances. In the promises to Abraham, these two hermeneutics may be represented by Ishmael and Isaac. The promises unfold to Abraham in a progression of increasingly detailed revelation. At first he is promised that he will become a great nation, with no mention of Sarah’s or Isaac’s involvement. One can view the designation of Isaac as the one through whom the promises will be fulfilled as following the rejection of three “false

⁴³³Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 59-60.

⁴³⁴Ronning, “The Naming of Isaac,” 18.

candidates” for that role; Lot, Eliezer, and Ishmael. Lot is excluded as an implication of the fact that Abraham was given the promise of descendants again after Lot separated from him (Gen 13:4).⁴³⁵ Eliezer is excluded explicitly by God, but in a manner that does not rule out Ishmael, who was born subsequently (Gen 15:4). The reader, of course, knows that Isaac is the true heir, but Abraham did not know that when God began speaking to him as recorded in Genesis 17. By that time, Abraham would have understood for the past 13 years that Ishmael was his heir. By all appearances, this was true. And now that Sarah had progressed through menopause and Abraham himself was too old to father a child (Gen 17:17; 18:11), the passage of time would seem to confirm this interpretation. So, when God begins to tell him about a son being given to him through Sarah, he naturally tries to fit this promise into his interpretive framework in which Ishmael is legally Sarah’s son (Gen 17:17-18).⁴³⁶ Only then is he told in a way that cannot be misinterpreted that Sarah will in fact bear a son in the future, not Isaac, but Ishmael.

According to appearances, then, Ishmael was Abraham’s heir, and both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the miraculous alternative; but God teaches them the hermeneutics of faith. We see, therefore, that just as the naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:15 (the interpretation according to appearances) is wrong, and just as the figurative interpretation of Gen 3:15 applied strictly to matters of this life is wrong, so too the promises to the patriarchs cannot be interpreted strictly according to worldly prosperity; otherwise Ishmael would have sufficed.

4.4 *Gen 3:15 in the History of Isaac*

4.4.1 *Isaac as the New Adam*

Abraham was disqualified as the new Adam, progenitor of the righteous seed, a fact which would point to the need for someone greater than him to be this progenitor. As we have seen, this progenitor must be the one who spoke of the righteous seed in terms of a promise of a new creation (Gen 3:15; 12:1-3), thus God himself. Yet he speaks of Eve, then Noah, then Abraham as if they were the actual parent, or progenitor. Is the progenitor of the righteous seed human or divine? When we turn our attention to Isaac, there would seem to be some hope that he is that one who is greater than Abraham, the progenitor of the righteous seed. His birth is associated with the miraculous (Gen 18:14; נִפְלָא, *niphla*). This miracle goes beyond those miracles in which God “opens the womb” of a barren woman, for here Sarah has advanced beyond the age of child-bearing, so that even if she had been fertile, she could not now bear children (Gen 18:11). Similarly, Abraham considered his own body as being unable to produce children (Gen 17:17), and Paul likens the miracle of their rejuvenation and fertility to that of resurrection (Rom 4:17-24; Paul repeatedly uses words related to death to describe the state of Abraham and Sarah). The covenant of Abraham is not passed on to all of his children, but only to Isaac:

⁴³⁵So L. Helyer, “The Separation of Abram and Lot: Its Significance in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *JSOT* 26 (1983): 77-88; also Ronning, “The Naming of Isaac,” 10.

⁴³⁶Ronning, “The Naming of Isaac,” 11. I suggested that the perfect וַיִּהְיֶה (v. 16) gave Abraham some room to try and force this promise of a son into the past, thus fitting Ishmael, which he preferred to do since the alternative he thinks is ridiculous (v. 17).

it is now through Isaac that all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 26:1-5). Isaac is modelled after his father, and thus, as the new Adam. He receives the promises of Abraham (Gen 26:3-4; 24), and he calls on the name of the Lord (Gen 26:25). In one respect he acts better than Abraham; when Rebekah is barren for 20 years, his only response is prayer, rather than adoption of the “Hagar solution” (Gen 25:21). He thus avoids the “fall” of Abraham described in Genesis 16. But if all the attention paid to this special child before his birth creates an expectation that he would exceed his father in holiness and righteousness, this expectation is not fulfilled.

4.4.2 *The Fall of Isaac*

The divine interest in Isaac before his birth, the miraculous manner of his birth, and the moral improvement over his father might imply that we will see greater things from Isaac. But nothing seems more certain than the conclusion that he is not greater than Abraham. The interest in Isaac before his birth is not matched by a remarkable life; less attention is paid to him in comparison to Abraham and Jacob. Only one chapter (Genesis 26) involves Isaac as the principle character. In the most remarkable event of his life (Genesis 22), he is involved only passively. In general, his life is a repetition of his father’s, including the fact that he repeats one of Abraham’s “falls” when he passes off Rebekah as his sister for fear of his life (Gen 26:6-11). And although he did not repeat the other “fall” of Abraham, he also did not repeat his father’s faithful actions in securing a virtuous bride for his sons. No one should have been more aware than Isaac of the story of Abraham’s servant going to Abraham’s homeland to get a wife for his son Isaac, and of the necessity of avoiding the marriage of his sons to Canaanites. Yet Isaac never communicates this to his sons until Rebekah tells him that her life will not be worth living if Jacob marries a Canaanite, and this is almost 40 years after Esau married two Canaanites (Gen 27:46 - 28:8). When he sends Jacob back to his homeland, he forgets Abraham’s instructions to his servant: “beware, lest you take my son back there” (Gen 24:6).

4.4.3 *Isaac’s Two Seeds*

Isaac is also like his father in that he has both seeds spoken of in Gen 3:15 among his immediate descendants (Jacob and Esau), and we see them at enmity with each other. Therefore he, too, cannot be actually the father of the righteous. This enmity is prefigured even in the womb, as the twins attack each other (רָצַץ; *hithpolel*) in such a manner as to cause Rebekah to inquire of the Lord for the cause. She is told that two nations are in her womb; two peoples which will be separated (פָּרַד; *niphal*); one will be stronger than (אָמַץ with מָן) the other, and the great one (רַב) will serve the little one (צָעִיר; Gen 25:22-23). We have already seen in chap. II that רָצַץ in the *piel* is used for crushing Leviathan’s heads in Ps 74:14, which may suggest a meaning similar to שָׁרַף Gen 3:15. Likewise אָמַץ occurs in contexts of hostilities between enemies (individual or national; 2 Sam 22:18; Ps 18:18 [17]; 142:7 [6]; 2 Chron 13:18), although being stronger than the opponent does not necessarily mean victory, as the first three of these examples show. A divinely decreed separation due to enmity would seem to suggest that here again we will see a fulfillment of Gen 3:15 in the children of Isaac. Another theme implied in the curse, stated also to Noah, and implied in the Isaac-Ishmael opposition, was that the wicked seed is in servitude to the righteous seed. According to the usual translation, “the older will serve the younger,” the first-born Esau would apparently be identified with the

serpent's seed, and Jacob with the woman's seed. Why then would Isaac, who favored Esau, favor the offspring of the serpent? Possibly, Isaac interpreted רב and צעיר as applying to the nations that would spring from the twins, rather than to them as individuals, in which case one could not know by this oracle which child would be an "Ishmael" and which would be an "Isaac." צעיר often means the "younger" of two or more children (Gen 19:31, 34, 35, 38; 29:26; 43:33; 48:14; Josh 6:26; 1 Kgs 16:34), in opposition to "first-born" (בְּכוֹר), which is never expressed elsewhere by רב (in the story of Jacob and Esau, the adjectives used are always גָּדוֹל and קָטָן). Applied to nations, the adjectives would mean numerous or great, and little or insignificant.⁴³⁷ Whether or not the oracle was ambiguous to Isaac, he made his preference on the basis of his appetite (Gen 25:28). In any case, the themes of servitude and of enmity between and separation of two nations, combine to suggest another Cain-Abel, Ishmael-Isaac pair in the sons of Isaac. Westermann and Wenham both mention a similarity between the narratives of the birth, naming, and calling of Cain and Abel, and Esau and Jacob.⁴³⁸ *waw* disjunctive is used twice to contrast Jacob and Esau, but the chiasmus is not complete, as it was so repeatedly in the case of Cain and Abel, since the verb is missing or changed to a participle in the second half of each sentence (Gen 25:27-28).

The expectation of enmity is fulfilled in the lives of Jacob and Esau, and it is also found between the nations descended from them. In discussing the usage of the word "enmity" we observed that Ezek 35:5 speaks of the "ancient enmity" on the part of Edom for Israel. This ancient enmity can be traced back to the Edomite opposition to Israel when Israel requested permission to cross through their land on the way to the promised land (Num 20:18-21), or to the enmity between Jacob and Esau (as prefiguring the national enmity), or even, if one wants to, to Gen 3:15, since it is spiritual in origin. Similarly, the ancient enmity of the Philistines (Ezek 25:15) can be traced back to the Philistine opposition to Isaac, who even named one of his wells "enmity" (עֵשְׂתָּנָה, from the same root as the name Satan) because of this opposition (Gen 26:21), or, again, one could trace this enmity even to Gen 3:15 itself.

The enmity between Esau and Jacob is more obviously like that between Cain and Abel than was the case with the enmity between Ishmael and Isaac, and one need not be trying to show a pattern of fulfillment of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 to notice this similarity: "Esau becomes his brother's enemy, as Cain did his brother Abel; like Cain he resolves to kill him."⁴³⁹ Esau desired to kill his brother Jacob, and was only waiting for his father's death to carry it out (Gen 27:41). Also as in the case of Cain and

⁴³⁷ TWOT 2.773 (§ 1948), 2.827 (§ 2099). רב means "many" or "great" in over three fourths of its 420 usages; it apparently means "old" in Job 32:9. Using the adjective "great" is one way to describe a child as eldest, though elsewhere this is done with רב גָּדוֹל. I am not suggesting that רב does not mean "eldest" here, but only that Isaac could view this adjective as ambiguous. Likewise the LXX (quoted by Paul in Rom 9:12) does not translate with the Greek word for "older" (πρεσβύτερος), but rather with "greater" (μείζων, comparative of μέγας).

⁴³⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 102; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 292-93.

⁴³⁹ Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 443.

Abel, Esau's hostility was due to the favor his brother received: "because of the blessing with which his father blessed him." This case is not identical to Genesis 4, since there God indicated directly his preference for Abel. Here, however, Jacob obtained the blessing (apparently) by deceit. This blessing is clearly the Abrahamic blessing, as it contains the element "may those who curse you be cursed, and may those who bless you be blessed," as well as the element of dominion which was mentioned to Rebekah before the birth of the twins (Gen 27:29). When Esau asked for a blessing, he is answered in terms reminiscent of the curse on Cain: "Away from the fertility of the earth will be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven above" (Gen 27:39). This blessing is not about the disposition of Isaac's estate, even if that had been Isaac's original purpose. The blessing of Abraham is not Isaac's to give. Isaac is tricked into blessing Jacob against his will, yet he apparently recognizes that in this matter he has spoken for the Lord (as he does in vv. 39-40 concerning Esau), for he says to Esau concerning Jacob, "Indeed, he shall be blessed" (Gen 27:33). After learning through this experience that it is God's will to bless Jacob, not Esau, he then willingly gives him the blessing (Gen 28:3-4).

So Esau planned to kill Jacob because of the blessing that Isaac, speaking for the Lord, had given to him. In this there is a clear analogy to the Cain and Abel incident. However, there is also a difference, in that there is not a clear moral distinction between the two brothers before this point. In the incident of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob, the concluding editorial comment "Thus Esau despised his birthright" (Gen 25:34) implies that the story is not so much about Jacob's virtue, but about Esau's lack of it. Esau is portrayed as a slave of his appetite (his claim that he was about to die cannot be taken seriously, since truly starving people cannot even eat a full meal without throwing it up), who sells his birthright rather than wait a few minutes to prepare his own food. His desire to kill the one to whom it was said "may those who curse you be cursed, and may those who bless you be blessed" precisely because it was said to Jacob demonstrates unbelief in the blessing, and is an irrational attitude, as was Cain's. It is irrational to seek the blessing for oneself by killing the one whom God favors.

But it is not until later that Jacob demonstrates the faith and moral character of the righteous seed. His comment at Bethel, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it" (Gen 28:16), and his vow that the Lord will be his God *if* he brings him safely home (Gen 28:20-21), demonstrates that he does not have the faith of Abraham at this point. When he arrives in Haran and meets Rachel at the well, and recalls the story of similar divine providence in Genesis 24, he sees the Lord answering the conditions of his vow (Gen 29:11). By the time Jacob is returning home, and afterwards, we see him clearly demonstrating the faith that is characteristic of the righteous seed (Gen 32:9-12; 33:20; 35:1-4, 14-15; etc.).

Rebekah had told Jacob that she would send word to him when his brother's anger had subsided and it would be safe to return (Gen 27:44-45), yet Jacob never hears from her that it is safe to return; instead, he returns by God's decree, with a general promise, "I will be with you" (Gen 31:3). On his way, he sends messengers to Esau to tell him he is coming, and to try and appease him; he hears that Esau is coming to meet him, with 400 men, and the last thing he knows about Esau is that he wanted to kill him (Gen 32:3-6). When Esau does come, however, he is appeased and the brothers are reconciled. Does this mean that the enmity set by God between the two seeds is now gone? Is Esau

now like Jacob? The words of the two brothers hint at the answer to this question. Esau initially rejects Jacob's gifts, saying, "I have plenty (רַב), my brother, let what is yours be yours" (Gen 33:9). Esau uses the word that was used in the oracle to Rebekah to identify the one who would serve the other (Gen 25:23). Esau thought that by missing the blessing of his father, he would be deprived of worldly goods in this life, but now he thinks that this is not the case at all. Esau has what he wanted – he has gone to Seir and prospered, and has 400 men at his disposal (more than Abraham in Gen 14:14). "Esau has obviously suffered no disadvantage through the loss of his prerogatives as firstborn. He has even prospered and become powerful without it, and to such an extent that he can do without the substantial gift representing considerable wealth."⁴⁴⁰ As in the case of Cain, the curse appears not to come true. The sight before his eyes tells Esau that the blessing of Isaac has not resulted in Jacob's being blessed more than Esau has been. Esau, of course, does not know that by being godless he really has nothing. He is as those who say, "I am rich, I have become wealthy, and need nothing," but do not realize that they are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17). His reconciliation is therefore not evidence of a change in his status as offspring of the serpent, but rather is evidence of his unbelief in the value of being allied with the God of his father. In Esau we have another example of one who has interpreted the promises of God in accordance with outward appearances, and concluded that he has plenty. Jacob, on the other hand, does not use Esau's word רַב when he tells Esau that he has "plenty," but rather speaks in the manner of one who is heir to the creation mandate: "Please accept my blessing which has been brought to you, for God has been gracious to me, and I have all things" (נְשִׂי לִי כֹל; Gen 33:11; cf. Ps 8:7 [6]).

4.5 *Gen 3:15 in the History of Jacob*

Jacob inherits the blessing of Abraham, and in particular, the promises of fruitfulness and dominion, and the land of Canaan, as had been promised to Abraham in Genesis 17 (Gen 35:11-13). Jacob, too, then, is portrayed as a new Adam. But we see the same disqualifiers in Jacob as we saw in Abraham and Isaac. Jacob does not repeat the "fall" of Abraham and Isaac in terms of the wife-sister episodes, but he does repeat the "fall" of Abraham concerning Hagar, by taking two wives, then for each of them taking their servant girls due to their barrenness (Gen 29:23, 28; 30:3-4, 9).

The other factor which disqualifies Jacob as the new Adam is that he actually has both seeds among his children. This is seen most obviously in the enmity which exists between Joseph and his older brothers. Jacob demonstrably favors the righteous Joseph, who reports to his father the misconduct of the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, rather than covering it up (Gen 37:2-3); in this he is unlike the oldest son Reuben who participates in covering up his brothers' selling Joseph into slavery. The special robe which Jacob made for Joseph, and the dreams of Joseph which he told to his brothers, resulted in hatred and jealousy on the part of his brothers. While many commentators see here only a lesson for parents not to show favoritism, such a conclusion would seem to ignore the fact that God himself does favor the righteous over the wicked, beginning with Cain and Abel, and that the enmity in Genesis 37 is the same enmity predicted in Gen 3:15, which has also been

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 526.

fulfilled in the generation of Joseph's father and grandfather. This theme of enmity is further implied in the fact that, as Westermann observes, "peace" is a key word in this account, peace which is broken and then restored (Gen 37:4, 14; 43:23, 27, 28; 44:17).⁴⁴¹ There certainly is a lesson for parents not to make distinctions among their children on the basis of frivolous reasons, and Jacob's reason (because Joseph was "the child of his old age") does not seem to be of much theological or moral weight. But the dreams did not come from Jacob, but from God, as becomes evident later, and they were a contributing factor to the hatred and jealousy manifested against Joseph. Hatred and jealousy are distinctly Cainite reactions to God's favor. Joseph and his ten older brothers thus represent the two seeds of Gen 3:15 once again at enmity, once again in the same family. Joseph is clearly of the righteous seed. Cain murdered Abel, Esau planned to murder Jacob, and nine of the ten older brothers plan to murder Joseph. As Cain tried to get away from everyone's presence to kill his brother, so, too, Joseph's brothers plan to kill him "in the field," and disregard the omnipresence of God, Joseph's ally. They foolishly and wickedly think that by killing Joseph, they can nullify the advantage of God's favor.

Isaac, too, was nearly killed, not from enmity but at God's command (Genesis 22). In Genesis 37, too, we see evidence of providential intervention which brings Joseph to his fate; for if a man who overheard his brothers talking about where they were going next had not found Joseph, he could not have found his brothers and thus have been sold into slavery after a narrow escape from death (Gen 37:15-17).⁴⁴² While Abraham figuratively received Isaac back from the dead, because he anticipated his death, the same is even more true of Jacob, who for more than twenty years thought that Joseph was dead.

While the brothers did not actually kill Joseph, selling him into slavery under the law of Moses would be a capital offense (Deut 24:7). Reuben did not participate in this plan, but he did participate in the cover-up, and also had committed what would be a capital offense under the law of Moses by lying with his father's wife (Gen 30:4; 35:22; Lev 20:11). In the law this is known as "uncovering the nakedness of your father's wife, which is your father's nakedness" (Lev 18:8), which would link Reuben with the wicked Ham, who uncovered his father's nakedness literally (Gen 9:22). Simeon and Levi massacred all the males in a whole town of innocent people to avenge their sister; like the serpent, they used deceit to kill, and like Lamech they kill for an offense not deserving death (Gen 34:13, 25). Judah came up with the plan to sell Joseph to their spiritual kin, the Ishmaelites (Gen 37:26-27), and, like Esau, he married a Canaanite woman, had intercourse with his Canaanite daughter-in-law whom he thought was a prostitute, and confesses that she is more righteous than him (Gen 38:2, 26). All of Joseph's ten older brothers, then, are portrayed in the beginning as in the line of Cain, Ham, Ishmael, and

⁴⁴¹Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 39. Here again Westermann, who sees no relationship between Gen 3:15 and the rest of the Old Testament, notes the similarity in theme between Genesis 37 and Genesis 4 (*ibid.*, 37; *Genesis 1-11*, 298).

⁴⁴²Von Rad notices that "the way Joseph finally found his brothers ... is told with strange minuteness, for ... it is a quite secondary matter" (*Genesis*, 347). This "strange minuteness" should be an indication that it is not secondary at all.

Esau, as the moral offspring of the serpent; in fact, one might say that Ishmael and Esau compare favorably with Joseph's brothers.

The thoughtful Israelite from any of the tribes descended from these ten brothers would realize that, if the pattern of the previous two generations had been followed, their ancestors would have been excluded from the covenant like Ishmael and Esau, and they would have been born and grown up in godless nations like the Edomites and other oppressors of Israel. Why was this pattern not followed in the case of these brothers? Because of Joseph. Joseph, despite his unjust suffering, maintained a blameless life in slavery, and then in prison. While the freeman Judah visits a prostitute (so he thinks), the slave Joseph refuses to commit adultery when the opportunity is offered to him (Gen 38:15-18; 39:6-12). Joseph is further punished for his righteousness, going from servitude to prison; but Judah remains free. Here again, the promise to the righteous, and the threat to the wicked, appear to be unfulfilled. But when Joseph gets out of prison and stands before Pharaoh, then sees his brothers come and bow down to him, he does not seek to bring them to their deserved fate, but rather uses his position to work on their consciences and bring them to a place of repentance. So the story of Joseph, in terms of Gen 3:15, is a story about how ten brothers cast as the offspring of the serpent are brought instead to be "the servants of your father's God" (Gen 50:17), thus sharing in the promises to the righteous seed of Gen 3:15 as spoken to their father Abraham.

4.6 Conclusions From the Post-diluvian History in Genesis

4.6.1 Enmity Between Two Seeds

Gen 3:15 is not cited in the rest of Genesis, but it can be seen from this survey that a large portion of the rest of the primeval period, and of the patriarchal history is concerned with describing fulfillments of the enmity predicted there. Not all enmity which occurs is a fulfillment of Gen 3:15, but only that which God has placed between the righteous (his new creation), and the wicked. The enmity between the four kings and the five kings (Gen 14:1-2) has nothing to do with Gen 3:15. Sibling rivalry, rivalry between wives in a polygamous marriage, and strife between herdsmen (all seen in Genesis) in themselves have nothing to do with Gen 3:15; only if the enmity is "set" by God, is there a connection to Gen 3:15; as in the case of Cain and Abel, where God favors the righteous over the wicked. Jacob's scheming against Esau took place before his own conversion to his father's God, and he in fact treated Esau better after this conversion. The enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 is usually found on an individual level in Genesis, usually brother against brother (Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Jacob's ten oldest sons and Joseph), as in its first occurrence with Cain and Abel, although we also see son against father (Ham and Noah). There is also enmity towards the righteous on a national scale, as in the case of the Philistines against Isaac. Obviously, seeing the murder of Abel by Cain as the first fulfillment of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 is the key to relating these other episodes to Gen 3:15, since they do not allude directly to the curse on the serpent, but rather indirectly, by following the pattern of Genesis 4. The narrative technique of not calling Cain Eve's son in Gen 4:1 is not repeated for the others in his line, because the message is sufficiently established there. The same applies to Eve's avoidance of calling Cain her seed. Once the figurative identity of the two seeds is

established, the lesson does not need to be taught again so explicitly. Still, God refers to Isaac as Abraham's *only* son, after the departure of Ishmael (Gen 22:2).⁴⁴³

The initiation, progress, and outcome of each of the episodes of enmity are all different, and none is identical to the first fulfillment with Cain and Abel; nevertheless, certain themes keep recurring. We see enmity arise from jealousy due to God's favor, and the desire to murder the one favored in the case of Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers. These are both motifs found in the Cain and Abel episode. We also see differences in these two cases: the favor of God is not always indicated directly by God, but indirectly through the righteous but imperfect (and sometimes unwitting and unwilling) patriarch. The murders are also not actually accomplished in these two cases. Esau's fate seems to be the same as Cain's (exile, and a curse that appears to not come true), but Joseph's brothers are reconciled to him and to God, so that they remain as heirs of the covenant, while Esau is only reconciled to his brother, not to God. The Philistines likewise display enmity against Isaac because they are envious of his prosperity (Gen 26:14), and this enmity is manifested by plugging up the wells he and his father dug, and seizing the wells newly dug. But here too there is a reconciliation as the Philistines realize something that Cain, Ham, Ishmael and Esau did not – opposition to the one favored by God is against their own interests. The enmity of Ham and Ishmael does not express itself in a threat of physical harm toward the righteous, but rather involves disrespect, humiliation, and ridicule.

In no case do we see the righteous attempt to fulfill "he will crush your head." As it was God himself, not Noah, who destroyed the world in a flood, so it is God who destroys Sodom and the other cities of the plain. But Abraham, of the "seed of the woman" in terms of Gen 3:15, did not take part in this destruction. In fact, he tried to prevent it for the sake of the righteous by interceding for the city, just as he had previously rescued the kings of these wicked cities for the sake of Lot and his family. We see Abraham making an alliance with the Amorites, whose iniquity is "not yet full" (Gen 14:13; 15:16), making peace with Abimelech (Gen 21:22-24), and bowing before the "people of the land," the sons of Heth, to buy a burial plot from them (Gen 23:7, 12); indeed, bowing down at the gate of their city, after receiving the promise that his offspring will possess the gates of their enemies (Gen 22:17; 23:10). So too Isaac responds to the hostility of the Philistines by moving farther away from them and seeking only peace (Gen 26:17-31). It is only Simeon and Levi who try to destroy the inhabitants of the land (Genesis 34). For an offense which under the law of Moses would be handled with compulsory marriage and a fine (Deut 22:28-29), Simeon and Levi murder the offender as well as all males in the town. But far from being an example of the righteous conquest of the wicked, these two brothers are still of the wicked seed when this happens. Their profession of filial loyalty (Gen 34:31; "should they treat our sister as a harlot?") is shown to be hypocrisy by their later treatment of their brother Joseph, whom they also intended to kill. When Joseph saw his brothers bow down to him in fulfillment of his dreams, he was in a position to do what his brothers feared (Gen 43:18; "he wants to

⁴⁴³Hamilton translates יְיָיִקָּרָא as "your precious one," although this meaning is speculative (*Genesis 18-50*, 97, n. 3). There is no question it means only child in Judg 11:4 (of Jephthah's daughter). The meaning "precious" is suggested by the fact that what is rare, singular, is often also precious.

plunder us and make us slaves and take our donkeys”); instead, he returned them good for evil. The fact that God is the one who sets enmity is seen in its outworking to imply that the righteous should, insofar as possible, seek peace with all men, and not seek their judgment, but their reconciliation to man and to God (cf. Rom 12:18).

4.6.2 *The New Adam*

The repeated fulfillments of the enmity between two seeds predicted in the curse on the serpent serve to confirm the figurative and collective interpretation of the woman’s seed derived from its first fulfillment in Genesis 4. The woman’s seed (at least in the enmity portion of the curse) is the righteous seed, not strictly an individual future savior. Still, Genesis focuses on a series of individuals (following Eve; Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) who are spoken to as if they were the progenitors of the righteous seed. This conclusion is most clear in the case of Noah, to whom the creation mandate of Gen 1:28 is repeated almost verbatim. In the case of Abraham, the mandate is given in the form of a promise which also recalls the wording of the creation mandate, except that the idea of dominion is expressed in the promise of kings among his offspring, rather than a promise to subdue the earth and the animals. This promise which portrays Abraham as a new Adam is to be fulfilled as part of God’s covenant with Abraham, which is passed on to Isaac, but not to Ishmael, then to Jacob, but not to Esau.

But these individuals who are portrayed as a new Adam are also shown to “fall” like the first Adam, not simply by sinning in general, but in ways that allude back to Genesis 2 and 3. In one respect, such allusions are not surprising, since probably every commentator on Genesis 3 notes that the fall narrative is paradigmatic of temptation and sin in general. Yet no one who came after Adam and Eve fell from a state of innocence, and so their fall is in that respect non-repeatable. What is significant about the “fall” of Noah and the patriarchs is that it shows them to be like the first Adam, and so they cannot be the actual progenitors of the righteous seed; they can only be the father of the righteous by way of example. This conclusion also follows from the fact that not all of their children are righteous; both seeds of Gen 3:15 are found among their immediate descendants, as was the case with the children of Adam and Eve. The true progenitor of the righteous seed is God himself, as is implied by the interpretation of Gen 3:15 as a promise of a new creation, the seed of the woman. The righteous Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob apparently function as figureheads of the righteous race, representing the true head, God. Their actual role in the new creation is secondary, consisting of passing on the “way of the Lord” to their children and their household (Gen 18:19), while it is God himself who brings about the new creation. The most extensive description of this process is in the adult conversion of Joseph’s brothers, but we also see it take place in the adult Jacob; this observation confirms that membership in the righteous seed is not gained by birth to godly parents. There is another “birth,” from God himself.

The description of adult conversions and the idea of Gen 3:15 as a promise of a new creation suggest that the “seed of the serpent” is actually man in his natural state, as he comes into the world. Darkness already existed when God said “let there be light.” The waters below already existed when he made the atmosphere to separate them from the waters above, and when he made the dry land appear. Likewise the wicked seed already exists when God creates out of that seed a righteous seed, whether a child or an adult. As we have seen, this righteous seed is not perfect, even though everything God

makes is good. Just as the creation of the universe took time, so the creation of the righteous takes time (cf. Phil 1:6).

4.6.3 *Blessing*

Wenham's observation that the idea of "blessing" connects the patriarchal narratives to each other and to the primeval history is a key observation for the present study, since we have interpreted the curse on the serpent as an implied blessing on the righteous seed. When Cain killed Abel, it would have appeared that the promised blessing was taken away from Abel. Though Cain was cursed, it appeared instead that he prospered in every way, and his life was protected by God, which is something God did not do for Abel. The incongruity between the blessing and the curse and their respective lack of fulfillment in this world forced an eschatological interpretation of the curse on the wicked seed, and the implied blessing on the righteous seed. As an allusion to Gen 1:28, Gen 3:15 should indicate that the righteous will have dominion over the earth and the animals, and victory over the serpent's seed. If we confine the idea of blessing to "the power of fertility, growth, success,"⁴⁴⁴ then we have the same incongruity as there was in the case of Cain and Abel. Abraham leaves his homeland with a promise of becoming a great nation. etc., yet he has no children. He fathers Ishmael but Ishmael has no role in fulfilling this promise. Miraculously, he fathers Isaac, but then he is told to sacrifice him. After Isaac is spared, he learns that his brother Nahor has fathered twelve children (Gen 22:20-24). Who is the fruitful one? Similarly, with the promise of land. Abraham is told that he will inherit the land of Canaan, but he is also told that he himself will not experience this; it will happen after 400 years in which his children will be enslaved and oppressed. These who will be oppressed are the children of promise, of Isaac and Jacob, not Ishmael, Esau, or the sons of Keturah. Meanwhile the patriarchs are aliens and sojourners in the land of promise (Gen 23:4; 47:9). Esau apparently prospers more than Jacob, and eight Edomite kings reigned before Israel had a king (Gen 36:31-39). Righteous Joseph languishes in slavery and in prison in Egypt while his wicked brothers are free. These contrasts act to reinforce the eschatological implications of the blessing spoken to the patriarchs, and would indicate that whatever earthly prosperity they enjoyed is only a token of the blessing ultimately in store for them.

In the next chapter, we see that the enmity which the patriarchs experienced personally is experienced by their children as a people, then as a nation. Gen 3:15 will have a further fulfillment as the nation of Israel is portrayed as God's new creation, the righteous seed at enmity with Egypt, of the seed of the serpent.

⁴⁴⁴Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 149.

CHAPTER V

THE EXODUS AND THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

5.1 Evidence From the Exodus Narrative

5.1.1 Enmity Between Egypt and Israel

Through Joseph, Egypt had been spared and had been the breadbasket for the nations around them (including Jacob's family) during the famine, and Genesis records only friendly relations between Pharaoh and Jacob's family. Exod 1:7 describes the apparent fulfillment of the fruitfulness promised to the patriarchs, in terms quite similar to the original creation mandate: "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and swarmed, and multiplied, and became very strong, and the land was filled with them." With a new king who did not know Joseph, "this prosperity and fecundity, however, aroused envy, hatred and suspicion."⁴⁴⁵ Pharaoh's reaction is to "deal shrewdly" (חכם, *hithpael*) with them, and enslave them (vv. 10-11), apparently preventing Israel from fulfilling the dominion aspect of the creation mandate; they were fruitful, but instead of ruling, they are enslaved, as predicted in Gen 15:13. To deal shrewdly for an evil purpose is an attribute of the serpent (Gen 3:1). But the plan does not work, as Israel multiplies even more, which leads the Egyptians to be in dread of the Israelites, so that they make their enslavement ruthless (vv. 12-13). The word used to signify this oppression (פָּרַדַּי) according to Cassuto means "to crush small," perhaps an allusion to Gen 3:15e.⁴⁴⁶ The root is ironically similar to that for the idea of blessing: God blesses Israel (בָּרַךְ), Pharaoh seeks to suppress and counteract this blessing by his oppression (פָּרַדַּי), a situation which recalls the patriarchal promise "I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you." Pharaoh brings God's curse on himself and his people, and Exodus records the working out of this curse in the plague narratives and the crossing of the Red Sea. Whereas we saw many examples in the primeval and patriarchal histories where the curse on the wicked was put off during the "here and now," we see in the exodus (just as in the case of the flood), an intrusion of the eschatological curse into history. Cassuto also notes that Egypt's reaction of dread parallels that of Moab when Israel comes out of Egypt (Num 22:3, 6),⁴⁴⁷ and here the idea of cursing Israel is explicit (i.e., Balaam is hired to curse); but there is also a parallel with the reaction of the Philistines to Isaac's prosperity: "You have become too powerful for us" (Gen 26:16) is similar to "The Israelites have become too numerous and too powerful for us" (Exod 1:9). Pharaoh does not send Israel away, as Abimelech sent Isaac, and neither does he recognize later, as Abimelech did, that since it was evident that the Lord was with Israel, it was to his advantage to be at peace with them. Instead, he intensifies the repression, first telling the midwives to kill

⁴⁴⁵Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 9.

⁴⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 11; cf. BDB, 827 on I. פָּרַדַּי; also, Ernest Klein, ed., *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 529: "the lit. meaning of פָּרַדַּי prob. is 'breaking, crushing.'"

⁴⁴⁷Cassuto, *Exodus*, 10-11.

the male children born to the Israelites, then openly commanding the people to throw all the male Hebrew children into the Nile river.

The enmity of Egypt towards Israel can easily be seen as a continuation of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15, and fulfilled throughout the book of Genesis, but here on a national scale. As such, it is an enmity “set” by God, an interpretation which agrees with Ps 105:25; “He turned their heart to hate his people; to deal craftily (הִתְנַבֵּל; also used for the conspiracy against Joseph in Gen 37:18) with his servants.” In this context of enmity Moses is born, and he is in danger of death due to it, as was Abel from his deceitful brother. The meaning of his name in Egyptian (“son”),⁴⁴⁸ is perhaps the same as that of Abel (see § 3.3.2). Later (as we shall see) he is modeled after the patriarchs in a number of ways. Moses is also paralleled with Noah, since it is by a waterproofed ark that he is delivered from drowning (Exod 2:3). Cassuto notes that the word for “ark” (תִּבְיָה) is used only here and in the flood story: “By this verbal parallelism Scripture apparently intends to draw attention to the thematic analogy.”⁴⁴⁹ But the rescue of the infant Moses is not the only parallel with Genesis seen in this narrative. The appraisal of Moses by his mother after he was born, “And she saw him, that he was good” (וַיִּתְּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא; Exod 2:2) recalls the refrain from the creation account (with variations), “And God saw that it was good” (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).⁴⁵⁰ To see that something (or someone) is good does not in itself imply a creation context, since the expression is common and occurs in many other contexts (including apostasy; cf. Gen 3:6; 6:2). But childbirth is a creation motif, the parent(s) being creator (Gen 4:1; Deut 32:6, 15, 18; Ps 139:13-16), and the comment occurs in parallel with an allusion to Noah’s flood, which is also typologically related to the creation account, so it is appropriate to see an allusion to the creation account in the observation of the mother. Finally, there is an allusion to the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea. The ark containing Moses was placed in the reeds (סוּף) along the bank of the Nile (Exod 2:3). The Nile is sometimes poetically called a “sea” (Isa 19:5; Nah 3:8), so the site of Moses’ rescue could allude to יַם־סוּף, the Red Sea or Sea of Reeds; the site of the future deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians.⁴⁵¹ These few

⁴⁴⁸ TWOT, §1254 (1.529-30); Cassuto, *Exodus*, 20-21.

⁴⁴⁹ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 18. Were it not for source criticism, no doubt this parallel would be considered transparently obvious (Exod 2:1-10 is supposed to be from E). If a cognate word to תִּבְיָה (ark) were found in a Ugaritic flood story, no doubt scholars would draw attention to that fact without the hesitation evident when their E document refers to their P document.

⁴⁵⁰ Sol Cohen says that the verse alludes to the creation account, saying that the point is that the mother recognizes the child as God’s creation which should not be destroyed (personal communication). Cassuto says the purpose of the remark is to describe Moses as a fine, healthy specimen; one who would surely live if given a chance, an observation that would increase his mother’s grief at his murder (*Exodus*, 18).

⁴⁵¹ This allusion is by wordplay if סוּף in יַם־סוּף does not mean “reeds,” but “end,” for the Red Sea was known as the sea at the extremity of the world. See Maurice Copisarow, “The Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Hebrew Concept of the Red Sea,” *VT* 12 (1962): 1-13, and Bernard F. Batto, “Red Sea or Reed Sea: How the Mistake Was Made and What *Yam Sûp* Really Means,” *BARev* 10, 4 (July/August 1984): 56-63. Batto says the expression had symbolic as well as geographical meaning, and connects the Red Sea in Exodus 15 with the dragon opponent of God (60-61).

verses then seem to link thematically, or typologically, the creation, the flood of Noah, and the crossing of the Red Sea.

We have already discussed the links between the creation and flood. The links between the flood and the crossing of the Red Sea are also obvious: both involve the drowning of the wicked seed, and the rescue of the righteous seed. We may note briefly here that not all (or even most) of those rescued were righteous: yet even here there is a parallel with the post-flood behavior of Ham.

5.1.2 *Israel as God's New Creation*

While the enmity spoken of in the curse on the serpent can be seen between Egypt and Israel, the new creation predicted in the curse, i.e., the woman's seed, later designated the seed of Abraham, can also be seen in the plague and exodus narratives. Israel is depicted as God's new creation in several ways, as we shall see. One way is the use of the language of separation to describe God's distinguishing of Israel from Egypt, and a second is the depiction of the crossing of the Red Sea and the events leading up to it as a reenactment of the first three days of creation in Genesis 1. A third way of connecting Israel with creation could be God's designation of Israel as his firstborn son (Exod 4:22; again, childbirth being a creation motif). Finally, Israel's calendar is arranged so that the Passover and the exodus occur in the beginning of the year (Exod 12:1; "This month shall be for you the beginning [רֵאשִׁית] of months; it is the first [רֵאשִׁוֹן] of the months of the year"). The creation of the universe and of Israel thus both take place "in the beginning" (רֵאשִׁית).

God distinguishes between Egypt and Israel (including their respective property and residence) in the plagues, and in the fourth, fifth, and tenth plagues this distinction is described with the *hiphil* of the verb פָּלַח (to separate, discriminate), usually with the preposition בֵּין, recalling the separation of light and darkness, and the waters above and below in the creation account (Exod 8:18-19 [22-23]; 9:4; 11:7). The two peoples are syntactically distinguished as well (Exod 9:6; 10:22-23 [both examples of chiasmus]; 11:6-7a and 12:27). The separation language is also used when the Egyptians pursue and overtake Israel, and the angel of God in the pillar of cloud comes "between the camp of Egypt and between the camp of Israel" (בֵּין . . . וּבֵין; Exod 14:20).

Of the three separations involved in the creation of the universe, that between light and darkness is the most prominent in Genesis 1. Besides being the first of the separations, both the explicit means (active verb with preposition) and the implicit means (chiasmus of indirect object) are used to indicate it (see §§ 2.2.5, 3.3.2), and this separation is involved with the first and the fourth days of creation. Likewise in the plague and exodus narratives, light and darkness figure twice. The first use is the ninth plague, where Egypt is plagued with a darkness so severe that it can be felt, and which lasts three days (Exod 10:21-29). We have already mentioned that chiasmus is used to distinguish Egypt from Israel in this plague (vv. 22-23). We have also seen that the Cain and Abel account alludes to the separation of light and darkness to symbolically relate Cain to the darkness which precedes God's creation, and Abel to the light which God created (see § 3.3.2). Likewise light and darkness are involved in the event mentioned above, where Egypt overtakes Israel, though the text itself here is somewhat "dark." After describing the movement of the angel of God and the pillar of cloud from in front of Israel to the rear to stand as a barrier to prevent the Egyptians from approaching further,

Exod 14:20 goes on to say, וַיְהִי הַעֲנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּאָר אֶת-הַלַּיְלָה, (“and the cloud remained, along with the darkness, yet it illumined the night”), followed by, “and neither (camp) approached the other all night long.”

Brevard Childs describes three basic approaches to translating and interpreting this text.⁴⁵² The first follows MT and the *Targums* and understands it to say that the cloud which came between the two camps brought darkness to the Egyptians and light to the Israelites.⁴⁵³ The darkness was total (as in the ninth plague), preventing Egypt from moving, as suggested by Josh 24:7; “He put deep darkness (מַאֲפֵל) between you and the Egyptians.” Another approach sees “darkness” as a verbal form.⁴⁵⁴ A third approach sees a verb other than אור (give light) in the form וַיֵּאָר.⁴⁵⁵

The theophanic pillar of fire and cloud which accompanied the Israelites throughout the desert journeys is first mentioned in Exod 13:21-22. The pillar was continually present; as a cloud during the daytime, and as fire during the night. The mention of the pillar of *cloud* in Exod 14:19 would therefore indicate that the Egyptians overtook Israel before it was dark. Hertz, followed by Cross, suggested that “the cloud and the darkness” is hendiadys for “the dark cloud,”⁴⁵⁶ a reading which would fit well with the “deep darkness” mentioned in Josh 24:7, but which would leave the definite articles as problematic. I would translate as above, to say that the cloud remained (היה) is used in the sense of “remain” for the cloud in Num 9:21), i.e., was still a cloud, even after darkness came. That the result was the “deep darkness” referred to by Joshua is a natural inference from the fact that the Egyptians could not approach the Israelites all night long, and from a comparison to the “darkness that could be felt” which immobilized the Egyptians for three days during the ninth plague. The last two words would then indicate that in addition to the cloud, there was the customary light by night. The subject of “it [or

⁴⁵²Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 218.

⁴⁵³So also the Syriac (*BHS*, 109). Similarly the NIV: “Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side.” Also J. H. Hertz, “and there was the cloud and the darkness here, yet gave it light by night there” (*Pentateuch and Haftorahs* [London: Soncino, 1956], 268). The *Palestinian Targums* make explicit that darkness applies to the Egyptians, light to the Israelites.

⁴⁵⁴Martin Noth says “The transmitted text is completely incomprehensible at this point and is certainly incomplete.” For “and the darkness” he substitutes וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ and translates “and the cloud remained dark on this night,” leaving out וַיֵּאָר as an addition (*Exodus* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962], 115, including note).

⁴⁵⁵For וַיֵּאָר, E. A. Speiser suggests a derivation from ארר, to curse; the angel of God cast a spell on the darkness (“An Angelic ‘Curse’: Exodus 14:20,” *JAOS* 80 [1960]: 198-200). Robert Althann suggests the meaning “dominate,” follows Cross in his suggestion of hendiadys (see below), and sees the verse as a poetic fragment: “And it came between the army of Egypt / and the army of Israel, / and there was the dark cloud, / and it dominated the night, / and the one did not approach the other / the whole night” (“Unrecognized Poetic Fragments in Exodus,” *JNSL* 11 [1983]: 15).

⁴⁵⁶Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 268; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History and Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973), 164, n. 79. Cross suggests the LXX is based on a similar hendiadys: “darkness and deep darkness,” referring to Joel 2:2; Zeph 1:15.

he] gave light” must still be the theophanic pillar, so that there is both darkness and light from the same source at the same time (not two different pillars), an interpretation which is confirmed by the reference to the Lord looking down on the Egyptians from “the pillar of fire and cloud” during the morning watch (Exod 14:24). This is the only place where the pillar is referred to with both designations “fire” and “cloud” at the same time. Everywhere else it is either one (fire by night) or the other (cloud by day). The designation “cloud” is apparently used generically in Num 9:18-21 (especially v. 21) for both fire and cloud, but apart from the crossing of the Red Sea, it is never said to be the pillar of fire and cloud at the same time, a fact which suggests a unique event. Those who translate Exod 14:20 to omit the reference to the illumination of the night have overlooked this fact.

The light would thwart the purpose of the deep darkness unless the Egyptians were shielded from this light, so it is another natural inference to conclude that the light which shone by night was only for the benefit of Israel; the cloud blocked the light from being seen by the Egyptians. As the *Targums* interpret, the angel of God in the cloud gave light to the Israelites, but only darkness to the Egyptians. Though the text could be more clear, and possibly has suffered during transmission, this interpretation is not mere speculation, as J. Durham charges.⁴⁵⁷ The use of creation symbolism in this narrative would suggest that Israel is like the light, God’s creation, the promised righteous seed; the Egyptians are like the darkness and like Cain, the offspring of the serpent, and God has distinguished the two, in a separation recalling the first day of creation.

This same event can be seen as a symbolic reenactment of the second day of creation, as well as of the first. The theophanic cloud is throughout the exodus and wilderness period the place from which God manifested himself. It is thus suggestive of God’s abode, or heaven. The cloud phenomenon would suggest heaven (sky; where clouds usually are found) as well, even though this cloud apparently has nothing to do with water. But “heaven” (or “sky”) is the name given to the firmament which separates the waters above from the waters below in Gen 1:8. Figuratively speaking, then, the firmament comes in between the Egyptians and the Israelites to keep them separate, providing a horizontal separation suggestive of the vertical separation accomplished on the second day of creation. We have already noted the separation language of this description as reminiscent of the creation account.

The third day of creation involved the separation of the seas from the dry land. Here again the two separated components of the creation are applied to the two nations: one to Israel, and one to the Egyptians. God caused the dry ground (יַבֵּשׁ, Exod 14:22, as in Gen 1:9-10) to appear in the midst of the Red Sea, and Israel crossed the sea on this dry ground, while the Egyptians drowned in the sea. Thus the crossing of the Red Sea can be seen as a symbolic reenactment of the first three days of creation, with the symbolism identifying Israel as God’s new creation, a fulfillment of the promise of a new creation, the righteous seed, in Gen 3:15. As Kline summarizes,

⁴⁵⁷ John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1987), 189 (he refers to Cassuto’s view [*Exodus*, 167]). Durham interprets יַבֵּשׁ as saying that the dark cloud “was the light” that night; i.e., there was deep darkness that night instead of light (p. 193). To say that the dark cloud illumined the night seems a very strange way of saying that it was dark that night.

Within the broad parallelism that emerges we find that at the exodus reenactment of creation history the divine pillar of cloud and fire was present ... to bring light into the darkness ... , to divide the waters and make dry land appear in the midst of the deep, and to lead on to the Sabbath in the holy paradise land.⁴⁵⁸

Kline notes also that the strong east wind over the waters of the Red Sea can be seen as a parallel to the Spirit of God moving over the waters at the start of creation and to the wind sent by God in the middle of the flood:

The flood episode, like the exodus salvation, is portrayed on an elaborate scale as a re-creation event, and the decisive initiating moment is God's making a wind to move over the earth to subdue the waters (Gen. 8:1). In the exodus re-creation itself, the divine agency in dealing with the waters is denoted as a strong, east wind (Exod. 14:21) and, more poetically, as the breath (*ru^ah*) of God's nostrils blown upon the waters (Exod. 15:8, 10).⁴⁵⁹

Kline apparently takes the dividing of the waters of the sea as the analogue to the second day of creation. But this division does not distinguish Israel from Egypt, so I believe it is preferable to see the second day's reenactment in God's physical separation of Israel from Egypt with the pillar of fire and cloud during the night. A further parallel with the creation account could be the fact that this wind blew all night long, i.e., in darkness, as in Gen 1:2. The word east (מִקְדָּם) is from the same root as קִדְמִים which may signify the ancient past, possibly suggesting by word play "primeval wind."

5.1.3 *The Crossing of the Red Sea and the Slaying of the Ancient Serpent*

While Gen 3:15 being a promise of a new creation explains why the crossing of the sea should involve symbolism from the account of the creation of the universe, the other obvious connection to Gen 3:15 would be the destruction of the wicked seed. As Noah's world was destroyed in a flood, so the Egyptians, portrayed as the seed of the serpent by their enmity against God's chosen, are likewise drowned in the sea. This would appear to be another fulfillment of "he will strike you on the head," though the part played by the woman's seed (now Abraham's seed) was token (Exod 14:13-14; "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. ... The Lord will fight for you, while you keep silent"). Even though Israel's involvement was primarily passive, still, Moses plays a part in splitting the Red Sea, and in causing the Egyptians to drown: "As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it (וַיִּקְרַע מֹשֶׁה), that the Israelites might come into the midst of the sea on the dry ground," and "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen" (Exod 14:16, 26). Through these token acts of obedience which resulted in the destruction of the serpent's seed (much like Noah's building the ark), the "seed of the woman" (whether Moses as an individual, or Israel collectively acting through their head, Moses) could be said to have struck the serpent on the head (i.e., dealt a deadly blow). The question arises whether the Scripture itself gives evidence of an interpretation where

⁴⁵⁸Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 14-15. John N. Oswalt also takes the parallel of dry land here and in the crossing of the Jordan with Gen 1:9 as consistent "with the general understanding that the Exodus is a complement to creation" ("The Myth of the Dragon and Old Testament Faith," *EvQ* 49 [1977]: 171, n. 22).

⁴⁵⁹Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 15-16.

the slaying of the ancient serpent is said to be accomplished at the crossing of the Red Sea, or in general at the exodus. To this question we turn next.

5.2 Evidence From Isa 51:9-10

The most obvious text giving an interpretation of the exodus event as a fulfillment of the slaying of the ancient serpent would seem to be Isa 51:9-10:

עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי לְבַשׁוּ-עֵץ זָרוּעַ יְהוָה	51:9	Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD;
עוֹרֵי כִימֵי קִדְמֵ דְרוֹת עוֹלָמִים		Awake as in the days of old, of ancient generations
הֲלוֹא אַתָּה הָיָה הַמַּחְצֵצֶת רַהַב		Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,
מִחַוֹלֵלֶת תַּנְיִן		who pierced the serpent-dragon?
הֲלוֹא אַתָּה הָיָה הַמַּתְרַבֵּת יָם	10	Was it not you who dried up the sea,
מֵי תְהוֹם רַבָּה		The waters of the great deep,
הַשְׁמָה מַעְמְקֵי-יָם יָרֵד		who made the depths of the sea a pathway,
לְעַבְרַת גְּאוּלָּיִם		for the crossing over of the redeemed?

As discussed in § 2.3.6, the serpent or dragon (תַּנְיִן) Rahab is described using some of the same terminology as is used to describe Leviathan; “evil (or primeval) serpent” (Isa 27:1; Job 26:12-13), though interpreters differ on whether they are alternate names for the same being,⁴⁶⁰ two different beings,⁴⁶¹ or originally the same but developed differently,⁴⁶² or originally different beings but became alternate names for the same monster.⁴⁶³ Either adjective (evil or primeval, or “twisted,” taken metaphorically) would fit well with the serpent of Genesis 3.⁴⁶⁴ The portrayal of the dragon in supernatural terms (i.e., with many heads; Ps 74:13-14), and as the opponent of God would also fit well, since we have demonstrated that the serpent of the curse cannot be a mere animal, but is portrayed rather as an evil angel acting through the animal instrument. If the holy angels may appear with serpentine bodies (Isaiah 6), how much more may the ancient serpent enemy of man and God be depicted as a seven headed dragon! Either Rahab or Leviathan could then be easily seen to be a name given to the cursed serpent of Genesis 3. From an Israelite point of view, the internationally known dragon figure is not mere myth, but an

⁴⁶⁰ An animal symbolic of Egypt in the traditional view, or the personification of the chaos waters in Gunkel’s view (*Schöpfung und Chaos*, 32, 54).

⁴⁶¹ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 179. Cassuto reconstructs an Israelite version of the pre-creation battle myth, using sayings from the prophets and other poetic writings, in which Rahab is (following the Midrashic title) the prince of the sea (also known by several other titles such as *תְּהוֹם רַבָּה* [the great deep]), and Leviathan is one of his helpers in revolt against the LORD. Rahab was unequivocally killed, unlike Leviathan who is only muzzled and restrained.

⁴⁶² E.g., Wakeman, *God’s Battle*, 79. Wakeman says that initially Rahab and Leviathan were different names for the same monster, Rahab being a peculiarly Israelite term which then became associated with Egypt.

⁴⁶³ E.g., Day (uncertainly), *God’s Conflict*, 6.

⁴⁶⁴ See the discussion of the adjective *בְּרָה* in § 2.3.6.

appropriate depiction of the being who led Adam and Eve into sin. Rahab is also a name given to Egypt by God himself (Isa 30:7; cf. Ps 87:4). These two usages are consistent if we observe that the Egyptians are portrayed in the exodus event as the offspring of the serpent (one of whose names is Rahab); the nation descended from an ancestor may bear his name (the obvious example being Israel), so Egypt is spiritually descended from Rahab, therefore called Rahab. Isa 51:9-10 may therefore be straightforwardly interpreted as describing the exodus. The days of old are the days of the exodus; cutting Rahab in pieces, piercing the dragon, drying up the sea, and the crossing over of the redeemed all describe the same thing: the safe crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites on dry ground and the destruction of the Egyptian army (Rahab's offspring) in the waters of the same sea. The destruction of the serpent's seed is taken as the destruction of the serpent, symbolized by the splitting open of a sea ("Sea" also alluding to the seven-headed dragon figure). This was the traditional interpretation of this passage, except that Rahab was usually connected solely to Egypt, not also to the serpent of Gen 3:15.⁴⁶⁵

A more recent way of interpreting this passage is to see a transition from a mythical description of the creation of the world to a description of the crossing of the Red Sea. In both interpretations, the purpose for recounting the past mighty deed is that the prophet desires God to repeat such action on behalf of his people in exile (v. 11). We have already mentioned Gunkel and others as advocates of the view that Rahab symbolizes the primordial powers of chaos (p. 141, n. 79). Westermann is another example. He calls Isa 51:9–52:3 a community lament, which he says characteristically starts with a review of history (e.g., Ps 44:2-5 [1-4]; 80:9-12 [8-11]; Isa 63:11-14), or a review of creation (Ps 74:12-17). Psalm 74

closely resembles the passage before us [Isa 51:9-10]. Our verses make a very characteristic link between creation and redemption. God's action as creator – pictured as a victory over the powers of chaos – is combined with the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea in such a way that the transition from the one (v. 9b) to the other (v. 10) is barely noticeable.⁴⁶⁶

Westermann finds it amazing that the language of v. 9 is "directly taken over from myth and unsafeguarded." Explanations of the language as figurative are insufficient; "there can be no mistaking the fact that v. 10b [*sic*; 9b] describes the victory over the chaos-dragon in exactly the same way as the Babylonia epic *Enuma elish*." He suggests that

⁴⁶⁵E.g., Edward J. Young: "As in Psalm 87:4; Isaiah 27:1; 30:7; Ezekiel 29:3 and 32:2, the terms *Rahab* and *Tannin* (crocodile?) are symbols for Egypt. ... Mythological connotations are here completely lost" (*The Book of Isaiah* [3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 3.313).

⁴⁶⁶Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 241. He quotes P. Volz's commentary: "There is no doubt that v. 9b refers to the creation of the world, and v. 10b to the passage of the Red Sea; 10a ... forms a transition, since to begin with it continues to speak of creation, but leads on to the second miraculous act by speaking of the drying up of the sea" (*ibid.*, n. b). Similarly, John L. McKenzie: "The passage of the sea in the Exodus is represented as a reenactment of the cosmological myth of Yahweh's victory over the monster of the sea. ... The invocation to act merges two themes, the theme of the creation myth and the theme of the crossing of the sea in Exodus" (*Second Isaiah* [AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968], 123, 126). McKenzie's reference to the *myth* of creation overlooks the fact that (as we have seen) the exodus is portrayed as a reenactment of the first three days of the Genesis 1 (anti-mythological) creation account at the same time as it is the vanquishing of the serpent-dragon.

perhaps the fact that “the Old Testament has no uniform theology about first and last things” is an explanation for why here “ideas taken straight from myth are applied to the Yahweh who is elsewhere the mortal foe of myth.”⁴⁶⁷ We note here that in the interpretation of these verses as applying exclusively to the exodus there is no such inconsistency since there is no reference to mythical accounts of a pre-creation battle, but rather the name of the unnamed serpent of Genesis 3 is derived from those myths, which from an Israelite point of view could be seen as perversions of the biblical curse on the serpent which connects the destruction of the supernatural serpent with a promise of a new creation.

Another point of interest in Westermann’s view is that to see v. 9 as a reference to a pre-creation battle, he has to assume a typological connection between creation and the exodus (“Our verses make a very characteristic link between creation and redemption”), since v. 10b clearly refers to the exodus, and the transition is “barely noticeable.” Obviously, such a connection is consistent with what has been argued in this dissertation, except that I have based this connection on Gen 3:15 being a promise of new creation, and on the thematic resemblance of creation, flood, and exodus (the latter two being token, or provisional, fulfillments of Gen 3:15), as brought out in the narrative of the nativity of Moses. We will see that this is a key point when analyzing Ps 74:12-17, since many interpreters connect the crushing of the serpent’s heads in vv. 13-14 with the creation battle myth on the basis of the use of creation terminology in the following verses. In this view, vv. 13-14 cannot describe the exodus because vv. 16-17 describe creation; i.e., there cannot be a transition from exodus to creation, even though just such a transition (in reverse order) is required for Westermann’s understanding of Isa 51:9-10. So John Day on Psalm 74: “The context clearly alludes to the creation of the world (cf. vv. 16-17), so that vv. 13-14 must allude to a mythological battle at this time.” Yet Day sees no problem with a blending of creation and exodus in Isa 51:9-10: “In this passage ... we have a blending of God’s victory over chaos at the creation, at the Exodus and in the coming deliverance from the Babylonian exile.”⁴⁶⁸ The traditional interpretation of Isa 51:9-10 as referring exclusively to the exodus does not have the problem which Westermann found amazing; namely, the application of “ideas taken straight from myth” being made to “the mortal foe of myth.” We proceed next to an analysis of the passage which Westermann connected to this one.

5.3 Evidence From Ps 74:12-17

5.3.1 Introduction

Psalm 74 is a congregational lament, the object of the lament being the destruction of the temple (vv. 3-8) and the continuing reproaches of God’s enemies against his people and his name (vv. 18-19, 22-23). By recalling God’s past mighty deeds in vv. 12-17, the psalmist presumably would like to see them repeated.

A lament of the complete destruction of the temple would presumably date the psalm sometime after the destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and before its

⁴⁶⁷Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 241-42.

⁴⁶⁸Day, *God’s Conflict*, 23, 92.

rebuilding. Yet alternative dates have been proposed, the most popular being the reign of Antiochus IV, on the basis of the absence of miracles and prophets (v. 9; cf. 1 Macc 4:46, 9:27, 14:41), not knowing “how long” the disaster would last (during the Babylonian exile they knew from Jeremiah that it would last 70 years), a possible pun on the derogatory title of Antiochus, “Epimenes” (v. 22; נָבֵל, “fool,” which the Targum applied to Antiochus Epiphanes), and a possible reference to synagogues (v. 8; מוֹעֲדֵי־אֵל, “meeting places of God”).⁴⁶⁹ Favoring the Babylonian exile as the setting is the apparent total destruction of the temple (vv. 3b-7), which did not occur under Antiochus.

Most of the features thought to favor a Maccabean era setting can be reconciled to a sixth century setting by assuming that the first group of exiles has returned to Israel by decree of Cyrus, but that the temple has not yet been built, and the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah has not yet commenced.⁴⁷⁰ Such a setting would explain the lamented absence of prophets and miracles. It also explains the lack of reference to the exile and its cause; these have returned from exile, and it was their fathers, not they, who caused it by their sins. The question “how long,” could be seen not as denying knowledge of the predicted length of captivity, but as being provoked by the fact that the 70 years has passed (or nearly so), but that the restoration has not been completed; the temple still lies in ruins, and the enemy still has the upper hand. The enemy of vv. 18-23, in this view, would then be the neighboring nations who opposed the rebuilding of the temple (and later, the walls of Jerusalem), not the Babylonians described in vv. 3-11. Isa 11:11-12:6 had predicted a regathering of exiles that would be like the day Israel came up from Egypt (11:16), with the returnees singing a song of joyous victory in words drawn from the song of victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea. But these returnees recall that song (Ps 74:2, 12) only in contrast to the present experience of continued oppression and domination of the enemy. As for the reference to the enemy’s burning of all the “synagogues,” it is an argument from silence to deny that such a general term could describe meeting places existing at the time of the destruction by the Babylonians, perhaps on the temple grounds (*BHS* notes that many mss. have “your meeting places” in v. 4, apparently referring to the temple; similarly, “your sanctuaries,” v. 8). The destruction of the temple is clearly described in a manner incompatible with the reign of Antiochus, and this evidence is more decisive than an argument from silence. Further, there is no identifiable reference to the abominations Antiochus performed.

For our purposes, we are mainly concerned with Ps 74:12-17:

וְאֱלֹהִים מְלָכִי מִקִּדְמוֹת	74:12	But God is my king from of old,
פָּעַל יְשׁוּעוֹת בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ		Who works salvation in the midst of the earth.
אַתָּה פִּוֶּרְתָּ בְעֹזֶךָ יָם	13	It was you who shattered the sea with your might,
שִׁבַּרְתָּ רִאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל־הַמַּיִם		You broke the heads of the dragons on the waters.

⁴⁶⁹ See the summary in W. A. Young, “Psalm 74: A Methodological and Exegetical Study,” Ph. D. diss., University of Iowa, 1974, 3, n. 3, 5-10. מוֹעֵד usually refers to feasts, assemblies, etc. (so LXX), but must here refer to something that can be burned (if the verb is right).

⁴⁷⁰ Similarly C. A. Briggs, but Briggs also sees glosses from the time of Antiochus IV (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* [ICC, 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907], 2.152).

אתה רצצת ראשי לויתן	14	It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan;
תתננו מאכל לעם לציים		You gave him as food to the desert creatures. ⁴⁷¹
אתה בקלעת מעין ונחל	15	It was you who broke open springs and streams;
אתה הוכשת נהרות איתן		You who dried up perennial rivers.
לך יום אף־לך לילה	16	Yours is the day, indeed yours is the night.
אתה הַכִּינֹת מֵאוֹר וְשֶׁמֶשׁ		It was you who made the moon ⁴⁷² and the sun,
אתה הַצַּבְתָּ כָּל־גְּבוּלוֹת אֶרֶץ	17	You who established all the boundaries of the earth.
לְיָזַר וְחָרַף אֶתְּךָ וְצִרְתָּם		Summer and harvest; you yourself formed them.

As is the case with Isa 51:9-10, there are two quite different ways in which these verses have been understood. The prevailing view for some 2000 years related vv. 13-14 to v. 12 which describes God as “my king from of old, worker of salvation in the midst of the earth,” and to v. 2, which also refers to ancient times, namely the exodus of Israel from Egypt (when the Lord became Israel’s king):

זְכֹר עֲדַתְךָ קְנִיַת קָדָם	74:2	Remember your congregation you created of old,
גְּאֻלְתְּ שִׁבְט נַחֲלֹתְךָ		(When) you redeemed the tribe of your inheritance
הֲרַצִּיּוֹן זֶה שְׁכֻנַּתְּ בּוֹ		(Remember) Mount Zion, where you dwell.

V. 2 can be seen as a petition for God to remember some things recorded in the Song of Moses, where they are found with similar phraseology:

Psalm 74:2		Exodus 15	
עֲדַתְךָ קְנִיַת קָדָם	(a) your congregation you created of old	עַם־זוֹ קְנִיַת (16)	the people you created
גְּאֻלְתְּ שִׁבְט נַחֲלֹתְךָ	(b) you redeemed the tribe of your inheritance	עַם־זוֹ גְּאֻלְתְּ (13) בְּהַר נַחֲלֹתְךָ (17)	the people you redeemed the mt. of your inheritance

⁴⁷¹ Literally, “to a people, to desert-dwellers.” “People” (עַם) refers figuratively to a class or group of animals in Joel 2:2 (locusts; “great and mighty people [or army];” cf. v. 5), and Prov 30:25-26 (ants, badgers; neither strong nor mighty folk). צִיִּים by itself refers to animals of some kind (associated with jackals and wolves) who live in ruins and desolate places (Isa 13:21; 23:13; 34:14; Jer 50:39). It is used of those who should bow down to Israel’s righteous king in Ps 72:9 (NASB, “nomads”), where it appears in parallel with “enemies,” so it is often emended to צָרִים, “enemies.” It is often emended in Ps 74:14 as well, either with the same meaning (לְעַם צִיִּים; BDB, 850; Day, *God’s Conflict*, 22, n. 57), or something quite different. Immanuel Löw’s suggestion עַם לְצִי (“sharks of the sea,” based on a hypothetical root) has been influential. See Young, “Psalm 74,” 101. Young renders the phrase עַם לְצִי (“people of the ship of the sea,” i.e., “sea-farers;” following Samuel Terrien). Young says his emendation is motivated by trying to find “a translation in keeping with the characteristics of Leviathan we have discovered” (i.e., a marine animal; p. 101).

⁴⁷² מֵאוֹר “luminary,” can mean the sun or the moon, but is usually thought to mean the moon here because it is paired with “sun.”

הַר־צִיּוֹן יְהִי שְׂכֻנָּתְךָ בּוֹ
 (c) Mt. Zion,
 in which you dwell

בְּהַר גְּבוּלְתֶּךָ (17)
 the mt. of your inheritance,
 מְכוּן לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ a place for you to dwell

Leviathan and Tannîn (here plural) were considered the equivalent of Rahab in Isa 51:9, names for the Egyptians, and the crushing of their heads was the destruction of the army of Egypt (or their chiefs [“heads”] in particular) in the Red Sea. Today the identification of the dragon is more frequently made with a mythological figure involved in a pre-creation battle with God, and so should not be related to historical accounts such as Genesis 3 or Exodus 14. I will argue that both of these views are in part correct and in part incorrect. The structure of this psalm has some bearing on this question, so that will be considered next.

5.3.2 The Structure of Psalm 74

R. Engle surveyed the various “past attempts to express the structure of Psalm74,” noting that “the history of interpretation of Psalm74 shows no consensus on its proper divisions.”⁴⁷³ We are not interested here in solving all structural questions, but rather in showing that vv. 12-17 are set apart to some extent as a unit, and to show the probable relationship (based on the overall structure) of these verses to v. 2, which clearly alludes to the exodus.

M. Weiss developed an outline based on the method he called “Total-Interpretation.” He saw the psalm as consisting of two main parts: vv. 1-3 is a three part introductory summary or prologue (*Eingangsstrophe*) which is followed by the main body consisting of three distinct strophes or stanzas corresponding to the three parts of the introduction. The three stanzas deal with present, past, and future, and are found encapsulated in the same order in the introduction. “The introduction is a reduced version of the main part.” Weiss saw v. 1 recapitulated in vv. 4-11, v. 2 in vv. 12-17, and v. 3 in vv. 18-23, as follows:⁴⁷⁴

Introduction	Lament over our distress	the present	verse 1
	Recollection of God’s might and favor	the past	2
	Call for God’s intervention	the future	3
Strophe I	The present (Description of our distress)		4-11
Strophe II	The past (Recollection of God’s mighty deeds)		12-17
Strophe III	The future (Call for God’s intervention)		18-23

⁴⁷³Richard Engle, “Psalm 74: Studies in Content, Structure, Context, and Meaning,” Th. D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1987, 162.

⁴⁷⁴Meir Weiss, *The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 286, 288, 290. Weiss was reacting to the outline given in Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 52-54, which is not an outline for Psalm 74, but an attempt to give a common outline for several lament psalms and then fit Psalm 74 into that outline.

The outline of the psalm developed by Young in his study was modified from Weiss' outline given in an earlier work in German:⁴⁷⁵

Prologue	1-3a	Lament	1	Now versus
		Hymnic Petition	2	Then
		Call for Theophany	3a	Future
Lament	3b-11	The Enemy	3b-8	Now
		Us	9	
		Elohim	10-11	versus
Hymnic Petition	12-17	The Cosmic King	12	Then
		The Cosmic Warrior	13-14	
		The Cosmic Creator	15-17	
		and sustainer		
Call for Divine Intervention	18-23	Consider	18	Future
		Do not forget	19	
		Consider	20	
		Do not forget	21	
		Arise	22	
		Do not forget	23	

It should be observed that in the psalm itself the time sequence is not followed as strictly as implied in the outlines. Both in the first verse of the prologue and the first stanza (“the present”), the past rejection is mentioned as the cause of the present crisis (vv. 1a and 3b-8). Also, the third stanza (“the future”) begins with a plea that God remember the present and/or past (“Remember how the enemy has mocked you, O Lord”).

Comparing how Weiss and Young treat v. 2 and its corresponding (second) stanza (vv. 12-17) we see that each has tried to equate the two in different ways. Young calls the second stanza a “hymnic petition” to relate it to the petition of v. 2. This is not accurate however, since vv. 12-17 are not a petition, but a remembrance of God’s past deeds. The petition is actually in vv. 18-23. Weiss on the other hand places both parts of the second pair in the past. This summary, too, is inaccurate; v. 2 mentions the past, but is better described as a petition that God remember the people he established in the past. The relationship between v. 2 and vv. 12-17 is more complex and is I think better stated as follows: while v. 2 petitions God to remember the past, in vv. 12-17 the psalmist himself remembers the past (thus reminds God of the past) in a hymn of praise.

P. Auffret has also studied the structure of the psalm. He agrees that there is an introduction with three following sections. He added observations about alliteration and word plays in vv. 12-17, further strengthening their identity as a unit, and also agreed that

⁴⁷⁵Young, “Psalm 74,” 143; Meir Weiss, “Die Methode der ‘Total-Interpretation,’” *VTSup* 22 (1972): 88-112.

they allude to v. 2. But he also sees multiple relationships among the different parts of the psalm; e.g., vv. 3b-9 and vv. 12-17 both have “in the midst of,” “earth,” and “all.” “Congregation” (עֲדָה) and “dwell” (שָׁכַן) of v. 2 correspond to “assembly” (מוֹעֵד; by assonance) and “dwelling” (מִשְׁכָּן) of vv. 3b-9. In theme, both vv. 3b-9 and vv. 12-17 speak of combat and God’s enemies, and the giving of Leviathan’s flesh for food alludes to the petition to not give over Israel to the enemy (v. 19). He also says that vv. 1-11 may be paralleled to vv. 18-23 (around vv. 12-17), and vv. 2-17 may be paralleled to vv. 12-21 (both including vv. 12-17).⁴⁷⁶

Weiss observed that the prologue is framed by an *inclusion* utilizing הַצֵּי (“utterly”) in vv. 1 and 3, and that this word is also found in the first and third strophes; vv. 10, 19; he also observed that the prologue begins with הֲמָּהּ (“why”) in the lament section, and the lament strophe ends with הֲמָּהּ (v. 11), for a kind of inter-strophe *inclusio*.⁴⁷⁷ The lament strophe structure proposed by Young (The Enemy/ Us/ Elohim) is essentially that of Westermann for a lament of the people (the foes/ we/ Thou, though Westermann does not use the same verses to get this outline.⁴⁷⁸ The hymnic strophe (vv. 12-17) starts with a reference to ancient times, as does the corresponding part of the prologue (v. 2; הֲמָּהּ both cases). Dahood noted that the hymn (vv. 12-17) is patterned on a sevenfold use of the pronoun הָאָתָּה; “It was you,” perhaps once for each of the seven heads of Leviathan (once each in vv. 13, 14, 16; twice in vv. 15 and 17).⁴⁷⁹ The petition strophe is framed by verse couplets 18/19 and 22/23 which both have “remember” in the first verse and “do not forget” in the second. These “remember” / “do not forget” couplets frame and highlight the central petition of v. 20, “Look to the covenant.”

If the structure of the psalm relates v. 2 to vv. 12-17, that would not prove that the second stanza is necessarily about the exodus; part of it (vv. 15-17) clearly is not. Weiss said that the relationship between the introduction and the stanzas was complementary, not strictly equivalent. In fact he said that since v. 2 was about the exodus, vv. 12-17 must be about something else (i.e., the pre-creation battle).⁴⁸⁰ Even so, such an interpretation is based on the thematic relationship between the exodus and creation. Because of this relationship, one cannot argue logically that because vv. 16-17 refer to the creation of the world, vv. 13-14 must also refer to the same thing. Even if one

⁴⁷⁶Pierre Auffret, “Essai sur la Structure Litteraire du Psaume LXXIV,” *VT* 33, 2 (1983): 129-148; especially 130, 137-39.

⁴⁷⁷Weiss, *The Method of Total Interpretation*, 285.

⁴⁷⁸Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 174.

⁴⁷⁹Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 205. John Day rejects such an allusion because he believes there were originally eight uses of הָאָתָּה (he adds one at the start of v. 12 to avoid the problem of the *waw* in direct address), and because not all of them occur in the portion mentioning the dragon (*God’s Conflict*, 24).

⁴⁸⁰Weiss, *The Method of Total Interpretation*, 292. Weiss’ opinion seems to be based on following a consensus of scholarly opinion rather than on following his own findings to their natural and logical conclusion.

does not accept the structural analysis presented here, and wants to see all of vv. 12-17 as relating to the creation of the world, it is very difficult to apply v. 12 to anything but the history of Israel (as we show below in the exegesis), so that to apply vv. 13-17 to creation, there must be a sharp transition at v. 13. V. 2 speaks of the exodus, v. 12 speaks of God's acts in history, while vv. 16-17 speak of creation: there must therefore be a transition somewhere, whether one finds it in v. 15 or v. 13. Further, if one denies that vv. 12-17 as a unit refer back to v. 2, it remains that v. 12 alludes to v. 2 if for no other reason than the use of מִלְּקָדֵם, which suggests some type of thematic relationship, even if the two ancient times are not identical.

5.3.3 Historical Approaches to Ps 74:12-17

V. 12. The traditional interpretation of v. 12 relates it specifically to the defeat of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, which would also enable us to see it (as expected from the structure) as an expansion on v. 2. We saw above the relationship between v. 12 and v. 2, and between v. 2 and Exodus 15. We can also see a relationship between v. 12 and Exodus 15:2a, 17b, 18: וַיְהִי־לִי לְיִשׁוּעָה (15:2a; And he has become my salvation), מְכוֹן יְהוָה יְמִלְכֵהּ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד (17b; A place for your dwelling you made, O LORD), יהוה ימלך לעלם ועד (18; The LORD will reign forever and ever). "God is my king from of old" is naturally understood of the time when the LORD became Israel's king. "Worker of deliverances in the midst of the earth" could of course be related to the most outstanding act of deliverance in Israel's history, the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod15:6, 12). The psalmist now also uses the singular "my king," which is suspicious to some interpreters, even though a close parallel is seen in Ps 44:5,⁴⁸¹ and changes from plural to singular are not extraordinary.⁴⁸² The psalmist's use of the singular is consistent with the interpretation of vv. 12-14 as a reference to the Red Sea crossing, since this usage is also found in the Song of Moses (Exod15:1b, 2; "I will sing to Yhwh, . . . my strength and my song . . . my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him; my father's God, and I will exalt him"). This song is also where it is first said, "the Lord reigns" (v. 18). "From of old" (מִלְּקָדֵם) also echoes the prologue, and refers to the same time, since it was at the exodus that God became Israel's king (Exod 15:18); or rather, it was at the exodus that Israel became a nation under God the king. To reaffirm the Song's "the Lord will reign forever and ever" is an expression of great faith, since it is affirmed not after a great victory, but after decades of apparent defeat, which involved the desecration and destruction of the King's temple. "Worker of deeds of deliverance" further describes "my king" and may be another allusion to the Song of Moses, in which Israel said, "Yah is my strength and song, and has become my salvation" (Exod15:2). If the immediate reference is to the

⁴⁸¹ אַתָּה־הוּא מִלְּכִי אֱלֹהִים צְוֹה יְשׁוּעוֹת יַעֲקֹב ("You are he who is my king, O God; command victories for Jacob); note also the use of לְקָדֵם for the time of the conquest and פעל for God's actions in history in v. 2 (1), as well as יְמִינָהּ in v. 4 (3).

⁴⁸² Hans-Joachim Kraus explained the singular on the basis that "an individual precentor performed the hymnic verses" (*Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* [trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989; orig. 1978], 99).

crossing of the Red Sea, Dahood is incorrect in interpreting “the midst of the earth” as Jerusalem. It usually simply means “on earth,” or “in the land.”⁴⁸³

Vv. 13-14. As mentioned above, the hymn is patterned around the sevenfold repetition of the pronoun הָאֱלֹהִים, which is found at the beginning of each of these two verses; “It was you who” did all these things, as opposed to the gods of the pagans, the gods of those who have lately prevailed over Israel. The traditional interpretation of vv. 13-14 is straightforward and understands יָם (sea) as יַם־סוּף (Red Sea), and פָּרַץ as “divide,” thus a description of God’s parting of the Red Sea, accomplished through כֹּחַ (your strength), i.e., the רִיחַ קְדִים עֹזֶה (strong east wind) which was used to part the sea (Exod14:21). Pharaoh and his host are pictured figuratively as the multi-headed Leviathan and as תַּנִּינִים, *tannînim*, serpents/dragons (or crocodiles). Their drowning in the sea is figuratively described as the crushing of their heads, or the heads refer to the military leaders.⁴⁸⁴ Hirsch took the figure Leviathan to be “the simile for a power in human society founded upon cunning and violence,” and related the heads to the “ancient Egyptian empire.” Hirsch also related Pharaoh’s defeat at the Red Sea as in part a just judgment on the one who relied so much on the waters of the Nile.⁴⁸⁵ The fate of the dead bodies washed up on the sea shore (Exod14:30; “Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the shore of the sea”) is to be eaten by the scavengers of the desert.⁴⁸⁶ The identification of Pharaoh with the מֶלֶךְ הַיָּם in Ezek 29:3; 32:2 facilitates the same identification in Ps 74:13-14,⁴⁸⁷ especially since both passages go on to say that Pharaoh the dragon will be cast up on an open field, left for the scavengers to eat (Ezek 29:4-5; 32:3-5); thus history repeats itself. As we have suggested, the setting of Psalm 74 is not long after Ezekiel.

Interpreters following the historical approach differ on the identification of the dragon. Before discovery of the Ugaritic material, it was thought that Leviathan and *tannînim* were animals (specifically, the crocodile) used figuratively for Pharaoh and/or Egypt.⁴⁸⁸ Payne still maintains this view: both Rahab and Leviathan in Scripture are

⁴⁸³Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 204. See Gen 45:6,48:16, Exod 8:18 (22), Deut 4:5, Isa 5:8, 6:12, 7:22, 10:23, 19:24. The first three references are to Egypt (or Egypt and Israel in the case of Gen 48:16), the last six to the land of Israel or Judah; never specifically to Jerusalem.

⁴⁸⁴*Mek.* 23:1; Briggs (*Psalms*, 2.155).

⁴⁸⁵Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Psalms* (2 vols; New York: Feldheim, 1973), 2.20.

⁴⁸⁶Briggs, *Psalms*, 2.155. J. B. Payne thinks this “may refer to the opportunity that the Israelites had for plundering the corpses of such of the Egyptian soldiers as were washed up on the shore of the Red Sea (*The Theology of the Older Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962], 139).

⁴⁸⁷Hirsch, *Psalms*, 2.20; Briggs, *Psalms*, 2.155. Ernst W. Hengstenberg anticipated the method of the mythological interpretation by denying any reference to Egypt because of the concern of the whole passage with God’s dominion over nature. He therefore rejected the common interpretation of his day which he said was based on Ezek 29:3-4, and said that the victory over the dragon was simply symbolic for God’s restraint of the sea (in a non-mythological sense; *Commentary on the Psalms* [3 vols.; Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, 1970], 2.424).

⁴⁸⁸Briggs, *Psalms*, 2.155.

simply the crocodile, sometimes poetically described (i.e., beyond the literal), which in turn serves as a symbol for Egypt.⁴⁸⁹ E. J. Young, however (Isa 51:9-10), says that although Rahab and Leviathan may have originally signified the powers of chaos at the creation, they are symbols of Egypt, whose mythological connotations are completely lost.⁴⁹⁰ Similarly E. Smick says “In Ps 74:12-14 the mythopoetic language about the many-headed Leviathan is historicized and used metaphorically to describe Yahweh’s great victory in history, at the Red Sea. The monster here is Egypt.”⁴⁹¹ In both of these views, the Scripture does not teach the reality of the existence of a supernatural being called Leviathan, or Rahab, or simply *tannînîm*. It is either an animal (or broad class of animals), or figurative or symbolic for God’s human enemies; a mythological figure which is used solely as a metaphor.

V. 15. In the historical approach, v. 15 refers to the miracle of bringing water like a river from the rocks in the wilderness (Exod 17:6; Num 20:8; Isa 48:21; Ps 78:15-16; 105:41; 114:8), and the drying up of the Jordan River (Josh 3:17); the plural may signify the Jordan and its tributaries. Thus there is historical progress from the previous verses; Red Sea, wilderness, to the beginning of the conquest.

Vv. 16-17. Here the historical approach diverges. Some interpreters continue the “march” into the promised land; God’s sovereignty over day and night, sun and moon, is invoked here (v. 16) because this sovereignty was vividly displayed at the battle of Gibeon; there never was such a day when God fought for his people. God made the sun and the moon, therefore he can (and does) control them (Josh 10:12-14).⁴⁹² V. 17 goes on to describe the boundaries set up by God for his people: whether tribal allotments or temperature zones.⁴⁹³ For the majority who see vv. 16-17 as not applying to history but to the creation, explanations are given for the transition from a recital of Israel’s history to a recital of the creation history. Hirsch said that in the context, which speaks of the oppression of the enemy, it was important to point out that God, who cast down Egypt, led Israel into freedom, and rules over the creation “will not allow man to live a life of wanton lawlessness and destructive caprice.”⁴⁹⁴ Briggs said vv. 16-17 are “passing from the divine power in history to the divine power over nature, both in creation and providence.”⁴⁹⁵ Thus the connection between salvation history and creation is that both

⁴⁸⁹ Payne, *Theology of the Older Testament*, 138-39.

⁴⁹⁰ Young, *Isaiah*, 3.313.

⁴⁹¹ Elmer B. Smick, “Mythopoetic Language in the Psalms,” *WTJ* 44 (1982): 90.

⁴⁹² Engle, “Psalm 74,” 101.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 103. Engle sees v. 16 as “a possible inference concerning Joshua’s long day,” while as a whole vv. 16-17 “concern natural phenomena under God’s control for the benefit of His people” (p. 196).

⁴⁹⁴ Hirsch, *Psalms*, 2.20.

⁴⁹⁵ Briggs, *Psalms*, 2.155.

are displays of God's power and rule. I do not regard these explanations as implausible, but my own explanation (a typological one given below) is somewhat different – salvation history is a record of a kind of creation.

5.3.4 *Creation-Mythological Approaches to Ps 74:12-17*

V. 12. In the creation-mythological approach (that which sees this entire passage as a reference to a pre-creation battle between God and an anti-creation chaos monster, followed by a brief account of creation), there is nothing in v. 12 which supports the interpretation adopted. Rather, there are several things that need to be explained away so that those holding this view can show that it may be interpreted mythologically, even if there is no positive evidence for such an interpretation in the verse itself. The meaning of “deeds of salvation” must be taken to refer to “victories” rather than salvation since there was no one around to deliver at the creation, unless we suppose that in the hypothetical Hebrew myth, the lesser gods were saved by Yahweh (similar to *Enuma Elish*). The reference to the site of these victories, “the midst of the earth” in a pre-creation context is explained as analogous to the “earth” in Gen 1:2; “the primaeval chaotic state” which existed “before God’s effective creative work began.” God is called the psalmist’s king from of old not because he became Israel’s king at the exodus, but because his “victory over the chaotic sea was associated with his assumption of effective kingship (cf. Ps. 93), just as was the case with Baal in the Ugaritic Baal – Yam myth and Marduk in the Babylonian *Enuma elish*.”⁴⁹⁶

Vv. 13-14. The key to interpreting these verses mythologically is identifying the dragon figure Leviathan not with the crocodile, but with the seven headed dragon Lîtan / Lôtân of Ugarit. Before the Ugaritic discoveries, however, Gunkel had related Leviathan to the dragon Tiamat from the *Enuma Elish* story. There, the slaying of Marduk preceded the creation of the world; in fact she was split in two halves and the upper half became the sky. Marduk then became king and Babylon his capital city. A temple was also built to honor him; similarly in the Baal story (except that the Ugaritic materials we have do not connect the battle with the creation of the world). This explains why the myth would be recalled in a lament of the destruction of the temple.⁴⁹⁷ Discovery of the Ugaritic material made the identification of Leviathan with the dragon figure more certain in that (as we have already seen) the Ugaritic name is similar (*ltn* for Hebrew לוֹיִתָן), the description of him as “evil/primeval serpent” is almost identical in both languages, and the Ugaritic dragon is said to have seven heads, explaining the “heads” in vv. 13-14. Another name for the dragon (though he is not actually called a dragon) in Ugaritic literature is “Yam” (Sea), which means that v. 13a can also be seen as referring to the defeat of the dragon: “sea” is in parallel with the “dragon(s)” of v. 13b, and the dividing of the sea mentioned there can be seen as the attack on Sea, the dragon, rather than the dividing of the Red Sea.

Somewhat problematic for the creation-mythological interpretation is the reference to the giving of the dragon’s corpse to be eaten by scavengers of the desert.

⁴⁹⁶Day, *God’s Conflict*, 23-24. Similarly, John A. Emerton, “‘Spring and Torrent’ in Psalm LXXIV 15,” *VTSup* 15 (1965): 130-33.

⁴⁹⁷Day, *God’s Conflict*, 24.

Gunkel drew a parallel to the disgrace of Tiamat's corpse, and said that the myth behind the psalm assumes that the pre-creation world was sea and desert, but he did not explain why the animals are mentioned in a pre-creation context.⁴⁹⁸ Day says this "need not imply that the battle occurred after Yahweh's effective work of creation had taken place."⁴⁹⁹ This point may be conceded; conceivably, the dragon could serve as food for creatures yet to be created.⁵⁰⁰ But there is no analogy to this feature in the Ugaritic material, and Day's line of argument depends on the equation of biblical Leviathan with Ugaritic *Ltn* due to their similar epithets. Consequently this appears to be more evidence that needs to be explained away. Mention of a lack of burial for Egyptians, and the leaving of their bodies to be eaten by scavengers would be significant because of their belief that care of the body of the dead (particularly, embalming) was important for their afterlife. Anubis, the Egyptian god of the dead and of embalming, was identified with the jackal. Deprivation of embalming and burial would thus be another judgment on the Egyptians and their gods.

The Ugaritic stories in another significant respect are problematic for the view that Ps 74:13-14 (and other passages) refer to a pre-creation battle myth, and that is simply that in these myths there is no connection to the creation of the world. Baal defeats Yam and attains the kingship over the gods and builds a palace for himself: only a few lines after the defeat of Yam are missing where the account of the creation of the world "should" be narrated (if this were a creation myth).⁵⁰¹

Since Anat also claims to have defeated the dragon, whereas Baal-Yam ascribes the victory only to Baal, and because Yam and Leviathan are never explicitly equated

⁴⁹⁸Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 43. The presumed myth (a variant of *Enuma Elish*) would have God shatter the heads of the sea monster and throw him from the sea to the land, which was desert, thus disgracing his corpse.

⁴⁹⁹Day, *God's Conflict*, 23.

⁵⁰⁰Wakeman refers to an Indian myth in which Vritra, the serpent lying upon the mountains is defeated by Indra, the separator of heaven and earth. Vritra's body then serves as food (for Indra, not for animals). Wakeman, *God's Battle*, 10.

⁵⁰¹Day, *God's Conflict*, 9-10. Day also notes that the proposal that the Baal-Yam text deals with creation not in the sense of origins but in the sense of order and control over nature "does not solve the problem with which we are concerned here, since, as a matter of fact, the Old Testament does associate the conflict with chaos with ultimate origins." The argument that the Baal-Yam battle deals not with ultimate origins but with ordering of the cosmos (thus may still be termed a creation account) is made by Loren A. Fisher ("Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *VT* 15 [1965]: 314-24), Frank M. Cross (*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 120), and Jakob H. Grønbaek ("Baal's Battle with Yam – A Canaanite Creation Fight," *JSOT* 33 [1985]: 27-44). Against the view that the Old Testament combines the Canaanite and Babylonian traditions, Day remarks that "the monster terminology used is so definitely Canaanite," that this hypothesis should not be accepted except as a last resort. Day also notes the argument that *Enuma Elish* was west Semitic in origin and thus could be used as evidence for an original connected with creation. Since W. G. Lambert now places its composition about 1100 B.C., a date which "makes an Amorite origin much less likely," and the attribution of Tiamat's defeat seems to have been taken over from Ninurta, and elements of Marduk's victory have been taken from Ninurta's victory over Anzu, Day suggests "a common intellectual background" as the reason for the similarities between *Enuma Elish* and Baal-Yam (*God's Conflict*, 10-12).

(and in one text apparently differentiated), and for several other reasons, Day follows the suggestion that there was another myth of the defeat of Leviathan by Baal and Anat, the details of which are not known to us, but which may have involved creation.⁵⁰² To adopt such an understanding, “the references to the heavens and Lebanon (*KTU* 1.83.6, 10) and the earth (*KTU* 1.82.2) as already existing would have to be taken as referring to them in their primordial chaotic state.”⁵⁰³ The strongest evidence for Day and others relating the Canaanite myth to creation is actually not anything in the Canaanite texts but rather the Old Testament: “It must be strongly emphasized that the fact that the Old Testament so frequently uses the imagery of the divine conflict with the dragon and the sea in association with creation, when this imagery is Canaanite, leads one to expect that the Canaanites likewise connected the two themes.”⁵⁰⁴

V. 15. H. W. F. Saggs saw the mention of rivers in v. 15 as evidence against the interpretation of vv. 13-14 as a battle with the waters preceding creation. If one tries to get around this by viewing them as another designation of the primordial waters, then they have been demythologized between vv. 13-14 and v. 15, and are from “quite a different stratum of belief.”⁵⁰⁵ J. Emerton had already tried to avoid this problem by seeing v. 15 as transitional. Emerton relates v. 15 to creation because such a reference is primary to vv. 13-14 (though he does not rule out an allusion to the exodus), but he does not think that it describes the creation of springs and streams because the “positive work of creation” does not begin until v. 16 (following the order in Ps 89:12 [11]). On the basis of the cleaving open of springs to release water at the start of the flood (Gen 7:11), and of the possibility (based on extra-biblical citations) that these same springs were used to drain water back off the earth at the end of the flood, he suggests that v. 15a refers to the creation of openings which allowed the draining of water from the earth which then allowed dry land to appear. V. 15b is then in synonymous parallel: the perennial streams are simply the ocean waters which are dried up where the land appears. He takes “stream” in its usual sense; while water was running into the depths through springs, “some ran off the land by rivers to the sea.” V. 15 “forms the transition from the attack on the chaos described in verses 12-14 to the positive work of creation in verses 16 f.”⁵⁰⁶

Vv. 16-17. In the mythological approach, these verses are a straightforward narration of creation (sun and moon, the earth’s geographical boundaries or temperature zones, summer and winter) which followed the battle with the chaos dragon enemy of God. Three verbs of creation are used in the four lines (יצר, הציב, הכין). There is thus a

⁵⁰²Ibid., 12-18. Day cites J. C. de Moor and S. E. Loewenstamm as advocates of this view (13, n. 30).

⁵⁰³Ibid., 17, n. 42.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰⁵H. W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone Press, 1978), 55.

⁵⁰⁶Emerton, “Spring and Torrent,” 122, 125-29. His interpretation “is advanced very tentatively, with a consciousness of the uncertainties involved” (p. 124).

natural progression in thought throughout vv. 12-17: vv. 12-14 describe the victory over the dragon, v. 15 forms a transition, and vv. 16-17 describe the creation of the world.

While the mythological interpretation appears to have nothing to do with the historical interpretation, its adherents acknowledge that vv. 12-14 may in fact allude to the exodus events as well as to a pre-creation battle. That the exodus allusion is secondary is shown by the fact that creation is prominent at the end of the passage.

5.3.5 *Creation-Metaphorical Approach to Ps 74:12-17*

The creation-metaphorical approach sees the defeat of Leviathan as a metaphor, not for any event in Israel's history, but for creation, in a way that is consistent with Genesis 1. Thus while Leviathan is an anti-creation dragon in pagan mythology, the pagan mythology only functions "as a helpful metaphor to describe Yahweh's creative activity."⁵⁰⁷ Leviathan is thus a metaphor for the chaotic state described in Gen 1:2, which God "overcame" when he brought order to the universe. This view is a combination of the two preceding views described above. It is like the strictly historical approach in viewing Leviathan as a mere metaphor, not a supernatural being, and it is like the creation-mythological approach in seeing the defeat of the dragon as a description of creation.

5.3.6 *Historicized Myth Approach to Ps 74:12-17*

Against the view that Psalm 29 is a "Canaanite psalm," Carola Kloos argues that it is completely Israelite in origin, and was composed because Israel wanted to have a Baal of its own. The evidence is that the psalm portrays the Lord as being "against" (not "upon," or "over") the mighty waters (מַיִם רַבִּים; v. 3c).⁵⁰⁸ The desire of Israel to have a Baal of its own resulted in the adoption of the myth of the defeat of Yam as an historical occurrence – the drying up of the Red Sea. The myth has therefore become historicized.⁵⁰⁹ Kloos argues that Exodus 15 does in fact describe the drying up of the sea, and that the song is (on the basis of language used) a very early poem. Since the drying up of Yam was "the" punishment inflicted on him by Baal, it is evident that Israel used the Baal – Yam myth to construct an event in history featuring this punishment as an historical event (the drying up of the Red Sea). Kloos thinks this is a simpler explanation than the "mythicized history" approach which sees an historical kernel of truth in the Red Sea event which was later embellished using the outlines of the myth of the defeat of Sea.⁵¹⁰ In this approach, Ps 74:13-14 uses the language of the defeat of the dragon Sea

⁵⁰⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, *Creation and Chaos: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Biblical Cosmogony* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 13.

⁵⁰⁸ Carola Kloos, *Yhwh's Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 52. The translation of the ambiguous preposition to portray hostile action against the waters (thus Sea) is accompanied by an estimation of the overt hostility against nature on Canaanite territory (God's thunder tearing apart the cedars of Lebanon, etc.) as mere "fright of nature" (*ibid.*, 60).

⁵⁰⁹ "In my opinion, the Red Sea story originates in the myth of the combat with Sea, which has been 'historicized', i.e. turned into pseudo-history, by the Israelites" (*ibid.*, 11).

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 171-76.

(which is not connected to creation) to describe the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. There is no causal connection between the battle described and creation, since the passage assumes the existence of animals and rivers.⁵¹¹

5.3.7 Typological Approaches to Ps 74:12-17⁵¹²

Two typological approaches may be distinguished, although these approaches may also be combined. In one, vv. 13-17 may allude purposefully to two or more distinct events with the same language; events which are the same “type” of event. H. -J. Kraus says the question of whether these verses refer to the origin of the world or to Israel’s salvation history “is hardly a matter of an either-or.” He thinks that they refer primarily to God as creator, but “undoubtedly also conceptions of ancient Israelite salvation history are present in vv. 13ff.”⁵¹³ B. W. Anderson likewise says “in the last analysis we are not forced to choose” whether the passage speaks of Israel’s *Urzeit* or the creation, “for the psalmist’s use of creation imagery carries overtones from Israel’s historical experience: the victory at the Reed Sea, the crossing of the Jordan, and the entry into the Promised Land.”⁵¹⁴

Another typological approach sees a transition in thought from one verse to another, so that instead of seeing plural references in the same statement, first one idea is expressed, then another idea which is typologically related. As an example, we have already noted that Westermann finds a “characteristic link” between creation and redemption in Isa 51:9-10, a link which he also finds present in Ps 74:12-17. While he would agree generally with the mythical approach cited above for vv. 13-17, he applies v. 12 to the history of Israel. He regards v. 12 as a summary confession of trust in God’s past saving actions in history, which introduces the psalm of praise of God as creator (vv. 13-17): “God’s activity in creation, however, is depicted as entirely analogous to his intervention in history.”⁵¹⁵ Using Westermann’s own words, we could also call his approach “analogical.”

There are good reasons for assigning v. 12 to the history of Israel, rather than to a pre-creation battle with a dragon. We noticed above that there were three things that must be “explained away,” to apply v. 12 to such a context: the regular meaning of שִׁינָה as an

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 73, where Kloos also lists other authors who deny a connection between creation and the battle with the dragon.

⁵¹² The authors I quote here (except B. W. Anderson, who uses it in a different context; see below) do not use the word “typological,” but I use it to describe my own approach which is similar to others described in this section.

⁵¹³ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 99.

⁵¹⁴ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos* (New York: Association Press, 1967), 108. Anderson then discusses Isa 51:9-11 and notes that the crossing of the sea became typologically associated with the return from exile (p. 109).

⁵¹⁵ Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 56, 59. In his table comparing the structure of lament psalms 74, 79, and 80, Westermann puts Ps 74:12 alongside Ps 79:13: “We are your people, and the sheep of your pasture,” and Ps 80:9 (8): “You brought a vine out of Egypt” (54).

act of deliverance accomplished by God for his people; the phrase “in the midst of the earth;” and the reference to God becoming the psalmist’s king at the time to which he is referring. In the first two of these, the mythological interpretation must assume unique meanings or uses for the word or phrase. Although מִן־הַיָּמִים might suitably be used to refer to the time prior to or at creation (see Mic5:1, Prov8:22-23), nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is יָשַׁע or פָּעַל (whether verb or noun) used to refer to the creation of the universe. The root יָשַׁע

is reserved almost exclusively for theological usage ... with Yahweh [or his appointed representative] as subject *and his people as object* ... It is not one of the regular terms used for the exodus [as opposed to the crossing of the sea] ... but it is applied 3 times to the victory of [i.e., over] the Egyptians at the Red Sea⁵¹⁶ (emphasis added).

The three references are Exod14:13, 30; 15:2, and such usage harmonizes nicely with the view that the psalmist thinks in vv. 13-14 of the Red Sea deliverance. Proponents of the mythological view of v. 12 either take the noun in the sense of “victories” by God on his own behalf (over the dragon), or else it signifies deliverance of the lesser gods over whom the Lord then became king (as Marduk in *Enuma Elish*; presumably then its appearance in the Hebrew canon is an oversight). As for the argument that God’s kingship is connected with creation, not the exodus, such a point overlooks the fact that the psalmist is not celebrating God as king of the universe, but rather as *his* king (speaking for Israel). If kingship is connected with creation, then God’s kingship over Israel is connected with his creation of Israel accomplished at the exodus – how can he be Israel’s king before there is any Israel? This view is strengthened by the relationship of v. 12 to v. 2, which is an unambiguous reference to the exodus and the establishment of Israel as the people of God. Even if one argues that these two verses are not talking about the same thing or the same time, the connection between the two verses made evident by the structure of the psalm and the verbal allusion (מִן־הַיָּמִים; ancient times), suggests a thematic (typological) link which makes it possible to associate the time of the exodus with the time of creation; if such a link is possible between vv. 2 and 12, then it is also possible elsewhere, i.e., between v. 12 and v. 13 (Westermann), or vv. 13-14 and vv. 16-17 (my suggestion).

I thus believe Westermann has placed the transition from history to creation at the wrong place; in his view, v. 12 refers to God’s works of deliverance for Israel, but then the psalmist does not list any of these acts. I would place the transition at v. 16, and I would follow Young who says that v. 15 is intentionally ambiguous between allusions to Israel’s wilderness experience and the crossing of the Jordan on the one hand, and the typologically related event, the flood of Noah on the other.⁵¹⁷

Emerton noted the use of בָּקַע (cleave) to describe the opening up of the springs at the time of the flood (Gen 7:11; see above), and suggested they could also refer to their being opened for draining of the waters prior to creation. The suggested meaning for “springs” (מְצוּדֹת) is thus unique in the Bible: holes by which water drains into the earth. It

⁵¹⁶J. F. Sawyer, *TDOT*, 6.444-45.

⁵¹⁷Young, “Psalm 74,” 103-04. Young likewise says vv. 12-14 may refer both to primeval times as well as the time of the exodus (pp. 93, 98).

must be questioned, however, whether Emerton has adequately explained the reference to cleaving of “torrents.” In the historical explanation, these torrents are the waters coming out of the rocks split open for God’s people; he cleaves open rocks as torrential springs. Emerton says they are not connected with the springs just mentioned, but are an alternate method by which the waters were drained when the dry land formed.⁵¹⁸ In that case, what does it mean that these torrents, or streams, were “split,” since they must be the second object of the verb? Emerton does not explain, but the idea of gushing springs from the rocks split open in the wilderness is an adequate explanation, as in Ps 78:15-16: “He split open rocks in the wilderness, and gave them to drink as from the great deep. He led forth streams from the rock, and made water come down like rivers.” Also Ps 114:8b; God turned “the flint into a spring of water (מַעְיִן־מַיִם) and Ps 105:41; “He opened the rock and water flowed; it ran in dry places as a river (נָהַר).” At the same time, v. 15a uses the same verb and noun as in Gen 7:11; an allusion to the flood would not be surprising since as we have seen it is typologically related to the Red Sea deliverance, and it was the same rod of Moses which struck the rock and was used to divide the sea.

Proponents of the creation-mythological approach to the entire passage admit that vv. 13-14 could have a secondary allusion to the exodus events,⁵¹⁹ an admission which seems to me to be fatal to the argument for a necessary connection between vv. 13-14 and a story about the creation of the world. To admit a dual allusion is to admit there is some kind of relationship between the creation story and the Red Sea crossing. Whatever that relationship is, it could account for a description of the slaying of the dragon solely as an allusion to the defeat of the Egyptians at the sea, followed later by a reference to creation. They assert that the creation myth must be the primary reference in vv. 13-14 because of the allusions to creation in vv. 16-17. It seems to me, however, that v. 16 proves too much in this regard. For this verse not only speaks of the creation of light-bearers, but does so in a manner that seems to be based on a meditation on the Genesis 1 creation account.⁵²⁰ V. 16a mentions day and night, and God’s ownership of them, while v. 16b mentions the luminaries and their creation. This sequence follows that found in Genesis 1 where light and darkness are separated in connection with the first day, and are named day and night (indicating God’s ownership, as Ps 74:16a mentions), while the light-bearers (Ps 74:16b uses the same word) were created and put in the sky in connection with the fourth day. If the psalmist alludes to the Genesis 1 anti-mythical creation account, where the “great monsters” (הַתַּיִמִּים הַגְּדֹלִים) which swarm in the sea (Gen 1:21) are singled out for mention as part of God’s good creation, and where there are no enemies, how can he also describe in vv. 13-14 a mythological pre-creation battle with these monsters which Genesis 1 implicitly denies? Similarly, the allusion in v. 15a to Gen

⁵¹⁸Emerton, “Spring and Torrent,” 129.

⁵¹⁹Day, *God’s Conflict*, 23; Emerton, “Spring and Torrent,” 123.

⁵²⁰So Young: “The picture of the cosmos presupposed in these two verses (especially vv. 16 and 17b) relates closely to Genesis 1” (“Psalm 74,” 106).

7:11 is an allusion to the putative P document – the same source as Genesis 1, and therefore anti-mythological.⁵²¹

Likewise vv. 16a and 17b may allude back to the end of the flood, where God says: מַזְרֵיץ וְחָרֵף יוֹם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ; “summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease” (Gen 8:22). This passage is supposed to be from J. Proponents of the mythological approach assume the psalmist is citing a hypothetical Hebrew creation *Chaoskampf* (war with the chaos monster) myth which is similar to or virtually identical to a likewise hypothetical Canaanite myth (hypothetical because it is not reflected in the Ugaritic corpus), all the while there are demonstrable allusions in these verses to non-hypothetical (i.e. biblical) passages which are plainly incompatible with the hypothetical myths. Such a view seems, to say the least, unlikely.

The specific allusions to the creation account in v. 16, however, should not rule out any connection between this verse and salvation history. We have seen that light and darkness figured in the crossing of the Red Sea as part of a portrayal of that event as a reenactment of the first three days of creation; recalling that historical narrative would therefore recall the creation. Since it is also a reenactment of Noah’s flood on a smaller scale, we should not be surprised at allusions to that event, either. Aside from the fact that there are thematic similarities between creation and flood (the flood involves re-creation), and between flood and Red Sea crossing (drowning of the wicked, salvation of the righteous), I am suggesting a typological relationship based on Gen 3:15. Gen 3:15 is a promise of a new creation, the righteous seed, and the destruction of the wicked one and his seed as an outcome of divinely placed enmity between the two. The idea of new creation thus thematically links fulfillments of Gen 3:15 to the original creation. The fulfillments of the predicted destruction of the wicked would be typologically linked together also. It follows that the crossing of the Jordan, together with the conquest of the promised land, which involves the annihilation of the wicked seed of Canaan (cursed son of Ham and brother of Egypt [= Mizraim, Gen 10:6]), would be another fulfillment of Gen 3:15 and would therefore be typologically linked to creation, flood, and the crossing of the sea. This makes the mention of the drying up of the rivers in connection with the Jordan (v. 15b), which signalled the start of the conquest, quite natural, even aside from the obvious similarity to the drying up of the Red Sea. It would also be reasonable to see a dual reference in v. 16; to the creation of light and the luminaries, and to the miracle at Gibeon. Further use of creation-exodus typology in the conquest will be discussed in the next chapter.

The typological approach I am suggesting here differs from the traditional historical approach in two respects, one of which is minor, the other more significant. The minor difference is that the historical approach depends on a general logical relationship between salvation and creation; both are demonstrations of God’s power. I believe that this is true, as far as it goes, but I have tried to show that the Scripture itself demonstrates the typological interpretation (by the narration of the flood which obviously recalls the creation account, and by the narrative of the birth and infant rescue of Moses,

⁵²¹Source critics agree that the verse is from P, since Gen 7:11 begins with chronological data supposedly characteristic of P; see, e.g., Skinner, *Genesis*, 148; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 395.

for example), and that in this typological relationship, salvation is a kind of creation, not simply another display of God's power.

Secondly, as mentioned above, the traditional historical approach denied that the dragon is, as elsewhere throughout the ancient Near East, a supernatural foe of God. I believe that this denial is motivated by a mistaken impression that admitting the supernatural character of the dragon would lead to the conclusion that the biblical writers believed the myths of their neighbors (as certainly many of their countrymen did, according to the prophets). As J. Oswalt expressed it, "these accounts are being used in a literary way and not in any sense as an affirmation of their value as a way of thinking."⁵²² I would follow Delitzsch and Kline (see §§ 1.8.4, 1.8.28) who see the biblical writers as recognizing remnants of true theology (specifically, the fall narrative and the curse on the serpent) in the figure of the dragon enemy of God, and thus the appropriateness of calling the cursed serpent by the name(s) of this dragon. In this respect it is significant that the writers advocating the creation-mythological approach pay little or no attention to Gen 3:15 in developing their theses. In addition to Gen 3:15 explaining the figure of the dragon, it also explains why he is an anti-creator dragon, since Gen 3:15 is the promise of a new creation. The nations could view the slaying of the dragon as a past event associated with a creation on the basis of the flood being viewed by Noah and his sons as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15, this tradition then being developed in various pagan directions, while retaining some truth among their perversions.

The view which identifies the dragon figure with the serpent of Genesis 3 is similar to the mythological interpretation which sees the myth as not necessarily incompatible with monotheism. Day, for example, says that if the dragon and the sea are viewed not as gods but as demonic forces, the myth is compatible with monotheism. He points to the figure of the Seraphim (see my discussion in § 2.3.5): "If belief in snake-like angels seems to have been compatible with monotheism (cf. the seraphim of Is. 6), might not the same have been true of comparable demons?"⁵²³ Similarly, Gunkel's moral description of Leviathan is not unlike the New Testament conception of Satan: "einer finsternen, Gott widrigen Gewalt."⁵²⁴ The major difference between the mythological view and that which I am presenting here is that the mythological view places the conflict prior to or as an integral part of the creation of the universe, whereas I believe the Bible connects it with the new creation promised in Gen 3:15.

The creation-metaphorical approach, being a combination of the historical approach and the creation-mythological approach, shares some of their problems.

⁵²²J. N. Oswalt, "Recent Studies in Old Testament Eschatology and Apocalyptic," *JETS* 24 (1981): 295. Oswalt is discussing the use of Leviathan in Isa 27:1. In n. 49 (same page) he concludes the same for Leviathan in Psalm 74.

⁵²³Day, *God's Conflict*, 189.

⁵²⁴Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 59. Similarly the רַהַבִּים (Ps 40:5 [4]), which Gunkel understands as a plural of Rahab and a designation of idols, "sind böse, feindliche Wesen" (p. 40), and the dragon in the sea (Job 7:12) is "ein feindliches, unheimliches Wesen" (p. 70). He also speaks of the dragon's "Weltregiment, Hoffart und Lästerung" (p. 76).

Leviathan is described the same way in Isa 27:1 (evil, twisted serpent, etc.) as in Ugaritic literature, so it is difficult to see how Israelites would see him as a mere metaphor (whether of history or creation), without actual existence, in Psalm 74. The creation-metaphorical approach has the same problems as the creation-mythological approach in trying to explain all of Ps 74:12-17 as applying to creation: it must explain away the reference to God's acts of salvation for Israel (v. 12), and the references to the drying up of the Jordan, the wilderness experience, and Noah's flood (vv. 15-17).

Another problem with this view is related to the main hermeneutical issue of this dissertation: namely, how does one arrive at certainty in figurative interpretation? Because one can conceive of someone describing Genesis 1 poetically as God crushing the heads of a seven-headed dragon does not mean that this is a legitimate interpretation. It must be asked, what indication in the Bible is there of such an interpretation? The presence of allusions to creation in Psalm 74 cannot be an indication, since there are also allusions to the flood, drying of the Jordan, and journey in the wilderness along with some mention of creation, and there is an unambiguous reference to the exodus in v. 2. To interpret the slaying of Leviathan as a metaphor of creation is to confuse the original creation which was very good with the new creation necessitated by the fall of man into sin, and it would lead us to dismiss the similarity in language of Ps 74:13-14 with Gen 3:15d as mere coincidence. It is easy to see the crushing of the heads of a seven-headed dragon as a poetic celebration of a fulfillment of Gen 3:15d, but it is more like allegory to relate such an event to Genesis 1. Further, since the Bible itself associates the exodus typologically with creation and the flood (as in the narrative of the birth of Moses), the typological explanation explains the references to creation along with the defeat of the dragon.

Finally, the creation-metaphorical approach assumes uniformity in the ancient world in relating the victory over the dragon to creation of the universe. This uniformity is certainly overstated with respect to Leviathan, for whom there is no evidence in Canaanite mythology for calling him an "anti-creation monster." As for Rahab, that name is not yet known outside the Bible, so nothing of an "anti-creation" role can be assumed for him either. And, as we shall see below, the crossing of the Red Sea carries polemical overtones of the Egyptian sun-god's victory over the wicked serpent Apophis, a battle which is not connected to creation in Egyptian mythology.

While most of the attention to the dragon figure has focused on the equation or comparison of the Canaanite *Lîtan* or Babylonian *Tiamat* with the biblical *Leviathan-Rahab*, the connection of the dragon battle with the crossing of the Red Sea would suggest the possibility that there is an Egyptian connection as well. The Egyptians had a curse on the serpent Apophis,⁵²⁵ which was performed daily in the temple of Amon-Re to aid in the victory of the sun god Re over the serpent who tried to prevent his rising every morning, and who threatened to destroy his vessel as it sailed into the netherworld at sunset.⁵²⁶ In this curse, Apophis is "that evil enemy," of whom Re says,

⁵²⁵“The most famous and most important of all Egyptian demons was the huge serpent-god Apophis (‘3pp)” (Samuel A. B. Mercer, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* [London: Luzac, 1949], 192).

⁵²⁶“The sun's enemy in Egypt is darkness, symbolized by the snake Apophis. Every night and at every dawn this antagonist is subdued” (Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation* [New York:

I have commanded that a *curse* be cast upon him; I have consumed his bones; I have annihilated his soul in the course of every day; I have cut his vertebrae at his neck, severed with a knife which hacked up his flesh and pierced into his hide. ... His children are not. ... His egg shall not last, nor shall his seed be knit together. ... He is fallen and overthrown.⁵²⁷

The curse is also usable against the enemies of Pharaoh, whose names may be written down along with Apophis on the curse which is to be written out every day, trampled on with the left foot, and burned in the fire. Thus, unlike the Ugaritic material, but like the biblical curse on the serpent (as I am interpreting it), human enemies are connected with the wicked serpent opponent of God, and both are to be crushed under foot. The god Seth, riding in the vessel with Re, is also involved in repulsing Apophis; he makes a Gen 3:15-like declaration to Apophis: “Your head is crushed, O Groundling.”⁵²⁸ The connection between the serpent and Egypt’s human enemies can also be seen in a legend of the Ptolemaic period which refers to Semite invaders as “children of Apophis.”⁵²⁹

The account of the crossing of the Red Sea, however, is highly polemical against the Egyptian identification of Pharaoh as the sun god’s ally, and of the connection between Pharaoh’s opponents and the wicked serpent. At dusk and at daybreak, the two times in which Re and Pharaoh are to be victorious over the serpent and the enemies of Pharaoh, God and Israel are victorious over the Egyptians. First, Pharaoh is prevented at sundown from attacking the Israelites; the light shines on the Israelites, not on those who worship the sun god, who are immobilized in darkness. Then, at daybreak, when Re is to rise and deliver Pharaoh from his enemies, the sun did rise but the Egyptians are drowned in the sea. Both Egyptian and Israelite theology, then, would identify the Egyptians with the wicked serpent. It is also interesting to read a new Kingdom period curse / blessing on those responsible for maintaining a temple of Amon-Re, and compare in light of it the fate of the Egyptians under Pharaoh with that of Moses, faithful over the “house” of the God of Israel (Num 12:7), and of Joshua, his successor, who passed through the sea. If they do not maintain the temple,

they shall become like the snake Apophis on the New Years’s Day. They shall be drowned in the ocean, which shall conceal their bodies; they shall not receive the funeral services of the just. ... They shall be slain on the day of destruction. ... If, however, you

Columbia University Press, 1948], 132). The battle is depicted in New Kingdom era pictures (ibid.). Adolf Erman cites hymns to the morning and evening sun (from the *Book of the Dead*, in the New Kingdom period) which celebrate the sun-god’s victory over his foes; the evening hymn explicitly mentions Apophis (*The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* [London: Methuen, 1927], 188-89).

⁵²⁷ John A. Wilson, “The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation,” *ANET*, 7, and nn. 18, 19. “The present manuscript is dated about 310 B.C., but the text makes a deliberate attempt to preserve a language two thousand years older than that date. There is no doubt that the basic material derives from a relatively early period” (p. 6).

⁵²⁸ Wakeman, *God’s Battle*, 15, from *Book of the Dead*, chap. 39, trans. R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 209.

⁵²⁹ Sayce, *Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, 225.

shall take care to protect the temple of Kak, ... Honours shall be heaped upon you. ...
Your bodies shall rest in the netherworld after a life of 110 years.⁵³⁰

(Cf. Deut 34:7; Josh 24:29).

R. Dalman wrote of the anti-Egyptian polemical nature of the sea crossing event, including the victory that Re and Pharaoh were to have at dawn (without connecting it to Apophis, however), and also described several other ways in which the sea crossing is polemical against Egyptian religious beliefs. Egyptians envisioned the dead carrying on their existence in estates granted by Osiris in a “field of reeds.” At death they would travel along a route of 24 chambers filled with uncrossable swampland, which have pathways which only those who know the right magic spells can follow to the eastern horizon and god’s dwelling place, where they feast with him and live forever; the wicked, however, drown in the swamps. Pharaoh in particular was supposed to have power over supernatural fire, and Re was supposed to rise at dawn to destroy his enemies.⁵³¹ The actual experience of the Egyptians, however, was to be drowned in the sea at dawn, after being stopped by the pillar of cloud and fire. Dalman also cites Coffin Spell 162 which refers to the east wind which “is opened and a fair path is made for Rē that he may go forth on it.” The east wind is “the breath of life ... that I [Pharaoh] may live by means of it.”⁵³²

Kloos saw Exodus 15 as confirming the view that the crossing of the Red Sea was pseudo-history inspired by the Baal-Yam myth (see above). The evidence in Exodus 15 is that “the” punishment of Yam, namely, being dried up, also happened to the Red Sea (Exod 15:8; “the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea”). Dalman notes from the narrative portion (Exod 14:16, 21, 26-27) the role of the rod of Moses as an analogy to the war club fashioned by the divine craftsmen for use by Baal against Yam, as well as the idea of the holy mountain in both.⁵³³ But Kloos does not explain how the human enemies mentioned in Exodus 15 (i.e., Egyptians, Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, the major focus in the song) relate to the myth. Such a focus is easily explainable on the basis of the identification of human enemies with the wicked serpent of Gen 3:15, and partially preserved in Egyptian theology. Psalm 74 as a whole is also concerned with human enemies. The stanzas preceding and following vv. 12-17 are preoccupied with what the enemies of Israel have done and are doing now. According to the strictly creation-mythical interpretation of vv. 12-17, then, these verses are seriously misplaced. The argument that vv. 13-14 must be talking about creation because vv. 16-17 talk about

⁵³⁰Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, 148-49. Henri Frankfort explains the mention of New Year’s day as an intensification of the curse: if the serpent is slain at the start of every day, how much more on the dawn of the start of a new year! (*Kingship and the Gods* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], 150).

⁵³¹Rodger Wayne Dalman, “The Theology of Israel’s Sea Crossing,” Th. D. diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1990, 129-56; and “The Polemical Significance of Israel’s Sea Crossing,” paper presented to the annual conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, Philadelphia; November 18, 1995: 1-21.

⁵³²*Ibid.*, 138.

⁵³³*Ibid.*, 177-80, 182.

creation can be turned around: vv. 13-14 must be talking about the enemies of Israel because the rest of the psalm is! One cannot avoid the conclusion that in Psalm 74, the human enemies of Israel are somehow connected to God's adversary the dragon.

Interpreting the crossing of the sea as polemical against Egyptian religious beliefs could be problematic. A consistent application of the analogies could result in identifying the God of Israel as the true Re, the sun god. Ps 74:16 safeguards against such an identification by saying that the God of the exodus created light and darkness, the sun and moon. So here we have another reason for a mention of God as creator of the sun in the context of a battle with the dragon – to safeguard against the identification of the God of Israel with the sun god (much less a storm god like Baal, who, unlike Re, is not even said to be a creator).⁵³⁴

Since Ps 74:14 uses the name Leviathan, not Apophis, one might object that the Egyptian serpent-dragon is not in view here. I would argue that from an Israelite point of view, Apophis, Leviathan, Rahab, Yam, and other names of dragon figures are suitable names for the unnamed serpent foe of God who was cursed in the Garden of Eden, as long as it is made clear (as it is in Ps 74:16-17) that use of those names does not imply the writer's belief in the other pagan mythology associated with those names. Thus it is not a matter of simply equating Apophis with Leviathan, but rather identifying both with the biblical cursed serpent. In Job 3, however, Leviathan is ascribed Apophis-like attributes, in that he is shown as a foe of the day. Job curses the day of his birth, wishing that "that day be darkness, let not God watch over it from above, nor light shine on it. ... Let those curse it who curse the day, who are prepared to rouse Leviathan" (Job 3:4, 8). "Day" in v. 8 is commonly emended to "Sea" to form a parallel with "Leviathan," but John Day and others have pointed out that Job is actually wishing the dragon had been successful in preventing his birth, so he is not calling for a curse on the dragon, but (as in the second half of the verse), wishing he had been successful. Day cites a Ugaritic text which implies that the dragon (*tnn*) and the sun goddess Shapash are enemies, and he says this passage was very likely part of a new year's eve ceremony, corresponding therefore to the time of creation, and all this means that Job is wishing for a "return of the pre-creation darkness associated with Leviathan."⁵³⁵ But Job's wish is more modest; he only wishes that the day of his birth had never come, not that primeval darkness should return to the world.

Thus Leviathan and Apophis have in common that they are opponents of the day. From a biblical perspective, this would identify them with opposition to God, not because the God of Israel is the sun god, but because light and darkness (the first separation in Genesis 1) function as symbols for the righteous and the wicked, between whom God has

⁵³⁴The same curse on Apophis cited above begins with Re reciting his work of creation (after he himself came into being as Kephri, the morning sun). Gods were created in order to be sent out with magical charms against Re's enemies, especially Apophis (*ANET*, 6). One could therefore cite this curse to disprove the idea that creation of the world and the dragon battle are of necessity causally connected simply because both are mentioned in the same context.

⁵³⁵Day, *God's Conflict*, 44-48. The Ugaritic citation is *CTA* 6.VI.44-52, which reads in part (Day's translation): "Shapash, the ghosts are under you; ... Kothar is your companion and Hasis is your friend. In the sea are Arš and the dragon; May Kothar-and-Hasis drive (them) away, may Kothar-and-Hasis cut (them) off" (*ibid.*, 45).

set enmity (Gen 3:15), thus either name could suitably be used to designate the spiritual father of the wicked. Likewise association of Leviathan with the sea (as a dwelling place) would symbolically link him to opposition to God for the same reason: the separations of waters above from waters below, and dry land from seas in Genesis 1, like that of light from darkness, are symbolic of the separation between the righteous and the wicked. As mentioned above, the god Seth was involved in the defeat of Apophis. Seth is also identified with Baal in iconography at Tanis and plays the part of Baal in the Egyptian version of the Baal-Yam story, a fact which might illustrate how easy it would be to view Apophis and Leviathan in the same light.⁵³⁶

5.4 *The Conflict with the Dragon in Job*

Job speaks of the defeat of the dragon Rahab in a context of creation in Job 26:5-14. “By his might he quieted (רגע) the sea, and by his understanding he crushed (מחזק) Rahab. By his breath the sky is made beautiful; his hand pierced (חלל) the evil/primeval serpent” (נִקְחַשׁ קָרִיחַ; vv. 12-13). Vv. 7 and 10 describe acts of creation: “He stretches out the north over emptiness, he hangs the earth on nothing;” “He has inscribed a circle over the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.” Other passages speak of God’s power over nature, not specifically speaking of the acts of creation. One could argue that it is not likely that the mention of the slaying of the serpent in a creation context has the same explanation as in Psalm 74, since Job shows no awareness of Israelite traditions.⁵³⁷ Or, one could argue that the events of the exodus, the crossing of the sea, the defeat of Sihon and Og, the drying up of the Jordan, and the conquest of Palestine, were well known among the inhabitants of the lands in and around Israel, and that these events would have been interpreted by them in the light of their mythologies as showing that the God of Israel is the true God, thus making their hearts melt in fear, for the God of Israel accomplished in history what their gods did only in their mythology (Exod 15:14-16; 23:27; Num 22:3; Deut 2:25; Josh 2:8-11; 5:1; 9:9-10). In particular, the drying up of the Red Sea and the Jordan would suggest the defeat of the dragon, and the connection of this defeat with the defeat of Israel’s human enemies. Conceivably, Job 26:12-13 could speak of these events, except that would leave v. 13a unexplained: “By his breath the heavens are beautiful.”

If not connected to Israel’s history, the slaying of Rahab would most likely either be connected with creation, or with some other great display of God’s power, especially over nature. Saggs said that the verses preceding the dragon-slaying passage “could equally refer to God currently and constantly maintaining the universe” and in any case “do not make cosmic creation the culmination of a *Chaoskampf* but either antecedent or

⁵³⁶ Dalman, “Theology of Israel’s Sea Crossing,” 166-67, 174; W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 133; W. F. Albright, “The Ancient Near East and the Religion of Israel,” *JBL* 59 (1940): 107.

⁵³⁷ “Job does not refer to any historical events, not even those that were always in the mind of an Israelite – the call of Abram, the Exodus, the Conquest, the Exile. ... Nor does Job refer to any of the familiar institutions of Israel – the monarchy, the temple, the prophets” (Francis I. Anderson, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC; London: Tyndale, 1976], 62).

parallel to it.”⁵³⁸ The order of events listed in Psalms 74 and 89 (slaying of the dragon, then reference to creation) was taken by Day as evidence that creation had a causal connection with the defeat of the dragon; but this order is not found in Job 26.

If not creation, what event is connected to the slaying of the dragon, “either antecedent or parallel to” creation? We have noted before that Noah’s flood could be interpreted as the crushing of the serpent (here the crushing of Rahab, the piercing of the evil/primeval serpent) in terms of Gen 3:15 – the destruction of the wicked human race. Possibly the quieting of the sea mentioned by Job would be the subsiding of the flood waters and the return of the seas to their natural boundaries. The beautification of the heavens would then be the clearing away of the storm clouds from the sky. I am not aware of any other evidence from the book of Job that would support this interpretation, so we should hold open the possibility that Job is expressing belief in a battle with the dragon in connection with the creation of the universe. If so, such a belief should not be viewed as normative for biblical theology. When Job finally gets his wish and God speaks to him, he asks, “Who is this that darkens counsel, by words without knowledge” (Job 38:2), and then asks Job where he was when the foundations of the earth were laid (v. 4). The sons of God are mentioned as shouting for joy (v. 7), but there is no mention here of any slaying of a dragon. Vv. 8-11 describe the enclosure of the sea, but the wording makes it clear that this restraint is the continental boundaries which keep back the seas, a picture consistent with Genesis 1,⁵³⁹ and with the receding of waters after the flood. Likewise God’s description of Leviathan as an animal in Job 40:25-41:26 (41:1-34) is consistent with Genesis 1, where the *tannînîm* (“monsters”) are singled out for mention as part of God’s good creation (as is the case with the mention of Leviathan in Ps 104:26, discussed below).⁵⁴⁰ The book of Job does affirm, however, that God (as well as righteous Job) has an “adversary” (translation of the name Satan, שָׂטָן, with the definite article). He is shown in the beginning of the book, not disguised as an animal as in Genesis 3 or in the dragon myths, but among the sons of God (consistent with the interpretation I have given of Isaiah 6, as well as with evil gods such as Seth and Yam/Nahar), accusing Job and instigating Job’s trials. The reader would be reminded of this by the mention of the sons of God in v. 7, though Job, ignorant of the cause of his misfortune, would not.

⁵³⁸ Saggs, *Encounter with the Divine*, 55.

⁵³⁹ Job 38:8, 9 mentions the sea as bursting forth from the womb, and mentions a thick dark cloud covering the earth. John Wiester notes that these two things (which are not mentioned explicitly in Genesis 1) are accurate descriptions of the early earth, which was originally “a naked body of rock” with no atmosphere until heat from radioactive decay forced water and gases to the surface: “Huge quantities of water vapor and other gases were released from the Earth’s interior to produce a dense continuous black cloud which surrounded the Earth” (*The Genesis Connection* [Hatfield: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1992], 50, 53).

⁵⁴⁰ Despite the references to smoke and fire coming out of Leviathan’s mouth (Job 41:10-13 [41:18-21]), which may be poetic metaphor, the passage clearly portrays Leviathan as an animal that Job could (at least in theory) interact with, and who has one head, not seven.

Job refers to the dragon on two other occasions. In Job 9:13-14, Job asks how he could hope to contend with God if “God will not turn back his anger; beneath him crouch the helpers of Rahab.” Here again the context speaks of God’s creative acts, as well as his other awesome displays of power. The mythological view would identify the helpers of Rahab as supernatural associates of the sea monster; the Israelite view might as well; other, demonic, subordinate beings, as long as it is clear that the conflict is not preceding creation. What Job believed about them is not obvious. In Job 7:12 he complains, “Am I the sea (יָם), or the dragon (תַּנִּינִי), that you set over me a guard?” One cannot tell from the context if this is a mythical reference or not; the literal seas, along with the sea monsters (actual animals) in them, are “under guard” because the sea is restrained from encroaching on the land. Day notes that Marduk imprisoned Tiamat and her allies, and cites this as evidence for a creation connection. Likewise he explains the “helpers of Rahab” on analogy to the helpers of Tiamat who are imprisoned in *Enuma Elish*, as Gunkel did.⁵⁴¹ As we saw above, however, Day rejects *Enuma Elish* as a background for understanding the dragon figure in the Old Testament. Similarly Saggs said *Enuma Elish* “is neither a paradigm for ancient Near Eastern creation myths, nor indeed early;” it is a propaganda piece for the supremacy of Marduk and Babylon which is “a conflation of a number of myths originally separate and distinct.”⁵⁴² From a biblical perspective, too, *Enuma Elish* is a conflation of the primeval history, going directly from creation to Babylon, by combining creation and the defeat of the dragon by means of “the great weapon,” the flood.⁵⁴³ In the Old Testament, these are separate events, and, of course, the primeval history culminates in the call of Abraham, not the enthronement of Marduk in Babylon.

The evidence from Job is therefore somewhat paradoxical. If Job is supposed to be a spokesman for orthodox Israelite religion, we could explain his mention of God’s conflict with the dragon (and its relationship to creation) in Israelite terms, by referring it to the crossing of the Red Sea or (preferably) to the flood. If we are to understand Job instead as a righteous but somewhat misguided monotheist with little or no knowledge of Israel’s special revelation (thus one who “darkens counsel by words without knowledge” when speaking of God’s past deeds), then his beliefs should not be used to resolve questions of interpretation in Old Testament theology.

5.5 Evidence From Ps 89:10-15 (9-14)

⁵⁴¹Day, *God’s Conflict*, 41, 43; Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 38.

⁵⁴²Saggs, *Encounter with the Divine*, 57-58. Both Saggs and Day rely on W. G. Lambert’s study for their conclusions; Lambert calls *Enuma Elish* “a sectarian and aberrant combination of mythological threads woven into an unparalleled compositum” (“A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis,” *JTS* 16 [1965]: 291).

⁵⁴³“Then the lord [Marduk] raised the flood, his mighty weapon, And against Tiamat, who was raging, he sent it with words,” (Tablet 4, lines 75-76, from Robert William Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* [2nd ed.; New York: Abingdon, 1926], 28). The word for “flood” (*abūbu*) is the same word which describes the deluge which destroyed humanity; it is also listed in the arsenals of other gods such as Nergal and Aššur, and is said to be the expression of the wrath of various gods such as Marduk, Ninurta and Ištar. Kings and warriors may be called “Deluge of battles” (*CAD* 1.1.77-81).

אתה מושל בגאות הים	89:10	You are he who rules over the swelling of the sea,
בשוא גליו אתה תשבחם		When its waves rise, it is you who stills them.
אתה דפאת כחלל רהב	11	It was you who crushed Rahab, as one slain,
בזרוע עזת פזרת אויבך		With your strong arm you scattered your enemies.
לה שמים אלה ארץ	12	Yours are the heavens, yours also the earth;
תבל ומלאה אתה יסדתם		The world and its fullness – you founded them.
צפון וימין אתה בראתם	13	North and South ⁵⁴⁴ – you created them.
תבור וחרמון בשמך ירצנו		Tabor and Hermon – in your name they rejoice.
לה זרוע עם-גבורה	14	Yours is an arm with strength;
תעז ידה תרום ימינה		Your hand is mighty; your right hand is exalted.
צדק ומשפט מכון כסאך	15	Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne,
רחם ונאמת יקדמו פניך		Kindness and truth go before your face.

Psalm 89:10-15 (9-14) has a dragon-slaying passage followed by a creation passage in a way that recalls Ps 74:12-17, except that Rahab is not called a *tannin* here, though he is elsewhere (Job 26:13; Isa 51:9). We will therefore have the same choices of interpretation for this passage: the strictly historical approach (the sea and Rahab are metaphors for Egypt); the creation-historical approach (they are the personification of the primordial waters, monsters who opposed God in battle prior to his creation of the universe); the historicized myth approach (the event is pseudo-history inspired by the dragon battle myths), the creation-metaphorical approach (the victory over the dragon is a metaphorical description of the Genesis 1 creation), or the typological approach (the battle against the sea and the dragon refers to the crossing of the Red Sea as the destruction of the serpent's seed and the creation of Israel, which leads to praise of God as creator in general).

In the first verse of this section the sea and its waves are clearly personified as in rebellion against God, who must calm them. The Red Sea is personified in Ps 77:17-21 (16-20); “The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and trembled; yea the deeps trembled. ... You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (vv. 17, 21 [16, 20]). I think that the personification in Ps 89:10 (9) is not the same, however. Psalm 77 describes the parting of the waters figuratively, as if they were running away from God out of fear (likewise Ps 114:3, 5). The use of *tû'ĀFg* (majesty) for the swelling of the seas here suggests self-exaltation against God's majesty (cf. Isa 26:10; Ps 17:10). To maintain v. 10 (9) as a reference to the sea-crossing event, the sea here cannot be the Red Sea (as it could in Ps 74:13), since any swelling of the sea at that time would be due to the wind that God sent to make the seas “flee” (Ps 114:3, 5). The sea and its waves would have to be a metaphor for the proud Egyptians; the Egyptians who would arrogantly cross a (moral) boundary established by God, and threaten his people, much as a storm driven sea would cross the coastal boundary, or a destructively flooding river

⁵⁴⁴See Day, *God's Conflict*, 27-28 for a defense of the translation “south” against the attempt to see in the word the name of another mountain corresponding to the mountain “Zaphon” (= “north”).

would overflow its banks. Being drowned in the sea, one could say the Egyptians may be identified with it; thus their raging against God is like the raging of the sea, and their raging is “stilled” by God in the sea. In the next section below, we will see other examples of such a metaphor.

Comparison of Psalms 74 and 89 shows that in large part they are complementary to each other. Psalm 74 is a *maskil* of Asaph which laments the destruction of the temple, calls God king, uses Leviathan as the name of the dragon crushed by God, uses the pronoun “you” seven times, and speaks of God’s ownership of day and night, and his creation of the sun and moon, and the boundaries and seasons of the earth. Psalm 89 is a *maskil* of Ethan which laments the profanation of the davidic dynasty, calls God ruler, and mentions his throne, uses Rahab as the name of the one slain by God, uses the pronoun “you” five times (in the passage of interest), and speaks of God’s ownership of heaven and earth, and of his creation of all things in the world. Most of these correspondences were noted by Ringgren.⁵⁴⁵ Ringgren also noted that both psalms have a number of allusions to Exodus 15:⁵⁴⁶

	Exodus 15	Psalm 74	Psalm 89
ישועה	2 deliverance	12	
גֵּאוֹן	7 majesty		10 (גֵּאוֹת)
אֹיֵב	9 enemy		11
מִי־כַמֶּנְךָ	11 who is like you?		9
נֹרָא	11 awesome		8
עֲזָךְ	13 your strength	13	11 (עֲזָךְ)
מְכוֹן	17 dwelling		15
יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ	18 the LORD reigns	12 (מִלְכִי)	

Ps 89:12a is identical to Ps 74:16a with the substitution of “heaven” and “earth” for “day” and “night” (both being word pairs found in Genesis 1). Similarly, the syntax of Ps 89:12b-13b (especially 13a) is quite similar to Ps 74:17b (*casus pendens* beginning with two noun direct objects, followed by second masculine singular pronoun, then verb with third masculine plural object suffix). On the basis of these complementary relationships it seems reasonable to assume that the allusions to the slaying of the dragon and to creation function the same way in Psalm 89 as they do in Psalm 74: they are due to a typological relationship between creation and redemption, whose chief example (for an Israelite) is the Red Sea crossing. Secondly, the reference to God’s creative acts and his ownership of the creation serve to safeguard against applying the traits of the defeater of the dragon in pagan myths to the God of Israel, who is the creator of all things and defeats the dragon in history, not mythology. One might argue also that the theme of the surpassing greatness of the LORD over the other gods in vv. 6-9 (5-8) is derived from

⁵⁴⁵ Helmer Ringgren, “Yahvé et Rahab-Léviatan,” in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot, M. Delcor (AOAT 212; Kevelaer: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 390-91.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 392.

God's declaration that the plagues on Egypt would be a judgment on their gods, as well as a demonstration of his supremacy, and his ownership of the earth mentioned in v. 11 (12). As God says to Pharaoh, "so that you might know that there is none like me in all the earth;" "that you may know that the earth is the Lord's" (Exod 9:14, 29). On this interpretation, the reference to the defeat of the Egyptians at the sea in Psalm 89 follows the allusion to the plague narratives. Similarly Rahab the harlot (not to be confused with Rahab the dragon, since the two names are quite different in Hebrew) told the two Israelite spies that she knew that the drying up of the Red Sea and the defeat of the Amorite kings by the God of Israel showed that he was "God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Josh 2:10-11).

I do not see the same structural features in Psalm 89 which were present in Psalm 74 to point to a time of the exodus for the slaying of the dragon, but Psalm 89 has additional information on the relationship of Israel's history to the creation. Ps 89:37-38 (36-37) refers to David's offspring and his throne as enduring forever like the sun and moon before God, so that the sun and moon in the sky are witnesses to God's promise to David; when one thinks of one, one may think of the other as well. Further, in N. Sarna's division of Psalm 89 into three parts (hymn, vv. 2-3; 6-19 [1-2; 5-18]; oracle, vv. 4-5; 20-38 [3-4; 19-37]; lament, vv. 39-52 [38-51]), there are a dozen key words which "unite the hymn with the oracle." One such union relates the enemies spoken of in v. 11 (10) in conjunction with Rahab, with David's enemy in v. 23 (22).⁵⁴⁷ While this connection is not sufficient to identify the crushing of Rahab with a particular historical event, it demonstrates at least a typological relationship between David's human enemies and God's cosmic enemy, as one would expect if the defeat of Egypt was interpreted as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15.

Day says that the minority of scholars (since Gunkel) which thinks that Ps 89:12-13 (11-12) refers to the exodus and Red Sea crossing "ignores the context,"⁵⁴⁸ but cosmic and historical references seem to be intertwined throughout the psalm. The promises to David in vv. 4-5 (3-4) are followed by things of heaven and of the divine council (vv. 6-9 [5-8]), and the references to creation discussed above are followed by a discussion of God's attributes which leads back again to the promises to David, then again to the sun and moon (vv. 14-38 [13-37]). I suggest therefore that we apply the findings from Psalm 74 to Psalm 89 and see a typological connection between the creation of the universe and the creation of Israel, rather than a hard to explain dependence on a non-canonical creation myth.

There is another factor in Psalm 89 which could cast doubt on a reference to an Israelite creation myth in vv. 10-11 (9-10). Day sees a rather complicated development of the theme of God's conflict with the dragon and the sea in the Old Testament. He takes three of the dragon-slaying passages we have discussed so far (Ps 74:13-14; 89:10-11 [9-10]; Job 26:12-13) as referring to the time of the creation of the world. But Day also sees a "historicization of the divine conflict" so that in Isa 51:9-10 "Rahab is both the monster

⁵⁴⁷Nahum M. Sarna, "Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 31.

⁵⁴⁸Day, *God's Conflict*, 26.

defeated at creation and Egypt at the time of the Exodus and also, by implication, it may be argued, the thought is extended to Babylon at the time of the prophet himself. The return from exile is both a new creation and a new Exodus.”⁵⁴⁹ As part of this “historicization,” Day cites Ps 77:17-21 (16-20), which we have just discussed. According to Day, God’s conflict with the sea (= the dragon) has been historicized, so that it is said to have taken place at the exodus.⁵⁵⁰ A number of other passages show such historicization, whether by referring to the time of the exodus, or by identifying the dragon or the seas with Israel’s enemies after the exodus. The point I would make here is that there appears to be just such a passage in Psalm 89, which I believe could be cited as an example of the “historicization of the divine conflict” using the same methodology that places other passages under this designation. God promises to crush David’s adversaries before him (vv. 23-24 [22-23]), and then says, “I will also set his hand against the sea, and his right hand against the rivers” (v. 26 [25]). Here, one could argue, we have God promising David victory over Yam, since we have sea and rivers in parallel as David’s (thus God’s) opponents (recalling the Canaanite dragon’s dual title “Prince Sea, Judge River”), except that the dragon must here represent David’s human enemies, the nations. If the dragon represents human enemies in this verse, it is difficult to argue that the dragon Rahab in v. 11 (10) could not refer to Egypt at the exodus. Although it is quite possible to understand v. 26 (25) as simply a description of the boundaries of the land over which David will have dominion (the usual translation of the preposition ־ is not “against” but “on”); cf. Exod 23:31, Ps 72:8, one could also say that these boundaries are here used polemically against Canaanite religion; the God of Israel’s defeat of the serpent-dragon (in fulfillment of Gen 3:15) is represented even in the boundaries of the conquered land (the Mediterranean on the west and the Jordan on the east). Such an interpretation would give us another reason for the mentioning of God’s creation of the boundaries of the earth in Ps 74:17a, in the context of God’s crushing of the heads of Leviathan. In any case, I would argue that simply because in a passage the sea or the waters are personified, as fleeing or fearing before God, for example (Ps 77:17 [16]; 114:3), it does not of necessity indicate that there is a direct reference to some mythological figure. We never see the use of the Ugaritic title “Prince Sea/Judge River” in the Old Testament, while we do see the Ugaritic terminology used in describing Leviathan. In many cases, the allusion to Yam is indirect; the “flight” of the Red Sea may allude to Yam as a dragon figure, but it is tied to the historical event of the defeat of Egypt. God’s actions against literal seas and rivers (plural, unlike in the Ugaritic title of Yam) indirectly allude to the father of the wicked, while Leviathan or Rahab is explicitly mentioned as the dragon figure. But we have seen reason apart from the Ugaritic myths to relate the seas and rivers to God’s enemies, and that reason is based on the symbolic use of the three separations described in the creation account to distinguish the two seeds of Gen 3:15, beginning with Cain and Abel. We saw that the Cain and Abel incident drew on the idea of God seeing the light, that it was good, to contrast Cain and Abel: thus Cain

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 91-92.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 96-97.

is symbolized by darkness, Abel by light. The other two separations both involve the seas: the waters below, distinguished from the waters above, from the second day, and the “gathering of the waters” (named seas), distinguished from the dry land, from the third day. These three separations were reenacted in the exodus and crossing of the sea (Exod 14:19-21), identifying the Egyptians (and by extension, the nations in general) with the darkness and the waters below (seas, rivers, etc.). We will discuss next some passages which do not mention the slaying of the dragon, but which have been thought to relate to the same conflict because there is an indication of hostility between the seas, or the waters (which are often associated with the dragon), and God. Since some of these passages occur in creation contexts, it is necessary to discuss them in order to be thorough in a treatment of the question examined above in the discussion of Palms 74 and 89, as to whether or not the battle with the dragon in the Old Testament is said to be associated with the creation of the world.

5.6 God’s “Conflict” with the Sea and Gen 3:15

5.6.1 Ps 104:1-9

Day says that this passage “unambiguously makes it clear that the Old Testament can depict the creation as having been associated with a primordial conflict with chaos.”⁵⁵¹ The main evidence is that the deep which covered the earth like a garment at the creation is said to have fled at the Lord’s rebuke (הַיַּמִּים) and the sound of God’s thunder (v. 7). Two issues are involved here: the first is whether the mention of rebuke and thunder imply not only a personification of the waters but a conflict with them as representative of a chaos monster. The second issue is whether the passage refers to the creation or the end of the flood.

V. 5 says God established the earth on its foundation, v. 6 says that he covered it with the deep, and waters stood above the mountains, then vv. 7-9 describe the waters going to the place appointed for them, so that they should never return to cover the earth. One can easily read this passage as moving from creation to flood (Gen 7:19; all the mountains were covered), then to the end of the flood, and God’s promise to never bring such a flood again (Gen 9:11). Indeed, to read v. 9 as part of a creation account, one would have to interpret it as denying Noah’s flood (unless one assumes an implied exception), since it says the waters will never return again to cover the earth. The commentators do not relate the verse to the flood, however, because of the overall context of creation. B. Anderson says Psalm 104 matches both the scope of thought and the sequence of Genesis 1, and he arranges vv. 1-30 in a seven strophe arrangement paralleling Genesis 1.⁵⁵² In each section, however, there is material that does not parallel the portion of Genesis 1 that he relates to it. The psalm mixes a survey of the results of God’s creative works and his maintenance of the creation along with an account of his creative works; but the order does not consistently agree with Genesis 1. The psalmist also clearly has in mind more than just creation (as an act and as that which is created); he concludes with an expression of his desire that “sinners be consumed from the earth,

⁵⁵¹Day, *God’s Conflict*, 30.

⁵⁵²Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos*, 91-92.

let the wicked be no more” (v. 35), an idea consistent with seeing v. 6 as a mention of Noah’s flood. One cannot take it for granted, then, that the fleeing of the seas refers to the appearance of dry land during the creation, or that the seas are somehow connected with the pre-creation chaos waters. In particular, to see the waters as a personification of the dragon in v. 7 involves an inconsistency with v. 6 which says that it is God who covered the earth with the waters, so that his “rebuke” in v. 7 reverses his own actions; it does not put down a rebellion by the seas.

Ps 106:9 says that God rebuked (גער) the Red Sea. This is obviously not a chaos conflict, if we take the word “chaos” according to its proper meaning of formlessness, which would therefore only apply to the pre-creation state described in Gen 1:2, not the created waters such as the Red Sea. The rebuke must refer to the wind which parted the Red Sea, or God’s irresistible decree, which was accomplished by means of the wind. We noted above Kline’s observation that this wind is typologically connected to the wind sent by God to cause the flood waters of Noah to recede (Gen 8:1); consequently that action too could be called a “rebuke” of the waters which made them recede, without seeing any chaos monster behind them. Or if, as the commentators say, Ps 104:9 relates to the appearance of dry land in the creation, the rising of the continents and the original establishment of the boundaries keeping back the seas, such action could be figuratively called a rebuke of the seas based on the typological association between Red Sea crossing, Noah’s flood, and creation. One need not take the reference to thunder in v. 7b literally, as if it was a weapon against some chaos monster. It makes sense to see it as a description of God’s command to disperse as thundering; an irresistible command, and poetic equivalent of “and God said.”⁵⁵³ In Isa 50:2, God says “With my rebuke I dry up the sea,” which by itself might seem to refer to his drying up of the Red Sea, since it is an answer to the question, “Have I no power to deliver?” But he goes on to say, “I make the rivers a wilderness, their fish stink for lack of water, and die of thirst.” These are not “chaos waters” which are rebuked, but life giving waters. God’s power over nature is shown both in salvation (rebuking the seas which threaten to drown his people) and in judgment (rebuking the waters necessary for man’s existence); his rebuke of the waters here means his power over nature, not a conflict with a primordial chaos monster. How can one say, then, that the word “rebuke” in Ps 104:7 must imply a conflict with a chaos monster, rather than God’s power over nature, and his irresistible decree?

Perhaps most problematic for the view that v. 7 implies a conflict with a chaos monster is the mention of Leviathan as a mere created animal in v. 26. This feature does indeed parallel Genesis 1, where the great sea monsters are specifically mentioned as part of God’s good creation, thus cannot be identified with an anti-creator “chaos monster” such as Tiamat (Gen 1:21). Leviathan is said to be formed by God (יצר; v. 26). It is implied that he is one of the “living things, small and great” mentioned in v. 25; the adjective “great” (גדול) naturally recalls the mention of great (גדול) sea monsters in Gen 1:21. It is also implied that Leviathan is one of the “creatures” (קַיִן) with which the earth is filled (v. 24). Leviathan, then, is one of the many animals mentioned in this psalm; wild donkeys, birds of the air, cattle, the stork, wild goats, coney, beasts of the forest

⁵⁵³BDB, 947, takes “thunder of the captains” in Job 39:25 as referring to “thunderous shouting” of captains.

such as lions, and teeming creatures (vv. 11-12, 14, 17-18, 20-21, 24). Unlike the case of the serpent in Genesis 3, there is nothing in the context to suggest that Leviathan is anything but an animal here.

Besides Genesis 1, Psalm 104 is often compared to the hymn of Akhenaton, and here too, the parallel with Ps 104:26 would suggest that Leviathan is a sea creature, not a supernatural being.⁵⁵⁴

But according to Day's interpretation, Leviathan is everywhere else in Scripture the personification of primordial chaos who was slain or bound as God's enemy prior to the creation (Ps 74:13-14), a battle alluded to in Ps 104:7-9, and so he must be here also. To explain the inconsistency of Leviathan being the personification of chaos in v. 7, but an animal created by God in v. 26, Day says in v. 26 Leviathan is not a created animal (despite the use of the verb יצר, which is also used in Ps 74:17 where Day translates it with the word "create"), but a "depotentized" chaos monster.⁵⁵⁵ Day has committed a logical fallacy here. He says Leviathan cannot be an animal in Ps 104:26 because he is not an animal elsewhere. By the same reasoning, Leviathan cannot be a "depotentized" chaos monster in Psalm 104 because he is not depotentized elsewhere. And doesn't the "depotentization" and the mention of Leviathan as a created being along with a dozen other animals, and the analogy to Gen 1:21 represent a full-fledged "naturalization?" The view that Leviathan is elsewhere a figure for the cursed being of Gen 3:15 does not have this problem, for the being in that chapter is also called a mere snake. The animal (whether called snake or Leviathan) serves to symbolize and represent the demonic being, but that fact does not mean that everywhere it is mentioned it must be the supernatural being who was cursed by God.

5.6.2 Ps 65:7-8 (6-7)

V. 7 (6) speaks of creation in that it says God established the mountains by his strength, then v. 8 (7) calls God the one "who stills the roaring of the seas (שִׁאוֹן יַמִּים), the roaring of their waves, and the tumult (הִמּוֹן) of the peoples. Day says that v. 7 (6) "makes it clear that the stilling of the seas is here related to the control of the waters in connection with the creation."⁵⁵⁶ If he means that because v. 7 (6) and v. 8 (7) a-b occur together in the psalm they both must refer to the same time (creation), the argument would be logically defective, for then the stilling of the roaring of the seas must also be at the same time as the following phrase, the stilling of the tumult of the peoples (clearly not associated with the creation). I would argue instead that the relation between these three phrases is given in the preceding and following verses: they are signs and awesome deeds which make men trust in God. Stilling the tumult of the peoples is analogous to stilling

⁵⁵⁴Ps 104:25-26: "There is the sea, great and broad, / In which are swarms without number, / Animals both small and great. / There the ships move along, / And Leviathan, which Thou hast formed to sport in it" (NASB). Cf. from the Egyptian hymn to the sun, "The ships are sailing north and south as well, / For every way is open at thy appearance. / The fish in the river dart before thy face; / Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea" (John A. Wilson, *ANET*, 370).

⁵⁵⁵Day, *God's Conflict*, 22, 74.

⁵⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 35.

the roaring of the seas. This symbolic usage of the roaring of the seas as analogous to the tumult of the nations is consistent with the symbolism drawn from the creation account to distinguish the two seeds of Gen 3:15, while the mention of “seas” in the plural makes a direct allusion to Yam unlikely (though an indirect reference to him as spiritual father of the wicked nations is possible).

5.6.3 *Psalm 93*

Ps 93:3 says “The floods (נְהָרוֹת; “rivers”) have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring,” and v. 4 says that the Lord is mightier than the sounds of many waters, than the breakers of the sea. Vv. 1-2 speak primarily of God as king, but also mention that the world is established and shall not be moved. Day thinks that the psalm associates “victory over the chaotic waters” with the Lord’s kingship and creation, but acknowledges the possibility “that the thought is extended to that of Yahweh’s rule over the nations.”⁵⁵⁷ He refers to Ps 96:10: “Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns;’ surely the world is established – it shall not move; he will judge the peoples with equity.” Here kingship, creation, and God’s judging the peoples are mentioned together, so it is quite possible that Psalm 93 has the same ideas, the lifting up of the voice by the waters being again a figure of speech for the rebelliousness of the peoples. Just as he maintains his creation (keeping the seas away from the land), so must God uphold his moral decrees (judging the nations).

The idea of the boundaries between land and sea as analogous to the moral boundaries established by God’s laws is made explicit in Jer 5:22-23: “I have set the sand as a boundary for the sea; a perpetual statute so that it cannot cross it (עבר); though they toss to and fro (געש; *hithpael*), they shall not prevail; though their waves roar (המה), they cannot cross over it (עבר). But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside (סור) and departed.” The result of this rebellion is the service of foreign gods (v. 19) and deprivation of justice for their neighbors (vv. 26-28). In this case, those who would violate the boundary (like a stormy sea) are apostate Israelites; how much more appropriate to describe the nations in the same way!

5.6.4 *The Seas as the Nations*

None of the passages discussed so far in this section necessitates an interpretation which places a “conflict” between God and the chaotic seas at the time of creation. In Psalm 104 it seems likely that the rebuke of the waters is connected to the subsiding of the flood waters of Noah. In the other passages the likely interpretation is that the stormy seas are used as a figure of speech for the nations hostile to God. Such a figure of speech is explainable along the same lines as we have mentioned earlier: the seas along with darkness in Genesis 1 serve symbolically to designate the wicked; thus when God, through Israel or through other means (e.g., Genesis 19), subdues the nations, the “seas” are stilled. It is Gen 3:15 and its fulfillments in Genesis 4 and the crossing of the Red Sea which reveals this symbolic significance.

Such an argument is strengthened by the presence of other passages which unambiguously designate the nations or individual enemies of Israel as the seas, or the dragon. Passages where the dragon is used to describe the enemies of Israel have already

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 35-36.

been mentioned in § 2.3.6 when discussing the meaning of the dragon and the names for the dragon. I believe we have now demonstrated that in Ps 74:13-14; 89:10-11 (9-10); Isa 51:9-10, a dependence of these passages on Gen 3:15 indicates that the application of the dragon figure to Israel’s enemy at the exodus is based on the Egyptians being an example of the seed of the serpent cursed in Gen 3:15, thus Rahab and Leviathan are better understood as names of the serpent cursed in Gen 3:15; secondarily, humans of the same moral character, the seed of the serpent. I would understand Leviathan in Isa 27:1 in the same way, following a minority of interpreters from Justin Martyr to M. Kline.⁵⁵⁸

Passages in the psalms and the prophets also compare the nations to unruly waters; Day discusses these passages under “the historicization of the divine conflict.”⁵⁵⁹ David wrote Psalm 18 (= 2 Samuel 22) as a song “when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, especially from the hand of Saul.” David describes his closeness to death at the hand of his human enemies in a wide variety of images, including that of threatening waters; “torrents of the netherworld” (נַחְלֵי בְּלִיעֵל; v. 5 [4]), and “many waters” (or, “great waters;” מַיִם רַבִּים; v. 17 [16]).⁵⁶⁰ Very similar is Ps 144:7, where again “many waters” are David’s enemies. These waters have nothing to do with “chaos,” unless one wants to use “chaos” in a moral sense; they have nothing to do with the creation of the world. Ps 46:4, 7 (3, 6) speak of both the waters of the sea *and* the nations making an uproar at which God’s people need not fear.

From the prophets, Isa 8:7-8 describes the king of Assyria as the mighty waters of the Euphrates which will flood and sweep on into Judah, where the waters will reach even to the neck. The reason for this reversal of the picture of deliverance from the waters is given in the previous verse, where the people are said to have rejected the “gently flowing waters of Shiloh.” Isa 17:12-13 compares the plunderers of Israel with the roaring waters of the seas.

הוֹי הַמּוֹן עַמִּים רַבִּים	17:12	Oh, the roar of many peoples,
כַּהֲמוֹת יַמִּים יִהְיֶינָה		Like the roaring of the seas they roar;
וּשְׂאוֹן לְאֻמִּים		And the uproar of the peoples,
כַּשְׂאוֹן מַיִם כְּבִירִים יִשְׂאוֹן		Like the uproar of great waters they roar.
לְאֻמִּים כַּשְׂאוֹן מַיִם רַבִּים יִשְׂאוֹן	13	The peoples – like the uproar of many waters they roar.
וְגַעַר בּוֹ וְנָס מִמֶּרְחֵק		But he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away,
וְרָדְף כְּמֵץ הַרִים לְפָנֵי-רוּחַ		and will be chased like chaff of the hills before the wind;

⁵⁵⁸See chap. I. See also Meredith G. Kline, “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1,” in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser and Ronald F. Youngblood (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 235. More common is the view that Leviathan has been historicized: “The mythic chaos figure Leviathan is historicized to represent the final evil power in the Endtime” (Smick, “Mythopoetic Language,” 90). So Day, *God’s Conflict*, 143.

⁵⁵⁹Day, *God’s Conflict*, 88-125.

⁵⁶⁰The verb in v. 17 (16) is יִמְשְׁנֵנִי, “he drew me,” which would recall the deliverance of Moses from death in the Nile.

Day notes the similarity in imagery between this passage and Psalm 46, including the idea of a dawn deliverance in both (Ps 46:6 [5]; less obvious in Isa 17:14). Deliverance at dawn was part of the polemical significance of the drowning in the Red Sea of the Egyptians at dawn that we noted above. Similarly, on the final day of the marches around Jericho, it not only says they arose early to march around the city (as on the first day; Josh 6:12), but “they arose early, at the dawning of the day” (Josh 6:15). Day suggests that the idea of an enemy posing a threat at night “derives from the myth of the conflict with the chaos waters,” and cites a Ugaritic passage suggesting that “the chaos monsters of the sea, Arš and the dragon, pose a threat precisely at the time when the sun-goddess Shapash is in the underworld, i.e., at night.”⁵⁶¹ But association of the darkness and the seas with the evil monster is easily explainable from the symbolic use (especially in the narrative of the crossing of the Red Sea) of the Genesis 1 creation account where the darkness and the seas serve to designate the wicked. The deliverance at dawn in the crossing of the Red Sea and the conquest of Jericho show that one need not look to Ugarit for explanations, particularly since the connection with pre-creation chaos in those myths is just speculation. Still, since these dawn deliverances are fulfillments of “he will crush your head” in the curse on the serpent, one could grant Day’s point, if he wanted to call the serpent of Gen 3:15 a “chaos-monster” (in the moral sense, since Gen 3:15 pertains to a conflict concerning the new creation, not the creation of the universe).

The passages where the seas or waters are clearly said to be nations hostile to God and to his people use language and ideas (noise, threat, transgressing of boundaries) that are basically the same as those which were used in the passages where God’s control of the raging seas is mentioned in contexts where there is no explicit mention of the nations. To maintain that these latter are connected to the idea of a pre-creation conflict with the sea requires interpreting the former as a demythologizing and an “historicization of the divine conflict.” Presumably, then, the New Testament identification of the dragon with Satan represents a “re-mythologizing of the divine conflict.” This process is even more complex if one recognizes that Leviathan is spoken of in some passages as a mere created animal (Ps 104:26; Job 40:25-41-26 [Job 41]), so that the seas are demythologized and Leviathan is naturalized. Day avoids this problem by denying that Leviathan is ever naturalized (see above), but even so one cannot deny that the “dragon,” or “monster” (תַּיִן) in Gen 1:21 is a created animal, a part of God’s good creation, thus has no more connection with the supernatural foe of God than does the snake as mere animal.

In contrast to the complex process of mythologizing, demythologizing, historicizing, and naturalizing, it is much simpler to view Leviathan and תַּיִן as names for animals, or a broad class of animals. תַּיִן can be used to describe huge marine creatures (Gen 1:21), or a snake (Exod 7:9, 10, 12, 15); thus its range of meaning can be compared to “dinosaur,” which can describe animals as small as chickens, or as large as many tons. The figure of a seven headed snake on a Sumerian cylinder seal impression, found at the

⁵⁶¹Day, *God’s Conflict*, 102-03. “Shapash, the shades are under you; Shapash, the ghosts are under you; the gods (come) to you, behold! the dead (come) to you. ... In the sea are Arš and the dragon; May Kothar-and Hasis drive (them) away” (CTA 6.VI.44-52; = KTU 1.6.VI.45-53).

same place but from a prior time as the seal of the seven headed dragon, as well as etymology and the epithets “crooked” and “snake” suggest that Leviathan may have been a seven headed snake before he was a seven headed dragon (𐤋𐤍𐤁; see § 2.3.6). The single-headed snake of Genesis 3 (passed on in the traditions of the sons of Noah) could have been the predecessor of the seven-headed snake (there is no reason to assume that the reverse process occurred, that the seven-headed dragon was partially demythologized into a talking snake of Genesis 3). The snake, further developed into a “dragon,” served as a model for God’s supernatural foe, though he is depicted with features not found in real animals to distinguish him from them (i.e., with seven heads, fire rising from his back).⁵⁶² This process is consistent with the general use of animal figures in the ancient Near East to depict demonic forces; to suggest that the dragon was first a demonic creature and then became a mere animal in Genesis 3 (then Satan in the New Testament) is, I think, much less likely, from a strictly logical point of view.

The dragon figure thus has the same ambiguity as the word “snake” in Genesis 3. As mere animal (“monster”), he is part of God’s good creation. The animal then serves as model for a supernatural being and his human allies, his “seed,” an evil foe of God and his people, whether past, present, or future. There is no process of demythologizing, historicizing, naturalizing, eschatologizing, or remythologizing. We saw in chap. I that scholars of the last two centuries stressed the depiction of the Genesis 3 serpent as a created animal to prove that it is an animal and nothing more (though in fact the serpent is compared to the animals without being called an animal himself, and is also compared to Adam and Eve by word play, and to the Cherubim by his actions which are inconsistent with those of an animal or human). Presumably, Day agrees with this consensus, since he does not even discuss Gen 3:15 despite the obvious similarity in language to Ps 74:13-14. But we see Day making the reverse argument in the case of Leviathan, who is actually stated repeatedly to be a created animal in Ps 104:25-26 – he must in any case be a mythological supernatural being!

5.7 Further Significance of the Red Sea Crossing

5.7.1 The Nile River and the Red Sea

Cassuto suggested that the drowning of the Egyptian army in the sea was an example of God’s just judgment, “the final retribution, measure for measure,” for drowning the Israelite children in the Nile.⁵⁶³ Such a view is consistent with God’s declaration as early as Gen 15:14 that he would judge the nation which oppressed the children of Abraham. This judgment would be “measure for measure” on a national scale, not individually, and it does not visit retribution on the actual murderers, since this is another generation. Further, “final retribution” on an individual basis, as was made clear in our analysis of Genesis 4, is not accomplished in these token fulfillments of Gen 3:15.

Another way in which the Red Sea is linked to the Nile is that the rod of Moses (and Aaron) figures prominently in respect to both bodies of water. When Moses threw the rod down, it became a serpent before which he fled, but when he picked it up, it

⁵⁶² ANEP, pls. 671, 691.

⁵⁶³ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 170.

became in his hand the rod of God (Exod 4:3-4, 17). This may be a not unintentional analogy to Moses, the human instrument of God. In his natural state (by birth), he is of the seed of the serpent. He is from the tribe of Levi, a name probably from the same root as Leviathan. If spirituality was based on physical parentage, Levi would be quite unlikely as an ancestor of Moses. Taken hold of by God, he is transformed into a divine agent; the crooked becomes straight. Perhaps this episode is also a foreshadowing of Israel fleeing before the Egyptians and being rescued by Moses lifting up the rod (Exod 14:5, 16, 21, 26). Similarly Aaron's rod becomes a $\text{רָבִיעַ \text{ } \text{רֹדֶן}$ when thrown down before Pharaoh (Exod 7:9-12). Moses is told to take this rod which had been turned into a snake and confront Pharaoh, who remained like the serpent, at the Nile river, where Moses (and Aaron) strikes the Nile for the first plague (Exod 7:15-20). Dalman noted that Pharaoh was bathed ritually every morning to purify him as a token of the purification he would receive while bathing in the Field/Lake of Reeds in the afterlife before joining Re in his vessel.⁵⁶⁴ The first plague would prevent this purification bath; the drowning in a Sea of Reeds showed judgment and destruction for the afterlife, not purification and justification.⁵⁶⁵

Association of the Nile and the Red Sea in the judgment on Egypt would suggest the figure of Yam, "Prince Sea, Judge River," in much the same way that the association of the Red Sea and the Jordan river would. Israel would also have a geographical reason to identify the Nile with the dragon Leviathan. Rivers in general have courses which are often described as "serpentine,"⁵⁶⁶ and the Nile had many branches in the delta region which could be said to be many "heads." The *Genesis Apocryphon* has Abraham recounting his entry into Egypt, crossing the "seven heads" of the Nile.⁵⁶⁷ Here, too, there is an analogy with the Egyptian serpent Apophis, who "was usually depicted as a serpent of the abyss and often appeared with four heads, representing the four sources of the Nile, which was often thought to spring from the underworld."⁵⁶⁸ The connection of the Nile with the Red Sea in the Exodus narratives would therefore facilitate identifying the Red Sea symbolically as the dragon as well, a conclusion we also come to in the next section.

⁵⁶⁴Dalman, "Theology of Israel's Sea Crossing," 130-31. Dalman cites Coffin Spell 439: (the priest says) "Wash yourself in the swamp-waters of the inundation and in the waters of the Nile which are in the Broad Hall" (131).

⁵⁶⁵"When Pharaoh's army crossed into a real Field of Reeds, they were not justified by its waters. They were destroyed" (ibid.). The possibility (or likelihood) that $\text{יָם \text{ } \text{רִבְעִי}}$ does not mean "Sea of Reeds" does not invalidate a polemical association with the Field of Reeds since such a connection could be made on the basis of the homonym.

⁵⁶⁶Gunkel gave a geographical explanation for Leviathan as the name of the dragon: he is the circling one because the ocean was thought to encircle the world (*Schöpfung und Chaos*, 46).

⁵⁶⁷1QapGen 19:12. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary* (2nd ed.; BibOr 18A; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971), 58-59, 109-10. Fitzmyer says Greek writers also numbered the Nile's branches as seven (p. 110), although he does not cite any examples.

⁵⁶⁸Mercer, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, 192.

5.7.2 *Genesis 15 and Exodus 14*

M. Kline has suggested that besides being a reenactment of the first three days of the creation account, the sea crossing event is also a reenactment of the covenant ceremony with Abram in Genesis 15. “The Scriptures represent the waters of the Egyptian sea as the Leviathan-Adversary, who was slain in the Lord’s dividing of the sea and given as food to be devoured (Ps 74:13, 14; cf. Isa 51:9, 10; Ps 89:10).” Kline says the pillar of fire and cloud correspond to the smoke and fire theophany in Gen 15:17 which passed between the pieces.⁵⁶⁹ I find further confirmation for this view from several considerations. Firstly, God told Abram to bring three animals which were three years old (Gen 15:9); such an emphasis on the number three fits with the sea crossing as being a reenactment of the first three days of creation.⁵⁷⁰ Secondly, Ps 136:13 calls God the one who split the Red Sea into “pieces,” using the same rare word used only there and for the animal “pieces” in Gen 15:17. Finally, the closest verbal parallel in the Pentateuch to Gen 15:6 (just prior to the covenant ceremony), “Abram believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness,” is Exod 14:31 (just after the crossing of the sea), “they believed in the Lord, and in Moses his servant.”

Kline takes the covenant ceremony of Genesis 15 to be one of self-malediction, and notes that ultimately, for God to keep his covenant, he had to assume the curse upon himself.⁵⁷¹ If the crossing of the sea is a reenactment of this self-malediction covenant ceremony, then some serious ramifications become apparent. If the one walking between the pieces calls upon himself the fate of the slain animal if he does not keep his promise, and if the slain animal is portrayed as the dragon, the serpent of old, who was cursed in the garden of Eden, then the Israelites would be invoking upon themselves not simply the fate of a slain animal (i.e., mere death), but the curse on the serpent, with all of its eschatological implications, if they failed to keep God’s covenant.⁵⁷²

5.7.3 *Genesis 22 and Exodus 3*

Two other passages mention a sacrifice where the number three is important, and these appear to relate to each other and to the exodus: Genesis 22 (the sacrifice of Isaac) and Exodus 3 (Moses at the burning bush). Some verbal and thematic similarities between the two are indicated below.

⁵⁶⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 181. Kline says that since the dragon slaying was part of the creation episode in ancient mythology, the connection of the exodus with the dragon slaying is a means of portraying the exodus as a creation event. Though this relationship is logically possible, I am arguing instead that for the biblical writers, the connotation of creation actually comes from Gen 3:15, not the myths.

⁵⁷⁰ “The use of three three-year-old animals makes it likely that some significance is attached to their age and the certainty of the events predicted (cf. Gen 41:32)” (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 333[!]).

⁵⁷¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 182.

⁵⁷² Hamilton and Wenham doubt that the covenant ceremony is one of self malediction, though Wenham says it is the view of most modern commentators (Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 430-33; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 332-33). Wenham thinks the animals represent Israel, the birds of prey are the unclean nations attacking Israel, including Egypt.

Exodus 3

1 The mountain of God
 2 and he saw, and behold, the bush (הֶבְרֵט) was burning with fire
 4-5 And [God] called to him from the midst of the bush and said “Moses, Moses.” And he said, “here am I.” And he said, “do not come near here.”
 7 And the Lord said, “I have surely seen.”
 18 Let us go a three day journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God.

Genesis 22

14 in the mountain of the Lord
 13 and he saw, and behold, a ram caught in a bush (הֶבְרֵט) ... and he offered him as a burnt offering
 11 And the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham.” And he said, “here am I.” And he said “do not stretch forth your hand.”
 14 The Lord will see.
 4 On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place [where he would sacrifice Isaac] from a distance.

Possibly these similarities are an example of the things which happened to the fathers being fulfilled also in their sons.⁵⁷³ Isaac was led by his father unwittingly to his own sacrifice, and on the third day he was spared from imminent death by God’s intervention and the provision of a substitute. Israel’s departure from Egypt was likewise originally conceived of as a three day journey to offer sacrifice. In reality, Israel left Egypt and unwittingly was led by God to a place where they were about to be slaughtered by the Egyptians.⁵⁷⁴ Again, at the last minute, they were spared from death, which was the lot of those who pursued them. Num 33:5-7 lists Migdol as the third encampment after leaving Egypt, which would not necessarily mean a three day journey (e.g., v. 8 lists only one encampment but a three day journey). Perhaps more significantly for the connection to the three days of Exodus 3 and Genesis 22, the first three days of creation are reenacted before Israel is delivered from the Egyptians. The theme of deliverance on the third day therefore seems to be derived from the creation account, and this observation would be further evidence for the typological link between creation and redemption, introducing the idea of substitutionary sacrifice as well. The crossing of the Jordan also took place on the third day, and Israel is reminded of the similarity between the two events (Josh 1:11; 4:21-24). The creation account itself encompasses six days of creation, but, as has often been pointed out, the six days are really two sets of three that correspond to each other: light and darkness on the first day, sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day; waters above and below on the second day, birds and sea creatures on the fifth day; dry land appears on the third day, land animals and humans on the sixth day. The third day of each pair of three is also given prominence in that “both days have a double pronouncement of the divine word ‘And God said’ (vv. 9, 11, 24, 26) and the

⁵⁷³“You will find that whatever is written in Scripture about Abraham is written also about his descendants” (*Gen. Rab.* 40.6; the comment is made in connection with Abraham’s descent into Egypt).

⁵⁷⁴ At least in the Israelites’ minds they were going to be slaughtered in the wilderness (Exod 14:11; cf. v. 5). Certainly they would have been (without God’s intervention) if they had resisted Pharaoh’s attempts to bring them back into bondage, and probably many of them would have been in any case.

approval formula twice (vv. 10, 12, 25, 31).⁵⁷⁵ The importance of the number three figures in both Genesis 22 and Genesis 15 (see above); another common feature of both is that a ram is offered in sacrifice. In Gen 15:9 it is a three year old ram, in Gen 22:13 it is a ram provided on the third day. If we see the sacrificial ceremony in Genesis 15 as one of self-malediction, then God is saying, “May I be like this slain ram (and the other animals) if I do not keep my promise.” This is consistent with the fact that the Exodus 3 correspondence to the ram caught in the bush who is offered as a burnt offering is that God himself is in the bush, which is on fire but is not burned up, and points in the direction which Kline indicated (see above, § 5.7.2).

5.8 Summary

As the first chapter of Exodus marks a transition from the patriarchal history to the history of the nation of Israel, it also marks a transition from the episodes of enmity described in the patriarchal narratives which were predominantly between individuals, to enmity on a national scale, as the oppression of Israel by Egypt is narrated. The narration of the birth of Moses and his rescue from drowning in the Nile combines verbal and thematic allusions to, and in the same sequence as, creation, flood, and the crossing of the Red Sea, suggesting a typological relationship between the three events which is suggested again in the narratives of the plagues and the crossing of the sea. This typological connection is implicit in Gen 3:15 itself, since it combines creation language (separation of two seeds by divinely created enmity) with a threat of judgment on the wicked seed which manifests itself in that enmity. The narrative of the plagues, and, especially, the crossing of the sea, uses the language of the creation account to symbolically identify Israel as the new creation, the woman’s seed (in terms of Gen 3:15), which is Abraham’s seed (in terms of Gen 12:1-3), and to identify their persecutors the Egyptians as the seed of the serpent (in terms of Gen 3:15), which is the seed of the international figure of the dragon enemy of God (in terms of the pagan myths about Leviathan, Rahab, etc.). The exegesis of Ps 74:2, 12-17 was a key element in this demonstration, as it vindicated the traditional interpretation of vv. 13-14 as referring to the events of the exodus, and explained the connection to the following creation context using the typological approach suggested in the exodus narrative itself.

From a cosmic perspective, using Cassuto’s distinction between macrocosmic (world-wide) and microcosmic (pertaining to Israel) events,⁵⁷⁶ the flood of Noah would be the greater of the two major fulfillments so far of “he will crush your head.” But from an Israelite perspective, the crossing of the sea would naturally be the most significant and celebrated of the two events. In the fulfillment of the curse on the serpent, we also learn something of how God intended to fulfill it. We suggested a collective interpretation of the two seeds, and found this confirmed in its immediate fulfillment in Genesis 4. Yet clearly, in the fulfillment of “he will crush your head,” we see the prominent role of an individual; Moses is credited by God with parting the waters of the sea, and bringing them back upon the Egyptians to drown them (Exod 14:16, 26). Thus,

⁵⁷⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 6-7.

⁵⁷⁶E.g., on Exod 1:5 as relating to Genesis 10; “So the children of Israel total seventy; they form a small world that parallels the great world, a microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm” (Cassuto, *Exodus*, 8).

in effect, an individual crushes the head of the serpent. But the narrative also shows, as Kline said (see § 1.8.28) that God could have said, in the curse, “I will crush your head.” And, in fact, while God credits Moses, Moses, prophets, and psalmists credit God, as we have seen in Exodus 15, Isa 51:9-10, and Pss 74:13-14; 89:10-11 (9-10).

Besides the prominent role of an individual, there is an emphasis on the number three in respect to periods of time that shows up in the fulfillment of Gen 3:15, and this importance is related to the creation account. A three day period was also significant in the sacrifice of Isaac, which is apparently related to the exodus from Egypt by the relationship between Genesis 22 and Exodus 3, and the number three figures prominently in the sacrificial animals in Genesis 15, another passage related typologically to the sea crossing, and which gives further evidence that the crossing of the sea is symbolically the slaying of the serpent.

The theological significance of these events is explained from many perspectives: judgment on Egypt, creation of the universe, curse on the serpent, Abrahamic covenant ceremony, sacrifice of Isaac, and anti-Egyptian and anti-Canaanite religious polemics. We have seen that using the prose narratives of these events in Genesis and Exodus provides a basis for understanding the poetic accounts of God’s slaying of the dragon that is far more consistent with the data than the approach which ignores these narratives in favor of pagan mythology as their exclusive background.

I have already mentioned several times that the conquest of Canaan would be the next fulfillment of “he will crush your head,” and we will see more evidence of such an interpretation in the next chapter, as we look at fulfillments of Gen 3:15 in the rest of the Old Testament.

CHAPTER VI

GENESIS 3:15 IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

6.1 *The Wilderness Period*

6.1.1 *The Two Seeds in the Nation of Israel*

We have seen consistently that, although Gen 3:15 and the promises related to it were given generally to the “seed” of the individual receiving the promises, subsequent developments show that not one seed but the two seeds of Gen 3:15 (the righteous and the wicked) are found among that offspring, and that the promises apply only to the righteous seed, while the curses apply to the seed at enmity with it. Similarly, the promises given to the patriarchs and to Moses concerning deliverance from the oppression of Egypt and inheritance of the promised land are given to the whole nation of Israel. The creation symbolism evident at the crossing of the sea would seem to confirm that the whole nation is the new creation, the righteous seed, the seed which crushes under foot the serpent and his wicked seed (typified there by Pharaoh and his army). It does not take long, however, for the wicked seed to manifest itself among Jacob’s children. Such a development should be anything but surprising, considering the prior history of inter-family enmity between the two seeds that we have traced in chaps. III and IV. The majority of the generation which passed through the sea is modeled after the seed of the serpent indirectly, by being modelled after their former oppressors, the Egyptians, who were modelled after the serpent, and called serpents in Ps 74:13, and by the depiction of their unbelief, slave mentality, and wickedness; the moral characteristics of the serpent’s seed manifested from Cain onwards.

Such characteristics are evident at the Red Sea itself, when Israel sees the Egyptian army approaching: “Is this not the word we spoke to you in Egypt, saying ‘Let us alone, that we might serve the Egyptians,’ for it would be better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in this wilderness” (Exod 14:12). These are the same people who groaned under Egyptian oppression and pled for deliverance, and who saw the power of God displayed in the plagues, including the death of the first-born. They had believed, for a while, when Moses showed them the signs from God,⁵⁷⁷ and they believed for a while again, after passing through the sea,⁵⁷⁸ until trouble and hardship came, and they longingly thought of their servitude in Egypt, when they had plenty to eat.⁵⁷⁹ Since the Egyptians would not allow Israel to serve the Lord, the desire to serve the Egyptians is an

⁵⁷⁷ Exod 4:31; “The people believed when they heard that the Lord had visited the sons of Israel, and that he had seen their oppression; and they bowed down and worshiped.” Cf. Matt 13:20-21; Luke 8:13.

⁵⁷⁸ Exod 14:31; “The people feared the Lord, and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.”

⁵⁷⁹ Exod 16:3; “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord when we were in Egypt, where we sat by pots of meat, and ate bread to the full; for you [Moses and Aaron] have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” Similarly, Exod 17:3; Num 11:5 (“We remember the fish we ate freely in Egypt, along with cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic; but now our soul is dried up, for there is nothing in sight but this manna”); 18-20 (“We had good things in Egypt ... Why did we ever leave Egypt?”).

expression of preference for serving the Egyptians rather than serving the Lord. Their unbelief in God's promises⁵⁸⁰ was augmented by the manifestation of enmity against Moses and other righteous men, favored by God, as when the ten spies discouraged the people from entering the promised land, and the people determined to stone Joshua and Caleb, and to replace Moses with a leader who would take them back to Egypt.⁵⁸¹ The people had been delivered by Moses raising his staff over the sea at God's command, they are now saved by Moses again, as he intercedes for them that the Lord should not destroy them instantly (Num 14:11-19). Nevertheless, having tested God ten times, being therefore like the Egyptians who hardened their hearts even after ten plagues, their "corpses shall fall in the wilderness,"⁵⁸² and they are directed to turn back towards the Red Sea, perhaps indicating that their judgment of death in the wilderness is analogous to that of the Egyptians in the sea, or perhaps it indicates the spiritual need of Israel to start over, believing the promises of God, or perhaps both.⁵⁸³ The judgment of death in the wilderness also brings to mind Kline's suggestion, which I supported in § 5.7.2, that the crossing of the sea is in part a self-malediction covenant ceremony along the lines of Genesis 15, with the "pieces" of the Red Sea symbolic of the slain serpent. The covenant makers call upon themselves the fate of the slain animal, thus invoking on themselves the curse on the serpent if they break the covenant, and identifying themselves as his offspring. The essence of Israel's covenant breaking is unbelief, whereas the essence of Abraham's covenant keeping in Genesis 15 is his faith (Gen 15:6).

Another indication that the generation which came out of Egypt is spiritually like the Egyptians is Israel's proneness to idolatry. Perhaps the most obvious indication of such a tendency is the incident of the golden calf (or bull).⁵⁸⁴ As the text does not state specifically the religious significance of the golden calf/bull, explanations have varied considerably, and it seems that Aaron's motives were less idolatrous than the people's.

⁵⁸⁰The unbelief of the Israelites is given in Num 14:11 as a reason Israel cannot enter the promised land ("How long will they not believe in me?").

⁵⁸¹Num 14:2-10 ("Would that we had died in the land of Egypt, or in this wilderness ... Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt. ... And all the congregation said to stone them [Joshua and Caleb] with stones"). "This time they actually propose returning to Egypt, thereby completely rejecting the whole plan of redemption" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981], 120).

⁵⁸²Num 14:29, 32, 33, 35. That the people's complaining is a "test" is made explicit by Moses in Exod 17:2 ("Why do you test the Lord?"), and by the name "Massah" given to the place where they complained (v. 7; cf. Deut 6:16). A connection between these testings of the Lord and the reaction of Pharaoh to the plagues may also be suggested by the fact that Moses is told to bring water out of the rock by striking it with the rod "with which you struck the Nile" (v. 5).

⁵⁸³Num 14:25; "Turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea." Wenham suggests an alternative symbolic significance to these directions: "Theologically, *the way to the Red Sea* suggests they are returning to Egypt" (Wenham, *Numbers*, 123).

⁵⁸⁴The female counterpart to הַגֵּזֶלֶת (heifer), can be as much as three years old (Gen 15:9).

The calf has been explained as analogous (or identical) to the cherubim, “a vacant throne for the Godhead,”⁵⁸⁵ or related to Apis, a sacred bull of the Egyptians, or to Baal, who may appear as a bull, or El, who is called bull.⁵⁸⁶ I suggested in § 5.3.8 that the crossing of the sea is a polemical depiction of the victory over the serpent (called Apophis by the Egyptians) and his allies at dawn, and mentioned the danger that a pagan mind-set trained in Egypt might misconstrue the significance of such a depiction and identify the God of Israel with the Egyptian sun-god, Re, who was supposed to be the author of such victories. It is possible to interpret the golden calf incident in this light. S. Mercer noted that “the most important animal-worship in Ancient Egypt was that of the bull, and its cult was one of the earliest, having been very common in the Delta long before the time of Menes” (ca. 3000 B.C.). Not the Apis-bull but the Mnevis-bull was connected to the sun-god: he “was worshipped in Heliopolis since the second dynasty. He was considered an incarnation or manifestation of *Rē*’.”⁵⁸⁷ But Cole’s objection against seeing the Apis-bull in the golden calf (namely, that the sacred bull is a succession of live bulls and not an image)⁵⁸⁸ would apply also to the Mnevis-bull, and such an objection certainly is valid to some extent. But Mercer also says that one of the conceptions that the Egyptians had of the sun is that it “was thought to be a golden calf born of the sky-cow in the morning, which grew to be a bull and fertilized his mother so as to be born anew as the sun the next morning.”⁵⁸⁹ Such a conception could then lead to connecting the golden calf image to the sun-god Re (as well as to his sacred bull manifestation), victorious over the serpent Apophis and his allies at sunrise at the Red Sea.⁵⁹⁰ A Pyramid Text explicitly equates the sun-god with the golden calf: Pharaoh says, “I [have come] to you, O *Rē*’, a calf of gold born of the sky, a fatted calf of gold which *Hꜣꜣt** created.”⁵⁹¹ Whatever the precise

⁵⁸⁵E.g., Cassuto, *Exodus*, 408. Cassuto is referring to Aaron’s intention, not the people’s.

⁵⁸⁶El is commonly called bull (*tr*, related to Hebrew שׁוֹר) at the same time he is called father of Baal or Yam; see Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 41, 52, 55 (2.i.16; 3.E.7; 4.i.4). Cassuto notes that in Ps 106:19-20, שׁוֹר and בָּלֵם are found in parallel referring to this incident (Cassuto, *Exodus*, 412). Baal is said to have intercourse with a heifer 77 or 88 times in order to produce offspring (Baal-Mot; 5.v.18-22; see Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 72), from which R. Alan Cole infers that Baal takes the form of a bull (*Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC; Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1973], 214).

⁵⁸⁷Mercer, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, 234. Joseph had married the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On (= Heliopolis); Gen 41:45. Heliopolis is called בְּיַת שֶׁשׁ, “house of the sun (god)” in Jer 43:13.

⁵⁸⁸Cole, *Exodus*, 214.

⁵⁸⁹Mercer, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, 24.

⁵⁹⁰Such a conception would also be consistent with the early morning feast followed by “play,” usually interpreted as fertility rites (i.e., sexual immorality; Exod 32:6).

⁵⁹¹Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 172 (Utterance 485A).

significance, it is clear that the Israelites are showing that their religious mindset is like that of the Egyptians, whose gods had been judged by the Lord, and who were identified as of the seed of the serpent.

Since the Egyptians were shown to be of the offspring of the serpent, we may infer that the spiritual identification of the majority of Israel with Egypt is the same as identifying them as of the serpent's seed as well. Such a conclusion means that the actions symbolically depicting Israel as the new creation did not actually accomplish this creation. The new creation of the people of God must entail something other (i.e. greater) than the mighty works accomplished at the sea: the light from the pillar of fire shining down, or a visible manifestation of God and of his power, or walking through a sea on ground made dry by God's wind. Such matters are all external; Israel saw and experienced all those things, but even of the generation allowed to enter the promised land Moses says, "yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear (Deut 29:2-4)."⁵⁹² The new creation is thus not external, but internal. Similarly God tells Israel through Isaiah that they will see and hear, but not perceive and understand; as was the case with those who fell in the wilderness, they will suffer devastating judgment, and only a remnant will be left, a remnant called "the holy seed."⁵⁹³ When we speak of Israel in the Old Testament as the new creation, then, we are not speaking of Israel as a whole, though nominally the people of God, but of this remnant, the holy seed, the seed of promise, the seed of the woman spoken of in Gen 3:15, God's promised new creation.

In the patriarchal narratives we observed that while Abraham was spoken of as if he would be a new Adam, the progenitor of a righteous race, he is actually shown to be more like the first Adam, as shown in narratives such as Genesis 16 which could be called "fall" narratives; he himself is not perfect, and not all of his children are righteous. We also observed this pattern repeated in the following patriarchal generations. There may be an analogy to this pattern in the mosaic period, where the symbolism of the Red Sea events would seem to indicate that Israel is a righteous nation, God's new creation, yet subsequent events show the fallacy of such an interpretation (here again we see the role of history in interpreting the oracles of God). The narratives describing these events might also then be described as "fall" narratives; they describe the "fall" of Israel. In many of these narratives there is a general similarity with Genesis 3 in that the Israelites are tested by God,⁵⁹⁴ and are tempted by dissatisfaction with God's provision for them; dissatisfaction was also part of the temptation and "fall" of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 16, paralleling the temptation of Eve, to whom God was accused of withholding good things, knowledge and God-likeness. The serpent accused God of being a liar and of

⁵⁹²Deut 29:2-4.

⁵⁹³Isa 6:9-13 (v. 13; וְיִרְעוּ קִדְּוֹתַי).

⁵⁹⁴Deut 8:15-16; "He led you through the great and awesome wilderness, with venomous snakes and scorpions, and thirsty ground without water; he brought forth water for you from flint rock. He fed you manna in the wilderness, which your fathers had not known, to humble you and to test you, to do good to you in the end." Similarly Deut 8:2.

having less than benevolent motives for Adam and Eve. Similarly the serpent's offspring in the wilderness ascribed to God motives contrary to what God himself had expressed to them, regarding his promises as lies. He promised to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey, to fulfill his loving covenant promises to the fathers,⁵⁹⁵ but they ascribe to him hatred for them, and a desire to have them fall in the wilderness by the sword of their enemies.⁵⁹⁶ One of these "fall" of Israel narratives features venomous snakes sent as judgment on the complaining Israelites (Num 21:4-9). When the people acknowledge their sin and Moses intercedes for them, Moses is told to make a model of a venomous snake and set it on a standard, so that whoever looks at it may live. Joines explains the bronze snake as a case of sympathetic magic, analogous to Egyptian snake charms and amulets, and to the models of the tumors and mice made by the Philistines to appease God (1 Sam 6:5).⁵⁹⁷ The latter are not called "charms," however, but "guilt offerings" (זִבְחֵי חַטָּאת; 1 Sam 6:4-5). In addition, the Philistines were told to "give glory to the God of Israel" (v. 5), which in context implies confession of wrongdoing on their part, and the justness of God's actions against them (cf. Josh 7:19). Comparison to Numbers 21 would thus indicate that the bronze snake was not a charm but a guilt offering, and the fact that this is a "fall" narrative with serpents would seem to validate Justin Martyr's attempt to interpret the incident in light of Genesis 3, the serpents and their bronze model serving as reminders of the being cursed in the garden of Eden.⁵⁹⁸ There may be a reminder also of the staff of Moses which was raised up to deliver Israel, since this staff had been turned into a snake on occasion. While snakes are not animals which may be used in sacrifice as guilt offerings under mosaic law, this is not an actual sacrifice, and we saw in the last chapter that the crossing of the sea seems to depict (among other things) the slaying of the ancient serpent as part of a covenant sacrificial ceremony. This symbolic slaying of an unclean animal relates back to the ceremony of Genesis 15, where it was clean animals that were slain. As in the case of the crossing of the sea, where the Israelites had only to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, here too they had only to look at the model of the snake and be healed. Those who succumb to the temptation to complain are thus those who "listen to the serpent" as Eve did, and are destroyed by it, unless they repent and believe God's promises. Since this incident also shows that those who are bitten by poisonous snakes might nevertheless live, it would seem to refute (if more refutation

⁵⁹⁵ Gen 15:14-21; Exod 3:8-17; 6:5-8; 23:27-31, etc.

⁵⁹⁶ Num 14:3; "Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder;" Deut 1:27, of the same incident; "Because the Lord hates us he brought us from the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us." Also Exod 16:3; 17:3; Num 11:1-6; 20:4-5; 21:5.

⁵⁹⁷ Joines, *Serpent Symbolism*, 87.

⁵⁹⁸ See § 1.4.1. Justin interpreted the Numbers 19 incident as a promise of salvation through Christ by relating it to Gen 3:15.

were desired) the view that Gen 3:15 cannot be a promise since it pictures a struggle in which both parties are ruined.⁵⁹⁹

6.1.2 *Moses and the Fulfillment of Gen 3:15*

In addition to comparing the fall of the nation of Israel to that of the patriarchs, we might also compare Moses as the leader of the people of God to the patriarchs. Moses seems to be pictured as their successor in a number of ways. God told Moses twice that he would destroy Israel and make a new nation from him,⁶⁰⁰ so at least in theory Moses could be thought of as the progenitor of the people of God, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On both occasions Moses interceded for the people to save them from destruction, so he is like Abraham, who interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah; conversely, Moses had also interceded for Pharaoh to remove the plagues from him,⁶⁰¹ so here again the Israelites are like the Egyptians. Abraham had earlier rescued Lot by going to battle against his captors (Genesis 14); likewise Moses used force to rescue an Israelite being oppressed by an Egyptian (Exod 2:11-12). In Genesis there are many genealogies, but as a rule it is only in the line of the patriarchs (from Adam to Joseph) that the lifespan is given.⁶⁰² When the genealogy of Moses is taken up in Exodus 6, it is only the ancestors of Moses whose lifespans are given,⁶⁰³ not those of the other descendants of Levi, or of the sons of Reuben or Simeon, and only the lifespan of Moses is given in the rest of the Pentateuch (Deut 34:7). And while in Genesis 49 Jacob gave the prophetic blessing to the twelve tribes, in Deuteronomy 33 it is Moses who gives the blessing to the sons of Israel by their tribes. The manner in which Moses obtained his wife is also reminiscent of the patriarchal narratives; a man (or his agent) meeting his prospective bride at a well is a feature of Genesis 24 (Rebekah), Genesis 29 (Rachel), and Exodus 2 (Zipporah). Perhaps the most important similarity is that God said he chose Abraham to teach his children after him the way of the Lord, by doing righteousness and justice (Gen 18:19); this function is obviously fulfilled by Moses in his generation (cf. Deut 6:1-2).

Moses is like the patriarchs in other ways that we have already mentioned: he is the object of enmity not only from the Egyptians, but from jealous and unbelieving Israelites, much as Joseph was. He is also like Noah in that he plays a very prominent role in the token, or provisional fulfillment of Gen 3:15d (the crushing of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, which parallels the flood of Noah). We have also seen a number of close parallels between Exodus 3 and Genesis 22, where Moses corresponds to Abraham.

⁵⁹⁹See chap. I, especially von Rad (§ 1.8.20).

⁶⁰⁰Exod 32:10 (the golden calf incident); Num 14:12 (the incident of the report of the spies).

⁶⁰¹Exod 8:8-13; 28-31; 9:28-33; 10:17-18.

⁶⁰²The two exceptions are Sarah and Ishmael (Gen 23:1; 25:17). See Ronning, "The Naming of Isaac," 14, 24-25, for an explanation of the reason for these exceptions.

⁶⁰³Levi, Kohath, and Amram (Exod 6: 16, 18, 20).

That Moses is portrayed as the successor of the patriarchs would make it more obvious that the role of patriarch as “father” of the righteous is fulfilled not by physical generation but by exemplifying and teaching faith and righteousness, whereas God has the major role in bringing about the righteous as his creation. If Israel had been destroyed, and a new nation made of Moses, would that nation be morally any better than that which came from Jacob? That the answer is no may be inferred from the fact that while Moses is portrayed positively as in the line of the patriarchs, he is also shown to share in their imperfection, and in their inability to generate offspring who are by nature righteous. The “fall” of Moses does not resemble that of the patriarchs, but rather that of Israel, in that he is prevented from entering the promised land because he did not believe God, in the incident where he was told to speak to the rock that it might bring forth water for the congregation (Num 20:8-12). As in the case of the patriarchs, therefore, we see the lamentable situation where the righteous seed sometimes displays some of the characteristics of the wicked seed, and of course this is even more obvious in the case of Aaron.⁶⁰⁴ Similarly, as in the case of the patriarchs, both seeds of Gen 3:15 are found among the descendants of Moses: at the center of one of the stories at the end of the book of Judges cataloguing the apostasies of Israel, a certain Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses, is an idolatrous priest.⁶⁰⁵

As a whole, however, God calls Moses his servant who is “faithful in all my house” (Num 12:7).⁶⁰⁶ Wenham explains, “He is God’s servant, entrusted with looking after all his estate, *i.e.*, Israel.”⁶⁰⁷ For God to refer to his house as consisting of his people is unusual; usually God’s “house” is his dwelling place (temple or sanctuary), the structure where he uniquely manifests his presence. The two usages come together, however, in Ps 114:1-2: “When Israel went forth from Egypt, / The house of Jacob from a people of strange language, / Judah became his sanctuary (יְשֻׁבֵּי), / Israel his dominion.”⁶⁰⁸ When God’s house refers to his people, then, the expression is another name for the seed of the woman of Gen 3:15, or the seed of Abraham, the spiritual seed of promise. I suggested earlier that Eve and Abraham function as figureheads in these

⁶⁰⁴ As seen in Exodus 32 (the incident of the golden calf), and Numbers 12 (the challenge to the authority of Moses by Miriam and Aaron).

⁶⁰⁵ Judg 18:30. The name is vocalized “Manasseh” with a “suspended” *nun* in many mss. (see *BHS*, 435), indicating its dubious validity. “Moses” is attested by some LXX mss. and Vg. It was obviously considered by someone a matter of offense that Moses should have such an apostate among his offspring, but that Moses had such offspring is no more surprising than that he had an ancestor such as the murderer Levi.

⁶⁰⁶ Another translation is “He is entrusted with my whole house” (Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 221); similarly, Wenham, *Numbers*, 112.

⁶⁰⁷ Wenham, *Numbers*, 112.

⁶⁰⁸ That God’s “house” is his people among whom he dwells as well as his kingdom suggests that there need be no temple in Israel to complete the analogy between Canaanite myth (Baal defeating Sea, assuming kingship over the gods, and then building a temple) and Israelite history (the Lord defeating the serpent’s seed in the sea personified as the serpent, then making a people as his house and dominion).

expressions: the offspring is said to be theirs, whereas the offspring is actually produced by God. The same function of figurehead may also be ascribed to Moses, since he is over God’s house, the spiritual leader of his people; as he himself says, however, he did not beget them (Num 11:12).

6.1.3 Enmity Between Israel and the Nations

During the wilderness period, we see that the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 that was fulfilled on a national scale in the case of Egypt and Israel, continues on with other national fulfillments after Israel leaves Egypt. Israel was attacked by Amalek, whom they defeated (Exod 17:8-16); similarly the Canaanite king of Arad (Num 21:1-3), and the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (Num 21:21-35). Edom denied passage to Israel (Num 20:14-21), resuming the enmity which existed between Jacob and Esau. The king of Moab, along with the elders of Midian, hired Balaam to curse Israel (Numbers 22-24); when this failed they seduced them into idolatry of Baal of Peor (Numbers 25), and later the Israelites took vengeance (Num 31:1-12).

In addition to the theme of enmity, which is common enough between nations apart from the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15, some of these episodes contain what may be allusions to the curse on the serpent. The manner of attack used by the Amalekites was in the rear, among the weary stragglers, which perhaps recalls “you will strike him in the heel” (Deut 25:18). Amalek is called the “first of the nations” (Num 24:20). “First” (רִאשִׁית) is related to the word “head” (רֵאשׁ), and Ashley actually translates the phrase as “head of the nations,” though he explains it in the sense of “first,” whether first in antiquity (as opposed to “his end” in the next line), strength, or Israel’s primary or first opponent, or all three.⁶⁰⁹ That this first case of warfare against Israel is to be seen as a continuation of the enmity ordained in the curse on the serpent may be inferred from the fact that the staff of Moses which was used to strike the Nile river and to “crush the serpent” in the Red Sea functions in an analogous manner in the battle against the Amalekites. While Joshua fought the battle, Moses stood on a hill with the staff in his hand. As long as it was raised up, as at the Red Sea, Israel prevailed (Exod 17:9-11), giving another dramatic presentation that the crushing of the serpent’s seed involves much more than simply human conflict, and that while the woman’s seed is victorious, it is because God crushes the wicked seed under their feet.

That Balaam blessed Israel and cursed Moab though he was hired by Moab to curse Israel is a fulfillment of the patriarchal promise, “I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you,” a promise which we related to the curse on the serpent in § 4.3.1. This patriarchal blessing is repeated by Balaam in Num 24:9, and the language of the curse on Moab (Num 24:17) has much in common with that of Gen 3:15:

אֶרְאֶנּוּ וְלֹא עֵתָהּ	I see him, but not now,
אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ וְלֹא קְרוֹב	I observe him, but not near;
דָּרָךְ כּוֹכֵב מִיַּעֲקֹב	A star shall march out of Jacob,
וְקֶמֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל	A scepter shall rise from Israel;
וּמַחֲזֵן פְּאַתֵי מוֹאָב	He shall crush the forehead of Moab,

⁶⁰⁹ Ashley, *Numbers*, 504, 506-07. Wenham takes the statement as Amalek’s self-estimate (*Numbers*, 181).

וְקִרְקַר כָּל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל The heads of all the sons of tumult.

“Star” is usually taken as indicating a king;⁶¹⁰ whether the Messiah,⁶¹¹ or David with a corresponding fulfillment in 2 Sam 8:2.⁶¹² Ashley noted that if the prophecy was fulfilled in David, “it was only a temporary fulfillment,” since Moab recovered its independence.⁶¹³ But “temporary,” or partial fulfillments of Gen 3:15 seem to be the rule in the Old Testament (though I have preferred to use the word “token”); Egypt recovered also. Ashley considers the identity of “him” in the first line intentionally ambiguous, and says that “whether the figure is individual or corporate, it must represent Israel in order to fulfill what Balaam claimed as the purpose of his oracle in v. 14b.”⁶¹⁴

“Heads” in the last line is based on the reading קִרְקַר (actually crown of the head), which is found in SP and in the very similar passage in Jer 48:45, and assumes the common misreading of *resh* for *daleth*; it is possible, of course that the mistake is in Jeremiah, or that both readings are original in their respective passages. “Head” would also be a closer parallel to “forehead” from the preceding line, but that word could also be translated “edges,” as in the borders of Moab. The reading of “head” and “forehead” assumes that “Moab is personified as a man smitten by his antagonist,”⁶¹⁵ a personification which makes the punishment on Moab sound like that of the serpent in Gen 3:15 (intentionally, I assume). The translation of the last word, “tumult, uproar” for תַּשׁ also assumes an equivalent from Jer 48:45, where תַּשׁ is used.⁶¹⁶ As we saw in § 5.6.4, תַּשׁ is used in Isa 17:12-13 to describe the roaring of the seas as comparable to the roaring of the wicked nations oppressing Israel.

Balak’s desire to curse Israel was a manifestation of his character as the seed of the serpent. The following incident of Baal of Peor (Numbers 25) manifests another of

⁶¹⁰Jacob Milgrom notes that the star has also been interpreted as a weapon of God used to destroy his enemies, and as “host” (army), based on an Akkadian cognate (*Numbers* [JPSTC; Philadelphia/New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990], 207).

⁶¹¹The messianic interpretation is found in all of the Targums, which translate “star” as “king” and “scepter” as “Messiah” (*Tg. Onqelos* and *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan*) or “Redeemer and Ruler” (*Tg. Neofiti*).

⁶¹²So Rashi and many moderns (Rosenbaum and Silbermann, *Pentateuch and Rashi’s Commentary*, 4.120).

⁶¹³Ashley, *Numbers*, 503.

⁶¹⁴*Ibid.*, 500, 503.

⁶¹⁵George Buchanan Gray, *Numbers* (ICC; New York: Scribners, 1903), 370.

⁶¹⁶The equivalence is obtained by assuming the form תַּשׁ for תַּשׁ, from the same root as תַּשׁ (i.e., תַּשׁ), for which the form תַּשׁ in Lam 3:47 may provide support. See BDB, 981. *Tg. Onq.* took the “sons of Seth” as a designation for “the children of men” assuming that Adam’s third son is meant. Such an expression is never used elsewhere, and it would include not only the nations, but Israel as well. W. F. Albright identified the name *HT* found in Egyptian execration texts as “an ancient name of Moab” based on this passage (“The Land of Damascus Between 1850 and 1750 B. C.,” *BASOR* 83 [1941]: 30-36).

the serpent's attributes, namely deception to bring about a downfall, as the Moabites and Midianites invited the Israelites to their sacrifices. The serpent deceived Eve and was cursed with enmity and a strike to the head: so God says to Israel, "Be hostile to the Midianites and strike (הִקָּח) them, for they have been hostile to you with their deceptions, with which they deceived you" (Num 25:17-18).

6.2 *Gen 3:15 From Joshua to David*

6.2.1 *Conquest as Fulfillment of Gen 3:15d*

I use the term "conquest" here to describe a process beginning with the conquest of Trans-Jordan under Moses (Num 21:21-35) to the conquests of David (2 Samuel 8), though of course Israel suffered many reversals during this process. The procedure here will be the same as in the previous chapter; i.e., first the goal will be to show how the conquest can be interpreted as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15d, then we will demonstrate that such an interpretation is given in Scripture itself (Habakkuk 3, in this case).

The conquest is shown as a continuation of or analogous to the defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea; if the latter is a fulfillment of Gen 3:15d, so is the former. Some of the evidence for this conclusion was discussed in § 5.3 in connection with the exposition of Ps 74:12-17, where the cleaving open of springs and the drying up of the perennial rivers (i.e., the Jordan), followed by an allusion to the miracle at Gibeon, seem to indicate a progression from the slaying of the dragon at the Red Sea, through the wilderness wanderings, to the conquest of Canaan. The death of the Canaanites following Israel's crossing is thus the typological counterpart to the death of the Egyptians in the sea, which suggests that the army of Israel under Joshua and later leaders is the typological counterpart to the flood waters of God's judgment in the days of Noah and Moses. We saw in chap. V how the battle of Jericho reproduces from the Red Sea event the idea of deliverance at dawn and the crossing of the Jordan reproduces the idea of deliverance on the third day (as well as the obvious similarity of drying up the waters for Israel to pass through),⁶¹⁷ and the time of year was the same.⁶¹⁸ The staff of Aaron struck the Nile for the first plague (Exod 7:19-20), the staff of Moses waved over the Red Sea to divide it and then return on the Egyptians (Exod 14:21, 27), and the feet of the priests carrying the ark (containing Aaron's staff; Num 17:10) stepped on the Jordan River, after which it dried up (Josh 3:13-17). Woudstra notes on the basis of Num 10:35 that the lifting up of the ark by the priests "was tantamount to the Lord's own 'arising;'"⁶¹⁹ so we can see the priests stepping on the Jordan River and drying it up as symbolic of the Lord defeating, trampling, on his supernatural foe, the evil/primeval serpent-dragon of seven heads as he leads Israel into battle against the seven nations (Josh 3:10).⁶²⁰ As was

⁶¹⁷ As is commonly pointed out, the word "heap" (הֵבֵל) describing the piling up of the Jordan upstream is the same word used to describe the piling up of the Red Sea into heaps (Exod 15:8; Josh 3:13, 16; Ps 78:13).

⁶¹⁸ Israel crossed the Jordan on the tenth of the first month (Josh 4:19), the day the Passover lamb was to be selected (Exod 12:3).

⁶¹⁹ Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 82.

⁶²⁰ "By this you shall know that the living God is in your midst, and that he shall drive out from before you the Canaanite, ... and the Jebusite." Here the number of nations is seven, as also in Deut 7:1; 20:17; Josh

pointed out in the last chapter (§ 5.7.1), rivers with serpentine courses (such as the Nile and Jordan) are quite appropriate symbols for the serpent, and the connection between the Egyptian Nile and Apophis would facilitate the connection between the Canaanite Jordan and the Canaanite analogues to Apophis, Leviathan and Sea/River; God also shows himself Lord over Baal, who only defeats Sea/River in myths. A further geographical indicator may be involved in the mention of the city Adam where the river was blocked (Josh 3:16); the natural state of post-fall humanity is as seed of the serpent.

The second battle of Ai (Josh 8:1-29) also has similarities to the defeat of the Egyptians at the sea, and gives further support to the idea that the army of Israel is the equivalent of the flood waters as the instrument of God’s judgment on the wicked seed. God’s strategy in this battle is to have Israel flee towards the wilderness from the men of Ai to draw them out in pursuit, much as he had drawn out Pharaoh (Josh 8:2-5, 15, 20; cf. Exod 13:18; 14:3-5). Like the waters of the Red Sea, Israel’s army is divided into two parts; Joshua is commanded to stretch out his javelin toward Ai, as Moses did with his staff over the sea, and as the waters responded to Moses’ staff by converging on the Egyptians to drown them, the two parts of the army of Israel respond to Joshua’s javelin to close in on the army of Ai, which perished completely “in the midst of Israel,” as the Egyptians perished in the midst of the waters (Josh 8:18-19, 22, 26; cf. Exod 14:26-28; 17:9-13). The following table summarizes these similarities:

	Exodus 13 & 14	Joshua 8
strategy: flee “by the way of the wilderness” to lure the enemy to his destruction	God brought the people around by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. . . . “Pharaoh will pursue them” (13:18; 14:3-4).	And they fled by the way of the wilderness, and all the people of the city were summoned to pursue them (8:5-6, 15-16)
divided into 2 parts which converge	the sea	Israel's army - 8:22
role of leader to initiate this convergence	raises his staff (14:26)	raises his javelin (8:18-20)
the end of the wicked “in the midst of” the “waters”	14:27-28 - overthrown in the midst of the sea - not even one remained	8:22 they were in the midst of Israel - no one survived

Perhaps as a more direct allusion to Gen 3:15, the ambush laid against the city (which thus “crushes” it) is called the “heel” of Joshua’s army (Josh 8:12-13).

The context may provide an explanation for why little Ai should be chosen for this reenactment of the defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. Israel had been defeated before the men of Ai, and Joshua feared that the result would be that the Canaanites would rally together and wipe out Israel (Josh 7:7-9). The defeat occurred because “Israel has sinned and transgressed my covenant which I commanded them” in the matter of Achan (Josh 7:11). In terms of Gen 3:15, Israel has become like the cursed seed, their enemies, the Canaanites: Israel “cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs

24:11. The number of nations in such lists varies from ten (Gen 15:19-21) to the most common, six (Exod 3:8, 17; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Josh 9:1; 11:3; 12:8) or fewer (Exod 13:5 [5]; 23:28 [3]).

to them because they have become an accursed thing [אָרְרָם]. I will not be with you again unless you completely destroy the accursed thing from among you” (Josh 7:12).⁶²¹ The portrayal of the defeat of Ai as similar to that of the Egyptians would serve to reassure Israel that God is with them again, as at the Red Sea, thus they need not fear, and it might also serve as a covenant renewal ceremony, including a ritual “death” of Israel (since the division of the waters corresponds to the slaying of animals in a covenant ceremony).

Additionally, Joshua’s reaction to the initial battle at Ai was similar to that of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness: “If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan” (Josh 7:7). For such thinking the previous generation had been instructed to turn back by way of the Red Sea (Num 14:25); the second battle at Ai seems to symbolically accomplish this, with the same spiritual significance as implied in the wilderness example (see above).

If it is valid to identify the conquest as a fulfillment of Gen 3:15, then it would not be surprising to find creation symbolism used in the conquest narratives. Such symbolism is present, but it depends on the typological relationship between the conquest and previous events, and including the crossing of the Jordan in the conquest narratives. Noah’s flood and the crossing of the Red Sea both reproduce the third day of creation; bringing dry land out of the sea, and this is found also in the crossing of the Jordan. That the Jordan crossing does not also reenact the first two days of creation (as was done at the Red Sea) is not decisive against a creation-symbolic interpretation, since Noah’s flood also only reproduces the third day, but from other considerations is clearly a new creation; further, Josh 1:11 explicitly mentions that the crossing will take place on the third day. If we follow up further on the analogy between the flood waters of Noah and the army of Joshua suggested by the second battle of Ai, discussed above, then we can see the conquest as God’s “flood” over the land of Canaan (not just Ai), with a new nation (Israel) appearing when the flood waters subside and Israel has rest. Since Noah’s flood and the crossing of the Red Sea are both connected typologically with the creation account (and with each other), the typological connection of the conquest with them is sufficient to justify its interpretation as a new creation.⁶²²

6.2.2 *Literalistic Fulfillments of Gen 3:15d*

We have seen from the first fulfillment of Gen 3:15 in the murder of Abel that the two seeds of Gen 3:15, as well as the nature of the conflict and its outcome are to be interpreted figuratively and eschatologically, not literally and in terms of our earthly existence. The “serpent” tempter is an evil angel, a spiritual being, thus does not have a “head” to be crushed, by which he would lose his life. His earthly representatives, however, wicked humans, do have heads, and there is some evidence that the literal crushing of their heads is played out in history as a picture showing that their defeat in battle is connected to the fulfillment of the curse on the serpent and his seed; some such

⁶²¹Woudstra, *Joshua*, 118.

⁶²²Michael Fishbane gives the typological connection between the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan as an example of “typologies of a historical nature,” and he gives the typological connection between creation and flood as an example of creation typology; as we have seen, however, they are all tied together in one creation-redemption typology (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 350-79).

episodes are discussed below. I refer to these as “literalistic” fulfillments because there is an aspect to the event which recalls the literal picture of a man striking a snake on its head given by Gen 3:15. At the same time, it is not a completely literal picture, since we are dealing with humans, not literal snakes.

Another kind of fulfillment does not deal with the actual crushing of someone’s head, but is accomplished rather by a play on words, using one of the key words from the curse on the serpent in such a way that might allude to it. For example, the city Hazor was known in the time of Joshua as “the head of all these kingdoms,” i.e., of the kingdoms which joined king Jabin in attacking Israel; Joshua took the city and burned it, and killed Jabin, (Josh 11:1-5, 10-11), thus “striking the head” of northern Canaan. At the same time, both Hazor and Jericho are near the Jordan river, at opposite ends (thus head and tail), so their destruction might represent the complete destruction of the serpent. Another example of allusion to Gen 3:15 by word play might be the name “snake” (Nahash) used by an Ammonite king attacking Israel in the days of Saul (1 Sam 11:1-2; 12:12). Conversely, Israel’s other name (Jacob) is from the same root as “heel,” so that when the nations attack Israel, they strike at the “heel,” so to speak. On an individual level, David speaks of his persecutors in language similar enough to Gen 3:15e to apparently lead the LXX translators (see § 1.2.2) to mistranslate הָשָׁן.⁶²³ Conversely, it is the “heel” (thus Jacob) which is the instrument of crushing the serpent’s head. Similarly, we have already noted the role of the “heel” of Joshua’s army in the battle of Ai.

When Joshua defeated the five king coalition at the battle of Gibeon, and brought the five kings out from the cave where they were hiding, he told the military chiefs of Israel to approach and put their feet on the necks of the kings (Josh 10:22-24). This lesson designed to give courage to the military leaders is explainable apart from Gen 3:15, and might well have been something the pagan kings themselves would do if they had been victorious.⁶²⁴ Consequently, this episode cannot serve as an argument for the identification of the two seeds of Gen 3:15 as (nominally) Israel and the nations. But since that identification has been accomplished elsewhere, we can see that the scene of the Israelite warriors stepping on the necks of vanquished kings, who are of the cursed “seed of the serpent,” recalls literalistically the picture of a man stepping on a snake’s head which Gen 3:15d-e calls to mind. These kings were then killed and hung on a tree, the fate which designates them as cursed by God according to God’s covenant law with Israel (Josh 10:26-27; cf. Deut 21:22-23). This episode, then, can be viewed as linking the curse on the serpent with the curses of the law of Moses. Conversely, the blessings of the law of Moses would be linked to the implied blessing to the victors in Gen 3:15.

⁶²³Ps 56:7 (6): “They watch my footsteps” (lit., “my heels;”), with the verb הָשָׁן with the enemy as subject used in vv. 2-3 (1-2). Ps 57:4 (3) also uses הָשָׁן for the enemy’s actions, and v. 7 (6) speaks of spreading a net for his feet (אֲרָבָה, not אֲרָבָה). Ps 58:4 (3) compares wickedness to snake venom.

⁶²⁴“A widespread ancient custom called for victorious kings to put their feet upon the necks of conquered enemies” (Woudstra, *Joshua*, 178). Woudstra also notes the similarity in thought to 1 Kgs 5:17 (3), where Solomon speaks of the Lord putting David’s enemies under the soles of his feet, and Ps 110:1. See *ANEP*, pls. 300, 315, 393.

A rebuilt Hazor and another king Jabin (now called king of Canaan) figure in a literalistic fulfillment of Gen 3:15d. Judges 4 describes the defeat of Jabin’s army under Sisera, following 20 years of oppression. Because Barak would not go to battle without Deborah, she predicted that the Lord would deliver Sisera over to a woman. He met his demise at the hands of Jael, who drove a tent peg through his temple while he slept. The song of Deborah follows in Judges 5. The narrative account and the song of celebration contain some parallels and contrasts with the fall narrative in general, and the curse on the serpent in particular.⁶²⁵

Both this episode and Genesis 3 involve an abdication of male leadership (Adam follows Eve’s lead, Barak will not lead without Deborah, Heber the Kenite separates from the Kenites allied with Israel) which gives women (Eve, Deborah, Jael) prominent roles; for evil in Genesis 3, for good here. While Jabin was cruelly oppressing Israel, there was peace between Jabin and the house of Heber the Kenite, husband of Jael (Judg 4:3, 17). As the establishment of enmity between the serpent and the woman by God was predicted in the curse on the serpent, here we see the introduction of enmity between another woman (or “seed of the woman,” Jael) and the seed of the serpent, Sisera. Deborah calls Jael תְּבֵרָה מְנַשִּׁים, “blessed among women” (Judg 5:24), which in the immediate context is a contrast to the cursed inhabitants of Meroz who would not join the battle (Judg 5:23), but also recalls (in contrast) the beginning of the curse on the serpent, “מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה . . . אָרוּר . . . above all beasts” (Gen 3:14). The contrast between Jael and the inhabitants of Meroz suggests that Jael acted from spiritual motives, thus as a true seed of the woman, although such is not stated. In Genesis 3 the serpent deceived the woman to bring about her downfall; here the woman deceives the serpent’s seed to bring about his downfall. In Genesis 3 the woman ate the fruit which opened her eyes and brought her death; here the serpent’s seed drank from the woman’s bowl, closed his eyes (slept), and died on the day he drank (cf. Gen 2:16). Deborah describes his manner of death in v. 26 in a way that recalls (literalistically) Gen 3:15d:

וְהִלְמָה סִיסְרָא She hammered⁶²⁶ Sisera,
מִחֲקָה רֹאשׁוֹ וּמִחֲצָה she shattered and crushed his head;
וְהִלְפָה רִקְתּוֹ she pierced his temple.

The verb מחך from the second line may also be placed at the beginning of the third line; “she shattered and pierced his temple.” It has also been suggested that it is an explanatory gloss on the *hapax* מחק,⁶²⁷ or that a following direct object dropped out of the text.⁶²⁸ We

⁶²⁵The song is often thought to contradict the narrative as it implies that Sisera “fell” as a result of what Jael did (v. 27); but “fall” as “die violently” occurs almost 100 times (BDB, 657; see Judg 8:10; 19:27; cf. 3:25; 4:22), and no one would suggest that the statement in the Mishnah that Goliath “fell by the sword” represents a different tradition than that found in 1 Samuel 17 (*m. Sota* 8.1 [Danby 302]).

⁶²⁶The translation “hammer” brings out the word play between the verb used here and the instrument Jael used (הַלְמִית, mentioned in the previous line).

⁶²⁷Barnabas Lindars, *Judges 1-5* (ed. A. D. H. Mayes; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 278. Its cognate in Ugaritic (*mḥs*) means, “strike, smite, wound,” and is used to describe Baal’s striking of Leviathan (i.e., *ltn*; Baal-Mot, *CTA* 5.i.1, 27; see Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 68-69). One of the other words used by Deborah in this verse (הִלְמָה) is used in Ugaritic (*hlm*) for Baal’s weapon striking Yam’s shoulders and head (Baal-Yam;

discussed *קח* in chap. II in establishing that words which may be translated “crush” may also be used more generally to indicate a “strike,” or “wound;” thus *שׁוּף* could be used for crushing the head as well as striking the heel (see §2.2.1). The conclusion of Deborah’s song, “Thus may all your enemies perish, O Lord” (v. 31), is consistent with the view that she alludes to Gen 3:15, since the crushing of the head predicted in the curse describes the fate of all those at enmity with the righteous seed.

A woman figures in another episode which could be considered a literalistic fulfillment of the curse on the serpent, the crushing of Abimelech’s head. Here again, there is also a more limited curse in view, the curse of Jotham, who is Abimelech’s half brother and sole survivor of Abimelech’s murder of Gideon’s seventy sons (Judg 9:5). Jotham likens Abimelech to a thornbush (v. 14), and calls him the son of Gideon’s slave girl (v. 18), who was apparently a Canaanite (cf. vv. 1-2, 28). Abimelech is thus cast in the line of Cain and Ishmael, murderer of his brothers and slave of sin; i.e., as seed of the serpent. Jotham’s curse calls for Abimelech and his subjects in Shechem and Beth Millo to destroy each other (v. 20), and was fulfilled in Abimelech’s case when a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head, crushing his skull (v. 53); fatally wounded, he asks his servant to kill him so he will avoid the disgrace of being killed by a woman (v. 54). The verb for “crush” is the *hiphil* of *רצץ*; the *piel* is used in Ps 74:14 for the crushing of Leviathan’s heads, which I argued in the last chapter was an allusion to Gen 3:15d. I do not see compounded allusions to Genesis 3 in this case; instead I would see the point of the narrative to liken Abimelech to Sisera. In part the narrative shows how Abimelech follows his father Gideon in terms of his military tactics: both divide their army into three parts, and both tell their troops to emulate their own actions (Judg 7:16-17; 9:43, 48). But Abimelech follows the faith and practices of the Canaanites in Shechem, rather than those of his father, and so his end is like the Canaanite seed of the serpent, Sisera; crushed in the head by a woman (in agreement with the wish with which the Song of Deborah concludes). His father, on the other hand, like Abraham dies in a good old age (Judg 8:32).

The Philistine giant Goliath was also struck fatally in the head (1 Samuel 17). This episode is one in a long series of conflicts between Israel and the Philistines, in which the Israelites were often the losers. As was mentioned in chap. IV, the Philistines are described in Ezek 25:15 as harboring an “ancient enmity” against Israel, an enmity traceable indirectly to that predicted in Gen 3:15. The ancestry of the Philistines is traced from Ham and Mizraim (= Egypt; Gen 10:6, 13). As the promised seed, Israel should have dominion, but instead the wicked Philistines were accustomed to ruling Israel,⁶²⁹

CTA 2.iv.24; *ylm.qdqd.zbl.ym* [also lines 14, 16, 21]; see Gibson, *ibid.*, 44). Klein says that *קח* is “Prob. a secondary form of *רצץ*” (*Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*, 336).

⁶²⁸ *BHS*, 408.

⁶²⁹ 1 Sam 4:9; “Be strong and be men, Philistines, lest you serve the Hebrews, as they have served you; be men and fight.”

and Israel was accustomed to being ruled by them.⁶³⁰ To keep Israel under subjection, the Philistines monopolized metal-working technology in order to prevent the Israelites from making weapons;⁶³¹ in this, there is a parallel with the technological superiority of the cursed descendants of Cain which we discussed in chap. III (see Gen 4:22). So superior were the Philistines that many Israelites defected to them (1 Sam 14:21).

Goliath proposed a battle of champions to settle the war between armies. He was a giant, and had scaled armor (שָׁרְיוֹן קֶשֶׁתָּיִם). Scales (same word) are also found on Pharaoh described as the great dragon (or crocodile – תַּנִּינִים; Ezek 29:3-4). Goliath was covered from head to legs with bronze protective equipment, and had a bronze javelin: the word bronze is used four times in describing this, and perhaps it is more than coincidence that this word shares the same consonants as the common Hebrew word for snake (1 Sam 17:5-6; cf. Num 21:9). The description of him as a champion is literally, “man of the (2) between” (אִישׁ הַבְּנָיִם), a man who advances ahead of his own front lines in battle; 1 Sam 17:4); the preposition “between” is found four times in the curse on the serpent.

Despite apparently having all the technological and physical advantages, Goliath was felled by a stone striking his head, which was then cut off with his own sword (vv. 48-51). In this case, the human agent involved (David) clearly qualifies as being of the seed of the woman in the figurative, spiritual sense. This episode of individual combat could be considered another example of the role of an individual champion being the agent of victory for the rest of the promised seed, and of the leader of the forces of wickedness as being the particular object of the curse. The role of David in fulfilling Gen 3:15 will be explored at greater length below.

6.2.3 Evidence From Habakkuk 3

יֵצְאֶתָּ לְיִשְׁעַ עֲמֹד	13a	You went forth for the salvation of your people
לְיִשְׁעַ אֶת־מְשִׁיחֶךָ	b	For the salvation of your anointed.
מִחֹצֶת רֹאשׁ מִבַּיִת רָשָׁע	c	You struck the head of the house of the wicked one;
עֲרוֹת יָסוֹד עַד־צִוְנָאֵר טָלָה	d	Stripping him from legs to neck. [<i>Selah</i>]
נִלְקַבְתָּ בְּמִטְוֵי רֹאשׁ	14a	With his own shafts you pierced his head,
פָּרְזוּ וְסִעְרוּ לְהַפְיֵצְנֵנוּ	b	when his warriors came storming to scatter us,
עֲלִיצְתֶּם כְּמוֹ־לְאָכַל עֲנִי בְּמִסְתָּר	c	exulting as if they would devour the poor in secret.
דָּרְבַתְּ בַיָּם סוּטִיךָ	15a	You trod on the sea with your horses,
חִמְרָה מַיִם רַבִּים	b	churning up the many waters.

The prayer of Habakkuk (Hab 3:1-19) is like Psalm 74 in that it uses language which is similar to and arguably derived from Gen 3:15 to refer to God’s past deeds on

⁶³⁰ Judg 15:11, 12; “Three thousand men from Judah went down to the cave in the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, ‘Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us? ... We have come down to bind you and to hand you over to the Philistines.’”

⁶³¹ 1 Sam 13:19; “No blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, for the Philistines said, ‘Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears.’”

behalf of Israel (vv. 13-14); the difference here being that the crushing of the head of the wicked seems to refer primarily to the conquest rather than the crossing of the sea. Another similarity with Psalm 74 is that Habakkuk's prayer includes a lament (in advance), here not of the burning of the temple but of the demise of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians (v. 16). Also like Ps 74:12-17, the chapter has been said to be adapted from the story of the battle between Marduk and Tiamat,⁶³² or between Baal and Yam or Mot,⁶³³ or all of these.⁶³⁴ J. H. Eaton says the prayer is cultic and has no reference to Israel's past, but was to be recited annually at a pre-exilic Autumn temple festival, where "King and people were assembled to pray for 'salvation', rains and fertility on the one hand, deliverance from social and political oppression on the other. An experience of theophany, mediated to faith in some customary rite, was the earnest or pledge of such salvation."⁶³⁵ Most of Eaton's essay is taken up with a discussion of the text; unlike many commentators who suggest several dozen changes in MT, Eaton's conclusion is "that we are hardly in a position to improve on [MT]'s consonantal tradition, the possibilities of which are often not sufficiently explored; in a few places, however, a likely alternative needs to be borne in mind."⁶³⁶

Cassuto said that Hebrew thought introduced a national element into the ancient Canaanite traditions, so that (for example) whereas the Baal and Yam story speaks of Yam as Baal's enemy, Ps 92:10 (9) uses similar language to speak of human workers of iniquity as the Lord's enemies who will be destroyed ("Behold, your enemies, O Lord, Behold your enemies will perish; All the doers of iniquity will be scattered").⁶³⁷ Cassuto notes the similarity to Ps 74:12 in the use of the roots פִּעַל (work, v. 2) and יָשַׁע (save, v. 8, [also v. 13]). He also sees a number of parallels with the Ugaritic material. Resheph in v. 5 (translated "pestilence" or "fire-bolt") corresponds to the Canaanite destroying deity *Ršp*. The verb יָתַר in v. 6 is used for God's casting down of human enemies, corresponding to the Ugaritic story's mention of *Kothar-wa- Hasis* casting (*ytr*) the

⁶³² Especially William A. Irwin, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," *JNES* 1 (1942): 10-40; *ibid.*, "The Mythological Background of Habakkuk, Chapter 3," *JNES* 15 (1956): 47-50. In the second work, Irwin allows a "single distinctively Canaanite feature" in Habakkuk 3, namely, "the mention of rivers as well as sea" (p. 50).

⁶³³ Umberto Cassuto, "Chapter III of Habakkuk and the Ras Shamra Texts," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies, vol. 2: Bible and Ancient Oriental Texts* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975; original 1938), 3-15; William F. Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," 2-18.

⁶³⁴ Theodore Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3* (HSM 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

⁶³⁵ J. H. Eaton, "The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 168.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 148. Albright counts his own emendations of the text at 38, plus five insertions, comparing to 37 for Procksch (with 3 omissions), and 33 for Horst (6 omissions; "The Psalm of Habakkuk," 10).

⁶³⁷ Cassuto, "Chapter III of Habakkuk," 7-8. Cassuto refers to III AB 8-9, which he translates, "Lo, thine enemies, O Baal, / lo, thine enemies wilt thou pierce through, / lo, wilt thou destroy thine adversaries" (cf. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 43).

monster-helpers of Mot into the sea. The mention of rivers and sea in v. 8 alludes to the foe of Baal, and the answer to the rhetorical question is that the ancient deed is being renewed in the defeat of Israel's oppressors. The obscure expression מַטּוֹת אֶמְר in v. 9a may allude to the name of one of the clubs used against Yam, called 'ymr. V. 9c he translates "The rivers [that is, the spirit who personifies the rivers] Thou didst shatter upon the ground." Vv. 13-14 describe the destruction of the wicked by blows to the head and neck (i.e., between the shoulders), following the pattern of Baal's clubbing of Yam, and the longing of the enemy to devour the poor in secret is reminiscent of the insatiable appetite of Mot or Sheol. In v. 15 the defeat of the present foe "is described with details reminiscent of the punishment of the primordial enemy."⁶³⁸ While Cassuto says that the song refers to the defeat of Israel's enemies, he does not relate it to any particular enemy or time in Israelite history.

Irwin said that the Ugaritic parallels "indicate no more than a common store of cosmic mythology of the ancient Near East," and he regarded the parallels to *Enuma Elish* as much closer, and freely emended the text to make these parallels more explicit. For example v. 2b, the MT of which Irwin regards as "patently ludicrous," is emended to say something about Yahweh's defeat of Rahab in battle, and "years" is a corruption of *tannîn*, the chaos dragon, and "make known" is a corruption of תָּרַע (cf. רָצַץ in Ps 74:14). V. 3b is said to parallel the celebration of Marduk's glory before he sets out for battle; the use of lightning, pestilence, the bow and arrow, are found (or implied) in both accounts. Tiamat screamed in fury; so the deep (תְּהוֹם) roared (v. 10c). The flashing of arrows causes the Lord's enemies to flee, then he tramples the nations and crushes the head; likewise Marduk shoots an arrow and tears open Tiamat's belly, disperses her helpers, then tramples them underfoot. The crushing of the head is expressed with the Akkadian cognate of מַטָּ (Irwin and others amend the suffix to read "with your club"), and the agreement with MT is close, including the lack of suffix on "head:" *ina miṭišu la padi unatti muḥḥa* ("with his unsparing club he split [her] skull").⁶³⁹

Albright viewed Habakkuk 3 as a composition by Habakkuk derived from four sources; part 3 consists of vv. 8-15 and is adapted from an early Canaanite poem celebrating the triumph of Baal over River (the apparent plural is a mistake for enclitic *mem*) / Sea / Death (all variant names of the same primordial chaos dragon). The deep (Tehom), along with Sun and Moon are personified, but that does not mean that they are considered deities, or angels, by Habakkuk. Albright translates vv. 13b-14a as follows: "Thou didst smite the head of wicked Death, / Destroying (him) tail-end to neck; / Thou didst pierce <his> head in the fight, / While his followers (?) stormed ... (?)." "Death" ("obviously original") is read instead of "house" based on the LXX (βαλεῖς εἰς κεφαλὰς ἀνόμων θάνατον; "You cast death on the heads of lawless men"). "Tail-end" is based on analogy from Akkadian, where *išdu* means foundation as well as having the "derived sense 'tail-end, fundament, thigh,'" likewise the Ugaritic cognate 'iṣd means thigh, and

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 8-14. See Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 82, lns. 18-19; 81, lns. 50-52.

⁶³⁹ Irwin, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," 13-19, 28-30. See ln. 130 of Tablet IV of *Enuma Elish*.

Hebrew רַגְלֵי the slopes of a mountain. “We have a vivid sketch of the prostrate body of a dragon.” “Fight” is read for “staff/club” based on Arabic *mṭw*.⁶⁴⁰

Hiebert views Habakkuk 3 as a pre-monarchic divine warrior victory hymn in which God customarily goes forth from his sanctuary in south Transjordan (not Zion) to do battle for his people, who are allied with the Midianites mentioned in v. 7 (he sees the reference as positive of their awe of God, not an expression of their terror, the text being corrupt). Both human and cosmic enemies are in view, but vv. 13-14 deal with the destruction of “the wicked one,” which is “either an original epithet for the dragon of chaos ... or a later substitution for the actual name of the dragon in order to mute the high mythology.” He amends v. 13 and translates the passage: “You struck the back of the wicked one, / You laid him bare, tail-end to neck. / (14) You pierced with your shafts his head.”⁶⁴¹

The motive for emending v. 13 to remove “head” is to make the verse more like the Ugaritic story of the slaying of Sea-River (who is first clubbed in the back and then in the head) and the account in *Enuma Elish* of the slaying of Tiamat by Marduk (Tiamat is first torn open with an arrow, then trampled on, then her head is smashed). “Head” is in MT and all witnesses, but Hiebert believes it encroached in from v. 14. Direct evidence for “back” is lacking, but the Greek reading “death” instead of “house” presumes Hebrew מוֹת , and perhaps בְּמוֹת (the LXX taking ב as a preposition), which might have been due to mistaking בְּמַת (“back”) for a plural (“high places”). MT would then be due to metathesis of the first two letters in בְּמוֹת , and the confusion of *waw* and *yod* (similarly the targumist read בֵּית for בְּמוֹתֵי in v. 19). Like Irwin, Hiebert draws attention to the similarity with *Enuma Elish*, IV.130, except that while Irwin saw v. 14a as secondary, Hiebert sees it as the original reference to the crushing of the head, even though נִקַּב does not really mean crush or smash. He draws attention to the fact that Marduk stands on Tiamat’s buttocks (*išdasa*) to smash her head, and this agrees with the sequence of the mention of the tail-end (סוּדִי) in v. 13d followed by the piercing of the head in v. 14a.

Irwin justified the mythological interpretation of Habakkuk 3 in part as follows: “For there staring us in the face are the words, ‘Thou didst crush the head . . . ,’ a statement repeated and expanded in 14a to read: ‘Thou didst smash with thy club the head. . . .’ What comment is necessary?” My own reaction to vv. 13-14 is similar, except that I would identify the dragon with the serpent of Gen 3:15, understanding him to be to some extent correctly represented in the pagan myths to which modern commentators refer, and I would relate the prophet’s description here to the fulfillment of the crushing of the serpent’s head accomplished in the history of Israel, primarily in the conquest of Canaan. Unlike the mythological approach, we do not need to decide which verses apply to the defeat of the primeval dragon and which verses refer to the defeat of Israel’s enemies. Nor do we need to try and “demythologize” the passage by explaining the allusions to the wicked one as simply metaphorical references to Israel’s enemies: the

⁶⁴⁰Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” 8-12, 15, n. ff, 17, nn. oo, qq. Gibson translates *išd* as “leg” (*Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 51 (“Palace of Baal,” 3.D.56). Ugaritic *ysd* does mean “foundation.”

⁶⁴¹Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 8-9, 40. The remainder of v. 14 he regards as too corrupt to restore with confidence, but he feels it must have something to do with the disposal of the dragon’s body.

supernatural foe of God is crushed not in the pre-creation past (a time which is certainly not alluded to at all in this chapter), but in history when his earthly offspring (the enemies of Israel) is crushed. In part, this interpretation depends on the validity of the approach adopted in the last chapter concerning passages like Ps 74:12-14, and in part by the plausibility of relating Habakkuk's prayer to the defeat of Israel's enemies, primarily in the conquest, as I propose to do now.

V. 3 in this interpretation does not describe God's habitual going forth from a southern sanctuary to fight in Canaan and then return, but relates back to the initial post-Exodus movements of the ark and the theophanic pillar of fire/cloud from Sinai, when Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD, / that your enemies might be scattered, / that those who hate you might flee before you" (Num 10:35).⁶⁴² The first resting place of the theophanic pillar after leaving Sinai is the wilderness of Paran (Num 10:12). Teman is somewhere in South Edom, perhaps used to stand for Edom, another place on the path from Sinai to the promised land,⁶⁴³ or Teman here could have its more general meaning of "south." Deut 33:2 is often compared to Hab 3:3. There Moses says God came from Sinai, dawned from Seir (Edom), and shone forth from Mt. Paran; in context he must refer to the events described in Exodus-Numbers. He goes on to bless the tribes, then concludes with the promise that God will drive out the enemies of Israel before them, and they will trample down their high places (vv. 26-29). That Habakkuk 3 starts and ends the same way (cf. Hab 3:19) would certainly be consistent with the view that Hab 3:3 has an historical reference to the pre-conquest activities of God.

Such an interpretation would also explain why Habakkuk, successor to Moses in the office of prophet, would plead, "In wrath remember mercy," for the works of God in the wilderness were not only against the enemies of Israel, but also against complaining and unbelieving Israelites, for whom Moses pled for mercy. Following the reference to the ark moving to Paran, we have fire burning up some of the complainers, the people being struck with a great plague, Miriam being made leprous, the threatened destruction of the whole nation, the death of the ten spies by a plague, defeat by Amalekites and Canaanites, the splitting open of the ground to swallow Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their company, and a great plague with thousands dead.⁶⁴⁴ Habakkuk has already been told that the Babylonians have been appointed to bring about divine judgment on Judah (Hab 1:6, 12).

⁶⁴²So O. Palmer Robertson, "Habakkuk depicts God in movement from Sinai through Edom on the way to the possession of the land for his people" (*The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 222). *Targum Jonathan* also puts the time as "when he gave the law to his people" (Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* [The Aramaic Bible, vol. 14; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989], 156).

⁶⁴³Num 20:23; 21:4; Jer 49:20; Obadiah 9.

⁶⁴⁴Num 11:1-2, 10, 33; 12:10; 13:3, 26; 14:12, 37, 45; 16:20, 31-35, 46. The appearance of the glory of God or the pillar of cloud is mentioned along with these judgments in Num 12:5; 14:10; 16:19, 42.

V. 5 refers to fire (or lightning, or plague, fever) and pestilence as accompanying God on his march from the south;⁶⁴⁵ such weapons could be used by God against the enemies of Israel as they were used against the Egyptians (Deut 7:15), or they could be used against disobedient Israel (Deut 28:27, 60; 32:24). Vv. 6-7 refer to the fearful reaction of the nations (specifically the Midianites) at God’s display of power; again, this is easily seen as a reference to the melting in fear by the nations when they heard about the death of the Egyptians, the crossing of the sea, and the crossing of the Jordan. The Midianites were allies of the Moabites, terrified at the advance of Israel (Num 22:3-4), and we do not need to amend the text to make the Midianites (objects of God’s wrath in the wilderness and in the time of Gideon) co-worshippers of Israel’s God in a pre-monarchic Israel, as Hiebert does (see above).

V. 8 is usually taken as a rhetorical question with the obvious answer “no;” God’s wrath is not against rivers and seas. One could see this question as prompted by Exod 15:8; “by the breath of your nostrils (רִיחֶיךָ) the waters were heaped up,” since רִיחֶיךָ also means anger. Hiebert, however, thinks that on the basis of the mention of God’s treading on the sea in v. 15 that the answer to v. 8 must be “yes.” But there is no conflict with v. 15 if we view the waters in v. 8 as being merely the components of the created universe. Rivers (plural) may be taken literally as the rivers “struck” from Exodus to Joshua, i.e., the Nile and the Jordan (or the Jordan with its tributaries), and the sea would then be the Red Sea. God “struck” the Nile with the staffs of Moses and Aaron to turn it to blood, then he struck the Red Sea with the east wind to dry it up (again with the staff of Moses symbolically involved), then he struck the Jordan River, this time with the feet of the priests carrying the ark containing the staff of Aaron (Josh 3:13-16), and dried it up. These symbolic strikings of the waters are symbolic of God’s striking of the nations (therefore also symbolic of his striking of their spiritual father), as argued in the last chapter, and they give rise to the poetic figures such as found in v. 15. Robertson suggests another historical explanation for the reference to rivers, which, however, does not explain the reference to the sea. Cushan Rishathaim of Aram of the Two Rivers was the first oppressor of Israel (Judg 3:8), and the trembling of the tent curtains of Midian could refer to the dream overheard by Gideon in which the loaf of barley bread tumbles into camp and strikes a tent (Judg 7:13).⁶⁴⁶

V. 9 (“you did cleave the earth with rivers”) seems to refer to flooding river waters from sudden storms as another of God’s weapons;⁶⁴⁷ such a weapon was used

⁶⁴⁵Fire (or lightning, or plague; רִיחֶיךָ) and pestilence are either personified for the purpose of poetry, or perhaps the destroying angels mentioned in Ps 78:49 (אֱלֹהֵי הַרְעָה is lightning in v. 48). Hiebert assumes that the widely known deity רִיחֶיךָ is in view here (*God of My Victory*, 92).

⁶⁴⁶Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 228. The Targum also made the application to Cushan Rishathaim and the Midianites in the time of Gideon.

⁶⁴⁷Cassuto argued from Ugaritic parallels for the translation “The rivers [that is, the spirit who personifies the rivers] Thou didst shatter upon the ground” (“Habakkuk 3 and the Ras Shamra Texts,” 12). As J. H. Eaton notes, “The usual translation, however, accurately represents the effect of early winter’s sudden downpours on the parched earth” (“Habakkuk 3,” 152).

against Sisera (Judg 5:19-21), whose demise I argued above alluded literalistically to Gen 3:15d, and of course such minor floods remind one of the great flood of Noah by which God destroyed the first world, and the waters of the Red Sea which drowned the Egyptian army (i.e., the instruments used in previous fulfillments of Gen 3:15d). V. 11 most naturally seems to refer to the miracle of the sun and moon at the battle of Gibeon: “Sun and moon stood (עמד) in their places.” עמד is one of the words used to describe the miracle in Josh 10:13. V. 12 describes God as marching (צעד, as in Judg 5:4) through the land in indignation, trampling (or threshing; שדד) the nations. The figure of the priests bearing the ark “trampling” the Jordan (see above) is sufficient to explain this description of God as treading wherever the holy army treads, but we also have the theophany of the “Commander of the Lord’s army” who appears to Joshua as an armed man in Josh 5:13, and instructs him on how to conquer Jericho.

As in Ps 74:12, the crushing of the head(s) of the enemy (v. 13) is prefaced by a description of these acts as acts of salvation (Hab 3:13a-b). The objects of this salvation are God’s people and his anointed. As the patriarchs are called anointed ones in Ps 105:15, conceivably the whole people of God could be so described (as they are collectively called the servant of the Lord in Isa 49:3, etc.), or David himself could be in view, since the conquest was advanced most significantly by him. While some commentators amend the verse to make it more like the Ugaritic or Babylonian material, Robertson notes that the passage as it stands is reminiscent of other passages that we have related to Gen 3:15; Num 24:17 and Judg 5:26, as well as to Ps 110:5-6, which will be discussed later in this chapter.⁶⁴⁸

Several issues are involved in translating and interpreting v. 13c. Possibly Albright regarded the LXX reading “death” for “house” as “obviously original” because he could not interpret “house of the wicked one” in line with the Ugaritic interpretation. While “death” could be personified (and is in Hab 2:5), it is not used elsewhere for the serpent-dragon; neither is “the wicked one” by itself, but I would agree with Hiebert that it is an apt description, and “house(hold) of the wicked one” would be an apt description of the seed of the serpent, whose head is decreed to be crushed in the curse on the serpent by God’s house (cf. Num 12:7). But “head” here could mean a leader (head of the house) who is crushed, rather than a part of the body, or a play on the two meanings could be involved.⁶⁴⁹ The word “head” could be used here, without suffix, to point back to Gen 3:15, even though here it means “leader” rather than a part of the body. At the same time, there would be no objection to seeing an allusion to *Enuma Elish*, as long as it is understood that the prophet describes the true God smashing the head of the dragon in Israel’s history, rather than in Babylonian mythology.

⁶⁴⁸Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 239.

⁶⁴⁹Sometimes an architectural interpretation is given, in keeping with the mention of the foundation. Head would then be the top of the house stricken off by the blow, followed by the laying bare of the foundation to the rock (ציר; for צוּרָר): “‘Laying bare’ of a hidden foundation depicts radical destruction” (R. Mosis, *TDOT*, 6.111); cf. Ps 137:7; Isa 23:13; Jer 51:58. Hiebert notes, however, that the verb מָחַץ is always used of bodily wounds (*God of My Victory*, 39); Ps 68:24 (23) is a possible exception, though it is often amended there to רָחַץ, “wash.”

The preposition *min* is somewhat problematic for the translation “head of the house,” which elsewhere is expressed with the simple construct. The phrase could refer to a leader from the house of the wicked one. Because “head of the house” is such a common phrase, one could see the *min* as actually enclitic *mem* (after “head”), which occurs most commonly in the middle of a construct chain and in poetry (as here).⁶⁵⁰

Whatever the exact translation should be, and allowing for the possibility of textual corruption in vv. 13-14, the twofold repetition of the noun “head” without suffix, and the use of the verb *ḥm* make an allusion to Gen 3:15d in connection with the conquest plausible. The Canaanites (and other enemies) are the seed of the serpent, i.e., the house of the wicked one. As Joshua’s army marches through the land, God “marches through the land,” and “tramples the nations” (v. 12), he crushes heads (kings and military leaders, or people in general) under their feet throughout the land. By extension the Canaanite land itself might also be called the house of the wicked one.⁶⁵¹ Or, Habakkuk could have in mind the interpretation suggested above for the crossing of the Jordan as symbolic of slaying the serpent-dragon in the defeat of Israel’s enemies from Jericho at the south end of the Jordan (thus the tail-end), to Hazor the head in the north (Josh 11:10). As Israel entered the land from the east, the picture would be, as Albright said, that of a slain prostrate foe.

It is possible that Habakkuk is also thinking of some of the literalistic fulfillments of Gen 3:15 in connection with the conquest that we have discussed above, such as the demise of Sisera. Sisera was commander of Jabin’s army; Jabin was “king of Canaan,” who reigned in Hazor (the “head” previously struck by Joshua). Sisera’s head was also struck fatally; it was also pierced with his own shaft, so to speak (Hab 3:14a), since Jael’s tent peg was part of the house of Heber the Kenite which was supposed to be allied with Sisera. One of the words for Jael’s hammer (*מִקְרָת*; Judg 4:21) is from the same root as “pierce” in Hab 3:14a. Abimelech, too, met his demise from a former ally; the woman who threw the stone on him, crushing his head, and he was pierced through by his own armor bearer (Judg 9:52-53). Goliath, after being felled by David, was finished off with his own sword, and the word order of the sentence describing this is similar to Hab 3:14a; i.e., verb, indirect object, direct object: “And he cut off with it his head” (1 Sam 17:51; *וַיִּכְרַת-בָּהּ אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ*). Goliath was also stripped “legs to neck” (not legs to head, since his head was cut off), as is inferred from the known weight of his scale-armor (1 Sam 17:5), the statement that David put Goliath’s warrior-equipment (*בְּלִי*) in his tent (1 Sam 17:54), and the fact that Goliath’s body would be eaten by scavengers (1 Sam 17:46), while his head was kept as a trophy. As we noted above, the scales of Goliath’s armor could be seen as part of a portrayal of Goliath as a dragon figure, a *tannîn*; similarly the fourfold use of the word “bronze” in describing his armor and other equipment may allude to his

⁶⁵⁰Horace D. Hummel, “Enclitic *Mem* in Early Northwest Semitic, Especially Hebrew,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 85-107; esp. 92-95; 97-99.

⁶⁵¹The extension is based on the idea of “house” as “place of residence” (see Harry A. Hoffner, *TDOT*, 2.109-13). “House of slavery” seems to be an equivalent of “land of Egypt” in Exod 20:2.

serpent father, and his name sounds like “skull;” he is a “head” from the house of the wicked one.⁶⁵²

Thus we may substantially agree with the “dragon interpretation” described above, except that the dragon is defeated by God when Israel’s enemies (or an individual champion or leader) are defeated by Israel (or by an individual champion, or leader). It is not that the prophet copies the description of the victory from mythology, but rather that God ordains history so that the event follows the mythological pattern and takes place in history, not mythology (such an interpretation of the Red Sea crossing was given in the last chapter), and the prophet recognizes the polemical lesson and records it. In Habakkuk 3, then, we may have another example where it is more fruitful to give attention to the prose narrative of Israel’s wars in interpreting obscure Hebrew poetry than to the myths of its neighbors, helpful as they may be at times. It seems ironic that Hab 3:13-14 should be emended to make them more closely follow the Ugaritic myths, while the verbatim allusion to Josh 10:13 is dismissed as coincidence.⁶⁵³

Besides these literalistic fulfillments, there are many cases where Israel’s enemies were destroyed by each other, episodes which might figuratively be described as the enemy’s head being pierced with his own shaft. Since Habakkuk has mentioned the Midianites, one thinks naturally of the Midianites who destroyed each other (Judg 7:22).⁶⁵⁴

According to Eaton, the remainder of v. 14, is “perhaps the hardest problem of the whole chapter.” He follows Driver’s suggestion that עליצתם is to be explained by Arabic as “throat,” and that כמו is a verb that goes with it: “Their throats crave.”⁶⁵⁵ While any translation is somewhat speculative due to the problems in MT, the diverging versions, and the obscure word פרוו, it is hard to see how the second part of v. 14 can support the mythological interpretation since on that view, as Hiebert says, it “must contain a description of the annihilation of the dragon.”⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵²In addition to the serpent-dragon portrayal, Goliath’s fate is likened by David to those of the lion and bear David had killed (1 Sam 17:36), and Goliath says to David, “Am I a dog?” (v. 43).

⁶⁵³Hiebert notes that in Josh 10:12-13, Hab 3:11 has its “closest parallel in the Hebrew Bible;” even so, there is no “specific historical allusion” here. The coincidence is to be explained by the view (behind both texts) that the sun and moon are part of the Lord’s army, and “appear together in the sky in positions considered fortuitous astrologically, when the divine warrior goes into battle” (as if God needs luck on his side; *God of My Victory*, 99-100).

⁶⁵⁴Eaton mentions a number of other cases; Ps 9:16 (15); 10:2; 35:8; 37:14-15; 2 Chr 20:23 (“Habakkuk 3,” 155).

⁶⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 155-56. He translates: “With their own weapons thou splittest the heads of his retinue, / As they whirl on to crush me, / Their throats craving to devour / The poor in the darkness” (*ibid.*, 146).

⁶⁵⁶Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 104-05. Some of the roots are “correct” for such a reading (such as טער, for the wind of God), but the suffixes are wrong. Because of the number of allusions to Judges 4-5 in this passage, the usage of פְּרוּוֹן (peasantry?, warriors?) in Judg 5:7, 11 may somehow explain פרוו in Hab 3:14, but the meaning is not obvious in Judges, either (see, e.g., the discussion in J. Alberto Soggins, *Judges: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981], 86).

The prophet goes on to speak in v. 15 of God's treading upon the sea with his horses. In other contexts, such language might allude to the crossing of the sea and the defeat of the Egyptians, typologically linked to the conquest. In this context, however, it may be seen as continuing the conquest celebration as a defeat of the dragon; just as the drying up of the Jordan is symbolic of the defeat of Jericho and Hazor, so the defeat of the Philistines and of other sites along the Mediterranean Sea could be described as trampling on the sea. The Canaanites might be particularly in view, since they were said to dwell along the sea and the Jordan (Num 13:29).

6.2.4 *David and the Fulfillment of Gen 3:15*

We have already discussed David's role in the literalistic fulfillment of Gen 3:15d, the slaying of Goliath. The success and celebration of David's early exploits aroused the anger, jealousy, suspicion, and fear of Saul, who saw David as a threat to his dynasty, and began making attempts on David's life (1 Sam 18:8-27). As the divinely ordained enmity is usually accomplished by evidence that the Lord has favored the righteous seed, so is the case here. Saul was aware that the Lord favored David, just as Cain was aware that the Lord favored Abel, and his reaction was the same: "When Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David ... Saul became even more afraid of David, and Saul became David's perpetual enemy" (1 Sam 18:28-29). Saul's son Jonathan is a contrast to his father, showing how the righteous respond to a demonstration of God's favor on someone else: "You will be king over Israel, and I will be next to you" (1 Sam 23:17). Saul's murderous spirit even led him to order the death of eighty five priests of the Lord on the suspicion that Ahimelech had helped David against Saul. Appropriately, no one but an Edomite was willing to carry out his command (1 Sam 21:1-9; 22:11-19). The enmity between righteous David and Saul the murderer therefore is another fulfillment of the prediction of such enmity in Gen 3:15, following the pattern of fulfillment from Cain and Abel onwards.

After David became king and determined to build a temple for the Lord, he is told that he will not be the one to build a temple (house), but that the Lord will build a house (i.e., dynasty) for him (2 Sam 7:11-13). David is promised offspring and a perpetual kingdom, paralleling the two aspects of the blessing (fruitfulness and dominion) given to Adam and Eve, to Noah, and to the patriarchs (see chap. IV). David's prayer response includes an exclamation (or question) which has been subject to a wide range of interpretations, and the texts in 2 Sam 7:19 (shown first below) and 1 Chr 17:17 are also quite different:

וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הָאָדָם⁶⁵⁷ And this is the law of man.

וַיֵּרְאֵנִי כְּתוֹר הָאָדָם הַמַּעֲלָה (?) And you see me as the form (?) of the Adam to arise (?)

Perhaps the most commonly accepted suggestion concerning this portion of 2 Sam 7:19 is that the text is corrupt. Keil and Delitzsch take the text as is and explain, "The law of man' is the law which determines or regulates the conduct of man;" i.e., in giving this

⁶⁵⁷ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 350. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., translates MT similarly, though he does not think the text is correct (*II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* [AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984], 233).

promise to David, God is acting according to the supreme law which man should live by, the law of love towards others. So the Chronicles passage: “Thou sawest (*i.e.* visitedst me, or didst deal with me) according to the manner of man.”⁶⁵⁸ A. A. Anderson also tries to take the 2 Samuel 7 text as it stands: “This is truly a divine revelation to mankind,” which is taken to mean, “This stability of the royal line is the will (תּוֹרָה) of God, and it has implications for the whole mankind.”⁶⁵⁹ W. Kaiser says “David understands that promise as being ‘a charter for all humanity,’” which is “a renewal of the ancient promise given in Eden [Gen 3:15], to the patriarchs and at the Exodus.”⁶⁶⁰ I would agree with Keil and Delitzsch’s paraphrase since זאת תּוֹרָה occurs very commonly and always means “these are the regulations concerning.”⁶⁶¹ But I would interpret the regulations for man’s conduct as a reference to the blessing given to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28), which C. Briggs was quoted in § 1.8.6 as calling “the divine plan for mankind.” David could recognize this because of the themes of offspring and dominion given to them, to Noah, and to the patriarchs.⁶⁶² The relevance of this interpretation to the present dissertation is that I have related Gen 1:28 to Gen 3:15, interpreting the latter as in part a post-fall version of the former; it is not all of humanity which will rule over and subdue the animals and the rest of creation, but it is the righteous (nominally Israel in the Old Testament) that will rule over and subdue the serpent’s seed, the wicked (nominally the nations in the Old Testament). That 2 Samuel 8 goes on to list all the nations subdued by David could be seen as confirmation of this line of reasoning. The summary statement (2 Sam 8:11) uses the same word for “subdue” as is used in Gen 1:28: “King David dedicated these also to the Lord, ... from all the nations which he had subdued” (כָּבַשׁ). 2 Samuel 8 mentions the Philistines, Moab, the king of Zobah, the Arameans from Damascus, Ammon, Amalek, and Edom as among these nations. An indication of their identification as offspring of the serpent is accomplished by word-play in 2 Samuel 10, where Hanun son of Nahash (“Snake”) the Ammonite humiliates the servants of David by cutting off their garments, uncovering their nakedness like Ham and like the serpent of Genesis 3.⁶⁶³ Ironically, Hanun’s father, “Snake” himself had showed kindness toward

⁶⁵⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Samuel*, 350.

⁶⁵⁹ A. A. Anderson, 2 *Samuel* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 124, 126-27.

⁶⁶⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Promise Doctrine and Jesus,” *Trinity Journal* 4 (1975): 64. That Kaiser is referring to Gen 3:15 is made clear on pp. 60-61.

⁶⁶¹ Lev 6:2, 7, 18 [9, 14, 25]; 7:1, 11; 11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:2 (with verb), 32, 57; 15:32; Num 5:29; 6:13, 21; 19:14, and Ezek 43:12 (2X). זאת תּוֹרָה (“this is the law,” not in construct) occurs in Lev 7:37; 14:54; Num 19:14 (with אָצֶר); and Deut 4:44.

⁶⁶² Of course, David (or even the deuteronomist) is not supposed to know about Gen 1:28 or the passages beginning with “this is the law of,” since they are part of P, but according to 1 Chr 15:13, David had recently familiarized himself with the Levitical regulations (after the death of Uzzah), and Psalm 8 (ascribed to David) is in large part a meditation on Gen 1:26-28 (as discussed in the next chapter).

David (2 Sam 10:2); as was the case with the Gibeonites in Joshua and the Philistines in Genesis, some had the sense to bless the one blessed by God (so Toi, 2 Sam 8:10).

In addition to the similarity in theme between the promises to David and the creation mandate, the idea of secure land for Israel and an eternal dynasty (2 Sam 7:10, 13, 16) recalls the eternal covenant promised to Abraham in Genesis 17 (vv. 8, 19), a chapter clearly depicting Abraham as a new Adam. Inheriting these promises would seem to make David, like Abraham before him, the new Adam, and thus would have implications for all of humankind; such an interpretation is the basis for my suggested translation of 1 Chr 17:17 given above. My translation assumes that the text is a paraphrastic explanation of 2 Sam 7:19, though if that is what it is, its clarity is lost to us today.

Any translation of 1 Chr 17:17 is made doubtful because of several interpretive problems: the meaning of every word is in doubt. הָאָדָם could refer to Adam, or to the human race as a whole, or perhaps a specific individual. P. McCarter revocalizes the first word as a *hiphil*, and takes תּוֹר as “turn” (as in Esth 2:12, 15), so that תּוֹר הָאָדָם is a “generation.” He then takes הַמַּעֲלָה with adverbial force indicating the future: “You have ... shown me the generation to come.”⁶⁶⁴ That the root עלה (to go up) could be used figuratively for the future is believable, and agrees with the previous clause (you have spoken concerning your servant’s house in the distant future); we saw קום so used in Balaam’s oracle concerning the rising scepter and Moab (Num 24:17). There is some evidence for the use of הַמַּעֲלָה in referring to the future,⁶⁶⁵ although there are numerous examples where מַעֲלָה and other nouns derived from the root עלה have the idea of superiority or supremacy,⁶⁶⁶ which explains the NASB, “Thou hast ... regarded me according to the standard of a man of high degree” (reading תּוֹרַת for תּוֹר). If מַעֲלָה is used to indicate the future, it seems unlikely that David is only speaking of the next generation, since he has just mentioned the “far off” future (לְמַרְחֹק), agreeing with the eternal covenant he has just been promised. My translation follows the plausible suggestion often made that תּוֹר is a contraction of תְּאֵר “outline, form, appearance,” which goes naturally with the verb. Because תּוֹרַת הָאָדָם from 2 Samuel is so similar to תּוֹר הָאָדָם from 1 Chronicles, one might rather say that one must be a copyist’s mistake for the other, whereas I have tried to translate them as they are. תּוֹר הָאָדָם could be a mistake for תּוֹרַת הָאָדָם (i.e., 2 Sam 7:19 without the article). Perhaps “You have seen me according to

⁶⁶³ Here again we see the mingling of themes from the supposedly unrelated P and J documents, and so our findings tend again to refute classical source criticism.

⁶⁶⁴ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 233. McCarter regards 2 Sam 7:19 as corrupt.

⁶⁶⁵ Marcus Jastrow cites a Talmudic example where מַעֲלָה is used “(of time) *further on*,” in the expression “from the *minhah* time and onward” (וּלְמַעֲלָה); *A Dictionary of the Targum, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* [vol. 2; New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1903], 817). The adverb וּלְמַעֲלָה, usually meaning “and upward” (in age or height) means “onward” (into the future) in 1 Sam 16:13; 30:25; Hag 2:15, 18.

⁶⁶⁶ See Klein, *Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*, 366, 472-73.

the teaching concerning the Adam to arise” (cf. Rom 5:14). The idea of an Adam of the future would be derived from the failure of those modelled in the past as the new Adam to live up to such expectations.

Gen 3:15 seems to have been brought to its most extensive Old Testament fulfillment under David and Solomon. David is the righteous head of a (nominally) righteous nation, administering “justice and righteousness for all his people” (2 Sam 8:15). Abraham was to be a father of many nations; under David instead of seeing Israelites going over to the Philistine side (1 Sam 14:21), Philistines and other Gentiles were joining Israel, professing allegiance to the Lord. Examples would include Ittai and the 600 men who had come with him from Gath (2 Sam 15:18-21). Is David then the true Adam through whom God’s purposes will be fulfilled?

If David rose higher, he also fell farther. P. Miscall has compared the sin of David against Uriah the Hittite to the narrative of Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis 20, which we have earlier analyzed as a “fall” narrative.⁶⁶⁷ There Abraham feared for his life because of a foreign king (Abimelech) who (so he thought) might take his wife from him and kill him. This king professed his own innocence and indignation that Abraham would bring guilt on him by passing off his wife as his sister. Abraham explained his motive: “I thought, ‘Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife’” (Gen 20:11). In a later incident with Isaac the king threatened death on anyone who would touch Isaac or Rebekah (Gen 26:11).

In 2 Samuel 11 the king is not a foreigner but David, who knowingly takes the wife of the foreigner Uriah the Hittite, then kills him to cover up the adultery. Perhaps Uriah was one of those foreigners brought to the worship of the true God by David, yet David in 2 Samuel 11 is like the king feared by Abraham in Genesis 20, who rules in a place where there is no fear of God. David stayed home and slept with Uriah’s wife while Uriah fought for the king on the battlefield. When David brought him home to cover up the adultery, Uriah’s piety and devotion prevents him from lawfully going home to sleep with his wife; instead, he sleeps at the door of the king’s house, thus serving to guard his life while David plots his death. If Genesis 20 is a “fall” narrative for Abraham, much more is 2 Samuel 11 for David. Perhaps to aid us in making the comparison with Genesis 20, the name “Abimelech” is even used in the account of the slaying of Uriah (2 Sam 11:21; a different Abimelech, of course).

David’s fall also recalls the fall of Adam, as W. Gage has shown, particularly in its consequences: the eastward escape route from the city (in Absalom’s rebellion) recalls the eastward exile from the garden, and the sword which would not depart from David’s house recalls the sword guarding the way to the tree of life.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷“What the patriarch, the elect, fears of foreigners because of his wife is just what David, the elect, the Israelite king, does to Uriah the Hittite because of his wife” (P. Miscall, “Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative,” *Semeia* 15 [1979]: 27-44).

⁶⁶⁸Gen 3:24; 2 Sam 12:10; 15:23. Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake: Carpenter Books, 1984), 68. Gage also suggests David’s palace would have been “terraced with gardens,” and sees an analogy between the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the forbidden “knowledge” of another man’s wife.

David's sin obscured what should be a clear distinction between the righteous, God's new creation, and the wicked. David's "fall" was as great in magnitude as any of his heroic deeds; thus the two most well known stories about David are his slaying of Goliath, and his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Nevertheless, it became another occasion for the two seeds of Gen 3:15 to manifest their own natures. For the righteous, the oracle of Nathan the prophet (thus successor of Moses the lawgiver) served as guidance,⁶⁶⁹ and the punishment decreed by the Lord was sufficient (2 Sam 12:10-12, 14). Like the earlier David, they knew that to touch the Lord's anointed was a great sin. No doubt others said that David was nothing but a hypocrite, and interpreted his whole life in that light – all his public piety was a sham, his heroic deeds were nothing but ambition, or appropriated from someone else, he was probably behind the murder of Abner, etc. The "fall" of David may have contributed to Israel's abandoning David, though this is not stated explicitly; it is at least part of God's judgment on David announced through Nathan.

Absalom rejected God's law against murder so that he could be king; thus he essentially adopted the serpent's view of God given to Eve (God is withholding good from you, seize it yourself), and exemplified the murdering spirit of Cain. Like the serpent, he won over Israel by deceit (2 Sam 15:6). Like Ham, father of cursed Canaan (and like Reuben before his conversion), he uncovered his father's nakedness.⁶⁷⁰ Absalom was not alone from David's family in rebellion; he put Amasa, his cousin, David's nephew, over his army.⁶⁷¹ The listing of Amasa's family members is interesting. According to 1 Chr 2:17, as well as some witnesses to 2 Sam 17:25, his father was an Ishmaelite, which would give him a connection to a family with a long history of persecution of the seed of Abraham, beginning with Isaac (see chap. IV). His mother was Abigail, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. David's repeated lament about the "sons of Zeruiah"⁶⁷² begs the question of who Zeruiah is. Apparently it was common knowledge to the original audience of the book; 1 Chr 2:16 identifies Zeruiah as a sister of David.⁶⁷³ If Amasa's mother was the sister of Zeruiah, therefore the sister of David, we would expect Abigail's father to be Jesse, but her father is called Nahash (= "Snake;" 2 Sam 17:25). It has been suggested that Abigail and Zeruiah were half sisters of David, their father being an otherwise unknown individual named Nahash.⁶⁷⁴ Another possibility that

⁶⁶⁹2 Sam 12:13; "The Lord has taken away your sin, you shall not die."

⁶⁷⁰According to Lev 20:11, one who lies with his father's wife uncovers his father's nakedness, a capital crime for both parties.

⁶⁷¹2 Sam 17:25; cf. 1 Chr 2:16-17.

⁶⁷²2 Sam 3:39; 16:10; 19:22.

⁶⁷³2 Sam 19:13 ("Say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh'"), along with the fact that Zeruiah is Amasa's aunt, does tie Zeruiah into David's family in a general way.

⁶⁷⁴Because Abigail is called sister of Zeruiah, rather than of David, Hans W. Hertzberg says "perhaps both David's half-sisters came from a first marriage of their common mother ... though the identity of name with

might seem dubious at first sight is that Nahash is a variant, or a mistaken vocalization of a variant of the name of David's ancestor Nahshon (head of the tribe of Judah in the generation that came out of Egypt), which was not recognized as such because it is not in a genealogy.⁶⁷⁵ By itself it would seem implausible that a distant ancestor of David's sister would be mentioned in this context, but Nahshon, being part of the generation that came out of Egypt, was part of the congregation which wanted to replace Moses and appoint a leader to bring the people back to Egypt. The point would be that Amasa is doing the same thing, by joining Absalom's rebellion. Further, using the name Nahash, "Snake" (whether Nahash refers to David's ancestor Nahshon, or whether he is a previous husband of Jesse's wife) could serve not only to identify Amasa with Nahshon, who died in the wilderness for his sin, but to identify him (and by implication, all who joined Absalom's rebellion), as of the seed of the serpent, cursed in Gen 3:15. Ironically, the name Nahash is used just two verses later (v. 27) in relating that Shobi, son of "Snake" (Nahash) the Ammonite, who as a foreigner might be expected to be acting like the seed of the serpent, was instead coming to David's aid.⁶⁷⁶

The figure of the serpent is recalled indirectly also in the usurpation of Adonijah, "born after Absalom" (1 Kgs 1:6). Adonijah's coronation feast featured sacrifices at the "Stone of Zohelath" (1 Kgs 1:9), sometimes translated "Serpent Stone." "Zohelath" is the feminine of the participle זָחַל ("crawler," or "cowerer"), used of venomous serpents as instruments of judgment against Israel (Deut 32:24), and of serpents who lick dust, as sentenced in the curse on the serpent (Mic 7:17). This stone is said to be near En Rogel, which apparently was called the "Dragon Well" in the time of Nehemiah (עֵיִן הַתְּנִיחַ; Neh 2:13).⁶⁷⁷ The name of the stone has been explained as referring to sliding stone, i.e., due to a landslide (perhaps from an earthquake), as in Arabic,⁶⁷⁸ though the association with a well later called the "Dragon Well" suggests some geographical feature which struck observers as reptilian or serpentine.⁶⁷⁹

Besides being a scandal and a cause of grief to the righteous, the episode we have analyzed as a "fall" narrative serves the same purpose, perhaps more so, as similar

the Ammonite king mentioned in v. 27 suggests a scribal error" (*I & II Samuel: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964], 357).

⁶⁷⁵ Num 1:7, Ruth 4:20, etc. Compare the variant forms of the name of Nahshon's son Salmon (שָׁלֹמֹן, שְׁלֹמֹן; Ruth 4:20, 21; 1 Chr 2:11).

⁶⁷⁶ It is true that Solomon calls Amasa more righteous than Joab, his murderer, who did not join this rebellion, but that is not saying much (2 Sam 20:8-10; 1 Kgs 2:5, 32).

⁶⁷⁷ For the equivalence, see Jan J. Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament: Researches and Theories* (Leiden: Brill, 1952), 161-62.

⁶⁷⁸ John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; 2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 83.

⁶⁷⁹ This geographical serpent-dragon apparently was also located in the Valley of Ben Hinnom (where it joined the Kidron), later symbolic of Hell (Gehenna).

episodes described previously in this dissertation. David is unworthy to be considered the new Adam, even though he was given the promises of the new Adam, and did more than anyone else to bring those promises to reality. The other disqualifying factor is also manifest in David: both seeds of Gen 3:15 are found among his offspring. To highlight this factor, in addition to the accounts of Absalom and Adonijah, we have another role reversal from the book of Genesis which shows the guilt of David's house as greater than that of inhabitants of Canaan in patriarchal times. Gen 34:1-2 describes the rape of Jacob's daughter Leah by Shechem, the son of the "prince of the land," Hamor. The story of Amnon's rape of Tamar alludes to this story both by the obvious similarity in theme, and by Tamar's words in 2 Sam 13:12 ("such a thing should not be done [לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה] in Israel, do not do this disgraceful thing [בְּלֵלָהּ]"), which virtually quote Gen 34:7 ("He had done a disgraceful thing [בְּלֵלָהּ] in Israel, ... such a thing ought not to be done [לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה]"). Shechem wanted to marry Dinah, and pay whatever dowry Jacob required (Gen 34:12), fulfilling in advance the requirements of the law of Moses (Deut 22:28-29). Amnon's infatuation, however, turns to even greater hatred, and he tells Tamar "Get up and get out" (2 Sam 13:15). David's son Amnon, who had the law of Moses is therefore obviously worse than the pagan Canaanite prince's son who did not have the law, and whose land Israel inherited because of their wickedness.

6.2.5 *Solomon and the Fulfillment of Gen 3:15*

The relationship between Abraham and Isaac is in some respects similar to that between David and Solomon. Before Solomon is crowned, three other candidates are eliminated as David's successor (Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah), as was the case with Abraham and Isaac (Lot, Eliezer, and Ishmael). We saw in chap. IV that the miraculous nature of Isaac's birth, as well as the oracles given before his birth, could be taken to suggest that Isaac would somehow be greater than his father, and succeed where his father failed. Solomon's birth was not miraculous like Isaac's, but is analogous in one sense – it represents life from the dead. For Abraham and Sarah the miracle was of rejuvenation from the deadness of old age (cf. Rom 4:17-19; Heb 11:12), and the curing of barrenness; for David and Bathsheba, the miracle was one of grace for those who should have been put to death for adultery (and David for murder) under the law of Moses.

The oracles concerning Solomon would build the expectation that he would advance the work of David and do things that David did not. The successor to David in 2 Sam 7:12-14 is to build the house that David was not allowed to. The birth of Solomon (whose name means "his peace") would suggest that despite David's sin, there is peace between him and God; "Happy is he whose transgressions are forgiven" (Ps 32:1). The name also signifies that God would give rest from the wars David fought (1 Chr 22:9). Since these wars were won in fulfillment of Gen 3:15, and were instances of the divinely placed enmity predicted there, it would seem that a prediction of peace would imply an unprecedented fulfillment of Gen 3:15; the enmity is abolished because the victory has been won, and a golden age would ensue. In part this expectation was fulfilled in Solomon's empire, as Israel reached its farthest borders and Solomon "ruled over all the kingdoms from the (Euphrates) River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt" (1 Kgs 5:1 [4:21]). Solomon might seem to be the son of God anointed by God before whom rulers are warned to tremble and not rebel (Psalm 2; cf. 2 Sam 7:14).

Whatever expectations were raised by the apparent fulfillment of Gen 3:15 under David and Solomon were subsequently dashed by the “fall” of Solomon; his multiplication of horses and wives and his erection of idols for his foreign wives, and his bowing down to them (1 Kgs 10:26-11:8), and the resulting division of the kingdom into two nations after the death of Solomon. The dynasty that apparently was told in Psalm 2 that it would crush all opposition was told after Jeroboam’s rebellion to let that rebellion stand, because it came about from God (1 Kgs 12:23-24). In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam leads the people in the wilderness apostasy of the worship of the golden calves,⁶⁸⁰ and most of the kings are like the Pharaoh of Exodus, opposed to the prophets sent by God.⁶⁸¹ And Habakkuk’s description of the conquest as God “striking heads in the house of the wicked one” could apply equally to his judgment on the house of Ahab, when his seventy sons had their heads cut off (2 Kgs 10:1-7). In Judah the putative son of God who is to stand with God against the nations (Ps 2:2) instead goes to the king of Assyria and proclaims himself to be his servant and his son (2 Kgs 16:7).

Interpreters have noted a tension between two parts of Nathan’s oracle (2 Samuel 7). The first part expects the conclusion that neither David nor anyone else will build a temple because God does not desire one; if he did, he would have told someone long ago (vv. 5-7). The second part talks about David’s dynasty (vv. 8-16), with a brief mention that David’s son will build a temple (v. 13a; “He will build a house for my name”). McCarter remarks: “This half-verse, then, is the linch-pin of the passage. When it is removed, the oracle falls apart: There is no other reference in vv. 11b-16 to a temple, and there is no reference in vv. 5b-7 to David’s offspring.” Thus v. 13a is an editorial insertion which forges “a tenuous link between the incongruous oracular motifs of temple refusal and dynastic promise.”⁶⁸² The link itself is not incongruous, however, as it is developed from the play on meanings of the word “house.” What is unexplained here is why Solomon would not also be excluded from building a temple for the same reason David is. Elsewhere the explanation given is that David is a man of blood; he has shed much blood in his many years of warfare, and the son to build the temple will be a man of peace (1 Chr 22:8); perhaps this is related to the idea that even just executions should not take place in the temple (2 Kgs 11:15; cf. 1 Kgs 1:28-34).

McCarter’s solution to such paradoxical material is the assumption of “diverse materials” used in its composition: “The chief indication of the presence of diverse materials in the oracle is its fundamental conceptual inconsistency” (i.e., “here a dynasty is promised while a temple is refused”); therefore either contradictory traditions have

⁶⁸⁰ An Egyptian connection for the golden calf in the wilderness was suggested above: such an explanation is also plausible for the calves of Jeroboam, who spent some time in Egypt waiting for Solomon to die (1 Kgs 11:40; 12:2).

⁶⁸¹ E.g., Ahab to Elijah; “Have you found me, O my enemy,” etc. (1 Kgs 21:20).

⁶⁸² McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 222.

been combined, or the original tradition was revised.⁶⁸³ I would suggest that the paradox is deliberate, and that its solution was not intended to be evident to the original hearers. For such an interpretive method, we have the example of Gen 3:15 itself, whose full meaning could not have been guessed by the original hearers. While there is obviously a play on the word “house” which can mean temple or family (thus dynasty for a king), I would suggest that the word play also involves the idea of God’s house as his family; i.e., his people (the promised seed of Gen 3:15). God does not desire a “house” in the sense “elaborate temple such as are made by kings” because he dwells among his people: his people are his house both as his family (brought about by a birth from above), and as his dwelling place (Lev 26:11-12).

We have seen the inability of those apparently designated as the new Adam to bring about the righteous seed from themselves; i.e., to build God’s house. Thus God’s denial of permission for David to build a temple can be seen as symbolic of this inability, and would imply that there is something greater about the son who will build God’s house. David shed much blood in just wars, perhaps hardening him to violent death, making it easier for him to order the death of just one more, Uriah; thus David as a “man of blood” is excluded from being the builder of God’s household. Solomon, however, does not turn out to be the one greater than David, and the ultimate failure of the Davidic dynasty would indicate that the fulfillment of Gen 3:15 under David and Solomon, was, like other Old Testament fulfillments, only token.

6.3 *Other Old Testament Passages Alluding to Gen 3:15*

6.3.1 *Ps 68:22 (21)*

אֶדְ-אֱלֹהִים יִמְחַז רֹאשׁ אֲבִיּוֹ Surely God crushes the heads of his enemies,

קִדְקֹד שְׂעָר מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּאֲשָׁמָיו The hairy crowns of those who go on in their guilt.

The language of this verse may be based on Gen 3:15, assuming the figurative interpretation established in chap. III; by itself it could not be used to establish such an interpretation, since there is no definite allusion to Gen 3:15 or to an equation of the human enemies of God with the serpent in this psalm. A number of interpreters have tried to find a reference to the serpent in the following verse, however, by reading בְּשֵׁן; as not the mountain mentioned in v. 16 (15), but the cognate of Ugaritic *bṯn*, “snake.” Albright, for example, (after emendation), translated: “From smiting the Serpent I return, I return from destroying Sea.” John Day gives several arguments against such translations. First, they all require considerable emendation or repointing and redivision of the text, while the MT is not really problematic. Secondly, Mt. Bashan is mentioned in v. 16 (15), while בִּשְׁן does not elsewhere designate the serpent. Finally, the Hebrew בְּשֵׁן, not בְּשֵׁן, is the equivalent of Ugaritic *bṯn*. While support for emendation is said to come from the unlikelihood of Mt. Bashan being in parallel with the depths of the sea, Day suggests they are in antithetical parallel (i.e., as high and low), yet associated with each other as

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 221. McCarter’s view is that “The earliest form of Nathan’s oracle was a promise of dynasty to David made in connection with his declared intention to build a temple for Yahweh,” and it was later expanded by someone with a less favorable view of David and temples (ibid., 223).

representing “places of hostility to Yahweh;” Bashan is Hermon, abode of the Canaanite gods envious of the Lord’s rule from Zion (v. 17 [16]).⁶⁸⁴

6.3.2 Psalm 110

Jesus cited Ps 110:1 to show that the Messiah could not be the “son” of David in the usual sense, since here he is David’s lord (Matt 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). Such an interpretation is consistent with the conclusion that the decline of Israel and Judah and the failure of the Davidic dynasty which had apparently been connected to the ultimate fulfillment of Gen 3:15, implies that one greater than David is required to bring it to fulfillment. It would not be surprising, then, to find the language of Gen 3:15 in this psalm:

אֲדָנָי עַל-יְמִינֶךָ	110:5	The Lord is at your right hand,
מִחֵץ בְּיוֹם-אַפּוֹ מְלָכִים		He will crush kings in the day of his wrath;
יַדְדֵיךָ בְּגוֹיִם מְלֵא גְוִיּוֹת	6	He will judge among the nations, heaping up corpses;
מִחֵץ רֹאשׁ עַל-אֲרָצַת רַבָּה		He will crush heads over the wide earth.

Here “head” could be seen as synonymous with “kings,” taking it as collective (as in Ps 68:22 [21]) and meaning leaders. In context, the “heads” must be those of the Lord’s enemies mentioned in vv. 1-2, and of the nations mentioned in v. 6a. In terms of Gen 3:15, it is not simply kings who are to be crushed, but all of the wicked enemies of God. I would therefore take the crushing of the “heads” of v. 6b to be a more general statement of the judgment on the nations, employing the language of Gen 3:15d (as well as Num 24:17; Judg 5:26; Hab 3:13; Ps 68:22 [21]).

6.3.3 Isaiah 24-27

We have referred to Isa 27:1 a number of times, beginning with chap. I where we saw that Justin Martyr equated Leviathan with the serpent of Gen 3:15. Such an interpretation was natural for Greek speaking Church fathers (some of whom followed Justin’s interpretation here), because of the LXX translation of both Leviathan and תַּנִּינִן by δράκων, dragon, also here called a serpent, making Isa 27:1 much like Rev 12:9; 20:2, where the great dragon is called the serpent of old, i.e., the serpent of Genesis 3, and the devil and Satan. Another line of interpretation, going back to the Targum, simply equates the dragon with nations (or one in particular, or three based on the threefold designation of the dragon)⁶⁸⁵ opposed to Israel. Based on our foregoing exposition, either of these two interpretations would be possible – the dragon has been “defeated” in the past by the defeat of Israel’s enemies, the dragon’s seed; he may be defeated in the future in the same

⁶⁸⁴Day, *God’s Conflict*, 113-19. Day says that Cassuto was the first to propose reading “snake” in this verse. He does not see any reason to accept Cross’ and Freedman’s view that “Bashan” is really “snake” in Deut 33:22 (“Dan is a lion’s whelp, who shies away from a viper”); the authors think that תַּנִּינִן is an early Aramaic loan word (“The Blessing of Moses,” *JBL* 67 [1948], 195, 208).

⁶⁸⁵Gunkel thought that Leviathan was split into three monsters (Leviathan the twisted serpent, Leviathan the crooked serpent, the dragon in the sea) by the author to correspond to three world powers (*Schöpfung und Chaos*, 47). The Targum says “In that time the LORD with his great and strong and hard sword will punish the king who exalts himself like Pharaoh the first king, and the king who prides himself like Sennacherib the second king, and he will slay the king who is strong as the dragon that is in the sea” (Bruce D. Chilton *The Isaiah Targum* [The Aramaic Bible, vol. 11; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987], 52).

way.⁶⁸⁶ On the other hand, such past defeats have only been partial and temporary, and have not actually touched the dragon himself, or given permanent salvation to God's people, so this verse could look forward to the actual demise of the dragon himself. Support for the view that Leviathan here is the nations may be found in the frequent reference in Isaiah 24-27 to the judgment on the nations, or the wicked in general (Isa 24:4-13, 17-22; 25:10-12; 26:9-11, 21); this section also follows a long series of judgments against the nations (Isaiah 13-23). John Day, who interprets the dragon supernaturally in references to the defeat of Leviathan and Rahab in the past, which he places prior to creation (see chap. V), agrees that here the dragon symbolizes "the dominant world power of the time" (Babylon or Persia), or Egypt.⁶⁸⁷

M. Kline argues (persuasively, in my opinion) that Leviathan is still the supernatural dragon in Isa 27:1. He takes the banquet scene in Isa 25:6-8 as "the centerpiece of the composition" (i.e., of Isaiah 24-27), describing an eschatological banquet with its ultimate model being the post-exodus (i.e., post-defeat-of-the-dragon) communion meal with the elders of Israel on Mt. Sinai (Isa 24:23 with its picture of the Lord reigning in glory on Mt. Zion before the elders of Israel Kline relates to the banquet scene of Exod 24:9-11). In connection with this banquet scene it is said that the Lord will swallow up death forever (v. 8), indicating something more than the past token fulfillments of victory over the dragon. Isa 24:21-22 mentions God's judgment not only on earthly kings below who are opposed to God, but also on the host of heaven on high; v. 21 starts out the same way as Isa 27:1: "In that day, the Lord will punish," so "This judgment of the demonic host on high is the same as the judgment of Leviathan announced in 27:1." Mentioned by himself, Leviathan would be the head of the host on high, who are presumably the same as the "helpers of Rahab" mentioned in Job 9:13, possibly also the "rahabs" mentioned in Ps 40:5 (4). Association of this judgment with the theme of resurrection (Isa 26:19) suggests an eschatological connection for this judgment on Leviathan as well; we saw in the exposition of Genesis 4 that the murder of Abel forces such an ultimate, eschatological fulfillment for God to keep his promise of victory for the righteous seed. Kline points out that the judgment on the lofty city and its inhabitants (Isa 25:12; 26:5-6) is "couched in the imagery of the primeval curse on the serpent (Gen 3:14-15), the humbling in the dust and the trampling under foot."⁶⁸⁸ The humbling in the dust of the nations is even more explicitly connected to the curse on the serpent in Mic 7:17; "the nations shall lick dust like the serpent," and the trampling under foot of the wicked is also expressed in Mal 3:21 (4:3), though there is no definite allusion to Gen 3:15 there. Allusions to Gen 3:15 in this portion of Isaiah would seem to support the identity of Leviathan and the serpent of Gen 3:15, though one could still argue that the predicted judgment against him is accomplished in the defeat of the nations. In this respect, the mention of the "host on high" and the other eschatological references are

⁶⁸⁶I would note, however, that most adherents of this interpretation simply equate the dragon with the nations, rather than seeing the nation's judgment as a judgment also on the dragon.

⁶⁸⁷Day, *God's Conflict*, 144-45.

⁶⁸⁸Kline, "Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs," 230, 236, 240.

pivotal in identifying Isa 27:1 as pointing to the actual judgment on the serpent-dragon himself, not simply his offspring.

I would also suggest as further evidence against the dragon being merely symbolic for the nations in Isa 27:1 the fact that the verse so closely follows the Ugaritic description of the dragon *Ltn*, who is clearly a seven-headed dragon, not a mere symbol for human enemies.⁶⁸⁹ It seems ironic that Isa 27:1 is used to prove that Leviathan in the Bible is to be identified with Ugaritic *Ltn*, thus Leviathan is a supernatural being opposed to God, but then in the very verse used to prove this, Leviathan is held not to be a supernatural being opposed to God, but a mere symbol. Here again we see that the pre-judgment that the conflict between God and the dragon is to be placed prior to creation (even though the Ugaritic material does not do this) interferes with a consistent exegesis of the passages speaking of this conflict. Put another way, those who interpret Ps 74:13-14; 89:11 (10), etc. as involving a pre-creation conflict between God and the dragon cannot interpret Isa 27:1 as predicting a future conflict between God and the dragon, even though that would appear to be the most obvious interpretation based on the clear allusion to the Ugaritic myths and the internationally known figure of the multi-headed dragon.

As the name of his essay suggests, Kline thinks that it is specifically the martyred dead who are in view in the resurrection of Isa 26:19-21 (v. 21; “The earth shall disclose its blood, / it shall no longer cover its slain”).⁶⁹⁰ Though we have made frequent mention of Abel as the first of the martyrs, whose murder is pivotal in establishing the eschatological interpretation of Gen 3:15, there is a long line of martyrs, “from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah” (Matt 23:35), that speaks for an eschatological interpretation of the victory implied in the curse on the serpent, since in such episodes the fatal, crushing blow comes on the righteous, while the openly wicked often evade such a fate. In addition to individual cases of martyrdom, Psalm 44 speaks of the righteous collectively suffering the fate of the serpent:

You have rejected (us) and put us to shame, you do not go out with our armies, ... You give us like sheep for food, and scatter us among the nations. ... But we have not forgotten you, nor dealt falsely with your covenant; our heart has not turned back, our steps have not turned aside from your way. But you have crushed us in a place of jackals, and covered us with a shadow of death. ... But for your sake we are killed all day long, we are considered like sheep to be slaughtered. ... Our soul has sunk down to the dust, our bellies cling to the earth (Ps 44:10-26 [9-25]).

Day, following Gunkel, translates vv. 19b-20a [18b-19a], “nor have our steps departed from your way, that you should have crushed us in place of the dragon,” reading תִּנְיָן MT (supported by Peshitta), and assuming a rare use of “in place of” as “instead

⁶⁸⁹Such a conclusion does not imply, of course, that the evil angelic being cursed in the Garden of Eden actually has seven heads, or any heads, since he is a spiritual being. Depiction with seven heads serves to show his supernatural character, though this depiction may be symbolic of other things as well.

⁶⁹⁰“It is clear from the context that the slain in view are the martyrs, as typical of all the faithful” (ibid., 232).

of.”⁶⁹¹ The verb for “crush” is a by-form of the word used to describe the crushing of Rahab in Ps 89:11: (10). Even without the emendation, much the same sense would be derived from “You have crushed us in a place of jackals,” i.e., we are like the Egyptians whose bodies were left to be eaten by desert creatures after being drowned in the Red Sea (Ps 74:14), and Gunkel and Day have overlooked an allusion to Gen 3:14 in this passage; v. 26 (25) with its mention of bellies and dust recalls the first part of the curse: “On your belly you shall go, and dust shall you eat.”

6.3.4 *Isaiah 53*

Isa 53:5 speaks of the suffering of the Lord’s servant in language used elsewhere of the defeat of the serpent-dragon: “But he was pierced through (מְהַלְלֵל) for our transgressions, / he was crushed (אֶצְרָא) for our iniquities; / the punishment of our peace was upon him, / and by his wounds we are healed.” Similarly v. 10: “And the Lord was pleased to crush him (אֶצְרָא), wounding him; / Though you make his soul a guilt-offering, / he shall see offspring, he shall prolong days, / and the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” The same verb for “pierce through” is used of God’s piercing the dragon Rahab in Isa 51:9 and the unnamed dragon in Job 26:13, and the verb “crush” is used of God’s crushing Rahab in Ps 89:11 (10). Such results are consistent with the verb שָׁחַט being used in Gen 3:15 both for the action done to the serpent, and the action done to his opponent. This passage also recalls the dual perspectives of the suffering of the righteous that was evident in our exposition of Genesis 4 and 22: one perspective is that the suffering is due to the malice of the wicked towards the one favored by God (Isa 52:13; 53:3, 8), while another is that it is a sacrificial death ordained by God through which the promise of the seed is realized (vv. 6, 7, 10). We also see the same solution presented before to the dilemma of the death of the righteous apart from the fulfillment of God’s promise; after his suffering to death, he nevertheless lives, thus Gen 3:15 is fulfilled through resurrection (vv. 8-12). The contrast in Gen 3:15 between a wound to the head and a wound to the heel therefore does not mean that the righteous lives while the wicked dies (a view we actually disproved by seeing Genesis 4 as the first fulfillment of Gen 3:15), but that the righteous one survives even death.

J. McKenzie says that Isaiah 53 “is such a notable departure from the patterns of thought of the OT in general.”⁶⁹² While the chapter is unique, however, we have seen various elements of it before in our exposition. The picture of a lamb led to the slaughter reminds one closely of both Abel and Isaac. The shepherd Abel was led by Cain to his slaughter (with God’s passive involvement), the “lamb” Isaac was led by Abraham (with God’s active involvement), agreeing with the two perspectives of the servant’s death offered here. In the case of Isaac there was a figurative death and resurrection; in the case of Abel, a real death and an implied promise of resurrection. We saw a similar picture with Joseph being sold into slavery; he himself noted the two perspectives: “I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and have done nothing that they should have

⁶⁹¹ Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 70-71; Day, *God’s Conflict*, 112-13. Day cites Hos 2:1 (1:10) for evidence that מְהַלְלֵל can mean “instead of.”

⁶⁹² McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 132.

put me in this pit” yet he could say to his brothers, “it was not you, but God, who sent me here, to save many souls alive” (Gen 40:15; 45:5, 7-8; 50:20). Here again, there is a figurative resurrection of Joseph for Jacob, who thought he was dead.

It is quite clear that in Isaiah 53, the suffering of the Lord’s servant is a vicarious atonement; “surely it was our griefs he bore; our troubles he carried;” the Lord laid “the iniquity of us all” on him; it is because he “makes himself a guilt offering” that he will see offspring; by his experience he will “justify many, as he will bear their iniquities;” and “he bore the sin of many” (vv. 4-6; 10-12). The death of a righteous man to gain forgiveness of another (here the “many”) is certainly “a notable departure from the patterns of thought of the OT.” Those who do not accept the New Testament identification of the Lord’s servant with the Messiah are still asking the question of the Ethiopian eunuch, whether the prophet speaks about himself or someone else (Acts 8:34), even though the prophet clearly puts himself in the category of those justified by the servant (vv. 4-6), and the description of the servant as having no deceit in his mouth (v. 9) contrasts with Isaiah’s description of himself as a man of unclean lips (Isa 6:5). But even from an Old Testament perspective, seeing the servant here, and David’s Lord in Psalm 110, as the divine incarnate Son of God foretold in Isa 9:5-6 (6-7) explains the “notable departures from the patterns of thought of the OT” in both places. Unexplained in Psalm 110 is why the apparent Davidic king takes on a priesthood “after the manner of Melchizedek.”

That God himself would suffer a sacrificial death is implied (hypothetically, at least) in the covenant ceremony of Genesis 15, a death which is related to the slaying of the dragon at the Red Sea (see § 5.7.2). The same implication may be seen in following up on the comparisons between Genesis 22 and Exodus 3 mentioned in the last chapter (see § 5.7.3). In Genesis 22 there is a ram stuck in a bush who is then offered up as a burnt offering in place of Isaac; in Exodus 3 the Lord appears to Moses in a burning bush. The self-malediction ceremony implies that God calls upon himself the fate of the slain animals (including the 3 year old ram); comparison between Exodus 3 and Genesis 22 suggests the same possibility, and the incarnation explains how that is possible. In fact, if God should take on human nature and walk among men, the enmity directed against him (such as depicted in Isaiah 53) would be totally predictable, based on Gen 3:15 and the pattern of fulfillment of the enmity predicted there throughout the Old Testament.

6.4 Summary of Gen 3:15 in Old Testament Theology and Hermeneutics

Far from being part of a snake aetiology with no further relevance to the Old Testament, Gen 3:15 can be seen to be foundational to the development of Old Testament theology in a way that has been greatly under-appreciated in the history of its interpretation. While the initial interpretation could connect the verse with the blessing of Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28) and with the idea of creation, it is not the oracle of God but the first fulfillment of the predicted enmity (thus, history) which overthrows the naturalistic interpretation of the curse and forces the figurative spiritual identification of the two seeds (one of faith and righteousness, one of unbelief and wickedness) and their respective progenitors (God, with Eve as figurehead, and an evil angelic being, with the animal snake as figurehead). This identification further forces an eschatological interpretation of the outcome of the battle, since it was the wicked seed which seemed to prevail in Genesis 4. The pre-flood development of the two seeds is paralleled by their

post-flood development, seen both in individual cases of enmity in the family of Abraham (patterned after the Cain and Abel example), and in national enmity between Israel and Egypt, then Israel and the nations. While an eschatological interpretation is necessitated, token fulfillments of “he will strike you on the head” occur in Noah’s flood, the drowning of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and the conquest of Palestine, brought to its foremost extent under David and Solomon. With the decline and conquest of Israel and Judah and the demise of the Davidic dynasty, the prophets still maintain that Gen 3:15 will be fulfilled, under one greater than David, the Messiah. The Israelite in the centuries before the coming of Jesus would face the same question as Adam and Eve faced after the murder of Abel; will God’s promise of victory come true in spite of apparent defeat?

CHAPTER VII

GENESIS 3:15 IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

7.1 *Enmity Between the Two Seeds*

Two factors indicate the correctness of the view of most Christian interpreters through most of Church history that the hostility between Jesus and his disciples, on the one hand, and the majority of the scribes and Pharisees, on the other hand, a hostility that continued on in the ministry of the apostles, is traced by the New Testament to the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15.⁶⁹³ The first factor is the identification of the opponents of Jesus, John the Baptist, and the apostles as offspring of the serpent. Much of the evidence for this has been referred to already in chap. I, and will be briefly summarized here. The second factor is that the enmity experienced by Jesus from his persecutors not only follows the general pattern found in the Old Testament (i.e., the enmity follows a demonstration of God's favor upon the righteous one), but often the very things that happened to the righteous in the Old Testament in fulfillment of the predicted enmity, also happened to Jesus.

Luke says that John the Baptist addressed the crowds coming for baptism, calling them γεννήματα ἑχιδνῶν ("brood of vipers;" Luke 3:7), while Matthew says this statement was prompted specifically by John seeing in the crowd many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism (Matt 3:7). This description could be simply a figurative moral description, but it is set in a context of denying the Abrahamic parentage of those whom he is addressing (Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8), so it fits in well with the idea that John is specifically thinking of the two seeds of Gen 3:15: the Pharisees and Sadducees are physically of the seed of Abraham, but spiritually, like Cain, seed of the serpent. Jesus also called the scribes and Pharisees a "brood of vipers" (Matt 12:34; 23:33) and "serpents" (Matt 23:33; ὄφεις). John 8:12-59 reports a dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees during which Jesus acknowledges the fact that although the Pharisees are descended from Abraham, their deeds (seeking to kill him) show that their spiritual father actually is not God, but the devil, who is a liar and murderer (vv. 37-44). Hengstenberg cited this passage to show that the serpent of Gen 3:15 is Satan, and the wicked are considered the seed of the serpent, a view which was expressed as early as Abbot Rupert of Deutz; also by Zwingli, Pareus, Keil, and others (see §§ 1.4.13, 1.5.3, 1.6.5-6, 1.8.1-2). This view is supported by the evident allusions to Genesis 4. That the devil is said to be a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies (v. 44) recalls the two ways in which

⁶⁹³E. P. Sanders has concluded, "I find no substantial conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees" (*Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 280, and more generally, pp. 270-93). Obviously one must dismiss as historically untrustworthy much of the evidence from the Gospels to arrive at this conclusion, and we do not have space here to enter into the arguments used. Sanders refers to the Pharisees as among "the pious" (p. 288-89) who could only have sincere motives for opposing Jesus (p. 280), while Jesus refers to them as hypocrites and children of the devil. In Sanders' work therefore we simply see the same conflict as that which is portrayed in the Gospels, with Sanders taking sides with the Pharisees.

Cain is shown in Genesis 4 to be the offspring of the serpent.⁶⁹⁴ In this passage Jesus also uses several of the contrasts that I have argued were used to contrast the two seeds from the very beginning. From the creation account, we saw that the syntax of the language describing the separation of light from darkness, the waters above from the waters below, and the dry land from the seas is also used to describe the separation of the two seeds in Genesis 4, and we saw that this symbolism is carried on into the narrative of the crossing of the Red Sea (see § 3.3.2). Two of these three separations are alluded to in this dialogue: Jesus says that he is the light of the world, that his followers walk in the light (implying those who do not follow him walk in darkness), and he says “You are from below, I am from above” (vv. 12, 23). We also saw that beginning with Genesis 4 the idea of slavery versus freedom is another contrast used to distinguish the two seeds; Jesus uses this contrast also (vv. 32-36). All of these allusions to events and themes of Genesis 1-4 make it quite likely that we are to take the phrase “you are of your father the devil” as directly related to Gen 3:15: “you are the offspring of the serpent” (taking the genitive as indicating parentage).⁶⁹⁵ The implication would be that the enmity of most of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus is another instance of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15. Another implication is that the source of the “dualism” seen throughout John is not to be traced to Gnosticism or Jewish apocalyptic or Zoroastrianism, but to Genesis.⁶⁹⁶

John also writes of the enmity between Cain and Abel as an example of the enmity that Christians (the children of God) can expect from the world (the children of the devil), adding, “do not marvel if the world hates you” (1 John 3:10-13). That Christians should not be surprised by this enmity is consistent with viewing it as that which was ordained by God to exist between the two seeds from the beginning, and the implication of John’s statement is that the enmity which was nominally between Israel

⁶⁹⁴ See § 3.1.1. There is no need to decide whether the murder in the beginning refers to the introduction of death through the serpent in Genesis 3 or the murder of Abel in Genesis 4, since they are linked in Genesis, and could be here as well.

⁶⁹⁵ The possessive genitive, “with or without *υἱός*” is used to express the relationship of parents to children (James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* [vol. 3; *Syntax*; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963], 207). John Lightfoot comments on v. 37, “The whole tendency of our Saviour’s discourse is to shew the Jews that they are the seed of the serpent that was to bruise the heel of the Messiah: else what could that mean, ver. 44, ‘Ye are of your father the devil,’ but this, viz. ‘Ye are the seed of the serpent?’” (*A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*; Vol. 3, *Luke-John* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979; orig. 1859], 334-35).

⁶⁹⁶ Judith L. Kovacs argues for Jewish apocalyptic being the background for the dualism in John, as opposed to Gnosticism (“Now Shall the Ruler of This World be Driven Out: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle,” *JBL* 114 [1995]: 235-46). Kovacs notes the use of light and darkness throughout John, including the statement that when Judas went out from the last supper: Judas is “wholly allied with the forces of darkness” (*ibid.*, 234; see also John 1:5; 3:19-20; 12:35-36, 46). The dualism of the apocalypics might as well be traced to the same source, accounting for some overlap between them and John. Edwin M. Yamauchi notes that many of the parallels drawn between Zoroastrianism and biblical dualism are from 9th century A.D. texts, and that there is no reason to assume a dependence on Persian influence (“Persians,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 123).

and the nations in the Old Testament will from now on be found between the Church and the world. The same is implied from John 17:5 “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.” Kovacs comments, “After Jesus’ departure the struggle with evil will continue. Although Jesus’ death and glorification are the turning point in the conflict (12:31), Satan, refusing to concede defeat, will focus his attack on the human allies Jesus leaves behind (cf. 15:18-19; 16:33b).” In one of those “attacks on the human allies” of Jesus, Paul speaks of the sorcerer Elymas as “a child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness” (Acts 13:10).

The identification of those expressing enmity towards Jesus and the church as offspring of the devil is one way of relating this enmity back to Gen 3:15. Another is the recognition that in the ministry of Jesus and that of his disciples, there is a recurrence of features of the individual episodes of enmity presented as fulfillments of Gen 3:15 in the Old Testament. We may generally note that jealousy due to evidence of God’s favor on the righteous was an instigating factor in many of these Old Testament episodes of enmity (especially Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers, Saul and David). This factor is also mentioned in the New Testament (Matt 27:18; Acts 17:5). The “worst-case scenario” for the enmity in the Old Testament was exemplified by the murder of Abel; the same happened to Jesus. Ham told of Noah’s nakedness to Shem and Japheth, and the concept of “uncovering the father’s nakedness” in a sexual sense was done by Reuben and Absalom. Similarly, nakedness is part of crucifixion, in this case at the hands of Shem and Japheth (i.e., the Jews and Romans). Ishmael questioned the legitimacy of Isaac; one reading of the accusation that Jesus was a Samaritan (John 8:48) is that the virgin birth was simply a story to explain Mary’s illegitimate pregnancy.⁶⁹⁷ Jacob fled from his brother Esau (Edom) over Esau’s loss of the blessing and birthright to Jacob. Similarly, Joseph and Mary fled with Jesus from the Edomite Herod who wanted to kill the rival king, one born “king of the Jews.” This story is also paralleled in the infant rescue of Moses; in both cases the future savior is rescued from a king’s decreed slaughter of infants. The story of Joseph and his brothers has many parallels with the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and the same may be said of the persecution of David by Saul. Both Joseph and Jesus were sold for money by Judah (= Judas from the Greek). Joseph’s brothers used the Ishmaelites to get rid of Joseph so that their own hand would not be against him (Gen 37:27); Saul tried to destroy David by using the Philistines (“My hand shall not be against him;” 1 Sam 18:17); likewise the

⁶⁹⁷ Raymond E. Brown says that the statement by the Jews “We were not born of fornication” (v. 41) possibly reflects “an *ad hominem* argument against Jesus;” similarly on v. 48. Brown also suggests that the designation of Jesus as “son of Mary” in Mark 6:3 “is strange and may be an insinuation of illegitimacy” (*The Gospel According to John (I-XII): A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966], 82-83; 357-58). The subtlety of the presentation of the accusation in the New Testament also compares with the subtlety with which it is presented in Genesis 21 (see § 4.3.2; I first suggested this interpretation of Genesis 21 and made the connection to John 8:41 in “The Naming of Isaac,” 17-18). Other Jewish sources are very explicit; see especially Gustaf Dalman, “Designations and Origin of Jesus,” in *Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and the Literature of the Synagogue* (New York: Arno, 1973; orig. 1893), 7-39. For modern non-Jewish versions of the accusation, see John Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 10-11, 273-77. Machen and Brown also cite patristic sources.

Jews used the Romans to crucify Jesus (“by the hands of lawless men,” Acts 2:23). Joseph was not literally killed, but as far as Jacob was concerned, he was long dead, so that the news “Joseph is alive and is ruler of all Egypt” would be seen by him as something of a resurrection. Likewise David described himself as only a step away from death at the hand of Saul (1 Sam 20:3). Peter’s words to the Jews at his Pentecost sermon were much like those of Joseph to his repentant brothers (Acts 2:23; Gen 50:20). Of Joseph, Moses, David, and Jesus it could be said, “the stone that the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone” (Ps 118:22). The chief persecutor of the early church was also named Saul, and the Lord’s words to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me,” were much like those said by David to the earlier Saul (1 Sam 26:18). If all these Old Testament examples are fulfillments of the enmity and conflict predicted in Gen 3:15, the same is true of the New Testament examples. In this conclusion, there is little disagreement among Christian interpreters (except in the case of those who deny the figurative identification of the two seeds), for the collective interpretation of the woman’s seed (which I have supported throughout this dissertation), and the individual interpretation coincide in seeing the enmity of Gen 3:15 fulfilled in that which was directed against Jesus.

The similarity between the things that happened to Jesus and the things that happened to the righteous in the Old Testament has often been pointed out before, beginning as early as Steven (Acts 7:9, 27, 51-52). We see a pattern (Greek; τύπος) of fulfillment of Gen 3:15 in the Old Testament (briefly described above, though many more examples could be cited), and this pattern revealed in Old Testament history teaches us how Gen 3:15 (a prophecy) will continue to be fulfilled throughout history. It would seem, then, that our exposition of Gen 3:15 contributes to an understanding of biblical typology as an apologetic for the messiahship of Jesus.

7.2 Jesus Christ as Progenitor of the Righteous Seed

With the first fulfillment of Gen 3:15 in the murder of Abel by Cain, it became apparent that the animal snake and the woman (Eve) could not be the actual progenitors of their respective seeds, and I suggested the term “figurehead” as appropriate designations for their role in Gen 3:15. Each stands for the true head of their race, though each seed has a “head” in a different sense. The use of creation language in Genesis 4 to identify Abel as the woman’s seed (as well as the use of creation language in Gen 3:15 itself) suggests that God himself is the progenitor of the righteous seed; they come about through his creative work, which has nothing to do with literal childbirth. At the same time, there is a moral sense in which God is head of the righteous seed; the woman’s seed (later Abraham’s seed) consists of those who are (because of this new creation) morally like him. In the case of the wicked seed, there is no creative process involved, since that seed is the natural human state, so the headship of the wicked is in the moral sense, and was accomplished in the fall of Adam and Eve into sin.

Though God is the head and creator of the righteous seed, the Old Testament continued to treat other human beings as if they were the “new Adam,” head of a righteous race (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David), recipients of the promises of fruitfulness and dominion first given to Adam. But their own moral failures (the “fall” narratives), and their inability to generate the promised seed (i.e., they had wicked descendants) show that they are again only figureheads. The tension between the fact that

God is shown to be the head of the righteous, while a succession of human beings is also so spoken of is resolved nicely by the incarnation and virgin birth of Jesus Christ, called “child” and “son” as well as “mighty God” and “eternal father” (Isa 9:5 [6]). Isa 53:10 said that he would “see (his) offspring” and “prolong (his) days” after death, so it is those justified by his death (v. 11) who are his children. The identity of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 with the divine child of Isaiah 9 is suggested by the fact that it is in the Lord that “all the offspring of Israel will be justified” (Isa 45:25).

Therefore, while there is a similarity between Jesus and the Old Testament righteous with respect to the enmity experienced by both, there is a contrast in the matter of the role of the new Adam. Those so designated in the Old Testament gave birth to both seeds of Gen 3:15, not just one righteous seed. The “seed” of Jesus, however, are those made righteous by him, thus all are righteous. Another (not unrelated) contrast with the figureheads of the Old Testament is the sinlessness of Jesus. This contrast is shown clearly in considering one of the recurring “fall” narratives of the Old Testament, the cases where the patriarch calls his wife his sister, subjecting her to potential defilement, in order to save his own life (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:1-11). The story of David and Bathsheba has a similar background, with a role reversal which emphasizes David’s guilt beyond that of the patriarchs. In the case of Jesus, however, instead of fearing for his life and subjecting his bride to defilement to save his own life, he “gave himself up for her, to make her holy” (Eph 5:25-26). That such behavior by Jesus is deliberately contrasted with that of the patriarchs is suggested by John 4, where Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at a well (a well is where Isaac, Jacob, and Moses all got their wives), a narrative which has many points of contact with Genesis 24, thus suggesting that we view the Samaritan woman as symbolic of the bride of Christ, her unworthiness being a contrast with Rebekah, the model bride, for whom Isaac would not give up his life. The table below shows these similarities and contrasts.

Genesis 24	John 4
vv. 1-4 father Abraham seeks a virtuous bride for his son Isaac.	vv. 23-24 the Father seeks such people who worship him in spirit and truth
v. 17 The servant ran to meet her, and said, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar.” Also Exod 2:15; he (Moses) sat down by a well.	vv. 6, 7 Jesus was sitting by the well. . . . Jesus said to her “Give me a drink.”
v. 28 The girl ran and told her mother’s household about these things.	vv. 28-29 The woman went into the city and said to the men, “Come see a man who told me all the things I have done.”
v. 29-32 Laban ran outside to the man at the spring, invited him in, and he came to their house.	vv. 30, 40a They went out of the city and were coming to him. . . . They were asking him to stay with them.

v. 33 When food was set before him he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business."

vv. 27, 31-32, 34 The disciples came and marvelled that he was speaking with a woman. . . . The disciples were requesting him, saying "Rabbi, eat." But he said, "I have food to eat that you do not know about. . . . My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."

v. 54 He and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. In the morning he said "send me away."

vv. 40, 43 And he stayed there two days. . . . And after the two days he went forth from there.

v. 3 "You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, but you shall go to my country, to my relatives."

v. 9 "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, since I am a Samaritan woman" (for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans)

v. 16 The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her.

vv. 17-18 "You have well said 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband."

Going from the individual "fall" narratives to the corporate "fall of Israel" narratives, we see Jesus clearly contrasted from fallible Israel, as when Jesus is tested for 40 days in the wilderness (corresponding to the 40 years of Israel in the wilderness). Jesus answers Satan's temptations three times by quoting from Deuteronomy, where Moses shows Israel's failures precisely at these points: "It is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matt 4:7), "as you tested him at Massah" (Deut 6:16). We also noted in chap. VI that these wilderness temptations of Israel followed the general pattern of the Genesis 3 temptation, and even Moses failed and could not enter the promised land. Jesus' complete victory over temptation would therefore serve to identify him as the new Adam, superior even to Moses, and head over a righteous Israel.

In a later section, I will suggest that the title "Son of Man" used by Jesus to describe himself is equivalent to the "new Adam" figure that we have seen developed in the Old Testament series of figureheads. In presenting Jesus as the new Adam, in contrast to the Old Testament figureheads of the righteous seed, the New Testament does not describe the fulfillment of the promise of an individual "seed of the woman" or "seed of Abraham" to come, but rather the New Testament presents Jesus as the true progenitor of the "seed of Abraham," i.e., the spiritual seed of promise. Since Gal 3:16 is often cited as teaching that the promised seed is strictly an individual (Christ), we will deal with that text next.

7.3 Gal 3:16 and the Two Seeds of Gen 3:15

7.3.1 Introduction

τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ.
οὐ λέγει, καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἑνός,
καὶ τῷ σπέρματι σου ὅς ἐστιν Χριστός.

NASB translates as follows: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." The NIV reflects the interpretation that has generally been

placed on these words: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.” That is, if “many people” were the object of the promise, the promises would have been spoken to Abraham’s “seeds.” Such an argument has not been highly regarded, to say the least, since “seed” means “many people,” indeed, numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore in the patriarchal promises.⁶⁹⁸

As we saw in § 1.6.6, Lutherans used Gal 3:16 to criticize, even ridicule Calvin and other interpreters who said that a collective sense for the woman’s seed is indicated in Gen 3:15. This criticism is both unfair and inconsistent. It is unfair because Calvin himself alluded to Gal 3:16 in his exposition of Gen 3:15, when he said “since experience teaches that not all the sons of Adam by far, arise as conquerors of the devil, we must necessarily come to one head, that we may find to whom the victory belongs. So Paul, from the seed of Abraham, leads us to Christ.”⁶⁹⁹ The criticism is also inconsistent, because the many who were willing to use the conclusion of the argument (“seed means just one person, Christ”), were apparently unwilling to use the argument itself (“if more than one person were included in the promise, the plural ‘seeds’ would have been used”). Calvin tried to explain Paul’s argument as an historical argument, rather than a grammatical argument, which is no different from what the Lutherans did. But if they were unwilling to use the apparent argument of Gal 3:16, it seems that they should have called into question their understanding of the argument and/or the conclusion. In fact, I doubt that anyone in history has suggested that “seeds” would have been used if the recipients of the promises were “many people.” E. Burton spoke for many when he said, “He doubtless arrived at his thought, not by exegesis of scripture, but from an interpretation of history, and then availed himself of the singular noun to express his thought briefly.” In an appendix to his commentary, however, Burton found all explanations unacceptable, and despaired of making sense out of Paul’s argument; he suggested that an early scribe wrote v. 16b (starting with “He does not say”) as a marginal comment, which then found its way into the text as a parenthetical intrusion on Paul’s train of thought.⁷⁰⁰

7.3.2 The “Rabbinic” Explanation

⁶⁹⁸ Albert Barnes said, “No one ever probably read this passage without feeling a difficulty, and without asking himself whether this argument is sound, and is worthy a man of candour, and especially of an inspired man” (*Notes on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Kregal, 1962], 938).

⁶⁹⁹ Calvin, *Genesis*, 171 (quoted above, § 1.5.2).

⁷⁰⁰ Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 182; 505-10. “It is difficult to accept even the most probable of these interpretations as an expression of the apostle’s thought, ... because of the inharmoniousness of such an interpretation with his other references to the passage, and because the sentence contributes little to the force of his argument at this point. It is, moreover, not in harmony with the thought of vv. ²⁸, ²⁹, where the word “seed” is used collectively and predicated not of Christ but of those who are Christ’s” (ibid., 509).

Most interpreters fall into two categories. In the first are those who agree that Paul is in fact making an absurd argument here, and its absurdity is probably due to Paul's rabbinical training (though this example is admitted to rank with the worst of anything else found in rabbinical writings). Some in this category would sympathize with Paul's conclusion, if not his reasoning: "Paul sees clearly and correctly the result to be aimed at, but he reaches the result by a process of reasoning which has no more force in logic than the poorest wordsplitting of any old Greek philosopher or Hebrew Rabbi."⁷⁰¹ Others rejected both the reasoning and the conclusion, such as the Rabbis of Calvin's day, who, according to Calvin, heaped scorn on Paul's argument, while Christians maintained an embarrassed silence.⁷⁰²

Brendan Byrne said, "From this singular, by a somewhat bizarre but not unparalleled exegesis, he concludes that the secondary beneficiary of God's bequest is Christ and Christ alone."⁷⁰³ Explaining "not unparalleled," Byrne refers the reader to David Daube, who thinks that Paul specifically has in mind Genesis 15, and is relying on a midrash (*S. 'Olam Rab.* 3 according to Daube, which is thought to date to the first century) which was meant to resolve a difficulty felt in "reconciling" the 400 years predicted in Gen 15:13 with the 430 years of Exod 12:40-41. The 430 years was thought to have started from the covenant in Genesis 15, supposedly agreeing with the LXX of Exod 12:40-41 (this view would seem to require understanding Abraham and Isaac as among "the sons of Israel"), against the MT. The rabbinical "solution" was to conclude that "your seed shall be a stranger" meant "Isaac shall be a stranger," and that Isaac must have been born 30 years after the covenant of Genesis 15, when only 400 out of the 430 years was left. Equating "your seed" with "Isaac" (who is a foreshadowing of Christ) thus opens the way for an "individual" interpretation. That Paul refers in the next verse to the law coming 430 years after the promise (Gal 3:17) is seen as proving that he is following this chronology.⁷⁰⁴

Besides noting that this midrash is unnecessary to resolve the use of the round number 400 in one place and the more precise 430 in another,⁷⁰⁵ we must ask if it actually sheds any light on the argument from the singular that Paul makes. Daube has demonstrated that the expression "your seed" was recognized as having a range of

⁷⁰¹William M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), 376.

⁷⁰²John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 57.

⁷⁰³Brendan Byrne, *'Sons of God' - 'Seed of Abraham'* (AnBib 83; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 159.

⁷⁰⁴David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: The Athlone Press, 1956) 438-44.

⁷⁰⁵J. J. Bimson suggests that the LXX is allotting 30 years (which would be about right) for the time that Jacob and his sons lived in Canaan after Jacob returned from Haran, before going down to Egypt for 400 years ("Archaeological Data and the Patriarchs," in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, ed. A. R. Millard, D. J. Wiseman [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983; orig. 1980], 83-84).

meaning which allows it to signify one person. But no one would dispute that; all Daube has shown is that a midrash existed which understood “seed” to refer to one individual where the context clearly refers to a large number of people. The singular form of “seed” may facilitate that, but could hardly be a grammatically compelling reason for doing so. It is quite another thing to argue that if more than one person had been meant, the plural “seeds” would have been used. Daube’s proposal also assumes that Paul specifically has in mind a passage in which the quoted phrase “and to your seed” does not occur. This Daube explains by saying that the phrase “and to your seed” occurs only in the promise of the land (Gen 13:15; 17:7),⁷⁰⁶ and thus is naturally linked to the covenant ceremony of chap. 15 guaranteeing the land. But if we are free to think of a starting time for the 430 years elsewhere than the place where “and to your seed” appears, then we are also free to see that Paul is following MT, which starts the 430 years with Jacob’s going down into Egypt, in conjunction with which the patriarchal promise is given for the last time (Gen 46:2-4). On this view, Paul has not just Abraham, but also Isaac and Jacob in mind as the recipients of the promises. This point alone contradicts the idea that Paul is limiting the recipients to just Abraham and Christ. Finally, the idea that the covenant of Genesis 15 took place 30 years before Isaac’s birth is in contradiction with the chronology of Genesis, which has Isaac born 25 years after Abraham arrives at Canaan.

Other passages where the word “seed” is used to refer to one individual have been cited as possible starting points for an “individual” interpretation of Abraham’s seed: Gen 4:25 (Seth), 21:13 (Ishmael), 2Sam7:12 (Solomon). Otto Betz thinks that the latter, interpreted messianically, was connected to Gen17:7 by applying the rabbinical rule *gezerah shavah* due to the appearance of “your seed after you” in both passages, thus making Genesis 17 refer to the Messiah also;⁷⁰⁷ Max Wilcox cites Betz and suggests that such a linkage is behind the *Tg.* reading of Ps 89:4 (3), which takes “my chosen one,” which in MT is parallel to David, as “Abraham my chosen one.”⁷⁰⁸ But such arguments fail to illuminate the reason for the argument from the singular that Paul makes. The argument is, “He does not say, ‘And to seeds.’” How did the plural ever enter Paul’s mind? And how does the perceived argument from the singular used here not directly contradict the collective understanding only 13 verses later (Gal 3:29) and everywhere else in Paul’s writings?⁷⁰⁹

Some cite mishnaic arguments from the grammatical number as possible parallels to Paul’s interpretation of “seed.” For example, *m. Šabb.9.2* reads

⁷⁰⁶It is actually Gen 17:8 in which the phrase (one word in Hebrew) is used in the promise of the land, where it is joined with the promise that God will be their God, and this is also the context in v. 7: “I will establish my covenant ... for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you, and to your seed after you.”

⁷⁰⁷Otto Betz, “Die heilsgeschichtliche Rolle Israels bei Paulus,” *TBei* 9 (1978): 1-21, esp. 11-13.

⁷⁰⁸Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed,’” 5.

⁷⁰⁹Rom 4:13, 16, 18; 9:7 (twice); 8, 29; 2Cor 11:22; Gal 3:29. Paul never equates Jesus with the seed of Abraham or David, but speaks of him (or even himself) as *of* (i.e., one of many) their seed (ἐκ σπέρματος or ἀπὸ τοῦ σπέρματος): Acts 13:23, Rom 1:3; 11:1; and 2Tim 2:8.

Whence do we learn of a garden-bed, six handbreadths square, that five kinds of seed may be sown therein, four on the sides and one in the middle? Because it is written, *For as the earth bringeth forth her bud and as the garden causeth the seeds sown in it to spring forth.* It is not written *Its seed* but the *seeds sown in it.*⁷¹⁰

But the “seeds” of this passage (Isa 61:11) is not זרע but זרעו, which occurs twice in the Old Testament (here as a plural and in Lev 11:37 as a singular). And whatever we think of the rabbinical argument,⁷¹¹ it must be acknowledged that it is legitimate to inquire as to whether there is some significance to the plural in a word that is also attested in the singular. Such is not the case with זרע, which is always in the singular when it is used to refer to offspring. The only plural is in 1 Sam 8:15, where it refers to harvested grain, of which the king would tax a tenth.

Likewise in *Gen.Rab.22* and *m.Sanh.4.5* the plural זרעו of Gen 4:10 is understood to mean not just Abel’s blood (for which the singular would have been used), but also the blood of his potential offspring, which would not exist because of Abel’s murder. But again, no matter what we think of this exegesis, we must admit that it is legitimate to ask whether there is any particular significance to the plural, since the singular might also have been used (as in Gen9:6).

Thus while it is easy to say that Paul is being “rabbinic” in Gal 3:16, the alleged parallels are not convincing upon close examination. Further evidence against the “rabbinic” explanation for Paul’s interpretation is that it apparently has not impressed any Rabbis of the last 2000 years; as noted above, Calvin reported that Gal 3:16 was an object of scorn by the Rabbis. Thus Earl Ellis concluded, “If this is Paul’s argument, then it must be confessed that its baseless caprice out-rabbis the rabbis; only Akiba could applaud it and even he would substitute something more intricate.”⁷¹² The problem for the “rabbinic” solution becomes even worse when it is observed that rabbinic tradition requires understanding “seed” in a collective sense. Max Wilcox cites the rule of interpretation expressed in *Sipre Deut.8*; “‘to their seed’ means (to) ‘their sons’.”⁷¹³ The Targums of Genesis follow this rule of interpretation in virtually all cases, except where the context clearly indicates that only one person is being referred to. As we saw in § 1.2.2, even in *Pal. Tgs.Gen 3:15*, which add a messianic comment, “seed” is translated as “sons.” In this very chapter of Galatians Paul says that Christians are sons of Abraham (v. 9), and Abraham’s seed (v. 29); if he is under any “rabbinic” influence then, it is that “seed” means “sons”!

7.3.3 Other Explanations

⁷¹⁰Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford, 1938), 108.

⁷¹¹Danby cites the explanation in the Gemara to the effect that “bring forth” is one, “her bud” is a second, “seeds sown” is (at least) two more, and “causes to spring forth” is the fifth – thus five kinds of seed (ibid., n. 8).

⁷¹²Earl E. Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 71.

⁷¹³Max Wilcox, “The Promise of the Seed,” 3.

The second category of interpreters assumes that a different argument lies behind Gal 3:16 than that which the usual translations seem to suggest. Lightfoot retained the idea that Paul is making a grammatical argument, but he thought that Paul must be merely pointing out that the word “seed” is a collective, like “offspring,” rather than a (hypothetical) plural noun (like “sons”). And since it is a collective, it involves the idea of unity. In the case of the promised seed, the unity is found in Christ, since “He is the source of their spiritual life. They are one in Him.”⁷¹⁴ Thus Lightfoot sees Paul as simply pointing out that the seed is “summed up” in Christ. This interpretation provides an explanation for the plural as hypothetical, rather than what would have actually been used in the promises to indicate they applied to many persons. It also avoids the problem of having Paul say in v. 16 that Abraham’s seed is Christ alone, while he says in v. 29 to the Galatians that they are Abraham’s seed. But this reasoning has two shortcomings. First, it is not the fact that זרע “seed,” is a collective that provides the derivative connotation. Trying to follow this principle in the case of other collectives would quickly cause us to abandon it. For example, צאן, which includes sheep and goats, cannot be comprehended as a unity derived from or summed up in one sheep-goat. Likewise, חמץ and זרעו refer to a multitude of different kinds of creeping things and swarming things, respectively; they are not summed up in one source. It is the meaning of זרע itself (at least in its usual sense of offspring) that involves the derivative concept, since there must be a parent-offspring relationship, not the mere fact that it is a collective. Secondly, Lightfoot has Paul making the argument that the source (progenitor) of the seed is Christ; that is not the conclusion that all of our translations have Paul make. The versions have Paul say “*the seed is Christ,*” not “*the source of the seed is Christ,*” or “*the seed is summed up in Christ.*” That Paul would argue for the source of the seed being Christ agrees with the exposition presented in the section above, so I think Lightfoot was on the right track, but the collective meaning of זרע does not lead to such a conclusion.

H. Alford supported a somewhat similar interpretation. He said that “Christ” at the end of the verse is viewed collectively – more than “Christ and his Church,” but actually the body of Christ, for “Christ contains His people.”⁷¹⁵ The solution given has the advantage of agreeing with v. 29, but the rest of the verse is made irrelevant, as it simply does not support the conclusion.

We noted Calvin’s argument at the beginning of this section: experience teaches us that since not all of the literal seed fit the description of those who are victorious over the evil one, there must be one head, who is Christ. Again, this is an argument that the source, or progenitor, of the seed is Christ, but Calvin does not explain how Gal 3:16 teaches this. It is also an argument from experience, or history, not from grammar.

F. Rendall said that Paul’s “many” does not refer to many people (cf. NIV), but to many seeds, i.e., many families. Abraham had many children who were excluded from

⁷¹⁴Lightfoot explained, “He is not laying stress on the particular word used, but on the fact that a singular noun of some kind, a collective term, is employed, where τὰ τέκνα or οἱ ἀπόγονοι for instance might have been substituted” (Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957; orig. 1865], 142-43).

⁷¹⁵Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (4 vols.; Chicago: Moody, 1968), 3.30.

the covenant in favor of Isaac and then Jacob, so there is “a continuous holy family linking Christ with Abraham,” and Gal 3:16 “contains the germ of that doctrine of continuous divine election within the stock of Abraham which is developed in the ninth chapter of ... Romans.”⁷¹⁶ But Rendall does not provide a translation of the verse to show how this teaching is accomplished in Gal 3:16.

7.3.4 Proposed Solution

I believe Rendall was correct, however, to relate this verse to Romans 9. There, Paul says that descent from Israel does not mean membership in Israel in terms of the promises (v. 6). To illustrate, Paul points out that through Isaac alone is the seed of Abraham reckoned, a pattern repeated in the next generation with the exclusion of Esau, so that “it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but it is the children of the promise who are considered as seed” (v. 8). Here again, we see that the observation of the fact that not all of the children share in the promises leads to the conclusion that the progenitor of the seed is Christ. True, Paul says “children of God,” not “children of Christ,” but he has just said in v. 5 that “the Christ ... is over all, God, blessed forever.” This argument, then, is in great part an argument from observation, or experience, or history; one interprets the meaning of God’s promises at least in part by an observation of subsequent history.

I also believe Rendall was correct to take the “many” as referring back to “seeds,” not “people.” However, I think Paul has in mind not many families descended from Abraham, but rather the two seeds of Gen 3:15. Thus “many” is used in the grammatical sense of “more than one,” i.e., “plural.” The promises were given to Abraham and to his seed. The question raised is, why are not those descended from Abraham counted as his seed? Justin Martyr faced a similar question in his dialogue with Trypho, where he is expounding on Isa 65:9 (LXX; “I will bring forth seed from Jacob and Judah”). Justin says that Christ is the Israel and the Jacob (i.e., progenitor of the race), “so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelitic race.” When Trypho reads about the seed of Jacob, therefore, “The seed of Jacob now referred to is something else, and not, as may be supposed, spoken of your people.” In Isa 65:9, therefore “it is necessary for us here to observe that *there are two seeds of Judah*, and two races, as there are two houses of Jacob: the one begotten by blood and flesh, the other by faith and the Spirit.”⁷¹⁷ It is the latter seed to whom the promise pertains. Similarly, I am suggesting that in Gal 3:16 Paul takes the opportunity to point out that although the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed (singular), there are two seeds of Abraham, corresponding to the two seeds of the woman in Gen 3:15. “He does not say ‘And to seeds,’ in the plural,” is therefore simply a way of making an historical observation: Abraham had two seeds, distinguished by the fact that God says to Abraham “In Isaac seed shall be called yours” (Gen 21:13), yet of Ishmael God says in the next verse that he, too, “is your seed.” Alternatively, one could agree with Rendall that Paul is thinking of the many seeds of Abraham’s first generation; “he does not say,

⁷¹⁶Frederic Rendall, “The Epistle to the Galatians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 3.170.

⁷¹⁷Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 135 (ANF 1.267; emphasis added).

‘and to seeds,’ as pertaining to Ishmael, Midian, etc.” Ultimately, however, all of Abraham’s children belong to one of the two seeds of Gen 3:15. That “many” could be used when Paul is thinking only of “more than one,” i.e., “two,” is suggested by analogy with other languages,⁷¹⁸ and is consistent with the context, since the most that one could logically conclude from the use of a plural is that “more than one” (as opposed to many) is meant.

That Paul is making a singular versus plural argument, rather than a one versus many argument is reflected in a number of Bible/New Testament translations, such as NEB, James Moffet, New Berkley, Charles B. Williams, William F. Beck, and J. B. Phillips. By itself, this does not solve the problem of the verse sensed by interpreters who think that the correct argument should be that the progenitor of the seed is Christ, rather than that the (one and only) seed is Christ. I would solve this problem by analyzing “your seed” in the promises to Abraham from the point of view that Abraham is a figurehead. Many interpreters of Gen 3:14-15 pointed out that in the curse on the serpent, God is not merely speaking to an animal, but to the being the animal represents and speaks for in the temptation. As Luther put it, “God is not speaking to an irrational being [a snake] but to an intelligent being [Satan],” and “God is dealing with Satan, who is hidden within the serpent” (see § 1.5.1). Thus “you” in the curse on the serpent is not simply the visible animal, and “your seed” is not simply the offspring of the visible animal, but in the figurative meaning, “you” is Satan, and “your seed” is Satan’s seed.

If we apply the same reasoning to the figurehead of the righteous race, “you” in the promises to Abraham is ultimately Christ, and “your seed” is Christ’s seed, agreeing with Isa 53:10 (the suffering servant will see his offspring). This is the point Paul is making if in fact the antecedent of the relative pronoun is not “seed” but “you.” The Greek generally uses a genitive pronoun to indicate possession, rather than a possessive adjective. Thus Gal 3:16 ends, καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου ὃς ἐστὶν Χριστός; literally, “‘and to the seed of you,’ who is Christ.” Since the meaning of the word “pronoun” means that it stands in place of a noun, either the noun σπέρματί (seed) or the pronoun σου (you) can be the antecedent of the relative pronoun ὃς.⁷¹⁹ The word order would compare with a phrase such as in Rom 4:16; τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ ὃς ἐστὶν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν; “to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.” In this case, both context and the gender of the relative pronoun indicate that the second noun (Abraham) not the first (faith) is the antecedent; in Gal 3:16 context alone would determine whether the antecedent was “seed” or “you,” since even though “seed” is neuter, the relative could be masculine by attraction to “Christ,” just as the case is nominative by attraction. A few

⁷¹⁸The word “many” in Akkadian is used in lexical texts to indicate the plural suffixes of Sumerian words (CAD 10.13). In modern Hebrew, the expression for “plural” is מִסְפַּר הַרְבֵּי, “the number of the many” (E. Ben Yehuda, *Complete International Centennial Edition Dictionary and Thesaurus of the Hebrew Language* [New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960], 7.6344; M. H. Bresslau, *English and Hebrew Dictionary* [London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, 1910], 179).

⁷¹⁹Similarly, in Heb 3:6 (“but Christ [was faithful] over the house of him whose house we are”), “the relative finds its antecedent in αὐτοῦ” (Marcus Dods, “The Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, 4.274). The relative is οὗ (genitive), but a few mss. have the nominative. Similarly in Heb4:13, “before the eyes of him with whom (αὐτοῦ πρὸς ὃν) we have to do.”

mss. “corrected” (incorrectly) the gender of the relative to the neuter to agree with seed, but probably Paul was relying on his previous teaching to the Galatians, not the masculine gender of the relative, to lead them to the correct understanding of his point. Gal 3:16 has the additional complication that here the relative with the third person singular verb comes after a quotation addressed in the second person, so that my reading “you who is Christ” might sound strange; the use of quotation marks in English clarifies the situation; “‘you,’ who is Christ.”⁷²⁰ The history of interpretation shows that the context has always been taken as dictating that “seed” is the antecedent of the relative; in fact this has never been questioned as far as I can determine. But interpreters who were willing to argue against appearances that the snake is not the “you” in at least part of Gen 3:14-15 (Paul would certainly be in this camp; see § 7.7 below) should be willing to entertain the possibility that the “you” in the patriarchal promises transcends the patriarchs. In other words, I interpret Paul as saying that, contrary to appearances, the new Adam spoken to in the Old Testament is not only the man being addressed at the time, but Christ, who will actually bring the promises of the new Adam to pass. Just as Genesis 4 shows that the “you” in the curse on the serpent must be more than an animal, so Genesis shows that the “you” in the promises to Abraham must be more than a son of Adam, however righteous he may be. This one is Christ, the progenitor of the promised seed.

Since English uses an adjective (“your”) rather than a pronoun (“of you”) to indicate possession, it is necessary to paraphrase somewhat in translating with the sense I am proposing. I would translate Gal 3:16 as follows: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed; he does not say ‘and to seeds,’ in the plural, but in the singular, ‘and to your seed’ (which is, Christ’s).” The observation appears to be a grammatical one, but as such it would be pointless; it is an historical observation: Abraham had two seeds (the two seeds of Gen 3:15, the righteous and the wicked), but the promises are to one seed, the righteous. The meaning is, the seed of promise must be someone else’s, Christ’s. Abraham the figurehead receives the promise on behalf of Christ, just as the animal snake receives the curse on behalf of Satan; as Abraham receives the promise he represents Christ receiving the promise, so just as “your seed” in the curse on the serpent is “Satan’s seed,” “your seed” in the promises to Abraham is “Christ’s seed.” Perhaps we may even say that as the devil is in the snake, receiving the curse along with it, Christ is in Abraham, receiving the promises of an innumerable seed along with him.

As we have seen, others have tried to say Paul must actually be making an historical argument to the effect that the promised seed is Christ’s. This interpretation is also consistent with Paul’s teaching elsewhere, since he never elsewhere equates the seed of Abraham or David with Christ, but rather he says believers in general are the seed of Abraham (twice in this chapter); Jesus is not *the* seed of Abraham, but *of* the seed of Abraham, *of* the seed of David, etc. (i.e., one of many in that category; see p. *, n. *).

⁷²⁰ Paul could have even drawn a line from the relative to sou in his letter to specify the antecedent, but of course this is only speculation. I only seek to counter the objection that Paul could not possibly have expected his readers to take sou as the antecedent. Indeed, probably nothing would surprise him more than that he would be interpreted as saying the seed is Christ when he says twice in this chapter and everywhere else that the seed is the Church!

However, v. 19 appears to contradict this collective interpretation of “seed” and support the view that Gal 3:16 teaches that Christ alone is the promised seed: Paul says the law was added because of transgressions, “until the seed should come to whom the promise was given.” Since the seed is viewed here as not in existence before the coming of Jesus, seed could not mean here the collective, spiritual seed of Abraham, since that seed existed from the beginning; so “seed” in v. 19 must refer to Christ specifically, and the same must apply to v. 16, to which v. 19 obviously refers.

Such an objection could not be pressed, however, for a similar problem is found in v. 23 where Paul says “before (the) faith came;” likewise v. 25: “Now that faith has come.” No one has suggested that Paul is teaching that there was no saving faith in Old Testament times; obviously quite the contrary. Similarly, understanding the seed of v. 19 as the Church cannot require the conclusion that there was no spiritual seed before Christ came. But why does Paul speak this way? Burton explained it as follows,

By τὴν πίστιν is meant not faith qualitatively; the article excludes this; not generically; Paul could not speak of this as having recently come, since, as he has maintained, it was at least as old as Abraham; nor the faith in the sense “that which is believed” ... ; but the faith in Christ just spoken of in v.²². That this was, in the apostle’s view, fundamentally alike in kind with the faith of Abraham is clear ... That it was specifically different is indicated by the use of the definite article, the frequent addition of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, and by the assertion of this verse that faith came at the end of the reign of the law.⁷²¹

Likewise the Church is “fundamentally alike in kind” with the assembly of the Old Testament faithful, yet “specifically different” in that it is now not the “commonwealth of Israel” (Eph 2:12), but the Church of Jesus Christ, the “new man” (Eph 2:15) which is to include members of all nations, irrespective of descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and it comes “at the end of the reign of the law.” Paul seems to be continuing the contrast he began earlier; law and faith, Spirit and flesh, and now, the physical seed and the spiritual seed. These correspond to two ages. After Abraham, his physical seed came, and that age was characterized by the rule of the law over the unregenerate seed of Abraham. The faithful remnant is simply not in view in Paul’s mind. But when Christ came, and the gospel was preached to those not of Abraham’s physical seed, a “new” seed came; Christ’s seed. This does not at all imply that the Old Testament believers were not part of that seed (as we saw, Genesis 4 places Abel among the promised seed) any more than “before faith came” means that there was no faith in Christ before he came. And since the issue being addressed by Paul is the believer’s relationship to the law, it seems to actually enhance Paul’s argument to see a reference to the Church as the seed in v. 19; “the law was added until the Church should come, the spiritual seed to whom the promises were given.” The fact that one of two places where the precise words “and to your seed” occurs is Gen 17:7-8 would support the view that Paul is thinking of the multinational Church as “the seed that should come,” since in this same chapter Abraham is made “father of many nations” (Gen 17:4-5; cf. Rom 4:16-17). We might add that after the covenant ceremony of Genesis 15, connected quite specifically with the history of the nation of Israel, comes the narrative of Ishmael’s birth (Genesis 16), while after the covenant by which Abraham becomes the father of many nations

⁷²¹Burton, *Galatians*, 198.

(Genesis 17), Isaac is born. Paul connects Israel according to the flesh (children of “the present Jerusalem”) and the first covenant with Ishmael’s mother, while telling the mostly Gentile Galatians that they are children of Sarah (Gal 4:24-26).

To summarize, it is impossible from the standpoint of logic, grammar, and Paul’s own usage to see Paul as arguing that “one person” as opposed to “many people” is implied by the use of the collective *עַרְבָּי* in the Old Testament promises. Proposals to explain Paul’s argument from the singular of “seed” in Gal 3:16 on the basis of rabbinic parallels fail to provide any real convincing parallels. There is strong rabbinic tradition, which merely reflects Hebrew (and Greek) idiom, that “seed” is a collective. And this is how the word is always used by the New Testament writers. The seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the house of David are all equivalent expressions for the righteous, now known as the Church, whose true head according to Gal 3:16 (with many other passages) is Christ. Paul’s point about “seeds” appears on the surface to be grammatical, but is actually historical, a point he makes at greater length elsewhere (Gal 4:22-31; Rom 9:6-13). The promises were not to Abraham’s “seeds;” which reminds us that Abraham had “seeds;” the two seeds of Gen 3:15 were among his descendants. This fact of history, repeated over several generations in the book of Genesis, shows us that the seed of promise must be produced by, and belong to, someone else. Taking the antecedent of *ὃς* in *ὃς ἐστὶν Χριστός* as σου rather than τῷ σπέρματι allows us to see that Paul is pointing out that the source and owner of the seed is Christ. We might add that Paul is vindicating the role of history (as recorded in scripture) in correctly interpreting the promises.

7.4 *Exodus and Conquest Typology in the Gospels*

The interpretation of certain events in the ministry of Jesus as “reenactments” of the exodus and conquest would indirectly relate these events to Gen 3:15d and the victory over the serpent-dragon, since we found that that was the case with the exodus and conquest in the Old Testament. T. Longman and D. Reid present a detailed analysis of the synoptic Gospels from this perspective, with a view to showing that Jesus is depicted as the same divine warrior which God is often pictured as in the Old Testament.⁷²² We will briefly review this typology, and then see if there are any more direct pointers to the fact that Gen 3:15d is being fulfilled by Jesus.

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is followed by the temptation for 40 days in the wilderness; we discussed above the evidence that the wilderness temptation is the typological counterpart to Israel’s after the exodus (§ 7.2). It seems likely, therefore, that the baptism of Jesus is seen as the typological counterpart to the crossing of the sea which preceded the wilderness temptations, which in turn was typologically connected to the crossing of the Jordan. The designation of Jesus as God’s son (like Israel in Exod 4:22) after the baptism and the creation symbolism of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove (“a veiled allusion to Gen 1:2”)⁷²³ would seem to confirm this. John the Baptist’s

⁷²² Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 91-135.

⁷²³ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 56. The use of creation symbolism reminds us that the crossing of the sea was itself part of a creation reenactment (see § 5.1.2). The creation allusion is based on the Spirit of God “hovering” over the waters, a verb used elsewhere of a bird (Deut 32:11, the only other occurrence). Lane mentions another possible meaning of the dove, that it

designation of Jesus as “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” at the Jordan may also point back to the crossing of the Jordan, which took place on the day that the Passover lamb was to be selected.⁷²⁴

As the conquest followed the 40 years in the wilderness, Reid points out that following his wilderness temptation, Jesus’ first act of “conquest,” after choosing disciples (representing the holy army of Israel in Joshua) is rebuking and driving out a demon in a synagogue (Mark 1:22-26), but after Mark 9:38 there are no more battles with demons, but rather with the Scribes and Pharisees, while at the end of his ministry he drives out the moneychangers from the temple. The verb for driving out (ἐκβάλλω) in these cases is regularly used in the LXX to translate שָׁרַף, used of driving out the Canaanites from their land.⁷²⁵ Of particular interest is the incident of Jesus rebuking the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:39), which is followed by the incident of the demoniac of Gerasenes⁷²⁶ with the “legion” (Mark 5:1-20). The calming of the sea provokes the question from the disciples, “Who then is this?”, and the two incidents remind one closely of Ps 65:8-9 (7-8), which says that God “stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples, and those who dwell in the ends of the earth are in awe of your signs.” The fleeing of the demons into the herd of swine resulted in their being drowned in the sea, like the Egyptians after the rebuke of the Red Sea (Ps 106:9, 11).⁷²⁷

The fact that the driving out of demons is part of this “conquest” raises the question of whether the serpent’s seed is to be understood to include demons, as many

represents Israel, thus identifies Jesus as “the unique representative of the new Israel created through the Spirit” (ibid., 57).

⁷²⁴ John 1:29, 36; Josh 4:19; Exod 12:3. Woudstra says the mentions of the date is a way of connecting the crossing of the Jordan with the crossing of the sea (which took place soon after the first Passover; *Joshua*, 94). The day of the crossing of the Jordan was also the day on which God said he would “begin to exalt” Joshua (= Jesus in Greek) in the eyes of all Israel (Josh 3:7; 4:14). A connection with the Passover lamb ordinance might also explain Jesus’ statement that his baptism was “fitting to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15).

⁷²⁵ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 97, 99, 103-04, 108, 117, 123. The Greek for Jesus’s rebuking of the demons (ἐπιτιμάω) is in the LXX always a translation of שָׁרַף (including Ps 106 [105]:9, rebuking the Red Sea); similarly with the noun forms.

⁷²⁶ The reading Γεργεσηνων or Γεργυστηνων in many mss. suggests a connection with the otherwise little known Girgashites (so Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 341). Westermann traces this suggestion to H. Ewald (Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 522).

⁷²⁷ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 116. Because of the juxtaposition of these two incidents, Reid sees the storm as recalling “the archetypal enemy *Yam*” (ibid., 116). As I have argued in chap. V, and as the allusion to Psalm 65 seems to support, the comparison of the nations to the seas is to be explained by the use of the “waters below” (along with darkness) in the creation account to symbolize the serpent’s seed, so the serpent himself is alluded to indirectly via this symbolism. In any case, if there is an allusion to the defeat of *Yam*, there is also an allusion to the defeat of Baal (the prince of demons defeated in the next event), since not only the sea but also the storm is stilled.

interpreters have said. In the Old Testament evidence that we have discussed, it was always wicked humans who were so depicted, beginning with Cain. The role of demons in the Old Testament is that they are the gods of the nations (1 Cor 10:20) and the defeat of these gods is bound up with the defeat of the nations which worship them (Exod 12:12). One might view these gods as being defeated along with Satan without identifying them as his seed; there seems to me to be no definite evidence of an interpretation of Gen 3:15 that identifies the demons as part of the serpent's seed. More likely the New Testament counterpart to the conquest of Canaan and the annihilation of the Canaanites is the conversion of sinners (the driving out of demons here showing the greatness of the conversion), perhaps explaining Paul's figure of the "old man" who has been crucified with Christ and laid aside at conversion, and which must still be laid aside (Rom 6:6; Gal 2:20; 5:24; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), and his advice to Christians to "put to death the deeds of the body" in which the converts once lived (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5).

At first sight, John's Gospel seems for the most part left out of the use of exodus and conquest typology, with the exception of the events of the passion and resurrection. Kovacs points out, however, that in John we see Jesus as a conqueror in more universalistic terms. The crucifixion is a victory, the result of a confrontation with "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30), and the conflict between light and darkness is a recurring theme (John 1:5; 3:19-21; 12:36). The mention of the fact that "it was night" when Judas left to betray Jesus (John 13:30), shows that "Judas is wholly allied with the forces of darkness."⁷²⁸ As we have seen, the contrast between light and darkness in the creation account (along with that between the waters above and below, and between the dry land and the seas) is used in the Old Testament to contrast the two seeds, so the battle between light and darkness is simply the same battle predicted in Gen 3:15.

Christian interpreters throughout history, whether they had a strictly individual or collective interpretation of the woman's seed, have agreed that Gen 3:15d-e is fulfilled uniquely in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Here, too, Exodus typology comes into play. Luke 9:30-31 refers to the "exodus" Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem; discussed on top of a mountain where a cloud came down with (appropriately) Moses, the leader of the exodus, and Elijah, who went to Horeb where God had appeared to Moses. The association of the crucifixion with the Passover feast, and the numerous parallels often drawn between the two, provides another connection. We also saw that deliverance at dawn and/or deliverance on the third day were recurring themes in the Old Testament fulfillments of Gen 3:15d, and both may be seen in the resurrection of Jesus at dawn on the third day. We also noted in connection with the conquest that certain literalistic or geographical features of a narrative pointed to some aspect of the curse on the serpent, especially the literal crushing of the head of the wicked. Such a literalistic and geographical pointer to the fulfillment of Gen 3:15d may be seen in the site of the crucifixion: all four Gospels mention that Jesus was crucified at a place called "Skull" (Golgatha), or "Place of a Skull" (Matt 27:33; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17). This skull was, so to speak, trodden on by Jesus as he walked to the place of his crucifixion. As the skull of Sisera on the ground was pierced by Jael's tent peg, into the ground, so

⁷²⁸Kovacs, "Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle," 230-234, esp. 234.

the cross of Jesus pierced the “Place of the Skull;” its rocks were also split open by an earthquake (Matt 27:51; cf. Abimelech’s fate, Judg 9:53). At the same time, his feet were pierced, recalling (literalistically) Gen 3:15e, as well as Ps 22:17 (16). Thus while all the events of Good Friday seemed to point obviously to a great defeat, the image of Jesus’ crucifixion at Calvary could instead be seen as a picture of the Son of God “crushing heads over the wide earth” (Ps 110:6), and perhaps this picture explains in part why Paul places the victory over all powers at the crucifixion rather than the resurrection (Col 2:15).

7.5 Evidence From *Ephesians 1 – 2*

Speaking to Gentile Christians formerly “separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12; NASB), Paul says that they have been brought near by the blood of Christ, who is “our peace” (v. 14), and who “abolished in his flesh the enmity” (v. 15), and through the cross “put to death the enmity” (v. 16). In both references to this enmity, he says that the result of the elimination of enmity is that Jewish and Gentile Christians become one body in Christ: “That in himself he might create the two into one new man” (v. 15); that he might “reconcile them both in one body to God” (v. 16). The enmity is thus stated as that which was between Jew and Gentile, which raises the question of whether Paul is specifically thinking of the enmity spoken of in Gen 3:15, which, as we saw in chap. VI, was nominally between Israel and the nations during the history of Israel.⁷²⁹

That Paul says that this enmity between Jew and Gentile consisted of “the law of commandments in ordinances” (v. 15) might be taken as evidence against an association with Gen 3:15: “It can easily be seen that in functioning as a fence to protect Israel from the impurity of the Gentiles, the law became such a sign of Jewish particularism that it also alienated Gentiles and became a cause of hostility.”⁷³⁰ But this view assumes that Paul has derived the concept of enmity between Jew and Gentile from personal observation or the present experience of others, rather than from the Old Testament. However, one might try to make the same case from the Old Testament; Lev 20:24-26 says that because God separated (הבדיל) Israel from the nations for himself, Israel should distinguish (הבדיל) between clean and unclean animals in order to be holy. But we do not read, for example, that the Edomites and Philistines harbored an “ancient enmity” (Ezek 25:15; 35:5) against Israel because of Mosaic dietary laws; the enmity was due to their wickedness, and their desire to shed blood. Thus the law is the enmity because it is the standard of righteousness separating the nations from God and from those at peace with him (nominally, “the commonwealth of Israel” in the Old Testament). But if Israel violated God’s laws, their sins would separate (הבדיל) them from God (Isa 59:2-3), thus they become again like the nations (cf. Eph 2:12, “separate from Christ”), while “the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord” should not say “The Lord will surely

⁷²⁹“Nominally” because only a remnant in Israel qualified as the spiritual seed, so there was also enmity in Israel itself; also because there were Gentile converts.

⁷³⁰Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 141.

separate (הבדיל) me from his people” (Isa 56:3). The similar passage in Col 2:14 suggests the same thing: God “canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us.” It was “hostile to us” not because we liked to eat pork but because of our wickedness. So the enmity between Jew and Gentile in Eph 2:15 is the same as that which is between the unregenerate and God, as well as between the righteous and the wicked; namely, the enmity of Gen 3:15.⁷³¹ The context of Ephesians 2 suggests the same thing, since the abolition of the enmity is also expressed as a result of Christ coming and preaching peace to those far away, and peace to those near (v. 17), an allusion to Isa 57:19, where God says “peace” to the repentant, whether far or near, but, “‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked’” (v. 21).

It is quite possible, therefore, that Paul is specifically thinking of the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 in these verses. While he makes no explicit reference to Gen 3:15, the wider context touches on a number of themes that we have dealt with in looking at the use of Gen 3:15 in the Old Testament. First, we saw that the idea of the separation of the two seeds predicted in Gen 3:15 is reminiscent of the creation account of Genesis 1, where creation is a series of separations (the verb is הבדיל, the same as used in describing Israel’s separation from the nations). The narration of the Lord’s approval (literally, looking upon) of Abel and his offering over Cain and his offering is stated with the same syntax used in the creation account, and also alludes to God’s seeing the light (as opposed to the darkness). The implication is that the seed of the woman (exemplified by Abel), as well as his good works (Abel’s offering) is God’s new creation. Here, too, Paul uses the word “create” (κτίζω) to speak of the new man brought about by the abolishing of enmity between Jewish and Gentile believers (v. 15), and between both and God (v. 16), and Paul has also just said that even the good works that Christians do are God’s creation; we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (v. 10).

I also argued that the significance of Solomon’s name (“his peace”), since it is connected to the cessation of wars with the nations, was related to the abolishing of the enmity of Gen 3:15. Further, I argued that the word-play on “house” in 2 Samuel 7 (Nathan’s oracle to David), a house that David could not build but Solomon could, ultimately refers to God’s house as his people, which someone greater than David (or Solomon) would build (see §§ 6.2.4, 6.2.5). Here too Paul, after calling Jesus “our peace,” goes on to tell the Ephesian Christians they are “of God’s house(hold)” (v. 19), part of “a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21), thus alluding to the word-play on “house” as temple and God’s household in 2 Samuel 7 with the implication that Jesus (“our peace”), not Solomon, is the son of David spoken of in that chapter as the builder of God’s household, and his temple in whom he dwells. That “our peace” is a title of Jesus based on the name Solomon would also be consistent with Jesus’ self description as “one

⁷³¹We have noted that the four uses of “enmity” outside of Gen 3:15 are all connected to the shedding of blood, and that these two verses in Ezekiel are the only collective usages of the Hebrew אִיְבָהָה. The Greek ἔχθρα, in addition to translating אִיְבָהָה in Gen 3:15; Num 35:22; and Ezek 35:5, translates שְׂנְאָה in Num 35:20 (a condition of premeditated murder), Prov 10:18; 15:17; 26:26 (hatred by wicked people), אַף in Ezek 35:11 (anger of the Edomites), and it translates the verbal form אִיב in Isa 63:10; Mic 2:8 (of enmity between God and disobedient Israel). In Jer 9:8 it translates אֶרְבָּא, “ambush” against a neighbor, possibly reading אִיְבָהָה.

greater than Solomon” (Matt 12:42; Luke 11:31). Distinguishing Jesus from Solomon may also be the reason for the demonstrative αὐτός beginning v. 14: “As most commentators notice, the emphasis is on the αὐτός – ‘He and no other;’”⁷³² i.e., not Solomon.

A further connection with Gen 3:15 may exist in Paul’s description of the Ephesians (and himself) before their conversion:

You were dead in [or, by] your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, of the spirit which is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all, too, lived in the desires of the flesh, ... and were by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:1-3).

The ruler spoken of, of course, is Satan. T. Abbott noted that the LXX of Deut 25:2 translates “son of stripes” as “worthy (ἄξιος) of blows,” and that a “son of death” is one worthy of death (1 Sam 26:12; 2 Sam 12:5); thus “children of wrath” are those worthy or deserving of God’s wrath.⁷³³ Lincoln noted that Cain (the archetype of the serpent’s seed) is called a “son of wrath” in *Apoc. Mos.* 3.2, and that for “by nature” the context favors the sense “in their natural condition, through birth.”⁷³⁴ One could easily read Paul’s description, then, as a paraphrastic exposition of what it means to be of the seed of the serpent, so that the whole chapter describes the transition from seed of the serpent to member of God’s household by God’s grace and his creative power.

In the course of describing the magnitude of this power and of the Christian’s inheritance in Christ, Paul says it has been “brought about in Christ, when [God] raised him from the dead, and seated him at his right hand” (Eph 1:20). The allusion to Ps 110:1 is of interest because the psalm as a whole speaks of enemies under foot (v. 1), of ruling amidst enemies (v. 2), and of crushing heads (v. 6), on the basis of which I related it to Gen 3:15 (§ 6.3.2). Following the allusion to Ps 110:1 he quotes Ps 8:7 (6; changing to third person); “and he put all things under his feet” (v. 22). As F. Delitzsch noted, the words in Ps 8:7 (6) “sound like a paraphrase of the הָרַךְ in Gen. 1.26, 28” because the literal meaning is to tread upon.⁷³⁵ P. Giles noted that it is not just here that Psalms 8 and 110 are put together: “It is notable that nowhere in the New Testament is Ps 8⁷ expounded without the aid of Ps 110¹.”⁷³⁶ As in Eph 1:20-22, Paul alludes to Ps 110:1 and then Ps 8:7 (6) in 1 Cor 15:25-27. In Hebrews there is a larger separation, but the order is the same; Ps 110:1 in Heb 1:13, then Ps 8:7 (6) in Heb 2:8.

⁷³²S. D. F. Salmond, “The Epistle to the Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, 3.294.

⁷³³T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 45.

⁷³⁴Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 98-99.

⁷³⁵Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 155.

⁷³⁶Pauline Giles, “The Son of Man in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *ExpTim* 86 (1975): 331. I thank Brad Mellon for pointing out the relationship between Psalms 8 and 110 to me, a point also mentioned in his S. T. M. Thesis, “The ‘Son of Man’ in Hebrews 2:1-10” (Biblical Theological Seminary, 1985).

The connection between Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 can be explained by the connection between Gen 1:26-28 and Gen 3:15, a connection noted by Keil (§ 1.8.2) and which I supported in §§ 2.2.4 and 6.2.4. The order in which they are referred to three out of three times in the New Testament can also be explained by the relationship between Gen 1:26-28 and Gen 3:15. As argued previously, Gen 3:15 would suggest that Gen 1:26-28 will be fulfilled in spite of the fall, but under different terms. Only part of humanity (the righteous) will subdue and rule; the rest will be subdued in hostility. Gen 1:26-28 (dominion over the creation by those in God's image) can only be fulfilled when Gen 3:15 is fulfilled (the putting under foot of the wicked); thus Psalm 110 (which alludes to Gen 3:15) is quoted prior to Psalm 8 (which alludes to Gen 1:26-28). We saw this order in the Old Testament in the case of Noah, to whom the creation mandate was reissued after the wicked seed had been destroyed in the flood. Similarly David subdued the surrounding nations, bringing an era of peace in which Solomon could turn his attention to Gen 1:28 in investigating and subduing the creation (1 Kgs 4:33; 9:26-28). Finally, if we understand the promises of fruitfulness and dominion to Noah, the patriarchs and David, as promises which would seem to designate these individuals as the "new Adam" of their time, we can see why the "man/son of man" of Psalm 8 given dominion is to be identified with David's "Lord" in Psalm 110. Since the creation mandate was repeated almost verbatim to Noah (Gen 9:1, 7), we might read "Noah" as well as Adam in the question, "What is man, that you remember him?" (Ps 8:5 [4]; cf. Gen 8:1). The mandate was repeated thematically, as a promise, to Abraham (Genesis 17), whom God also "remembered" (Gen 19:29); also to Jacob (Gen 35:11), and Jacob said of himself, "I have all things" (Gen 33:11; cf. Ps 8:7 [6]); finally, to David (2 Samuel 7), who responded, "this is the *torah* of Adam" (2 Sam 7:19; see § 6.2.4). All of these prospective "new Adams" came and went in the Old Testament, and in the time of Jesus, "all things" were under the foot of Rome. Consequently, believers must look to someone greater than them to bring about the fulfillment of the promise, namely, David's Lord who sits at God's right hand (Ps 110:1).

The issue of the meaning of the title "Son of Man" used by Jesus to describe himself is a topic of significant discussion in New Testament studies, and we do not have space to give a full discussion here. Giles's essay cited above (and Mellon's thesis) supports the view that the "son of man" phrase from Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 is equivalent to the title used by Jesus in the Gospels. Giles notes that J. Héring equates the "Son of Man" title with the "heavenly Adam" in Paul's epistles (1 Cor 15:45-47).⁷³⁷ If the phrase "Son of Man" relates to Psalm 8 in the Gospels, the equation would be natural, but the fact that some of the references are obviously from Daniel's vision of "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13; Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27) would seem to be against this. I would note, however, that in the first use of the title in the New Testament, there is an ironic reference to Psalm 8. In Matt 8:20 (= Luke 9:58) Jesus says, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (NASB). A reference to Ps 8:5-9 (4-8) would make nice irony: "What is man, that you remember him; or the son of man, that you pay attention to him? ... You make him

⁷³⁷Giles, "The Son of Man in Hebrews," 329; J. Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Epworth, 1970), 15.

rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet; ... all the beasts of the field [including foxes, of course], the birds of the sky;” these have dens and nests, yet the “Son of Man” over them has no home. This reference to Psalm 8 in application to himself would also support the connection made in Heb 2:9 between Ps 8:6 (5), “You made him a little lower than the angels,” and the humiliation of Jesus, whereas applied to the original Adam it would indicate exaltation.

If “Son of Man,” means the “new Adam” often mentioned in previous chapters of the present work, then part of his office is as progenitor of the righteous seed, and so we might expect some reference to this role, since the title is found about 75 times in the Gospels. The most obvious example would probably be in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt 13:24-30; 36-43). Jesus explains that the good seed (which grows into wheat) are “the sons of the kingdom,” while the tares are “the sons of the evil one” (v. 38); so the parable speaks of the two seeds of Gen 3:15 (here, coincidentally, using “seed” in the literal sense to speak of the seed in the figurative sense). But Jesus also speaks of the two progenitors: the enemy who sowed the tares is the devil, while “the one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man” (vv. 37, 39). Another connection with generation of the righteous offspring is seen in the conversion of Zaccheus. When the tax collector repented, Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house, for he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:9-10).

Therefore, while the closest Paul comes to quoting Gen 3:15 in Ephesians 1-2 is the mere mention of enmity, it appears that a great deal of his thought in these two chapters can be explained as depending upon the Old Testament development of Gen 3:15 as described in this dissertation.

7.6 Jesus Made Like the Serpent

Jesus told Nicodemus that he (the Son of Man) would be “lifted up” just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14), which brings up the question of whether he is simply making an analogy to an unrelated Old Testament story, or whether he views the bronze serpent as representative of the serpent of Genesis 3, and therefore means that he will be lifted up as a cursed being, made like the serpent. If the latter is the meaning, this may be another ironic use of the “Son of Man” title. We saw that the wilderness temptations of Israel followed the pattern of temptation in Genesis 3 in that behind the complaining of the Israelites was a temptation to ascribe base motives to God, as the serpent did (e.g., Num 14:3; Deut 1:27; see § 6.1.1), and that the bronze snake incident is one such case. If this incident therefore alludes to Genesis 3, and the “Son of Man” is the new Adam who passed every test and never complained, and who is the snake-head-crusher, Lord of all creation, it is ironic (or paradoxical) that he must be made like the cursed serpent. But this same paradox we saw in Isaiah 53, where the Lord’s servant makes himself a guilt offering though he himself had done no wrong (vv. 9-10). We also saw that the word for this guilt offering (אָפֶלֶת) would be appropriate to apply to the bronze serpent based on analogy with the golden mice made by the Philistines (see § 6.1.1). It seems highly probable, therefore, that Jesus is making more than a physical analogy between the two incidents, and that he is indicating to Nicodemus that he will take upon himself the curse on the serpent for the sake of those who believe in him. We have also drawn this same implication from comparing the covenant ceremony in Genesis

15 to the crossing of the Red Sea (see § 5.7.2). R. Brown says that when Jesus says he “must” be lifted up, it is an indication that this lifting up is prophesied, and he points to Isa 52:13, where God says that his servant will “be lifted up and greatly exalted.”⁷³⁸ This mention of lifting up, obviously, precedes the mention of him being made a guilt offering in Isa 53:10. As mentioned in § 6.3.4, various verbs used in the Old Testament to describe God’s vanquishing of the serpent-dragon are used in Isaiah 53 to describe God’s actions which he is pleased to take against his servant; crushing him, piercing him, etc. It would be natural, then, to relate the idea of the servant’s being lifted up to that of the serpent’s being lifted up, combining the apparently paradoxical ideas of guilt offering (humiliation to death) and exaltation. L. Morris comments on this paradox: “It is part of John’s aim to show that Jesus showed forth His glory not *in spite of* His earthly humiliations, but precisely *by means of* those humiliations.”⁷³⁹ Relating the statement that the Son of Man must be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness to the serpent of Gen 3:15 and to Isa 52:13 and Isaiah 53 reveals the extent of this humiliation and its paradox: he *receives* the curse on the serpent on behalf of those he redeems, and who are in their natural state under that curse, so that they might partake of his *victory over the serpent*.

Paul also speaks of Jesus being made a curse for us, citing the identification of those executed in accordance with the law of Moses and then hung on a tree as those cursed by God (Gal 3:14; Deut 21:23). As Longman and Reid note, this penalty was also applied to Canaanite kings (seed of the serpent) conquered by Joshua,⁷⁴⁰ and preceding one of these cases there is a possible allusion to Gen 3:15 when the Israelites step on the kings’ necks (Josh 10:24); in any case, the curses of the law must be seen as thematically related to the curse on the serpent since the law is the standard for the righteous seed and the blessings and curses of the law allude back to the patriarchal blessings and curses, which we have seen go back to Gen 1:28 and Gen 3:15. Paul’s statement, then, implies that Jesus took the curse of the serpent on himself.

Another indication that the curse on the serpent is applied to Jesus in his crucifixion is the three hours of darkness (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44), which would recall the three days of darkness on the Egyptians (the serpent’s seed) during the plagues (while Israel had light), and the darkness on them again during the reenactment of the three days of creation at the Red Sea. The death of the firstborn followed the plague of darkness, and the death of the Egyptians in the sea followed the darkness from the pillar of cloud and fire. Likewise the death of Jesus (the firstborn among many brethren; Rom 8:29) on the cross follows the three hours of darkness.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁸Brown, *John 1-12*, 146.

⁷³⁹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 226.

⁷⁴⁰Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 162.

⁷⁴¹I thank Jimmy Wright for the observation that the Lord experienced the ninth and tenth plagues against Egypt on the cross (personal communication).

We also analyzed Hab 3:13-14 as a picture of the serpent-dragon being defeated in battle; stripped from legs to neck, and struck in the head with a “staff.” Jesus was also struck repeatedly in the head with a mock ruler’s staff (Matt 27:29-30; Mark 15:18), and he was “laid bare” by flogging and stripped for crucifixion. Finally, death itself in the Old Testament marked the token fulfillments of the curse on the serpent, and three days in the tomb would make Jesus again like the Egyptians, “swallowed up by the earth” (Exod 15:12). And yet, as the picture of the cross of Jesus piercing the Place of the Skull suggests, it is through this suffering, even to the extent of being cursed, that he is victorious (Col 2:15), so that while he is apparently made like the serpent and his seed, he is delivered from death, like Israel, at dawn on the third day.

Since he did die, however, deliverance from death in his case means a resurrection. This raises the question of whether the “lifting up” in John 3:14 alludes also to the resurrection. The bronze snake incident itself might be seen as partly pointing in this direction. The snake is raised up, but so are those who have been bitten and look to the snake (the guilt offering) for deliverance; they are raised up from their dying state. More probably, the idea of resurrection would be found from the Isaiah passage cited, since the crucifixion without the accompanying idea of resurrection would only be a defeat, not a glorious exaltation, as Isa 52:13 speaks of, while Isaiah 53 goes on to speak of both suffering to death and resurrection. It would seem, then, that the dependence of John 3:14 on both the Numbers 21 incident and on Isaiah 53 implies that the resurrection is part of the lifting up. I have suggested that such a veiled allusion to the idea of resurrection is found also in Gen 4:7, a promise of a “lifting up” if Cain does well (see § 3.4.1); this lifting up must apply to the one who did do well, but died; i.e., Abel.⁷⁴²

7.7 Rom 16:20

ὁ δὲ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης συντρίψει

τὸν Σατανᾶς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας ὑμῶν ἐν τάχει

The God of peace shall soon crush Satan under your feet.

Interpreters denying that this verse alludes to Gen 3:15, or saying that it may allude to Gen 3:15 in combination with other verses point to the fact that it is not an exact quotation, and that here God is the subject, not the woman’s seed. The obvious inference to be drawn from viewing the language of Rom 16:20 as based primarily on Gen 3:15 is that the Church is the woman’s seed, thus the strictly individual interpretation (and the naturalistic interpretation) is wrong. Since the interpretation of the promised seed throughout the Old Testament has been shown to be consistently collective, a similar conclusion based on Rom 16:20 might seem anti-climactic; nevertheless the verse is of interest for our study because it seems to be the closest Paul comes to actually quoting Gen 3:15.

⁷⁴²In the same section I also noted Wilcox’s suggestion that the apostles saw a similar double *entendre* in the “raising up” of David’s son in 2 Sam 7:12, which, applied to Jesus, must involve a resurrection since he died without coming to the throne (Wilcox, “Promise of the Seed,” 6-9; Acts 2:30-31; 13:23, 33). Wilcox is in error, however, by saying that the apostles therefore understood the promised seed as being an individual (ibid., 9), since 2 Sam 7:12 applies to the whole Davidic line. It is the fact of Jesus’ death without attaining his kingship that requires an understanding of the verb “raise up” in the sense of resurrection, with a corresponding application of Ps 2:7 as a resurrection.

Both the title of God and the action he is said to take point in this direction. First, the word “peace” may here allude to its opposite, the enmity of Gen 3:15. The phrase “God of peace” may in addition reflect the *Tg. Neofiti* paraphrase of “enmity” with “enemy,” literally, “lord of enmity,” which, as mentioned in § 1.2.2, may allude to the name Beelzebub. The idea of crushing Satan under foot is also quite consistent with the picture presented in Gen 3:15, and since it is figurative, it would be hard to explain where Paul got the figure if not from Gen 3:15; he presumably does not anticipate Christians literally stepping on Satan. The Old Testament passages we have related to the fulfillment of Gen 3:15d speak, for example, of crushing the heads of the serpent Leviathan (Ps 74:13), or speak more generally of his demise, without mentioning “under the feet” of humans, while passages speaking of the enemy being put under foot (such as Ps 110:1) speak of human enemies. Gen 3:15 is therefore the most likely candidate to be the basis for Paul’s statement, as it combines these two ideas. Lewis’s objection (§ 1.9.2) that Paul does not follow the LXX of Gen 3:15 seems pointless since the LXX is a bad translation; Paul obviously is not dependant on the LXX Gen 3:15d-e translation “watch” here. He may be giving his own translation, or he may have derived it from another passage which I have argued celebrates the fulfillment of Gen 3:15. $\sigma\upsilon\nu\tau\rho\iota\beta\omega$ does in fact translate both רָצַץ and שָׁבַר in the LXX of Ps 74 (73):13-14: “You crushed the heads of the dragons (Heb., תַּנִּינִים) upon the waters; you crushed the head of the dragon (Heb., לְיָתוֹן).”

The use of Gen 3:15 in Psalm 74 also helps us answer the objection that Rom 16:20 cannot be based primarily on Gen 3:15 because the woman’s seed crushes the serpent’s head in Gen 3:15, while Rom 16:20 ascribes this action to God. As we have seen, in the Old Testament the poet recognizes that a fulfillment of Gen 3:15d has occurred, and ascribes the fulfillment of it to God (Ps 74:13-14, for example), whereas the narrative text gives humans at least a nominal (or token) role. The outstanding example we saw was God telling Moses to divide the Red Sea and then bring the divided waters back together, as if it was his raising of the staff that accomplished it (Exod 14:16, 21, 26-27). The fact that in the Old Testament a human being, usually the leader of God’s people, is given a prominent role in the fulfillment of Gen 3:15 certainly finds its counterpart in the role of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, while the doctrine of the incarnation would seem to make the distinction between “the God of peace” and this New Testament leader of God’s people invalid.

7.8 *Mary and the Fulfillment of Gen 3:15*

As described in § 1.4.1, Justin Martyr made a contrast between Eve’s response of faith in the words of the fallen angel speaking through the serpent, resulting in disobedience and death, and Mary’s response of faith to the words of the angel Gabriel, resulting in obedience and the birth of the Son of God by whom God would destroy “both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him.” Similarly, Irenaeus said that what Eve bound through unbelief, Mary set free through faith (§ 1.4.2). From Justin and Irenaeus, a theology of Mary as an “anti-Eve” was developed in which Mary was thought to be “the woman” spoken of in Gen 3:15. Since this view logically depends on the singular interpretation of the woman’s seed, an interpretation which we have seen is against the consistent collective interpretation of the woman’s seed in Scripture itself from the very beginning, this view cannot be maintained. The question remains, however, whether the New Testament assigns to Mary a special role in the fulfillment of Gen 3:15.

We saw in § 6.2.2 that Jael is viewed in Judges 4-5 as something of an anti-Eve as well; she literally crushed the head of not the serpent, but his offspring, Sisera. Part of her depiction as an anti-Eve is Deborah's saying "Blessed is Jael among women" (Judg 5:24), which compares well to Elizabeth's inspired greeting to Mary (Luke 1:42; only later mss. have the phrase in Gabriel's greeting in v. 28), and contrasts with the beginning of the curse on the serpent. It would seem natural to conclude, then, that "blessed are you among women," along with the other analogies mentioned by Justin and Irenaeus, point to Mary as having a special role in the fulfillment of Gen 3:15, a role which would obviously be the virgin birth of Jesus, who would crush the serpent's head. At the same time, since Jael was similarly described, one cannot go beyond Justin and Irenaeus to the view that Mary is "the woman" spoken of in Gen 3:15, though obviously Mary's faithful submission was of greater benefit to the true Israel than was Jael's piercing of Sisera's skull.

7.9 *The Woman and Her Seed in Revelation 12*

In § 1.2.2 we noted McNamara's view that the *Palestinian Tgs.* of Gen 3:15 influenced the description of the woman's seed in Rev 12:17, which reads, "The dragon was enraged at the woman, and went off to wage war against the rest of her seed, those who keep the commandments of God, and who hold to the testimony of Jesus." The idea of the woman's seed by itself has led to connecting this verse with the LXX of Gen 3:15.⁷⁴³ But the *Palestinian Tgs.* of Gen 3:15 add a moral description of the woman's seed: "And when the children of the woman keep the commandments of the Law they will take aim and strike you on your head," and goes on to speak of "the days of the King Messiah."⁷⁴⁴ McNamara thinks that v. 17 is a clear enough parallel to the Targums, but combined with the fact that the persecutor in Revelation 12 is called the "ancient serpent," a term agreeing with Jewish descriptions of the serpent of Genesis 3 such as נחש קדמוני and נחש ראשון, "we are justified in believing that this passage of the work is dependent on the manner in which Gn 3,15 is viewed in this same liturgical rendering."⁷⁴⁵

If Rev 12:17 is an allusion to Gen 3:15, then, it supports the collective, figurative interpretation that was established in Genesis 4 and many other passages. This connection of the two verses is not widely recognized, however, and the belief that Revelation 12 borrows heavily from pagan "combat myths" for its imagery (especially of the dragon) raises the question as to whether the background of Revelation 12 should be sought in the Bible. A. Collins has studied Revelation 12 in detail from this point of view, assuming that the author is "consciously attempting to be international" because one cannot understand all the features of the chapter from a Semitic background, such as the dragon

⁷⁴³ E.g., Robert H. Mounce: "τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς may echo Gen 3:15 (LXX)" (*The Book of Revelation* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 247, n. 40).

⁷⁴⁴ Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis, 27-28*. Similarly, *Tg. Neof.* Gen 3:15. For the whole verse, see § 1.2.2.

⁷⁴⁵ McNamara, *New Testament and Palestinian Targum*, 221-22.

pursuing the woman.⁷⁴⁶ Of the various myths available for comparison, Collins believes that the motif of the dragon attacking the woman (who is depicted in v. 1 as a goddess) is most like the Egyptian myth of Isis being attacked by Seth so that Horus will not be born or grow up, and the myth of Leto (pregnant with Apollo by Zeus) being pursued by Python. In particular, Zeus sending the north wind is like the eagles' wings given to the woman (v. 14), and Poseidon's aid to Leto is like the earth opening its mouth to help the woman by swallowing the dragon's flood. These similarities are "too great to be accidental."⁷⁴⁷ Similarly, R. H. Charles said that Revelation 12 "is full of mythological features which could not have been the original creation of a Jew or a Christian." He then listed these features:

1. A goddess clothed with the sun, crowned with the zodiac, and standing on the moon as her footstool.
2. This goddess is with child – an idea wholly foreign to Jewish conceptions of the angels.
3. The great fiery dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems, whose tail can hurl down a third of the stars from heaven.
4. The birth of the young sun-god and his rapture into heaven.
5. The flight of the woman into the wilderness by means of the wings of the great eagle.
6. The flood cast forth by the dragon after the woman, and the earth opening its mouth and swallowing it.⁷⁴⁸

Aside from the fact that these objections do not explain how incorporation of such mythological features into a Christian document is any more possible than their origination by a Christian, each of these six objections can be met with plausible and/or compelling explanations from a biblical background, while not denying the fact that there may be points of contact with pagan myths. It is useful also to keep in mind that John is describing a vision he sees, which is not the same thing as saying that the events of this vision will or have taken place literally, either on earth or in heaven. Thus the woman need not exist literally, either as a woman or a goddess: "She belongs, like all John's other symbols, to the realm of vision."⁷⁴⁹ If not literally a goddess or a woman, what does she symbolize? The sun, moon, and stars might serve to represent her as a goddess to a pagan; Collins mentions three candidates for background to the "woman" (Artemis, Atargatis, and Isis), each of which is associated with the moon, but Artemis is not associated directly with the sun, and Isis is not associated directly with the zodiac; association with sun, moon, and stars together is not seen in any of them.⁷⁵⁰ Caird assumes a polemical intent: "John rewrites the old pagan myth deliberately to contradict

⁷⁴⁶Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (HTR HDR 9; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 58.

⁷⁴⁷Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 65-76.

⁷⁴⁸R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 300.

⁷⁴⁹G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 149.

⁷⁵⁰Collins, *Combat Myth in Revelation*, 71-76.

its current political application. The killing of the dragon *is* being re-enacted, but not by the emperor, who turns out instead to be one of the dragon's minions."⁷⁵¹ Caird points to a coin from the reign of Tiberius, on which Augustus and Livia are depicted as the sun and the moon; another coin depicts the head of Augustus and a figure of the goddess Roma. John will therefore refute Roman "imperial ideology, which declared that Roma was the new queen of the gods and mother of the world's savior. John is going to portray her as the new Jezebel, the seducer of the world."⁷⁵² We saw that the crossing of the sea had the same polemical purpose towards Pharaoh; Egyptian religion identified him with the sun god, enemy of the evil serpent Apophis, but the crossing of the sea showed him instead to be the ally of Apophis, or "seed of the serpent" in biblical terms. Such a polemical use of symbolism should not be surprising here, especially since the exodus typology is so pronounced.

Association of sun, moon, and stars together to represent Israel is found in Joseph's second dream (Gen 37:9; assuming Joseph is the twelfth star), a fact mentioned by those arguing for a biblical background to the vision.⁷⁵³ Furthermore, light is used symbolically to represent the righteous from the early chapters of Genesis onwards, and Rev 12:1 does not say that the moon is a footstool. The figure of Israel (or Zion) as a woman in labor is seen in Isa 66:8 and Mic 4:10. In the latter God tells the daughter of Zion to labor like one giving birth: "Now you shall go forth from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon; there I will rescue you, there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies." Isa 66:7-8 speaks of Zion giving birth to a boy (v. 7), then a nation (v. 8), then speaks for several verses of Jerusalem as a comforting mother to those to whom the Lord has extended peace (vv. 10-13). Isa 62:1-53 speaks of Zion's glorification, with righteousness which "goes forth like brightness" and as a crown in God's hand, and of God rejoicing over her as a bridegroom over her bride. Caird also notes Paul's reference to the "Jerusalem above, ... who is our mother" (Gal 4:26).⁷⁵⁴ Seeing the glorious woman in labor as the heavenly Jerusalem, therefore, answers Charles' first two objections, as well as the fourth, since the child is not "the young sun-god" if his mother is not a goddess.

His third objection concerns the image of the dragon. There is no question that such an image is pagan, but as we have seen, it is also used in the Old Testament to depict the serpent of the temptation as the supernatural enemy of God, so that the equation of Satan with the dragon and the serpent of Genesis 3 in v. 9 is no innovation at all. More descriptive details are given here; he is red and has ten horns and seven crowns to go along with his seven heads. Collins notes that the color red is associated with

⁷⁵¹Caird, *Revelation*, 148.

⁷⁵²*Ibid.*

⁷⁵³E.g., McNamara, *New Testament and Palestinian Targum*, 224.

⁷⁵⁴Caird, *Revelation*, 149.

Seth,⁷⁵⁵ but here too there may be a biblical explanation. Mounce believes it is due to the murderous character of Satan, which fits well with him being “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).⁷⁵⁶ There may also be a connection with the waters of the Nile (which can symbolize the serpent) being turned to blood in the first plague. The ten horns and sweeping away of stars is probably to be connected with Dan 7:7, 24; 8:10.

Concerning Charles’ fifth and sixth “mythical features” (the flight of the woman into the wilderness on wings of eagles, and the flood from the dragon’s mouth and the earth opening its mouth and swallowing it), we should note again that seeing a vision in heaven is not the same as saying that such things literally happen. Things seen in a vision may agree with figurative descriptions of what literally happened, and it happens that events of the exodus have been substantially so described. If God could say figuratively to Israel, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” (i.e., at Sinai, in the wilderness; Exod 19:4; cf. Deut 32:11), he could certainly convey the same information in a vision. The meaning of the flood which is swallowed by the earth seems to have no precise parallel, but here again McNamara points out that in *Pal. Tgs. Exod 15:12* (MT; “You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them [the Egyptians]”) there is a close parallel. These Targums portray a dispute between the sea and land; “the sea said to the land: ‘Receive your sons.’ And the land said to the sea: ‘Receive your slain.’” Neither wanted to do the job. The land was afraid of the Egyptians’ blood being required of it on judgment day (*Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan* adds, “as the blood of Abel will be demanded of her”), so the Lord lifted up his hand on oath that they would not be required of it, whereupon “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up.”⁷⁵⁷ Accounts of the crossing of the sea do not liken the Egyptians to flood waters, but we saw that in the battle of Ai, a re-creation of the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea, the army of Israel is the counterpart to the flood waters of the Red Sea, so we can see the flood from the dragon’s mouth as troops sent to destroy God’s people, who are in turn miraculously destroyed.⁷⁵⁸ Isa 59:19 speaks of the enemy coming in like a river / flood (רַבָּרָב).

Charles has another objection to viewing Revelation as a free Christian composition: “No Christian could spontaneously have depicted the life of our Lord, ... and have suppressed every reference to His earthly life and work, His death and resurrection.”⁷⁵⁹ This objection begs the same question, how a Christian could produce

⁷⁵⁵Collins, *Combat Myth*, 79.

⁷⁵⁶Mounce, *Revelation*, 237.

⁷⁵⁷McNamara, *New Testament and Palestinian Targum*, 226; Martin McNamara and Michael Maher, *Targums Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus* (The Aramaic Bible; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 66, 204.

⁷⁵⁸See § 6.2.1. We have also noted (§ 5.4) that the Akkadian word for “flood” (*abūbu*) is the same word which describes the deluge which destroyed humanity and is listed in the arsenals of gods such as Nergal and Ašsur, and is said to be the expression of the wrath of various gods such as Marduk, Ninurta and Ištar (*CAD* 1.1.77-81).

⁷⁵⁹Charles, *Revelation*, 1.299-300.

such a finished product using the materials of others, while he could not have produced those materials himself, or seen them in a vision. Caird answered Charles' objection by pointing out that in Ps 2:7-9 the enthronement of the king is considered his birthday, thus the catching up of the child ("who will rule the nations with a rod of iron," from Ps 2:9) to God's throne is an allusion to the crucifixion through which Jesus overcame the evil one (Rev 3:21). But seeing the birth of the child as the crucifixion of Jesus is problematic for two reasons. First, there is a logical problem in seeing the dragon waiting to devour the child when he is born, whereas according to this view it is the dragon who causes the "birth" by having Jesus crucified, while there is no problem seeing Herod, like Pharaoh before him, portrayed as a dragon. Secondly, it is the resurrection, not the crucifixion, by which Jesus is declared Son of God in the meaning of Ps 2:7 (Caird himself refers to Rom 1:4; also Acts 13:33). But what events of Jesus' life "should" the vision have included? Christian readers, after all, already know the Gospel. Collins suggests that the part of the vision concerning the woman and the dragon is typified; it "might be characterized as a paradigmatic story" which is not to be applied to one or several historical events exclusively, but is meant to be applied to the reader's historical situation, whatever that may be; "The particular situation is not presented in detail, it is rather typified."⁷⁶⁰ A similar motive might explain the lack of detail in Christ's life; in so presenting it, all Christians can see themselves as following the same pattern; the dragon seeks to devour those who are born of God, but "He who overcomes, and keeps my deeds to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from my Father" (Rev 2:26-27). And this is the context in which Rev 12:17 occurs; the dragon went off to make war with the rest of her offspring. If they overcome (remain faithful to death), they too will be caught up to God's throne.

It remains, then, to see what light this verse sheds on Gen 3:15. It seems obvious that the implication is the same as that drawn by Kovacs from John 17:5, quoted above: "After Jesus' departure the struggle with evil will continue. Although Jesus' death and glorification are the turning point in the conflict (12:31), Satan, refusing to concede defeat, will focus his attack on the human allies Jesus leaves behind (cf. 15:18-19; 16:33b)."⁷⁶¹ Identifying the particular time in view (the 1260 days of v. 6, the time, times, and a half of v. 14) is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but in any case it seems reasonable to conclude that the lesson is applicable throughout Church history. The heavy use of exodus typology here and elsewhere in Revelation, which in turn is repeated throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament, and was presaged in the patriarchal and primeval histories, should make us anticipate that all of the persecutions directed against the righteous in all of Scripture will continue throughout Church history until the coming of Jesus, even if from time to time and place to place there are "golden ages," temporary reversals (such as occurred under David and Solomon) of the usual dominance of the wicked over government and cultural institutions seen since Genesis 4.

⁷⁶⁰ Collins, *Combat Myth*, 126. In particular, the vision lacks any suggestion that believers should "adopt a Zealot position" and take up arms against the Romans (*ibid.*, 127).

⁷⁶¹ Kovacs, "Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle," 234.

We should further expect, based on the history of enmity recorded in Scripture, that a major portion of the enmity directed against Christians will come from within the Church itself, for Christians, like Abraham, will have the two seeds among their children, and the children born according to the flesh will persecute the children born of the Spirit. To maintain the purity of the Church, therefore, each generation must follow the Old and New Testament advice, “drive out the bondwoman and her son” (Gen 21:10; Gal 4:30).

One might object that Rev 12:17 views Christians not as the offspring of Christ, but as brethren, while other saints (ideal Israel, or Zion, the woman) are pictured as his mother. One might further ask if this verse should be taken as identifying “the woman” of Gen 3:15 as ideal Israel or the Church, as some of the fathers did. I think it would be helpful here to recall what I termed “literalistic” fulfillments of Gen 3:15. Seeing David as fulfilling Gen 3:15d in the slaying of Goliath does not mean, for example, that David’s mother is “the woman” or that David is “the” (one and only) seed of the woman. The literalistic fulfillment uses some of the features of the curse in a literalistic way to draw attention to the fulfillment of that verse. One could view this vision that John sees as constructed along the same pattern. Christ and the Church are depicted as the offspring of a woman, thus drawing our attention to Gen 3:15. But by whom is the woman pregnant? Since her children are the children of God, and she is not a real woman, we obviously cannot press the details too far. The depiction of Christians as the brethren of Christ is found elsewhere,⁷⁶² as is the idea of Christians as the children of mother Jerusalem above (Gal 4:26). Christians are also viewed as the bride of Christ and the children of Christ in Revelation 21. V. 7 says, “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” The speaker is “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (v. 6), i.e., Christ (cf. Rev 1:8; 22:12-13). But Christians are also residents of heavenly Jerusalem, the bride of Christ (vv. 9-10). Taken literally, these multiple family relationships are incompatible, but of course they are not to be taken literally. Jesus himself said that whoever did the will of God was his mother and brother and sister (Matt 12:50; Mark 3:35). Rev 12:17 depicts Christians as brethren of Christ and children of Jerusalem above based on Gen 3:15, but that does not contradict the teaching elsewhere based on Gen 3:15 that Christians are the offspring of Christ.

Passages such as Isa 51:9-10; Ps 74:13-14; 89:11 (10) describe the demise of the dragon in seemingly final terms; his heads are crushed, his body left as food for scavengers, etc. Yet he remains very much alive in the Old Testament, and his demise is put in the future (e.g., Isa 27:1). Likewise the crucifixion of Christ is pictured as victory over the evil one, yet Revelation 12 shows that the dragon is still very much alive and expressing the enmity of Gen 3:15. Rev 12:11 shows that Christians participate in victory over the dragon the same way Christ did; “they did not love their lives even to death.” We saw in previous chapters that the connection between the serpent of Gen 3:15 and the Old Testament dragon figure is quite clear, and recognized as long ago as Justin, although largely unrecognized by modern scholarship. One would think that the explicit equation between the two beings in Rev 12:9 would facilitate the connection between Rev 12:17 and Gen 3:15, but that has not been the case. Though Collins’ work is unquestionably

⁷⁶²Mounce cites Rom 8:29; Heb 2:11 (*Revelation*, 247). The context of the latter verse also has Christians as Christ’s children (Heb 2:13).

erudite, and was published ten years after McNamara's demonstration that Rev 12:17 (along with other features of Revelation 12) has a self consciously targumaic background, it makes no mention of Gen 3:15, either when discussing Rev 12:17, or in developing the idea of the dissertation (the "combat myth" in Revelation). As we have seen, Gen 3:15 is the foundation of what Collins calls "the combat myth," a foundation that has been largely overlooked with the result that passages referring to the combat have been mistakenly placed prior to the creation of the universe, while in other passages clearly connecting the combat with history, the foe has been de-supernaturalized and equated with Israel's enemies. According to this view, the dragon in Revelation must be a re-supernaturalization of the Old Testament figure, or simply taken over (again) from pagan myths. The view presented in this dissertation is much simpler: the dragon not only is, but always has been, the "serpent of old," though like the word "snake," it may at times merely represent an actual animal. In "combat" with God, however, it is the spiritual father of the wicked, and the battle is carried out in the Old Testament by proxy; the defeat of the wicked is counted as a defeat of the wicked one in the supernatural realm. In the New Testament, however, the wicked one himself meets his final demise, not at the cross, but in the lake of fire.

7.10 *The Dragon's Final Demise*

Rev 20:2 again identifies the dragon as "the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan," who is bound for 1000 years, then let loose to deceive the nations for a short time. V. 10 says that he will then be "thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone," where he will be "tormented day and night, forever and ever." V. 15 says all those not found written in the lamb's book of life will also be thrown into the lake of fire. Thus the serpent and his offspring have the same fate, as suggested first in Gen 3:15d. True, this passage does not describe their fate as having their heads crushed, but we saw from the first fulfillment in Genesis 4 that two seeds are figurative and the defeat spoken of in the curse must pertain to something beyond this lifetime, therefore the crushing of the head is also figurative, and Revelation 20 explains its meaning. Cain and his successors did not escape the fate pronounced in the curse on the serpent, they will be thrown into the lake of fire. At this point, the equation between the dragon and Leviathan of Isa 27:1 seems quite clear. Most interpreters connect Isa 27:1 (the judgment on Leviathan, the dragon who lives in the sea) with the preceding context; the preceding verse says the Lord will come forth to punish the inhabitants of the world for their sins; "And the earth will reveal its bloodshed; it will no longer cover its slain," which sounds like Rev 20:13, where the sea, death, and Hades give up their dead.⁷⁶³

As exodus typology is used throughout Revelation, here too there seems to be an Egyptian connection to the lake of fire. We saw in chap. V how the crossing of the Red Sea was a polemic against Egyptian religious beliefs which viewed Pharaoh as the representative of the good sun god and foe of the serpent Apophis (whose functions were

⁷⁶³ Isa 26:21 refers to the earth giving up those murdered, while Rev 20:13 mentions the sea and death and Hades giving up their dead in general. These differences may be smaller than they seem, however, since "earth" can have the same basic meaning as "Hades," i.e., the underworld (e.g., Exod 15:12), and Rev 20:12 has already identified the dead as being before the judgment seat; v. 13 may therefore not refer to the dead in general.

later taken over by Seth, whom many see in the dragon figure of Revelation). The Hebrew יַם־סוּף either means or at least suggests by word play, “Sea of Reeds,” which Dalman compared to the “field (or marsh) of reeds” which the Egyptians crossed via special pathways on the way to be with the gods after death. The drowning of the Egyptians in the sea at dawn and the crossing over by the Israelites suggests instead that the Egyptians are the allies or agents of Apophis. Dalman notes that to the Egyptians “One of the most dangerous regions in the netherworld was named ‘The Lake of Fire.’ ... This Lake of Fire in the underworld prevents anyone [except Pharaoh who knows the spells] from arriving at the shore of the Field of Reeds.”⁷⁶⁴

We saw that comparison of the syntax of Gen 3:15 and its first fulfillment in Genesis 4 with the creation account in Genesis 1 led to the implication that Gen 3:15 views the seed of the woman as a new creation. In the pattern of fulfillment of Gen 3:15, we saw first in the flood of Noah that this new creation involves destruction of the wicked seed, a new seed to inherit the earth (the children of Noah), and a recreation of the earth itself. Similarly in the exodus and conquest there is the destruction of the wicked (Egyptians and Canaanites), Israel represented as a new creation of God, and a new land for them to live in. In the eschatological fulfillment shown in Revelation, the wicked and the dragon are not simply killed but thrown in the lake of fire where they will be forever, and we see the completion of the new creation of the righteous seed, and a new heaven and a new earth. Though the first creation was “very good” (Gen 1:31), we saw that the darkness and the seas served as symbolism to identify the wicked seed. In the new heavens and earth, there is no sea (Rev 12:1) or night (v. 25; 22:5).

⁷⁶⁴Dalman, “Theology of Israel’s Sea Crossing,” 152.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 *Final Interpretation*

The “imbalance” in Gen 3:15 noted by various interpreters (woman vs. snake, then seed vs. seed, but then seed vs. snake) was briefly discussed in § 2.2.1, where it was mentioned that in the initial interpretation of Adam and Eve, no certain conclusion could be drawn from it; I also mentioned that “he” might not have “her seed” as its antecedent, in which case Gen 3:15 would be something of a riddle. I believe this to be the case. I would note first that if Adam were mentioned in the curse instead of Eve, then there would be no imbalance because the “he” would be taken as referring back to Adam, though it would probably be taken collectively: “I will put enmity between you and the man, and between your offspring and his offspring; he will strike you on the head, and you will strike him on the heel.” “He” would naturally be taken as Adam, but this interpretation would be falsified by Genesis 4 which makes Adam a figurehead, not the true head. The same process of reinterpretation of the creation mandate spoken of in Psalm 8 which makes Jesus the Son of Man and progenitor of the righteous seed suggests the following as the final interpretation, and solution to the riddle: “I will put enmity between you and Christ, and between your offspring and his offspring; he will strike you on the head, and you will strike him on the heel.” In other words, as the curse is given in the Garden of Eden, God shifts from speaking of the figurehead in v. 15b, to the true head in v. 15d, much as he shifts from speaking to the figurehead snake in v. 14 to the father of the wicked in v. 15. Because of the disagreement in gender, “He” was taken as referring back to “seed,” whereas I would view it as referring back to the one whom Eve represents as figurehead, Christ. I would still take “he” as collective, however, at least in application, due to the solidarity between Christ and his Church pointed out by those trying to explain away Gal 3:16 (see above, § 7.3.3). While this final interpretation is closer to Luther than I expected to be when I began my researches, it probably would not have satisfied him (or Hunnius) since I maintain that Adam and Eve could not have understood it in this way. It also would not satisfy those who think that a prophecy given by God cannot mean more than the original hearers could have understood (I believe we have disproved this notion, since Eve clearly gave witness to an erroneous naturalistic interpretation of the curse), and it would not satisfy those who think that God should not fool people by speaking in riddles. Here I think Luther had a point, however, in saying that God intended to mock and irritate Satan by the generality of the curse.

8.2 *Hermeneutical Conclusions*

We began by pointing out the wide disparity of scholarly opinion regarding the meaning and significance of Gen 3:15, and asked the question if Gen 3:15 is not to be taken literally, how could the figurative meaning be known with any degree of certainty. This dissertation may be considered, among other things, a case study in determining figurative meaning with certainty. While Christians have almost always interpreted the enmity and victory spoken of in Gen 3:15 as fulfilled uniquely in Jesus Christ, such an interpretation has seemed quite arbitrary and dogmatic (as opposed to scientific) to others. We have seen, however, that one can read a great deal of the Old Testament,

beginning with Genesis 4, as preparing the way for just such a conclusion. But Gen 3:15 for those in Old Testament times was not simply connected with future anticipation, but rather it was foundational in the establishment of Old Testament theology, and was part of Israel's common experience, both on a national and individual level. No passage says overtly, "thus was fulfilled the curse on the serpent in the drowning of the wicked in Noah's flood" or "in the drowning of the Egyptians at the crossing of the Red Sea," or "in the conquest of Canaan," or even, "in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus." Neither does any passage say, "thus the enmity predicted in the curse on the serpent was manifested between Cain and Abel." Then again, no passage says overtly, "thus was fulfilled Nathan's prediction of a sword being in David's house" (2 Sam 12:10), but it does not take a hermeneutical genius to see the fulfillment of that prediction beginning in the next chapter. Here too we have a prediction of enmity, followed by a prime example of enmity in the chapter following its prediction, and we have seen that following up on this connection is really the key to finding fulfillments of Gen 3:15 throughout Scripture, since it conclusively establishes the figurative (as well as collective) interpretation, and it establishes the identity of the two seeds, while raising the question of who are the real progenitors. The conclusion that Gen 3:15 is not referred to anywhere else in Scripture must count as one of the greatest hermeneutical blunders in the history of biblical interpretation. But it is not only rationalists who have missed the connection between Gen 3:15 and Genesis 4, but also Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and others who have insisted on the strictly individual and christological interpretation of the woman's seed, whether from a desire to see the fullness of the Gospel revealed to Adam and Eve, or a desire to see a reference to the mother of Jesus predicted in Gen 3:15.

We find further references to Gen 3:15 primarily indirectly; we see a pattern of fulfillment of individual enmity in Noah's children, then the children of the patriarchs, which is modelled after the enmity found in Genesis 4, and then we see enmity between nations when Israel becomes a nation, as well as continued enmity within Israel, and we find the same things in the New Testament. Thus it is a typological method that connects these events to Gen 3:15 via Genesis 4, which establishes the figurative interpretation. Instead of direct allusions to the fulfillment of Gen 3:15, we usually see reenactments of Genesis 4 with varying details (in the case of enmity), or the flood (in the case of Gen 3:15d).

The indirect connection to Gen 3:15 via Genesis 4 of these manifestations of the predicted enmity certainly accounts for the connection not being more widely recognized. Another factor accounting for the failure to make the connection would be modern critical scholarship's view of Genesis 3 and 4 as being originally unconnected, and Genesis 4 as being originally two or three separate stories which make little sense when put together. Even without recognizing the connection with Genesis 4, however, there are pointers to a figurative interpretation of Gen 3:15, a point proven in the essays by Walter Wifall, Manfred Görg, and Knut Holter (summarized in §§ 1.9.5-7). Taking clues from Israel's history and/or the promises to David, a figurative interpretation of Gen 3:15 is arrived at. While their interpretations do not agree with that given here, they do take a few small steps in this direction. In particular, recall that Holter concluded that it would be natural for the serpent in Gen 3:15 to metaphorically represent Israel's enemies. We have seen that other pointers to a connection between Israel's history and Gen 3:15 were

word plays (such as the name Nahash, or head, or heel), geographical pointers (crooked rivers, serpent stone), and literalistic fulfillments (the crushing of someone's head).

Another key step in the interpretation of Gen 3:15 is recognizing the connection between the serpent of the temptation and the internationally known serpent-dragon figure called Leviathan or Rahab, the evil (or twisted, or primeval) serpent, the crooked serpent, the many headed dragon who lives in the "sea." While the connection is not obvious, the celebration of the crossing of the Red Sea as the slaying of this serpent-dragon in Isa 51:9-10, combined with the narrative of the event which portrays the Egyptians as the serpent's seed is a sufficient clue. A similar hermeneutical procedure would identify the destruction of the wicked world at the time of Noah as the slaying of the dragon, and would account for the presence of this motif in many of the nations of the earth. At this point, Gunkel's connection of the serpent-dragon in the Bible to Tiamat in *Enuma Elish* was disastrous, because of the latter's collapsing of the whole primeval history into a creation account, so that the slaying of the dragon preceded and was connected to creation, rather than to the deluge which destroyed almost the whole human race. The typological connection between the Red Sea crossing, Noah's flood, and creation, which is evident in narrative (Exod 2:1-5) and poetry (Ps 74:12-17) was not recognized by Gunkel or his successors, so the mention of the slaying of the dragon along with a mention of creation was taken as evidence of an Israelite *Enuma Elish* type creation myth. This error has continued to be propagated even though it has long been recognized that Leviathan is the dragon of Canaanite myths which have nothing to do with creation. The result is that Church fathers such as Justin, who recognized the identity of the dragon with the serpent of Genesis 3, gave interpretations of Gen 3:15 that are much closer to the correct one than those of Gunkel, von Rad, Westermann, and many other practitioners of modern Bible science.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study has been to show the creation-promise implications of Gen 3:15. God created the inanimate universe in a series of three separations; in Gen 3:15 he says he will bring about another separation, between two seeds. Eve gives witness to such an interpretation, thinking that the human race is the new creation, and she names her son Cain, saying "I have created a man with the Lord" (Gen 4:1). When the new creation is brought about, however, the two seeds separated are brothers, Cain and Abel. The narrative uses the same syntax used to distinguish the separated components of the physical universe in Genesis 1, and the idea of God looking on Abel and his offering while not looking on Cain and his offering recalls God seeing the light, that it was good, in Gen 1:4. Thus light, the waters above, and the dry land could be used to symbolize the righteous, while darkness and the seas could be used to symbolize the wicked (as well as their spiritual father). The figurative meaning established in Genesis 4 means that the woman's seed is not brought about by childbirth, but by the creative process of God, a birth from above. The connection between Gen 3:15 and creation is seen clearly in the crossing of the sea, where darkness and the sea identify the Egyptians as the serpent's seed, while light and the cloud and the dry land identify Israel as God's new creation, though subsequent events show that only a remnant could be so characterized, and the first three days of the creation account are symbolically reenacted. In the New Testament we see the realization of the expectations developed in the Old Testament concerning the defeat of the serpent, though his ultimate demise is still

in the future. The vanquishing of the serpent's offspring in the New Testament is not the annihilation of the Gentiles by flood or Israel's army (though conceivably, natural disasters or wars might still remind us of the curse, and we might even see literalistic fulfillments in Church history), but the conversion of the Gentiles from being the serpent's seed to the children of Christ, and our overcoming the serpent-dragon is not found in killing his offspring (though involvement in just wars might require this), but rather in keeping the commandments of God, and maintaining the testimony of Jesus even to death (as Cyprian said, even if he did not know that this was the meaning of Revelation 12; see p. 13, "the helmeted serpent was both crushed and conquered," because Celerinus did not deny the faith under torture).

Another key to interpreting Gen 3:15 in Scripture was to relate it to the creation mandate in Gen 1:26-28. We found this relationship implied in the thematic similarity of the two passages, and we found the interpretation based on this relationship (the righteous seed will have victory over the wicked followed by dominion over the creation) in the idea of a new Adam who will head this righteous race; he is foreshadowed by various Old Testament figures, but is shown in the New Testament to be Jesus of Nazareth, the true "Son of Man."

Incidentally to the exposition of Gen 3:15, we have seen that two of the keys to its interpretation have tended to refute the classical source criticism of Genesis maintained by those scholars who, not coincidentally, maintain the naturalistic interpretation of the curse. Evidence for the dependence of Gen 3:15 on the idea of separation in Genesis 1 (P) is seen in J itself (Genesis 4, especially v. 1). Similarly the first two days of the Genesis 1 creation reenactment at the Red Sea are supposedly from the J document, while the typological linking of creation, flood, and deliverance at the Red Sea in the birth and rescue of Moses is supposed to be from E, which has no creation or flood account. Even in 2 Samuel 7-10 we see the themes of Genesis 1 and 3 mixed, as the Gentile nations are both subdued (using the word from Gen 1:28), and portrayed as the offspring of the serpent. While refuting orthodox source criticism has not been my primary purpose, these modest results could no doubt be extended by further investigations along these same lines.

8.3 *Reflections on the History of Interpretation*

Luther is in some respects a tragic figure in the history of interpretation of Gen 3:15. One reason is that some of his earlier interpretation was better than that expressed in his lectures on Genesis. Quoting from p. 16 above, For Ps 112:2 ("His seed shall be mighty upon earth"), he says, "This is the seed spoken of in Gen 3:15. ... And these are the seed and children and descendants of Christ, about whom Is. 53:10 says: 'If He shall lay down His life for sin, He will see a long-lived seed'; and Ps. 22:30-31, A seed serving him shall be declared to the Lord."⁷⁶⁵

The tragedy is that Luther's equation of the seed of the woman with the seed of Christ spoken of in Isaiah 53 is correct, but Luther abandoned that position and his followers ridiculed those who held it. We will have no hesitation agreeing with Luther, however, that Gen 3:15 is rightly called the first Gospel, if we take "Gospel" broadly, as used, for

⁷⁶⁵*First Lectures on the Psalms II*, Ps 112:2; ca. 1515 (LWA, 11.385).

example, even in the Gospels themselves when the disciples went from town to town preaching the gospel (Luke 9:6), while they themselves were ignorant until after the resurrection of the specific content of the Gospel as expressed by Paul in 1 Cor 15:1-8. Gen 3:15 as Gospel, however, derives from the idea of blessing, since it is first of all an implied blessing on those who are at enmity with the being cursed in it. Paul in fact connects the concept of Gospel with the blessing of Abraham, not the promise of an individual savior, in Gal 3:8, and Abraham was justified by faith in God's promise of a seed multiplied (not singularized) like the stars of heaven (Gen 15:6). Expositors have called Gen 3:15 first Gospel, last judgment, covenant of grace, *heilsgeshichtenliche* aetiology, and the institution of holy war, but it is before all these things a blessing to the righteous. Luther made an easy target for rationalists, while the cogent arguments of Hengstenberg (and more recently, Kline) have been basically ignored.

Our results do not speak well for mainstream modern biblical scholarship, since the majority holds to the naturalistic interpretation of the curse. As we have seen, the view of the serpent as mere animal is shown to us as the view of Adam and Eve in their naiveté (Gen 3:1), and the naturalistic interpretation no doubt continued to be held by Cain and his sons, who did not realize that it pronounced their own doom, and did not realize their own spiritual kinship to the serpent. "They did not understand, until the flood came and took them all away." It is ironic to note that the key argument used by rationalists to turn the tide towards a naturalistic interpretation could not be made today. That is the argument that Israelites could not have known of a Satanic being such as the dragon of Revelation equated with the Genesis 3 serpent until the exile. For some strange reason, the discovery of the ancient Near East evil anti-God dragon figure, predating Moses by almost 1000 years (or more) has not caused a reevaluation by scholars of the identity of the Genesis 3 serpent, even though we have seen strenuous efforts to interpret Leviathan as a supernatural dragon even where he is clearly portrayed as a created animal. In this respect (as in all others touching on the interpretation of Gen 3:15), we see the New Testament well ahead of modern scholarship. Because the Church fathers accepted the New Testament testimony, their conclusions were also well ahead of modern scholarship, in spite of their ignorance of Hebrew and having a poor translation of Gen 3:15 to work with, and their lack of knowledge of comparative Semitics and ancient Near Eastern culture and religion, and even in spite of the tendency toward allegory found in many of them. If one goes back and reads Augustine and Origen he will see that even these allegorizers were far ahead of Gunkel, von Rad, Westermann, and many others. To be sure, the line of Cain excels in technical matters (as in Genesis 4, and as the Philistines in 1 Samuel), thus excels in grammatico-historical exegesis, but as we have seen, such technical proficiency without faith does not keep one from being ignorant of the meaning of Scripture.

In light of the majority opinion of modern scholarship concerning Gen 3:15, it is worth citing Zachariä again (p. 26): "the arguments must be determinative, not the number and respect of interpreters on one side." It also appears that Semler's comment that Gen 3:15 was only viewed as a protoevangelium by "venerable repetition of many interpreters" (p. 26) rather than fresh investigations may apply in the reverse today: it is only by venerable repetition of highly regarded scholars, and disregard of the evidence that Gen 3:15 is *not* viewed as a protoevangelium today. And it would be fitting in

conclusion to cite Augustine on his exposition of Gen 3:15 (p. 14): “If there is anything that we might have said more carefully and properly, may God help us that we might accomplish it.”

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