

## ADAM REIGNS IN EDEN: GENESIS AND THE ORIGINS OF KINGSHIP

MICHAEL LEFEBVRE<sup>1</sup>

“In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”

Many generations of early American school children began their ABCs with that recitation. That phrase was used to teach children the sound produced by the letter “A.” But it was also to teach children their need for Christ. Schools today rarely use the same rhymes found in *The New England Primer*,<sup>2</sup> but churches still confess the historical reality of Adam and his sin as a fundamental doctrine of biblical faith.

Today, the historicity of Adam has come under attack, principally due to new findings in human genetics. It is now regarded as genetically improbable—some insist, impossible—for the human race to have arisen from a single couple. Francis Collins represents this challenge: “Population geneticists, whose discipline involves the use of mathematical tools to reconstruct the history of populations of animals, plants, or bacteria, look at these facts about the human genome and conclude that they point to all members of our species having descended from a common set of founders, approximately 10,000 in number, who lived about 100,000 to 150,000 years ago.”<sup>3</sup> Dennis Venema clarifies the issue further, “If a species were formed [from a single pair]...or if a species were reduced in numbers to a single breeding pair at some point in its history, it would leave a telltale mark on its genome that would persist for hundreds of thousands of years—a severe reduction in genetic variability for the species as a whole.”<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, the human race embodies remarkable genetic diversity that, according to the operations of genetics, cannot be explained by a single set of parents. As a result, new doubts have been raised about the historical viability of the Genesis narrative concerning Adam.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael LeFebvre is the pastor of Christ Church in Brownsburg, Indiana.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Harris, *The New-England Primer: A Reprint of the Earliest Known Edition, with Many Facsimiles and Reproductions, and an Historical Introduction*, ed., Paul Leicester Ford (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1899), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 126.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis R. Venema and Scot McKnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2017), 46–7.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Richard N. Ostling, “The Search for the Historical Adam,” *Christianity Today* (June, 2011), 24.

Some theologians have resisted any revision of traditional dogma concerning Adam; others have welcomed this impetus for a fresh look at the Eden narrative, either asserting a revised view of Adam or concluding his story to be typological rather than historical.<sup>6</sup> There is no consensus, yet, how to respond to the fresh challenges posed by modern genetics. But all sides of the discussion generally concur on one point: that the Adam narrative is an origin story (an *etiology*) for the human race. But is it, in fact, this point of consensus that needs correction?

The Adam account does bear the hallmarks of an etiological narrative.<sup>7</sup> It also contains numerous etiological motifs,<sup>8</sup> such as an origin story for marriage (2:24), for serpents crawling in the dust (3:14-15), for pain in childbirth (3:16), for human clothing (3:21), and for the soil's resistance to cultivation (3:17-19), just to note a few.<sup>9</sup> The Eden narrative certainly is an etiology. But an etiology for what? What, indeed, is the later reality validated by this origin story? Traditionally, the text has been regarded as an etiology for the human race. In this paper, I will argue that the Eden narrative presents a more narrow topic. Adam is introduced as humanity's first father, not in his reproductive capacity but in his royal appointment. The thesis of this paper is that the Eden narrative introduces Adam as humankind's first king,<sup>10</sup> and the narrative is an etiology of kingship with only tangential relevance at best to the question of humankind's biological

<sup>6</sup> For a survey of the field, see Matthew Barrett, Ardel B. Caneday, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Deborah B. Haarsma and Loren D. Haarsma, *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2011), 251-87.

<sup>7</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "For This Reason: Etiology and Its Implications for the Historicity of Adam," *CTR* n.s. 10.2 (2013), 27-51. The contention that etiology is, on its face, non-historical lacks merit, as argued by, C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who Were They and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 62-3; contra, Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 56. Cf., Chisholm, 30-33.

<sup>8</sup> On the definition of *etiological narrative* and *etiological motif*, see Friedemann W. Golka, "The Aetiologies in the Old Testament: Part 1," *VT* 26.4 (1976), 411.

<sup>9</sup> Chisholm, 33-43.

<sup>10</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 29-30; followed by John Stott, *Romans* (BST; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 162-6; considered by Collins, *Adam and Eve*, 130. See also, Ivan Engnell, "Knowledge' and 'Life' in the Creation Story" in Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Harold Henry Rowley by the Editorial Board of Vetus Testamentum in Celebration of his 65th Birthday, 24 March 1955* (*VTSup* 3; Leiden: Brill, 1969), 103-19; Walter Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *ZAW* 84 (1972), 1-18; Manfred Hutter, "Adam als Gärtner und König (Gen 2, 8. 15)," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 30 (1986), 258-62; Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord, *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 42-81; Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011). In a comparison with other ANE origins stories, Giorgio Castellino has argued that the Adam and Eve narrative is about "the origin of civilized life in cities, as well as the origin of other social structures and activities of humanity." (Giorgio R. Castellino, "The Origins of Civilization according to Biblical and Cuneiform Texts" in Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, eds., "I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood": *Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* [SBTS 4; Winona Lake, In.: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 75-95.)

origins. Consequently, current genetic findings have no bearings on the question of Adam's historicity. He was a real person who was appointed by God as humanity's first universal king, but—as we will examine in this paper—the Genesis text does not actually require that Adam was the sole progenitor of all subsequent human beings.

*“In Adam's fall—as our first universal king—we sinned all.”*

Regarding Adam as humanity's first universal king is not necessarily exclusive of the view that Adam may also have been the first human being and progenitor of the whole human race. In fact, traditional dogma holds that Adam was both our first parent and our first head. However, the Eden narrative is often approached as primarily about Adam's reproductive fatherhood and incidentally about his regal status. I will argue that the kingship of Adam is the text's primary message. Any implications of the text for human ancestry is secondary at best. While this conclusion is nuanced differently from the traditional view, it is not inconsistent with orthodox soteriology. In fact, the likeness of Jesus to Adam is based on their like role as federal heads of humankind, not paternity. It is regency rather than reproduction that, in Pauline thought, links the First and Second Adams. Jesus never begat biological offspring. Jesus is the Second Adam strictly by his succeeding the First Adam in his role as humankind's universal king (Rom. 5:12–21).

In his classic commentary on Romans, Robert Haldane (quoting Thomas Bell) wrote, “Since [Jesus] is called the second man...because He was the second public head, it follows that [Adam] is called the first man not because he was first created, or in [relation] to his descendants, but because he was the first public head in [relation] to Christ the second. Thus the two Adams are the heads of the two covenants...”<sup>11</sup> This statement by Haldane and Bell is significant, since both of these eighteenth-century churchmen undoubtedly thought of Adam as the sole father of the human race. But they recognize it was not Adam's genetic fatherhood at issue in Paul's epistle to the Romans. It is Adam's royal office at the head of the human race that is the focus of Paul's argument in the New Testament.<sup>12</sup>

This realization underscores the importance of there having been an actual, historic Adam as the type of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, it also shows that the connection need only be one of kingship. It is my contention that the Eden narrative (Gen. 2:4–4:26)<sup>13</sup> is an etiology of kingship, not human biological origins.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Bell quoted in Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth, 1996), 213.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 178–80; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Sacra Pagina Series, 6; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 178–80.

<sup>13</sup> The Eden narrative or Adam and Eve narrative (I use those terms synonymously) begins with the cosmic genealogy marker in Genesis 2:4 and ends with the birth of Seth (Abel's replacement) in 4:26. The beginning of the next narrative is indicated by a new genealogy marker at 5:1.

## I. ADAM AS FARMER

Rather than bringing questions that are foreign to the text, prudence begins with the questions raised by the text itself. The Eden narrative begins with a specific problem: the need for agriculture. Adam is introduced as God's solution to the need for cultivated fields.

Following its genealogical heading ("These are the generations of the heavens and the earth..."; 2:4),<sup>14</sup> the narrative opens with this problem: "No bush of the field (*śiāh hāśśādeh*) was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field (*ʿēseb hāśśādeh*) had yet sprung up..." (2:5). These two phrases for various kinds of foliage "of the field (*hāśśādeh*)" refer to cultivated growth. Theodore Hiebert protests the frequent oversight of this nuance: "Both kinds of vegetation are customarily translated with such generic terms that little can be made of them, when in fact they describe a very precise agricultural environment." The first term (*śiāh hāśśādeh*) refers to pasturage for livestock and the second term (*ʿēseb hāśśādeh*) refers to field crops cultivated for human consumption.<sup>15</sup> The question with which the text itself opens, and for which the reader is to expect a solution, is the land's lack of cultivation.

The reason the land was lacking crops was because "the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground." But solutions are quick to follow: "and a mist (*ʿēd*) was going up from the land and watering the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed the man...and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (2:6-15). In order to bring about cultivated fields, two needs are indicated and satisfied. The first need is for rain, presently matched with the provision of "a mist (*ʿēd*...watering the whole face of the ground." (We will return to this theme of rainfall and the initial "mist," later.) The second and most important need is for a farmer. God formed Adam and placed him in Eden in order to produce, beginning in that place, the cultivation previously lacking.

This agricultural detail is so important, it is not only the introductory purpose for the man's existence but is also the feature captured in his name. *ʿĀdām* ("man"), is derived from *ʿadāmā* ("arable soil"). Although "traditionally translated by a general term, such as 'ground'..." *ʿadāmā* is "...arable land, fertile soil that can be cultivated."<sup>16</sup> The specificity of the term is illustrated in the curse upon Cain, whose banishment sends him away from the *ʿadāmā* (arable land) he had been farming to a barren *ʿereṣ* (generic "land") farther east of Eden (4:12-14).<sup>17</sup>

In fact, the curse upon Adam as well as that upon Cain both center on their access to the farmable land where God had initially placed them.

<sup>14</sup> Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version, except where indicated as my own translation by "a.t." (author's translation).

<sup>15</sup> Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 37-8. Cf., Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (John J. Scullion, trans.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 199; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Erdmann, 1990), 154.

<sup>16</sup> Hiebert, 34.

<sup>17</sup> Hiebert, 35; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 107.

To Adam it was said, “Cursed is the ground (*ʿadāmā*) because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...” (3:17-19). Furthermore, Cain was told, “And now you are cursed from the ground (*ʿadāmā*)...When you work the ground (*ʿadāmā*), it shall no longer yield to you its strength...” (4:11-12). The whole Adam narrative is concerned with the acquisition and loss of agriculture.

This is a fitting preface to the Pentateuch which contains many narratives about wandering peoples seeking to become agrarian, settled societies. In particular, the heritage of Abraham is the story of a family that left the settled kingdoms of the east (“Ur of the Chaldeans,” Gen. 11:31) and became wandering herdsmen, hoping to possess farmable land in Canaan where they might re-settle.<sup>18</sup> The concern for settled agriculture is an important theme of the Pentateuch introduced as the presenting problem of the Adam narrative. But with this opening focus on crops, why was Adam placed by God in an orchard?

## II. ADAM AS SACRAL KING

Adam was appointed by God to cultivate field crops (2:5). He was not introduced into the land to tend fruit trees in an orchard. Nevertheless, he was placed by God in an arboreal garden as the setting from which to carry out his calling. “The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put (*yāsem*) the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food... The LORD God took the man and put (*yanniḥēhū*) him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat’...” (2:8-17).

Confusion arises when readers mistakenly equate “Eden” with the “Garden of Eden.” But the two are not identical. The Garden of Eden was a garden located within the broader region called “Eden.”<sup>19</sup> Note especially Genesis 2:10, where the text describes a river flowing “out of Eden to water the garden.” Eden was a larger territory for Adam’s labor, in which the garden was a place for his residence. The text tells us that God formed the man from the arable soil (*ʿadāmā*) but “put” or “settled” (*yāsem*) him in the garden (2:7-8). Indeed, God “rested” the man there (*yanniḥēhū*, from the root *nūaḥ*; 2:15). That verb *nūaḥ* (“rest”) is not a term of labor but refreshment.<sup>20</sup> The garden was not the realm of Adam’s work; it was a place for his rest.

<sup>18</sup> The only instance of farming by the patriarchs is the account of Isaac’s early cultivation efforts, which ultimately failed because the owners of the land drove him out of it and forced him to go back to nomadic herding (Gen. 26:12-22; cf., 46:31-34).

<sup>19</sup> I. Cornelius, “6359 נָחַ,” *NIDOTTE*, 3.331.

<sup>20</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 69-70.

It is commonly thought that Adam was an orchard keeper based on a certain reading of Genesis 2:15, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” However, the pronoun “it” (the Hebrew pronominal suffix, *-ab*) repeated twice in that passage probably points to Eden as a whole and not narrowly to the Garden of Eden. John Sailhamer pointed out, “the suffixed pronoun in the Hebrew text rendered ‘it’ in English is feminine, whereas the noun ‘garden’...is a masculine noun in Hebrew.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the expression “to work it and keep it (*l’š obdâ ûlšomrâ*)” is used two other times in the context (2:5; 3:23), and both of those instances refer to tilling the soil not tending trees.<sup>22</sup> Adam’s assignment was to oversee the agricultural development of the whole land of Eden from his garden residence.

This insight is significant, since placement in a paradisiacal garden overlooking ones larger domain is a standard trope of kingship. It was an ideal of royalty throughout the ancient Near East, including in Israel, to locate a royal palace among gardens on a hill or mountain overlooking the land.<sup>23</sup> “I built houses and planted vineyards for myself,” Ecclesiastes 2:4-5 quotes King Solomon, “I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees” (cf., 1 Kgs. 21:2; 2 Kgs. 21:8, 26; 25:5; Jer. 39:4; 52:7; Neh. 3:15). In fact, the Hebrew word “paradise” (*pardēs*, itself a loan word from Persian) literally means a “royal orchard” or “enclosed royal garden” (cf., its use in Neh. 2:8; Songs 4:13; Eccl. 2:5). The term *pardēs* is not itself used in the Eden narrative; Genesis uses the older (pre-Persian) Hebrew term for garden (*gan*). Nevertheless, both the Septuagint and New Testament writers recognized the royal significance of the Edenic garden as indicated by their translating *gan* with *paradeisos* (cf., Rev. 2:7). The text even expects the reader to recognize this garden was enclosed (as royal gardens typically were), since Adam was expected to keep it free from beasts that do not belong in it (like the serpent; 3:1) and it had an entrance that could be blocked by a single guard wielding a sword (3:24).<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the ancient Near East, a king’s palace was stereotypically built among gardens. The British Museum has an impressive relief sculpture from ancient Ninevah, in which King Sennacherib is portrayed standing next to his palace surrounded by a beautiful orchard.<sup>25</sup> The book of Esther similarly describes the Persian king feasting with Esther and Haman, from which he exits “into the palace garden” (Esth. 7:7). Nebuchadnezzar

<sup>21</sup> Sailhamer, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Nicolas Wyatt, “When Adam Delved: The Meaning of Genesis 3:23,” *VT* 38.1 (1988), 118. Contra Walton, who suggests “the terms ‘serve’ and ‘keep’ convey priestly tasks rather than landscaping and agrarian responsibilities” (John Walton, *Adam and Eve*, 105–7.)

<sup>23</sup> A. Leo Oppenheimer, “On Royal Gardens in Mesopotamia,” *JNES* 24 (1965), 328–33; Coote and Ord, 51; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 61; Joachim Schaper, “The Messiah in the Garden: John 19.38–41, (Royal) Gardens, and Messianic Concepts,” in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroud, eds., *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 17–27.

<sup>24</sup> Coote and Ord, *First History*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> A drawing of this relief is provided by Stephanie Dalley, “Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved,” *Garden History* 21.1 (1993), 10. Cf., other images and descriptions in this article.



legendarily built the “hanging gardens of Babylon” around his palace.<sup>26</sup> The beauty and fruitfulness of the king’s garden was a demonstration of his royal management,<sup>27</sup> so that the title “gardener of [deity’s name]” was a stock title of kingship.<sup>28</sup> Nicolas Wyatt concludes, “The idea of the king as the gardener is found in Mesopotamian royal ideology, and the Primal Man of Gen. ii-iii is to be interpreted as the paradigm of the king.”<sup>29</sup>

It was also typical of kings to populate their royal gardens with transplanted trees of exotic varieties and also with animals. Tiglath-Pileser I spoke of his gardens in the following inscription: “I got control of and formed herds of *nayalu*-deer, *ayalu*-deer, gazelle and ibex which the gods Ashur and Ninurta, the gods who love me, had given me in the course of the hunt in high mountain ranges...I took cedar, box-tree, and Kanish oak from the lands over which I had gained dominion—such trees as none among previous kings, my forefathers, had ever planted—and I planted [them] in the orchards of my land...I received [as] tribute from the lands of Byblos, Sidon and Arvad...a crocodile and a large, female ape...”<sup>30</sup> Leo Oppenheim explains the use of large royal parks (called *ambassu*) associated with the palace gardens of Assyrian kings: “Wild animals were kept in the *ambassu* for hunting, and it was also planted with fruit trees of all kinds, imported olive trees, and foreign spice plants.”<sup>31</sup> Stephanie Dalley affirms that, realistically the garden immediately surrounding a Mesopotamian palace “was sometimes large enough to accommodate a few attractive animals such as deer and gazelle,” but “the royal urge to collect zoological specimens had generally to be satisfied in a wider landscape” leading to the development of large royal parks annexed to the palace.<sup>32</sup> Coote and Ord further note, “The valley east of the city wall of monarchic Jerusalem also contained a royal garden; it may have gone back to the time of David.”<sup>33</sup> The depiction of Adam’s residence in an idyllic garden of fruit trees and all manner of wildlife which he studied and named (2:19-20) further elicits the royal paradigm.

Temples were also typically located in gardens in the ancient world, but this is because temples were “royal palaces” for the gods. Rightly, many scholars have recognized the presence of temple imagery in the Garden of Eden. Gordon Wenham captures this consensus, “The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him. Many of the features of the garden may

<sup>26</sup> Josephus (citing Berossus), *Contra Apion* 1.19.

<sup>27</sup> Wyatt, “A Royal Garden,” 21.

<sup>28</sup> Wyatt, “A Royal Garden,” 24; George Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (King and Saviour 4; Uppsala, Sweden: Lundequist, 1951).

<sup>29</sup> Wyatt, “When Adam Delved,” 118.

<sup>30</sup> Dalley, “Mesopotamian Gardens,” 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> Leo Oppenheim, “On Royal Gardens in Mesopotamia,” *JNES* 24.4 (1965), 333.

<sup>32</sup> Dalley, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord, *The Bible’s First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 51. This garden is what became, in New Testament times, the Garden of Gethsemane—a favorite place where Jesus went to pray and where Jesus, unlike Adam, resisted Satan’s temptation.

also be found in later sanctuaries particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple.<sup>34</sup> It is certainly correct to recognize temple imagery in the Garden of Eden. The Jerusalem Temple was also located within a garden supplied with water (1 Kgs 7:23-39; cf., Exod. 30:17-21) and fruit trees (Psa. 52:10; 84:3; 92:13-14).<sup>35</sup> The Garden of Eden is described as a place where Yahweh “walks to and fro (*hithallék*)” (3:8) to meet with his people, an expression elsewhere used for God’s communion with Israel in the tabernacle and the temple (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:15; 2Sam. 7:6-7). The eastern entrance to the garden was guarded by cherubim (3:24),<sup>36</sup> just as the temple’s entrance faced east (cf., Exod. 27:16; Num. 3:38) and was guarded by cherubim (cf., Exod. 25:18-22; 26:31; 1Kgs. 6:23-29). Eden’s tree of life is broadly recognized as an organic counterpart to the ever burning menorah in the tabernacle and temple (Exod. 25:31-40).<sup>37</sup> The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (with its attendant commandment) is described in terms elsewhere used to identify the role of the Law in temple for teaching and holiness (cf., Gen. 2:9, 17; Psa. 19:8-13).<sup>38</sup> For these and other reasons, scholars generally concur that the Garden of Eden was an archetype for Israel’s tabernacle/temple, leading many to recognize Adam’s role as having a priestly character.<sup>39</sup>

However, the priestly role of Adam is only half the picture. Priests did indeed *serve* in garden temples, but it was emblematic of priestly kings *to live* in palaces adjacent to the temple sharing the same garden. Thus the heavenly king (the god) and his earthly “son” (the king) dwelt together in the same garden. This is exemplified in the architecture of Zion, where the palace of Solomon was built adjacent to the temple of Yahweh on the top of Mount Zion. The king’s palace was literally “at the right hand” (Psa. 110:1) of Yahweh’s “palace.” This is precisely the arrangement depicted in Yahweh’s placement of Adam to reside adjacent to his own dwelling in the garden located in within the broader territory of Eden. G. K. Beale observes, “God places Adam into a royal temple to begin to reign as his priestly vice-regent. In fact, Adam should always be referred to as a ‘priest-king,’ ...

<sup>34</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in Richard Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (SBTS 4; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399; cf., John Walton, *Genesis 1 As Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 184-7.

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 57-103.

<sup>36</sup> Cherubim (*kerúbim*, derived from the Akkadian *kuribu*) “were the traditional guardians of holy places in the ancient Near East.” (Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 21; Barker, 141-5.)

<sup>37</sup> Carol Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

<sup>38</sup> D. J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm XIX),” *VT* 24.1 (1974), 8-14; cf., Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 63-4; Coote and Ord, *First History*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 19-25; Lifsa Schachter, “The Garden of Eden as God’s First Sanctuary,” *JBQ* 41.2 (2013), 73-7; Magnus Ottosson, “Eden and the Land of Promise,” *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986* (J. A. Emerton, ed.; VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 178-88.



[just as] Israel's eschatological expectation is of a messianic priest-king (e.g., see Zech. 6:12-13)."<sup>40</sup>

That Adam was formed "from the dust" further contributes to his introduction as a king. That idiom is opaque to modern readers, but Walter Brueggemann has shown that the idiom "from the dust" is used in the Hebrew Scriptures as a metaphor of royal election. For example, God described his enthronement of King Baasha in these terms: "I exalted you out of the dust and made you a leader over my people Israel" (1 Kgs. 16:2). More particularly, the Song of Hannah treats this "from the dust" imagery as a stock descriptor of all Israel's princes: "He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes" (1Sam. 2:8; cf., Psa. 113:7-8). Brueggemann concludes, "To be taken 'from the dust' means to be elevated from obscurity to royal office... Adam, in Genesis 2, is really being crowned king over the garden with all the power and authority which it implies."<sup>41</sup> All humankind are regarded as being "dust" (e.g., Job 10:9; Psa. 103:14),<sup>42</sup> but it is kings who are lifted "from the dust."

In the cases of David and Baasha, the phrase "from the dust" is a metaphor. Nothing is said about Adam's biological lineage apart from his fashioning from the dust (2:7), leading many to conclude it is not a metaphor in Adam's case. Maybe Adam was literally formed out of dust. Regardless of the literal or metaphorical intent of Adam's calling from the dust, the use of this idiom without reference to lineage may have a further significance. Elsewhere in Genesis, the lack of recorded parentage is used to identify divine appointment at the head of a new dynasty. There is one other king in Genesis who is introduced without human genealogy: Melchizedek (14:18). Presumably, Melchizedek did have biological parents. However, the New Testament author of Hebrews interprets the absence of genealogy as indicating his direct ordination by heaven: "he is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3). Adam's exaltation "from the dust" without human genealogy likely serves this same purpose, presenting him as chosen by heaven and a "son of God" (Lk. 4:38; cf., Gen. 1:26-27; 1Chr. 1:1).

The creation week in Genesis 1:1-2:3 had used the royal language of divine "image bearer" (a syntactical equivalent for "son of God," both terms widely discussed as royal titles).<sup>43</sup> "Then God said, 'Let us make man in

<sup>40</sup> Beale, 70; cf., pp. 81-92; Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011). Cf., also the historic interpretation of the "king in Eden" poem in Ezekiel 28:12-19 as a reference to Adam. (Hector M. Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in Late Antiquity* [Jewish and Christian Perspectives 20; Leiden: Brill, 2012].)

<sup>41</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *ZAW* 84 (1972), 2, 12. For a discussion of possible coronation overtones to the divine "breath of life," see also Walter R. Wifall, "The Breath of His Nostrils: Gen. 2:7b," *CBQ* 36 [1974], 237-40; cf., Hamilton, 158-9.

<sup>42</sup> John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2015), 74-77.

<sup>43</sup> The literature on this title is extensive. E.g., Jarl Fossum, "Son of God," *ABD* 6.128-9; John Day, ed., *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford*

our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion..." (1:26). That previous creation narrative introduces the purpose of all humanity as one of dominion over the world to foster its fruitfulness (1:26-30) as regents of God. It is not a coincidence that the Eden account follows by describing the world's need for cultivation and the inauguration of one particular king, Adam, to lead his offspring (2:18, 21-24; 4:1-2) in that duty.

This conclusion, that the Eden narrative is about the origin of kingship, is not surprising when considered within the context of other ancient Near Eastern creation stories. Coote and Ord explain, "analogous [creation] texts from the Middle East are basically about the understanding of labor in the state, especially the relation between the ruler and the laborer."<sup>44</sup> The Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, for example, connects the ordering of the world with the establishment of Marduk's royal-temple through which humans were organized into work *corvées*. "The story is not the story of the creation of the world; it is the story of the creation of the Babylonian state, told as if the state were the world."<sup>45</sup> Giorgio Castellino prefers to call these "myths of organization" rather than "creation myths." After reviewing an extensive catalogue of such creation myths, Castellino concludes, "[In] all of these texts...the author's intent is not to focus on the creation of the world, but to take this as a point of departure. Its purpose is to introduce the organization of the earth. Consequently we call these texts narratives of 'organization' rather than 'creation'."<sup>46</sup>

Ancient Near Eastern creation/organization myths typically speak of the creation of humankind as a group, formed to till the ground for the gods. It seems rare to find such texts depicting the creation of a single human, as Genesis describes the singular formation of Adam. But in those rare cases where the creation of a specific man is reported, it is the king whose origin is in view. In the pictorial Egyptian Coffin Texts, for example, "the god Khnum is fashioning the young ruler on a potter's wheel."<sup>47</sup> The internal evidence of the Hebrew Bible, on its own, supports the reading of Adam's settlement in the garden of God as indicating his royal appointment. Nevertheless, this reading also comports with the political interests of ancient Near Eastern creation stories generally.

But what land had God ordained from whence Adam was to extend his reign over the world? Where was this land called "Eden" located?

---

*Old Testament Seminar* (LHBOTS 270; London: Bloomsbury, 1998); Aubrey R Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1967); Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Coote and Ord, *First History*, 44.

<sup>45</sup> Coote and Ord, *First History*, 46.

<sup>46</sup> Giorgio Castellino, "The Origins of Civilization according to Biblical and Cuneiform Texts," in Hess, *Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Wifall, "The Breath of His Nostrils: Gen 2:7b," *CBQ* 36 (1974), 239; cf., Walton, *Adam and Eve*, 87. For a translation of the picture's accompanying text, see Wyatt, "A Royal Garden," 22.

## III. LOCATING EDEN AND ITS GARDEN

Eden is neither a mythical nor a mysterious place. The author provides named rivers and neighboring lands to help ensure the reader knows where Eden was located.<sup>48</sup> The land of Adam's domain is a place the reader is expected to recognize. According to the modern consensus, the Garden of Eden was located in Mesopotamia. But there is an alternate, more ancient interpretation of Eden's location that makes better sense of the text: Eden is the land of Canaan.

There are two features of the text that have led many to identify Eden with Mesopotamia. First, of the four named rivers said to flow from Eden (2:10-14) only two are now known: the Tigris (*hiddegel*) and the Euphrates. These are the rivers that bound Mesopotamia, leading many scholars to look in that region for Eden. Second, the text says that "the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east" (2:8). Assuming Canaan is the author's vantage point, "in the east" would naturally point to a region east of the Jordan River. Mesopotamia is the most likely candidate for a land east of Canaan where the garden might have been located. For these two reasons, Eden has become identified with Mesopotamia by most modern commentators.<sup>49</sup> However, the thesis that Eden is Canaan has a long history.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the Canaan thesis makes better sense of many details in the text, beginning with the land's name.

<sup>48</sup> The provision of the real world markers in the text also resists the theory that Eden is strictly an "other worldly" utopia. Contra, Umberto Cassuto, "Garden of Eden," *Encyclopedia Biblica* 2.536; Yairah Amit, "Biblical Utopianism: A Mapmakers Guide to Eden," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 44 (1990), 11-17; Terje Stordalen, "Heaven on Earth – Or Not?: Jerusalem as Eden in Biblical Literature," in Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, eds., *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2-3) and Its Reception History* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 28-57.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 66-7; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2006), 119-20. However, Collins notes, "The problem [with placing Eden in Mesopotamia], of course, is that the present climate cannot sustain such a picture." However, the climate of Canaan perfectly fits the picture as argued in this paper.

<sup>50</sup> Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), e.g., fig. 10.31 (page 334); cf., John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Books), 216-21. The modern demise of the Canaan thesis might be due, in some measure, to the influence of the Reformer John Calvin who lent vigorous support to the Mesopotamian thesis. It was the misfortune of the Canaan thesis to find a period champion in Michael Servetus, the infamous theological rival of Calvin. Servetus stressed the identification of Eden with Canaan as part of his unorthodox teachings on baptism. He argued that Christian baptism was like fleeing the rivers of Babylon to be washed in the rivers of Eden, which he identified as the Promised Land. (George H. Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought: The Biblical Experience of the Desert in the History of Christianity and the Paradise Theme in the Theological Idea of the University* [Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2016], 72-3.) Perhaps motivated by his opposition to Servetus, Calvin went to unusual lengths to demonstrate the opposite: that Eden was located in Mesopotamia. Calvin devoted many pages in his commentary to the argument (John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 1.1.118-24), and he even commissioned a drawn map "that the readers may understand where I think Paradise was placed by Moses" (Calvin, 1.1.120). This was the only place in his commentaries where Calvin employed the power of a visual aid to bolster his argument!

It was once popular to regard the word “Eden” (*ēden*) as a cognate of the Akkadian *edīnu* (“steppe”). However, Genesis treats Eden as a high-land terrain with a river flowing out of it (2:10) rather than steppe land. Furthermore, on both lexical and inscriptional grounds, many scholars now regard a different etymology as more likely.<sup>51</sup> The term derives from the Hebrew root *‘dn*, “abundance, lushness.” The Septuagint translators perceived this root, translating “Garden of Eden” as “Garden of Delight” (*paradeisou tēs truphēs*). Eden “does not mean ‘steppe’ but the area of abundance.”<sup>52</sup>

As further examination of the text will show, this title is meant to evoke visions of “the land of milk and honey” (cf., Deut. 9:7-10) in contrast with the deserts that surrounded Canaan. What else would a Hebrew audience envision as “the good land,” than Canaan? The Eden narrative could hardly use the later titles “Canaan” or “Israel” for the land, since neither of those people groups had yet inhabited the land at the time Adam was placed there. Furthermore, the purpose of the narrative is to introduce the land’s first king, and so the names of later rulers in the land like “Canaan” (cf., Gen. 10:6) and “Israel” (cf., Gen. 35:10) could not be used. Just as Genesis 11:2 (cf., 10:10) used the ancient title “Shinar” for the plain where the Babel was founded, the descriptive name “Eden” was used for the land the reader is expected to recognize as Canaan.

Another feature that identifies Eden with Canaan is its annual rainfall. The Eden narrative opens with the expectation of rain: “the LORD God had not caused it to rain (*mātar*) on the land” (2:5). This statement reveals the present lack of rain, but also the anticipation that God would send rain. We do not need to read this statement as though the entire world lacked rainfall, or even that Eden had never before experienced rainfall. It may be a seasonal indicator, marking the narrated events as occurring in summer time prior to the late autumn rainy season.<sup>53</sup> In either case, the expectation of rain from Yahweh upon the land adds to its identification with Canaan.

“In the great river valley civilizations of the ancient Near East, Egypt and Mesopotamia...” Theodore Hiebert explains, “agriculture was dependent on the inundation of lowlands by flooding rivers and on irrigation systems related to them...By contrast, [the Gen. 2:5] reference to rain alone reflects the rain-based, dryland farming characteristic of the highlands on the shores of the Mediterranean where biblical Israel came into being.”<sup>54</sup> Moses described the Promised Land as, “a land flowing with milk and honey...not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for...” (Deut.

---

Perhaps owing in part to Calvin’s influence, the Mesopotamian thesis has dominated post-reformation views of Eden.

<sup>51</sup> See esp., A. R. Millard, “The Etymology of Eden,” *VT* 34.1 (1984), 103–6; Cornelius, 3.331–2.

<sup>52</sup> Ottosson, 178.

<sup>53</sup> Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 111.

<sup>54</sup> Hiebert, 36.

11:9-12). The other great kingdoms of the ancient Near East developed agriculture through irrigation. Egypt irrigated its croplands from the Nile and Babylon sustained crops by irrigation canals dug from the Tigris and Euphrates. Genesis 2:5 locates Adam's farming kingdom in a land that received rainfall from Yahweh.

The rain had not yet come at the time Adam was placed there. But then "[an] 'ēd was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground" (2:6). The meaning of the obscure word 'ēd is not certain. The Septuagint translates the term as *pēgē* ("spring"). If this is correct, then the passage indicates the presence of spring-fed rivers (like the one mentioned in 2:10) that provided water in the land during the dry months of the year (cf., Psa. 1:3).<sup>55</sup> This fits the dependence of Canaan on such spring-fed rivers that flowed from its rain-watered mountains. However, Mitchell Dahood has persuasively argued that the Hebrew word 'ēd is cognate with the Eblaite *i-du*, which means "rain clouds."<sup>56</sup> This is probably correct, since the passage itself introduces two needs: "rain" and "man" (2:5), which the subsequent provision of "'ēd" and "Adam" satisfy (2:6). This parallelism supports Dahood's interpretation of the 'ēd as rain clouds. We should probably read the text, "Yahweh God had not yet caused it to rain on the land and there was no man to work the ground. Then rain clouds went up from the land and watered the whole face of the ground, and Yahweh God formed the man of soil of the ground" (2:5-7, a.t.) The Lord placed Adam in Eden just at the season when rain clouds were beginning to gather, promising the early rains that would soften the soil for the planting season.<sup>57</sup> The expectation of rainfall further identifies Eden as Canaan, a land distinguished in the Pentateuch by its rainfall adequate for farming without irrigation.

The Garden's compass location in Genesis 2:8 also supports the Canaan thesis. "And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east (*gan-bē'ēden miqedem*)..." Most commentators regard this as indicating a location in Mesopotamia. But it is the garden that is in the east, not the whole territory of Eden. The verse first locates the garden inside of Eden, then adds that it was in the easternmost part of Eden.<sup>58</sup> Terje Stordalen points out,

<sup>55</sup> E.g., Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation; Commentary by Nahum M. Sarna* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 17; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 58; Westermann, 200-1.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell Dahood, "Eblaite *i-du* and Hebrew 'ēd, 'Rain Cloud,'" *CBQ* 43 (1981), 534-8. Cf., Mark D. Futato, "Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3," *WTJ* 60 (1998), 1-10; Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 104 n. 6; cf., Hamilton, 154-6.

<sup>57</sup> In Canaan, about four inches of rain fell during "the early rains" (in October or November). This softened the ground so farmers could get their seed into the earth. Heavier rains (typically four to six inches a month) through the rainy season helped the crops to grow. Tapering off in the springtime, "the later rains" (generally around March) ensured a good crop (see Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24). David C. Hopkins, "Life on the Land: The Subsistence Struggles of Early Israel," *BA* 50 (Sept., 1987), 184; Carl G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 29.

<sup>58</sup> John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," 41-2, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 2: Genesis-Numbers* (Frank E. Gaebel, ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

“[When used in] a geographical sense..., מִקְדָּם [“from the east”] would still not be read as a simple reference to any ‘easterly location.’” This particular prepositional construction is used for “an utmost extremity. Assuming a parallel, ‘absolute’ topographical מִקְדָּם in Genesis 2:8, would locate Eden in the utmost east.”<sup>59</sup> Mesopotamia is not at the uttermost, eastern edge of the world from Canaan. The construction better suits a pointer to the easternmost part of Eden as the garden’s location.

This reading is supported by the subsequent description, “A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden...” (2:10). Eden was a land with higher elevations from which a rain/spring-fed river flowed down into the verdant garden located along its easternmost border. It is not difficult to recognize the Jordan River valley in this description, located along the eastern border of Canaan. Later in the book of Genesis, when Abram first set eyes on the Jordan River valley, it was described as “like the garden of the LORD” (13:10). If Abraham thought about “the garden of the LORD” as he laid eyes on the Jordan River valley, perhaps the reader of the text is expected to do the same.

The eastern border was a land’s “front door” in the ancient Near East. Maps today are drawn with north at the top, since moderns conceive of the world as a globe spinning on a north-south axis. In the ancient world, east was regarded as the forward direction since the sun rises in the east. The temple on Mount Zion was built with its doors and its main gate facing toward the Jordan River valley to its east as the main approach to the temple mount. This comports with Eden’s description of its eastern garden as an approach to the sanctuary of God’s presence.

Genesis reports two sacramental trees “in the midst (*bētōk*) of the garden” (2:9). We have already noted the sanctuary significance of those trees, it is now helpful to note their location in the “midst” of the garden. Rather than reading the phrase (*bētōk*) (“midst”) as the center-point of the garden, *bētōk* should here be understood as the heart or deepest point in the garden.<sup>60</sup> Entering Eden through the lush garden valley on its eastern border, a person would ascend from the valley to approach the dwelling place of God in the hills. The climax of that approach was the mountain from whence Eden’s river flowed down into the valley. The sacramental trees marked the deepest point on that approach, where access to the presence of God on that mountain might be enjoyed.<sup>61</sup> The imagery supports a location in Canaan, with the dwelling place of God (and the source of Eden’s primary river, further discussed momentarily) on Mount Zion.

The most important clue for locating Eden is the set of map references in Genesis 2:10-14. These verses provide a textual map for locating Eden based on a list of five rivers, four of which are named (Pishon, Gihon,

<sup>59</sup> Stordalen, “Heaven on Earth,” 42. Stordalen argues for a utopian reading of the text, interpreting the phrase *miqqedem* as a temporal rather than spacial indicator: “in the first/primeval Eden” (p. 41).

<sup>60</sup> Cf., Hamilton, 162.

<sup>61</sup> Genesis 2:9-10 might be read as explicitly locating the trees at the same place where the river was sourced: “The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, also a river that flowed out of Eden to water the garden...” (a.t.)



Tigris, and Euphrates), as well as three named regions (Havilah, Cush, and Assyria). The first river in the text is unnamed, but it is the one that flows out of Eden into the garden valley and which feeds the other four. This river is probably the Jordan River, elsewhere in Scripture called the “river of God” (Pss. 36:8; 46:4; 65:9; cf., 133:3) and “the river of delight (*’ādan*, cf., *’ēden*)” (Psa. 36:8).

The Jordan River, as we know it today, is fed from springs on Mount Hermon in the far north of Canaan. But the Eden narrative offers a different vision of the Jordan’s ideal source: springs of water from the temple mount. This idyllic vision is part of the Prophet Ezekiel’s interpretation of the Eden narrative (Ezek. 47:1-12). The prophet envisions a river flowing from the Zion temple with trees of life growing on either side of it. That river flows eastward into the Jordan Valley, even making the Dead Sea alive again (cf., Rev. 22:1-2). Although “the river of God/delight” flowed from Hermon’s slopes in the days of ancient Israel, Ezekiel interprets the Eden narrative as casting an idyllic vision of a time when the Jordan was sourced from the temple of God on Mount Zion.

In the Eden narrative, this river (Jordan) flows from the Temple Mount through its eastern garden (Jordan River valley) and from there feeds four subsidiary rivers. Those four subsidiaries are named in the text and given explicit, geographical locations. Two of the rivers are easy to locate: “the Tigris (*hiddeqel*), which flows east of Assyria, and...the Euphrates (*pērat*)” (2:14). The other two rivers are more difficult to locate: “the Pishon... that flowed around the whole land of Havilah” and “the Gihon...that flowed around the whole land of Cush” (2:11, 13). While these latter two rivers are no longer certain, the lands which they watered are easy to identify. Cush is most naturally identified with regions at the heart of Africa. Gihon must be the ancient name for a river that flowed through Egypt and the heart of Africa. There is some evidence the name “Gihon” may once have been identified with the Nile River.<sup>62</sup> The geography of this association makes sense, however it must be admitted that the present topography of the Middle East introduces significant difficulties for the water flow here envisioned. The Nile flows north, away from “Cush” and toward the Mediterranean. If the Jordan River is imagined by Genesis 2 as flowing into the Nile (Gihon?) and from there flowing toward Cush, that would defy the land’s actual topography. This does not undermine the vision presented in Genesis 2 of a river flowing from Canaan toward Cush, but it does suggest the rivers named are literal while their perceived linkages are metaphorical. Ezekiel’s vision of a river flowing out of the temple that revivifies the Dead Sea offers a biblical illustration for this capacity to weave literal locations and bodies of water into metaphorical directions of water flow to communicate the text’s message.

<sup>62</sup> E.g., 1QapGen 21:15, 18. See commentary in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 152-3. Also, Manfred Görg, “Zur Identität des Pishon (Gen 2,11),” *BN* 40 (1987), 11-13; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 25)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 278.

The land of Havilah is elsewhere identified with the Arabian peninsula (Gen. 25:18; 1Sam. 15:7). The Pishon River may, then, refer to the waters that surround the Arabian Peninsula. Notably, the land of Havilah is identified by its mineral wealth, rather than arable land. Both Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates) and Egypt (cf., Cush/Gihon) were irrigated from their respective rivers. Arabia (Havilah) however was not arable for farming, which may explain its unique commendation for mineral wealth in the Genesis description. These identifications for the Gihon and Pishon rivers may or may not be correct, but the lands they feed are almost certainly to be identified as African Cush and the Arabian peninsula. Thus all three named regions fed by this system of rivers are those immediately surrounding Canaan: Assyria (and Babylonia), Cush (and Egypt), and the Arabian peninsula. Only Canaan is watered directly by God, and the rest of the lands receive their waters secondarily.

The topography in that part of the world makes it impossible for such a massive water system to work in this manner, literally. As previously noted, the Jordan River is actually fed by springs from Mount Hermon, not from the temple mount. With the topography of the Middle East, it is not possible for the Jordan River to flow from its midpoint below Zion, both northward into the Tigris and Euphrates and southward into rivers of Africa and Arabia. But the prophets help us in this conundrum. Micah envisions a day of God's glory when Mount Zion will be lifted up above the other mountains of the earth (Mic. 4:1-2). The Prophet Isaiah also envisions a day when the proud mountains of the nations will be brought low and valleys will be raised, changing the world's topography around an elevated Mount Zion (Isa. 40:3-5). Zechariah similarly envisions that, "on that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea" because "the whole land shall be turned into a plain...But Jerusalem shall remain aloft..." (Zech. 14:8, 10). If the prophets can envision a day when Mount Zion would be higher than the others, it should not surprise us if Eden captures the vision of a time when this was the case in the past—at least symbolically. All of the geographical references provided in the text support the identification of Canaan as Eden, even though the hydromechanics of the region make it impossible for the rivers to have actually flowed in the manner described.<sup>63</sup>

The Eden narrative posits Mount Zion as the true "navel of the world" by linking real locations known to the Hebrew audience with water connections never to have actually existed. Similar ways of writing in the prophets, as noted above, teach us why this was done. The Eden narrative was written in this way to indicate the preeminence of the rain-watered kingdom established in Adam as a source of blessing to the other lands of the world. Eden's water system introduces in a figure, what Genesis later states as God's covenant purpose for the household of Abraham in their (re-)settling Canaan: "Go...to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:1-3).

<sup>63</sup> Magnus Ottosson, "Eden and the Land of Promise," in J. A. Emerton, ed., *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986* (VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 178-88.

Another line of evidence that identifies Eden as Canaan emerges from the movements of God's people in the book of Genesis. After Adam's sin, Genesis 3:24 reports that Adam settled just outside of Eden on its eastern border (perhaps in Moab). Thereafter, Cain was sent further east, far away from Eden (4:16). After the flood, Cain's heritage re-emerges in the lineage of Ham,<sup>64</sup> whose descendants built the Tower of Babel in the plain of Shinar, that is Babylonia (11:2), located in the east.<sup>65</sup> It is from the region of Mesopotamia that God called Abram to head west again, first as far as Haran (11:31) and later (back) to Canaan (12:1). This circle of movements supports the thesis that the Land of Abundance (Eden) from which Adam was sent (to the east) is the same as the Land of Milk and Honey to which Abram was later called (back to the west). When God called Abram to Canaan, he attached this purpose to that call: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:2-3). This sounds similar to the blessing portrayed by the rivers flowing from Eden into the rest of the surrounding world.<sup>66</sup> The purpose for which Adam was set up as a king in Eden/Canaan continues to be God's purpose for the house of Abraham, returning to Eden/Canaan.

Finally, there are numerous references in the Psalms and the Prophets that identify Canaan with Eden. Terje Stordalen has compiled an extensive catalogue of innerbiblical references to Eden, saying, "Biblical reflections of the Garden of Eden do in fact come in a large number...יְרֵכָה hovers behind at least 30 biblical passages, possibly many more," and connections between Eden and Canaan are common among them.<sup>67</sup> For example, Isaiah 51:3 reads, "The LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD." Ezekiel similarly declares, "Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled...And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden'" (Ezek. 36:33-35). Joel proclaims of God's judgment, "Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain!...For the day of the LORD is coming...The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness" (Joel 2:1-3). In Psalm 36:7-8, the psalmist sings, "The children of man (*ʿādām*) ...feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights (*ʿādānēkā*, plural of *ʿēden*)" (a.t.)<sup>68</sup> Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 14:8-11; Joel

<sup>64</sup> "The sons of Cain...represent urban, royal culture. When this culture is wiped out in a great downpour, the line is reestablished in Ham, whose sons are...the great city builders of Genesis 11." (Coote and Ord, *First History*, 75.)

<sup>65</sup> Note, Mesopotamia can hardly be Eden if Cain moved east of Eden to get there!

<sup>66</sup> This calling is also harmonious with what happens in the Book of Acts, when the church spreads from Jerusalem outward into all the world (Act 1:8).

<sup>67</sup> Stordalen, "Heaven on Earth," 30. For his full catalogue, see Terje Stordalen, *Echoes*. Cf., also New Testament texts, e.g., Revelation 22:1.

<sup>68</sup> On Psalm 36, see Wyatt, "A Royal Garden," 12.

4:18; Psalms 65:9-13; 133:3; and numerous other texts further support this identification.<sup>69</sup>

The internal evidence in Genesis and reflections in later Scriptures indicate that the location of Eden was not a mystery. It is supposed to be recognized as the Promised Land, and the “temple/palace mount” of Adam as Mount Zion.<sup>70</sup> The Eden narrative is an etiology, not merely for human kingship but for the Davidic throne specifically. It is the throne appointed by God on that mountain that was ordained “from the beginning” to extend his righteousness into all the earth. The passage supports the vision cast by later prophets for a son of David who would yet fulfill the calling of Adam (a “Second Adam”) from that location (Isa. 11:1–12:6; cf., 2Sam. 7:19).

#### IV. CAIN AS FIRST CITY-BUILDER

The irony at the heart of the Eden narrative is this: Adam failed to establish the intended agricultural kingdom in Eden (Canaan) due to his sin; nevertheless, his firstborn son Cain successfully built the world’s first urban kingdom in the east, in spite of his sin. Thus, the vision of a settled kingdom began with Adam, but it was through wicked Cain that the first kingdoms were realized and the vision of universal kingship actually took root in the lands later associated with Babylon. The paradigmatic contest between Israel and Babylon finds its etiology in the story of Abel/Seth and Cain.<sup>71</sup>

After being exiled from the land for ignoring God’s law, Adam settled immediately east of Eden (3:23–24), likely in the plains of Moab.<sup>72</sup> Moab was also fertile for cultivation. Adam farmed there albeit with great hardship (3:18–19) due to his loss of access to Yahweh’s presence. He and his wife also gave birth to sons in that land, beginning with Cain and Abel. As typical of an ancient Near Eastern household, the eldest son shouldered the strenuous work of the fields with his father, while the youngest son was left to tend the family flocks (4:2; cf., Num. 14:33; 1Sam. 16:11).

The story of Adam’s sons took a tragic turn one spring. Genesis 4:3 provides a time stamp for the event: “At the end of days (*miqqēs yāmim*) Cain brought to Yahweh an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel

<sup>69</sup> Notably, Ezekiel 28:1–19 (cf., Isa. 14:13–23) draws upon the story of Adam’s fall in Eden to issue a charge against the king of Tyre in his own day. Nicolas Wyatt suggests the interesting (albeit doubtful) suggestion that Ezekiel might actually be retelling the fall of Adam, reasoning that the phrase commonly translated “king of Tyre” might actually be *melek sôr* meaning “king of the rock” with reference to Adam as the king upon Mount Zion (“the rock”). (Wyatt, “A Royal Garden,” 9; but see C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2011], 69–70.)

<sup>70</sup> Cf., Sailhamer, 69–77.

<sup>71</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 102, 110–11.

<sup>72</sup> Note the biblical city of “Adam” located just barely over the border from Canaan, east of the Jordan River in the region of Moab. When Israel entered the land of Promise, the waters of the Jordan River “rose up in a heap...at Adam” (Josh. 3:16), opening the way for the people to enter the land. Was the name of the place coincidental, or was there legendary association of that place with Adam’s settlement when banished from Eden just opposite the entrance guarded by the cherubim?

brought one also from the firstborn of his flock and of their fatness" (4:3–4, a.t.) The phrase "at the end of days" (*miqqeš yāmim*) is idiomatic for the end of the Hebrew year just before the next (2Sam. 14:26; 1 Kgs. 17:7; cf., Jer. 13:6; Neh. 13:6). That would indicate the springtime, when the rains have ceased and both the grain harvest and lambing season are beginning. The offerings brought by Cain and Abel at that time were their first fruit offerings.<sup>73</sup> But Yahweh "had no regard" for Cain and his offering (4:5). Cain grew angry as a result and murdered Abel (4:8). "And the LORD said [to Cain], 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground (*hā' adāmā*). And now you are cursed from the ground (*hā' adāmā*), which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground (*hā' adāmā*), it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer (*nā' wānād*) on the earth (*bā' areš*)'" (4:10–12).

The farming heir of Adam was cast out from the fertile fields (*hā' adāmā*) just outside of Eden. He was banished instead to the desert regions farther east of Eden, characterized as "the land of wandering (*bē' ereš nōd*)" (4:16, a.t.) The description of the lands east of Eden as lands of wandering indicates the lack of settled societies in those places. Cain's banishment was not merely an exile from farming and from family; it was an exile to the "other" way of life: "vagrant wandering" (*nā' wānād*; i.e., "hunter-gatherers").

Remarkably, the narrative presupposes the presence of other populations already dwelling to the east of Eden! Up to this point in the narrative, it is possible to regard Adam as the first king and also humanity's first progenitor. It is only as the narrative follows Cain away from Eden into "the land of wandering" that we realize the author's worldview includes other populations already present. Questions like, "Where did Cain get his wife?" (4:17) and "Who were the other people Cain was afraid would kill him when he was cast out?" (4:14) and "Who lived in the city built by Cain?" (4:17) have been asked for centuries.<sup>74</sup> Typically, these questions have been viewed as marginal issues mainstream exegetes answered by postulating extreme fecundity to Eve (cf., 5:4). However, in light of current questions about Adam's biological relationship with the rest of the human race, those peripheral details about other populations contemporaneous with his household may be much more important than previously recognized.

Walter Moberly notes that the text's presupposition of a populated world is actually pervasive through the text, beyond the most obvious instances connected with Cain's exile. For example, Moberly notes, "at the outset (Gen. 4:2), Abel is said to be 'a keeper of sheep' while Cain is 'a tiller of the ground.' Such divisions of labor...presuppose a regular population with its familiar tasks..." Furthermore, "it is when Cain and Abel are in the

<sup>73</sup> This time stamp shows that Cain's offering was not rejected due to its being bloodless. Both sons were supposed to bring the first fruits of their labors to the altar. (Cf., Keil and F. Delitzsche, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, Volume I: The Pentateuch* [James Martin, trans.; Grand Rapids: Erdmann, 1980], 1.110. Contra, e.g., *The Scofield Study Bible: New King James Version* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002], 10–11.)

<sup>74</sup> E.g., Jubilees 4:9; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.2.2; Augustine, *City of God*, 15.8; A. J. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible* (London: Inter-varsity Fellowship, 1954), 81.

open countryside that Cain kills Abel [4:8]. The point of being in the open countryside is that one is away from other people in their settlements... murder is best committed without an audience..."<sup>75</sup> A broader population is assumed throughout the Eden narrative, although it is clearest when Cain is banished to the lands of the east, where he fears attack, finds a wife, and founds a city.

Augustine is the first of the Church Fathers to address the problem of other populations in the Genesis account, and his interpretation became the standard view. Augustine suggested that the "other sons and daughters" ascribed to Adam and Eve in Genesis 5:4 comprised a multitude large enough to fill those roles.<sup>76</sup> But Augustine's solution is not without problems. In particular, banishment to the east was a punishment for Cain. Are we to suppose that other sons and daughters of Adam had been exiled to that distant "land of wandering" prior to Cain? Had large numbers of other sons and daughters of Adam previously been exiled for earlier crimes like that leading to Cain's banishment? It seems that the narrative simply presupposes there are other, non-settled groups of wanderers "out there."<sup>77</sup>

Other explanations of Cain's contemporaries have also been attempted. In the early part of the twentieth century, John Maynard reasoned, "After the death of Abel, his father Adam was the only other man left on the face of the earth... [Therefore] we are led to suppose that... [Cain feared] *jinn* or spirits." Maynard further proposed that the mark God placed on Cain was circumcision, "since it is well known that circumcision was looked upon by many peoples as a charm against the evil spirits."<sup>78</sup> But the text says nothing about evil spirits, and it is not possible the text expects that Cain populated his city with amicable *jinn*!

Perhaps the most sophisticated examination of the issue was produced by the French Calvinist Isaac La Peyrère in his 1655 treatise, *Prae-Adamitae*.<sup>79</sup> Like many children reading the story, La Peyrère developed questions about Cain's family from his earliest years: "I had this suspicion [sic.] also being a Child, when I heard or read the History of *Genesis*: Where Cain goes forth; where he kills his brother when they were in the field; doing it warily, like a thief least it should be discovered by any: Where he flies, where he fears punishment for the death of his Brother: Lastly, where he married a wife

<sup>75</sup> Walter Moberly, "How Should One Read the Early Chapters of Genesis?" in, Stephen C. Barton and David Wilkinson, *Reading Genesis After Darwin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *Questions on the Heptateuch* 1.1; *City of God* 15.8, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Ronald Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis: An Introductory Commentary* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 65.

<sup>78</sup> John A. Maynard, "The Mark of Cain (Gen. 4:13-15)," *Anglican Theological Review* 2.4 (1920), 325-6.

<sup>79</sup> For a review of antecedents to La Peyrère on pre-Adamite peoples, see Richard Popkin, "The Pre-Adamite Theory in the Renaissance," in Edward P. Mahoney, ed., *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 50-69; David N. Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008).



far from his Ancestors, and builds a City.”<sup>80</sup> Decades later, he published his examination of the relevant texts in Genesis along with a lengthy treatment of Paul’s discussion of Adam in Romans 5. La Peyrère concluded that Genesis 1:26-27 reports the creation of all humankind, but Genesis 2 is only about the beginnings of the Hebrew race.<sup>81</sup> La Peyrère was not alone. Philip Almond finds, “Pre-Adamitism was probably a not uncommon belief [in seventeenth century Europe].”<sup>82</sup> Notably, these challenges to the Augustinian interpretation were being debated, with extensive exegesis of the relevant texts in both Genesis 2 and in Romans 5, a full two centuries before Darwin—and long before the science of genetics even existed!

Ultimately, any effort to use the Bible to explain the origins of those among whom Cain settled must lean on arguments from silence. *The text presupposes the existence of dangerous populations of wanderers in the east without explaining them.* That is significant. It is not part of the writer’s agenda to report the origins of those other populations! The Augustinian interpretation inserts assumptions into the text. So do other efforts to explain the origin of those peoples, including those of Maynard and La Peyrère and others. It is not possible to make any assertions from Scripture as to where Cain’s contemporaries came from. Genesis is silent on that question. Thus, we can reliably conclude that Genesis 2:4-4:26 was written to address a different topic than the origins of all human populations. The question of human biological origins is not the burden of the passage. The origin of all humanity is the burden of a passage in the previous chapter: Genesis 1:26-27. That text reports that God created humankind in the categories of “male and female” by his command. But the Eden narrative tells a different story. And the Eden narrative occurs at a time when humankind was already greater than a single family, since the text presupposes a broader population than Adam’s household without any concern to explain their identity or relationship to him. The etiological function of the Eden narrative is one of kingship and not genetic origins.

Cain was filled with fear at the prospect of being sent out among the “wanderers” to the east. He would be a vulnerable loner with no kinship group for his protection:<sup>83</sup> “I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me” (4:15). In his great mercy, God promised Cain protection in his exile: “And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him” (4:15). As a result, something remarkable took place. Cain, and not Adam, built the first kingdom! “Cain... built a city, [and] he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch” (4:17). To name the city for his son indicates the establishment of

<sup>80</sup> Isaac La Peyrère, *A Theological Systeme upon that Presupposition that Men Were before Adam* (London, 1655), proeme.

<sup>81</sup> On La Peyrère’s views, see Richard Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676): His Life, Work, and Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 52–60; Jeffrey L. Marrow, “Pe-Adamites, Politics and Criticism: Isaac La Peyrère’s Contribution to Modern Biblical Studies,” *JOCABS* 4.1 (2011).

<sup>82</sup> Almond, *Adam and Eve*, 51.

<sup>83</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 108; Hamilton, 232.

dynasty.<sup>84</sup> Unlike the agrarian kingdom intended to arise in Eden/Canaan, Cain represents the appearance of the great urban-based empires of the east (e.g., Babylon). There is no discussion of agriculture in Cain's line since the 'adāmā was closed to him. Irrigation enabled the infertile lands in Mesopotamia to be cultivated, but the Cain narrative only tells us that he built cities.

Genesis further identifies the staple institutions of the great Mesopotamian empires as emerging in Cain's line. Cain's descendant Jabal "was the father of those who dwell in tents (*ʿāhal*) and have *mīqneh*" (4:20). The latter term means "possessions," often with particular reference to livestock but sometimes as a more generic term for wealth.<sup>85</sup> Most scholars understand the term's use here as indicating "livestock," concluding that Jabal was the founder of the bedouin way of life. However, Abel had already kept herds and presumably would have taken them along the seasonal circuits of grazing lands. It is better to read this instance of *mīqneh* as a general term for material goods and to regard Jabal as setting up the first caravan trade networks: "the father of those who live by tents and possessions" (a.t.) Judges 6:5 similarly describes the Midianite caravans passing through Israel as those who come with "their possessions (*mīqneh*)...and their tents (*ʿāhal*)" (a.t.)<sup>86</sup> Jabal is not the inventor of beduin herding, but that staple of the great Mesopotamian empires: trading caravans. Another of Cain's descendants, Jubal, "was the father of those who play the lyre and pipe" (4:21), while Tubal-cain "was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron" (4:22). Also Lamech introduced polygamy by taking two wives, and he began the custom of instilling fear among his subjects with excessive retribution against any who wronged him (4:19, 23-24).<sup>87</sup> These are all the stereotypical markers of the despotic urban empires of the east. "This is a stock motif of royal excess..." Coote and Ord conclude, "In this exposé of royal urban culture, urban culture is exposed as the worst fosterer of revenge of all. The line of Cain and Ham is the foil to the line of Abram, Israel, Judah, and David."<sup>88</sup>

Questions swirl as we consider how to regard the timing of these massive innovations, such as the forging of both "bronze and iron" by Tubal-cain (4:22). The human development of bronze and the later innovation of iron smelting were discoveries separated by nearly two thousand years.<sup>89</sup> Genesis is telescoping a long process of advances into the record of a few generations. However the chronology of these developments are

<sup>84</sup> Cf., Coote and Ord, *First History*, 73.

<sup>85</sup> William T. Koopmans, "5238 מִיִּקְנֵה," *NIDOTTE*, 2.1089-92. Cf., Coote and Ord, *First History*, 66.

<sup>86</sup> Since, in that context, the only animals traveling with the Midianites are specifically identified as camels (Jdg. 6:5), the term *mīqneh* can hardly mean the Midianites are bringing their cattle with them on raiding ventures through Israel!

<sup>87</sup> "Lemek is a made-up, or nonce, word. It is a thinly disguised cipher for Hebrew *melek*, meaning, 'king'." (Coote and Ord, *First History*, 78.) With the despotic character of Lemech, the Cainite model of kingship reaches its maturation.

<sup>88</sup> Coote, *First History*, 80.

<sup>89</sup> The Bronze Age is generally dated from 3300-1200 B.C., and the Iron Age from 1200-500 B.C.

understood, the text is describing the emergence of powerful empires—of a very different character to that intended in Eden—through the line of violent Cain. Adam failed to establish the Yahwistic, agrarian kingdom in Eden to which he was called. Instead, kingdoms of luxury, weaponry, and despotic violence emerged in Mesopotamia. But even those kingdoms owe their successes to the original kingdom vision of Adam, and to God's mercies on Cain for Adam's sake.<sup>90</sup>

Notwithstanding the disappointment of Cain's developments, the hope of a godly kingdom in Eden did not end with Abel's death. The Eden narrative closes with this final word of hope: "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, 'God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.' To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD" (4:25–26). Cain had established an urban dynasty of despots in his son Enoch. Seth established a community of worship in his son Enosh. The etiological function of the Adam and Eve narrative is once again evident in this final motif: the beginning of Yahwistic worshipping communities in Enosh. The contrast between Cain's line and that of Seth could not be more pronounced; nor could it be more comforting for readers in later Hebrew communities of worship living under the shadow of the great despotic empires of the east.<sup>91</sup>

#### V. ADAM'S HERITAGE OF KINGSHIP AND KINGDOMS

In this essay, it has been argued that Adam is introduced as the first universal king and not the first progenitor of humanity. This thesis has been grounded in the opening chapters of Genesis, but it finds further support in the way Adam's heritage is reported in the rest of the book. Genesis is the book of beginnings, but it is specifically about the beginnings of *kingdoms*.<sup>92</sup> It is not about the beginnings of human families spreading through the world, except as an incidental feature of the establishment and spread of dynasties. A survey of the genealogies throughout the rest of the book of Genesis will support the thesis of this essay, by showing that its opening concern to identify the origin of kingship in Adam is the basis of the book's sustained interest in kings and kingdoms.

<sup>90</sup> The recent proposal of Jacques Cauvin is intriguing. Cauvin has correlated Neolithic evidence for agricultural innovations with remnants of period art that indicate a contemporaneous sense of the divine emerged in those same groups. He draws the conclusion that it was the development of religious thought that explains the radical shift in mindset and practices required to change from hunter-gathering bands to a settled society. (Jacques Cauvin, *The Birth of the Gods and the Origins of Agriculture* [Trevor Watkins, trans.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000].)

<sup>91</sup> These conclusions are particularly compelling in connection with the redaction of the final form of the Pentateuch at the hands of Ezra (Ezra 7:1–26). The Enoshite worshipping community outside of Eden might provide an etiological pointer to proto-synagogues among the exilic diaspora.

<sup>92</sup> Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2005), 49–85.

Eden is where God's appointed king (Adam) was to establish fruitful and godly rule. From Eden, he was to lead the whole world in united labor and worship before God. But Adam failed. The tragic result of Adam's fall was the division of the human family (4:1–26). On the one hand, a fragile line descended from Seth of those who “call[ed] upon the name of the LORD” (4:25–26). On the other hand, a powerful line of those who built cities (4:17–24) and opposed the heritage of faith descended through Cain.<sup>93</sup> The rest of Genesis follows from that dilemma at the end of the Eden narrative, following the slow growth of God's kingdom from Seth's heritage while mighty kingdoms arose all around from Cain's heritage of violence.

There is an element of irony (even humor) woven through this process. From the book's opening to its end, the godly line struggles to form even a household—let alone to achieve nationhood. Meanwhile, great kingdoms arise rapidly all around them: kingdoms like Babylon (11:1–9), Egypt (12:1–20), the Amorites and Moabites (19:30–38), the Canaanite forebears of the Philistines (21:22–34), the desert tribes of the Negev (25:12–18), and the Edomites. The Edomites are the last of the neighboring kingdoms to emerge in Genesis (36:1–43). Notably, it is in connection with that kingdom's appearance that Genesis introduces the punchline of its ironic story of emerging kingdoms: these other kings all reigned “before any king reigned over the Israelites” (36:31). The other kingdoms achieved greatness first; meanwhile, the people of God's promise continued to struggle even to form a family, and to keep that family from self-destructing (e.g., 4:1–26; 37:1–38:30).

There is a Table of Nations in Genesis 10:1–32 that provides an “index” of the emerging world order after the flood. In that Table of Nations, Genesis reports seventy kingdoms that were to emerge, each with its own settled domain. Meanwhile, God's people barely managed to achieve a household of seventy individuals by the close of the book. And they are heading into a foreign land (Egypt) when the book ends (Gen. 47–50; Exod. 1:1–7).

But there is a deeper layer of irony in the story: despite their weakness and inability to form a nation themselves, the household of faith is the actual source of life for the other kingdoms all around them. Throughout Genesis, the patriarchs are found interceding for the other nations. The first time Genesis introduces the pharaoh of Egypt, he comes under “great plagues” (*nega'*; 12:17; cf., Exod. 11:1) for violating the house of Abram and taking Sarai into his harem. The very existence of pharaoh's house, and perhaps all Egypt, hung in the balance because of pharaoh's mistreatment of Abram's house. When pharaoh realized what he had done, he restored Sarai to Abram and was therefore spared destruction from God's plagues.<sup>94</sup>

Likewise, it was due to Abram's intervention that the land of Canaan was delivered from the imperial aspirations of the proto-Babylonian Empire. Genesis 14 tells of a massive invasion of armies under the leadership of the “king of Shinar” (14:1), Shinar being an archaic title for Babylon (11:1–9). The passage lists a great alliance of eastern kings entering the land from

<sup>93</sup> Cf., Augustine, *City of God*, book 15.

<sup>94</sup> This time; but consider the events of a later generation: Exodus 7:14–12:32.

its eastern approaches, an early foreshadowing of the Babylonian invasion with its many vassal states. The city-states around Sodom and Gomorrah faced the first wave of this invasion and could not resist them. But Abram rallied his army of “318 trained men” for a surprise attack (14:14). He did this to save his nephew Lot. Nevertheless, as a result of Abram’s intervention, these proto-Babylonian aspirations in the land were brought to a halt. Also, the Canaanite kingdoms of Sodom and Gomorrah were preserved.<sup>95</sup>

Soon after, Abraham’s first son Ishmael and his mother Hagar were sent away. They had mocked the covenant promises of God (seen in Hagar’s contempt for Sarai, 16:4; and in Ishmael’s mocking Isaac, 21:9–13). They were sent from the household for showing themselves to be those who despised the covenant. Though Ishmael was no longer part of the covenant family, God blessed him because of Abraham’s love and prayers for him. Ishmael’s offspring went on to form a great nation (17:18–21; 21:13; 25:12–18).

A second story about Sodom and Gomorrah appears in the text, with Abraham interceding for God’s mercy on those cities which had only increased in their wickedness (18:1–33). God told Abraham his intention to destroy those cities. Abraham reasoned that there was still hope for their redemption, so long as a small number of righteous were present among them. So Abraham began his famous series of appeals to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. There is an important window into the theology of Genesis in these petitions of Abraham, who expects that a small household can bring God’s mercy to great kingdoms. But the necessary number of righteous was not present in Sodom and Gomorrah, so their judgment followed. Nevertheless, because of Abraham’s intercessions, Lot and his daughters were rescued out of Sodom. At the climax of the account, Genesis reports the ultimate result of Abraham’s intervention: the birth of Moab and Ammon to Lot’s daughters (19:34–38). Once again, new kingdoms emerge out of the intercessions of Abraham.

The mighty kingdom of Gerar almost came to a sudden end for a sin similar to that previously committed by Egypt’s pharaoh. Gerar’s king Abimelech took Abraham’s wife into his harem (20:1–18). Before any violation occurred, God pronounced a curse upon Gerar and “closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife” (20:18). The entire “house of Abimelech” (which might mean his palace household or his kingdom) would have become extinct within the generation had not Abraham intervened. When Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham with pleas for mercy, “Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech” so that his house became fruitful again (20:17). The kingdom of Abimelech was nearly annihilated but was spared by Abraham’s intercession. The kingdom of Gerar went on to make a covenant of perpetual peace with Abraham, explicitly acknowledging that the land of Canaan was one day to become the land of Abraham’s offspring (21:22–34; cf., Gen. 26:1–33).

One of the most intriguing features of the Gerar story is that Genesis identifies Gerar as the progenitor of the later Philistine kingdom (21:32–34; cf., 26:1, 8, 14–15). Many scholars think that it is an error on the part of the

<sup>95</sup> But consider the later invasions from Babylon; 2 Kings 24:1–25:30.

author of the text that the Philistines are named in the time of Abraham,<sup>96</sup> since the Philistines came from the Aegean region and only settled the western coasts of Canaan in the thirteenth century B.C.<sup>97</sup> However, this anachronism is deliberate. The author of Genesis understood that the Philistines came from outside of Canaan (10:14; cf., Num. 24:24; Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7). Nevertheless, when the Philistines arrived in the land, they settled in what was formerly Gerar. By making this identification of Gerar with later Philistia, the writer is revealing his purpose for writing about these ancient kingdoms. The text is not concerned with the nations of Abraham's day, but was compiled to teach later Israel about the nations of their own time. The very nations that later became Israel's most vicious enemies—indirectly including the late arriving Philistines—owed their existence to the intercession of the patriarchs.

The final kingdom described in the book of Genesis is the kingdom of Edom (36:1–43). The Edomite princes and their domains are traced to the lineage of Jacob's brother, Esau. Esau had sold his birthright and had despised the covenant (25:29–34; 26:34–35; 27:41). Nevertheless, Isaac pronounced a blessing on Esau, promising him an independent existence free from Jacob's rule (27:39–40). Esau settled east of the Jordan where he fathered the kingdom of Edom. In later history, Edom was to betray Judah by allying with Babylon against Jerusalem. This treachery, in violation of Esau's oath with Jacob (33:1–20), was to earn a particular curse from God (Obed. 1–21; Psa. 137:7–9). Though one of Israel's most bitter adversaries in later generations, Edom too owed its existence to the blessing of Abraham's house.

The real irony of the Genesis story is that each of these kingdoms described were Israel's chief enemies in later generations, yet each of them—Egypt, Babylon, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, the Negev tribes, and even Edom—owed their own existence to the intercession of the patriarchs. God's people struggled even to form a stable family, yet they were already the source of life to the mighty kingdoms emerging all around them. This is the marvelous irony traced by this book about the beginnings of the world's kingdoms.<sup>98</sup>

It is a commonplace that the book of Genesis is structured around genealogies. There are, in fact, ten genealogies (*tôlêdôt*) dividing the book

<sup>96</sup> "The mention of the Philistines is a gross anachronism." Geerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 237.

<sup>97</sup> Trude Dothan, "Philistines," ABD 5.326–33; Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300–1100 B.C.E.* (Archaeology and Biblical Studies, 9; Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 197–245.

<sup>98</sup> There is one exception to this pattern: Genesis 14:18–24 introduces the one instance where Abraham is on the receiving end of a blessing from another king. Melchizedek, who was both "king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High" (14:17), is the only example of a king who blesses Abraham rather than the other way around. Melchizedek is also the only king in Canaan who is introduced without any genealogy (Heb. 7:3) and is claimed by the psalmist as the order into which David's reign was ordained (Psa. 110:4). Perhaps Genesis "frees" Melchizedek from his place in the genealogies of "other nations" in order to enable Israel to lay claim to his heritage and the holy mountain (presuming Salem = Jerusalem) where both Adam and later David were to reign.



into its various sections: the generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4ff.), of Adam (5:1ff.) of Noah (6:9ff.); of Noah's sons (10:1ff.); of Shem (11:10ff.); of Terah (11:27ff.); of Ishmael (25:12ff.); of Isaac (25:19ff.); of Esau (36:1ff.); and of Jacob (37:2ff.) "Genesis is a book whose plot is genealogy."<sup>99</sup> This concern with genealogy is deeper than a mere fascination with families, however. These genealogies trace the lineage of kings from the first kingdom in Eden to form the many nations of the ancient world. In his study of the Genesis genealogies, Sven Tengström identified two forms of genealogy: "the *erzählerische* or narrating type and the *aufzählende* or enumeration type. The narrating type...is used merely to introduce the story of the next set of the ancestors of Israel...The enumeration type... is used to introduce *Stammtafeln* or tribal trees which are concerned with the relationship between Israel's ancestors and the other nations of Israel's world."<sup>100</sup>

The genealogies do not provide exhaustive catalogues of early human procreation. Instead, they are the lineages of rulers: heads of clans and heads of kingdoms.<sup>101</sup> This purpose is made explicit at the end of the Table of Nations (10:1–32): "These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these [i.e., the names in the genealogies] the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood" (10:32).<sup>102</sup> The Table of Nations provides an index of the 70 nations of the ancient world, and the genealogies are provided to trace that spread of kingdoms.

The genealogies of faithful Seth and Shem reach their climax in Jacob's prophecy concerning Judah: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah... and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (49:10). The book of Genesis reports the beginnings of all the other nations of the earth, but it also points ahead to the rise of David as the dynastic head for Israel. The same Davidic interest is reflected in the Chronicler's genealogies as well. Chronicles recapitulates the line from Adam all the way to the coronation of David (1Chr. 1:1–10:14). In the New Testament, Luke continues this theme tracing the royal genealogy to Jesus all the way from David and ultimately

<sup>99</sup> N. Steinberg, "The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis," *Semeia* 46 (1989), 41. In fact, the Greek word *genesis* means "generation(s)." The reason the book was titled Genesis in its ancient Greek translation (the LXX) is because it is a book of "generations," the beginnings of peoples. Cf., Matthew 1:1, "The book of the genealogy (*biblos geneleos*) of Jesus Christ..."

<sup>100</sup> Matthew A. Thomas, *These are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the 'Toledot' Formula* (LHBOTS 551; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 91–92. Cf., Sven Tengström, *Die Hexateucherzählung: Eine literaturgeschichtliche Studie* (Coniectanea Biblical, Old Testament Series 7; Uppsala: CWK Gleerup, 1976). On the political function of genealogies, see also Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 193–5, 199. Cf., the Sumerian King List.

<sup>101</sup> Abraham Malamat, "King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies," in Hess, *Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 183–99; cf., the Sumerian King List, which begins, "After the kingship descended from heaven, the kingship was in..."

<sup>102</sup> D. J. Wiseman, "Genesis 10: Some Archaeological Considerations," in Hess, *Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 254–65; Jack M. Sasson, "The 'Tower of Babel' as a Clue to the Redactional Structuring of the Primeval History (Genesis 1:1–11:9)," in Hess, *Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 448–57.

Adam (Lk. 3:23–38). This pervasive interest in genealogies is particularly concerned with kingship, flowing from Adam to David to Jesus.<sup>103</sup>

Genesis is a book of joyful irony (cf., Psa. 2:4, 12), introducing the fledgling community of faith emerging in the shadows of the mighty kingdoms of humankind. And it all begins with the First Adam and his failed reign—but God’s faithful purpose—announced from Eden.

#### VI. EVE AS “MOTHER OF ALL LIVING”

There are, therefore, two lines of kingship that flow from Adam and Eve: the unrealized hope for a righteous kingdom in the lineage of Seth and later Abraham; and the realized advance of kingdoms in the lineage of Cain and the sons of Noah. The genealogy of kingdoms is traced to Adam and Eve, but is this couple also presented as the biological progenitors of the whole human race? Since the Cain story presumes the existence of other peoples outside of the household of Adam, biological origins does not seem to be the burden of the text. If there is any place in the Eden narrative, however, where the text might present Adam as the sole progenitor of all humans, it is when Eve is called “the mother of all living” (3:20). This statement is often interpreted to mean that all humans were born through Eve. However, examination of the text reveals that the designation “mother of all living” is not a reproductive notation: it is a soteriological statement.

Genesis 3:15 (the so-called “proto-evangelium”)<sup>104</sup> divides the human race into two categories: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Both “seeds” are groups of humanity.<sup>105</sup> Adam called his wife “Eve” (*ḥawwā* which means “life”) to identify her as “the mother of all living” (3:20) with respect to the “seed” to arise from her in contrast to the human “seed” associated with the serpent. The title “mother of all living” is not, therefore, about all human beings descending from Eve. It is about “all living” human beings—in the soteriological sense of the term in light of Genesis 3:15—being those found among “the seed of the woman.” She is the mother of all who have the hope of life, not the mother of all humans.

This special use of the term “life” is a theme all through the Eden narrative. In particular, the Tree of Life in the Garden promised everlasting life in God’s presence for those with access to it (2:9; 3:22). The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil promised death if its fruit was violated: “in

<sup>103</sup> David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18–19 suggests that David himself recognized that his special anointing by God was in the lineage of Adamic kingship. When God promised David a universal and everlasting kingship from his enthronement on Zion (2Sam. 7:1–17), David declared, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that you have brought me to this place? This was an easy thing in your eyes, O Lord God, yet you have spoken even of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is the law of Adam (*tōrat ḥā’ādām*), O Lord God!” (2Sam. 7:18–19, a.t.) This cry suggests David understood that the promised Second Adam (Gen. 3:15) was to come in his dynasty.

<sup>104</sup> See “Is Genesis 3:15 a protoevangelium?” in Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 155–9.

<sup>105</sup> The term “offspring” (*zāra’*) refers to the human male seed (i.e., semen, and its resulting offspring). Neither the serpent nor the woman produce this seed themselves. It is the offspring (from the seed) of men who are divided into these two lines: the serpent’s heritage of death or the woman’s heritage of life. (Cf., Walter C. Kaiser, “זָרַע” (*zāra’*) I,” *TWOT*, 1.252–3.)

the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (2:17). The serpent deceived the couple, insisting they would not die if they stole from the forbidden tree (3:4). But when the man and his wife ate the forbidden fruit, they did die—in this specialized use of the terms "life" and "death." On the very day they ate from the forbidden tree, they were cast out from the presence of God and cut off from the Tree of Life (3:22–24).<sup>106</sup> Physical death would also follow (3:19) without access to the sustaining presence of God. But the death in view in the narrative is more involved than a mere cessation of breathing. It is separation from God's presence.

Despite their banishment from Eden, the man retained the knowledge of agriculture (3:18–19) and the support of his wife to raise a family (3:16; 4:1–2). God also promised to provide a new king through the offspring of Adam's wife, who would one day conquer the serpent (3:15). It is that promise of life exclusively for the heritage belonging to Eve's household that prompted her title "mother of all living." Adam's ascription calling his wife "Eve" ("life") was a pronouncement of faith, not a mundane reproductive datum.<sup>107</sup> She is mother to the household of life from which, in fact, her own firstborn son Cain was ultimately separated (4:4).

Just as the narrative highlight's Adam's kingly role rather than his reproduction, the narrative's focus on Eve is on her role as an educator. In the ancient Hebrew household, the mother was the first teacher of the children. While the men of the household labored in the fields, the mother nurtured the little ones physically and intellectually in their earliest, formative years.<sup>108</sup> She oversaw the child's learning of language, including the stories that embodied the community's faith. This is why Nehemiah decried the intermarriage of Jews in Jerusalem with "women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab" such that "half their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah" (Neh. 13:23–24; cf., 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). It is also why the provision of a Hebrew nurse for Moses in his infancy (his own mother!) would prove so decisive in his adulthood (Exod. 2:7–10). This convention is also reflected in Paul's references to the church as a "nursing mother" in whose care believers are reared in faithfulness to Christ (1 Thess. 2:7; cf., 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12). The Edenic reference to Eve as "mother of all living" indicates the importance of maternal catechism, and the faith learned from infancy in the believing home, for continuing the line of promised life. Eve's title "mother of all living" does not identify her as the womb from whom all human seed descended, but as the mother from whom all households in the heritage of life have arisen.

Paul draws upon this description of Eve as "mother of all living" in his first epistle to Timothy. Paul writes, "[the woman] will be saved through childbearing—if they [i.e., her offspring] continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control" (1 Tim. 2:15). Paul uses the term "childbearing" here, not strictly for the birthing event but for the entire birthing and nursing process during which the child is weaned from its dependence upon

<sup>106</sup> Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 116–9, 180–84; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 74–5.

<sup>107</sup> Kidner, 30 n. 1; 72.

<sup>108</sup> Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 136–9.

its mother.<sup>109</sup> It was typical, at least by Second Temple times, for mothers to nurse children until sometime around age three (2Macc. 7:27; cf., Gen. 21:8). Paul is pointing to Eve's title "mother of all living" as indicating the vital role of mothers within the church in their catechism of children from earliest infancy. It is not the childbearing of all women everywhere that Paul sees in that Genesis designation, but the salvific ministry of mothers who nurture their children "in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." Paul's citation is consistent with the interpretation of Eve's designation "mother of all living" as a reference to her vital role in the heritage of life.<sup>110</sup>

The title "mother of all living" is a salvific title, not a reproductive title. It refers to the "seed" of life in contrast to the "seed" (humans!) of the serpent's line. The text does not identify all human beings as descending biologically from Adam and Eve. Their universal headship is that of king and first educator.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have argued that the Eden narrative is an etiology of kingship. As such, it teaches the origin of humanity's fallen condition as a consequence of the first universal king's failure. The Eden narrative is not, however, an etiology of human biological origins, as indicated by the presence of other, contemporaneous populations presupposed within the text.

Adam was a real, historical person. He was the "first man," the "ideal man," and the "father of us all" in the sense that he was humanity's first universal king. He is also the one from whom later kings of the biblical world arose, as traced in the various genealogies of Genesis. Many later kings attempted to gain universal dominion (e.g., Dan. 4:31-32), but only two have received that authority from God: the First Adam (Gen. 2:4-4:26) and the Second Adam (Php. 2:9-11; Rom. 5:12-21; 1Cor. 15:22-28). It is in this role of universal kingship that Jesus is likened to Adam.

This conclusion is consistent with Paul's teaching about Adam in the New Testament. In his sermon to the Areopagus, Paul proclaimed, "The God who made the world and everything in it...made from one man every nation of mankind (*pan ethnos anthrōpōn*) to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place...But now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed...by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:24-31). It is Adam's role as the first king, from whom "every nation" of humankind arises,<sup>111</sup> that Paul identified as the type Jesus fulfills as the final judge.<sup>112</sup> Paul's similar statements about Adam in his epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians (Rom. 5:12-14; 1Cor. 15:21-22) also emphasize the "reign" of sin and death spreading through the world by Adam's fall and Christ's

<sup>109</sup> Cf., Lamentations 2:22, "those whom I bore and reared" (a.t.)

<sup>110</sup> Cf., William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), 111.

<sup>111</sup> Contra Walton, 186-7.

<sup>112</sup> For a full survey of biblical texts about Adam, see Collins, *Adam and Eve*, 51-92.

victory as our royal representative. “The ‘king’ of the ראשית (‘beginning’) provides the job description for the king of the אחרית (‘end’).”<sup>113</sup>

Admittedly, to isolate Adam’s royal precedence from issues of human biological origins raises other questions. Were populations in “the land of wandering” *Homo sapiens*, or was the “breath of life” given to Adam a distinct mark of the first *Homo sapiens* within a broader, interbreeding hominid population?<sup>114</sup> More importantly, this account maintains the traditional dogma that Adam’s sin brought guilt upon the whole world resulting in the curse of death and separation from God. But how should pre-fall evils and deaths be understood?<sup>115</sup> These are important questions, but they are not necessarily without solutions.<sup>116</sup>

It is my contention in this paper that Genesis 2:4-4:26 is silent regarding the family tree of human biology. The Bible offers neither reason to dispute nor to affirm the findings of modern genetics. If current scientific theories on human biological origins continue to prove sound, there is no biblical reason to refute these conclusions. But if current theories are ultimately found to be wrong, and it is found that the human race does in fact arise from a single couple, this too is biblically plausible since the Bible is silent on the relationship between Adam and other populations in “the land of wandering.” Genesis 1:26-27 states that God created humankind in

<sup>113</sup> Postell, *Adam as Israel*, 163.

<sup>114</sup> Youngblood, *Genesis*, 65; Kidner, *Genesis*, 28.

<sup>115</sup> See the list of violent deeds indicated in the human fossil record cataloged by Marvin Lubenow, “Pre-Adamites, Sin, Death and the Human Fossils,” *Journal of Creation* 12.2 (1998), 222-32.

<sup>116</sup> James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1993); C. John Collins, *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003), 147-60; Ronald E. Osborn, *Death Before the Fall: Biblical Literalism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014); Nicola Hoggard Creegan, *Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008); Michael J. Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Walton, 159-60. Isaac La Peyrère argued that the “law” mentioned in Romans 5:12-14 is the law first revealed to Adam (“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”). Thus, in La Peyrère’s reading, Romans states that “sin indeed was in the world before the law was given [to Adam], but sin is not counted where there is no law” (Rom. 5:13). (Isaac La Peyrère, *Men before Adam, or, A discourse upon the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses of the fifth chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans: by which are prov’d that the first men were created before Adam* [London, 1656]; so also, John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2015], 155.) Cf., also, Psalm 104:20-23 which acknowledges some degree of natural violence as part of the creation order. The Apostle Paul does identify at least one sin that chronologically preceded that of Adam. In his letter to Timothy, Paul identifies Eve as having become “a transgressor (*parabasis*)” first (1Tim. 2:11; cf., 2Cor. 11:3), before Adam sinned. One might therefore argue that Paul regards Adam’s sin as having universal implications, not because of its chronological primacy but solely due to the universal office he held at the time of that particular sin. Note this admission by Wayne Grudem, “Theistic Evolution Undermines Twelve Creation Events and Several Crucial Christian Doctrines,” in J. P. Moreland, et al, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2017), 807 n. 45.

the categories of “male and female.” But beyond that, Genesis is silent on the question of human biological origins. This means that Christians need not feel threatened by the findings of the biological and genetic sciences. It also means that scientists working those fields ought not suppose their research is undermining biblical theism. There is no necessary conflict between Genesis and genetics.

But the most important fruit of this study is theological. Even though the impetus of this study has been the challenge emerging from modern science, its fruits are productive for the church’s theology. The shadow of Christ in the contours of the Eden narrative are more pronounced when viewed as an etiology of kingship, than when treated as an account of human paternity. I believe the present study offers important contributions that strengthen the Christology woven into the Eden narrative.

The Bible is God’s inspired word (2 Tim. 3:16),<sup>117</sup> but our interpretations of it are fallible. There are times when discoveries within the fields of history, archaeology, or the natural sciences challenge a long-held interpretation of the Bible. In such times, it is proper to welcome the challenge and to assess whether or not our interpretation of the Scriptures requires revision—even revisions as theologically earthshaking as it was to abandon geocentrism under the Copernican revolution.<sup>118</sup> I believe we are facing just such a time in the modern challenges emerging from the fields of biology and genetics. And when we do re-examine the Eden narrative, we find the text more pointedly focused on Christ than recognized under a view that made Adam’s reproductive fatherhood central. “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all,” but “the Last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45).

These topics are understandably controversial. In his recent book defending a traditional view of Adam, William VanDoodewaard offers a closing word of exhortation with which I too want to conclude this paper. VanDoodewaard writes, “In any pursuit to harmonize our knowledge of God’s special and general revelation, we must walk humbly—this is true for all of us. We are called to be watchful in love for one another, and where there is error to respond in a spirit of Christlike faithfulness... As we seek to grow together in understanding God’s handiwork in creation and His gracious Word to us, may it lead us to wonder and worship.”<sup>119</sup>

It is my prayer that God would grant me this same humility as I offer these contributions to an important theological frontier, and as I listen to those arguments advanced by others.<sup>120</sup> May the Second Adam advance the truth of his reign among us!

<sup>117</sup> My convictions concerning the nature of Scripture align with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 1.

<sup>118</sup> Owen Gingrich, *God’s Planet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 7-55.

<sup>119</sup> William VanDoodewaard, *The Quest for the Historical Adam: Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 316. Cf., Job 38:1-42:6.

<sup>120</sup> I want to express my particular appreciation for the critical feedback I received from those who kindly read earlier drafts of this paper, including Hans Madueme, Kenneth Turner, John Walton, Scott McCullough, Rich Holdeman, Darrell Bock, Matthew Mason, and the Saint John Fellowship of the Center for Pastor Theologians.



“Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to the royal son!...  
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
who alone does wondrous things.  
Blessed be his glorious name forever;  
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!  
Amen and Amen!” (Psa. 72:1, 18–19)