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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENESIS 2:4 FOR UNDERSTANDING GENESIS 1–3, WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HISTORICAL ADAM DEBATE¹

Chris Prekop

This article explores the literary relationship between Gen 1 and Gen 2–3, with a particular focus on implications for questions of human origins. It concludes that Genesis 1–3 could describe how Adam, with Eve, was selected from a previously created group of humans to be their covenant head, a position which fits with modern scientific theories of human origins.

Introduction

“It is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these [cosmological] topics.”² Augustine’s warning is a provocative and influential statement for many who discuss the relationship between science and Christianity. It may be especially pertinent in the debate surrounding the Bible and evolution. Fuelled by fear that the gospel will be disgraced, many within Evangelicalism argue for a reappraisal of the Bible’s teaching on human origins. Others contend that no reappraisal is necessary, raising exegetical, doctrinal and scientific objections to stave off any reinterpretation of the traditional understanding of Adam, Eve and human origins.

In view of the complexity of this debate, this contribution must necessarily be modest. My working assumption is that the relationship between science and Scripture is best understood from a broadly concordist position.³ My main exegetical argument is that Genesis 2:4 indicates that Genesis 1 and 2 narrate distinct and chronologically sequential events.⁴ This reading allows for the possibility that Genesis

¹ A version of this article was originally submitted as a BA dissertation at Oak Hill College.

² Cited in Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012), 12.

³ See Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston (1979; repr., Leicester: IVP, 1984), 20–21.

⁴ Unless greater specificity is required, “Genesis 1” is shorthand for Genesis 1:1–2:3 and “Genesis 2” shorthand for 2:4–25.

1:26–27 records the creation of humanity (without specifying how many humans were created), whereas Genesis 2–3 describes the election of Adam and Eve, from among a previously created human population, and their subsequent transgression.

The Unity of Genesis 2:4

This is what became of (’ēlleh tōl’qōt) the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. (Genesis 2:4, my translation.)

Genesis 2:4 is commonly divided in two: “This is what became of the heavens and the earth when they were created” is designated 2:4a and “in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven” as 2:4b.⁵ The former is regarded as the conclusion of the creation account in Genesis 1:1–2:3, the latter as the opening clause of Genesis 2:4b–25.⁶ A number of arguments are advanced in support of dividing the verse. Genesis 2:4a is the final reference to “the heavens and the earth,” indicating an *inclusio* with Genesis 1:1.⁷ Stylistically, therefore, 2:4a could be a pithy précis of Genesis 1:1–2:3.⁸ Other arguments depend more directly on source critical theory. God is referred to as *yhwh* ’lōhîm in 2:4b, suggesting a different author from the one who used ’lōhîm throughout Genesis 1. Moreover, since Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the *tōl’qōt* formula are both considered priestly,⁹ it supposedly follows that 2:4a belongs with the preceding material. The assumption underlying these arguments is that Genesis 1 and 2 contain different, often contradictory, cosmogonies.

A much stronger case can be made for the unity of Genesis 2:4.¹⁰ Wenham’s analysis of its chiasmic structure is typical: A1 *haššāmāyim*, B¹ *w’hā’āreš*, C¹ *b’hibbār’ām* // C² *b’yôm ’ašōt*, B² *’ereš*, and A² *w’ešāmāyim*.¹¹ Here *haššāmāyim w’hā’āreš* is inverted to *’ereš w’ešāmāyim* to form the chiasm; two balancing infinitive constructs with *b’* prepositions reinforce

⁵ Terje Stordalen, “Genesis 2,4: Restudying a *Locus Classicus*,” ZAW 104 (1992): 163.

⁶ See, e.g., RSV, NIV 1984.

⁷ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (1974; repr., London: SPCK, 1984), 197.

⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 78, 181; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed., OTL (London: SCM, 1972), 63.

⁹ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 47, 63.

¹⁰ See, e.g., ESV, NIV 2011.

¹¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 55.

the artistry.¹² Moreover, although the first infinitive construct takes a pronominal suffix, the second does not, sacrificing conciseness to complete the chiasm. Although neither *'ēlleh tōl'qōt* nor *yhw h 'ēlōhīm* are mirrored, the chiasm is clear, indicating the verse's unity.

Moreover, Genesis 2:1–3 is a more obvious conclusion than 2:4a of the preceding literary unit. It opens with *way'qullū*, which Wenham identifies as a literary device “used to sum up or recapitulate a narrative,” making another recapitulation in 2:4a redundant.¹³ Matthews notes how the final words of 2:3, *bārā' 'ēlōhīm la'asōt*, “repeat the primary lexical and theological terms of chap. 1 so as to reflect its content,” making 2:1–3 a “satisfying denouement” of Genesis 1.¹⁴ Finally, dividing 2:4 and treating 2:4a as a subscription ignores the etymology of *tōl'qōt*. Derived from the root *yld*, it always refers to the thing produced and not the thing that produces. This is borne out in its consistent use as a superscription in Genesis,¹⁵ placing the burden of proof on those who suggest an anomalous use in Genesis 2:4.

The Function of *tōl'qōt* in Genesis

This insistence on the unity of Genesis 2:4 will be justified as we examine the verse's function in Genesis 1–2. To understand this, it is necessary first to consider the function of the *tōl'qōt* formula elsewhere in Genesis. Virtually all scholars agree that *tōl'qōt* are used to introduce a new section of material. As noted above, this is implied by the root *yld*, giving *tōl'qōt* the basic meaning “descendants” or “successors.” It is, therefore, no surprise that the *tōl'qōt* formula often introduces a genealogy. In Genesis, however, *tōl'qōt* introduce narratives as well as genealogies. Of particular note is Genesis 6:9, *'ēlleh tōl'qōt nōah*, which introduces a narrative about Noah and not one about his descendants, suggesting a broader meaning of *'ēlleh tōl'qōt* in Genesis. Woudstra, after surveying a variety of interpretations, concludes, “In the word *toledot* ... we find the meaning:

¹² C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006), 41.

¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 5.

¹⁴ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, NAC 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 114.

¹⁵ Duane A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Bible* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2000), 90–92.

this is what came of it. And in the genitive ... we have the thought: *this is where it started from.*"¹⁶

This understanding of the *tōl'qōt* formula will be applied to Genesis 2:4 shortly. More can be said, however, about their function in Genesis. They are not merely headings; they imply a connection between the preceding and subsequent material. DeRouchie calls them "transitional headings."¹⁷ The exact nature of the connection, or transition, is debatable. At the very least, a *tōl'qōt* heading invites the reader to keep the previous material in mind as the new development unfolds, giving the book an organic unity.¹⁸ More specifically, some suggest that a *tōl'qōt* narrows the narrative focus, transitioning from a general account of an event to a specific or "synoptic" account.¹⁹ Hess propounds this view with reference to Genesis 1–2, 4–5 and 10–11, each of which contains a *tōl'qōt*.²⁰ This treats Genesis 2 as a synoptic account of Genesis 1. It seems unlikely, however, that this general-specific transition is *inherent* to the function of a *tōl'qōt*.²¹ Hess' sample size is too small and a cursory glance outside Genesis 1–11 reveals that a general-specific transition is not common. Within Genesis 1–11 Hess' suggestion cannot account for the juxtaposition of Genesis 9 and 10, linked by the *tōl'qōt* in 10:1.

Another possible function of the *tōl'qōt* formula is that it identifies the next protagonist in the narrative.²² However, this fails to describe its use with genealogies where "protagonist" is hardly an appropriate term. Specifically, this view cannot account for genealogies of families, which play no further part in the story. A more modest claim could be defended: the *tōl'qōt* show what became of characters of interest to the original audience.²³ This accounts for *tōl'qōt* that tie up loose ends and for those that drive the central plot forward.

In summary, all *tōl'qōt* headings introduce new material, organically connected to the preceding section, answering the question "what became

¹⁶ Martin H. Woudstra, "The *Toledot* of the Book of Genesis and Their Redemptive-Historical Significance," *CTJ* 5 (1970): 187.

¹⁷ Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis," *JETS* 56 (2013): 225.

¹⁸ Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 34.

¹⁹ Cf. Woudstra, "Toledot," 187.

²⁰ Richard S. Hess, "Genesis 1–2 in its Literary Context," *TynBul* 41 (1990): 143–153.

²¹ See, e.g., Woudstra, "Toledot," 187–188.

²² Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 10.

²³ Cf. DeRouchie, "The Blessing-Commission," 238–240.

of ...” in relation to characters relevant to the original audience. This does not preclude a more nuanced or complex function for any particular *ṭōl^eḏōṭ*, if that can be demonstrated from usage and context. This initial analysis suggests that source-critical and synoptic readings of Genesis 1–2 are incorrect.

Notable Features of the *ṭōl^eḏōṭ* in Genesis 2:4

Before exploring how this analysis of *ṭōl^eḏōṭ* headings relates to Genesis 2:4, we must consider two features of this verse, which suggest a more *pronounced* transition between Genesis 1 and 2 than would be the case with a “mere” *ṭōl^eḏōṭ*. Herein lies the significance of the unity of 2:4; the considerable amount of material the writer appends to the *ṭōl^eḏōṭ* formula signals that a particularly important transition is taking place.

The first feature to consider is *the nature of the transitional device* contained in Genesis 2:4. Tsumura claims, “Genesis 1–2 could ... be explained as Parunak’s A/aB pattern; in 2:4a (“a”) the narrator repeats the keywords of Gen 1:1–2:3 (“A”) and initiates a new section of story, 2:4b–4:26 (“B”).”²⁴ Parunak himself describes this transitional device as “the linked-keyword” technique.²⁵ Perhaps, however, Genesis 2:4 is better labelled a “hinge” under Parunak’s schema: “The hinge is a transitional unit of text, independent to some degree from the larger units on either side, which has affinities with each of them and does not add significant information to that presented by its neighbours. The two larger units are joined together, *not directly*, but because each is joined to the hinge.”²⁶ That appropriately describes Genesis 2:4. Here *ḥaššāmayim w^eḥā’āreš* relates to Genesis 1:1–2:3, particularly 2:1–3, while *yhwh ’ēlōhîm* connects the hinge to Genesis 2:5–24, particularly 2:5. Thus an A/ab/B pattern is established rather than merely A/aB.²⁷ *Prima facie* the hinge device signals considerable *discontinuity* between Genesis 1 and 2, more than would be implied by the A/aB pattern.

²⁴ David Toshio Tsumura, “Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, SBTS 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 30.

²⁵ H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Transitional Techniques in the Bible,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 532. According to his scheme, the effect of linked-keyword *may* be to privilege or emphasise the material in Genesis 1, emphasising continuity over discontinuity.

²⁶ Parunak, “Transitional Techniques,” 540–541, my italics.

²⁷ Parunak, “Transitional Techniques,” 541.

This is confirmed by the second notable feature of Genesis 2:4. DeRouchie has observed that five *lōl̄dōl̄* in Genesis are asyndetic;²⁸ they lack a co-ordinating *waw* particle and thus “stand grammatically independent from the preceding material.”²⁹ DeRouchie concludes that these five asyndetic *lōl̄dōl̄* form the macrostructure of Genesis, signalling when “major shifts” in the plot take place.³⁰ Kaminski has applied these findings to Genesis 6:9, the *lōl̄dōl̄ nōah*.³¹ This is significant because 2:4 and 6:9 are the only asyndetic *lōl̄dōl̄* that connect two narratives, neither of which focus on biological offspring, a *prima facie* indication that they function alike. Concerning 6:9, Kaminski concludes, “The insertion of new information about the main character, along with the presence of the Toledot formula without a coordinating *waw*, suggests that a *new theme* is being introduced at this point in the narrative.”³² I submit that Kaminski’s findings are also true of Genesis 2:4, further evidence that the verse signals considerable discontinuity between Genesis 1 and 2. As we will see below, the new theme introduced is the covenant relationship between Adam and the LORD.

The Function of Genesis 2:4

What then may we say about how Genesis 2:4 impacts our understanding of Genesis 1–2? First, notwithstanding the marks of discontinuity just discussed, there is still a *real connection* between the chapters. These are not contradictory cosmogonies, artlessly juxtaposed by a redactor. Genesis 2:4 is the writer’s signal that the material has been skilfully woven together. Supposed contradictions arise from faulty reading, not faulty redaction. This *real connection* means that Genesis 1 is the vital backdrop to the story of Adam and Eve, not to mention Genesis 1–11 and the rest of the Pentateuch.

Nonetheless, Genesis 2:4 emphasises the *real transition* that takes place between these chapters; a major shift in the plot is signalled. Thus Genesis 1 and 2 are best read as chronologically sequential.³³ The

²⁸ DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission,” 229–233. The five asyndetic *lōl̄dōl̄* in Genesis are 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 11:1 and 37:2.

²⁹ DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission,” 231–233.

³⁰ DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission,” 235.

³¹ Carol M. Kaminski, *Was Noah Good? Finding Favour in the Flood Narrative*, LHBOTS 563 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 40–43.

³² Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 186, author’s italics.

³³ Alternatively, 2:4 may signal that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is a prologue to the whole of Genesis.

combination of an asyndetic *tôl'qôl* formula and the A/ab/B hinge demand this reading. The reader should not expect Genesis 2 to recapitulate the events of Genesis 1, in whole or in part, since that section is complete. This invalidates the reading of those, like Collins,³⁴ who argue that Genesis 2 presents a more detailed account of the events of “Day 6” (Genesis 1:24–31) or Futato, who claims that Genesis 2 takes us back to the creative acts of “Days 3b and 6b taken as a unit.”³⁵ Kikawada takes a different tack, arguing for a literary convention in the Ancient Near East “of telling the story of the origin of mankind in a doublet. The first part of the story relates the creation of mankind in more general and abstract terms, whereas the second part of the story narrates it in more specific and concrete terms.”³⁶ Irrespective of the details, I submit that such approaches to Genesis 1–2 are misconstrued. Understanding Genesis 2 as a synoptic account of Genesis 1 does not take sufficiently seriously the *real transition* that takes place between these chapters.

Having established the nature of the relationship between Genesis 1 and 2, we are now in position to reflect on their content and communicative intent in more detail. The following discussion will focus on issues that pertain to the Historical Adam Debate.

Understanding Genesis 1–3 in light of Genesis 2:4

1) Genesis 1: *'ādām* and *zākār ûn'qēbāh*

Genesis 1:26 states God’s intention to create *'ādām*. The basic meaning of *'ādām* is the collective noun, “mankind” or “humanity.” Although HALOT gives “individual man” as a second possible gloss, it immediately qualifies this by stating that such use is “sporadic, in most cases the collective interpretation is possible.”³⁷ Barr has argued that the inherent meaning of *'ādām* is masculine singular and that the “lexicographical tradition has exaggerated the centrality of the collective meaning ‘humanity’.”³⁸ These “interesting rather than certain” views have

³⁴ Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 109–110; C. John Collins, “Discourse Analysis and the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4–7,” *WTJ* 61 (1999): 274.

³⁵ Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained,” *WTJ* 60 (1998): 14.

³⁶ Isaac M. Kikawada, “The Double Creation of Mankind in Enki and Ninmah, Atrahasis I 1–351, and Genesis 1–2,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 169.

³⁷ HALOT 14a.

³⁸ James Barr, “Adam: Single Man, or All Humanity?” in *Hesed Ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, BJS 30 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 8–10.

been decisively refuted.³⁹ Clines has shown that *'ādām* is used of a group of females (Numbers 31:35), that it never explicitly excludes women and that its use in poetry is *not* synonymous with *'iš*.⁴⁰ He concludes, “The traditional view that *'ādām* means ‘humanity, without distinction of gender’ is to be upheld.”⁴¹ That the collective meaning is intended in Genesis 1:26–27 is confirmed by two indications of plurality in Genesis 1:27c, namely the creation of *'ādām* as “male and female,” and the use of the third person plural pronominal suffix. (In 1:27a, the article prefixed to *'ādām* is anaphoric; it is not a restriction of the collective meaning.)⁴² The overall effect of 1:26–27 is to present humanity as plural, gendered, united and, above all, made as God’s image.

It is difficult to say with certainty whether the plurality in 1:27 refers to a single human pair or a greater, undefined number of people. The strongest evidence that 1:27 refers to a single pair is the expression *zākār ûn'qēbāh*. This could be translated “a man and a woman” but no English translations does so; they all emphasise the *adjectival* aspect, translating the phrase “male and female.” This seems to be the lexical distinction between *zākār* and *'iš*, *n'qēbāh* and *'iššā*. Moreover, *zākār* is “commonly collective” and Genesis 1:27 is considered an example of such use.⁴³ Given, as argued above, that Genesis 2 is not a re-telling of Genesis 1, we should not read Adam and Eve into the words of Genesis 1:26–27.⁴⁴ There is, therefore, no conclusive argument that Genesis 1 describes the creation of a single human pair. Nonetheless, by using the same word, the author signals a relationship between the collective *'ādām* in 1:26–27 and the individual *'ādām* in Gen 2:5ff. It could reasonably be inferred that the

³⁹ Barr, “Adam: Single Man, or All Humanity?” 10.

⁴⁰ David J.A. Clines, “אָדָם, The Hebrew for ‘Human, Humanity’: A Response to James Barr,” *VT* 53 (2003): 299–308.

⁴¹ Clines, ‘Human, Humanity,’” 309.

⁴² GKC §126d-e.

⁴³ *HALOT* 270b. Unambiguous examples of the collective use in the Pentateuch are Gen 17:14, Lev 15:33, Num 5:3 and Deut 4:16. Plurality is more commonly communicated by *z'kārīm* or *kol-zākār*. The former only occurs with the article (15x) or *le* reposition (2x) and as such always refers to a clearly defined group. Thus, it is submitted that, as in English, it would not make sense to use *kol-zākār* or *z'kārīm* in Genesis 1:27 as this would imply that all males were created or that all the males of a known group were created. *zākār ûn'qēbāh* is the only way that the author could have indicated that multiple males and females were created.

⁴⁴ Cf. John H. Walton, “A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, ed. Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 110.

individual represents the collective. The nature of this representation will be revisited shortly.

If specifying the exact number of humans is not the communicative concern of Genesis 1:26–27, what is? It seems that the emphasis is on humanity's function. Walton has argued extensively that Genesis 1 is not preoccupied with *material* creation, as is commonly assumed; its concern is *functional* creation, attaching significance to the installation of humanity as functionaries in God's cosmic temple.⁴⁵ We need not accept a total dichotomy between functional and material to benefit from Walton's insights.⁴⁶ The functional *emphasis* of Genesis 1:26–28 is evident from how the author twice highlights humanity's dominion. If, as Clines argues, *b'šalmēnū* should be rendered "as our image," rather than "in our image,"⁴⁷ the functional emphasis is clearer still, since "as" connotes a verbal idea, the task of "imaging" God.⁴⁸ (This functional emphasis should be borne in mind when reading Genesis 2.) As suggested above, a functional emphasis may make us hesitant to assert how many human beings are in view in 1:26–28, since specifying that number is not the writer's communicative concern.

2) Genesis 2: Relationship with Genesis 3, *yṣr* and *l'ʿobdāh ūl'šāmrah*

An important interpretative issue is whether or not Genesis 2:4–25 is a pericope distinct from 3:1–24, with a message that is coherent and complete in its own right. If that were correct, it would strengthen the case for reading Genesis 2 as a synoptic account of Genesis 1.

Walsh has argued in detail that 2:4b–3:24 form a coherent, highly stylised, story by highlighting how the protagonists and themes form a chiasm, with Genesis 3:6–8 as the central incident.⁴⁹ To Walsh's analysis we might add that the play on words between *'arūmmim* (2:25) and *'ārūm*

⁴⁵ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 14–70.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., the review by Scott A. Ashmon, *CTQ* 77 (2013): 185–188.

⁴⁷ David J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynBul* 19 (1968): 70–80.

⁴⁸ Clines, "Image," 101.

⁴⁹ Jerome T. Walsh, "Genesis 2:4b–3:24: A Synchronic Approach," *JBL* 96 (1977): 161–172. In summary: (A1) 2:4b–17: predominantly narrative, Yahweh active, man passive. (B1) 2:18–25: predominantly narrative, Yahweh active, subordinate activity by man, woman and animals passive. (C1) 3:1–5: dialogue between snake woman. (D) 3:6–8: narrative, woman and man active. (C2) 3:9–13: dialogue involving Yahweh, man, and woman. (B2) 3:14–19: monologue of Yahweh; snake, woman, and man passive. (A2) 3:22–24: predominantly narrative, only Yahweh active, man present but passive.

(3:1) and the peculiar use of the appellation *yhwh 'lōhīm* throughout Genesis 2 and 3 cement the connection. Collins recognises that “Genesis 2:4–25 and 3:1–24 have a higher unity with each other than they do with 1:1–2:3” but concludes that they are separate pericopes.⁵⁰ He argues that *w'elō' yitbōšāsū*, “and they felt no shame,” “[wraps] up the pericope by describing its on-going results; we are left with a feeling of an idyllic scene. The way that Genesis 3 begins confirms this sense of having reached an end: instead of a *wayyiqtol* verb we have the ‘and’-conjunction joined to the subject with the verb in the perfect.”⁵¹

On balance, the elements that unite Genesis 2 and 3 outweigh the marks of discontinuity Collins identifies. Walsh’s chiasmic structure is persuasive and, from a discourse perspective, the narrative is more seamless than Collins suggests. In particular, 3:1 is less disruptive than the excursus in Genesis 2:10–14 which is introduced by a similar *waw*-subject-verb construction. Moreover, a crucial unresolved aspect of the plot, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, means that Genesis 2 is incomplete in isolation. Thus, rather than *w'elō' yitbōšāsū* suggesting an idyllic scene, it builds suspense as the reader wonders what will happen with the trees that promise life and threaten death. If this analysis is correct, then the reader should look forward to Genesis 3, not backwards to Genesis 1, to understand the communicative intent of Genesis 2.

Turning to details in the text, two problems are immediately apparent in Genesis 2:5–7. First, in 2:5, “but there was no man to work the ground,” seems fatal to the argument that Genesis 2 is not a re-telling of Genesis 1; it seems clear that humans have not yet been created. However, this statement is not absolute (i.e. “There was no man.”) but is immediately qualified by a purpose clause, “to work the ground.” Moreover, given how *'ādām* is used in Genesis 2:4–25, it seems that *'ādām* in 2:5 designates an individual, suggesting that the problem is the absence of a particular person not the absence of humanity in general.⁵²

A related conundrum is 2:7, *wayyišer yhwh 'lōhīm 'et-hā'ādām*. This seems like a straightforward statement about the creation of the first man. However, recalling the stress on function in Genesis 1, the reader should be alert to the same emphasis in Genesis 2. The etymological connection of *yzr* with pottery suggests that the function of the object formed is in

⁵⁰ Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 101–102.

⁵¹ Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 102. He sees further evidence of discontinuity in the introduction of a new character (the serpent) and scene (the temptation).

⁵² So Richard Hess, “Splitting the Adam: The Usage of *'ādām* in Genesis I–V.” in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 2–3.

view, even if not exclusively so.⁵³ A functional emphasis is confirmed by the preceding purpose clause, “to work the ground” in 2:5, which gives the context for understanding 2:7. Various commentators note the functional connotation of *yzr* although this is not always developed along the lines proposed here. For example, Wenham acknowledges that *yzr* can refer to non-material creation: “God’s shaping skill is seen ... *in shaping human character to fulfil a particular role* (Isa 43:21; 44:21).”⁵⁴ Similarly, Hamilton connects 2:7 with passages about humanity being “raised from the dust *to reign*.”⁵⁵ Walton goes further, comparing Genesis 2:7 to an Egyptian creation account:

Khnum, the craftsman creator deity, is shown shaping a human on the potter’s wheel.... The context of the relief and the text that accompany it, however, make clear that it is not the material formation of the human that is conveyed, but the shaping of the pharaoh to be pharaoh. He is being designed for a role.... In Egyptian thinking this is not referring merely to his training or preparation; rather, it is an indication of his election and sponsorship by the gods who have ordained him for this task.⁵⁶

It could, therefore, be appropriate, within the Israelites’ conceptual world, to use *yzr* to refer to functional creation or even election. Genesis 2:19a is further evidence that this understanding of *yzr* is valid. This is a problematic verse for those who read Genesis 2 as a re-telling of Genesis 1, since animals are created after humans. Collins has attempted the most sustained grammatical and theological explanation of 2:19a, essentially claiming *wayyîšer yhw̄h ’ēlōhîm* is pluperfect.⁵⁷ While Genesis 1:20–25 could be the logical referent from which the pluperfect is inferred,⁵⁸ the rarity with which a *wayyiqtol* is used as a pluperfect

⁵³ Walton understands “dust” in archetypal terms, a comment on human frailty. Walton, *Lost World*, 68–70. See also Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 206. It is surprising that this understanding of “dust” provokes so much disagreement. (See Walton, “Archetypal Creation View,” 123–124, 129, 135.) In the immediate context dust connotes humiliation (3:14) and mortality, 3:19 (cf. Gen 18:27). In Ps 103:14 and 104:29, which reflect on creation, the emphasis is on frailty and the state to which humans return when God withdraws his blessing.

⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 59, my italics.

⁵⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 158, my italics.

⁵⁶ Walton, “Archetypal Creation View,” 92.

⁵⁷ C. John Collins, “The Wayyiqtol as ‘Pluperfect’: When and Why,” *TynBul* 46 (1995): 135–140.

⁵⁸ Collins, “The Wayyiqtol,” 128.

and the writer's frequent use of other, more appropriate, verbal forms to provide background information mean that a pluperfect rendering of 2:19a is unjustified.⁵⁹ Rightly understood, 2:19–20 is the first “attempt” to address the functional deficiency identified in 2:18; there is no helper. Comparisons with the creation of birds and animals in Genesis 1 and the absence of fish in Genesis 2 overlook the functional orientation of this verse.⁶⁰

Turning from the man's “formation” to his role in the garden, this is explained in 2:15 (*l' 'obdāh ūl'sāmrah*). The connection of *'bd* to agricultural work is well attested. A more surprising choice of word is *šmr*; a generic gloss such as “keep” or “watch over” belies the fact that it is almost always used in connection with presumed or explicit threats.⁶¹ It is not an obvious verb to use in connection with agriculture. Wenham and others have pointed out that these verbs are used together in relation to Levitical service of the tabernacle.⁶² By itself, this combination of verbs might seem like an unlikely reference to the tabernacle. However, there are many other similarities between the garden and the tabernacle / temple.⁶³ When Ancient Near Eastern parallels are taken into account the connection between the garden and Israelite sanctuaries is unmistakable.⁶⁴ Wenham is therefore willing to suggest “if Eden is seen ... as an ideal sanctuary, then perhaps Adam should be described as an archetypal Levite.”⁶⁵ Following Beale, however, a more definite connection is appropriate: “Adam was to be the first priest to serve in and guard God's temple. When Adam fails to guard the temple by sinning and letting in an unclean serpent ... Adam loses his priestly role, and the two cherubim take over the responsibility of ‘guarding’ the Garden temple.”⁶⁶ Recognising the literary unity of Genesis

⁵⁹ Contra, e.g., NIV. In his own final analysis, Collins acknowledges his interpretation of 2:19a depends on criteria for which he can cite the support of no other grammarian and on his understanding of the function of Genesis 2:4. Collins, “The Wayiqtol,” 135–140.

⁶⁰ Cf. even Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 228.

⁶¹ The significance of reading Genesis 2–3 as a single pericope is again relevant; the threat presumed in Genesis 2 is the serpent.

⁶² Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 401. See also Gregory K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple and the Church's Mission in the New Creation,” *JETS* 48 (2005): 7–8.

⁶³ Wenham, “Sanctuary,” 400–403; Beale, “Eden,” 7–10.

⁶⁴ John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 189.

⁶⁵ Wenham, “Sanctuary,” 401.

⁶⁶ Beale, “Eden,” 8.

2–3 makes this reading credible. I submit, however, that even more is taking place in Genesis 2–3. Life in the garden is not merely a tale of paradise lost or a sanctuary profaned; it is a symbol-laden account about the initiation of a covenant relationship.⁶⁷ More specifically, Genesis 2 describes the covenant God made with Adam whereby he was elected leader, or covenant head, of the human race.

3) Covenant with Adam

The exact covenant theology of Genesis 1–3 is debatable. Kline argues that Genesis 1 is part of the covenant on the basis that the act of creation establishes covenant relationship.⁶⁸ Others locate the establishment of the covenant in Genesis 2, particularly in 2:15–17.⁶⁹ Although the latter view is preferable, on either view it is clear that Adam is given an elevated position within the covenant community, evidenced by his special responsibilities.⁷⁰ Thus, the dominion assigned to humanity in Genesis 1 is exercised in a unique way by Adam in Genesis 2:19–20. Humanity is given God’s word in Genesis 1:28 but Adam is given a special word in Genesis 2:16–17, suggesting general and specific prophetic functions respectively.⁷¹ Finally, while humanity has the general priestly task of “adoration of the creator,”⁷² Adam receives the special priestly role of serving, guarding and extending sacred space.⁷³ There are, therefore, many connections between Adam and later leaders of God’s covenant

⁶⁷ Although the word covenant is not mentioned in Genesis 1–3 various writers agree that a covenant is made in these chapters. See, e.g., Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age, 2000), 14–21; Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 112–114; Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 112.

⁶⁸ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 17.

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 112; Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 112–114.

⁷⁰ Cf. Walton, “Archetypal Creation View,” 95.

⁷¹ Adam’s role as a prophet is least pronounced. Kline argues against its existence: Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 89–90. However, this is an inconsistent position for him to adopt. A few pages later he will suggest that “the blessing and curse sanctions of God’s original covenant with man are the beginnings and essence of prophecy as we meet it throughout the Scriptures.... By its very nature as a covenantal word it summons man to a life of loyalty to his Lord.” (Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 91.) Kline argues that the priestly office before the fall involved offertory rituals analogous to later priestly sacrifices (*Kingdom Prologue*, 84–85.) Thus it is entirely plausible that a pre-lapsarian prophetic office existed, containing the essential ingredients of receiving and communicating God’s covenant words.

⁷² Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 83.

⁷³ See, e.g., Beale, “Eden,” 11.

people. His role as the first covenant head of God's people means that Genesis 3 is not about "The Fall of Humanity" but the transgression of humanity's covenant head.⁷⁴ In keeping with Ancient Near Eastern and Israelite ideas of corporate responsibility and the representative role of prophets, priests and kings, Adam's transgression impacts the human race. This is immediately witnessed in Genesis 4, the final literary unit in the *tôl'ôl'* of the heavens and the earth (2:4–4:26). Because of Adam's transgression, humanity is shut out from Eden, denied God's blessing, and is subjected to God's curse.

Such, then, is the central emphasis of Genesis 2–3, which, along with Genesis 4–11, establishes the need for subsequent covenants, culminating in the New Covenant through Christ, the second Adam, the perfect prophet, priest and king.

In sum, I have proposed that Genesis 1 describes the creation of humanity, without specifying how many people were created. Genesis 2, which takes place after the events of Genesis 1, narrates how a particular individual was "formed" as humanity's covenant head, helped by his wife.⁷⁵ This could be understood as the election of the *'ādām*, who is eventually given the name Adam, from among an existing human population, whose presence is hinted at after Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden (Genesis 4:14, 17).⁷⁶ This expulsion and the resultant loss of hope of fellowship with God set the stage for the covenants of promise and redemption.

⁷⁴ Cf. Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 135–136.

⁷⁵ Eve's role in Genesis 2–3 would be a fascinating area for further study. Of particular note are (a) another unusual choice of verb (*bnh*, to build) and (b) Paul's striking statement about Genesis 2:24 in Eph 5:32. If Adam is the prototypical covenant head, could Eve be the prototypical people of God?

⁷⁶ Who were Cain's wife, the "others" of whom he is afraid, and who lives in Cain's city? Other verses in the immediate context can reasonably be understood in such a way as not to contradict this proposal. For example, Genesis 3:20 should be read in light of the *protoevangelium* in Genesis 3:15. Adam is not necessarily claiming Eve is the biological mother of humanity. Rather, he acknowledges that the life he has forfeited will be restored through her seed. Genesis 5:1–2 is best understood as referring to humanity, not Adam specifically, and so need not be a claim that Adam is the biological father of humanity. Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 57.

Relevance to the Historical Adam Debate

1) Two Important Questions

Walton and Collins helpfully parse out several questions at the heart of the matter.⁷⁷ Two of these can be paraphrased thus: (1) were Adam and Eve real people who impacted the human race as described in the Bible and (2) were they the *only* humans in existence when the events of Genesis 2–3 took place? In answer to the first, it is arbitrary to suggest, “*real history in the Bible begins roughly around Genesis 12 with Abraham*” on the basis that “Genesis 1–11 [is] a unique type of literature.”⁷⁸ This ignores the presence and literary import of the *lôl’qôl* formula throughout Genesis 1–11, starting in 2:4,⁷⁹ and confuses the distinction between genre and history.⁸⁰ The details of Genesis 1–11 may be sparse and symbol laden and the echoes of other Ancient Near Eastern stories are undeniable. Nonetheless, there is every indication that the author believes that the events narrated in Genesis 2–3 have a historical referent, one that is vital for understanding the subsequent story of God’s dealings with Israel and the world.⁸¹ Accepting the “happenedness” of these events is a clear objective of this act of communication. Even if, to some extent, the events of Genesis 2–3 fade out of focus as the Old Testament unfolds,⁸² this can be explained by Adam’s transgression being superseded by the promises to Abraham and subsequent covenants.

A possible answer to the second question posed by Collins and Walton has been implied throughout this paper. I have suggested that Genesis does not *unequivocally* claim that Adam and Eve were the only humans

⁷⁷ Walton, “Archetypal Creation View,” 113; C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why It Matters* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 120–121.

⁷⁸ Lamoureux, “Evolutionary Creation View,” 44, author’s italics.

⁷⁹ Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–11*, 54.

⁸⁰ “In ordinary English a story is ‘historical’ if the author wants his audience to believe the events really happened. That is, ‘history’ is not really a *kind of literature* (or genre); it is a *way of referring*, of talking about events in the real world. This means that a variety of literary types can recount ‘history,’ and each type uses its own conventions for doing so.” C. John Collins, “A Historical Adam: Old-Earth Creation View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, 147. For a fuller discussion see Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 28–40.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 49. This is a version of the argument, sometimes employed in relation to Romans 5, that, because Christ was historical, Adam also must be historical.

⁸² Cf. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, 82–88 (although his argument is far from conclusive).

in existence when the events of Genesis 2–3 took place. Rather, in keeping with biblical ideas of covenant headship and corporate responsibility, Genesis places the focus on them being the important ones, not on them being the only ones. Their importance is established in Genesis 2–3, and it is highlighted as their ancestry is traced to Abraham, who receives the promises of redemption, and to Christ, who fulfils them.

2) Hypothetical Scenarios

A number of writers have suggested hypothetical scenarios for how the Bible's teaching and evolution might harmonise.⁸³ The tentative suggestions of Alexander and Walton are similar. Both allow for a substantial passage of time between Genesis 1:26–27 and the events of Genesis 2.⁸⁴ Based on the “culture and geography that the Genesis text provides,” Alexander dates Adam and Eve to the Neolithic period, ca. 10,000–8000 BC.⁸⁵ He accepts this locates Adam and Eve in a period of history when a substantial human population had spread across the planet. While this model fits with the “Out of Africa” hypothesis of human evolution,⁸⁶ it raises serious questions about how Adam could *meaningfully* represent all of humanity.⁸⁷ It also rests on a questionable dating of Adam and Eve.⁸⁸ A substantial period of time between Genesis 1 and 2 is certainly not *required* by Genesis 2:4.

A preferable scenario, which also coheres with the “Out of Africa” hypothesis, is that the events of Genesis 1–3 all take place at the *beginning* of human history, a time which cannot be pin-pointed chronologically using the Bible.⁸⁹ Adam and Eve need not have been the first and only

⁸³ See, e.g., Alexander, *Creation or Evolution*, 234–239; Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 121–131; Walton, “Archetypal Creation View,” 113–115.

⁸⁴ Walton is ambiguous about this substantial passage of time although he seems to assume it. Walton, “Archetypal Creation View,” 114.

⁸⁵ Alexander, *Creation or Evolution*, 236.

⁸⁶ The “Out of Africa” hypothesis is a relatively recent but widely accepted understanding of human evolution. See, e.g., James Kidder, “The Human Fossil Record, Part 9: Out of Africa (The First Time),” *Biologos*, 12 April 2012, <http://biologos.org/blog/the-human-fossil-record-part-9-out-of-africa-the-first-time>.

⁸⁷ Collins “wonders if the ‘representation’ [in Alexander’s model] is an arbitrary one.” Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 126.

⁸⁸ Alexander admirably attends to the language and geography of Genesis 2–3 but does not consider the possibility of deliberate anachronism on the part of the author. Cf. Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 60; Ken A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 443–447.

⁸⁹ A detailed examination of Genesis 5 and 11 would be necessary to substantiate this claim. However, Kline considers it “completely certain” that these chapters

human beings in existence but we could envisage them as being selected from among a relatively small, localised population over whom he could meaningfully exercise covenant headship.⁹⁰ Human death and archaeological evidence of religious consciousness in subsequent millennia would therefore *post-date* Genesis 3.⁹¹ Anachronistic elements in the early chapters of Genesis would make it comprehensible to the original readers and help the author better convey his theological message.⁹² Thus, it is not necessary to locate Adam and Eve in the Neolithic period.

Any such scenario must be tentative. Neither science nor a few hundred words of biblical text can paint a comprehensive picture of the dawn of the human race and their first dealings with God. However, this sort of hypothetical exercise, undertaken soberly, can provide a measure of cognitive rest for those grappling with the relationship between Genesis 1–3 and evolution. Further research would be desirable to test the proposed scenario. Within Genesis 1–3, a significant outstanding question is whether human beings are regarded as “special creations,” discontinuous with the rest of creation. The archetypal interpretation proposed by Walton admits of further study as well as New Testament references to Adam, Eve, and human origins. Finally, the meaning of original sin and the mechanism by which sin affects humanity are crucial theological issues. These could all shed light on the main suggestion this paper has made regarding the Historical Adam Debate, namely that Genesis 2–3 places the focus on Adam and Eve as the important ones, not as the only ones.

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do not supply enough information to date the flood or the first humans: Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 11. Further caution is needed in this matter because scientists can make reasonably definite statements only about *anatomically* modern humans. Since they envisage incremental anatomical evolution we cannot (and need not) be dogmatic about exactly what constitutes “the beginning of human history.” Biblically speaking, human history begins when human beings are endowed with God’s image and brought into covenant with him.

⁹⁰ Cf. Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*, 121.

⁹¹ For a discussion of non-human death and “natural disasters” before Genesis 3 see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 53–57.

⁹² See note 88.

