

AN INTERPRETATION OF ADAM'S FALL IN THE LIGHT OF FAR EASTERN PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

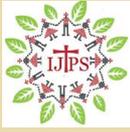
One must not pursue a concordism or discordism of theology and science but their dialogue towards creating a mutual understanding. We make an effort in this direction by reinterpreting certain Hebrew words in the narrative of Adam; and by bringing insights from far eastern psychology into play. The conventional understanding is that the creation of Adam from “dust” was the beginning of “spiritual mortality.” However, Adam transgressed and did not follow spiritual morality. We rely on the far eastern narrative of creation and propose that “dust” may refer to the implanting of negative qualities by God to break the primitive bliss and take the first steps to “draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). The conventional understanding is that God prohibited Adam and Eve from eating of the Tree of Knowledge. We note that God had placed the Tree in the middle of the Garden. We suggest that God did this so that Adam would see and partake of it. Also, Adam had not eaten of the Tree till the alleged prohibition was pronounced. There was no occasion to prohibit him from doing what he was not doing anyways. We propose that God wanted them to eat of the Tree. Their error was in making delay in eating of it and then of trying to devour the Tree. The conventional understanding is that the speaking serpent is correlated with near eastern depiction of serpents as adversaries. The role of the serpent, however, was also positive since it led Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree and to the opening of their eyes. We propose that the serpent was the far eastern symbolism of the unconscious impulses emanating from one's own spinal cord. We find that these interpretations make the Biblical narrative sync with science and also give it a positive ambience. These interpretations are consistent with the majesty of Jesus Christ in helping establish a conscious connection between man and God. The process by which these far eastern narratives may have entered the Bible require further investigations.

Keywords: Bible; Genesis; Original Sin; Adam; Eve; Serpent; Tree of Knowledge; Tree of Life; spinal cord; humankind;

INTRODUCTION

Ion Marian Croitoru, Faculty of Orthodox Theology and Education Sciences, Valahia University of Târgoviște, Romania says “one must pursue not a concordism or discordism of theology and science but their dialogue from a theological and, implicitly, eschatological perspective.”¹ We make such a dialogue by examining whether alternative meanings of the Biblical text of the narrative of Adam may concord with the natural sciences.

We agree with the Biblical scholars (1) that Adam was a historical person;² (2) that God created Adam without sin;³ (3) that death in Gen. 2:17 refers to spiritual death;⁴ (4) that the transmission of sin from Adam to his descendants was spiritual rather than biological;⁵ and (5) that Jesus helped humankind to re-establish a conscious connection with God.⁶



We provide alternative interpretations in respect of certain other points by accepting the alternative meanings of select Hebrew words and by bringing insights from far eastern psychology.

The “Fall”

Primitive Bliss

Adrian D. Covan Lecturer, Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, West University of Timișoara, Romania says that there was “no way back to the *bosom* of lost Paradise” once Adam and Eve transgressed and ate of the Tree of Knowledge.⁷ Implied is the depiction of Eden as a place of bliss. There is a sense of deprivation and nostalgia. We suggest this representation is only partially true.

Before the making of Adam from dust, Gen. 1:27 says, “So God created man in His own image...” Marin Bugiulescu, Professor, Director of Saint John Chrysostom Orthodox Theological Seminary, Târgoviște, Romania quotes theologian Christos Yannaras to the effect that man is created in the image of God because he “responds positively or negatively to the call of God, leads his life to life, which is a relationship, or to death that is separation from God...”⁸ In other words, man became conscious of his existence. Adam may have enjoyed bliss and a spontaneous connection with God earlier but was not responding positively or negatively to the call of God. He was living in primitive bliss. The development of consciousness opened the possibility of establishing a conscious connection with God. Absence of such a connection was tantamount to spiritual death.⁹

Then Gen. 1:28 says: “male and female He created them. Then... God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...’” We understand the term “multiply” in an anthropological context. Studies indicate that about 12,000 years ago some groups of humans abandoned the hunter-gatherer practices to establish permanent settlements that could provide for much larger populations.¹⁰ The multiplication of humankind as commanded by God would be possible only upon the start of cultivation. However, Gen. 2:5 says that “there was no man to cultivate the ground.” It is clear, therefore, that God had commanded Adam to initiate cultivation in Gen. 1:28 but he did not follow that command as indicated in Gen. 2:5. Rather, Adam remained in the state of primitive bliss of possibly a hunter-gatherer state.

Question arises whether the “not cultivating” was a “sin.” We feel a distinction is to be made between “not following” and “acting contra” a command. While the latter may be called a “sin,” we think the former not so since there is no opposition to the command. 17th century French theologian La Peyrère made such a distinction. He identified the sin of the pre-Adamites as “natural sin.”¹¹ Hence, no “sin” was committed by Adam till this point of the narrative.

Implanting Negative Qualities

Then, the Bible says:

NKJV: And the Lord God formed man of the *dust* of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of *life*; and man became a *living* being (Gen. 2:7).

Throughout this article we will write in italics the words that we wish to consider in detail. The word used for dust is “aphar.” It means “dust” 65 times, “dirt” 14 times, “ashes” and “dusty” 2 times each; and “debris,” “dirt-covered,” “grave” and “scabs” 1 time each. On the other hand, it means “soil,” “ground,” “earth,” “plaster,” “clay” and “siege ramps” total 22 times.¹² The former 87 uses give a negative connotation while the latter 22 uses give a neutral connotation. The overall sense, therefore, is of a negative connotation.



The word used for “life” and “living” is “chay.” It means, “living, alive, flowing, fresh (of water), lively, active (of man).”¹³ These meanings give a sense of positiveness and growth.

In this verse, therefore, we have two seemingly contradictory indicators. The “dust” suggests negative qualities while the words “life” and “living” suggest positive qualities. This is consistent with the suggestion that “dust” signifies spiritual mortality;¹⁴ and that the “breath of life” depicts redeeming Adam from spiritual death.”¹⁵

David O. Brown of Queen's University, Belfast says that “it is possible to hold that God wills that there is a creation and that this creation is good, without also holding that God constrains that a particular creation is good in a specific way.”¹⁶ In other words, the larger scheme of creation is good which would imply that the specifics, if negative, would still sync with the larger good of the creation. We examine whether the specific negativity of creation from “dust” could be reconciled with the larger positivity of “breathing of life.”

Anthropological studies provide a possible pathway of reconciliation of these seemingly contradictory indicators. Studies indicate that the development of agriculture was possible only if man could establish his control over the land that he cultivated. Otherwise, one would spend the energy to cultivate the crop while the crop would be harvested by another. This establishment of right over land entailed the “violence” of keeping others out of fields cultivated by oneself. Thus, anthropologists say:

(In the evolution of man) of paramount significance, is social “domestication” with new means of molding community identity and interaction, whose very essence changed; these range from bonding through kinship, exchange networks, craft specialization, feasting, and so on, to rivalry, political boundaries, and intra- and intercommunity *confrontational violence*.¹⁷

The advent of farming around 12 millennia ago was a cultural as well as technological revolution... This Holocene revolution was not sparked by a superior technology. It occurred because possession of the wealth of farmers—crops, dwellings, and animals—could be unambiguously demarcated and defended. *This facilitated the spread of new property rights* that were advantageous to the groups adopting them.¹⁸

These observations suggest that violence to guard the wealth created by the farmers—crops, dwellings, and animals—was a necessary step required for the beginning of cultivation and the multiplication of humankind. We suggest that the “creation from dust” was the specific negativity of violence that was necessary for the beginning of cultivation; while the consequent multiplication of humankind was the larger positivity of “breathing of life.”

We would like to share that we were led to this idea while reading the Hindu narrative of creation. Brahma is the creator in the Hindu narrative:

...when *the progeny did not multiply* by any means, Brahma, enveloped entirely by Darkness, became dejected. He then created intelligence which leads to a definite decision. He then saw only the Darkness element moving within himself as the controlling factor. Subduing Passion and Purity, it was functioning. *Tormented by that sorrow*, the Lord of the universe felt grieved. He eschewed Darkness and Passion enveloped it. The Darkness that thus dispelled, gave birth to a twin. *Violence and sorrow were born of Unrighteousness*. When the twins were born of the foot, *the lord felt pleased*.¹⁹

We may see the following parallels with the Bible here:

The progeny did not multiply ~ humankind did not multiply;

Brahma created intelligence ~ God made man in his image;



Brahma continued to be tormented by sorrow ~ there was no man to cultivate the ground; violence and sorrow were born of unrighteousness ~ God made Adam from dust.

The planting of the negative qualities such as that of violence also meant that the primitive bliss and the spontaneous connection with God was severed. Thus, Adrian D. Covan says, “sin and death are two sides of the same coin.”²⁰

Humankind was previously connected with God in an animal-like state of primitive bliss. However, God wanted to humankind to be drawn *consciously* to Him: “I... will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). The first step to such conscious drawing would be the initiation of independent thinking including severing of the primitive unconscious connection with God. Thus, scholars say, “Paul calls this state that of ‘the ungodly’ in Romans 4:5 and 5:6, designating it as a condition of separation from God.”²¹

Earlier, Irenaeus held that “Adam sinned and lost his initial endowment of friendship with God, and that all people die as a result of Adam's sin...” The initial endowment of friendship was the primitive connection that was severed due to the using of independent thinking by Adam. Irenaeus sees this “sin” as an almost necessary step for the education of mankind.²² Norman R. Gulley of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists says “If humans are born separated from God, then the center of their lives is not God but self.”²³ We would like to also see this as a first step necessary for the conscious drawing to God. Paul Ladouceur, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Divinity, Trinity College, University of Toronto says: “sin, the estrangement from God, is virtually cotemporaneous with free will, the acquisition of the “knowledge of good and evil,” and is dependent on it.”²⁴ We agree that estrangement from God is cotemporaneous with free will but we do not see this necessarily as sin. The independent thinking would lead to sin if and when a person would use the capacity of independent thinking to act contra God’s command. The result of this discussion is that the creation from “dust” refers to the implanting of negative qualities of violence and the beginning of independent thinking. This was a positive step in the larger scheme of God.

The question arises how did the negative qualities spread to humankind? It is oftentimes seen that an idea spreads like wildfire. An example that comes to mind is of the slogan “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” that spread during the French Revolution. Likewise, all humans may have broken out of the primitive stupor and started independent thinking after God planted the negative qualities in the person of Adam.

The capacity to think independently may be, in part, biologically inherited. Modern genetic studies say that “only 10% of a person’s ability to show empathy is due to genetic characteristics. The remaining 90% is not encoded by genes but depends on environment and lifestyle...”²⁵ Thus, the 10% of our emotional endowment, that is, the capacity of independent thinking is built into our genes and may be indicated in the view that humankind is born in sin.

Views of Adam’s “Sin”

We now consider certain views of “Adam’s sin” in this framework. The Roman Catholic and Protestant view that a sinful state for humankind resulted from Adam’s sin could refer to the spread of independent thinking from Adam.²⁶

The capacity to think independently existed before Adam. Its *use* started at the time of Adam, spread to humankind horizontally at Adam’s time and spread vertically to the descendants of those peoples. Thus, to repeat, Marin Bugiulescu quotes theologian Christos Yannaras to the effect that man is free to respond positively or negatively to the call of God.²⁷ On the other hand, Adrian D. Covan focusses on the possibility of sinning that is inherent in independent thinking and says that the “sin” of eating of the prohibited Tree led to the



digging out of “the foundation of the indomitable fortifications of good.”²⁸ Both Yannaras and Covan are correct in their own ways. Yannaras focuses on the capacity of independent thinking without attributing its positive or negative use. Covan may be understood to say that it would be unlikely that one could continue to act as per the commands of God entirely, therefore, a sinful state would result.²⁹

Jeremy Kimble, Associate Professor of Theology at Cedarville University gives four affirmations that Christian theology concerning original sin. We give our understanding of these below:

It is universal, affecting all humans. The capacity to think independently is inherited by- and affects all humankind.

It is something that has affected our nature. The human nature has changed due to the capacity of thinking independently.

It is inherited. The descendants biologically inherit the capacity to think independently—even if it constitutes only 10% of the inheritance.

It is Adamic, in that he plays a special role. The first person to think independently may have been Adam hence his special role.³⁰

A distinction can be made between “primal sin” and “inherited sin.” Primal sin would refer to the first use of the capacity of independent thinking sin contra God’s command by Adam. It would become “inherited sin” only if and when the inherited capacity would be used contra God’s command. Thus, Jesse Couenhaven of Villanova University says, “one can believe in primal sin... without being committed to a doctrine of inherited sin...”³¹

We need to maintain a delicate balance between the two aspects of independent thinking. On the positive side we have material progress as well as the first step towards being drawn to God. On the negative side we have the possibility of acting contra God. Thus, Bob Becking, Senior Research Professor of Bible, Identity and Religion at Utrecht University looks at the positive side and rightly says that “fall is absent in Genesis.”³² On the other hand, Augustine looked at the negative side and said that sin is inherited. In the light of above we may render Gen. 2:7 to say:

Alternate Translation: And the Lord God *planted in man negative qualities*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of *independent thinking*; and man became *capable of being drawn to God*.

1. GOD ENCOURAGED EATING OF THE TREE

The conventional interpretation of Adam’s sin is that God prohibited Adam from eating of the Tree, he ate nevertheless and met with spiritual death.³³ Question arises how could eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the consequent opening of eyes be considered to be spiritual death? Also, why would God prohibit Adam from eating of the Tree, when he was not eating of it in any case? We suggest an alternative reading of this verse that God wanted Adam and Eve *to eat* of the Tree. Let us recall that God had placed the Tree in the middle of the Garden. We suggest this was done so that Adam would see and eat of it. Adam’s error was that he did *not* eat of it. We would like to reconsider the conventional translation of Gen. 2:17 and examine if it is amenable to such an interpretation:

NKJV: *but* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not *eat, for* in the day that you *eat* of it you shall surely *die*” (Gen. 2:17).

We discuss the four words given in italics in detail.



But. The Hebrew text does not contain the phrase “but.” The text begins with the word “ets” that stands for trees or wood. The conjunction “but” has been interpolated into the text. We would like to interpolate “if” instead as, for example, done in Numbers 35:18.

Eat. The Hebrew word is “akal.”³⁴ It is used in the sense of eating-without-devouring as well as eating-with-devouring. In two verses it is used in the two senses in the same verse. The places where the word “akal” has been used are marked in italics in the quotes below:

NKJV: “And *ate* up all the vegetation in their land, And *devoured* the fruit of their ground” (Ps. 105:35).

NKJV: “There the fire will *devour* you, The sword will cut you off; It will *eat* you up like a locust” (Nah. 3:15).

We suggest that the word “akal” in Gen. 2:17 may have been used in the sense of eating-without-devouring in the first instance and in the sense of eating-with-devouring in the second instance.

For. The Hebrew word for “for” is “kiy.” It indicates causal relations of all kinds. We would like to translate it as “although, or” as, for example, done in Genesis 48:14.

Die. The Hebrew word “muwth,” is primarily used for physical death but also used as “despaired 1, fails to reach 1, perished 1, perish 1, finished off 1, finish off 1.”³⁵ In the present context we may consider it to mean “fails to evolve.”

The verse can thus be rendered as:

Alternative Translation: if of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, or in the day that you devour of it, you shall surely fail to evolve.”

Translated this way, God said to Adam that he would fail to evolve if he did not eat of the Tree or if he ate of and devoured it. Both the cases would lead to failure to evolve though differently. Adam would be deprived of the opening of the eyes and continue to live in the primitive stupor if he did not eat of the Tree. Future generations would be deprived of the opening of the eyes and they would fail to evolve if Adam devoured the Tree.

The same scenario unfolds again in Gen. 3. The serpent cast doubt on the nature of the command of God: He said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” The woman replied:

NKJV: *but* of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, *lest* you die.’

Once again, the difficulty lies in the conjunctions. The verse starts with the conjunction “and.” It is conventionally translated as “but.” It can alternatively be translated as “if.” The word “lest” is again a conjunction. It is translated as “or” in Gen. 19:15, 19:17 and Ex. 19:24.³⁶ Thus, the verse can be rendered as:

Alternate Translation: If of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, or you die.’

Whether this “not eating” or “devouring” would constitute a “sin” would depend on one’s perspective. Strong’s Concordance defines the word “hamartia” used for sin, among others, as:

- 1) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin;
- 2) that which is done wrong, sin, an offence, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act;
- 3) collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many.³⁷

“Eating” of the Tree despite prohibition in the conventional perspective; as well as “not eating” of the Tree in the alternative perspective could both be considered to be a sin. An important difference is that the “eating,” in the conventional perspective, would be a direct and conscious action contra the command of God; while the “not eating,” in the alternative perspective, would be procrastination rather than a conscious action and would stand at a lower level of sin, if at all.

2. THE SERPENT

Next, the serpent said, if you eat of the tree, “Surely you will not die” (Gen. 3:4). The talking serpent is explained by Biblical scholars by drawing parallel with the near eastern literature where serpents played a prominent role as adversaries of both humans and gods.³⁸ Adrian D. Covan follows this approach in saying that “The venom of lies was injected the moment the old serpent told Eve that they would not die.”³⁹ We know though that serpents do not speak. Further, serpent has both a negative and positive symbolism in the near eastern traditions. Between 4000 and 3000 BCE it represented devastation and fever.⁴⁰ This negative symbolism faded away in the second millennium and gave rise to a positive symbolism of vegetation, moisture, long life, wealth.⁴¹ The negative symbolism is understandable in view of the poisonous nature of the creature. However, no credible explanation is available as to how the serpent could represent long life and wealth. We suggest that an alternative explanation is available in far eastern traditions.

The Serpent in the Light of Far Eastern Psychology

The symbol of Caduceus of two snakes is used by many medical organizations. However, a historian comments that the “use of the symbol is very ironical as how can destructive creatures used to represent a healing purpose. The answer lies in the snakes’ characters of skin shedding representing immortal life, sudden change in activity emphasizing transit from sickness to cure, early use in the bible, and most important of all it was used by Asclepius who is the god of healing.”⁴³ We find these answers lacking because skin shedding and sudden change of activity pale into insignificance in front of its destructive nature.

We bring in far eastern psychology to gain insight into the matter. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the doyen of Yoga of the last century, explains:

Most commonly, Kundalini is illustrated as a sleeping serpent coiled three and a half times. Of course there is no serpent residing in... any... chakra, but the serpent has always been a symbol for efficient consciousness... This serpent power symbolizes the unconscious in man... In the traditional descriptions of Kundalini awakening, it is said that Kundalini resides [in

the basal chakra at the lower end of the spine] in the form of a coiled snake and when the snake awakens it uncoils and shoots up through the psychic passage in the centre of the spinal cord, opening the other chakras as it goes.⁴⁴

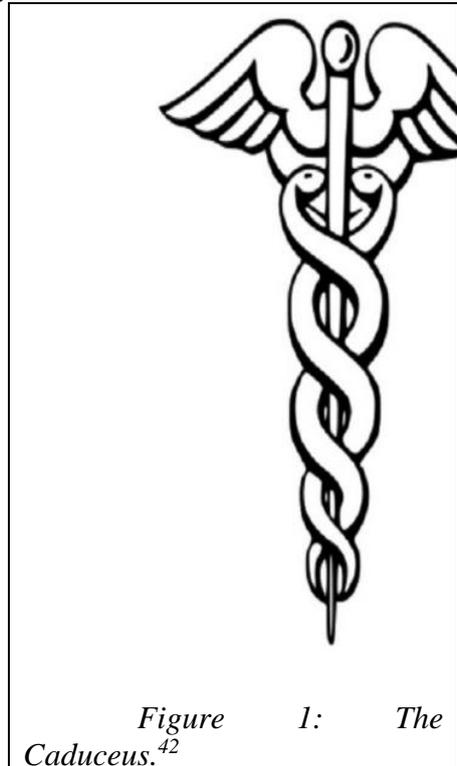


Figure 1: The Caduceus.⁴²

There are seven chakras or psychic centres in the spinal cord in the Hindu understanding. These are connected with each other and act as switches for certain parts of the brain. The interconnection of the psychic centres in the spinal cord is represented as a serpent. The spinal column is flanked by two nerves that join at the lower end.⁴⁵ The Hindu tradition holds that the flow of psychic energy through these three pathways—the spinal cord and the two nerves—strengthens the person psychically and begets positive results. This anatomy may explain the positive depiction of the serpent in the ancient near eastern traditions mentioned above.

We find confirmation of the existence of the three pathways from modern anatomy. Isaac Asimov says “the chief ganglia [swelling on a nerve fibre] involved in the autonomic nervous system form two lines running down either side of the spinal column... These two lines of ganglia outside the column resemble a pair of long beaded cords, the beads consisting of a succession of 22 or 23 swellings produced by massed nervous cell bodies. At the lower end, the two cords join and finish in a single central stretch.”⁴⁶ The number 22 or 23 need not distract us. More study is required to synchronize the seven turns with these 22 or 23 swellings. The main point is that the two serpents coiled around a central pillar may depict the two ganglia and the spinal column. The flow of energy through these may beget the positive results mentioned above.

Another association of the serpent in the near eastern and thus the Biblical tradition with the Hindu system is obtained through the planets. The Hindu tradition associates each of the seven centres in the spinal cord with a planet, specifically with Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn.⁴⁷ Joseph Campbell, author of *Occidental Mythology*, has produced an image from the ruins of a temple of a Roman Port dated to 190 C.E. in which a serpent is shown winding upward in six turns up the human body and resting its head above the brow on the 7th turn (Figure 2). The seven turns, he explains, were identified with the seven celestial spheres—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn.⁴⁸

In summary, we find two lines of support for the serpent in the Bible being a symbol of the spinal cord. One, the connection of the serpent with the flow of energy through the spinal cord may underlie its positive depiction. Two, the association of planets with psychic centres in the spinal cord connects the far eastern with the Roman and presumably with the near eastern traditions.

The speaking serpent may thus represent the unconscious psyche reposed in the spinal cord. The unconscious impulse may be described as a speaking serpent in the Bible. We now resume our discussion of the Biblical narrative in this background.

Not eating of the Tree

Then, in Gen. 3:11, God asked:

NKJV: Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should *not* eat?”

The word for “not” in this verse is “lebilti.”⁴⁹ Its primary use is in the sense of negation as mentioned above. However, it is also amenable to alternative interpretations. We

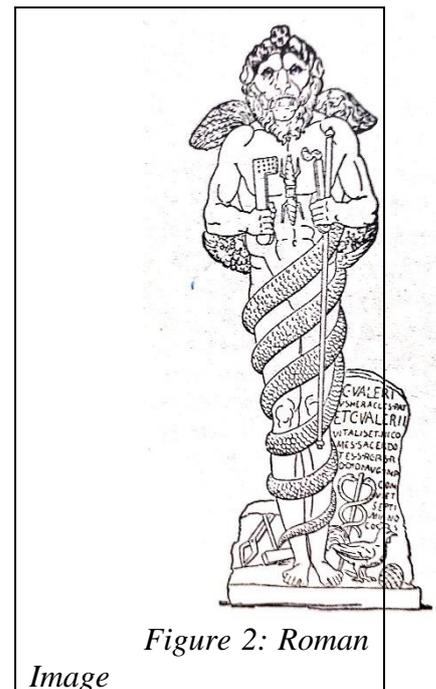


Figure 2: Roman

Image



give below three such usages with the order of the words changed for easy reading. We give the word “lebilti” in italics.

In Gen. 21:26 the word “lebilti” is used as “until” followed by “today.” Using the word “lebilti” in this way we get:

Alternative Translation 1: Have you *not* eaten *until [today]* from the tree of which I commanded you that you should eat?”

In Gen. 43:5 it is used to stress an exceptional person: “not you shall see my face *unless* your brother [is] with you.” Using the word “lebilti” in this way we get:

Alternative Translation 2: [You will die] *unless* you have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should eat?”

In Numbers 11:6 it is used to indicate the thing that is to be eaten: “there is nothing *except* the manna.” Using the word “lebilti” in this way we get:

Alternative Translation 3: Have you eaten *except* from the tree of which I commanded you that you should eat?”

These three alternative translations are consistent with God reprimanding Adam and Eve for not eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

Psychic Guidance

The woman explained:

NKJV: “The serpent *deceived* me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:13).

The Hebrew word for “deceived” is “nasha.” However, this is problematic. In Jeremiah 4:10, for example, this interpretation leads to accusing God of deceit: “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.” The Pulpit Commentary notes that “much difficulty has been felt in interpreting this verse, partly because it seems directly to charge Jehovah with ‘deceit.’”⁵⁰ This difficulty may be removed if we were to translated “nasha” as “to guide.”

The word “nasha,” used here for “deceived,” can also be translated as “guided.”⁵¹ It is used 14 times in the O.T. Of these, 12 times it can be substituted with the term “guided” without changing the meaning of the verse.⁵² If this substitution is accepted, the verse would read:

Alternative Translation: The serpent *guided* me, and I ate.

Serpent: The spinal Cord

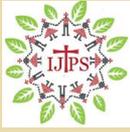
Then God cursed the serpent, Eve and Adam in succession. Scholars have noted that these curses are followed by progress. Matt Champlin writes in Themelios journal of The Gospel Coalition that the blessings given by God in Genesis are only partly offset by the curses, that is, the blessings stand tall over the curses.⁵³ Jacob Gerber, Senior Pastor of Harvest Community Church in Omaha, Nebraska says that God does not abolish the goodness of His blessings entirely. The curses only make a break in the larger continuity.⁵⁴ We follow this approach in understanding the curses.

We have already shown that the “serpent” could stand for the unconscious. We now discuss the curse on the serpent in view of the same. God said to the serpent:

NKJV: Because you have done this, You are *cursed* more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your *belly* you shall *go*, And you shall *eat dust* All the days of your life (Gen. 3:14).

We now consider the five words given in italics.

Curse.



The word “curse” has a negative connotation but one that could be of a short-term negative consequence leading to a long-term fortuitous result.⁵⁵ We give three examples to this end. First, the Lord had cursed the land at the time of Adam. Yet, Gen. 5:29 says that Noah would bring comfort from “labor and from the painful toil of our hands because of the ground that the Lord has cursed.” Second, God had cursed Canaan. Yet Gen. 9:25 tells us that Canaan was the land where the Lord led Abraham to reside. Third, Prophet Jeremiah wished that the day he was born would be cursed (Jer. 20:14-15). Yet he became a Prophet. Thus, the word “curse” can be used for pain followed by an fortuitous circumstance.

Belly. The Hebrew word for “belly” is “gachown.” Its origin is “giyach” which is used in the sense of “bursting forth” as in Job 38:8, “raging” as of a river as in Job 40:23, and “jumping out” from a place of hiding as in Jdg 20:33—just as consciousness bursts forth in the spine.

Crawl.

Go. The Hebrew word for “go” is “halak”—just as consciousness “goes” in the spine.

Eat.

Eat. The word for eat—“akal”—could signify the eating of the vibrations at chakras as the consciousness moves up.

Dust. The Hebrew word for dust, as mentioned previously, could be the quality of darkness.

Thus, we can alternatively render this verse as follows. To the unconscious reposed in the spinal cord, God said:

Alternative Translation: Because you have done this, You are cursed... On your spine you shall go continually up and down, And [lead to the fortuitous result of] burning up darkness All the days of your life (Gen. 3:14).

Swami Sivananda explains the movement of consciousness in the spine as follows:

As you inhale, feel that the Consciousness lying dormant at the base of the spinal cord is awakened and is going up from psychic center to psychic center ... Feel that by the Grace of the Lord, the darkness of ignorance enveloping your soul has been dispelled... Slowly exhale now. And, as you exhale feel that the Consciousness is gradually descending from the top of the spinal cord, and from psychic center to psychic center to the base of the spinal cord.⁵⁶

Rendered in this manner, this verse indicates that once activated due to eating of the Tree of Knowledge, the consciousness was “cursed” to move perpetually up and down the spinal cord.

Curse upon the Woman and the Man

After cursing the serpent, God cursed the woman:

NKJV: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children (Gen. 3:16).

We refer to the anthropological studies quoted previously to the effect that the development of agricultural practices could provide for much larger populations.⁵⁷ The begetting of these larger populations would entail larger numbers of conceptions and the consequent increase in pain of women. Thus:

Alternate Translation: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth [large numbers of] children;

Then, God cursed man:



NKJV: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life... And you shall eat the herb of the field (Gen. 3:17-18).

Scholar of the Old Testament Julius Wellhausen has pointed out that Genesis 1 portrays man in a positive sense that is distinct from the negative sense of Genesis 2-3:

What are generally cited as points of superiority in Gen. i. over Gen. ii. iii. Are beyond doubt signs of progress in outward culture... but in its general views of God, nature, and man, Gen. i. stands on a higher, certainly on a later, level. To our way of thinking its views are more intelligible, simpler, more natural, and on this account they have been held to be also older.⁵⁸

Wellhausen sees signs of progress in the narrative of Adam. Accordingly, we translate this verse as follows:

Alternate Translation: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat [*plentifully*] of it All the days of your life... And you shall eat the herb of the field.

Lastly, the Bible says God made tunics of skin and clothed Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20). Here again we may refer to Wellhausen:

The first step in civilisation is clothing; and here this is the first result of the fall. The story is continued in chapter iv. Adam's sons begin to found cities, Jubal is the first musician, Cain discovers the oldest and the most important of the arts, that of the smith—hence the sword and bloody vengeance.⁵⁹

The curses, therefore, could indicate short-term stress followed by the long-term progress.

3. HUMANKIND'S SIN: DEVOURING THE TREE

Scholars say that sin entered the world when Adam violated the command of not eating of the Tree.⁶⁰ However, we have suggested that God never prohibited Adam from eating of the Tree therefore that could not be the point of entry of the sin. We may recall though that another command was given—that of “not devouring the Tree.” It seems God was apprehensive that this command could be violated:

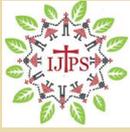
NKJV: Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and *take* also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3:22)

Take. The Hebrew word for “take” is “laqach.” It also means “capture” and “seize” as, for example, in 1Samuel 2:16, 1Samuel 7:14 and Judges 5:19. These meanings, especially “seize,” could indicate that God was concerned that humankind may devour the Tree of Life.

Forever. The Hebrew word for “forever” is “olam.” This can also be understood as “long time.”⁶¹

Indeed, the earlier prohibition against devouring was given regarding the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Gen. 2:17 as discussed above, while the above concern is indicated regarding the Tree of Life. However, both Trees were placed in midst of the Garden in Gen. 2:9, hence it is possible that the prohibition of devouring was made regarding both the trees though explicit reference is made regarding the Tree of Knowledge in Gen. 2:17 and regarding the Tree of Life in Gen. 3:22. Thus we could translate this verse as follows:

NKJV *Alternate Translation:* Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he [individually] put out his hand and *seize* also of the tree of life [leading to extinction of the tree], and eat, and live [long individually leading to short life for humankind]” (Gen. 3:22).



God placed cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life to avoid such an eventuality (Gen. 3:24).

This attempt to devour the Tree of Life may be the “sin” that was done at the time of Adam—and inherited by humankind. This view would be consistent with sin being understood as attachment to materiality.⁶²

4. TRANSMISSION

Scholars consider the two aspects of the doctrine of original sin to be (1) the origin of that condition at the beginning of the human race; and (2) the sinful condition in which each human life begins.⁶³ Between these two aspects is a third: how did the condition of sin at the beginning of human race got transmitted to the sinful condition in which each human life begins?

In agreement with these scholars, we understand Adam to be a historical person during whose time sin originated. We also know that there were other human beings at that time who did not descend from Adam hence would not have inherited the sin done by Adam. Yet all humankind is today born in sin. Thus, sin has to be transmitted both horizontally to other persons and vertically to the descendants. Only then it is possible for all humankind to be born in sin today.

We have noted above that there is 10% genetic transmission and 90% environmental transmission in the ability to show empathy. We may consider the same to hold for the ability to think independently or the ability to commit sin. Now, let us consider that Adam started independent thinking that may have included the sin of devouring the Tree of Life. It spread like wildfire, say, to all humankind, riding on the 90% environmental basis. Then all the descendants inherited the same independent thinking riding on the 10% genetic transmission. In this way it can be said that Adam was the first sinner. The Federal Headship explanation that Adam “sinned as our head, or our representative” would fit in with the 90% environmental transmission; while St. Augustine’s concept of inherited sin would fall into the second category of 10% genetic transmission.⁶⁴

5. REDEMPTION

We agree with the conventional view that spiritual transmission of sin from the time of Adam can be reconciled with science and that the fundamental message of the Bible is, “You are a sinner and Christ is your savior.”⁶⁵ We understand the basic trajectory as follows. Humankind was living in a state of primitive bliss in direct connection with God. Adam started the process of independent thinking leading to separation from God. This was the “fall.” Then through Jesus Christ we can re-establish a conscious connection with God as indicated in John 12:32.⁶⁶ We give our interpretation of Romans 5:12-15 in this perspective:

NKJV: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12).

We understand this verse to say that independent thinking entered the world through Adam and led to severing the live connection with God. The independent thinking then spread to all humankind. All used their independent thinking, in part, at least, not aligned with God hence all sinned.

NKJV: For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law (Rom. 5:13).

We understand this verse to say that the capacity of independent thinking was in the world after Adam and Eve were commanded to eat and not devour of the Trees of



Knowledge and Life. But the attempt of devouring the Tree of Life was made later. Humankind did no sin until they attempted to devour the Tree of Life.

NKJV: Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come (Rom. 5:14).

We understand this verse to say that humankind used its capacity of independent thinking sometimes, at least, not aligned with God hence separation with God reigned from Adam to Moses. Those who may not have sinned, like the devouring of the Tree of Life, were yet severed with the live connection with God due to their independent thinking. Jesus is like Adam before he ate of the Tree of Knowledge since both were in connection with God.

NKJV: But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many (Rom. 5:15).

We understand this verse to say that the offense of Adam led to the severing of the connection with God in many. The grace of God in Christ abounded to many more.

Similarly, 1Cor. 15:21-22:

NKJV: For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

We understand this verse to say that from Adam came the severing of the live connection with God or death. Likewise, by Jesus Christ came the reconnection with God. Here, the Greek word "anastasis" is conventionally translated as resurrection. It is derived from "anistemi" which means "standing up again" and could indicate reconnection with God.⁶⁷

Thus rendered, the verses are consistent with the Hebrew text, the "progress in outward culture" noted by Wellhausen and our alternative interpretation of the Adam narrative.

CONCLUSION

We have considered the apparent discordance between theology and science in the narrative of Adam. We find that theology and science can be synced by reinterpreting certain Hebrew words and by brining insights from far eastern psychology into play.

We suggest that the creation of Adam from "dust" may refer to the implanting of negative qualities by God to break the primitive bliss and to take the first steps towards establishing a conscious connection with God.

Second, God actually wanted Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree. Towards this end He had placed the Trees in the middle of the garden. Their error was firstly in making delay in eating of it; and secondly in trying to devour the Tree. God placed the Cherubin to guard against the latter possibility.

Third, the serpent was the far eastern symbolism of the unconscious impulses emanating from one's own spinal cord.

We find these interpretations make the Biblical narrative sync with science and also give it a positive ambience. Notably these interpretations are consistent with the majesty of Jesus Christ in helping establish a conscious connection between man and God.



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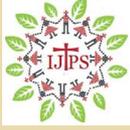
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