

Don C. Benjamin, Ph.D.
Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
dcben@asu.edu

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The Death of Abel: Murder or Sacrifice?

(Gen 4:3--5:32)

Don C. Benjamin, Ph.D.
Arizona State University

***Abstract:** The Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bearers (Gen 2:25-4:2) and the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3--5:32) are not sequels demonstrating the spread of sin, but parallels celebrating the founding of a new world, where humans can create. Using social scientific studies of human sacrifice in Mediterranean and pre-Columbian cultures, it is possible to argue that it is the soil, not Yahweh, "...which had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering it had no regard" (Gen 4:4-5), and that Cain sacrifices, rather than murders Abel (Gen 4:8). These stories do not indict Cain for cursing humanity with murder, but rather celebrate his household for blessing humanity with endowments like cities, tent making, herding, music, metal work, and, eventually a system of justice seventy-seven times more efficient than the mark with which Yahweh tattooed Cain to protect him from his enemies. The Stories of Cain are part of a tradition celebrating the progress of humans from living to life giving, not part of a story of the spread of an original sin.*

1. Confessional Readings of the Stories of Cain and Abel

For the New Testament, Jewish tradition and Christian theology, the Stories of Cain and Abel are stories about original sin, false worship, an inscrutable God, jealousy, murder and vengeance. These interpretations are the products of theological criticism, which begins its reading of the Bible in light of the pastoral needs of a particular biblical religion at any particular time in its history. Jews, Christians and Muslims studied the Bible to give understanding and shape to the practice of their religions. Confessional criticism was the standard method of biblical interpretation until the end of the nineteenth century.¹

In contrast to confessional criticism that begins reading the Bible in the worlds where it is interpreted, historical criticism begins reading the Bible in the worlds where its traditions developed. Historical criticism does not eliminate pastoral applications of the Bible, but does expect that pastoral applications be coherent with the use of biblical traditions in their communities of origin.

Historical criticism became the method of choice for biblical scholars throughout the twentieth

¹ For Norman K. Gottwald, [The Hebrew Bible – a socio-literary introduction](#). Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985: 8-9: "The first stage in the study of the Hebrew Bible was basically religious in a confessional sense. Jews and Christians studied scripture to give understanding and shape to the practice of their religions. In both communities, until the last two centuries, there was a solid consensus about the religious role of the Bible. It was believed to be the divinely revealed foundation document of their faith. From the close of the first Christian century until the Jewish Enlightenment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, orthodox Rabbinic Judaism interpreted the Tanak through the norms of the Oral Law or Talmud, and this "normalized" view of the Bible held sway among Jews without serious challenge.... From the late second Christian century until the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, orthodox Catholic Christianity adopted a similar normalized interpretation of the Old Testament, as viewed by the New Testament and church dogma. Protestantism in its various branches soon fell into dogmatic interpretations of the Bible. Departures from the normative religious readings of the Hebrew Bible were a threat that might be tolerated, as in the case of mystics, or more often had to be expelled, as in the case of heretical sects."

century. They reread virtually every biblical tradition in light of how it was understood in its community of origin before moving on to study its biblical and post-biblical tradition history. Despite this century-long project, however, confessional interpretations of the Stories of Cain still dominate scholarship. The Stories of Cain and Abel, as well as the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1—2:4), the Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4—4:2) and the Flood Stories (Gen 6:1—11:26), continue to be read theologically.

a. Original Sin

Augustine (354-430 CE) and many Christian theologians understand the Stories of Cain and Abel to be the stories about the spread of sin.² The sin of disobedience which Adam and Eve commit spreads to the sin of sacrilege when Cain offers his unworthy sacrifice (Gen 4:3-7), which spreads the sin of murder when Cain kills Abel (Gen 4:8), which spreads to the sin of perjury when Cain denies knowing where Abel is (Gen 4:9-10), which spreads to the sin of polygamy when Lamech marries more than one wife (Gen 4:19), which spreads to the sin of blood vengeance when Lamech threatens to avenge any injury to his household seventy-seven times (Gen 4:23-4).³ The only bright spot in this reading appears when the household of Enoch begins to worship Yahweh (Gen 4:25).⁴

Augustine's theology of original sin continues to have a significant impact on western European cultures, biblical religions and on-going biblical scholarship.⁵ English Common Law confers police

² Humphreys 1985: 81 and others continue this tradition of interpretation.

For Kselman 1988:89: "...J ...parallels[s] ...advances in civilization and technology with the increase of violence."

For David W. Cotter, Genesis. Collegeville: Liturgical Press: 40-41: "Although Genesis 2-3 describe a transgression against a divine command and so become the biblical basis for the later Christian doctrine of Original Sin, the word "sin" only appears for the first time in Genesis 4 (*hatta't*, Gen 4:7 in a passage famously difficult to translate)." -- "...sin is lurking at the door" (NRSV)

³ For example, Boadt 1990: RG 59 summarizes the importance of the Stories of Cain and Abel for the Yahwist tradition as: "...even the children sin but God continues to care."

⁴ So Kselman 1988:89 and others. Cassuto, Genesis, 1: 178-96 notes that the divine names appear 70 times in Gen 2-4: "Elohim" 40 times, "Yahweh Elohim" 20 times, and "Yahweh" 10 times with the 70th occurring in the verse: "...at that time people began to call on the name of Yahweh." So Brichto 1976:121.

For van Wolde 1991:26, "In Gen 4:1-16 the deity is no longer called Elohim, as in Genesis 1, nor YHWH Elohim as in Genesis 2-3, but YHWH. In Genesis 1, Elohim is the creator who creates all forms of life. In Genesis 2-3, YHWH Elohim is both creator and the one who makes contact with human beings. There are good reasons to believe that within the compound YHWH Elohim, Elohim represents the dimension of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3.5; 3.22), and YHWH the dimension of eternal life. To put it differently: in Genesis 2-3, Elohim corresponds with the tree of knowledge and YHWH corresponds with the tree of life. ... As a compound, YHWH Elohim shows that YHWH and Elohim are linked inextricably to each other. That is why a single linguistic sign can represent both creation and relation, transcendence and immanence. After YHWH and Elohim have been inextricably linked in Genesis 2-3, YHWH can (from Gen 4:1 onwards) appear alone, independently, while embodying the characteristics of both YHWH and Elohim."

⁵ For Radday 1990: 87:

"...[t]hat the Torah ...wished to ascribe the fratricide to a clash of material interest in unthinkable: it is not a History of Economy. That one sacrifice was more acceptable than the other is likewise incredible, because neither of the brothers had been commanded by God to offer any sacrifice at all. That the story is meant to explain why there were nomads called Kenites after Cain, their hieros eponymos, is impossible, among other reasons because the very same Kenites were famous for their rock fortresses, whose presence denotes the opposite of a nomadic lifestyle. That the mark is a sign of recognition among desert dwellers is altogether inconceivable."

"And if we surmise with some scholars the vagrant Cain to be the mythical ancestor of all roaming tinkers and the inventor of their skill, we have only come back full-circle to the field of economy, which is of little interest

power on states, for example, to allow them to control anti-social or “fallen” human beings. Likewise, Catholics describe the purpose of baptism as “washing away original sin”. And biblical scholars use Augustine’s theology to reconstruct the plot of a hypothetical source for the book of Genesis called the “Yahwist” or “J”.⁶

b. False Worship

Although the Hebrew (Gen 4:4) reads simply: “Abel brought the fat parts of the herd’s first born”, the Letter to the Hebrews, for example, understands the phrase to mean that the sacrifice of Abel was better than the sacrifice of Cain (Heb 11:4). Cain’s sacrifice has been considered sacrilegious for two reasons. First, Cain did not offer the best of his produce. Second, Cain did not offer a blood sacrifice.

c. An Inscrutable God

Confessional criticism also asks questions like: “Why did Yahweh accept Abel's offering, but not Cain's?”

d. Jealously

Confessional criticism also understands the Stories of Cain and Abel to be an explanation of an ancient, and irreconcilable, conflict between farmers and herders.⁷ Confessional criticism understands the Stories of Cain and Abel to be contrasting the generosity of Abel with the selfishness of Cain.⁸ Abel brought the best; Cain did not.

e. Murder

The Letter of Jude (Jude 11) pronounces judgment upon those who act like Cain, Balaam and Korah, and lead others into sin.

....convict Cain of sacrilege and murder (4 Macc 18:11; 1 John 3:12)

For Josephus and many rabbis, Cain and Abel are moral exemplars.⁹ Abel represents the virtuous, Cain the greedy. Abel is an innocent victim, Cain a premeditating murderer.

“Why was Cain angry with Abel, and not with Yahweh?”

to any biblical book, let alone the first few chapters of the Torah.”

⁶ So, for example, Bruce Vawter, On Genesis: a new reading. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977: 94 “The Yahwist has used the story [of Cain and Abel] to illustrate the further alienation of man from God that inevitably follows after the first rebellion against the divine decrees. Man who will not respect the limits set on his existence by his Creator God will also not respect the limits set on his activity by the rights of his brother and fellow.”

⁷ Speiser 1964:31.

⁸ E.A. Speiser, Genesis: introduction, translation, and notes. The Anchor Bible; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964: 30.

⁹ Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 1:53-57. Aptowitz, Kain und Abel provides a general summary of the interpretations of the stories of Cain and Abel, Vermes, Post-Biblical Jewish Studies, 92-126, Grelot "Targums," Isenberg, "Anti-Sadducee Politics," Levine, "Gen. IV:1-6" and Bassler, "Cain and Abel" summarize the interpretations of the rabbis in the Targums.

“How did Cain kill Abel?”

“How was Cain punished?”

They explain Cain’s fate by understanding him to be the child of Eve and the devil, who is condemned to the degrading life of a farmer, and who does not offer Yahweh appropriate sacrifice in a timely manner.

Cain hates Abel for refusing to let him marry their sister.

, and beats him to death with a rock.

The epitome of Cain’s evil is revealed when he lies to Yahweh, rather than confessing his crime, but, in the end, Cain does repent.¹⁰

f. Vengeance

Variations of ancient understandings of the death of Abel as murder continue to appear in both the work of scholars and preachers.¹¹ Murder becomes the seed of civilization. The founders of great cities must first kill their brothers.¹²

Some scholars consider the phrase: “Next she bore...” (Gen 4:2) in the Stories of Adam and Eve as an indication that Cain and Abel are twins like Romulus and Remus. Cain murders Abel and then founds the city of Enoch, a cradle of civilization in the eastern Mediterranean. Romulus murders Remus and then founds the city Rome, a cradle of civilization in the western Mediterranean.¹³ Murder and cities are the work of humans who want to be divine.

“The earth that supports life, now defiled by life’s wanton destruction – watered not by rain (wished and sacrificed for) but by blood, shed by the farmer’s hand – becomes an alien place for the murderer. The world is arranged so that murder will not go unnoticed; it will also not go unanswered. The earth shall resist the murderer’s plow; nowhere on earth shall he find a comfortable place to settle, both because no one else will welcome him and because his conscience and his fears will give him no rest. A man who has once shed blood knows in his marrow that his own life hangs by a thread that he lives, as it were, by the grace of God.

¹⁰ James L. Klugel, *The Bible as it Was*. Cambridge: Belknap, 1997: 83-96.

¹¹ Leon R. Kass, “Farmers, Founders, and Fratricide: the story of Cain of Abel.” *First Things* 62 (1966): 19-26 is an undocumented reflection on the Stories of Cain and Abel by a Professor of Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Using Hellenistic traditions and western European philosophy Kass, in general, agrees with the understanding of the death of Abel as a murder, and the motivation to be competition, jealousy or envy between siblings or between shepherds and farmers which results in the denial and destruction of radical human equality or brotherhood.

¹² <http://www.iol.ie/~coolmine/typ/romans/romans9.html>

¹³ For Vawter 1977: 92 the phrase “*Next she bore* [Gen 4:2] has seemed to some to indicate that Cain and Abel were thought of as twin brothers, a conclusion which in turn caused them to institute parallels between this story and others such as the legend of Romulus and Remus.”

Despite the fact that God does not exact the fitting specific (capital) punishment for his murder – as there is yet no law against it, there can be no exact punishment – Cain is nonetheless thrown into despair.”¹⁴

2. Social-Scientific Readings of the Stories of Cain and Abel

Original sin, false worship, an inscrutable God, jealousy, murder and vengeance were important issues in the world of Hellenism where the New Testament, Jewish tradition and Christian theology developed. They were not, however, important issues in the world of the Bible where the Stories of Cain and Abel developed. In the world of the Bible the issues were land and children, farming and herding, crop failure, risk sharing, human sacrifice and law and order.

a. Land and Children

Studies of ancient Near Eastern creation stories from Egypt and Mesopotamia are not about sin, but about human life. They are stories about how humans create, about land and children.

Creation stories ask: “Should humans be immortal or mortal? “Were humans created to live forever, or to lay down their lives so that others might live?” “Should humans be infertile or fertile?” “Are humans unique creations of their divine patrons, or children created from their human parents?” Creation stories do not draw tightly logical or conclusive arguments. They are not juridical; they are philosophical. They contemplate the great mysteries of human life. The results are enlightening, not compelling.

Telling creation stories answers a widespread human complaint that land and children cause suffering. Humans complain that mortality and fertility have turned them into slaves, so they do not want to have to harvest and to have children. They want to live in an Eden where only their divine patrons effortlessly farm the land and create the children. They want to be immortal and infertile

The Stories of Cain and Abel celebrate the household of Cain for discovering how to farm the land, to build cities, to make tents, to herd livestock, to play music, to work metal, to worship Yahweh and to administer justice with a legal system seventy-seven times more efficient than the mark with which Yahweh tattooed Cain to protect him from his enemies. These stories chart the progress of humans from living to life giving.

crisis

When the days of grazing were done, (Gen 4:3)¹⁵
And the days of farming came to an end,
Cain brought Yahweh produce from the soil;
Abel brought prize yearlings from the flock.

Abel's sacrifice brought him a good year,
Cain's sacrifice did not.
Cain mourned.
He lost face.

¹⁴ Kass 1966:24.

¹⁵ For Gen 4:3 to be the beginning of a story, the initial verb should be a qatal. It is not. Hence the tradition of beginning the Stories of Cain and Abel in Gen 4:1 where the verb is a qatal is grammatically solid. See Joaquim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise: a contextual interpretation of Gen 4:7” *Biblische Notizen* 100 (1999): 46-47

"Why are you grieving?

Why have you lost face?" Yahweh asked.

"If it is a good year for you, then why not hold up your head?

If it is a bad year for you, then the snake is at your door."¹⁶

"The instinct of the snake is to strike out at you,

But you can master it."

climax

Then Cain called out to his brother....

They went outdoors.

They came to a field.

Cain lifted up his hand over his brother.

He sacrificed Abel.

denouement

Finally, Yahweh summoned Cain:

"Where is your brother Abel?"

"I do not know," Cain answered.

"Am I the shepherd's shepherd?"

"Your brother's blood cries out from the soil.

You shall curse the soil, because it drank your brother's blood.

You shall work the soil,

But the soil shall not work for you.

You shall forage the earth like a wild animal,

¹⁶ For Azevedo 1999: 49 "In Gen 4:7 ...the protasis (negative) is found in the expected slot, but a nominal clause ...is introduced between it (the protasis ..."but if you do not do right") and its apodosis (... "then his desire will be to you and you will rule over him"). Functionally, that break (the nominal clause) implies an indirect imperative. In other words, "if you do not do what is right, fix it with the sacrificial offering lying at the door of Paradise, then his desire will be to you and you will rule over him again." Thus what "is at the door" is not a "snake", but a lamb which can be offered as sacrifice of purification that will forgive his sin of having offered Yahweh an improper sacrifice of produce. If Cain sacrifices the lamb, he will regain his place as the first-born and "rule over" Abel.

There is a long-standing tradition of interpretation that sees Cain at fault for offering produce rather than a blood sacrifice. Yet, from a social scientific perspective, farmers like Cain would be expected to offer produce, and herders like Abel would be expected to offer livestock. Furthermore, there is no language in Gen 4:4:3-4 that shows Cain doing something wrong, or only Abel sacrificing correctly. Also the nesting of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, which is a produce sacrifice, and the Feast of Passover, which is a blood sacrifice, in the Stories of the Death of the Firstborn of Egypt would argue against seeing these two kinds of sacrifice in opposition to one another here.

You shall become like a scavenger."

Cain appealed: "My burden will be greater than I can bear.
If you cut me off from the soil and from you,
If I forage the earth like a wild animal,
If I become a scavenger,
Hunters will stalk me like an animal:
Trappers will kill me."

But Yahweh swore:
"Anyone who kills Cain shall die seven times."
Therefore, Yahweh tattooed Cain.
The mark of Yahweh would protect him against hunters.
Then Yahweh sent Cain forth,
Yahweh dispatched him to Nod, east of Eden.

Cain had intercourse with his wife,
And she conceived.
The wife of Cain gave birth to Enoch,
And Enoch founded a city.
Enoch named the city after his son, Eridu.
To Eridu was born Mehujael.
To Mehujael was born Methusael,
To Methusael was born Lamech....

Adam had intercourse with Eve,
Eve gave birth to Seth,
Singing: "Yahweh has sown a seed,
Our Godparent has replaced the Abel whom Cain has slain."
To Seth was born Enosh,
Whose household called Yahweh by name....

Lamech married two women:
Adah first, Zillah second.
Adah gave birth to two boys:
Jabal, whose people weave tents and herded cattle,
And Jubal, whose people strum lyres and play flutes.
Zillah gave birth to a boy and a girl:
Tubalcain, whose people work bronze,
And Naamah, whose people work iron.
"Adah and Zillah, trust me, said Lamech;
"Women of Lamech, believe my words." Lamech swore.
"I will execute the elder who shames my good name,
"I will kill the warrior who lays a hand on me."
"If Cain's killer will die seven times,
"Lamech's killer will die seventy-seven times."

1) Ancient Near Eastern Parallels

The Stories of Cain and Abel are creation stories parallel with the Stories of Anubis and Bata, the Stories of Seth and Osiris, the Stories of Adapa, the Stories of Etana, the Stories of Aqhat, the Stories of Utnapishtim and the Stories of Gilgamesh.¹⁷

Some studies argue that creation stories lament a missed opportunity for humans to become immortal and infertile. Had Adapa, Etana, Aqhat, Utnapishtim or Gilgamesh, for example, succeeded in becoming immortal and infertile, then human storytellers and their audiences would not have to suffer. Suffering is a sentence for their failure. Therefore, creation stories encourage their audiences to seize any opportunity to become divine like Utnapishtim, Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11), and to avoid the hesitation or distractions of Adapa, Etana, Aqhat or Gilgamesh.¹⁸

Reading the Stories of Adapa, Etana, Aqhat and Gilgamesh as stories of missed opportunity, however, reads these ancient Near Eastern traditions as Augustine reads the biblical tradition. This reading, however, imposes a western Mediterranean and Christian theology on an eastern Mediterranean and non-Christian tradition. Eve and Cain like Adapa, Etana, Aqhat and Gilgamesh miss opportunities to become divine. The Stories of Adapa, Etana and Gilgamesh should be used to understand the Stories of Adam and Eve and the Stories of Cain and Abel, not vice versa.

Other studies argue that creation stories consider a world where only the divine farm and bear children to be a dream. Telling creation stories inspires humans to be humble. Only creatures that leave or decline Eden are truly human. The stories plead with their audiences to embrace fertility and mortality, to work the land and to conceive its children and to lay down their lives so that others may live. Mortality and fertility are the boundaries that separate humans from their divine patrons.

a) Stories of Anubis and Bata

b) Stories of Seth and Osiris

c) Stories of Adapa

d) Stories of Etana

e) Stories of Aqhat

f) Stories of Utnapishtim

g) Stories of Gilgamesh

2) Biblical Parallels

The Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3--5:32) are parallel to the Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen

¹⁷ For Brueggemann 1982: 62 the New Testament telling of the Stories of Cain and Abel is found in the Parable of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32).

¹⁸ Wolfram Herrmann, "Human Mortality as a Problem in Ancient Israel." In Religious Encounters with Death: insights from the history and anthropology of religions: 161-169. University Park: Pennsylvania State, 1977. Herrmann teaches Old Testament for a religious institute in Leipzig.

2:4—4:2) and to the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1—2:4).¹⁹ The Stories of Adam and Eve do not precede the Stories of Cain and Abel chronologically.

One indication that the stories are parallel, and not sequels, is their genealogies (Gen 4:1+1 7-22; Gen 4:25-6).²⁰ The Stories of Cain and Abel now separate the Stories of Adam and Eve from their original genealogy. In this genealogy, Seth is the first child, and Seth's first child is Enosh (Gen 2:25--3:24+4:25-6). In the original genealogy for the stories of Cain and Abel, the first child is Cain, and Cain's

¹⁹ For Hess 1992: i, 806 "...[i]t also has literary connections with the preceding narratives of chaps 2 and 3 (Hauser 1980). For example, v 16 speaks of the Garden of Eden, mentioned in chap 3."

For Brichto 1976:121 "...the Cain and Abel episode must be seen as the culmination of the Eden story in chs 2 and 3, a single composition, allegory or fable, articulating J's anthropology and theology. Since the characters are symbolic and prototypical, the tale is timeless; the conventions of life, however, are those of ancient Israel."

For von Rad 1961:99-100 "This new narrative is very closely tied in v.1 to what has preceded."

For Ellen van Wolde, "The Story of Cain and Abel: a narrative study" JSOT 52 (1991): 25-41 the story of Cain and Abel "...stands on its own to a certain extent, is closely connected with Genesis 2-3. The story of Cain and Abel opens with the protagonists of Genesis 2-3: the man and his wife. The last verse of the story (4:16) indicates that the events described happened in the neighbourhood of the garden of Eden, where Genesis 2-3 took place. Not only does the correspondence in characters and scene point to coherence; similarities are also found on the level of sentences and themes.... Thus, Gen. 4.7b is remarkably similar to Gen 3.16b, and 4.11a looks very much like 3.17b. In both stories, moreover, the relationship between human and earth plays an important part. In addition, words in the opening verses of Gen 4:1-16...refer back to Genesis 2-3. It is clear from these examples that there is coherence or continuity between Gen 2-3 and 4:1-16." See also: A. J. Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links between Genesis 4:1-16 and Genesis 2-3" 1980.

For Vawter 1977:93 the Stories of Cain and Abel also tell "...of a temptation and 'fall,' though the crime in this case is murder and fratricide, rather than unlawful acquisition of esoteric knowledge. It too speaks of a banishment from God's presence: the parallels between chapters 3 and 4 of Genesis are, in fact, more than several."

²⁰ Eissfeldt 1965:191: "...in iv.25 Seth does not appear originally to have been regarded as the brother of Cain, but as the sole son of the first human pair, just as Cain's genealogy in vi,1, 17a,18-22, must surely be understood to mean that the whole of later mankind is to be traced back to him. The genealogies of Cain and of Seth are mutually exclusive, and cannot be assigned to the same narrative strand."

Eissfeldt reads Gen 4:25 as: "And Adam knew his wife...and she bore a son and called his name Seth... To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Yahweh."

Bernhard W. Anderson, "Analytical Outline of the Pentateuch." In Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972: 262-3, reflecting the work of most source critics, shows no Urgeschichte or primeval history in the Elohist (E) Tradition. According to Eissfeldt 1965: 191 "... E does not yet appear here [Gen. i-xi], but only begins at xv with the narrative of God's covenant with Abraham, and appears to have had no primeval history at all; for the efforts of Mowinckel [The Two Sources of the Predeuteronomic Primeval History (JE) in Gen. i-xi, 1937] and Holscher [The Beginnings of Hebrew historical writing, 1942] to demonstrate an E share in Gen i-xi may be regarded as without success."

Septuagint Greek version (LXX) reflects different traditions for the Stories of Adam and Eve, where the name for the creator is "Yahweh" and the Cain and Abel story, where the name for the creator is "Elohim." If this is not just a case where "...an Elohim has crept secondarily into the Yahweh stratum (Eissfeldt 1965:182)" and if the Cain and Abel story is distinct from the Adam and Eve stories then it may be E's primeval history.

first child is Enoch (Gen 4:17).²¹

Like the Stories of the Heavens and the Earth and the Stories of Adam and Eve, a sterility affidavit opens the Stories of Cain and Abel. Also like these parallels, the stories of Cain and Abel close with the birth of a child.

3) The End of Days

Few English translations give the sterility affidavit with which the Stories of Cain and Abel open the emphasis it needs to be understood as the opening of a creation story. They do not set the phrase off with a new paragraph division or a subtitle to emphasize that it is the beginning of a new story. Most simply render it as a temporal adverb like "...sometime later (Hebrew: qes hayyamim)."

Grammatically, for the Stories of Cain and Abel to begin with the phrase: "When the days of grazing were done" (Gen 4:3), the initial verb should be a qatal. It is not. Hence the tradition of beginning the Stories of Cain and Abel with the words: "Now the man knew his wife Eve..." (Gen 4:1), where the verb is a qatal, appears to be more grammatically solid.²² But the impersonal use of *wayhi* in a temporal phrase, as it is used here, regularly marks the beginning of an episode.²³

The Hebrew words: qes hayyamim in the Stories of Cain and Abel should be translated as a sterility affidavit opening a creation story. For example, the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth begins "When Elohim began to create..." (Gen 1:1), and the Enuma Elish Stories begin "When on high, no heaven had been named..."

The book of Daniel (Dan 2:28; 10:14; 12:13) uses qes hayyamim as "the end of days." The connotation of the phrase, even though it is not used as a sterility affidavit in the book of Daniel, is that the Old World is coming to an end and a New World is being created. Therefore, qes hayyamim in the Stories of Cain and Abel would be better translated: "When the days of grazing were done, and the days of farming came to an end..."

The "end of days" was the time to bring in the harvest and to shear the sheep. When the sheep were sheared the season or the Old World was over. Herders then inaugurated a New World by planning for the coming breeding and grazing season. Farmers decommissioned the Old World by harvesting their crops and inaugurated a new world by planning for the coming growing season. The end of days was the time to pay debts and to borrow to breed new herds, access new grazing land, obtain seed to plant and rent fields to sow.²⁴

²¹ Eissfeldt 1965: 194 considers Gen 2:4b--3:24 and Gen 4:1+17a+18-24 as part of the same story told by the Laity's Tradition (L). This is not a tradition of monarchs like J and E, nor the tradition of priests like P, but a tradition of ordinary people. They are nomads, not farmers and they regard The Creator as so much like humans that it is possible for humans to threaten god by their actions. At any rate, this separation into sources further supports reading the stories of Cain and Abel or at least Gen 4:3-16+17b+23-5:32 separately from the stories of Adam and Eve.

²² See Joaquim Azevedo, "At the Door of Paradise: a contextual interpretation of Gen 4:7" Biblische Notizen 100 (1999): 46-47

²³ R.E. Longacre, Joseph, A Story of Divine Providence: a text theoretical and textlinguistic analysis of Gen 37 and 39-48. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989:70-71. A.F. den Exter Blokland, In Search of Text Syntax: towards a syntactic text-segmentation model for biblical Hebrew. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1995: 47.

²⁴ Each transaction was negotiated near the sheering site or the threshing floor and ratified at a sanctuary of the

The Stories of Cain and Abel open at the threshing floor and shearing field. It is the end of days. Farming and herding has ended. A new season is beginning. The sacrifices of Cain and Abel are ratifying the covenants that they have negotiated for seed to plant and animals to breed.

4) Patterns in the Stories of Cain and Abel

- 1) Crisis: "When the days were done..." (Hebrew: ges hayyamim (Gen 4:3-7)
- 2) Climax: "Then (Hebrew: we-) Cain called out to his brother..." (Gen 4:8)
- 3) Denouement: "So (Hebrew: we-), Yahweh summoned Cain..." (Gen 4:9)
 - a) Farm the land (Gen 4:9-16)
 - b) Twin endowments
 - i) Bear children (Gen 4:17)
 - ii) Build cities (Gen 4:17)
 - c) Twin endowments
 - i) Make tents (Gen 4:18-21)
 - ii) Herd
 - d) Twin endowments
 - i) Play stringed music (Gen 4:21)
 - ii) Play wind music
 - e) Twin endowments
 - i) Work bronze (Gen 4:22)
 - ii) Work iron
 - f) Twin endowments
 - i) Administer legal justice (Gen 4:19-24)
 - ii) Worship Yahweh (Gen 4:25-6)
 - g) Make trade (Gen 5:1-32)

b. Farming and Herding

The sacrifices of Abel and Cain are comparable, not contrasting.²⁵ Both offer sacrifice to Yahweh.

divine patron to whom the livestock and land belonged. The threshing floor was the site for distributing grain to the villagers. It became a metaphor for both the well being of the village and the administration of the law. In the stories of Aqhat from Ugarit, the ruler Dan-el sits at the threshing floor where widows and orphans come to him for help, just as Ruth goes to Boaz at the threshing floor for help (Ruth 3:6-13). See Matthews 1988:52-4.

²⁵ For Hess 1992: i, 806 "...the text is silent as to how God made know this preference for Abel's offering. The same is true concerning the conversation of the two brothers, though this has not prevented the ancient versions from filling in this and other 'gaps' (EncMiqr 7:119-24)." For Hess 1992: i, 9 "...explanations which focus on the difference in the type of offering of Cain and Abel (Gunkel Genesis HKAT, 37; Skinner Genesis ICC, 105), or on the difference in their disposition, like those which emphasize the inscrutable choice of God (von Rad Genesis OTL, 104; Westermann Genesis 1-11 BKAT, 403-4), rely upon suppositions not explicit within the text. Nor is there any support for a rivalry between farmers and herdsman (as disputed by Sarna 1970:28). Note that minhah, 'offering,' can refer to a grain offering as well as to a meat offering. The text makes a distinction between Abel's offering of the 'first' and Cain's offering of 'some' (Cassuto 1961: 206-7; Sarna 1970:29; Waltke 1986; Wenham Genesis 1-15 WBC, 103-4). In offering the firstborn, Abel's act parallels that of Israelite sacrifices in which the firstborn represent both that which belongs to God as well as the entirety of the flock. By giving the firstborn and the best of the animal (i.e., the fat), Abel would be understood as having given everything to God." Therefore, despite his explicit disagreement with the interpretive tradition that distinguishes the offerings of Cain and Abel, Hess ultimately seems to agree with it!

The stories are not contrasting paganism with orthodoxy or polytheism with monotheism.²⁶

The stories also do not contrast blood sacrifice with bloodless sacrifice.²⁷ Cain's sacrifice is no less appropriate for a farmer than is Abel's sacrifice for a herder.²⁸ Both bring the offerings that are appropriate, and both expect that their offerings will guarantee a good year to come.

Nothing in the story itself conclusively suggests that Cain is any less generous than Abel.²⁹ "An offering of the fruit of the ground..." and "...the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions..." are the standard expressions in the Bible for the sacrifices of farmers and herders.³⁰ The phrase: "their fat portions (Gen 3:4)" does not privilege the sacrifice of Abel over the sacrifice of Cain. All sacrifices must be the best or "fat portions".³¹

Yahweh talks with Cain about life as a farmer.³² "Why are you mourning? Why have you lost face? Hold up your head. Whether it is a good year for you or bad. Sin is a snake -- the Demon at the

For Walter Brueggemann, Genesis. Atlanta: John Knox, 1982: 56: "Both brothers do what is appropriate. Both bring their best. Both had reason to anticipate acceptance. There is nothing to indicate that God must discriminate or prefer one to the other. There is no hint of rivalry or hostility. This is simply a family at worship."

²⁶ For Regina M. Schwartz, The Curse of Cain: the violent legacy of Monotheism. Chicago: University of Chicago 1997: 3 "This God who excludes some and prefers others, who casts some out, is a monotheistic God – monotheistic not only because he demands allegiance to himself along but because he confers his favor on one alone. While the biblical God certainly does not always govern his universe this way, the rule presupposed and enforced here, in the story of Cain and Abel, is that there can be no multiple allegiances, neither directed toward the deity nor, apparently, emanating from him." A similar interpretation is offered by Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, a commentary. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962: 100-101: "...each one honors God separately from the other... the difference in the life of both is not something external, but rather is so deep that it works itself out in distinctive action of religious practice. Cult belongs intimately to culture, and every culture gives birth to its own peculiar cult. Thus there was more than one altar!"

²⁷ For von Rad 1962: 100 "Cultic interests do not move the narrator at all, and therefore he gives here a rather incidental report of the first sacrifice."

²⁸ Clifford and Murphy 1991:13 note:"...[m]ost commentators believe Abel's offering was the choice part and Cain's was not, but the emphasis falls on Yahweh's inscrutable acceptance of one and not the other." I don't think either conclusion is warranted by the text. Abel's offering is not preferable to Cain, and there is no emphasis on in the inscrutability of Yahweh, simply the unpredictability of the land.

²⁹ Humphreys 1985: 79.

³⁰ Hallo 1987:3-14 provides a brief review of the standard theories of how sacrifice functions in traditional societies in general and Mesopotamia in particular. Contrary to the common practice of distinguishing between the Mesopotamian custom of offering sacrifices to feed the Gods and the Israelite custom of offering sacrifices to make peace or enjoy communion with Yahweh, H argues that originally both cultures offered sacrifice to authorize the eating of meat by human created as vegetarians. Subsequently both developed secondary purposes. Israel's aversion to anthropomorphic imagery for Yahweh diverged from the tradition of sacrifice as feeding.

³¹ Grammatically, it is in an unusual place at the end of the verse, which may indicate that it was part of an early commentary on the story.

³² Standard studies of Yahweh's words to Cain appear in Castellino 1960, Loewenclau 1977, Ramaroson 1968, Speiser 1964, Westermann 1974, Woller 1979, Woller 1984, Yashar 1982. Van Wolde 1991: 39-33 provides a non-traditional reading of this text that is closer to the interpretation proposed here.

Door. Its instinct is to strike out at you, but you can master it."³³

Cain is not plotting to murder Abel. Cain is allowing his crop failure, to make him resent his fertility, and want to give up his life as a farmer. When the harvest is full, human ability to have a child and to have a harvest is a blessing. When the harvest fails, fertility is a curse.³⁴ Both the Stories of Adam and Eve, and the Stories of Cain and Abel encourage humans to embrace the ability to have a child, and to have a harvest, despite the labor which both require. The fertile know the good of having a child and having a harvest requires the evil of labor (Gen 3:5).

The snake that tutors the man and the woman the Stories of Adam and Eve, also tutors the household of Cain.³⁵ She is more a teacher, than a tempter. She teaches humans that fertility demands labor. The Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:14) identify their snake with one Hebrew word (Hebrew: nahas), and the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:7) use another (Hebrew: rabas), but the two words are

³³ For Hess 1992: i, 807 "...Driver (1946:158) suggests reading ht't trbs, 'sin will crouch,' with two taws expressed by a single one in an originally continuous Hebrew text without word divisions. Driver goes on to reposit the final phrase as a passive: 'And so you shall be ruled by it,' (we'atta timmesel-bah), rather than accepting it as it is and understanding an adversative waw, "but yet you may/should rule over it."

³⁴ The only other occurrence of the unusual phrase: "Its instinct is to strike out at you" (Gen 4:7) occurs only one other place in the Bible where the woman fantasizes about making love in the Song of Solomon: I am my beloved's and his desire is for me." (Song 7:11)

For van Wolde 1991:29-33 Cain is tempted not to look at Abel eye to eye as a brother, but rather to hide himself from the eyes of Abel like an animal crouching to attack him. For her, this story of Cain and Abel argues that Yahweh looks on Abel, although he is "worthless" or weak, even though Cain, like most humans, ignore the weak. She considers "sin" and "serpent" to be "...two nouns that both function as subject of the nominal sentence 7b.. In this sentence rabas is the second subject and the explanation or specification of the first subject[: 'sin']. at the door is sin, the sin of lying in wait. ['Serpent'] specifies the contents of ['sin']: we are not concerned with a sinful deed in general, but with the specific, well defined sin of 'prowling' or 'lying in ambush for'.

³⁵ Van Wolde 1991:30-31 summarizes the scholarship on reading rabas as "serpent." "GKC (#145u) has called rabas in Gen 4.7 a 'substantival participle'. Recent dictionary articles such as that by Waschke (ThWAT, VI, 32) and KB (IV, 1102), and recent grammars such as Waltke-O'Connor (1989:205), in agreement with the commentaries of Westermann (1976:385) and Hamilton (1990:227), have (since) considered rabas a substantive....

"Rabas means 'to lie down', usually in relation to animals (BDB, 918, 'stretch oneself out, lie down, lie stretched out'; Waschke in ThWAT, IV, 321-22, 'lagern, sich (nieder)legen; KB, 1102, 'lagern, lauern'). This lying mostly has a quiet or restful connotation, but sometimes a restless connotation. The first is the common connotation, used to describe a flock of sheep lying down (Gen. 29.2; Isa 13:20; 27:10; Ezek. 34.14; Sph. 2.14), or to describe wild animals, especially lions, that lie down and nobody dares to wake, because they project some kind of threat (Gen. 49.9; Isa 13.21; Zeph 2.15). Waschke describes the latest results of research on rabas (up to 1990) and sees an opposition between the normal quiet connotation of rabas on the one hand and the occurred of rabas in four particular texts on the other hand: "Der bisher beschriebene Kontext des Verbs schient verlassen zu sein, wenn die "Urflut" (...Gen 49,25; Dtn 29,19) das Subj. "Sunde" (...Gen 4,7) oder der "Fluch" (...Dtn 29,19) das Subj. bilden" (ThWAT, 322). In these text rabas refers to the lying (cf. 'crouching') of a powerful phenomenon, which emanates threat. Perhaps the opposition between these two connotations is not as great as Waschke described it, because there is an analogy between the lying or crouching of the wild animals that gives rise to some threat and the threatening lying of the [flood and the plague]. The negative context of Gen. 4.7b determined by the world ['sin'] and the opposition with the positive context of 7a, as well as the link between ['sin'] and the word...'at the door', forces us to interpret rabas here in the second, more threatening meaning, possibly associated with wild animals."

comparable.³⁶ These snakes guard thresholds to remind those who go out of the household that human life is demanding. The household is like a womb that protects its members. Once humans cross the threshold, snakes remind them that they must labor to survive. The words of Yahweh remind Cain that bad seasons are as much a part of farming life as good seasons.³⁷

In order to survive, farmers must be able to hold their heads up and go out of the doors of their houses into the fields even after the crops have failed. It is the responsibility of the snake at the door to remind them that crop failure is always possible. If farmers cannot face, and overcome, the fear of failure, then they cannot endure the labor of bringing in the harvest.³⁸

The conversation between Yahweh and Cain is amicable, not hostile. Cain accepts Yahweh's advice and returns to his life as a farmer. There is no reason to assume that Cain is venting his anger against Yahweh or Abel. Creation always begins with chaos. The crop failure that opens the Stories of Cain and Abel open describes the chaos in place when Cain begins to create.

c. Crop Failure

The soil, not an inscrutable Yahweh, has "...regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering it had no regard" (Gen 4:4-5). Cain reacts to crop failure with a human sacrifice, rather than murder (Gen 4:8).

³⁶ In Hebrew rbs means to crouch. There is no other example in Hebrew of the stem being used as a noun, but is well known in Akkadian where rabisum means a demon.

³⁷ For Clifford and Murphy 1991:13 notes: "...[a]s the literal transl. shows, Yahweh's response to the distressed (not "angry") Cain is extremely difficulty to understand and may be corrupt; all transla. are uncertain."

For Wood 1987:29-37, violence results from Cain as an archetype of the unaccepted Cain hating his lack of acceptance and being envious Abel as an archetype of the accepted. Psychologically, Cain and Abel are not two sons but one, and Cain-Abel is every human being. The "unaccepted part" of every human being hates rejection and is envious of the "accepted part". Humans seek acceptance from both their parents, and their divine patrons. Woods uses the relationship of sacrifice to violence proposed by Rene Girard to interpret the stories of Cain and Abel as a universal psychological profile. W's proposal assumes a well-developed sense of the interior person, but there is little evidence that the Bible is interested in the psychology of the individual or the development of the internal life of individual characters in the Bible. The anthropological basis for Girard's proposal is equally modern and psychological, rather than Mediterranean.

³⁸ Many different folk traditions acknowledge the demon at the door. When grooms carry their brides over the threshold, they are not simply demonstrating that they will totally support them financially. Nor does the gesture simply prevent the woman from stumbling, which would be a sign that the marriage will not succeed. The ritual protects brides from the bite of the demon that would make it impossible for her to have children. Likewise, when children play "Crack! Crack!" those who step on an expansion joint or crack in a concrete sidewalk "...break their mothers' backs." Women with broken backs cannot carry children to term, therefore, their households will have no children. Both the groom and his children acknowledge the demon at the door by engaging in ritual labor, to demonstrate they have the physical ability to survive.

In Jewish households, there is often a mezuzah on the doorjamb. It is a small container which holds a tiny scroll on which is written the commandment: "Remember, O Israel you have only one God, only Yahweh is your Lord (Deut 6:4)." Everyone leaving the house kisses or at least touches the mezuzah to accept the labor of fulfilling all the stipulations of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel so that their households may remain fertile and enjoy the blessings of land and children. In Catholic households, there are often small containers of holy water attached to the doorjamb. When they leave the house, Catholics dip their hands into the water and make the sign of the cross over themselves, which is the Christian symbol of the labor or suffering which their baptism requires if they are to experience the blessing of the resurrection.

English translations regularly read: "...and Yahweh had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard (Gen 4:4)" which invites a painful theology portraying Yahweh as choosing Abel and rejecting Cain without reason.³⁹ A better reading would be: "...and the land had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering it had no regard." Like its parallels, the intention of this story is: "Why is it so difficult for human beings to survive?" What makes life difficult for human beings is not that Yahweh, on a whim, curses one household and blesses another, but simply that Abel the herder has a good year, while Cain the farmer has a bad year.⁴⁰ Crop failure, and not divine caprice, causes humans to suffer. The source of the crisis here is not divine whim, but unpredictable weather.

A standard harvest in early Israel produced ten to fifteen times the grain that was needed to plant it.⁴¹ Positive changes in the quality of the land, the number of farmers available, and the way in which they worked could increase the standard harvest, yet there was always a greater risk that negative changes could destroy the economy of the village and its households altogether. Fields that produced as little as a ten to fifteen fold harvest in good years typically failed altogether in three years out of ten.⁴² It is not just Yahweh who has no regard for Cain, but the land that fails to produce an adequate harvest for his household.

Although there is little difference in the world of the Bible between the divine patron of a household and the land of its divine patron which the household works, using the word "Yahweh" instead of the word "land" in English translations makes an important difference in the way we understand the story today. Good years and bad years make sense to us. Divine caprice does not.

Elsewhere, the Stories of Cain themselves read "land" and "Yahweh" as parallels. In a denouement episode Cain says to Yahweh: "Today you are driving me away from the land, and I shall be hidden from your face..." (Gen 4:14) If Cain leaves the land, he leaves Yahweh as well. The words "land" and "Yahweh" here are synonyms, and it would be better to read "land" than "Yahweh" in the crisis episode as well. The connotations of the crisis episode are not that Yahweh is capricious in accepting the sacrifice of Abel, and rejecting the sacrifice of Cain, but rather that even though both

³⁹ Bract 1976: 121 softens the impact of such a theology by seeing the story as describing two vassals before their king. "Two brothers are rivals for the favor a divine monarch. the one offered the finest gift he can make; the other's gift is of middling quality. When the king makes known his displeasure with the latter, he also informs him that he is free to make amends and achieve restoration to favor; he warns him, however, that freedom of will makes him vulnerable to the demonic temptation of wrongdoing. The admonition is all too prophetic: the offender who began with niggardliness to this master now moves from petulance to murder. In the murderer's response to the question as to his brother's whereabouts, the author provides an exquisite insight into the psychology of the immoralist: he is one who rejects responsibility for his fellow."

Free will is clearly a topic of interest in the Western Mediterranean cultures of Greece and Rome, but not in the Eastern Mediterranean cultures of the ancient Near East.

⁴⁰ For Hess 1992: i, 807 "...Huffman (1985) has suggested, the problem lies in the failure of Cain to investigate the reason for God's rejection of his sacrifice."

⁴¹ Standard studies of agriculture and the economy in Syria-Palestine include: Borowski 1979, Freedman and Graf, eds. 1983, Hopkins 1987, Meyers 1988: 47-71

⁴² Hopkins 1987:178-91.

households offer acceptable sacrifices at the beginning of the growing and herding season, Abel has a good year, but Cain does not. The soil is good to Abel and produces enough for his flock to graze, but the soil is bad for Cain and does not produce for his fields and vineyards.⁴³

The narrative structure of the story also emphasizes the parallel between "...seeing Yahweh" and "...having a harvest". In the crisis episode Cain offers sacrifice in the sight of Yahweh at the beginning of the growing season, and in the denouement Cain leaves the sight of Yahweh at the time of the harvest. The consequences that Yahweh explains to Cain in the denouement reverse Cain's first action. Cain is not only banished from the face of the earth, but also from the sight of Yahweh. The first action places Cain within the sight of Yahweh, in the later action Cain is banished from the sight of Yahweh.⁴⁴ The first action Cain establishes a relationship with Yahweh, but the last threatens to destroy it.⁴⁵ Combine these two paragraphs

The crisis episode closes by moving from the beginning of growing season to the end of it. The harvest of Cain has failed. Cain has lost face.⁴⁶

d. Risk Sharing

Conflict between farmers and herders first appears after the industrial revolution that began about 1848 in Europe. The introduction of steam and water-powered machines created an opposition between cities and farms very different from the economy of the world of the Bible. The economy of Syria-Palestine during the Bronze Age and the Iron Age was dimorphic. Villages combined both farming and herding. Cities and villages were part of the same, not different, economic systems. The economy of village as a producer of raw materials was linked to the economy of cities as manufacturers and distributors. Villages and cities cooperated with each other in the production and distribution of goods. They were partners, not competitors.⁴⁷

⁴³ Since the farmer and the herder worked together, the audience would expect the farmer to be grateful for the herder during a crop failure. The herd was the farmers insurance. Therefore it would be unlikely that one would begrudge the other.

⁴⁴ For von Wolde 1991:34-35 seeing also defines not only the relationship between Cain and Yahweh, but between Cain and Abel as well. "Cain's speaking and looking are essential actions.... (Gen 4.6-7), YHWH reproaches Cain for not looking at his weaker brother, but rather lying in ambush for him. Looking someone in the face and showing one's face should be signs of a good relationship between Cain and his brother. ...Cain never looks squarely at his brother, but the anger which takes hold of him causes him to glower at Abel in the way that a wild animal glowers, with head lowered, at the prey it wants to devour. In this way Cain's speaking and looking are early images or signs of his subsequent behavior towards his brother Abel."

⁴⁵ For van Wolde 1991:26, the parallel is between Yahweh's first action in Gen 4:1b,beta and Yahweh's last action in Gen 4:10-15. "The last action of YHWH, at the end of the story is exactly opposite to his first action.... [Cain] is not only banished from the face of the earth, but also from the sight of YHWH himself. In his first creative action YHWH places Cain within his sight, in his later action Cain is banished away from his sight. In the first action Cain is put into a relationship with YHWH; in the last this relationship is all but broken off."

⁴⁶ For Azevedo 1999: 48, Cain has forfeited his rights as the firstborn.

⁴⁷ For Brueggemann 1982: 54-64, the conflict is not between farmers and herders, but between God and humans. Humans realize that their struggle with God is a struggle with one another. Humans cannot resolve their struggle with God without resolving their struggle with one another. Human conflict reflects divine conflict, and is caused by their conflict with God.

e. Human Sacrifice

Cain the farmer turns his attention to the challenge of fertilizing the soil.⁴⁸ He prepares to wet the soil with blood to create a fertile field.⁴⁹

In the world of the Bible, death comes, not when the heart stops beating or the brain stops transmitting. Death comes only when things are dry. In the Creation of a New People from Dry Bones (Ezek 37:1-14) Ezekiel sees a battlefield carpeted with the dry, unburied bones of the soldiers of Judah. As dawn lifts, a gentle breeze moistens these dry bones with dew, and they rise from the dead.

The practice of secondary burial also demonstrates that only the moist are alive, whereas the dry are dead. Primary burial allows the bodies of the dead to dry. Until all the wet parts of the body have decayed, the dead are considered still present in the household. Once, however, the bones are dry, they are harvested and disposed in an ossuary or stacked in piles in the household cave.

Cain's actions in the climax episode also parallel the climax episode in the Story of Adam and Eve as herders and child-bearers (Gen 3:6). In both stories the people primeval are learning how to create or to do what the creator does. And in both stories they are moderately successful. They do create, but they discover the painful lesson that human creativity demands labor. In the Stories of Adam and Eve, Eve must labor to give birth and Adam must labor to farm. They must give up their lives to create life. They lay down their lives for another. Cain also discovers human mortality. Abel must die in order that Cain can farm.

To restore the structure of his household so that it can once again feed and protect its members, Cain humbles the household by sacrificing Abel, the herder who stands alone between the household and starvation. By the sacrifice of Abel, Cain places the survival of his household completely in the hands of Yahweh. Assuming that the death of Abel is a sacrifice, and not a murder, reconfigures the way Augustine understood the components of the story.

At the beginning of the growing season described in the crisis episode, Cain offered a grain sacrifice expecting that grain sacrificed would bring a grain harvest. It did not. What was lacking was rain. The seed was good, but the soil was dry. Therefore, Cain moistens the soil with the blood of Abel expecting that bloodshed would bring rain.

⁴⁸ For Hess 1992: i, 10 "...Jesus' observation on the blood of Abel refers to the murder of Abel, which is interpreted as similar to that of a 'prophet'; and to that of a martyr, apparently due to its association with the worship of God (Hill Matthew NCBC, 315; Marshall, Luke NIGTC, 506; Legasse 1982; Fitzmeyer, Luke 20-24 AB, 946, 951)."

"The focus of Heb 11:4 is on the faith of Abel. He represents the first example of the righteous who are put to death for their faithfulness. In Heb 12:24 Abel's blood represents the murder of an innocent victim. It cries out for vengeance (Gen 4:10). The blood of Jesus could also represent the murder of an innocent victim. However, instead of a cry for vengeance, the blood of Jesus provides mercy before God (Le Deaut 1961: 30-36; Moffatt, Hebrews ICC, 163-65, 218-19; Hughes 1977: 453-57, 551-52)." Since the death of Jesus is considered sacrifice, rather than murder, it would perhaps be better to consider the death of Cain as sacrifice rather than murder. The difference between the two is that Jesus offers a self-sacrifice, while Cain offers a human sacrifice.

⁴⁹ Carroll 1985: 128-9 and S.H. Hooke, "Genesis" in Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Matthew Black and H.H. Rowley. London: Nelson, 1962:175-207 emphasize the sacrificial character of Cain's action.

There is a close link in the story between the farmer (Hebrew: adam), the farmland (Hebrew: adamah) and blood (Hebrew: dam).⁵⁰ When the land is dry, the link between the farmer and the farmland is destroyed. Cain restores his relationship with the land by wetting it with the blood of Abel. Only life can give life. In the Stories of Adam and Eve, the woman lays down her life to give life to Cain and Abel. In the Stories of Cain and Abel, Cain lays down the life of Abel to give life to the farmland.

The sacrifice of Abel is also a ritual of status reversal.⁵¹ To reestablish the hierarchy of the household of Cain necessary to survive, Cain humbles his household by putting Abel, its most valuable asset to death.⁵² This cosmogony describes a labor that humbles or cripples the household of Cain by voluntarily depriving it of its herder. The sacrifice of Abel is an act of humiliation.

Cain has concluded that the land failed because his household was still too arrogant -- too confident, that it could do a divine work like farming. Arrogance prevents human fertility. Only the humble prosper. Therefore, Cain alters the status of his household by sacrificing the herder, whose livestock are its insurance against starvation, when crops fail. By sacrificing Abel, Cain places his household in complete dependence upon its divine patron for survival. Cain takes Abel into the field, just as he brings the fruit of the land to Yahweh. The killing of Abel is a ritual act that takes place on the infertile land. It is not an impulsive murder instigated by jealousy, but a human sacrifice intended to fertilize the soil by drenching it with the blood of Abel.

1) Human Sacrifice in Mediterranean Cultures

Human sacrifice is an established social institution in Mediterranean cultures in antiquity. Walter Burkert,⁵³ Rene Girard⁵⁴ and Jon D. Levenson⁵⁵ have written seminal works on human sacrifice.

In Homo Necans: the anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth published in 1972 in Germany, Walter Burkert studies human sacrifice in Hellenistic or western Mediterranean cultures. He argues that it is connected with the evolution of humans as hunters. Sacrifice processes the guilt which humans experience in killing fellow animals. It allows human to deify their victims as an act of reconciliation for killing them, and to reaffirm their common bond as fellow animals.

In Violence and the Sacred also published in 1972, but in France, Rene Girard also studies western Mediterranean cultures. He argues that sacrifice is the strategy which religion uses to control the aggression or competition that consistently threatens to destroy the community necessary for survival. Religion focuses this aggression on a single member of the community. By sacrificing one human being

⁵⁰ Van Wolde 1991:34 notes the connection between the farmer, the farmland and human blood, but argues that the blood of Abel that flows from the hand of Cain into the farmland breaks the link between farmers and their farmland. This severed relationship between Cain and Abel, and between the farmer and the farmland, breaks the relationship between the farmer with his divine patron.

⁵¹Turner 1969: 166-203.

⁵²Levenson 1993

⁵³Burkert 1972.

⁵⁴Girard 1972.

⁵⁵Levenson 1993

the community vents its hostility, thereby protecting other members of the community. Once the victims are dead, they are often deified, as an act of restitution. The portion served to each household during the meal following the sacrifice reestablishes the social structure that was threatened by the violence neutralized by the sacrifice.

Paul Mosca, “Child Sacrifice in Canaanite and Israelite Religion: a study in *Mulk* and *Mlk*” (1975) and George C. Heider, The Cult of Molek: a reassessment (1985) have both done extensive comparative studies on child sacrifice. [START HERE](#)

In The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: the transformation of child sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity published in 1993, Jon D. Levenson studies human sacrifice in ancient Israel and early Christianity.⁵⁶ He argues that the firstborn son is Yahweh’s: “You shall give Me the first-born among your sons.” (Exod 22:28) Yahweh can ask for the firstborn son to be sacrificed, or for an animal to be substituted, or for a vow of celibacy to be substituted. The fathers of most households did not have to sacrifice their beloved sons, but some did. Abraham knew it was his turn when he heard Yahweh order the sacrifice of Isaac. Jephthah knew it when it was his only child who met him at his home on that day of triumph turned to tragedy. Mesha knew that, when all earthly strategy failed to break Israel’s siege of Moab, only a human sacrifice could reverse the dire situations.⁵⁷

2) Human Sacrifice in the Social Scientific Study of Religion

The work of Burkert, Girard and Levenson each offer intriguing patterns for understanding the killing of Abel as a sacrifice, but the work of Eliade and Turner offer better parallels for understanding the sacrifice of Abel as a human imitation of a divine act of creation, and ritual of reversal. In The Sacred and the Profane: the nature of religion published in 1959, Mircea Eliade argues that in traditional societies all human behavior is ritual, and that all human behavior imitates the behavior of the divine patrons who created their world and them. To be effective, to be life producing, humans must do what their divine patrons have done.

In The Ritual Process: structure and anti-structure published in 1969, Victor Turner argues that in order to preserve the structure of a society so that it can continue to feed and protect its members, those social structures need to be periodically deconstructed. In the resulting chaos that Turner calls “anti-structure” or “communitas” there is no structure. The first are last. The last are first. The rich are poor. The poor are rich. Such rituals of reversal bleed the pressure which social structures or hierarchies cause, and prevent these societies from permanently being destroyed.

3) Human Sacrifice in ANE Creation Stories

Nintu-Mami's sacrifice of Wei-la in the Atrahasis Stories provides a helpful parallel for understanding the killing of Abel as a sacrifice, rather than as a murder.⁵⁸ The Stories of Atrahasis begin

⁵⁶ R.H. Sales, “Human Sacrifice in Biblical Thought” JAAR 25 (1957): 112-117 identifies the most commonly discussed biblical traditions thought to reflect the practice of human sacrifice: Gen 22:1-19; Exod 22:29, 13:2, 34:20; Lev 18:21, 20:1-5; Num 18:15-16, 3:11-13; Judg 11; 1 Kgs 3, 18:40; 2 Kgs 10:25-27, 16:2-4, 21:5-16; 2 Chr 28:3-4, 33:6 and some traditions in Isa 40-55.

⁵⁷Levenson 1993:17

in a world populated only by divine warriors (Akkadian: iggigi) and elders (Akkadian: anunnaki). Eventually the warriors revolt, refusing to do all the work that is necessary to keep their world running properly. Ea-Enki negotiates a settlement with them, in which workers (Akkadian: lullu) will be created to take care of the world, especially by dredging its canals. The elders ratify Ea-Enki's proposal, but assign Nintu-Mami the actual task of carrying out the project.

I:192-5

"Summon Nintu, the divine midwife!
Let her create workers to labor for the divine assembly."
So, the divine assembly summoned Nintu-Mami,
They called the wise woman before them.
"Midwife the lullu," they commanded,
"Create workers to labor for us.
Let the lullu bear the yoke,
Let them work for Enlil,
Let them labor for the divine assembly."

The Stories of Atrahasis describe the labor of Nintu-Mami with several different accounts of how the task was carried out. One account compares Ea-Enki with a menstruating woman, who bathes three times during the menstrual cycle: first when the new moon appears, then seven days later, and finally fourteen days later when the full moon appears. Intercourse is described as the mixing of the body of Ea-Enki, with the blood of We-ila.

I:200-30

Nintu said to the divine assembly: "I cannot do Ea-Enki's work.
Only Ea-Enki has the clay to create."
Ea-Enki spoke: "I will bathe to mark my time . . .
At the new moon, the seventh day, and the full moon, I will wash.
Let the divine assembly sacrifice We-ila.
Let them bathe in his blood.
Let Nintu thin my clay with his blood.
Let Nintu mix clay with blood, the human with the divine.
Let the drum mark off the days,
Count down the time.
Let We-ila's blood give these workers life,
Let the midwife call out to them: 'Live!'"
The divine assembly agreed,
The anunnaki elders consented.

In the creation stories of the ancient Near East, life comes from life. The life of We-ila becomes the life of the lullu. Similarly, the life of Eve becomes the life of Cain and Abel. The life of Abel becomes the life of the household of Cain.

⁵⁸ Humphreys 1985: 79 parallels Gen 4:1-16 and Gen 22:1-19 in so far as in both "... extreme arbitrariness characterizes the actions of Yahweh. This element of the arbitrary, of a fate or a limit fixed or imposed by the gods which demands of human beings acceptance of something less than full realization of their potential, is one way of considering one pole of the tragic vision.... Even if most mortals appear willing and even eager to live within divinely prescribed limits, an occasional human figure will not. Then the potential for the tragic is present."

The New Testament comparisons between the death of Cain and the death of Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews would certainly be enriched if both were considered acts of sacrifice.

The cosmogony opens when Cain “calls out” (Hebrew: wayyomer). The words are a call to worship which signals that an act of creation is about to take place.

It would also be better to translate: "...Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him" with the same liturgical language which describes Abraham as he prepares to sacrifice Isaac: “Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.” (Gen 22:10)⁵⁹ Just as Abraham reaches out his hand and takes the knife to sacrifice his beloved son, Cain reaches out his hand and takes the knife to sacrifice Abel.⁶⁰

Just like Nintu-Mami, Cain mixes blood with soil. The blood of Wei-la is necessary to moisten the clay, the blood of Abel is necessary to moisten or given life to the soil. Human sacrifice is a sympathetic or imitative ritual. With imitative rituals humans model what they need the earth to do. By raining the blood of Abel into the soil, Cain invites the earth to moisten the soil with rain. Rain, semen, tears, blood and saliva are interchangeable thinners that appear in ancient Near Eastern creation stories. The mixing of something solid – clay, with something liquid – rain, semen, tears, blood or saliva, is the formula for life.

4) Human Sacrifice in Mesoamerican Cultures

Another set of parallels for understanding the death of Abel as a sacrifice is found in Mesoamerican cultures.

Tlaloc is the divine patron of nature in Aztec culture.⁶¹ Tlaloc feeds the Aztecs, with her children, and, in turn, the Aztecs fed Tlaloc with the bodies of their children. The Aztecs eat the produce of Tlaloc, and Tlaloc eats the children of the Aztecs.

The ritual of Atl Caualo celebrated to end of the dry season acknowledges the reciprocity that only life creates life. “Atl Caualo literally means ‘water left’ or ‘drought’. The ritual was performed at the end of the dry season to pray for enough rain to ensure successful harvest.”⁶²

The Aztecs sacrificed their children at significant places in nature – water sources, fertile fields --

⁵⁹ For van Wolde 1991: 34-35, Cain here raises his head and prepares to strike Abel. Previously, van Wolde has argued, that Cain does not look Abel in the eye – human to human – but lowers his head like an animal hunting prey. At this moment Cain raises his head to kill. Although van Wolde does not make this connection, Cain imitates the snake against which Yahweh has tried to warn him. Just as the snake has waited at the threshold to strike Cain, Cain has waited in the field to strike Abel.

⁶⁰ Abraham on Mt. Moriah and Cain and Abel, however, belong to different genres. Abraham on Mt. Moriah is an inauguration story, while Cain and Abel are creation stories. Likewise, the killings in each tradition serve very different purposes. In Abraham on Mt Moriah the sacrifice is an ordeal that puts Isaac at risk to determine whether Yahweh has chosen him or Ishmael as heir to the household of Abraham. In Cain and Abel the sacrifices feeds the soil to make it fertile.

⁶¹ Philip P. Arnold, “Eating Landscape: human sacrifice and sustenance in Aztec Mexico”. In To Change Place: Aztec ceremonial landscapes : 219-232. Edited by David Carrasco. Niwot: University of Colorado, 1991. Arnold is a student of Carrasco. He translated “Atl Caualo” – a ritual for ending drought – from Nahuatl as the basis for his study. Bernardino de Sahagun, Florentine Codex: general history of the things of New Spain: Book 2, Chapter 20:42-46. Translated and edited by A.J.O Anderson and C. Dibble. 13 bks. Santa Fe: School of American Research and the University of Utah.

⁶² Arnold 1991:226.

where Tlaloc sacrificed her children for the Aztecs. Wherever there were openings or mouths in the body of Tlaloc, the Aztecs offered sacrifice. The creation stories of the Aztecs explain that for Tlaloc to be able to release life-giving power, she had to be dismembered. In order to give birth, she had to be split in two.⁶³

The Aztecs tell how their creators -- Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca -- change into great snakes. One great snake takes "...Tlaloc's right hand and left foot and the other, her left hand and right foot and they twisted her with such force that they split her in two. From one hand they created earth and from the other, the heavens. To compensate her for the damage she had suffered, all the gods ordained that the sustenances of life issue from her. From her hair they made trees and the flowers and plants: from her skin and its tiny hairs, the small plants and flowers; from her numerous eyes, the springs and fountains and caves; from her mouths, the rivers and great caverns; from her nose, the valleys and mountains."

Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca may be attacking and dismembering Tlaloc, but it is also possible that they are her midwives. They take her arms as she as her legs split and she gives birth to the earth. The violence here may be murder, but it may also be labor.

Human sacrifice is a re-enactment of the labor that gave birth to the earth. Mothers, like Mother Earth, labor to bring forth their children. "Elements of the material world were seen as evidence of comogonic violence; there, at points in the landscape body, direct communication with Tlaloc's body could be achieved by sacrificial violence. Killing was the regenerative act within an eating landscape formed from an original violence."⁶⁴ Earthquakes and volcanoes create by the shifting of the earth's tectonic plates to shape the geography of the earth were considered to be the writhing of a woman in labor. Therefore, the Aztecs bring their children to the place where Tlaloc gave birth to her children.

Human sacrifice in Aztec culture saw a parallel between rain and blood. Blood "...is a bodily water and the basis of human life." Rain "...is an earthly or heavenly blood and logically the basis of Tlaloc or the landscape's life. The reciprocal nature of life and death was a central element in most of Aztec religious life. The ritual acquisition of water required paying high price in children's blood, which offset the cost of the sacrifice given by Tlaloc."⁶⁵

The reaction to the shedding of human blood is weeping – a ritual rain. "Ritual weeping and sorrow over the deaths of these children were the emotional impetus that resulted in rainfall."⁶⁶

The longstanding tradition of interpretation that understands the Stories of Cain and Abel as requiring a blood sacrifice may, in some way, still be relevant. But the distinction is that Abel offers produce of the land, just as Cain does. In the world of the Aztecs, neither would be appropriate. Livestock and grain are both gifts of the land to humans. To return them does not repay them. What Cain does is to repay with a human life, the life which nature gives to support human life.

⁶³ For T. Sullivan, "Tlaloc: a new etymological interpretation of the god's name and what it reveals of his essence and nature." *Proceeding of the 40th International Congress of Americanists*, 2: 103. Genoa. Note the parallel tradition in the ANE regarding the dismembering of Tiamat.

⁶⁴ Arnold 1991: 225

⁶⁵ Arnold 1991: 227

⁶⁶ Arnold 1991: 228

Applies Jonathan Z. Smith, To Take Place: toward theory in ritual and Claude Levi-Strauss, "all sacred things must have their place".⁶⁷

Ritual bring place to life -- geography is alive, and changes as humans use ritual to interact with place. Ritual draws borders, and thus creates cosmos from chaos which is borderless.

Carrasco applies three models of space to Aztec culture: omphalos (Eliade), locative (Smith) and utopian (Smith), and proposes his own: "Sacred space and ceremonial landscapes in Aztec ceremonies expand and retract, meander and transform, link and fold into one another in a metamorphic vision of place,' or to add to Smith's spectrum, the motion and movement of Aztec rituals suggest the title 'To Change Place.'" (33)

People change places, the places are transformed by hierophanies, and the humans are momentarily and ultimately changed.(33)

Cain sacrifices Abel to change the land from infertile to fertile, and to change his household from infertile to fertile.

f. Law and Order

The denouement of the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:9-16) is not just a sentence for a crime or a punishment for sin. Labor is life, not a life sentence for humans. Like the denouement in the stories of Adam and Eve, it is a covenant legislating the terms for life in the new world. In both stories, human creativity demands labor that distinguishes it from divine creativity. Creation stories propose that human labor was an act of self-sacrifice by the people primeval who freely chose to lay down their lives, rather than to remain immortal and to live forever.

There is judicial language in the Stories of Cain and Abel, but it is not so much the language of a trial, as the language of negotiation. Yahweh is not so much a judge who arraigns and charges Cain, who then as a defendant legally defends himself against the indictment. Yahweh is a sovereign negotiating the stipulations of a covenant with a vassal. Cain's astuteness as a negotiating partner appears in both his use of words and the keen sense of the bond that unites humans with their work.

Cain describes Abel as a grazer (Hebrew: ro'eh) of sheep and protests that he is not a keeper (Hebrew: somer) of Abel (Gen 4:9). Although the Hebrew words for "grazer" and "keeper" are different, storytellers play on the words. Cain asks Yahweh: "Am I the shepherd's (Hebrew: ro'eh) shepherd (Hebrew: somer)?" Cain's point is that when crops fail, it is the shepherds who feed the village. Shepherds take care of farmers. Farmers do not take care of shepherds.⁶⁸

Cain's response is also a separation or divorce formula similar to "You are not my wife" or "You are not our son." When Yahweh asks: "Where is your brother Abel?" (Gen 4:9), Cain answers: "Abel is not my brother."⁶⁹

Like the man and the woman in the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain seemingly denies his sacrifice. But neither the response of the man and the woman, nor the response of Cain may be simply lies to avoid

⁶⁷ David Carrasco, "The Sacrifice of Tezcatipoca: to change place". In To Change Place: Aztec ceremonial landscapes:31-57. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1991.

⁶⁸ For Clifford and Murphy 1991: 14 "...Cain's reaction to God's circumscribing command is to hate his favored brother."

⁶⁹ Van Wolde 1991:35

punishment. The responses may also be demurs with which humans are expected to respond to the recognition that they have led their households from infertility to fertility. For Cain to celebrate his sacrifice of Abel would only reaffirm the arrogance which the sacrifice of Abel removed from his household in the first place. When asked: "Are you taking care of your brother?" Cain responds, "On the contrary, it is Abel who must take care of us."

Yahweh's reaction to the killing of Abel is not the reaction of a judge to a crime. Cain (Gen 4), Abimelech (Judg 9), Absalom (2 Sam 13), Solomon (2 Kgs 2) and Jehoram (2 Chr 21) all kill their brothers. Strangely, none is tried for murder under the law of retaliation (Exod 20:13; 21:12; Deut 19:4-13). Blood vengeance was not only legal in ancient Israel, it was practiced (2 Sam 14; Judg 8; 2 Sam 2-3; 2 Kgs 14:5; 2 Sam 16). Early Christian teachers and Jewish rabbis occasionally argued that there was no penalty for murder until Cain murdered Abel. Cain could not be punished according to a law that was adopted only after his crime.⁷⁰ They also explained that Yahweh pardoned Cain outright as an expression of divine mercy. Some even suggested that part of the untold story is that Cain was given probation, rather than a death sentence, because he repented.

Anthropological studies offer another reason for the exception. In traditional African cultures, fratricide is often treated differently than murder. Murder is considered a tort, which requires compensation, rather than a crime that requires punishment. Generally, murder outside the household is punished according to the norms of the law of talion that requires that a life be given for a life. A murderer is sentenced to death. But the sentence may be executed in more than one way. The death sentence may be imposed on the actual murderer, or on any other member of the murderer's household. The death sentence may also be commuted to a fine of livestock, a human being physically comparable to the victim, or a woman who will bear a child for the victim's household.

Initially, murder inside the household is dealt with differently than murder outside the household. In some cases, murder inside the household is considered more heinous than murder. But in general society recognizes that the household has already been hurt by the murder, and would not be compensated, but only further damaged, by punishing it with a death sentence or a fine. Hence, households are allowed to settle the matter as quickly and satisfactorily as possible. In ancient Israel, murders inside the household were settled in a variety of ways. The exile of Cain is only one example. Eventually murders inside the household are punished exactly as murders outside the household (Gen 9:5).

The household of Cain has changed from being infertile to fertile. It has gone from being a household without a harvest to becoming a household preparing to harvest. Yahweh intervenes, not to punish the household of Cain, but, like a midwife, to be its companion, and prepare it to face the labor that such human creativity demands. Both Adam and Cain will curse the soil, Adam because it eats his life away one day at a time, Cain because it drinks his brother's blood.⁷¹

Both Adam and Cain supplement farming with foraging. The covenant which Yahweh promulgates for Cain in the new world stipulates that the household of Cain will survive by foraging (Hebrew: nawa') and scavenging (Hebrew: nadah) to supplement its farming in the land of Nod, the land

⁷⁰ Isaac Schapera, "The Sin of Cain." JRAI 85:33-43. Reprinted 1955 in Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament: 26-42. Edited by B. Lang. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985: 26-42.

⁷¹ For Clifford and Murphy 1991:13 "... the earth, which drank his brother's blood, becomes the instrument of the punishment by not yielding its fruit and by being the place on which Cain wanders."

of wandering or foraging (Hebrew: nad).⁷² So the covenant allows the household of Cain to farm, but not without great difficulty. This covenant is not a punishment (Hebrew: 'awoni); it is an obligation.

Cain protests the initial terms that Yahweh proposes. He argues that they are simply impossible for his household to fulfill.⁷³ For Cain the covenant that Yahweh proposes is a death sentence. Farmers hunt human scavengers like animal predators. If Yahweh requires the household of Cain to forage and scavenge, his household is as good as dead.

Yahweh concedes. The stipulation remains in place, but the household of Cain is placed under divine protection. The mark on Cain is an apotropaic mark or tattoo that warns all who meet the members of his household that Yahweh is their divine patron (Exod 13:6, 28: 36; Deut 6:8, 11:18; Ezek 9:4-6).⁷⁴

The concession that the household of Cain negotiates with Yahweh is preserved as a case law (Gen 4:15). "Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." The relative clause indicts the defendant for the murder of Cain; the main clause sentences the defendant to seven counts of vengeance (Hebrew: naqam).

The New World needs new people and a new city. The denouement of the Stories of Cain and Abel promulgate the covenant founding a New World, the creation of the first people and the building of the first city. Therefore, Cain's wife delivers a child and Cain's son, Enoch, builds a city.⁷⁵

Storytellers stress the connection between childbearing and city building by giving both the child and the city the same name: "Irak." Irak corresponds to Mesopotamian "Eridu," the first city built before the flood according to the Sumerian King List.⁷⁶ Cain's departure from the Old World brings life to a New World –

⁷² Clifford and Murphy 1991:13.

For Brichto 1976:121 "...fugitive and wanderer' [4:12], has overtones of neither fugitivism nor nomadism; it is a hendiadys denoting one who is endlessly on the move."

⁷³ For Brichto 1976:121 "...the condemned one's response is that the decree is equivalent to a death sentence."

⁷⁴

For Hess **year: page**, "...the sign (ot) given to Cain after the murder is not specified, but the narrator intends some means to make public the punishment due to anyone who kills the murderer."

JQR 48 (1957): 208ff

⁷⁵ Enoch did not die, but was taken up by Yahweh because of his righteousness. Between 300 BCE and 300 CE, many stories of Enoch developed celebrating his teachings about heaven (Ps 49:15; Ps 73:24; 1 Kgs 2:11). Like Noah, Enoch also "...walked with Yahweh."

For Kselman 1988:89 "...the recurring pattern of the standard genealogical notice is: 'A had lived X years when he fathered B [the firstborn male]; after B's birth A lived for Y more years and had other children. The whole lifetime of A was (X+Y) years; then he died.' This pattern is altered twice. In v. 24 readers are told that Enoch, who "walked with God" (an expression of continuing service and constant performance of duty; (Gen 6:9; 24:40; 1 Kings 3:6; 2 Kings 20:3), ""was no more"; and although this expression can mean death (Gen 42:13, 32; Jer 31:15), readers learn that "God took: Enoch (as he did Elijah in 2 Kings 2:9-10; cf. Ps 49:15)."

⁷⁶ For Clifford and Murphy 1991:13: "Enoch at the end of the MT verse seems to be a floss; Enoch rather is the builder and Irak is the son after whom the city is named. Irak corresponds to Mesopotamian Eridu, the first antediluvian city according to the Sumerian King List (ANET 265)." For Kselman 1988:89 and most other commentators: "...[t]o Cain is attributed the building of the first city, an advance that will culminate in Genesis 11 in

the birth of a child and the building of a city.

The household of Cain, like the seven great teachers (Akkadian: apkallu) in Mesopotamian tradition, endows humanity with all the skills of civilization. Cain or Kenan is the first teacher; Enoch is the second. Irad or Jared is the third teacher; Mehuyael or Mahalalel is the fourth. Methushael or Methuselah is fifth teacher; Lamech the sixth and Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-Cain are the seventh.⁷⁷

The genealogy of Lamech (Gen 4:18-24) needs to be read as emphasizing the increasing fertility of this new world, not the continuing decay of the old.⁷⁸ Therefore, the denouement describes how Cain with just one wife gives birth to one child, who gives birth to one child, who gives birth to one child, who gives birth to one child. For five generations, the new world has a stable, but not an expanding population. Then comes Lamech. Lamech marries twin wives: Adah and Zillah. The hard times with which the Stories of Cain and Abel began are over and primeval fertility begins to blossom once again (Gen 4:3). These twin wives each give birth to twins. Jabal and Jubal are identical twin boys.⁷⁹ Tubalcain, a boy and Naamah, a girl, are fraternal twins. The population of the world is no longer threatened, it is booming.

In creation stories, the endowment of population always comes with the endowment of technology. The twins, Jabal and Jubal, are as creative as their mother. Each gift the new world with twin technologies. Jabal invents tent making and herding. Jubal invents the music of stringed instruments and wind instruments. The twins Tubalcain and Naamah are not outdone. They gift the new world with the twin technologies of working bronze and working iron.⁸⁰ Although commentaries often consider

the building of a city that will challenge the supremacy of Yahweh."

For Speiser 1964: 35: "...the Mesopotamian king lists sometimes interrupt their statistics with ...incidental comment (sic) about a given entry; cf. the Khorsabad List (JNES 18 [1954], 210 ff.), which describes the first seventeen rulers as "dwelling in tents," using an analogus participial form (line 10)."

⁷⁷ For Clifford and Murphy 1991:13 "...[t]he 10-member linear genealogy [Gen 5:1-32 P] ending a group of three "executive" persons who act -- Shem, Ham, and Japheth -- resembles the seven-member linear genealogy of 4:17-22, which also ends in three executives -- Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain." Interestingly, C ignores Naamah, the daughter of Lamech, which would create a group of four, not three in the seventh generation.

⁷⁸ For Kselman 1988:89: "...Lamech, ...boasts of his vengeful reign of terror. This dark story of violence ends with a genealogy that moves from murderer to murderer; the framing of a genealogy by two acts that bring death [Cain's killing of Abel, and Lamech's killing of a man for wounding him] stands in contradiction to the genealogical record of the continued life of a family." In contrast, I consider Cain's action a sacrifice, and Lamech's words to be a statement of the conditions of retaliation, not a confession of murder.

Also, I translate the qal as a prophetic perfect here to emphasize certainty and to express a vivid future and views the actions as good as done. cf. Williams 1970: #165, who cites Num 17:27 (Eng 17:12), Isa 5:13.

⁷⁹ For Hess 1992: i, 806 "...[t]he verbal root qnh associates 4:1 with the genealogy of Cain in 4:17-24. In v 20 Jabal is described as the father of migne (RSV "[those who have] cattle"), which has a root similar to that of Cain. Cain reappears in the last-named figure of his line, Tubal-Cain."

⁸⁰ For Hess 1992:i,806 "...the name [Cain] may be found in the Hebrew qina, "song." This has the advantage of appearing in biblical Hebrew but lacks examples of a qatil noun formation such as the name Cain possesses... In Ugaritic ...['Na'amah'] may mean `song.'" In the story itself, however, Na'amah is associated with metal working, not with music.

Tubalcain the sole inventor of metalworking, it is more likely that just as both Jabal and Jubal share in endowing the new world with new skills, Tubalcain and Naamah do the same.

Endowments in creation stories are not simply interested in new technologies, they are also interested in new social institutions. It is more consistent with this pattern of a creation story to consider Lamech as the Hammurabi of the stories of Cain and Abel who promulgates a new legal code, than as a bloodthirsty and raving maniac. As part of the marriage covenant, a husband must agree to protect and provide for his wife. Lamech promises his wives protection eleven times greater than that which Yahweh promised Cain. His words are not a confession to murder, but a promise that anyone who threatens the household of Lamech is as good as dead.

The qal verb here in Hebrew should not be translated as "...I have killed (Gen 4:23)," but "...I will kill" in order to express certainty, not past action. It emphasizes a vivid future in which the action is viewed as good as done. A similar use of this verb form appears in the book of Numbers (Num 17:27/MT or 17:12/Eng) and the book of Isaiah (Isa 5:13, 42:1). Although the perfect is most commonly used to express action that is actually completed, or thought by the speaker or writer to be completed, in some instances, the certainty of an imminent event in the mind of the speaker is enough to justify the use of the perfect. This usage of the perfect is especially common in prophecies, promises, and threats. In such cases, one should render the Hebrew perfect by the English present or future.⁸¹

Lamech's threats are directed, not just at "men (Hebrew: 'is)" and "boys (Hebrew: yeled)." They are directed at the elders who sit in the village assembly, and the warriors that the village musters to answer the tribe's call to arms. The elders are old; the warriors are young. The virtue of the elders is experience in use of law to resolve internal conflicts. The virtue of the warriors is the use of force to protect their households from external dangers. Men in every village are assigned to one of these two categories. Lamech promises the women of his household that they will be safe from both legal and physical injury.

With the marriage of Lamech, the insecurity of the old world which so frightened Cain has given way to the ultimate security of the new world in which the penalties for crimes are so severe that no one dares to commit one. While the vengeance system of justice often seems anything but civilized to audiences today, it was and still is a standard and effective form of social control. Vengeance in the world of the Bible is by no means wanton. The avenger and the criminal are both clearly identified. And it is not necessarily more violent than today's system of imprisonment and capital punishment.

Yahweh protects Cain with a tattoo. Lamech protects his wives with weapons of metal. In the old world, only Yahweh the creator can protect Cain. Now in the new world, humans can use the technology of metal working and the social institution of the vengeance system to protect themselves. Because of metalworking and the vengeance system of justice, life is more possible, not less possible. The sense of the phrase generally translated as "At that time men began... (Gen 4:26)" is better rendered as "...just as." "Just as..." the household of Jabal invented the tent and domesticated cattle, and the household of Jubal invented music, the household of Enosh was the first to call its divine patron by the name "Yahweh."⁸²

⁸¹ So Williams 1970: #165, and John Baker, citing C.L. Seow, A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew (1987): 92-3.

⁸² For Clifford and Murphy 1991:13 "...[t]he most important cultural institution of civilization, authentic worship, was not founded by a son of the wrathful Cain, but by the replacement of the favored Abel. According to the E source, the name of Yahweh was revealed first to Moses at Sinai (Exod 3:13-15); P also places the revelation of the name in Moses' time (Exod 6:2-8)."

It is worth noting, however, that "...it is the woman, again asserting her creative vitality, who pronounces

The Story of Adam and Eve and the Stories of Cain and Abel are not sequels demonstrating the spread of sin, but parallels celebrating the founding of a new world, where humans can give life. It is the soil, not Yahweh, "...which had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering it had no regard" (Gen 4:4-5). Cain sacrifices, rather than murders Abel (Gen 4:8), much as Abraham had intended to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:21:33–22:19). Yahweh protects Cain from the consequences of his actions (Gen 4:15-16), just as Yahweh protects Abraham. These stories do not indict Cain for cursing humanity with murder, but rather celebrate Cain for blessing humanity with endowments like cities, tent making, herding, music, metal work, and, eventually a system of justice seventy-seven times more efficient than the mark with which Yahweh tattooed Cain to protect him from his enemies. The Stories of Cain are part of a tradition celebrating the evolution of human beings from living to life giving. The Stories of Adam and Eve and the Stories of Cain and Abel argue that only by laying down lives can humans create life. Mortality enters the world either through the self-sacrifice of Eve or through the human sacrifice of Abel. Without death, there is no life. It was a teaching to which Jesus and the Jewish martyrs would return.

the name of God for the first time and proclaims that she participates with God in the act of creation." (Cotter 2003:42)

Further Reading

Bassler, Jouette M. "Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums: a brief note on an old controversy." Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period 17(1986):56-64.

Borowski, Oded. "Agriculture in Iron Age Israel." University of Michigan Ph.D. Dissertation; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979.

Brichto, H.C. "Cain and Abel." The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976: supplementary vol., 121-2.

Two brothers are rivals for the favor a divine monarch. the one offered the finest gift he can make; the other's gift is of middling quality. When the king makes known his displeasure with the latter, he also informs him that he is free to make amends and achieve restoration to favor; he warns him, however, that freedom of will makes him vulnerable to the demonic temptation of wrongdoing. The admonition is all too prophetic: the offender who began with niggardliness to this master now moves from petulance to murder. In the murderer's response to the question as to his brother's whereabouts, the author provides an exquisite insight into the psychology of the immoralist: he is one who rejects responsibility for his fellow.

Burkert, Walter. Homo Necans: the antropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth. Berkeley: University of California, 1983 (German, 1972).

Studies Hellenistic or western Mediterranean cultures to argue that sacrifice is connected with the evolution of humans as hunters. Sacrifice processes the guilt which humans experience in killing fellow animals. It allows human to deify their victims as an act of reconciliation for killing them, and to reaffirm their common bond as fellow animals.

Carroll, Michael P. "Genesis restructured." In Anthropological approaches to the Old Testament. Edited by B. Lang, 1985:127-135.

Demonstrates work of E. Leach that humans use a limited number of structural patterns in telling creation stories, and that these patterns are transformed using a limited number of rules with stories of Adam and Eve and the stories of Cain and Abel. In both roles and results are reversed, and endogamy destroys culture, which exogamy creates culture. So Abel sacrifices a sheep which is accepted by Yahweh, yet dies. Then Cain sacrifices Abel who is rejected by Yahweh and lives.

Cassuto, U. A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, part 1. Translated by I. Abrahams. Jeruslaem, 1961.

Chilton, Bruce D. "Comparative study of synoptic development: dispute between Cain and Abel in Palestinian Targums and Beelzebul controversy in the Gospels." Journal of Biblical Literature 101 (1982):553-562.

Compares the elaborative renderings of the Palestinian Targums at Gen 4:8, first of all to one another. Similarities and differences are identified in respect of wording, theme, and above all, structure are a model for analyzing the Beelzebub controversy in the Gospels (Mk 3:22-27 and parallels).

Clifford, Richard J. and Roland E. Murphy. "Genesis." In The New Jerome Biblical Commentary. Edited by R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer and R.E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990: 8-43.

Identifies the tradition as "Cain's Murder of Abel" in J which continues the stories of Adam and Eve. Although Clifford carefully corelates the stories of Cain and Abel with the Sumerian King List, he nonetheless argues that they "...illustrate both the spreading effect of human sin and God's undiminished commitment to the blessing (14)."

Cole, Dick T. "Personality sketch of Cain, the son of Adam." Journal of Psychology and Theology 6(1978): 37-39.

Personality sketch of Cain in light of Karen Horney's description of neurotic functioning. Cain corresponds to the "moving against," expansive neurotic type of Horney's three directional model. Cain chose this mode of functioning as a means of solving his own interpersonal difficulties and as an attempt to satisfy the needs of his idealized self-image.

Davies, Philip R. "Sons of Cain." In A Word in Season. Edited by J. Martin and P. Davies, 1986:35-56.

Driver, G.R. "Theological and Philological Problems in the Old Testament." JTS 47 (1946): 156-66.

Reads h't trbs, 'sin will crouch,' with two taws expressed by a single one in an originally continuous Hebrew text without word divisions. Goes on to reposit the final phrase as a passive: 'And so you shall be ruled by it,' (we'atta timmesel-bah), rather than accepting it as it is and understanding an adversative waw, "but yet you may/should rule over it."

Eichhorn, David M. Cain, Son of the Serpent. Chappaqua, NY: Rossel Books, 1985.

Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred and the Profane: the nature of religion. San Diego: Harcourt 1959. (French 1957)

In traditional societies all human behavior is ritual, and that all human behavior imitates the behavior of the divine patrons who created their world and created them. To be effective, to be life producing, humans must do what their divine patrons have done

Freedman, David Noel and David Frank Graf, eds. Palestine in Transition: the emergence of ancient Israel. Sheffield: Almond, 1983.

Ginzberg, L. The Legends of the Jews. 7 vols. 1909-38.

Rabbinical interpretations of the stories of Cain and Abel.

Girard, Rene. Violence and the Sacred. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1977 (French, 1972).

Sacrifice in western Mediterranean cultures is the strategy that religion uses to control human aggression or competition, which consistently threatens to destroy the community necessary for survival. Religion focuses this aggression on a single member of the community. By sacrificing one human being the community vents its hostility, thereby protecting any other members of the community. Once the victims are dead, they are often deified, as an act of restitution. The portion served to each household during the meal following the sacrifice reestablishes the social structure which was threatened by the violence neutralized by the sacrifice.

Gordon, C. H. "Notes on Proper Names in the Ebla Tablets." In Eblaite Personal Names and Semitic Name-Giving. Edited by A. Archi. Rome, 1988:153-8.

Claims divine paternity for Cain.

Gruber, Mayer I. "The tragedy of Cain and Abel: a case of depression." The Jewish Quarterly Review 69 (1978): 89-97.

The tradition of interpretation that Cain's response to God's rejection of him and his offering was anger fails to reckon with Cain's fallen face, a symptom of depression rather than anger, or with biblical Hebrew's distinction between harah ap "be angry" and harah lo attested in Gen 4:5-6 in the sense "be depressed". The kinship between expressions for anger and depression in Hebrew and Akkadian, Cain's killing his brother, and the apparent lacuna in Gen 4:8 are accounted for by reference to psychoanalytic theory. The crux 'im tetib se'et is shown to mean "if you will make yourself happy, you will regain your smile".

_____. "The Many faces of Hebrew 'lift up the face'." ZAW 95 (1983):252-60.

Hallo 1987:3-14

Review of the standard theories of how sacrifice functions in traditional societies in general and Mesopotamia in

particular. Contrary to the common practice of distinguishing between the Mesopotamian custom of offering sacrifices to feed the Gods and the Israelite custom of offering sacrifices to make peace or enjoy communion with Yahweh, H argues that originally both cultures offered sacrifice to authorize the eating of meat by human created as vegetarians. Subsequently both developed secondary purposes. Israel's aversion to anthropomorphic imagery for Yahweh diverged from the tradition of sacrifice as feeding.

Hammer, Reuven. "The biblical perception of the origin of evil." Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought. 39 (1990): 318-325.

Hauser, A.J. "Linguistic and Thematic Links between Genesis 4:1-16 and Genesis 2-3." JETS 23 (1980): 297-305.

The Stories of Cain and Abel have literary connections with the Stories of Adam and Eve. For example, Gen 4:16 speaks of the Garden of Eden.

Hess, Richard S. "Cain." Anchor Bible Dictionary. Edited by D.N. Freedman et al. New York: Doubleday, 1992: vol. 1, 806-7.

Summary of etymological work on the Cain traditions.

Hopkins, David C. The Highlands of Canaan: agricultural life in the early Iron Age. Sheffield: Almond, 1985..

Huffman, Herbert B. "Cain, the arrogant sufferer." In Biblical and related studies presented to Samuel Iwry. Edited by A Kort and S Morschauer. Winona: Eisenbrauns, 1987: 109-113.

Cain's failure to investigate the reason for God's rejection of his sacrifice is his sin..

Hughes, Richard A. "The Cain complex and the apostle Paul." Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal 65(1982):5-22.

Applies the concept of the Cain Complex to the autobiographical passages of the Pauline texts. The Cain Complex is derived from the writings of Leopold Szondi and defined as follows: the son who hates the brother and loves the father. The result of the study is to provide a psychological examination of a biblical figure that is different from psychoanalysis. It is claimed that the psychoanalytic view, based upon the Oedipus complex, cannot account for the autobiographical aspects of Pauline thought. The essay also provides an interpretation of Paul's illness, experience of sin, concept of conscience, and understanding of community.

Kikawada, I.M. "Two Notes on Eve." JBL 91 (1971):33-7. For Hess 1992:i, 806

Claims that Cain is divine (Gordon 1988:154-55) are not explicit in the present text. Nor do comparative studies prove a divine maternity (Kikawada 1971: 35-7). The association of the name Cain with the root qnh, 'to create' and 'to acquire,' leaves open two interpretations for the phrase; either Eve is acknowledging God at work through her in creation (or proudly claiming her own creative act [Cassuto 1961: 201; Westermann Genesis 1-11 BKAT, 395]) or she is recognizing God as the ultimate source of Cain (Wenham Genesis WBC, 102).

Kselman, John S. "Genesis." In Harper's Bible Commentary. Edited by J.L. Mays et al. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988: 85-128.

Speaks of "violence," rather than "original sin," but repeats Augustine's tradition of interpretation. Summary of Robert R. Wilson, Genealogy and History in the Biblical World, but does not draw any parallels with the Sumerian King List, nor offer any suggestions for understanding the number of years attributed to each generation.

Kikawada, Isaac M. "A quantitative analysis of the "Adam and Eve", "Cain and Abel", and "Noah" stories [table]." In Perspectives on language and text. Edited by E. Conrad and E. Newing. 1987: 195-203

Kugel, James L. "Cain and Abel in fact and fable: Genesis 4:1-16." In Hebrew Bible or Old Testament? Edited by R Brooks. 1987: 167-190.

Review of rabbinical interpretations of stories of Cain and Abel. Critique of historical criticism which is interested only in how the stories were heard then, and not now, and only in this text, or the parts of this text,

and not the text or the Bible as a whole.

Kugel, James L. "Why was Lamech blind?" Hebrew Annual Review 12 (1987): 91-103

Leach, Edmund. "Anthropological approaches to the study of the Bible during the twentieth century." In Humanizing America's iconic book. Edited by G. Tucker, 1982:73-94.

Levenson, Jon D. The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: the transformation of child sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity. New Haven: Yale University, 1993.

In ancient Israel and early Christianity, the firstborn belongs to Yahweh's: "You shall give Me the first-born among your sons." (Exod 22:28) Yahweh can ask for the firstborn to be sacrificed, or for an animal to be substituted, or for a vow of celibacy to be substituted. The fathers of most households did not have to sacrifice their beloved sons, but some did. Abraham knew it was his turn when he heard Yahweh ordering the sacrifice of Isaac. Jephthah knew it when it was his only child who met him at his home on that day of triumph turned to tragedy. Mesha knew when all earthly strategy failed to break Israel's siege and only the supreme sacrifice could reverse the dire situations.

Mack, Burton L. "Decoding the Scripture: Philo and the rules of rhetoric." In Nourished with peace. Edited by F. Greenspahn, E. Hilgert and B. Mack, 1984:81-115.

Mauldin, Frank Louis. "Story patterns: how it says what it says [Gen 3-11]." Saint Luke's Journal of Theology 30 (1987):125-140.

Meyers, Carol. "Setting the Scene: the highland environment of ancient Israel." In Discovering Eve: ancient Israel Women in Context: 27-71. New York: Oxford University, 1988.

Radday, Yehuda T. "Humour in names." In On humour and the comic in the Hebrew Bible. Edited by Y. Radday, 1990:59-97.

Proper names like "Cain" as "...a sort of weapon (75)" and place names like "Nod" as "...tremor (86)" are examples of humor in Hebrew which is used to make fun of them or to indicate they are imaginary rather than real.

Sawyer, John F. A. "Cain and Hephaestus: possible relics of metalworking traditions in Genesis 4." Abr-Nahrain 24 (1986): 155-66.

The Stories of Balaam associate the name Cain with the Kenites (Num 24:21-22). These people appear in the biblical text as smiths associate with the desert area of Israel's wanderings. Tubal-cain, the last-mentioned figure in the line of Cain not only possesses Cain's name but also is described as a smith. Sawyers examinations of the line of Cain have led to other connections with the region of the Kenites.

Schapera, Isaac. "The sin of Cain." In Anthropological approaches to the Old Testament. Edited by B. Lang, 1985:26-42.

In traditional African cultures, fratricide is often treated differently than murder. Murder is considered a tort, which requires compensation, rather than a crime which requires punishment. Generally, murder outside the household is punished according to the norms of the law of talion which requires that a life be given for a life. A murderer is sentenced to death. But the sentence may be executed in more than one way. The death sentence may be imposed on the actual murderer, or on any other member of the murderer's household. The death sentence may also be commuted to a fine of livestock, a human being physically comparable to the victim, or a woman who will bear a child for the victim's household.

Scheiber, Alexander. "Remark on the legend of the sacrificial smoke of Cain and Abel." Vigilae Christianae: A Review of Early Christian Life and Language 10 (1956):194-195.

Solle, Dorothee. "Peace needs Women." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 38 (1983):83-91.

War is the great rite of passage in which man equals hero; a woman cannot become a human being through, with, or for war. Women need peace for self-realization. From a feminist perspective the Stories of Cain and Abel mirror a peaceless anthropology based on the equation of human beings with men. The war against the poor today hits no one harder than the poorest of the poor, the women of the Third World with starvation,

torture, and absolute poverty. For women to become conscious means to break with the values of patriarchy under which they were raised: militarism, use of violence, permanent preparation to exterminate others, first-strike mentality. "Women for Peace", an international peace organization, leads from the vaccinated peacelessness of "normal" life to consciously and militantly taking a stance for peace built on justice not on weaponry.

Steimle, Edmund A. "Preaching and the Biblical story of good and evil." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 31 (1976): 198-211.

Stillman, Norman A. "Story of Cain and Abel in the Qur'an and the Muslim commentators: some observations." Journal of Semitic Studies 19 (1974): 231-239.

Stump, Eleonore. "The problem of evil." Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers 2 (1985):392-423.

The approach to the problem of evil by Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, and John Hick is unsatisfactory. Properly interpreted, three Christian claims relevant to the problem: Adam fell; natural evil entered the world as a result of Adam's fall; and after death human beings go either to heaven or hell form a consistent and coherent Christian solution to the problem of evil.

Turner, Victor. The Ritual Process: structure and anti-structure. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1969.

To preserve the structure of a society so that it can continue to feed and protect its members, those social structures need to be periodically deconstructed. In the resulting chaos or "communitas" there is no structure. The first are last. The last are first. The rich are poor. The poor are rich. Such rituals of reversal bleed the pressure which social structures or hierarchies cause, and prevent these societies from permanently being destroyed.

Van Gemeren, Willem A. "The sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4 (an example of evangelical demythologization)?" Westminster Theological Journal 43(1981):320-348.

Evangelical Christian interpretations of Gen 6:1-4. The human intermarriage view holds that the sons of God were descendants of Seth who intermarried with the female descendants of Cain. The sin was that of intermarriage. The dynastic kingship view, offered as a variant to the ancient Jewish interpretation, proposes that the sons of God were dynastic kings who claimed and were recognized to be "divine". Their sin was polygamy and that of their children was that they were ruthless. The article analyzes both views and concludes that the balanced contrast of "the sons of God" and "the daughters of man" on contextual and linguistic considerations argues in favor of the sons of God as angelic/preternatural beings who "fathered" human offspring, and thus originated a "super race". Demonic possession cannot be excluded. The flood is interpreted as a divine judgment on man's search for eternity (divinity). Man is doomed to a limited lifespan of 120 years maximum.

Waltke, Bruce K. "Cain and his offering." Westminster Theological Journal 48 (1986):363-372.

Distinguishes between Abel's offering of the 'first' and Cain's offering of 'some' (Cassuto 1961: 206-7; Sarna 1970:29; Waltke 1986; Wenham Genesis 1-15 WBC, 103-4).

Gerald. "Reading "the text" and reading "behind-the-text": the Cain and Abel story in a context of liberation." In The Bible in three dimensions. Edited by D. Clines, et al., 1990: 299-320.

Wolde, Ellen van. "The story of Cain and Abel: a narrative study [bibliog]." Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. 52 (1991):25-41.

Cain is tempted not to look at Abel eye to eye as a brother, but rather to hide himself from the eyes of Abel like an animal crouching to attack him. Yahweh looks on Abel, although he is "worthless" or weak, even though Cain, like most humans, ignore the weak. "Sin" and "serpent" are two nouns that both function as subject of the nominal sentence 7b.. In this sentence rabas is the second subject and the explanation or specification of the first subject: 'sin:' "...at the door is sin, the sin of lying in wait." 'Serpent' specifies the contents of 'sin': we are not concerned with a sinful deed in general, but with the specific, well defined sin of 'prowling' or 'lying in ambush for'.

_____. "A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2-3: a semiotic theory and method of analysis applied to the story of the Garden

of Eden." Studia Semitica Neerlandica: Van Gorcum, 1989.

Wood, Forrest, Jr. "Averting violence: social and personal." Perspectives in Religious Studies 14(1987):29-37.

Violence results from Cain as an archetype of the unaccepted Cain hating his unacceptance and being envious Abel as an archetype of the accepted. Psychologically, Cain and Abel are not two sons but one, and he is us. The unaccepted part of us hates its unacceptance and is envious of the accepted part of us. We seek acceptance and project that in the seeking the acceptance of our fathers and project that in seeking of the acceptance of our divine and human parents. Woods uses the relationship of sacrifice to violence proposed by Rene Girard to interpret the stories of Cain and Abel as a universal psychological profile.

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