

EVE: THE EVOLUTION OF A CHARACTER FROM
GENESIS THROUGH THE PASTORALS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps more than any other biblical text, Genesis 2-3 has influenced western concepts of gender.¹ The interpretation of this text as the “fall” of Adam and Eve became the root of Christian thought concerning the origin of sin. Throughout the interpretive history of these chapters, Eve has been portrayed as one who “tempted, beguiled, lured, corrupted, persuaded, taught, counseled, suggested, urged, used wicked persuasion, led into wrongdoing, proved herself an enemy, used guile and cozening, tears and lamentations, to prevail upon Adam, had no rest until she got her husband banished, and thus became ‘the first temptress’.”² As a result, this linkage of woman and sin has become a basic assumption of western culture. Indeed, as one scholar writes, “Over the centuries this misogynous reading has acquired a status of canonicity so that those who deplore and those who applaud the story both agree upon its meaning.”³

Given the text’s importance in the modern culture and psyche, one could easily assume that Genesis 2-3 held an equal place of influence in the worldview of ancient Israelite literature. Such is not the case, at least if we use those Hebrew writings that compose the TANAK as the basis for judgment. The character of Eve appears only in Genesis 2-3. While the biblical prophets deal often and at length with the topic of sin, nowhere do they cite Eve, or for that matter Adam, as an example of the consequences

¹Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1988) 72.

thereof. Rather, when speaking of sin the prophets tend to use, among other metaphors, harlotry, wandering in the desert, or hardened hearts.

The book of Ben Sira (c.180 B.C.E.) provides the next mention of the primeval woman, Eve, and the first extant citation of “a woman” as the beginning of sin and the cause of death. In suggesting this, Ben Sira may have deviated from the views of his contemporaries.⁴ Nevertheless, his view prevailed. It is from this point, in the Hellenistic age (app. 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.), that unabashedly negative references to Eve burgeon in the kaleidoscopic body of writings known as the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Because these works were not deemed canonical by Jews or Christians, they remain comparatively unknown. But the Pseudepigrapha shed much light upon the early Jewish and Christian world; in the case of this study of Eve, it forms a bridge between the character Eve as found in Genesis and references in the Pseudo-Pauline letters.

Literature is both a creation and a creator of its culture. Christians inherited the literature and the cultural world of hellenized Judaism, and, included in that package, were the prevailing interpretations of Genesis 2-3 and a certain characterization of Eve. Emerging in the New Testament, these portrayals of the primeval woman would influence Christian and secular literature, art, and religion, especially in the West, to the present

²Jean M. Higgins, “The Myth of Eve: The Temptress,” *JAR*, 444/4 (1976) 642.

³Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) 73.

⁴Bruce Malina, “Some Observations on the Origin of Sin in Judaism and St. Paul,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969) 22-24.

day.⁵

In the last quarter of this century, scholars have questioned the accuracy of our assumptions and two millennia of interpretations and translations of Genesis 2-3. They have discovered that our assumptions, and the interpretations upon which they are based, may be flawed. The aim of this paper is to examine both traditional and alternative views of Eve. It will show how the literary character of Eve developed from her initial appearance in the writings of the TANAK, in the book of Genesis, to her overwhelmingly negative portrayals in intertestamental writings, including Ben Sira and the Pseudepigrapha. Then it will examine the character of Eve in the canonical New Testament, specifically in 2 Corinthians and the Pastorals (1 Timothy).

⁵For a thorough discussion of the treatment of Adam and Eve in literature from early Judaism to the Renaissance, see J.M. Evans, Paradise Lost and the Genesis Traditions (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 1968.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

By utilizing the many methodologies of biblical criticism, scholars learn more about biblical texts and the diverse factors that both brought them into existence and transmitted them through time. Each of these methods acts as a tool to help readers gain understanding of a variety of questions relating to particular texts. These questions have included: Who was the author of the text? Who was the author's audience? What was the social milieu in which the author and audience lived? What points did the author wish to impart, and why? What techniques did the author use to impart his/her points with the maximum impact?

At this point in time there are two major groupings of methodologies within biblical criticism: the older methodologies, such as historical, form, source, and redaction criticisms, and the newer methodologies, including literary, social world and feminist criticisms. While some tension has existed between practitioners of the traditional and the newer methods, more scholars are demonstrating that different methodologies, both old and new, may be used in harmony with one another, complementing each other and yielding a fuller picture of the text at hand.

Feminist Hermeneutics

This paper will utilize insights from the more established critical methods, but the overriding methodology will be that of feminist hermeneutics. Literary criticism,⁶ social world criticism, and historical-critical methods will proceed from the questions asked of the text by feminist hermeneutical methods. For

even that sort of interpretation that purportedly seeks only ‘the facts of the past’ will have access to those ‘facts’ only in the form that fits the question asked. The better part of intellectual credibility is to acknowledge at the outset the factors motivating one’s questions.⁷

Until the past several decades, men have produced the body of biblical scholarship.⁸ They have tended to consider their questions and interpretations as “objective” and “value free.” But in reality many factors influence biblical interpretation, and the gender of the interpreter is an important one. The questions the interpreter asks are to a large degree influenced by his or her life experience. For instance, it is a value

⁶Literary critical methods are known by different names: for example, in the past Old Testament studies were labeled “rhetorical criticism.” At this time this method falls under the general label of literary criticism. For a thorough discussion and application of this method see: Phyllis Trible, Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method and the Book of Jonah (Minneapolis: Fortress Press) 1994!

⁷Claudia V. Camp, “Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity,” Searching the Scriptures vol. 1, ed. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (NY: Crossroad, 1993) 156.

⁸Among the earliest known women who attempted biblical interpretation in the United States is Judith Sargent Murray, who was rebuffed in her efforts to grapple with Genesis 2-3 (c. 1790). The best known early feminist revision is Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s The Woman’s Bible (1895-96). Pamela J. Milne gives an overview of women’s attempts to make their voices heard in “Feminist Interpretations of the Bible: Then and Now,” Bible Review October 1992, 38-43, 52-55.

judgment to study the minting of money rather than the cooking of food.⁹ Recent biblical-critical studies are beginning to acknowledge the impact of the gender of the interpreter upon her work.¹⁰

Feminists using different critical methods have challenged the very roots of traditional constructs and have attempted to construct their own models. With their critique of a male-dominated society, they have drawn attention to the problem of ethnocentrism, or reading one's own cultural biases into another culture. As a rule, men have read texts inserting their own male biases into them. In addition, they have evaluated texts using biases from their own historical and cultural periods. Obviously, no person can work divorced from these concerns. Feminists using critical methods, however, attempt to state from the beginning their biases and how they may influence their conclusions.

Because it strives to offer and embrace alternative viewpoints, feminism eludes a strict definition. But feminism does "attempt a critique of the oppressive structures of society."¹¹ By turning that critical process to religious institutions and the documents they produce, women come to many different conclusions. Women do not produce a

⁹Mary Ann Tolbert, "Social, Sociological, and Anthropological Methods," Searching the Scriptures vol. 1, ed. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (NY: Crossroad, 1993) 256.

¹⁰Factors other than gender influence an exegete's work, including race, culture and economic status. Some African American women have defined the term "Womanist" to describe their work, and Hispanic women have coined the term *Mujerista*. See Searching the Scriptures vol. 1, chapters five and six.

¹¹Mary Ann Tolbert, "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics," Semeia 28 (1983) 113-126.

monolithic corpus of work any more than men do. However, one may perceive several general approaches to biblical feminism. Women may reject religious institutions and documents out of hand as irreformable (rejectionist); they may continue to accept the Bible as the inspired word of God and the idea that God wishes both men and women to live in equality and harmony (loyalist); they may attempt to reform certain problematic texts from within their tradition, reclaiming them for women and the church (revisionist); they may assert that women are superior to men (sublimationist), or they may attempt to use the biblical texts to transform the social order (liberationist).¹² Women engaging in feminist hermeneutics may stand in any one of these positions, or a combination of several.

Feminists approach a biblical text with a hermeneutics of suspicion,¹³ scrutinizing not only the text itself, but often the layers of historical interpretation the text has accumulated over time. Interpreters of Genesis 2-3, as we will discover, were particularly susceptible to eisegesis, or reading their own interpretations into the text. Later readers so accepted these often misogynistic interpretations that they did not question them. Feminist exegesis, therefore, will take into account not only the text itself, but also the history of interpretation of that text,¹⁴ which both undergird and support “the oppressive

¹²Camp cites Carolyn Osiek for these five approaches to feminism in Searching the Scriptures vol. 1, 156-57.

¹³Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, “Feminist Hermeneutics,” Anchor Bible Dictionary vol. 2, ed. David N. Freeman (NY: Doubleday, 1992) 783-91.

¹⁴Sharon Ringe, “When Women Interpret the Bible,” The Woman’s Bible Commentary, ed. Carol A. Newsome and Sharon Ringe (Louisville/Westminster/John Knox, 1992) 6.

structures of patriarchal society.”¹⁵

Literary Criticism

Rather than speak of literary criticism as a uniform method, one may instead note several types of literary criticism. One more recent method of literary criticism, reader-response criticism, demonstrates a post-modern approach and “approaches biblical literature in terms of the values, attitudes, and responses of readers.”¹⁶ It focuses upon the *reader’s* role in the determining meaning. Thus, in its most radical form, reader response criticism challenges the notion of an “objective reading.” Critics are

confronting seriously the view that language is infinitely unstable and thus that meaning is always deferrable; they are radically foregrounding the reader’s values as determinative of interpretation; they are arguing that criticism is not anchored in fixed texts but in fragile communities of interpreters; and they are recognizing that criticism is social construction, or persuasion, if you will.¹⁷

As this paper will demonstrate, different readers, emerging from different communities of interpreters, have read Genesis 2-3 and produced from it a number of different interpretations. The text of Genesis remained more or less static or fixed throughout the millennia, but different readers interpreted it in startlingly different ways, up to the present day. These interpretations persuaded communities to adopt various

¹⁵Tolbert, “Defining the Problem” 119.

¹⁶Edgar V. McKnight, “Reader-Response Criticism,” To Each Its Own Meaning, ed. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 197.

¹⁷David M. Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application, ed. Stephen Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 172.

views of the character of Eve. This paper will look at the responses of ancient readers to the Genesis 2-3 text and their views of the character of Eve as well as the lively conversation of scholars and others who read and respond to the text today.

Another literary critical approach is New Criticism, which examines the text itself as a vehicle of communication between author and audience. Its focus is primarily the text rather than concerns external to it such as historical background, the passage's *sitz im leben*, and any theological concerns the passage may suggest.¹⁸ A reading using New Criticism reveals the artistry of the text itself as a creative work.¹⁹

The elements in the text upon which biblical literary critics focus are the same as those of their counterparts in nonbiblical literature: plot, character, setting, and use of words. They explore “manifold varieties of minutely shifting plays of idea, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, and compositional units” in a pericope.²⁰ An exegete utilizing this method will look at, among other clues, word choice and repetition, sentence length and structure, and the interplay between dialogue and narration. By making the choices they do in these areas, authors reveal themselves as writers who use the tools of their trade to illuminate and captivate readers, not only to inform them.

¹⁸See Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Janice Capel Anderson, “Literary-Critical Methods,” Searching the Scriptures vol. 1, ed. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993) 241-254.

¹⁹For further reading see: J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines, eds., The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International) 1993; Edgar McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, eds., The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International) 1994.

²⁰ Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (NY: Basic Books, 1981) 12.

Social World Criticism

Scholars have investigated religions using sociological, archaeological and anthropological tools since the 19th century, when these disciplines developed. These social science methods found their way into biblical scholarship through the influence of three main figures: Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber.²¹

“Biblical sociology” is a broad, imprecise label that includes the application of social scientific criticism to the Bible, employing methods, data, and theories from the social sciences (anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology) to more clearly discern the relationship between biblical writings and the society that produced them.²²

²¹Mary Ann Tolbert, “Social, Sociological and Anthropological Methods” 261 ff. Durkheim, a French sociologist of the 19th century, was the major proponent of “positivism,” which in turn finds its roots in Auguste Comte. Positivism asserts that “only statements subject to empirical verification are to be considered valid, thus making art, religion and any type of metaphysical speculation essentially meaningless.” In his view, factual statements are verifiable, and value statements are not; he wanted to apply social science in such a way that it, as well as natural sciences, would be value-free. Marx, while not himself strictly a sociologist, posited his theory of class conflict that influenced many later sociological studies. Conflict between Christians and Marxists has delayed the integration of Marxian social theory in biblical studies until very recently. Weber’s work in many religious traditions, including Judaism, rejected Durkheim’s empiricism and acted as a catalyst for further work in biblical sociology in this century.

²²Norman K. Gottwald, “Sociology,” The Anchor Bible Dictionary vol. 6, ed. David N. Freedman (NY: Doubleday, 1992) 79-89. See also: Bruce Malina, The New Testament World: Insights From Cultural Anthropology, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press) 1993; Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, Social-Science Commentary and the Synoptic Gospels (Minneapolis: Fortress Press) 1992; John Pilch and Bruce Malina, eds. Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson) 1993.

Until recently scholars have applied social scientific tools to specifically religious questions, for example, discovering the date of the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 2-6).²³ More recently biblical scholars have adapted these approaches to the social world of the Bible. The guiding question is, “What social structures and social processes are explicit or implicit in the biblical literature, in the scattered socioeconomic data it contains, in the overtly political history it recounts, and in the religious beliefs and practices it attests?”²⁴

As with literary and feminist methods, there are many social scientific methodological approaches. The text chosen and the questions asked of it determine which tools a scholar will use. The various texts examined in this paper require a full toolbox: anthropology, archaeology, economics, political science and others disciplines.

Applications of the Methods

This paper utilizes traditional critical methods and newer ones such as literary and social world criticism and feminist hermeneutics to study several questions: How does the character of Eve develop over the period of c. 950 B.C.E. to the second century of the common era? How do the (presumably male) writers portray her character, and to what ends? How does the social milieu in which these writers live influence their characterizations? How does the social milieu of the readers influence their interpretations, translations and retellings of texts concerning the character of Eve?

²³Norman Gottwald, The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) 29.

²⁴Ibid., 26.

Traditional historical critical methods will reveal the historical background of ancient Israel and the very different hellenistic world of Ben Sira, the authors of the Pseudepigrapha, 2 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. The different forms of literary criticism will aid in determining author intent, reader response and the numerous literary conventions the authors of Genesis 2-3, Sirach, selected works of the Pseudepigrapha and 1 Timothy use to tell their stories. Social world criticism will apply discoveries from archaeology, anthropology, economics and other sociological areas to the texts, providing valuable insights not available by readings of the texts alone. Guiding all of these methodologies will be feminist criticism, with its overriding questions of the status of Eve as a female character in male-dominated societies.

CHAPTER II

TWO READINGS OF THE CHARACTER OF EVE IN GENESIS

General Introduction to Genesis

The only mention of the character of Eve in what came to be the canonical Hebrew scriptures is found in the book of Genesis. In order to more completely understand the primary Eve text, Genesis 2-3, we would do well to review its historical and literary context.

The book of Genesis, with Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, makes up the Pentateuch, or Torah, which holds the primary place in the faith and history of the Jewish people. The Pentateuch was the first part of the TANAK to be accepted as sacred and canonical.¹ Expressed in it is the Jewish view of primeval history, the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, the account of Moses and the exodus from Egypt, and the giving and interpretation of the Law.

Most scholars accept the theory that the Pentateuch, which covers a wide time range and exhibits several different writing styles, is not the work of one author but rather that of several writers carefully edited, blended and augmented. The compiler and editor of the passage under consideration in this chapter, Genesis 2-3, is given the label “J,” or Yahwist, because of his² distinctive use of the term YHWH; he also employs consistent style, content, concepts and choice of vocabulary that set him apart from the other

¹E.A. Speiser, Genesis Anchor Bible vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964) xix.

Pentateuchal writers.³ While determining J's work in its biblical context is fairly clear-cut, determining the date at which he wrote it is not. Most scholars place his work at about 950 B.C.E.⁴ The date at which he wrote, however, does not define the age of the traditions he incorporated; some are probably more ancient. There is evidence that the Hebrew narratives of Genesis were influenced by those of Israel's neighbors, specifically the Babylonians, as witnessed in the epics of Gilgamesh, Atrahasis and Adapa.⁵

The Yahwist dominates the book of Genesis, and in his characteristically laconic manner has created biblical personalities that have lived in the imaginations of Jews and Christians for millennia: Abraham and his wife Sarah, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and, of course, Adam and Eve, the primeval man and woman. "Prose fiction" might be the best rubric for describing the Yahwist's biblical narrative, and the essential aim of this literary form was "to produce a certain indeterminacy of meaning, especially in regard to motive, moral character, and psychology."⁶ Some have even argued that "deliberate ambiguity" was the goal of the Yahwist.⁷

²While the authors of the Pentateuch are anonymous, we presume them to be male.

³Speiser, Genesis xxiii. For a clear, succinct presentation of the JEPD theory, see Conrad L'Heureux, In and Out of Paradise (NY: Paulist Press, 1983) chapter 1.

⁴Speiser, Genesis xxvii; Gerhard von Rad, Genesis (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972) 24-25.

⁵For more concerning the Babylonian epics and their influence in the book of Genesis, see L'Heureux, In and Out of Paradise chapter 2; Speiser, Genesis 26-27, and Bernard Batto, Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox) 1992.

⁶Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative 24, 12.

⁷Ibid., 18.

Many writers have ventured their opinions of Genesis 2-3 from the time of Ben Sira (c. 180 B.C.E.), to the time of John Milton, to the present.⁸ Many of these commentators relied upon information from translators, whose craft certainly contains as much art as science. While any translation, either in the 20th century or the second, will reflect the biases and opinions of its translator, and is an interpretation, 20th century scholars have tools that their earlier counterparts did not have. The latter did not, of course, use historical/critical methods of exegesis, not to mention archaeological, sociological, or literary analysis, nor any of the technological tools of computers, carbon dating and others. What they had was the interpretations and usage of the texts of those who had gone before them. Scholars, like judges, tend to rely on precedent, and a certain inbreeding of interpretation can take place if basic assumptions concerning a topic are not challenged. Most people accept uncritically the view of Genesis 2-3, and consequently Eve, received from early interpretive sources such as the New Testament, the Mishnah, and the church fathers, or from later writers who relied upon those texts. In studying the opinions of the early interpreters of Genesis 2-3, therefore, we may learn more about the interpreters' concerns than about the text itself. One may debate the extent to which those early Jews and Christians were aware of these processes at play; nevertheless, their biases, conscious or unconscious, have influenced ours. Our task is to determine what these biases were.

⁸J.M. Evans gives an overview of Jewish, Christian and literary interpretations of Genesis 2-3

One way to uncover some of these ancient biases is through the use of literary critical tools and techniques. Another is through sociological criticism. This chapter will closely examine the work of two contemporary and influential feminist scholars who employ these methods. Both scholars study Genesis 2-3 because of its impact upon their religious traditions and upon the perception of gender roles in general. While using similar methodologies, they employ different tools within their own areas of expertise. Each produces different interpretations while using similar strategies, not unlike other scholars. Phyllis Trible's "A Love Story Gone Awry," a chapter in her larger work God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, uses literary criticism to study Genesis 2-3. Trible, a Christian, attempts to reclaim the text as legitimate for women of our time. Carol Meyers, a Jewish scholar not concerned with preserving Christian theological constructs, uses feminist, literary and social world methods to produce an interpretation of Genesis 2-3 that reveals human needs rather than theistic motivations. The studies of these two scholars are important in understanding the exegesis of this text in our times. Trible, the first to analyze Genesis 2-3 from a feminist perspective, has influenced many scholars, including Meyers. We will look at the work of each of these scholars in turn to begin peeling away the many layers of interpretation the character of Eve has acquired over the centuries.

PHYLLIS TRIBLE: A RHETORICAL (LITERARY) STUDY

Anyone wishing to undertake critical work regarding Genesis 2-3 cannot ignore the exegesis of Phyllis Tribble. The importance of Tribble's work on Eve in biblical studies cannot be underestimated. Her "Love Story Gone Awry,"⁹ a rhetorical study of Genesis 2-3 in the book God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, broke the ground for many consequent studies of Eve. A complete list of these studies would be tremendous.¹⁰ Even those scholars who do not share Tribble's concern for preserving the Bible's legitimacy for modern women have found her work useful in their own studies.¹¹

Virtually everyone knows the story of Adam and Eve, and many have accepted traditional interpretations of the story without question. These views "proclaim male superiority and female inferiority as the will of God"¹² and accuse Eve of acting as a "temptress" to her husband. Nevertheless, enough people have been uncomfortable with the traditional interpretations to create a need for fresh studies of Genesis 2-3. Broadly conceived, Tribble's "Love Story Gone Awry" articulates, responds to and challenges,

⁹This section also includes sections from Tribble's "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread," Andover Newton Quarterly 13/4 (1973) 251-58.

¹⁰Among recent studies are Nehama Aschkenasy Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Tradition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press) 1986; Conrad L'Heureux In and Out of Paradise (NY: Paulist Press) 1983; Elaine Pagels Adam, Eve and the Serpent (NY: Random House) 1988.

¹¹For Tribble's struggle with and defense of the Bible as relevant for modern women, see her article "If the Bible's So Patriarchal, How Come I Love It?" Bible Review 8 (October 1992) 44-47, 55.

¹²Tribble, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality 73.

through literary analysis, the traditional exegesis of Genesis 2-3. Tribble's use of literary and feminist analysis debunks the interpretations that scholars and non-scholars alike have generally accepted as "gospel;" assumptions that are at the core of later views portraying Eve as the mother of all sin and death.

Among the flawed assumptions Tribble lists are:

- *A male God creates first man (2:7) and last woman (2:22); first means superior and last means inferior or subordinate.
- *Woman is created for the sake of man: a helpmate to cure his loneliness (2:18-23).
- *Contrary to nature, woman comes out of man; she is denied even her natural function of birthing and that function is given to man (2:21-22).
- *Woman is the rib of man (2:23); woman has a derivative, not an autonomous, existence.
- *Woman tempted man to disobey and thus she is responsible for sin in the world (3:6); she is untrustworthy, gullible, and simpleminded.
- *Woman is cursed by pain in childbirth (3:16); pain in childbirth is a more severe punishment than man's struggles with the soil; it signifies that woman's sin is greater than man's.
- *God gives man the right to rule over woman (3:16).¹³

Much can be and has been written concerning the entirety of Genesis 2-3. Tribble herself examines each detail of the two chapters closely. This paper, however, concerned with the development of the character of Eve, will focus upon key passages that shed light upon the character. This section will look specifically at three vital areas in Genesis 2-3:

the origin of gender (2:18-24), the woman's conversation with the serpent (3:1-6), and the final conversation of the man and woman with YHWH (3:8-24). It will use Tribble's list of assumptions to provide a framework from which to examine these three areas.

Analysis of Genesis 2-3*

Tribble sees the subject of Genesis 2-3 as life and death, *Eros* and *Thanatos*, and the plot as moving from *Eros*, with its blossoming of life in all its forms, and human delight in that life, to *Thanatos*, the disintegration of life and harmonious relationships. The relationship between the sexes is central to this plot, and this relationship begins with the creation of gender.

Traditional interpretations of the origin of gender have contributed to a patriarchal view of male superiority and female inferiority. Tribble sums up a few of these interpretations in the following statements:

- *God creates first man (2:7) and last woman (2:22); first means superior and last means inferior or subordinate.
- *Woman is created for the sake of man: a helpmate to cure his loneliness (2:18-23).
- *Contrary to nature, woman comes out of man; she is denied even her natural function of birthing and that function is given to man (2:21-22).
- *Woman is the rib of man (2:23); woman has a derivative, not an autonomous, existence.

¹³Ibid., 73.

* For the entire text of Genesis 2-3, see Appendix.

A first step in debunking these notions is a careful examination of the texts so interpreted, particularly their choice of words. A key word in Genesis 2:7 and 2:22, two texts used as a basis for the first assumption, is *ha- 'adam*. This word is most often translated “man.” However, the creature *ha- 'adam* is not identified as either male or female. While the Hebrew word is grammatically male, it does not imply that the creature is sexually male, any more than modern gendered languages such as Spanish assume that, for instance, a chair (*silla*) is sexually female. A clue to the meaning of *ha- 'adam* can be found in the word *'adamah*, usually rendered “earth.” YHWH’s creature comes out of the earth, and its Hebrew name involves a pun lost in the English “man.” Tribble offers her own translation of *ha- 'adam* as “earth creature.”¹⁴ This genderless creature, *ha- 'adam*, is YHWH’s first human creation. The earth creature, however, is not the first “man.” The creation of gendered human beings is yet to come.

After the creation the earth (*'adamah*, 2:5-6) YHWH God forms *ha 'adam* from the *'adamah* (2:7). YHWH creates a garden, provides water for it and takes the earth creature there, saying:

You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die (2:16-17).

Then YHWH observes that “It is not good that *ha- 'adam* should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him” (2:18). But not a single animal YHWH created was “a helper fit for

¹⁴Tribble, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality 78.

him” (2:20). So YHWH anesthetizes *ha- 'adam*, takes one of his ribs, and creates a fit helper (2:21-22).

Here we come upon another word, “helper” (*'ezer*), that requires clarification. A “helper” is frequently understood as one less competent than the one being helped; for instance, a teacher’s helper would possess less competence and authority than the teacher herself. The Hebrew *'ezer*, often translated as “helper,” has many Old Testament uses. In Genesis 2-3 it describes both the animals and the woman; in other places in the Hebrew scriptures it refers to YHWH, who is the helper of Israel.¹⁵ The reader can determine the relationship of *'ezer* to other characters in the narrative from the context. On this evidence Tribble asserts that the word itself “does not specify positions within relationships; more particularly, it does not imply inferiority.”¹⁶ Another argument in favor of this position is the appearance of the word *neged* (“fit for him”), which connotes the equality of the woman to the man, as opposed to the status of the animals, who are not fit helpers for the earth creature (2:20).

Celebrating this creation of a fit helper, *ha- 'adam* rejoices:

Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.
This shall be called *'ishshah* (woman)
because from *'ish* (man) was taken this (2:23).

Here YHWH separates *ha- 'adam*, the ungendered earth creature, into male and female persons, creating sexual man (*'ish*) and sexual woman (*'ishshah*). YHWH creates man

¹⁵Psalms 121:2; 124:8; 146:5; 115:9-11; Exodus 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29.

and woman as separate beings at the same stroke; the existence of man depends upon the creation of woman, and the existence of woman upon the creation of man. Thus *'ish* and *'ishshah* arise together because male and female were created together, and the gendered identity of each is by definition dependent upon the other.¹⁷

But was not the woman “taken from” the man? The phrase “taken from” needs to be examined in context. It appears three times within 2:21-24: once in 23 (above), and twice (21,22). In each instance the verb concerns the woman. First, YHWH “*took one from* its ribs” while the earth creature slept (2:21), and “Yahweh God built the rib which he *took from* the earth creature into woman” (2:22).¹⁸ Outside this pericope, “taken from” occurs twice, both times in the passive voice, and both times referring to the earth creature. The first instance is in 3:19: “till you return to the earth, for *from* it you were *taken*,” and the second in 3:23: “therefore, Yahweh God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the earth *from* which he was *taken*.”¹⁹

Never would we imagine that the earth creature is subordinate to the earth because it is taken from it. The earth creature is derived from the earth, and the earth forms the raw material from which YHWH creates the creature. In the same way, the woman cannot be seen as subordinate to the earth creature because she derives from it; it forms the raw material from which she is made. But the life of the earth creature and the lives of the

¹⁶Trible, “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread” 252.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁸Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* 100.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 101.

man and woman “originate[s] with God.”²⁰ The earth creature does not birth itself, the man, or the woman; YHWH is the author of their lives.

As the woman makes her appearance, she is the culmination of YHWH’s creative activity, and the culmination of this section of the narrative. YHWH chooses to make the woman and carefully builds her from the available raw material. The verb *bnh*, “make” or “build” (2:22), “indicates considerable labor to produce solid results” showing that “woman is no weak dainty, ephemeral creature. No opposite sex, no second sex, no derived sex--in short, no ‘Adam’s rib.’”²¹

Thus we discover that “man” was not created first; nor does last mean inferior or subordinate. Woman is not taken from man, but the creation of gender is a simultaneous process. Woman is not dependent upon man for her life, but both are beholden to YHWH. Tribble’s view of the character of Eve begins to emerge.

The next assumption under examination is arguably more responsible for several millennia of misogynous attitudes and actions than any other drawn from Genesis 2-3. It is:

*Woman tempted man to disobey and thus she is responsible for sin in the world (3:6); she is untrustworthy, gullible, and simpleminded.

The context from which this interpretation arises, 2:25-3:7, is a dialogue between the woman, who speaks for the first time, and the serpent, who makes its first, last and only

²⁰Ibid., 102

²¹Ibid., 102.

appearance. Because of its vital role in later perceptions of the character of Eve, the entire passage bears repeating here. Tribble's translation of 2:25-3:7 reads:

Now they both were naked, the man and his woman
and they were not ashamed.

But the serpent was the sliest of all the wild beasts that Yahweh God
had made.

And he said to the woman:
"Did God really say, 'You shall not eat from every tree of the
garden?'"

And the woman said to the serpent:
"From every fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But from the
fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, God said:
'You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, lest you die.'"

And the serpent said to the woman:
"Indeed you will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it,
your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good
and evil."

And the woman saw that
good was the tree for food,
a delight it was to the eyes,
and the tree was desired to make one wise.

So she took from it
and she ate,
and she also gave to her man [who was] with her
and he ate.

And the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that naked were
they; and they sewed leaves together and made for themselves
clothes.²²

²²Ibid., 106.

The dialogue between the woman and the serpent is central in this section. The serpent speaks in plural verb forms, but only the woman replies. The Yahwist conceals from the reader until the conclusion of the dialogue that the man is with her.

The serpent, being a sly creature, phrases his question cleverly: “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?’” (3:1). Such a question cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. In answering the serpent’s question, the woman not only recounts God’s words but even adds to them (“you shall not touch it” [3:3]). In so doing, she shows herself as “intelligent, informed and perceptive. Theologian, ethicist, hermeneut, rabbi, she speaks with clarity and authority.”²³ But following the serpent’s verbal counterattack, she is silent. The Yahwist does not tell us in great detail why she decides to disobey YHWH’s command, even if the fruit is good for food, a delight for the eyes, and desired for wisdom (3:6).

When the woman acts, however, she does so decisively, with a quick succession of verbs: she took, she ate, she gave (3:6). The indirect object of her giving, however, the man, has indeed been passive, at least according to all textual evidence. The man, who is with the woman (3:6), does not say a word throughout the entire scene, much less a word of protest. Tribble notes that “[the man] does not theologize; he does not contemplate...instead, his one act is belly-oriented, and it is an act of acquiescence, not of

²³Ibid., 110.

initiative.”²⁴ The Yahwist does not note that the woman “tempted” her companion to eat the fruit at any point in the narrative.

A stronger picture of Eve is emerging, one that belies the persistent portrait of “temptress.” From all textual evidence, the act of disobedience to YHWH’s command is a mutual one. Even though the woman’s actions were active and the man’s passive, both disregarded YHWH’s command.²⁵ Far from tempting the man, the woman says not a word to him. The woman is the one who shows herself to be articulate and thoughtful, while the man shows himself “gullible and simpleminded.”

The human pair itself soon reaps the fruit of its deed. The eyes of the one flesh are opened, but they awaken to shame, knowing their nakedness and sewing their own clothes to cover it up. As Tribble observes, “instead of fulfillment, joy, and gift, they now experience life as a problem that *they* must solve...existence has become burden.”²⁶

At this point YHWH has a say in the future of the pair. Those pronouncements (3:14-19) have given rise to the following interpretations:

*Woman is cursed by pain in childbirth (3:16); pain in childbirth is a more severe punishment than man’s struggles with the soil; it signifies that woman’s sin is greater than man’s.

*God gives man the right to rule over woman (3:16).

²⁴*Ibid.*, 113.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 114.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 114-115.

YHWH, conspicuously absent during the tryst with the serpent, returns to the garden looking for the man and woman. Realizing that they are naked, they hide. YHWH questions the man. “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (3:11). The man does not accuse the woman of tempting him; he blames God for giving him the woman in the first place: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate” (3:12). The woman, on the other hand, does not ape the man’s words. She could have blamed YHWH for placing the serpent in the garden, but she simply states “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate” (3:13).

The Hebrew word for give, *ntn*, used with both YHWH and the woman as its subjects in the man’s reply to YHWH, does not mean or imply temptation or seduction. Only the woman’s statement to YHWH contains the verb *nsh*’, to deceive or seduce. If the Yahwist wanted to portray the woman as a seducer, not resting until the capitulation of her husband was complete, he missed a prime opportunity at this point.²⁷

A cursory reading of 3:14-19 might lead the casual reader to believe that the serpent, the man and the woman are cursed. In fact, YHWH curses only one creature in 3:14-19, the serpent. YHWH says, “Because you have done this, cursed (‘*arur*) are you among all animals...” (3:14). The accusatory formula “because you have...cursed are” is repeated to condemn the earth because of the man (3:17). The man and woman suffer judgments or consequences for their actions, but neither is cursed; the accusatory formula

²⁷Tribble, “Eve and Adam” 257.

is not present in the text regarding either of them.

The consequence of the man's eating is the cursing of the ground, upon which he will toil "all the days of [his] life" (3:17). To the woman YHWH gives toil as well: "I will greatly multiply your pain and your childbearing [*or*, your pain in childbearing]; in pain you will bring forth children" (3:16b, Tribble's trans.).²⁸

Verse 3:16 continues:

"For the man (*'ish*) is your desire, but he will rule over you."

The unity and mutuality of *'ish* and *'ishshah* and the joy of that unity is shattered. Instead of rejoicing in a mutual relationship, the consequence of the action is also that man rules over woman. *Thanatos* has triumphed over *Eros*. Neither man nor woman dies physically, but the mutual equality distinction in their relationship with each other has died. The humanity of both is diminished. But "his supremacy is neither a divine right nor a male prerogative. Her subordination is neither a divine decree nor the female destiny."²⁹ This disordered state is the result, not the punishment, of disobedience to YHWH's command.

From this point the woman fades from the story. She is not cursed, but both she and the man bear the consequences of their actions all the days of their lives. The character of Eve, whose creation as an equal partner in a relationship characterized by its mutuality has been transformed into its opposite. The relationship is now characterized by

²⁸Tribble, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality 127.

polarities, subordination and domination. This is where we leave her at the end of a literary study. But there are other ways to approach her character that may provide fresh insights.

²⁹Ibid., 128.

CAROL MEYERS: A SOCIAL WORLD STUDY

Carol Meyers, an exegete and archaeologist, reads Genesis 2-3 as an etiological tale from ancient Palestine, specifically from the Upper Galilee. In her book Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context she analyzes Genesis 2-3 using sociological, literary and feminist methods, illustrating her points with archaeological data. She devotes a fairly large portion of her book to this analysis and draws heavily from Tribble's study, but, unlike Tribble, rediscovering and reinterpreting the literary Eve is not her main goal. As her title indicates, Meyers' primary theme is revealing the lives of common women c.1200 B.C.E (Iron Age I), no easy task. The Bible alone cannot be used to accomplish this task; on the contrary, the Bible is notoriously unreliable in revealing the lives of everyday women (or men, for that matter). Therefore a multidisciplinary study is necessary. In this study, however, which incorporates much data from outside the biblical text, Meyers not only applies the sociological and archaeological data to reconstructing the everyday life of ancient women, but she gives special attention to the literary Eve.³⁰ The insights that these applications produce challenge traditional interpretations of Eve and offer a new and fascinating reading of her character.

³⁰Meyers is not pursuing a "quest for the historical Eve." Rather, she looks at the Biblical character of Eve as a representation for the typical ancient woman from the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age I.

As a Jewish scholar, Meyers is not concerned with preserving or salvaging Christian theological interpretations of Genesis 2-3. Her work actively challenges these interpretations. By “setting the scene”³¹ of the physical environment of upper Galilee, she asserts that the story responds to an ancient people’s needs to articulate and explain human, physical factors rather than divine, metaphysical questions.

Meyers first sets the scene by proposing that parts of the creation story predate the Yahwist’s writing in the tenth century and could very well have originated c.1200 B.C.E (Iron Age I).³² Archaeological evidence indicates that at this point in time a number of new Israelite settlements appeared in the Palestinian highlands. Why the Israelites would have moved into this land is a question that has no satisfactory answer. Some answers to the question are theological, citing YHWH’s promise of a homeland for the Israelites recorded in Exodus. Others guess that the movement was precipitated by the desire for social and political independence from the political superpowers of the day, Egypt and Mesopotamia.³³

The Israelites’ main occupation was agriculture. But the new settlers found farming difficult: rocky soil, lack of water during the dry season and extensive amounts of water during the wet season were particular problems that inhibited agriculture. To begin to solve these problems, the people introduced terracing. Clearing the rock exposed

³¹Meyers devotes an entire chapter to these issues, “Setting the Scene: The Highland Environment of Ancient Israel,” *Discovering Eve* 47-71.

³²*Ibid.*, 92.

³³*Ibid.*, 52.

soil, and the lay of the land encouraged maximum water retention or irrigation as needed. But the most effective solution to the problem of water supply was the cutting of cisterns. It was the cisterns that enabled the Israelites to survive in such an inhospitable land.³⁴

The survival of any people is dependent upon the three factors: “reproduction, defense, and the production of subsistence goods.”³⁵ Clearing and terracing the land, removing rocks and cutting cisterns in order to subsist upon the land required many hands. Both literary and archaeological evidence from Iron Age I and the period immediately preceding it, the Bronze Age, indicate that such labor was in short supply.

Literary records, both biblical and extrabiblical, point to epidemic disease in the Late Bronze Age, the time period just before the new Israelite settlements in upper Galilee. The ancient Israelites attributed disease to the wrath of YHWH. In their writings they wrote of the widespread loss of human life in theological language, attributing it to the visitation of the “angel of death” or the “angel of the Lord.”³⁶ Several of these incidents occurred in the Book of Numbers. The 250 leaders of the Korahites, a group in rebellion against Moses, were consumed by fire from the Lord (16:35). Directly after this 14,700 fell to the plague, sent by the wrath of the Lord (16:46, 49). In another incident Joshua was the sole survivor of a plague that claimed every other member of a reconnaissance party (14:11). And again, when several Israelite men began to have sexual liaisons with Moabite women at Beth Baal Peor and sacrifice to their god, the wrath of

³⁴Ibid., 54-55.

the Lord was again kindled, and Numbers reports that 24,000 died (25:9).³⁷

Extrabiblical sources from the late Bronze Age also attest to widespread disease. The Armana letters, so named because of their discovery at Tell-el-Amarna in Egypt, give testimony to plague and the resultant loss of life. The most poignant of these is a prayer of a certain Mursilis, a Hittite king. He begs the gods for mercy from a plague that has been raging for twenty years, leaving few survivors.³⁸

Archaeological evidence of disease corroborates literary evidence. The excavation of many Canaanite city-states reveals that they were destroyed by fire. While earlier scholars believed that this destruction was the result of war, others suggest that they were destroyed because of disease. The biblical record reveals that the role of fire in purifying articles contaminated by plague was known at the time (Numbers 31:22-23). Not only the cities, but also every person contaminated by the plague fell victim to the purifying fire.

Another archaeological study posits the decline of the population within this period. Charting, among other factors, the size and numbers of cities and number of burials in tomb groups, anthropologist J.L. Angel estimates that the population density of the Late Bronze Age, 30 people per square kilometer, dropped to 19 people per square kilometer by the beginning of the Iron Age.³⁹

³⁵Ibid., 56.

³⁶Ibid., 66.

³⁷Ibid., 67.

³⁸Ibid., 68.

³⁹Ibid., 69-70.

With this literary and archaeological evidence, we can ascertain that the Israelites who found new homes in Upper Galilee were survivors. We can also judge that they were comparatively few in number. Another piece of textual evidence indicates that they were aware of the need to increase their population. In Numbers 31, the people of Beth Baal Peor had been suffering from plague and were condemned by the Israelites to the purifying fire of destruction. Yet one group was separated from the rest to live: “But all the young girls who have not known a man by sleeping with him, keep alive for yourselves” (31:18). The Israelites must have been in dire need of increasing their population to risk such a move.⁴⁰

The availability of food, water, and the human labor to obtain them; these factors set the scene for Meyers’ interpretation of Genesis 2-3. With this social reconstruction of Meyers’, we see the context of Genesis 2-3 in a new light, and therefore the character of Eve is drawn in this world.

Themes of earth, water and the work of human beings in the production of food weave in and out of the narratives and poetry of Genesis 2-3. The text immediately and intimately links human beings with the earth by the wordplay *ha-’adam/’adamah*, as noted above in the section devoted to Tribble’s analysis. The earth, filled with the breath of YHWH, brings forth life.

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

⁴⁰*ibid.*, 70-71.

After creating the human, YHWH creates a suitable place for it to live, a place filled with trees “good for food” (2:9) and surrounded by abundant water (2:10-14). YHWH sets the human in the garden to “till and keep it” (2:15) but spares the human the intense effort of establishing it. This garden is easily maintained, as well; only two humans are needed to oversee it.

These aspects of the story would have been immediately cogent to its readers/hearers living in Iron Age I Palestine, which did not reflect this idyllic life. Many hands were needed to ensure survival for all; water was not readily available, and bringing forth food was excruciatingly difficult work: in short, the earth was not spontaneously bringing forth abundant life. But modern readers are removed from the ancient world by enormous environmental, temporal and psychological distance. We cannot see what would have been obvious to the text’s earliest readers. By considering the sociological and archaeological evidence of the period, modern readers can begin to apply insights from these disciplines to their interpretations of the text..

A close reading of the text itself, using literary-critical methods, can also reveal aspects of the narrative modern readers might overlook. Examining word choice and repetition can give clues to the major theme(s) the author may have wanted to emphasize. Different writers have different styles, and the ancient Israelites tended to repeat words to emphasize the meaning they wished to convey to a much greater extent than modern

writers.⁴¹ This holds true for Genesis 2-3. Within those two chapters, the noun “food” and the verb “eat” are frequently used terms. In Hebrew they derive from the same root, *’kl*, and in one form or another this root appears more often in Genesis 2-3 than any other except *’adamah/ha’adam*.⁴²

Not only the repetition of the words “food” and “eat” but also themes of food and eating articulate the importance of these concepts. Even a quick reading of 2-3 reveals these repetitions. In 2:9 YHWH creates “every tree that is...good for *food*” and in 2:17 tells the earth creature “You may *eat* freely of every tree in the garden.” YHWH is careful to provide sufficient water to support the vegetation (2:10-14). The entire conversation of the woman with the serpent revolves around eating, and who shall eat what, and why. After this conversation the man eats. When YHWH tells the man the consequences of his eating (3:17-19), the consequences themselves revolve around the difficulty of obtaining food: he shall *eat* of the ground “in toil;” he shall *eat* “the plants of the field;” he shall *eat* bread “by the sweat of [his] face.”

The importance of the themes of food/eating in Genesis 2-3 mirror their importance in the lives of women and men of Iron Age I. At the beginning of the narrative, the human pair had an easy job. By the end, obtaining food was backbreaking, sweat-producing labor, just as it was in upper Galilee. The consequences of the literary man’s actions within the narrative directly parallel the daily experiences of the actual man

⁴¹Ibid., 88.

within the time period.⁴³ Do the consequences of the literary woman's actions, recorded in 3:16, parallel the daily existence of "everywoman Eve?" If so, how?

Meyers uses the Revised Standard Version of 3:16 as a comparison for her own translation, numbering each line for easier reference. The RSV reads:

I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;(1)
 in pain you shall bring forth your children,(2)
 yet your desire shall be for your husband,(3)
 and he shall rule over you.(4)

As do many that precede it, this translation ignores several key points of vocabulary, syntax and context. The first examples can be found in line 1.

In Hebrew the first line contains only four words, and each of them requires scrutiny. Meyers writes, "The first line begins with a complex verbal structure. The regular verbal idea, 'I will make great' or 'I will increase,' is accompanied in the Hebrew by an infinitive absolute, another form of the same verbal root (*rbh*, 'to become much, many')." ⁴⁴ The verb *rbh* almost always denotes numerical increase, i.e., people, money, sins. This specific combination, verb plus infinitive absolute, occurs two other places in Genesis, and in both places it expresses the idea of population increase. The first refers to

⁴²Ibid., 87.

⁴³Meyers notes, "We have cautioned that with the division of labor along gender lines, no single societal task can be universally assigned to one gender. Nonetheless, strong evidence from cross-cultural studies reveals that certain tasks tend to be performed by men rather than women and vice versa. A case in point is the clearing of land. In horticultural societies at least, men have what might be considered a monopoly in the clearing of fields. There seems to be no convincing argument that the same is not true for agricultural societies, of which Israel was one" (Discovering Eve 55).

⁴⁴Ibid., 99.

the increase of Ishmaelites: “I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude” (16:10). The second refers to the Israelites: “I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore” (22:17a).

The use of this verb in conjunction with *'issabon* (pain) is unusual. Pain is a phenomenon that defies quantification.⁴⁵ Modern medicine has difficulty quantifying pain, because suffering is a subjective experience. No evidence exists for hypothesizing that the ancient Israelites thought of pain in quantitative terms, either. The traditional rendering of the object of the verb *rbh* as “pain” begins to look suspect.

The meaning of another word in line one, *heron*, makes suspect the translation of *issabon* as “pain.”⁴⁶ The Hebrew *heron* is often translated as “childbearing” or “childbirth.” The Israelites possessed a detailed vocabulary of human reproduction. The word *heron* does not signify the final event of reproduction--childbirth--but rather its beginning, “conception” or “becoming pregnant.”⁴⁷ The state of being pregnant is almost never a painful one.

The Hebrew *'issabon* apparently comes from the verbal root *'sb*, which means “to upset or grieve.” While the verb appears fifteen times in the Hebrew scriptures, in all but

⁴⁵Ibid., 100.

⁴⁶The two words usually rendered “pain” and “childbirth” have often been considered a hendiadys (“the use of two coordinate terms, such as two nouns, joined by a conjunction to express what in English would be expressed by a noun and an adjective” [Meyers 100]). Meyers rejects this interpretation of the structure.

⁴⁷Ibid., 102-103

one instance it refers to psychological or emotional rather than physical pain. On that evidence Meyers rules out physical pain as a legitimate translation of the noun form. The noun form occurs only three times within the Hebrew scriptures. The first, of course, is in 3:16. The second occurs in Genesis 3:17d: “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil (*'issabon*) you shall eat of it all the days of your life.” The second is in Genesis 5:29: “Out of the ground which God has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil (*'issabon*) of our hands.” On these grounds a more appropriate translation of *'issabon* for 3:16 is “toil” rather than pain, be it physical or emotional.⁴⁸

Meyers' translation thus far reads: “I will greatly increase your toil and your pregnancies.”⁴⁹

Line two follows line one in parallelism. It does not slavishly restate, but expands or intensifies the first line. Two words in line two bear scrutiny. The first, *yld*, often translated “to bear children,” can also mean to become a parent, either a mother or a father. In some cases the verb is translated “beget” (Genesis 5; 10; 1 Chronicles 1), and the paternal figure is “bearing” the children. Meyers notes that when *yld* is used intransitively (with no object of the verb), it signifies the physical birth process itself (cf. Genesis 30:3). When it is used transitively, it refers to the more abstract notion of becoming a parent. In 3:16 it is used transitively, and Meyers chooses the translation

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 103-5.

⁴⁹Meyers in fn. 17, p. 203 notes that “ ‘Pregnancies’ is actually singular in Hebrew. However, the preceding verbal form implies a collective plurality, and a simple English plural seems the best way to express that.”

“beget.”⁵⁰

The second word to reevaluate in line 2 is *be'eseb*. The first grouping of letters (*be*) is a preposition, but the second, *'eseb*, is related to *'issabon* and *'sb* above. In other biblical usages, this word takes on a dual meaning, that of physical labor and that of mental anguish. Meyers sees the word as reflecting both the exhaustion of physical labor coupled with the mental anxiety of raising children.

Meyers' translation of line two reads: “(Along) with travail shall you beget children.”⁵¹

In the following two lines of 3:16, Meyers does not change vocabulary or syntax to the extent she did previously, but she does argue that the words be understood in the context of her translation of lines one and two. These last lines she renders,

For to man is your desire,
and he shall predominate over you.

While maintaining the basic structure of traditional translations, Meyers takes issue with the word generally translated as “rule,” which she proposes to replace with “predominate.” The Hebrew *msl*, Meyers notes, “seems to refer to an extension of Israelite domination beyond its primary locus.” Its use elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures show this. For example, Solomon “rules” over land from the Euphrates to Egypt (1 Kings 5:1). Og “rules” land beyond his own (Joshua 12:5).⁵² In 3:16 the man also “rules” over

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 106.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 108.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 115

someone beyond his “primary locus.” No longer is he rejoicing in the “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” His rule over the woman is an unnatural one; it is an unusual response to a dire situation, the urgent need for more children.

At this point we need to recall the demographic situation of Iron Age I. The people have been tormented by plagues and disease and have suffered from a precipitous population decline. We have to remember the “toil” demanded to dig cisterns and clear terraces to grow subsistence crops for food. We may also add to these factors the reality that simply surviving to adulthood in such an environment was a challenging task. As in modern developing nations, the infant mortality rate in ancient Palestine was high. Archaeologists excavating burial sites of ancient Palestine have discovered one burial site in which 35 percent of the individuals it contained died before they reached the age of five.⁵³ As in modern society, parents in ancient societies responded to a high infant mortality rate by having more children, increasing the odds of survivors.

A necessity to have more children, however, does not equal a desire to do so. Something must overcome the woman’s tendency to resist the heavy burden of bearing and caring for a large brood. Given the physical and emotional pressures of raising a family, not to mention the physical risks associated with childbirth, the woman might understandably shrink from multiple pregnancies. But the woman desires the man, and this desire predominates over her dread of multiple pregnancies and births. Her desire for

⁵³Ibid., 112.

him will “rule” over these difficulties, producing the children necessary to maintain their grasp of the land. Understood in this context, the woman’s desire for the man will make his “rule” less oppressive.⁵⁴ But “rule,” while a correct translation, carries with it the baggage of millennia of misogyny, excusing a hierarchical male/female relationship. In light of this, Meyers offers the word “predominate.”

Meyers’ final translation of Genesis 3:16 reads:

I will greatly increase your toil and your pregnancies,
 (Along) with travail shall you beget children.
 For to your man is your desire,
 And he shall predominate over you.

Meyers, then, sees the whole of Genesis 2-3 not only as an etiological tale, but also as a reflection of the life of “Everywoman Eve.” When her people came into the land of upper Galilee, the population was already low due to a general population decline. Water was scarce at some times and overabundant at others, and while the Israelites possessed the technology to work with their environmental challenges by building cisterns and clearing terraces, the labor required many hands. To insure her people’s survival in the land, she needed to produce as many children as she could. The physical and emotional risks of many pregnancies were high; many children did not survive into adulthood. But because of her desire for the man, the woman’s fears of the travail of begetting children were predominated over. Genesis 2-3 is a reflection and explanation of these circumstances.

⁵⁴Ibid., 109-117.

CONCLUSIONS

Separated from Genesis 2-3 by three millennia, often reading it in a secondary fashion through translation, and coming to it with layers of often unconscious ready-made interpretation, modern readers may rightly question the text and traditional views of the character of Eve that they have inherited. Tribble and Meyers assert that these traditional interpretations have not come from a reading of the text itself, but rather through an eisegesis, or reading of preconceived notions into the text.

Admittedly, however, the text itself refuses to yield an entirely objective meaning. Genesis 2-3, characteristic of the work of the Yahwist, is full of ambiguities, ironies, reversals and even contradictions. The omniscient narrator reveals his knowledge selectively, and, it may seem, capriciously. At times readers are privy to the very thoughts of YHWH because YHWH has been so thoroughly anthropomorphized. Then YHWH disappears with nary a “by your leave.” At times we hear the voices of the human characters, and at other times they remain silent. While these periods of silence do not allow the characters to speak, they may provide clues to what the narrator thinks about the characters. At the same time, the ambiguities, reversals, contradictions and silences in the narrative leave much room for a reader’s own interpretations.

Tribble interprets the character of Eve as a co-creation of the human person, present at the beginning as a part of *'ha-adam*. When she is individuated from it, she brings joy into the garden, even inspiring her mate to poetry. Eve is not an afterthought or

“Adam’s rib,” but an equal to man in every way.

More than an equal, however, Tribble enables us to see Eve as an active, intelligent mover in contrast to Adam as a passive, unquestioning receiver. Eve is articulate; Adam is silent. Eve is also a person of higher integrity than Adam. The man blames both God and the woman for his mistakes; the woman mentions only the serpent.⁵⁵

By the end of the narrative, however, Tribble sees that Eve has lost life in its fullest sense. She did not die (another odd point in the narrative; it seems that the serpent, and not YHWH, was the truthful one), but both she and the man suffer for their disobedience.

Meyers agrees with a number of Tribble’s conclusions about the character of Eve, but by no means all of them. As a different reader in a different context (Jewish rather than Christian) and using different methodologies (sociological in addition to literary), Meyers brings different questions to the task and thus forms different conclusions. In her

⁵⁵Readers may legitimately ask why competent scholars of the last 2,000 years have not commented upon these characterizations. One answer to this question is relatively simple: the influence of Jerome and his Latin Vulgate. A man of irascible temper, Jerome was a misogynist strong in his views even for his time (4th-5th centuries C.E.). His many written works, especially his letters and the polemical treatise *Against Jovinian*, give ample testimony to this fact. See Meyers, *Discovering Eve* 76; Elizabeth A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press) 1979; J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London: Duckworth and Co.) 1975.

Jerome’s massively influential Vulgate (c. 382 C.E.), which became the authoritative Bible of the Church for the next millennium, left out a key phrase of Genesis 2:6. We read in English, as Jerome did in Hebrew, “she also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate” (emphasis mine). Jerome, a highly competent Hebrew scholar, presumably saw this passage as Tribble would later see it, and dropped “who was with her” from his Latin translation. By the time other translations of this passage began to circulate, however, the damage was done. In readers’ minds and in the literature some of them produced, the male creature was absent from the

search for “Everywoman Eve” she portrays the character as a woman of her time, Iron Age I, and environment, Upper Galilee. As such, the character of Eve is concerned about the acquisition of food. She is concerned about the hands-on physical labor necessary to produce sufficient food, and about her task in procreation, creating more hands to help the community survive. This Eve does not move from *Eros* to *Thanatos*. Rather she lives in a world where she is required, even against her will, to live up to her name, “the mother of all living” (3:20). Without the “*Eros*” of desire for her husband to overcome her unwillingness, “*Thanatos*” will surely result.

Neither one of these scholars, Tribble or Meyers, reads the text as misogynistic. On the basis of their conclusions, one may argue that neither did the Yahwist intend it as a story denigrating Eve. But the Yahwist, the purveyor of textual ambiguities, silences and ironies, creates through his laconic manner an irony which encompasses the whole of the text. At the end of it, as any reader knows, Eve is not physically naked; she has sewn herself clothes. But the *character* of Eve is indeed “naked.” Precisely because of the ambiguous nature of the text, the Yahwist leaves her vulnerable to the assaults of later interpreters of the tale.⁵⁶ He may not have done this intentionally, but the end result is the

serpent’s conversation with the earth creatures.

⁵⁶In the context of a discussion on David and Bathsheba, J. Cheryl Exum explains that “an androcentric biblical narrator” can violate a character “both in depriving her of voice and in portraying her in an ambiguous light that leaves her vulnerable, not simply to assault by characters in the story but also by later commentators on the story.” In Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press Intl., 1993) 171.

same. A later interpreter, himself misogynous, takes full advantage of the “nakedness” of the character of Eve to further his own ends.

CHAPTER III

EVE IN BEN SIRA

The next time we encounter the character of Eve she is portrayed in a totally different context. The literature in which she next appears is known by several names: *Ben Sira*, *Sirach*, or its Latin title, *Ecclesiasticus*. Most scholars date this work to c. 180 B.C.E. This is, of course, a very different world from Iron Age I, and the cultural, political, economic and religious structures of his time influence Ben Sira and his writing just as the Yahwist's world influenced his story. Before examining Ben Sira's use of Eve, some attention will be given to his social world. Ben Sira's religious and self-understanding are rooted in his socio-cultural experience, and his literary voice is always in conversation with the world in which he lives.

Background to Ben Sira's World

By the time of Ben Sira, Israel had been dominated by foreign rule for four centuries. In 586 B.C.E. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian conquerors. With the exception of a period of self-rule under the Hasmonean dynasty, the people of Israel would live as a conquered nation until their final defeat and dispersion by the Romans in C.E. 135. Persian rule followed Babylonian supremacy, and in 332 B.C.E. the Macedonian general Alexander the Great conquered Persian-controlled Israel. With him he brought his own hellenistic culture, which he believed superior to all others. Alexander, who had studied under the philosopher Aristotle, not only wished to obtain a large empire, but also to spread Greek culture throughout it: to "leaven ancient civilization with Greek scholarship,

art and manners.”¹ The introduction and establishment of hellenism into Palestine initiated a time of uncertainty, rapid change and violence. Some, such as Ben Sira, struggled to maintain their identity as Jews. Others gave way under pressure and lost their distinctive faith in YHWH. Nearly all, however, and especially those who lived in urban areas, were influenced by the impact of hellenism.

Influence of Hellenism in Palestine

Hellenism is understood as the melding of the Greek culture brought by Alexander with the oriental cultures he conquered--a “cultural syncretism.”² One scholar considers hellenism “a complex phenomenon which cannot be limited to purely political, socio-economic, cultural or religious aspects, but embraces them all.”³

The major vehicle for the infiltration of hellenism was the *polis*, or city. This institution carried “the essence of what was distinctive about Greek life,” from its autonomous government to its gymnasium, hippodrome and theatre.⁴ The hellenistic *polis*, whether a newly built city or a previously existing one remade on the Greek model, did not boast the full gamut of features of its Greek counterparts. About thirty of these cities are known to exist in Palestine/Transjordan.⁵ Some towns gained the status of *polis* more quickly than others; in general, coastal cities hellenized more quickly than those in

¹Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986) 612.

²Donald E. Gowan, Bridge Between the Testaments (Pittsburg: Pickwick Press, 1980) 71.

³M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 3.

⁴Gowan, Bridge Between the Testaments 70.

⁵Ibid., 69-70.

the interior of the region.⁶ Jerusalem, the major city of Judea, was not in name or practice a *polis*. It continued to be ruled by the High Priest and Council of Elders, known as the Gerousia. In spite of its Greek name, the Gerousia did not resemble any Greek governing system, but was directly descended from the “council of the elders of Judah” in Persian times.⁷

In economic matters the conquerors of Israel imposed their will on the conquered. Israel suffered under the weight of competing tax systems. Members of the local upper-class gathered taxes, and, of course, kept whatever profits remained after payment.⁸ Judean coinage imitated that of Athens, and from all archaeological evidence it appears that the victory of hellenistic finance extended even over Jerusalem.⁹

Hellenism, as well as penetrating the governmental and economic systems of Palestine, enacted deep and long-lasting changes in its cultural and social worlds. The presence of Greek and Macedonian soldiers, stemming from the time of Alexander’s invasion, influenced a population that had, until that time, been the sole inhabitants of the land since ancient times.¹⁰ An ordinance of Ptolemy Philadelphos, a successor of Alexander, shows that the Hellenistic rulers did not object to occupying soldiers establishing permanent relations with local women.¹¹ By the year 200 B.C.E., with this mixing of ethnic groups, Greek names had become common on all social levels, even in

⁶Michael Stern, “Palestine Under the Rule of the Hellenistic Kingdoms,” History of the Jewish People, ed. H.H. Ben Sasson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) 188.

⁷Ibid., 191.

⁸Ibid., 188.

⁹Ibid., 197.

¹⁰Ibid., 187.

the family of the High Priest; they had been quite rare among Jews as early as one hundred years earlier. The urban upper classes, including the priests, began to conform their thinking to the corresponding classes of non-Jews.¹²

Change was rapid, and in most of Alexander's empire, not overtly resisted. But cultural syncretism affected the Jews in a way that it did not affect other peoples. Their overriding question was "To what extent does cultural change endanger the values of traditional religion?"¹³ Some were troubled with questions and doubts about their faith precipitated by their encounters with Greek philosophy. Others wondered if their faith could even survive the onslaught of such enormous cultural change.¹⁴

Ben Sira's writing addresses the concerns of these Jews. Quoting extensively from the Torah, he wants to remind his readers that wisdom and knowledge reside in Jerusalem rather than Athens.¹⁵ His work shows little to no Hellenistic influence. The little that is there seems to be the interpolation of his translator. One scholar goes so far as to call Ben Sira a reactionary.¹⁶ That, indeed, is the purpose of his treatise: It is a reaction against Hellenism and a reaffirmation of the traditional faith of the Israelites.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 188.

¹²*Ibid.*, 197.

¹³Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments* 72.

¹⁴Patrick Skehan and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* Anchor Bible vol. 39 (NY: Doubleday, 1987) 15.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶F.R. Tenant, "The Teaching of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom on the Introduction of Sin and Death," *The Journal of Theological Studies* vol. 2 (1901) 208.

THE BOOK OF BEN SIRA

Ben Sira is part of the Apochrypha, a term which means “hidden writing.” The book was not and is not now part of the Jewish or Protestant canons, and in that sense was “hidden” from the faithful (i.e., not printed in the rest of the canon).¹⁷ Apochryphal writers used many different literary genres, including historical, romantic, didactic, devotional and apocalyptic.¹⁸ Sirach may be categorized as didactic, or Wisdom literature, in the company of the Wisdom of Solomon and canonical scriptures such as Job, Quohemoth, Proverbs, and certain “Wisdom Psalms.”

As with the term “Apochrypha,” “wisdom literature” can be difficult to define. It reached its highest forms after the Babylonian exile; it is expressed in early Judaism almost entirely in the form of poetry,¹⁹ and it takes two forms: “recipe” wisdom, a practical relating of wisdom concepts to everyday affairs, and “existential” wisdom, reflecting upon the meaning of life.²⁰ Ben Sira includes both of these forms, giving practical advice that leads to righteousness and “fear of the Lord,” the main theme in the book.

¹⁷Ben Sira, however, is considered “deuterocanonical” by Roman Catholics.

¹⁸Bruce Metzger, An Introduction to the Apochrypha (NY: Oxford University Press, 1957), 4.

¹⁹See Gerhard von Rad, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 1972 for a full explanation of why wisdom literature finds its best expression in poetry. Also see: Roland Murphey, The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature (New York: Doubleday) 1990.

²⁰Skehan and DiLella, The Wisdom of Ben Sira 31-39.

As opposed to the near impossibility of discovering the precise time at which other apochryphal books were written, determining the date of the actual writing of Ben Sira is fairly straightforward. At least three solid pieces of evidence within the text point to a date near 180 B.C.E. First is the fact that Ben Sira does not allude to the persecutions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. 175-163 B.C.E.). As a faithful Jew, Ben Sira certainly would not have ignored the desecration of the Temple and the social and political repercussions of that act.²¹ Second is Ben Sira's discussion of Simon son of Onias, High Priest from 219-196 B.C.E. (50:1-21). Ben Sira describes him and his actions laudably and in great detail, probably because Ben Sira himself had observed them. The position of High Priest was held until death, and Ben Sira speaks of Simon as if he had already died.²² Third is the Prologue to Ben Sira, written by his grandson, who translated his grandfather's original Hebrew text into Greek. This nameless grandson reports that he came to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes, which places his arrival there in 132 B.C.E. Allowing twenty to twenty-five years between generations, Ben Sira would have been writing in the latter quarter of the second century.²³

Readers of his book know more about Ben Sira than about any author of any apochryphal book. Indeed, he is the only identified author of an extant apochryphal text. He gives his name, Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach, and his location, Jerusalem, at the book's conclusion (50:27). He was probably a scribe (38:34-39:11) and may have run his

²¹Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the events he precipitated will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this paper.

²²Skehan and DiLella, The Wisdom of Ben Sira 9.

²³Ibid., 9.

own school in Jerusalem (51:23).

Ben Sira has been accused of revealing more of his likes and dislikes than any other ancient Jewish writer of Wisdom literature,²⁴ in several places using the first person to clarify a point:

Consider that I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek instruction (33:18).

I have seen many things on my travels, and I understand more than I can express. I have often been in danger of death, but have escaped because of these experiences (34:12-13).

One of the most obvious of his dislikes was women. Over one hundred verses of his text have to do with women.²⁵ He discusses woman as wife, mother, daughter, married woman, widow, servant girl, prostitute and women in general. The only positive portraits are those of mother and, on a few occasions, of wife.²⁶ Even when he speaks of a woman in positive terms, her goodness is solely for the man in her life. Ben Sira gives no outward indication that a woman holds any value in and of herself. Take, for instance, his comments about the wife. Ben Sira distinguishes between the good wife, who brings blessings to her husband, and the bad wife, who is insufferable. In his description of the good wife he notes:

A woman's beauty lights up a man's face
and there is nothing he desires more.
If kindness and humility mark her speech,
her husband is more fortunate than other men.

²⁴Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* 81-82.

²⁵Eileen M. Schuller, "The Apocrypha," *The Woman's Bible Commentary* ed. Carol A. Newsome and Sharon Ringe (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 237.

²⁶For a brief synopsis of each of these categories in the writing of Ben Sira, see Kenneth Bailey, "Women in Ben Sirach and in the New Testament," *For Me to Live: Essays in Honor of James Leon Kelso* ed. R.A. Coughenor (Cleveland: Dillon/Lierbach, 1972) 56-73.

He who acquires a wife gets his best possession,
a helper fit for him and a pillar of support (36:27-29).

A good wife must please her husband with her beauty, her speech, her help and support.

She is “his best possession.” This view of women as possessions was not particular to the Jewish milieu. In hellenistic times, as in the Classical age, Greek law still demanded that a woman have a legal guardian.²⁷

Ben Sira reserves some choice words for the bad wife:

I would rather live with a lion and a dragon than live with an evil woman.
A woman's wickedness changes her appearance,
and darkens her face like that of a bear.
Her husband sits among the neighbors,
and he cannot help sighing bitterly.
Any iniquity is small compared to a woman's iniquity
may a sinner's lot befall her! (25:16-19)

Arguably the most misogynous statement in the whole of Ben Sira has to do with women in general. Here a woman is “damned if she does, and damned if she doesn't”:

For from garments comes the moth,
and from a woman comes woman's wickedness.
Better is the wickedness of a man
than a woman who does good;
it is woman who brings shame and disgrace (42:13-14).

Some scholars have argued that Ben Sira had a unique and personal dislike of women, based on specific interactions with a woman/women.²⁸ Other sources show that his views of women were not only commonplace, but actually less abrasive than some in

²⁷Eve Cantarella, Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity, trans. Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) 91.

²⁸Warren C. Trenchard, Ben Sira's View of Women: A Literary Analysis (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, Brown Judaic Studies 38) 1982. Trenchard concludes his monograph with the statement that the topic of women “reflects [Ben Sira's] personal feelings, not merely an

the ancient world. An example is the 4th century B.C.E. Athenian, Eubulus, who took the faults of individuals and attributed them to all:

I wish the second man who took a wife would die an awful death. I don't blame the first man; he had no experience of that evil. The second man knew what kind of evil a wife was! Oh honoured Zeus, shall I ever say something unkind about women. By Zeus, may I perish then. They are the best possessions one can have. Medea was an evil woman, but Penelope was a good thing; some might criticize Clytemnestra, but I'll set Alcestis against her. Maybe someone else will criticize Phaedra--but, by Zeus, there must be another good wife! Who? Oh, poor me, I've run out of good women, and I still have so many more bad ones to talk about.²⁹

It is probably more likely, however, that neither Ben Sira nor Eubulus represents mainstream views of women. Rather, their views would be considered extreme. What these works do show is the diversity of positions within a culture.

In a more concise statement than that of the Athenian above, Ben Sira, too, took an individual woman and attributed his interpretation of her character to all humanity.

Sirach 25:24 reads:

*apo gunaikos arke hamartias
kai di auten apothneskomen pantes.*

From a woman sin had its beginning,
and because of her we all die (author's translation).

Unlike the Genesis texts we examined in chapter 2, this verse of Ben Sira lends itself to a straightforward translation. There is only one word that poses even a small difficulty in translation, the Greek noun, *arke*, beginning. This noun can indicate either a

environmental phenomenon" and that "Ben Sira exhibits a personal bias against women" 172-73.

²⁹Trans. M.R. Lefkowitz, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, ed. Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) 18.

temporal beginning or a causal origin. But the Hebrew text of Sirach 25:24 is extant, and it helps resolve the ambiguity, supplying the word *tehillā*, which points to a translation of “beginning” in a temporal sense. The Greek *di auten*, in comparison, is simply a phrase of causal origin, “because of, or through, her.” The verse itself, then, clearly states Ben Sira’s view of the first woman: she was the beginning of sin and the cause of death.

Ben Sira does not mention Eve by name, but instead simply states, a “woman” (*gunaikos*). Because 25:24 is found in the context of a treatise on the bad wife (25:16-26), one scholar has argued that Ben Sira does not mean the first woman of Genesis but instead the bad wife.³⁰ Another scholar asserts that the *gynaikos* is not one or the other, but both: Ben Sira plays with words, remaining true to the context of his discussion of the bad wife, but unmistakably echoing the images and character of Eve in Genesis 3.³¹ The latter argument seems the most reasonable. It is truly difficult to imagine anyone referring to a particular wife as the beginning of sin and cause of death. His allusion is clear; there could be no other text to which he could be referring.

Ben Sira 25:24 is not the only place the author refers to the story of the first man and woman. The book is full of allusions to Genesis 1-3. The lengthiest allusion is Ben Sira's own retelling and interpretation of the creation story in 17:1-15, 19-20:

The Lord created human beings out of earth,
and makes them return to it again.

³⁰For a discussion of “a woman” as the bad wife see John Levison, “Is Eve to Blame? A Contextual Analysis of Sirach 25:24,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985) 617-23. For a refutation of his argument, see Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* 349.

³¹Claudia V. Camp, “Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem Through the Eyes of Ben Sira,” *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 29.

He gave them a fixed number of days,
 but granted them authority over everything on the earth.
 He endowed them with strength like his own,
 and made them in his own image.
 He put the fear of them in all living beings,
 and gave them dominion over beasts and birds.
 Discretion and tongue and eyes,
 ears and a mind for thinking he gave them.
 He filled them with knowledge and understanding,
 and showed them good and evil.
 He put the fear of him into their hearts
 to show them the majesty of his works.
 And they will praise his holy name,
 to proclaim the grandeur of his works.
 He bestowed knowledge upon them,
 and allotted to them the law of life.
 He established with them an eternal covenant,
 and revealed to them his decrees.
 Their eyes saw his glorious majesty,
 and their ears heard the glory of his voice.
 He said to them, "Beware of all evil."
 And he gave commandment to each of them
 concerning the neighbor.
 Their ways are always known to him;
 they will not be hid from his eyes.
 All their works are as clear as the sun before him,
 and his eyes are ever upon their ways.
 Their iniquities are not hidden from him,
 and all their sins are before the Lord.³²

The characterization of Adam and Eve (again not specifically named) in this passage is quite positive. Ben Sira does grant that both the man and woman are made in the image of God. Here he does not allow his misogyny to blind his reading of the text. Ben Sira treats male and female as a unit, both of whom possess "knowledge and understanding" and both of whom see and hear YHWH. Ben Sira alludes to the female half of the first

³²Ben Sira harmonizes the P and J creation stories, Psalm 8 and other topics: references to the

human creation in only one other place:

Hard work was created for everyone,
and a heavy yoke is laid on the children of Adam,³³
from the day they come forth from their mother's womb
until the day they return to the mother of all the living (40:1).

Ben Sira quotes verbatim Genesis 3:20, “the mother of all the living,” which is the meaning of the Hebrew “Eve.” However, he does not even begrudge her this title that gives her some honor. Here again, as in his use of *gunaikos*, he appears to play with words. “The mother of all living” makes more sense in context as the earth, from which YHWH formed the first earth creature and to which every creature of earth must return at death.

These three references to Eve give a rather mixed characterization of her. The first, 17:1-15, 19-20 is generally positive. The second, 25:24, is unprecedentedly negative. The third, 40:1, builds from 24:25 by linking the “mother of the living” again with death.

Adam, on the other hand, receives much different treatment at the hands of Ben Sira. In 24:28, immediately before he accuses the woman of being the beginning of sin and cause of death, he excuses Adam's actions with the statement “the first man did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her.” And later Ben Sira not only excuses but honors Adam by giving him the final entry in his list of famous men

covenant, an admonition to beware of all evil and the commandment concerning the neighbor, ultimately creating a passage that resembles midrash.

³³J.R. Levison, Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988) 42 notes that the citation of “sons of Adam” is evidently a decision of the Greek translator of Ben

deserving of praise (chapters 44-49):

Shem and Seth and Enosh were honored,
but above every other living being was Adam (49:16).

While Ben Sira acknowledges in 17:20 that both the man and the woman in the garden sinned, he later singles out the woman for blame. As this text, 25:24, is also the first mention of Eve in any Hebrew literature since Genesis 2-4, it makes the reader wonder why Ben Sira would use Eve as an explanation for sin and death when the Yahwistic narrative on which this reference is based never made these accusations.

First of all, simply contemplating the question of “Why sin?” was a new phenomenon for Jewish writing. While the Israelites had devoted many words to naming sins and their punishments, they did not write about the philosophical question of why sin itself existed. The Law, the Prophets, and even the Psalms are strangely silent on the subject. The Torah, when it discusses the origin of sin at all, speaks of God hardening people’s hearts: God is the cause for a person’s deviant behavior; human beings exhibit no free will. A well-known example of this concerns the conflict between Moses and the Egyptian pharaoh:

Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; but the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the people of Israel go out of his land (Ex. 11:10).

Ben Sira, the conservative, “reactionary” writer in most of his work, produces new interpretations of the causes of human sin. In contrast to earlier Hebrew views of the subject, he rejects the idea that God has anything to do with our sinful nature:

Do not say, “It was the Lord’s doing that I fell away;”

Sira’s work, as the Hebrew is more easily translated “sons of man.”

for he does not do what he hates.
Do not say, "It was he who led me astray;"
for he has no need of the sinful.
The Lord hates all abominations;
such things are not loved by those who fear him.
It was he who created humankind in the beginning,
and he left them in the power of their own free choice.
If you choose, you can keep the commandments,
and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.
He has not commanded anyone to be wicked,
and he has not given anyone permission to sin (15:11-15, 20).

In this section Ben Sira makes another reference to the Genesis creation account, "he who created humankind in the beginning" (15:14). YHWH, according to Ben Sira, did not create automatons, but people who could exercise their own wills. The Lord did not "command anyone to be wicked." But because of their free wills, people may choose to sin. And, according to Ben Sira, the free will of one person, the first woman, was the beginning of all sin and the cause of death. Therefore he offers a new interpretation, one that would have been foreign to his ancestors, and one that would wield an enormous impact on generations to come.

CONCLUSIONS

Ben Sira's view of Eve is consistent with his views of women in general. He does write about good women (all of it, of course, defining "good" as the way in which she benefits a man). Nevertheless, a great deal more of his ink is spent writing about those he considers bad women. He allots Eve some goodness, but this is only in relationship to a man, Adam. Ben Sira's indictment of Eve in 25:24 almost completely overshadows that earlier portrayal in 17. Ben Sira's anti-woman feelings predispose him to look harshly upon Eve and to blind him to the role Adam plays in the garden. He presents a full portrait of neither Adam nor Eve; he draws caricatures of both, and an especially negative caricature of Eve.

Ben Sira's negative picture of Eve is unprecedented in Hebrew literature up to this point in time. What we now consider a "traditional" reading of Genesis 2-3--that the evil in creation is the fault of Eve through her seduction of Adam--was not a traditional reading in the communities of ancient Israel. If it was, later canonical writers who followed the Yahwist would have used her as a stereotype of sinful actions: for example, the turning to foreign gods and idolatry, corruption in government, the oppression of the poor and weak, and many others. As it is, writers throughout the TANAK mention her not at all, much less as the person who brings about sin and death in the world. Her

A favorite image for sin in the Hebrew Scriptures is the patriarchal one of seduction or "harlotry." Israel is "led astray" from YHWH like a woman who deserts her husband for other men. The most extended treatment of this metaphor is in the book of the prophet Hosea.

CHAPTER IV

EVE IN SELECTED WORKS OF THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

The body of literature in which the character of Eve next appears is known as the Pseudepigrapha. The emergence of Pseudepigraphic literature is contemporaneous with the mention of Eve in Ben Sira. From this point, c. 200 B.C.E., Pseudepigrapha--and in it references to Eve--burgeon. Very few of these references are positive, and most are positively negative. In order to present the many interpretations of the character of Eve found in the Pseudepigrapha, this chapter will describe that complex and varied body of literature, name some its major concerns and place it within its broad historical context. Using feminist hermeneutics, it will examine sections of four documents that contain references to Eve as a small part of their larger contexts.¹ Finally it will focus upon a piece of primary literature concerning Adam and Eve, the Life of Adam and Eve/Apocalypse of Moses. Each of the above documents arises from a primarily Jewish milieu from 200 B.C.E. to 150 C.E. Later writings and the substantial corpus of Gnostic Pseudepigraphal literature are outside the scope of this chapter.²

The term "Pseudepigrapha" means "with false superscription." Many of the documents included within the Pseudepigrapha claim the authorship of an esteemed person or persons from the Jewish past, for example, Enoch, Abraham or Adam. The

¹To date and to our knowledge, few close and critical readings of Pseudepigraphal literature have been published. In addition, feminist readings of this material, with the exception of the Sibylline Oracles, are nonexistent. Thus there will be a paucity of citations in those sections.

²Gnosticism and its impact on Christian interpretations of Eve will be examined in Chapter Five.

specific identities of the true authors of the literature are for all practical purposes unrecoverable.

The collection of works comprising the Pseudepigrapha is not a set “canon” because scholars differ regarding their definition of what constitutes Pseudepigraphical documents. As a working description of the material he chose to include, J. H. Charlesworth states that Pseudepigraphal documents 1) are primarily writings of Jews or Christians; 2) are often attributed to figures in Israel's past; 3) usually claim to transmit the word of God or God’s message; 4) usually expand upon Old Testament ideas or narratives; 5) were almost always written between 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E., or contain material that probably dates from that period.³

With this description in mind, the reader sees that the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha is a collection of widely divergent material, written at very different points in history with a broad range of subject matter. The individual works of the Pseudepigrapha, however, do not issue from a vacuum, but from the existential questioning of their anonymous authors, whom we must place in cultural and historical context as well as we are able. Within this context we may expand upon how they portray the character of Eve.

Historical Background of the Pseudepigrapha

“The religion and literature of the Jewish nation may be said to be the product of its history at every stage of development, but this is particularly so with that expression of

³J.H. Charlesworth, ed., The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983) xxv.

it in the intertestamental period,” writes one scholar of this timeframe.⁴ In regard to the Pseudepigrapha this assertion can be made with a caveat. Individual documents of the Pseudepigrapha are notoriously difficult to date specifically. Many documents contain groupings of related literature compiled over centuries. At times Pseudepigraphal scholars can date even a single portion of one document only within several centuries. The error margin is rather large. Because of this we cannot often correlate a specific historical event with a particular document. Therefore a general history of the time follows here, to be supplemented with more detailed analysis as the evidence warrants.

As some Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian exile of the sixth century B.C.E., they rebuilt their Temple, dedicated themselves to the study of the Torah, but still they did not prosper.⁵ As seen in chapter three, a succession of foreign conquerors dominated Palestine, taxing its people and challenging its religion.

The most severe attack upon Judaism itself came shortly after the time of Ben Sira from the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 B.C.E. Antiochus initiated a religious persecution by outlawing the practice of Judaism and forcing the Jews to participate in pagan rituals. Their Temple was dedicated to the Greek god Zeus. Those who attempted to practice their faith, opposing the actions of Antiochus, met horrible fates (cf. 2 Maccabees 6-7).

A resistance movement emerged from the rural population of northern Judea and the plain of Lydda, led by the Hasmoneans, a priestly family. This family would define

⁴D.S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964) 16.

⁵Charlesworth, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I., xxx.

Jewish history for the next 130 years.⁶ Their resistance movement developed into full-fledged war, which gained a measure of self-governance for the Jews. For the most part, however, this independence was not peaceful, but rather rife with intrigue, interference from foreign powers, assassination and even civil war. Jewish national independence ended when the Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E.

While the Romans of the early empire were, for the most part, tolerant of the practice of Judaism, conflicts inevitably arose, some of them ending in bloodshed. The Romans' decisive moves against the Jews were, of course, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the suppression of the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 C.E.

While not all Jews reviled hellenism and hellenistic rulers,⁷ the authors of the Pseudepigraphic literature we are about to examine wrote as a response to the changes and challenges that hellenism and opposition to it produced. They wrote to remind their people of their history and to search their history for answers to many questions: Why do those who deny their faith live, while those who maintain it suffer and die? Where is YHWH? Why does God permit evil to occur? These questions led to speculation on the causes of evil and the longing for an "end" (Gk. *eskatos*) when persecutors would themselves be persecuted and the righteous exalted. Such concerns found an expression in apocalyptic literature.

⁶Stern, "Palestine under the Rule of the Hellenistic Kingdoms" 206.

⁷The extent to which Jews accepted hellenism, and how that acceptance influenced others' perceptions of them as "good Jews," is still being debated. See Gary G. Horton, "Diversity in Postbiblical Judaism," Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W.E. Nickelsburg (Philadelphia/Atlanta: Fortress Press/Scholars Press, 1986) 57-59.

Apocalyptic Literature

Some indeterminacy exists in naming the characteristics of apocalyptic literature. The label itself comes to us from the Greek *apokalupsis*, “revelation.” Apocalypses often contain revelations to a human being by a heavenly being, speculations concerning the endtime, the consequent fates of the righteous and unrighteous, elaborate angelologies and demonologies, and bizarre images and symbols. Canonical Hebrew and Christian scriptures each contain one apocalypse: the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, respectively. Three of the works under consideration in this chapter, 1 Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles and the Apocalypse of Abraham, are apocalyptic literature. The book of Jubilees contains many apocalyptic elements but is not defined as such in Charlesworth’s collection. Simply because the title of a work contains the word “apocalypse” does not ensure that the work is one; the title of Apocalypse of Moses, for example, is misleading, for it was only mistakenly called so in one manuscript.

As apocalyptic writers imagine the endtime, their thoughts return to primordial times, before, in the view of many of them, sin and evil began.⁸ Other writers, not using apocalyptic imagery, also return to the beginning of creation in part to determine the origins of evil in the world. The last work we will study, the Life of Adam and Eve/Apocalypse of Moses, is not apocalyptic; as did Ben Sira, it places the blame for sin and death in the world squarely on the shoulders of Eve.

⁸D.S. Russell, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (London: SCM Press, 1987) 23.

All of the preceding remarks should make clear that the Pseudepigrapha is a complex body of literature that defies facile analysis from every quarter, from author to date to direct interpretation of its symbolism. The remainder of this chapter will work within these limitations, first giving the general provenance and themes of the individual Pseudepigraphal document, then noting how it portrays the character of Eve.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER OF EVE IN SELECTED WORKS OF THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

1 Enoch⁹

This work, also known as the Ethiopian Book of Enoch, is one of three attributed to the seventh descendent of Adam and Eve (Genesis 5: 21-24). It represents numerous periods and authors from the early pre-Maccabean era up to the first century C.E. Some scholars date the section examined here, chapter 69, to the late pre-Maccabean period, and they generally agree that the work as a whole was written in Judea.¹⁰ One could speculate that the author of this section and Ben Sira could have been contemporaries.

A complete copy of 1 Enoch exists only in Ethiopic, and most scholars believe that it was originally written in both Hebrew and Aramaic.

As an apocalypse, the work portrays the end of time, the final judgment of the wicked and the righteous, a detailed angelology, the coming of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the righteous. The author retells the history of the world and Israel from Adam to the Maccabees using symbols, images and parables. We cannot look at this

⁹This paper will examine only 1 Enoch and not 2 Enoch. While 2 Enoch contains more material about Eve, current scholarship varies widely concerning its date and provenance. One scholar writes, "In every respect 2 Enoch remains an enigma. So long as the date and location remain unknown, no use can be made of it for historical purposes." F.I. Anderson, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) ENOCH" in Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I., 97.

¹⁰E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) ENOCH," Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I., 6-7. See also George W.E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 46-47, 214-223; Leonhard Rost, Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971) 133-40; Martin McNamara, M.S.C., Intertestamental Literature (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983) 68-71; J.T. Milik, The Books of Enoch. Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 1976.

complex and influential book¹¹ in great detail but will concentrate on its references to Eve.

1 Enoch holds only one brief reference to Eve by name, within a listing of the names and actions of the fallen angels. Verse 69:4 begins:

The name of the first is Yeƣon; he is the one who misled all the children of the angels, brought them down upon the earth, and perverted them by the daughters of the people. The second was named Asb'el; he is the one who gave the children of the holy angels an evil counsel and misled them so that they would defile their bodies by the daughters of the people. The third was named Gader'el; this one is he who showed the children of the people all the blows of death, who misled Eve, who showed the children of the people (how to make) the instruments of death (such as) the shield, the breastplate, and the sword for warfare, and all (the other) instruments of death to the children of the people. Through their agency (death) proceeds against the people who dwell upon the earth, from that day forevermore.¹²

The concept of the “fallen angels” derives from Genesis 6:1-4, in which “sons of God” descended to earthly women and took them as their wives, producing children who were “the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown” (6:4). In 6:5 YHWH sees “that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.” At this point YHWH begins planning to destroy the humans by means of the great flood. Because of the association of the fallen angels, later called “watchers,” with the wickedness of humanity in the Genesis

¹¹Isaac writes, “1 Enoch played a significant role in the early Church; it was used by the authors of the Epistle of Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and a number of apologetic works. Many Church Fathers, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, either knew 1 Enoch or were inspired by it...but in the beginning of the fourth century, the book came to be regarded with disfavor and received negative reviews from Augustine, Hilary, and Jerome...the relegation of 1 Enoch to virtual oblivion by medieval minds should not diminish its significance for Christian origins; few other apocryphal books so indelibly marked the religious history and thought of the time of Jesus.” *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I., 8.

¹²Trans. E. Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) ENOCH” 47.

account, Pseudepigraphal writers often blamed them for the advent of sin and evil in the world.

The author of 1 Enoch expands the myth of Genesis 6:1-4 into an elaborate angelology. Strong and powerful, these “fallen” angels are nonetheless maliciously wicked, according to 1 Enoch. The author of 1 Enoch blames them for wickedness upon the earth and the corruption of human beings, including Eve. Differing from Ben Sira, 1 Enoch attributes death in the world not to the first woman, but to the “agency” of the fallen angels.

From this textual evidence, therefore, 1 Enoch presents the character of Eve (and the rest of humanity) as a helpless victim of malicious and powerful celestial beings. The author does not assign blame to Eve for bringing sin or death into the world.

Other sections of 1 Enoch are consistent with this characterization. In chapter 85, dated c. 165-61 B.C.E., the author shrouds the story of the first woman and man in the images of cattle. The only action the female performs is giving birth, first to two calves, one who killed the other, and consequently to many more calves (85:1-10). Her only function is procreation; no other deed, praiseworthy or blameworthy, is mentioned.

Jubilees

The book of Jubilees dates from the second century B.C.E., probably between 161-140, which places it after the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. It was almost certainly originally written in Hebrew.¹³ The author was a Palestinian Jew who probably

¹³O.S. Wintermute, “Jubilees” *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* II., 43-45. English citations in this section will be taken from Wintermute’s translation from Ge’ez, the ancient form of

belonged to a priestly family. Because of the author's "strict interpretation of the law,"¹⁴ his dislike of neighboring regions and gentile practices, his demand that others, in a time of apostasy, obey YHWH's commands, and his adherence to a calendar of 365 days, scholars identify him with a conservative sect of Judaism, probably the Hasidic or Essene.

While Jubilees contains some aspects of apocalyptic writing, it lacks others. Unlike apocalyptic writing, Jubilees does not contain bizarre, esoteric imagery or emphasis on eschatological themes.¹⁵ Like apocalyptic writing, Jubilees purports to be a private revelation given to a well-known figure by an angel in order to inform readers about important matters of their own time.

Jubilees concerns a revelation to Moses of events from the creation of the world to the time of Moses, given to him both by YHWH and an angel on Mount Sinai. As do most writers of history, the author of Jubilees retells the events of the past so that his contemporaries may better understand of their own, cultural, political, social and religious situation.¹⁶ In his retelling the author of Jubilees has therefore "condensed ...omitted ...expurgated ...explained ... supplemented ...and sometimes radically recast the biblical episodes."¹⁷ All of these hold true for his treatment of the story of Adam and Eve.

One of the author's major concerns is to show that Jewish law and piety are still relevant; they were practiced by the patriarchs and are still necessary in the present time.

Ethiopic. See also McNamara, Intertestamental Literature 117-121; Nickelsburg Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah 73-80; Rost, Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon 129-133.

¹⁴Wintermute, "Jubilees" 45.

¹⁵Ibid., 37.

¹⁶Ibid., 37.

¹⁷Ibid., 35.

He wants to remind Jews of their heritage and law.¹⁸ Because of this concern with its current situation, Jubilees is particularly valuable for later readers attempting to understand the time.

The initial appearance of the first woman takes place in Jubilees 2:14, within an exposition of the priestly narrative of Genesis 1. The Jubilees account differs little from Genesis 1:26-31, in which YHWH creates human beings “male and female.” At this point, however, rather than continuing along the same story line as the priestly writer, the author of Jubilees expands upon the meaning of the Sabbath. Then he proceeds to the Yahwistic account of the naming of the animals and the creation of man and woman from the earth creature. This material, too, differs little from the Genesis record from which it is taken.

The text retelling the remainder of Genesis 2-3, Jubilees 3:8-35, is as follows:

In the first week Adam was created and also the rib, his wife. And in the second week he showed her to him. And therefore the commandment was give to observe seven days for a male, but for a female twice seven days in their impurity.

And after forty days were completed for Adam in the land where he was created, we brought him into the garden of Eden so that he might work it and guard it. And on the eighth day his wife was also brought in. And after this she entered the garden of Eden. And therefore the command was written in the heavenly tablets for one who bears, “If she bears a male, she shall remain seven days in her impurity like the first seven days. And thirty-three days she shall remain in the blood of her purity. And she shall not touch anything holy. And she shall not enter the sanctuary until she has completed these days which are in accord with (the rule for) a male (child). And that which is in accord with (the rule for) a female is two weeks--like the first two weeks--in her impurity. And sixty-six days she shall remain in the blood of her purity. And their total will be eighty days.”

And when she finished those eighty days, we brought her into the garden of Eden because it is more holy than any land. And every tree which is planted in it is holy. Therefore the ordinances of these days were ordained for anyone who

¹⁸Ibid., 40.

bears a male or female that she might not touch anything holy and she might not enter the sanctuary until these days are completed for a male or female. This is the law and testimony which is written for Israel so that they might keep it always.

And during the first week of the first jubilee Adam and his wife had been in the garden of Eden for seven years tilling and guarding it. And we gave him work and we were teaching him to do everything which was appropriate for tilling. And he was tilling. And he was naked, but neither was he ashamed. And he was guarding the garden from the birds and beasts and cattle and gathering its fruit and eating. And he used to set aside the rest for himself and his wife. And what was being guarded he set aside.

At the end of seven years which he completed there, seven years exactly, in the second month of the seventeenth day, the serpent came and drew near to the woman. And the serpent said to the woman, "The LORD commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from any tree which is in the garden.'" And she said to him, "The LORD said, 'Eat from all the fruit of the trees which are in the garden.' But the LORD said to us, 'You shall not eat from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, and you shall not touch it lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "It is not (true) that you shall surely die because the LORD knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will become opened and you will become like gods, and you will know good and evil."

And the woman saw the tree that it was pleasant and it was pleasing to the eye and its fruit was good to eat and she took some of it and she ate. And she first covered her shame with a fig leaf, and then she gave it to Adam and he ate and his eyes were opened and he saw that he was naked. And he took a fig leaf and sewed it and made an apron for himself. And he covered his shame.

And the LORD cursed the serpent and he was angry with it forever. And he was angry with the woman also because she had listened to the voice of the serpent and had eaten. And he said to her, "I will surely multiply your grief and your birth pangs. Bear children in grief. And to your husband is your return and he will rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and you ate from that tree from which I commanded you that you should not eat, the land shall be cursed because of you. Thorns and thistles shall sprout up for you. And eat your bread in the sweat of your face until you return to the earth from which you were taken because you are earth and to the earth you will return."

And he made for them garments of skin and he dressed them and sent them from the garden of Eden. And on that day when Adam went out from the garden of Eden, he offered a sweet-smelling sacrifice--frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and spices--in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day he covered his shame. On that day the mouth of all the beasts and cattle and birds and whatever walked or moved was stopped from speaking because all of them used to speak with one another with one speech and one language. And he sent from the garden of Eden all of the flesh which was in the garden of Eden and all of the

flesh was scattered, each one according to its kind and each one according to its family, into the place which was created for them. But from all the beasts and all the cattle he granted to Adam alone that he might cover his shame. Therefore it is commanded in the heavenly tablets to all who will know the judgment of the Law that they should cover their shame and they should not be uncovered as the gentiles are uncovered.

And on the first of the fourth month Adam and his wife went out from the garden of Eden and dwelt in the land of 'Elda, in the land of their creation. And Adam named his wife Eve. They had no son until the first jubilee but after this he knew her. And he tilled the land as he had been taught in the garden of Eden.¹⁹

At the beginning of this section the author inserts material from Leviticus 12:2-5 regarding the time of purification following childbirth. He uses his own interpretation of the Genesis account to justify the difference in the time of impurity for the bearing a male rather than a female child. Genesis 2:15-24, which includes the creation and differentiation of the earth creature, does not denote any specific passage of time from the creation of the first human to its arrival in the garden to its differentiation into male and female. Simply the fact that the author of Jubilees feels the need to justify the difference in length of ritual impurity is interesting in itself.²⁰

The measuring of time is extremely important to the author of Jubilees. Emphasis on the proper ordering of time permeates his book. Seven day weeks are used as the basic structure, and seven years is a "week of years." Seven weeks of years, or forty-nine years, is a jubilee.²¹ According to this Pseudepigraphal work, the serpent arrived after the end of the first jubilee.

¹⁹Trans. Wintermute, "Jubilees" 59-61.

²⁰The author of Jubilees interweaves many of his own concerns with the story of the first humans. This is in the manner of narrative midrash, which "scarcely distinguishes between text and comment, but interweaves them to form a continuous narrative. In terms of overall structure, Jubilees is similar to narrative Midrashim." Wintermute, "Jubilees" 40.

²¹Wintermute, "Jubilees" 39.

The dialogue between the woman and the serpent proceeds without significant deviation from Genesis. After the woman eats, however, she “covers her shame” with a fig leaf, and then gives the fruit to Adam, who obtains his own cover for his “shame” at that point. In Genesis 3:7 both sew their own coverings at the same time, and nowhere does the Yahwist refer to their naked state in a negative way. The two human beings simply realize that they are naked.

In Jubilees YHWH is angry with the serpent and with the woman, but the text does not note that YHWH is angry at the man. Jubilees remains faithful to the original text in its rendering of the consequences of eating the fruit (giving the word Meyers translated “conceptions” as “grief”).

At this point the author of Jubilees again inserts his own material, recording a sacrifice that Adam made as well as the silencing of the animals. He differentiates between animals, who do not wear clothes, and “all who will know the judgment of the Law,” who wear clothes. The latter are contrasted with the gentiles, who go about “uncovered.” Here we may see the author’s disgust with the common Greek practice of exercising in the nude, a practice some Jews were emulating. Differing from Genesis once more, the author of Jubilees assigns specific times to the expulsion from the garden and the birth of the couple’s first son.

Jubilees does not give a particularly negative view of the character of Eve. The author’s main interests in this section are to enunciate his chronological cosmology, to explain Jewish law, and to defend Jewish law against gentile culture. He does, however,

exhibit bias in favor of Adam and against Eve. Adam is the normative figure in the piece; the angel gives *him* work, teaches *him* to do everything which was appropriate; *he* was naked; *he* was guarding the garden; and when *he* had completed seven years, the serpent came and drew near to the woman. The text is almost entirely androcentric. While Jubilees does not blame Eve for sin and absolve Adam, as later Pseudepigraphal works would, it does report that YHWH was angry with Eve and not with Adam.

If the author of Jubilees was familiar with the Sirach 24:25, he did not allow it to influence his characterization of Eve. Rather, the general patriarchal attitudes of the time, which considered the male normative and the woman “other,” emerge more strongly in Jubilees than in Genesis. The author of Jubilees, however, does not express even a fraction of the antipathy toward women that Ben Sira does, either in his rendition of the creation story or elsewhere in the document of Jubilees. Obviously he does not feel the need to denigrate Eve to make his points.

The Sibylline Oracles

Because they were ostensibly written by a woman, the Sibylline Oracles are unique among the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Sibylline oracles were, nevertheless, widespread in the ancient world, with one ancient author making a list of ten Sibyls, including the Persian, Libyan, and Delphic.²² The most famous collection of oracles was the Roman, which leaders consulted only in times of crisis, and only with the approval of the Senate. The twelve books of the Oracles found in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha reflect gentile, Jewish and Christian thought.

The derivation of the word “Sybil” is obscure. Most scholars believe that it does reflect the proper name of a real woman, whose identity was lost well before her first literary appearance in the fifth century B.C.E.²³ In Sibylline Oracles 1:289-90, the Jewish Sibyl identifies herself as the daughter-in-law of Noah. As with other Pseudepigraphical works, we cannot recover the true authors of the Sibylline Oracles. We cannot even assume that they are women.²⁴ Even if some are women, we can no more extrapolate the characteristics of the Sibyl upon “ordinary women” than we could use a Deborah or Huldah to recover women of their time.

Like 1 Enoch and other works of the Pseudepigrapha, the Sibylline Oracles are a collection of material from different authors and time periods, in this case from the second century B.C.E. to the seventh century C.E. We will be concerned strictly with Book One. Standing as a unit, Books One and Two contain a Jewish base with Christian redactions. The Jewish material in Book One with which we are concerned was probably written no earlier than 30 B.C.E. and no later than the turn of the era.²⁵

After a short introduction to Book One, the Sibyl moves into her rendition of the creation story. God creates the earth, the heavens and the animals, then the first human beings. Verses 24-64 read:

And then later he again fashioned an animate object,
making a copy from his own image, youthful man,
beautiful, wonderful. He bade him live in an

²²J.J. Collins, “The Sibylline Oracles,” *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I., 318.

²³*Ibid.*, 317.

²⁴Amy-Jill Levine, “The Sibylline Oracles,” *Searching the Scriptures* II., 100.

²⁵For more information about the Sibylline Oracles, see Rost, *Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon* 113-15.

ambrosial garden, so that he might be concerned with beautiful works.
 But he being alone in the luxuriant plantation of the garden
 desired conversation, and prayed to behold another form
 like his own. God himself indeed took a bone from his
 flank and made Eve, a wonderful maidenly
 spouse, whom he gave to this man to live with him in the garden.
 And he, when he saw her, was suddenly greatly
 amazed in spirit, rejoicing, such a corresponding
 copy did he see. They conversed with wise words
 which flowed spontaneously, for God had taken care of everything.
 For they neither covered their minds with licentiousness
 nor felt shame, but were far removed from evil heart;
 and they walked like wild beasts with uncovered limbs.
 To these did God then address commands
 and instruct them not to touch the tree. But a very horrible
 snake craftily deceived them to go to the fate
 of death and receive knowledge of good and evil.
 But the woman first became a betrayer to him.
 She gave, and persuaded him to sin in his ignorance.
 He was persuaded by the woman's words, forgot
 about his immortal creator, and neglected clear commands.
 Therefore, instead of good they received evil, as they had done.
 And then they sewed the leaves of the sweet fig tree
 and made clothes and put them on each other.
 They concealed their plans, because shame had come upon them.
 The Immortal became angry with them and expelled them
 from the place of the immortals. For it had been decreed
 that they remain in a mortal place, since they had not kept
 the command of the great immortal God, and attended to it.
 But they, immediately, going out on the fruitful earth
 wept with tears and groans. Then
 the immortal God himself spoke to them for the better:
 "Increase, multiply, and work on earth
 with skill, so that by sweat you may have your fill of food."
 Thus he spoke, but he made the serpent, cause of the deceit,
 press the earth with belly and flank,
 having bitterly driven him out. He aroused a dire enmity
 between them. The one guards his head
 to save it, the other his heel, for death is at hand
 in the proximity of men and malignant poisonous snakes.²⁶

²⁶Trans. Collins, "The Sibylline Oracles, Book I," 335-36.

The progression of the Sibylline interpretation of Genesis 2-3 mirrors one point of Tribble's analysis, the movement of the human characters and the plot from *Eros* to *Thanatos*. "Conversing with wise words which flowed spontaneously," the humans live in harmony with each other. A Sibyl, who makes her living by prophesy, would appreciate the ease of communication between the two humans. Like Genesis, the Sibylline Oracles do not focus upon the man as the normative character in the narrative, but the two humans live in mutuality. The Sibyl is not concerned with how long this idyllic period lasts. The reader gets the impression that it does not last long, however. The "horrible snake" deceives both of them, and the character of "Eve the temptress" emerges for the first time. The woman "betrays" the man and "persuades him to sin." As we have seen, the Genesis account does not give any account of the woman persuading the man to sin. Rather, he accepts the fruit without protest, as opposed to Eve, who at least engages the serpent in dialogue.

The response of the deity to the human pair and the animal in the Sibylline Oracles differs in no small way from works of the Pseudepigrapha previously examined as well as Genesis 3. God becomes angry at both of the humans rather than exempting the male. God expels the pair from the garden to ground that is not cursed but instead "fruitful." The only reference to the curse of the earth is in the next line, of which God remarks that the humans must eat "by sweat." The curse of the serpent is mentioned, though not labeled as "curse," along with an additional caution regarding poisonous snakes. But the Sibylline Oracles do not mention in any way the text of Genesis 3:16--

that Eve thereafter, depending on the translation, suffer pain in childbirth or multiple conceptions. Nor does it record that the man shall rule over the woman. The author of the Oracles softens the punishment of all players in the scene dramatically.

The character of Eve that emerges from the Sibylline Oracles is ambiguous. On the one hand, the first portrait of Eve as temptress emerges, a “betrayed,” who “persuaded him to sin in his ignorance.” The fact that “Adam was persuaded by a woman’s words” is particularly ironic in light of the fact that the Oracle, herself purportedly a woman, attempts to persuade others by her words.²⁷ On the other hand, the Oracles present an even more favorable view of Eve than the Genesis account itself, adding to it by mentioning harmonious conversations and leaving out any mention of Genesis 3:16. While the Oracles are greatly concerned with sexual practices and immorality in other sections of the work,²⁸ they are not in the section regarding Eve. To the contrary, any phrase that might even connote a relationship between the woman’s “sin” and the woman’s body are purged. This is in sharp contrast with the next Pseudepigraphal work we will examine.

The Apocalypse of Abraham

This work claims to reveal the words of YHWH and the angel Iaoel to the patriarch Abraham. Angelology and demonology play important roles in this apocalypse, and its unknown author follows in the tradition of 1 Enoch, to whom he is indebted.²⁹ Most likely written originally in Hebrew, the work was probably composed in Palestine

²⁷Levine, “The Sibylline Oracles” 104.

²⁸Ibid., 103-4.

no earlier than 70 C.E. and no later than the middle of the second century.³⁰ If this dating is correct, the writer would be greatly influenced by either the fall of the Jerusalem Temple, the Bar Kochba rebellion, or both.

The only section concerning Eve is found within a conversation between YHWH and Abraham. The two are looking at a vision of the garden of Eden and a great crowd of people within it, split into two groups. One group is “a multitude of tribes that existed previously” and the other “those I have prepared to be born of you and to be called my people” (22:4-5). Chapter 23 follows immediately, continuing in the voice of YHWH as narrated by Abraham:

“Look again at the picture: Who is the one who seduced Eve, and what is the fruit of the tree? And you will know what will be and how much will be for your seed in the last days. And what you cannot understand, I will make known to you because you have been pleasing before my face and I will tell you what I have kept in my heart.” And I looked at the picture, and my eyes ran to the side of the garden of Eden. And I saw there a man very great in height and terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect, entwined with a woman who was also equal to the man in aspect and size. And they were standing under a tree of Eden, and the fruit of the tree was like the appearance of a bunch of grapes of the vine. And behind the tree was standing (something) like a dragon in form, but having hands and feet like a man’s, on his back six wings on the right and six on the left. And he was holding the grapes of the tree and feeding them to the two entwined with each other. And I said, “Who are these two entwined with each other, or who is this between them, and what is the fruit which they are eating, Mighty One, eternal?” And he said, “This is the world of men, this is Adam and this is their thought on earth, this is Eve. And he who is between them is the impiety of their behavior unto perdition, Azazel himself.” And I said to him, “Eternal, Mighty One, why then did you adjudge him such dominion that through his works he could ruin humankind on earth?” And he said to me, “Hear, Abraham! Those who desire evil and all whom I have hated as they commit them--over them did I give him dominion, and he was

²⁹R. Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I., 685.

³⁰For more about the Apocalypse of Abraham, see McNamara, *Intertestamental Literature* 83-4; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* 294-99; D.S. Russell, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Patriarchs and Prophets in Early Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1987) 70, 75-77.

to be beloved of them.” And I answered and said, “Eternal, Mighty One! Why did it please you to bring it about that evil should be desired in the heart of man, because you are angered at what was chosen by you...him who does useless things in your light (?).”³¹

Within this complex text we will concentrate solely on the character of Eve. Here we encounter her entwined in the arms of Adam. Both Eve and Adam are equally awesome in size; one is not smaller and weaker than the other, an “Adam’s rib.” Both are being fed fruit from a tree from a dragon-like creature who is none other than Azazel, the chief of the fallen angels, whose realm is earth. The present author’s transformation of the serpent into a fallen angel reflects the influence of 1 Enoch’s interpretation.

The fact that the two human beings are entwined together suggests that their sin is “in the conjugal relation.”³² It is interesting that sex (in this text) is related to “eating.” In Genesis the couple are “flesh of flesh, bone of bone,” from the moment they are separate entities. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, however, their concupiscence, aided by Azazel, will bring about their destruction. Not in this section nor in any other, however, is there any indication that the action of Eve and Adam will bring about the destruction of their descendants. The question posed by Abraham at the end of the section quoted above, “Why did it please you to bring it about that evil should be desired in the heart of man...” never receives an adequate answer.³³ After this point in the narrative the author proceeds

³¹Trans. by R. Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham” 700-01.

³²*Ibid.*, 684. Rubinkiewicz notes that this section and several others (chapter 7, 20:5, 29:3-13) are gnostic glosses.

³³Nickelsburg in *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* writes, “Abraham presses the question further: why does God permit sin to be willed? The answer at the beginning of chap. 24 is obscure, perhaps due to textual corruption; however, it makes reference to the Gentiles’ ill-treatment of Israel--one of the author’s special concerns” (296).

to lay before the reader a vision of sins of the past (idolatry) and of the future (the destruction of the Temple) on to the last days.

The interpretation of the character of Eve given in the Apocalypse of Abraham is a radical departure from Genesis. This may be the first time that an author portrays the first couple's sexual act as sinful. Nowhere does Genesis even imply that the act that leads to procreation is sinful. While the Apocalypse of Abraham as a whole is not a gnostic work, 23:4-10 does reflect the gnostic view of sexual intercourse as evil.³⁴ Even later Pseudepigraphal works which greatly emphasized the "sin" of Eve show no trace of this negative view of sexuality.

The Life of Adam and Eve (*Vita Adam et Evae*)/Apocalypse of Moses

This document, the first a Latin and the second a Greek version, represent "primary" literature of Adam and Eve: the entire work concerns the first two humans. The Mosaic attribution of the Greek text is a misnomer, found only in a single manuscript. Both documents appear to be versions of an original Hebrew manuscript.³⁵

Scholars have proposed several theories regarding the provenance of the original manuscript. Wells suggested that the original author was a Jew of Alexandria.³⁶ A later scholar, Sharpe, believes that it was written in Palestine. For many reasons the latter view seems more likely.³⁷ The document was probably written at the end of the first century of

³⁴Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham" 684.

³⁵M.D. Johnson, "Life of Adam and Eve," Old Testament Pseudepigrapha II., 251.

³⁶L.S.A. Wells, "The Books of Adam and Eve," Apochrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament II., 130.

³⁷Johnson in "Life of Adam and Eve" writes that "both the Greek and Latin texts show signs of mistranslation of a source or sources written in Hebrew. Moreover, our documents have a

the Common Era, and it circulated widely among Christians. Nevertheless, it contains very few Christian allusions.³⁸

The purpose of the *Life of Adam and Eve* is “to exonerate Adam and denigrate Eve, thus presenting readers with a perfect penitent, a righteous figure who receives mercy during life and after death.”³⁹ In this document we find the character of Eve treated in a depth and style unmatched by other Pseudepigraphal documents. Completely fleshing out the negative sketch of Eve found in Sirach 24:25, the *Life of Adam and Eve* paints a portrait of the first woman from the expulsion from the garden of Eden to her death.

Because of the length of the manuscript, it cannot be reproduced in full as were the previous sections of Pseudepigrapha concerning Eve. Rather a summary of the Latin version will follow. Three sections of the Latin manuscript have no counterpart in the Greek: “the repentance of Adam and Eve (1-11); Satan’s fall from heaven (12-16) and Adam’s ascension into the heavenly Paradise.”⁴⁰ Eve’s story of the events of the garden in the Apocalypse of Moses 15-30 has no parallel in the *Vita Adam et Evae*. A summary of this will follow the *Vita*.

The *Vita* has been ordered into four sections. After each section, an examination of its impact on the character of Eve will follow.

consistently non-Philonian approach to biblical interpretation...the work stands much closer to the Midrash or Haggadah so typical of Qumran and the Rabbis.” “Life of Adam and Eve” 252.

³⁸For more about “The Life of Adam and Eve,” see Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah 256-7; Rost, Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon 151-54; Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic 59-67, and The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Patriarchs and Prophets in Early Judaism 13-23.

³⁹Michael E. Stone, A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve (Atlanta, Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1992) 23.

⁴⁰Johnson, “Life of Adam and Eve” 251.

Book One: The Repentance of Adam and Eve (1-17)

Book One opens to find Adam and Eve having mourned for seven days after being expelled from Paradise. After this period of mourning they begin to look for food. In 3:1-2 Eve asks Adam, “My lord, would you kill me? O that I would die! Then perhaps the LORD God will bring you again into Paradise, for it is because of me that the LORD God is angry with you.” Adam refuses; he does not wish the LORD God to curse them further, for “how is it possible that I should let loose my hand against my flesh?” The two cannot find anything to eat, so Eve asks Adam what penance they should do. In 6:1 Adam says that Eve cannot do as much penance as he; they will both stand in water to their necks and fast, he for forty days in the Jordan River, and she for thirty-seven days in the Tigris.

After eighteen days, Satan becomes angry and appears to Eve under the guise of an angel of light, telling her that he was sent by the LORD God to give her the food she ate in Paradise; the LORD God has accepted her penance. Satan leads her to Adam, who immediately knows it is the devil and remonstrates with Eve, saying, “O Eve, Eve, where is the work of your penitence? How have you again been seduced by our enemy by whom we have been deprived of our dwelling in Paradise and of spiritual joy?” (10:4). Eve laments and asks Satan “...Why do you assault us for nothing? What have you to do with us? What have we done to you...”.

In 13-16 Satan replies with his story: When the LORD God made Adam, the angel Michael brought him to the angels and told them, on the instructions of the LORD, to

worship him. Satan refused, saying that he was created before Adam, and Adam ought to worship him. The angels under Satan refused as well. But the remainder pleaded with the renegade angels to worship Adam, or the LORD God would be wrathful with him (15:3). Satan replied that if this happens, he would set a throne “above the stars of heaven and be like the most high.” The LORD God cast him out, and he and his company immediately grieved to be “deprived of so great glory.” As they were envious to see Adam and Eve in Paradise, they assailed Eve to ensure the expulsion of the pair. At this point Adam cries out to the LORD God to remove his opponent, and Satan disappears. Adam completes his full forty days of penance.

Book One sets out its view of the character of Eve immediately and clearly: she is guilty; she is weak and dependent, and she is still quite vulnerable to temptation from the devil. In the second statement she makes, she begs to die so that Adam may return to Paradise; his expulsion is entirely her fault. The author implies that by making this request she yet again induces Adam to sin, and this time in a double way--murder because he would kill her, and suicide because he would be “loosing his hand against his own flesh.” Eve is utterly at a loss regarding what to do to atone for their sin. Though the word “sin” is not used in Book One, the language of “repentance” and “penitence” makes it quite obvious that the author believes the pair has committed serious sin. Eve depends completely upon Adam for his guidance. Adam’s words to her regarding her penance show that she is not only emotionally, but also physically weak; he cannot expect her to endure the severity of penance that he does. This contrasts markedly with the vision of

her in Apocalypse of Abraham, in which both Adam and Eve are of equal physical awesomeness. While she serves her reduced sentence, Eve reveals that she is also spiritually weak. It is not enough for the author of the *Vita* that Eve is deceived once; to show how depraved she truly is, the author presents a scene in which she falls prey to a deceiving voice yet again in the very act of repenting for her first mistake. In its characterization, however, the *Vita* does not paint Eve as a malicious or hateful person; she is simply weak, dependent, and easily deceived. Her fecklessness serves to allow her to feel her suffering in a way that she could not if she acted purposely. Unlike the portrayal of the man and woman in Genesis, this is not a partnership of equals.

Adam, on the other hand, shows himself as a leader--decisive, clear-sighted and long-suffering, greatly in contrast to the view of his character revealed by Tribble. By the end of Book One the reader understands that Adam is the hero, and Eve, if not the villain, is the guilty and shameful victim. Throughout the whole of the *Vita Adam et Evae*, the character of Adam resembles Ben Sira's interpretation: a noble person who happened to make a mistake.

II. The Children of Adam and Eve (18-24)

Eve addresses Adam:

You live on, my lord. Life is granted to you, since you have done neither the first nor the second error, but I have been cheated and deceived, for I have not kept the command of God. And now separate me from the light of such life, and I will go to the sunset and stay there until I die (18:1-3).

She goes, three months pregnant and alone. Her time comes to have the baby, and she calls to the LORD to have mercy on her, “but neither was she heard, nor was the mercy of God around her”(19:2-3). She begs the lights of heaven to give the news of her labor to Adam. At that moment Adam reports, “Eve's complaint has come to me.” He fears the serpent may be plaguing her yet again. He goes to her, and upon seeing him, Eve says that her pains are relieved. Adam prays to the LORD for her, and “twelve angels and two excellencies” (*virtutes*) come to her and help her, saying, “Blessed are you, Eve, because of Adam.” (21:3). Thus Cain is born. At once the infant rises and brings a reed to his mother.

Adam takes Eve and the child to the east, and the LORD sends seeds to plant for food via the messenger Michael. Abel is born; Cain kills Abel. Eve gives birth to Seth, and then to sixty more children, thirty boys and thirty girls (24:3).

The characterization of Eve in this section could well be summarized in the heavenly hosts' statement “Blessed are you, Eve, because of Adam.” Since Eve has been denied death, she places herself in exile. As her time to give birth draws near, she is also in exile from the LORD, who remains silent as she pleads to him. Only through the male, Adam, will Eve have surcease. He is her mediator to the LORD. This section further emphasizes Eve's shame and separation from God, while Adam, who also ate the fruit, is surprisingly well-received by the deity.

III. Adam Is Taken Up to the Heavenly Paradise (25-29)

Adam speaks this to Seth: After Adam and Eve were driven out of paradise, the archangel Michael appeared and took Adam into “the Paradise of Righteousness” (25:4). The LORD said that Adam should die because he disregarded the command of God and “listened rather to the voice of your wife, whom I gave into your power, that you might keep her in your will...” (26:2). Adam fell down to worship the LORD, asking not to be cast out from the LORD’s presence. The LORD replied that “there shall not be abolished from your seed forever (those who would) serve me” (27:3). Adam worshipped for some time, and Michael took him back to the place from which he had seized him.

The only part of this section regarding Eve, 26:2, deviates from the general tone of Genesis 2-3 regarding the equality of the woman and the man. As we have seen, especially through the exegesis of Tribble, the woman and man existed in a relationship of equality until Gen. 3:16. The *Vita* implies that even up to the time of YHWH’s punishment the man ruled over the woman. Even if *Vita* 26:2 refers strictly to the relationship of the human pair following the edict of Gen. 3:16, the word choices of “gave into your power” and “keep her in your will” connote a heavier rule of the man over the woman than does 3:16.

IV. Adam's final illness (30-51)

“After Adam had lived 930 years, he knew his days were at an end” and asked for his sons to be gathered around him to speak with them. They ask Adam what is the matter

with him, but none of them understands his reply; none knows what it is to be “sick with pains” (30:4). Seth says that perhaps Adam longs for the fruit of paradise which he used to eat, and that Seth will go and entreat the LORD to give it to him. Adam says not to do so, even though he has great pain. When Seth asks, “What is pain...?”, Adam retells the story of events within the garden. He repeats the injunction against eating of the tree, then notes that Eve and Adam had been given different parts of Paradise: Adam received the north and east, and Eve the south and west. When the two angels that the LORD God sent to watch over the human pair ascend to worship God, then “the adversary, the devil, found opportunity while the angels were away and deceived your mother so that she ate of the illicit and forbidden tree. And she ate and gave to me” (33:3). Immediately the LORD, angry, inflicts Adam with plagues and pains which will also be upon his descendants.

At this point in his narrative Adam begins to feel worse, and Eve, seeing it, prays to God to give the pains to her, saying to Adam, “My lord, give me a portion of your pain, for this guilt has come to you from me” (35:3). Adam tells Eve and Seth to go to “the tree of his mercy, from which flows the oil of life” so that Adam “might have rest from these pains” (36:2).

As Seth and his mother walk, a serpent attacks and bites Seth. Eve cries out, “Woe is me for I am cursed, since I have not kept the command of the Lord” (37:2-3). Asking the serpent how it dares to attack, she hears the serpent reply,

“O Eve, is not our malice against *you*? Is not our fury against *you*? Tell me, Eve, how was your mouth opened that you ate of the fruit which the LORD God

commended you not to eat? Now, however, are you not able to bear it if I begin to reproach you?" (38:1-3)

Seth asks God to rebuke the beast, which consequently leaves. Seth and Eve arrive at the gates of Paradise, prostrate themselves and beg God to send the angel to give them the oil. After many hours, Michael appears to them and addresses Seth as "man of God" (41:2), saying that they cannot have the oil, except in the last days. The angel announces to Seth that Adam will die in six days, and that they shall see great wonders. When Seth and his mother return to Adam, they tell him how the serpent bit Seth. Adam says to Eve,

"What have you done? You have brought upon us a great wound, transgression and sin in all our generations. And you shall relate what you have done to your children after my death, for those who rise up from us shall labor, not being adequate, but failing, and they shall curse us, saying, 'Our parents who were from the beginning have brought upon us all evils'" (44:2-3).

Adam dies as Michael predicted. For seven days the sun, moon and stars darken.

But Michael appears and says to Seth that God has had mercy on Adam. Seth sees Adam held by the LORD, who hands him over to Michael. The LORD says, "Let him be in your custody until the day of dispensing punishment at the last year, when I will turn his sorrow into joy. Then he shall sit on the throne of him who overthrew him" (47:3). They bury Adam's body.

Six days after Adam's death, Eve knows she will die, and gathers her sons and daughters to tell them the story of the transgression of the law of God. She asks them to write the story down on tablets of stone and of clay; one to survive in case of flood, and the other in case of fire. Eve dies, and Seth makes the tablets. This ends the *Vita*, with the

exception of an appendix unanimously believed to be a much later addition to the manuscript.

First we must note that Adam gathers only his sons around him; there is no mention of his daughters. They are separate from their brothers just as Adam and Eve were separate in the garden of Eden. This invention of the author of the *Vita*, this segregation of male and female, neatly negates the presence of “the man with her” (Genesis 3:6) when the woman eats of the fruit. Therefore Adam need bear no responsibility for the initial eating. As soon as he eats, Adam (but not Eve) is stricken with the first pain in recorded history. At this point the story within a story stops as Adam feels his present pain. Again the words placed in Eve’s mouth reiterate that only she, the female, and not the male, sinned, although both performed the same action of eating. Eve, still feeling strictly emotional agony, wishes to bear some of Adam’s pain. But in the *Vita* only a male person can serve in an expiatory function. Eve cannot bear any of Adam’s pain, but she can go in search of the oil of life. To do this she departs with Seth, again implying the helplessness of the woman both as a physical person and as an effective righter of wrongs. The reader who discerns this as foreshadowing will not be disappointed. A serpent attacks the beloved son Seth, and Eve calls herself “cursed.” While she was decidedly not cursed in the Genesis account, the author of the *Vita* makes clear, through the voice of the serpent, that the wrath of heaven is against her and only her. Only Seth can quiet the serpent; Eve once more is helpless. When the pair arrives in

Paradise, the angel Michael addresses only Seth, not Eve, when refusing the oil. He bids Seth, not Eve, to return to Adam and see great wonders.

Before they can view these wonders, Adam has some choice words for Eve, who has yet again been foiled by the serpent/devil. His words introduce the first hint of the later doctrine of original sin in all the early Eve literature: the descendants of the first pair are wounded by her “transgression and sin.” Eve, true to her character in this piece of the Pseudepigrapha, can do nothing but weep and wail.

When Adam dies, the heavens themselves respond. The angel Michael appears to speak to Seth--only Seth--of God’s mercy upon Adam. Adam will indeed be exalted on the last day, and he will take over the devil’s throne.

As Eve prepares for her death, things are quite different than they were upon Adam’s death. Eve gathers both her daughters and her sons around her to tell her story of life in the garden. The *Vita*, however, does record her speech, as it did Adam’s, concerning the events in the garden. After addressing the assembled children, she dies, with no heavenly witness, with no angelic visit, with no beatific vision.

The Apocalypse of Moses

The *Vita* simply refers to the telling of Eve’s story “of the transgression of the law of God;” it does not record it. However, the Greek Apocalypse of Moses 15-30 does record the tale, which can be summarized as follows:

Eve was watching the south and west portions of Paradise. She had dominion over the female animals there, while Adam had charge of the male animals in his portion. The

devil went to Adam's portion where the serpent was, and asked if he wanted to help cast Adam out of Paradise "through his wife, just as we were cast out through him." The serpent admitted fear of the LORD. The devil said that the serpent would simply be his vessel, and that he would speak through him.

The serpent went to Eve and asked her name and what she was doing, mentioning that she could not eat of every plant of the garden. He urged her to behold the glory of the forbidden tree. She was afraid to take the fruit, but the serpent offered to give it to her. She opened the gate for him, and he said that he changed his mind; he would not let her eat. Eve mentions that he said such things in order to entice and ruin her. The serpent persuaded Eve, who didn't feel comfortable with such an action, to take an oath to share the fruit with her husband. When she did so, the serpent sprinkled "his evil poison on the fruit which he gave [her] to eat which is his covetousness. For covetousness is the origin of every sin." And so she ate the fruit.

She immediately realized that she was "naked of the righteousness with which [she] had been clothed." In addition, she regretted her oath. After making herself clothes, she called out to Adam to come, and she would show him "a great mystery." She tells her children, "I spoke to him unlawful words of transgression such as brought us down from great glory. For I opened my mouth and the devil was speaking." She told him that he would be as God. Adam responded that he was afraid of God's anger. Eve replied that he would know good and evil, and she "quickly persuaded him." After eating, Adam, too

realized that he was naked and accused Eve: “O evil woman! Why have you wrought destruction among us? You have estranged me from the glory of God.”

Within the hour Michael had sounded his trumpet, and the LORD, accompanied by other angels, came to judge the pair, who were hiding. God cursed the ground, and, in a bit of poetry, ordained that Adam would “grow weary and not rest; be afflicted with bitterness and not taste sweetness” and other unpleasantnesses. The LORD noted that the animals will “rise against you in disorder.”

To Eve the LORD said,

“Since you have listened to the voice of the serpent and ignored my commandment, you shall suffer birth pangs and unspeakable pains; with much trembling you shall bear children and on that occasion you shall come near to lose your life from your great anguish and pains, and you shall confess and say, ‘LORD, LORD, save me and I will never again turn to the sin of the flesh.’ And by this, according to your word I will judge you, because of the enmity which the enemy has placed in you. And yet you shall turn again to your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

The LORD cursed the serpent, depriving him of his appendages, and began to expel Eve and Adam from the garden. Adam begged the angels for a little time to “beseech God that he might have compassion and pity me, for I alone have sinned.” Adam begged the LORD for fruit from the tree of life. God refused, but promised that if he guarded himself from all evil, Adam would be raised up at the time of the resurrection, and that he would receive the fruit at that time. Failing the first request, Adam begged for fragrances from Paradise, so that he might bring an offering to God. The angels allowed this.

Eve finishes her story with an admonition to her children to watch themselves so they do not “forsake the good.”

The Apocalypse shares with the *Vita* the division of physical territory between Adam and Eve. The former, however, separates even the male and female animals. In the Apocalypse we see the temptation of the serpent to fulfill the devil’s plan, and the possession of the animal by the heavenly creature. The serpent is even craftier here than he is in Genesis, changing his mind in order to make the fruit all the more desirable, as Eve sees in hindsight. Another interesting addition to the Genesis account is the oath Eve takes to give the fruit to Adam. Obviously Eve is not important; she is only a vehicle, a tool and her only significance is in feeding Adam. Before Eve eats, the serpent sprinkles the poison of covetousness (Gk. *epithymias*) upon the fruit. Certainly coveting the fruit did induce Eve’s eating.

When Eve eats, she realizes not simply that she is naked, as in Genesis 3:7, but that she is naked of righteousness. Also differing from the Genesis account, Eve comes to this realization of nakedness by herself; in Genesis 3:7 both the man and woman discover this while they are together. But in this account the man and woman are physically apart; Eve must shout for Adam. At this point Eve notes that the devil was speaking through her, just as previously he had spoken through the serpent. She is literally possessed by a demon.

While in Genesis the man simply takes and eats, and no conversation is recorded, here the man and woman dialogue, and Adam demurs a little--but not much. After he

eats, he exclaims that he is estranged from the glory of God; the eating of the fruit is associated with moral and spiritual loss.

Instead of coming for a walk in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8), seemingly innocent of the deeds of his human creation, the LORD comes in anger to judge the two humans, prearmed with knowledge of what they have done. To both of them the deity gives severe and intricate punishment. The man not only will eat by the sweat of his face (Genesis 3:19), but he will be deprived of sweetness and savor in all areas of his life. The woman not only will have pain in childbirth, but she will come near to losing her life. The most striking comments come after this edict. When the woman is suffering in childbirth, she will “confess” and ask the LORD to save her, and she will never again “turn to the sin of the flesh.” Like the Apocalypse of Abraham, the Apocalypse of Moses is correlating Eve, sexuality and sin. While in the Apocalypse of Abraham both humans were entwined in an embrace and the serpent/angel was present, making an association between the eating of the fruit and sexuality, in the Apocalypse of Moses only Eve, and only the sexual act, are denoted as sinful. Genesis 3:16 has moved from a context in which the sexual act and procreation are seen as desirable and necessary, even though fraught with potential danger to the woman (Meyers’ interpretation) to a context where, at least in the mind of the writer of the Apocalypse of Moses, the sexual act is “the sin of the flesh.” As seen above, scholars have speculated that the denigration of sex in the Apocalypse of Abraham arises from gnostic redaction. From what quarter does the reference to sex as sin arise in the Apocalypse of Moses?

This paper is not the avenue to explore the question; it might be a fruitful area for further study.

The words of the LORD to Eve conclude with another strong statement: “And by this, according to your word I will judge you, because of the enmity which the enemy has placed in you.” The obvious referent to “this” (*touto*)⁴¹ is the “sin of the flesh (*hamartion tas sarkos*) .” However, shall the LORD judge Eve by what she says (“according to your word”) about “the sin of the flesh”? Whatever the LORD is using to judge her by, the impetus for the judgment is “the enmity which the enemy has placed in you.” The devil spoke through the serpent, and the devil spoke through the woman. In the woman’s case, however, the author indicates that the evil will of the devil has had some sort of permanent effect upon the character and motivations of the woman. This contrasts sharply with the picture of the character of Eve which emerges from the *Vita*, in which the woman is simply weak and easily led astray. In the *Vita* it is clear that the woman has no malicious intentions, either of her own or on account of demonic possession.

One more section of the Apocalypse bears attention. Immediately before Adam’s death, Eve falls on the ground saying,

“I have sinned, O God; I have sinned, O Father of all; I have sinned against you, I have sinned against your steadfast throne; I have sinned, LORD, I have sinned much; I have sinned before you, and all sin in creation has come about through me”(32:1-3).

Once more the reader hears an echo and expansion of Sirach 24:25, in which all sin has come into the world because of a woman. The word “sinned” (*hamarton*) pounds

⁴¹Greek text is from K. von Tischendorf, Apocalypses Apocryphae (Leipsig: Hildesheim, 1866) 14.

repeatedly into the consciousness of the reader, building to the climax of the last words, which explain the presence of sin and its resultant misery in the world.

The *Vita Adam et Evae*/Apocalypse of Moses fulfills its purpose to “exonerate Adam and denigrate Eve” quite well indeed. From the beginning of the manuscript, Eve repeatedly shows herself to be guilty, ashamed, weak and vulnerable to temptation. She is utterly miserable throughout the work, but the author does not portray her in a sympathetic light. Within her narration of the events in the garden, the author strongly implies that because of her possession by the devil via the serpent, Eve will henceforth act maliciously, out of the enmity with which the devil has tainted her. Without doubt this would further prejudice the ancient reader against her.

Adam, on the other hand, is virtually untouched by his actions in the garden. His acts of penitence are accepted, while Eve’s are not. His requests to the deity are answered, while Eve’s are ignored. Adam is glorified, while Eve dies ignominiously. As in Sirach, Adam is the hero of this work, and Eve is the anti-hero, the unrighteous one.

Within this lengthy retelling of the life of Adam and Eve are many striking elements, but among the most pertinent for this character study is the repeated assertion that the woman bears responsibility for her own sin, for her husband’s sin, and for all consequent sin in creation. While she is powerful enough to cause consequences of such cosmic proportions, she is yet too weak to remedy, even in the smallest way, her misdeeds. Her attempts make matters yet worse, creating a sort of black comedy. Eve’s sins are many, and her salvation is hopeless.

CONCLUSIONS

We may compare examining the character of Eve in the Pseudepigrapha with viewing a scene in a kaleidoscope: with every shift of the lens, the image changes. While material forming the base of the picture remains constant, each new twist of the instrument produces a novel arrangement. So is it with Eve in the Pseudepigrapha. Within each of the works we have analyzed, the authors looked at Eve through their own lenses. Each took the same basic material, Genesis 2-3, and manipulated it to serve his own purposes

Jewish and Christian communities as represented in the Pseudepigrapha provide many different views of the character of Eve. In 1 Enoch Eve serves as an example of the victimization of humanity by the fallen angels. The author of the book of Jubilees looks back to primeval history to explain why things are the way they are; for instance, the time of ritual impurity for a woman. In addition, he uses the story to remind his people why they should uphold certain customs which are slipping away, such as not appearing in public nude. The author of the Sibylline Oracles stresses the power of a woman's words, for good or ill; she then takes advantage of her authorial privilege to delete any connection between a woman's "sin" and her sexuality. The author of the Apocalypse of Abraham uses his bully pulpit to emphasize those very connections. The author of the Life of Adam and Eve/Apocalypse of Moses, like Ben Sira, seems to have as his mission to exalt Adam, a man, and denigrate Eve, a woman.

Not surprisingly, with several different texts using Eve to further their own literary ends, diverse views of the character of Eve emerge. We see her as victim, as joyous partner, as temptress and betrayer, as an almost superhumanly strong being, equal in every way to her male partner, as enslaved by sexuality, as a weak, miserable creature who is the bearer of sin and pain into the world, as a soul created by but mercilessly abandoned by YHWH.

Some aspects of these characterizations will have little influence on later interpretations of Genesis 2-3. Others will persist, expressed in contemporaneous documents and in literature for millennia to come. One of the most important of these persistent ideas is the linkage of Eve's sexuality with her "betrayal" of the man. This association between "woman," "betrayal," "sin" and "the flesh" will not end in the Pseudepigrapha but will appear again in texts the Christian church will raise to the status of canon.

CHAPTER V

EVE IN PAUL AND THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The next setting in which Eve appears, and the final one which this paper will analyze, is in the canonical New Testament. Within this milieu Eve appears only twice specifically by name: in an authentically Pauline work, 2 Corinthians, and in a non-Pauline work incorrectly attributed to Paul, 1 Timothy.¹ In writing these books, the authors reworked certain interpretations of the character of Eve that they may have found in Jewish literature such as Ben Sira and the Pseudepigrapha, transforming her yet again to fulfill their own needs. As this chapter will show, early Christianity, like early Judaism, did not have a monolithic view of the character of Eve. Paul used Eve as an example, almost an aside. The author of the Pastorals used her as the bedrock for his mandates to women.

2 Corinthians, while a complex text in itself, poses relatively few difficulties in the pericope examined here, 11:3. 1 Timothy, however, considered one of the Pastoral letters, is notoriously difficult to grapple with. Many Christians have used the passage examined here, 1 Tim 2:11-15, as a proof text for a number of patriarchal assertions:

¹Modern scholars overwhelmingly reject Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy and the other Pastoral letters, 2 Timothy and Titus. In most scholarly commentaries non-Pauline authorship is assumed. See Joanna Dewey, "1 Timothy," The Woman's Bible Commentary 353. This paper will not treat the authorship problem. For more information regarding this issue, the classic work is P.N. Harrison's The Problem of the Pastorals (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1921. For a less comprehensive but more up-to-date treatment, see Martin Dibelius/Hans Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles trans. Philip Buttoph and Adela Yarbro, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) 1972. For a summary of various ways in which we have received "Pauline" writings (authentic, rewritten, ghostwritten, and interpolated) see Francis X. Cleary, S.J., "Women in the New Testament," Biblical Theology Bulletin 10/2 (April 1980) 78-82.

women cannot teach or have authority over men, women are subordinate to men because Adam was created first and Eve second, and women's salvation is somehow connected to her bearing children. Not only does this passage offend modern sensibilities with its content, but its troublesome vocabulary and syntax continue to confound its interpreters. 1 Tim 2:11-15, more than almost any biblical text except for Genesis 2-3, on which it is based, shows the serious implications biblical interpretation can produce, not only in academia, but in the lives of people outside the academe.² And the character of Eve stands directly in the middle of the exegetical muddle.

This chapter will examine 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:9-15, paying close attention to the Greek vocabulary and syntax of the individual verses. It will attempt to delineate the sociological and literary background of these texts and will posit various theories to explain why the authors used Eve to make their points. This will reveal how they put their own interpretive stamp on the character of Eve.

²One of the major areas in which this verse continues to affect women is that of women's ordination to the ministry. While analysis of the character of Eve in 1 Timothy will have some bearing on the issue, even a cursory treatment of the topic is beyond the scope of this paper.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:3

General consensus exists that 2 Corinthians was written by Paul himself to the Christian community at Corinth, of which he was the founder. 2 Corinthians is probably a number of different letters or letter fragments later assembled by a redactor. The unit comprising chapters 10-13 makes up one of these fragments. It was written by Paul c. the fall of 54 and sent via Titus to Corinth.³ This unit has been labeled “The Tearful Letter” or “The Severe Letter.” Its content is highly emotional, and its subject concerns Paul’s opposition to certain “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (11:13).⁴ Paul admits in 11:2-3 that

I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.⁵

Thus Paul fears that the “false apostles” are luring members of the Christian community of Corinth away from Paul’s teaching, the “sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” He uses a metaphor in 11:2, comparing the Christian community to a virgin and Christ as her husband. Within this metaphor Paul himself would stand as “father of the bride.” In 11:3

³Francis T. Fallon, *2 Corinthians* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1980) 6. See also C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NY: Harper and Row, 1973) 5-21; and Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* Anchor Bible 32 (NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1984) 29-48.

⁴The identity of these “false apostles” or “super-apostles” (*hyperlian apostolon*, 11:5) continues to be hotly debated. Opinions range from judaizers to Gnostics to divine men to pneumatics. See Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press) 1990.

⁵All quotations from the New Testament will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

he uses a simile that compares the serpent's deception of Eve to the community's deception by the false apostles. These images of marriage, virginity, purity and deception are echoed in the Greek words Paul chooses in his example of Eve. Two words bear further scrutiny here: *exepatesen* (deceived) and *phthere* (be led astray).

The first, *exepatesen*, is an allusion to the Septuagint's rendition of Genesis 3:13: "And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me [*epatesen me*], and I ate." Paul, in citing this verb, changes it, however. While the Septuagint uses *apatao*, the simple form of the verb, Paul uses the compound form, *exapatao*, which intensifies the meaning.⁶ Therefore a better translation of it in 2 Corinthians 11:3 would be "quite deceived" or "deceived me exceedingly." This intensive form of *apatao* appears only one other place in the New Testament--1 Timothy 2:14.

A number of commentators believe that this "deception" signifies seduction.⁷ In Chapter Four we have seen the juxtaposition of Eve's deception with seduction in the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Apocalypse of Moses. It is quite probable that Paul believed, with them, that the sin of Eve was connected in some way to lust or sexuality. The context within which the character of Eve appears, juxtaposed to images of marriage and purity, strengthens the case that Paul viewed Eve's deception in that light. The second word we wish to consider, *phthere*, adds credence to this view. The verb *phtheirein* can be used of moral "ruin" or "corruption," but it has also been used

⁶Furnish, *II Corinthians* 487. Paul uses the LXX quite consistently with his other Old Testament references and allusions.

⁷Many scholars hold this view. See Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* 273; Fallon, *2 Corinthians* 93; Furnish, *II Corinthians* 487.

“specifically for the corruption of a woman.”⁸

This only citation of Eve in authentic Pauline writings indicates that Paul viewed her as one who was not only deceived, but also seduced, by the serpent. Regardless of this, however, Paul does not use his view of Eve to make any profound theological point.⁹ He does not proceed to apply this opinion of Eve to any particular woman, or to women in general. Within the context and imagery of 2 Cor 11:3, Eve stands for the whole community, both male and female.¹⁰ He cites Eve as an example or cautionary type for the leading astray of the Corinthian community. Nevertheless, simply by using the character of Eve in this way, damage has been done. Paul did what no author of the canonical Old Testament even hinted at: he used the character of Eve as a metaphor for a negative action. In addition, he separated her from her co-created partner, Adam. Within this pericope, Adam was not “exceedingly deceived.” In portraying Eve in this way, and exempting Adam from the same treatment, Paul leaves Eve vulnerable. The author of the Pastorals, who claimed Paul’s name, would use the deception of Eve, with its sexual connotations, to make theological points that would exert much more profound practical consequences.

⁸Furnish, II Corinthians 487 notes that it is used as moral “ruin” or “corruption” in 1 Cor 15:33, LXX Gen 6:11 and Hosea 9:9. It is used specifically for seduction of a woman in Euripides, Fragment 485 and Dio Chrysostom XI, 153. Furnish mentions, “See especially Diogn 12:8, where the seduction of ‘the virgin’ Eve is in view, as it seems to be here as well.”

⁹That honor is reserved for Adam in Romans 5. Here, as opposed to Ben Sira, all sin and death entered the world through one *man*. See Bruce J. Malina, “Some Observations on the Origin of Sin and Death in Judaism and St. Paul,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 31(1969) 18-34.

¹⁰Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins (NY: Crossroad, 1983) 235.

1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

The Pastoral Epistles are composed of three letters: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. In order to analyze 1 Timothy 2:9-15, the second (and final) passage referring to Eve, it is necessary to understand the social and literary context in which the reference occurs, the provenance and the general purpose and themes.

Many studies of the Pastorals have focused on the authorship question. As mentioned above, most scholars conclude that Paul did not write them, but that the unknown author did include fragments of genuinely Pauline material.¹¹ This anonymous author has come to be known as the Paulinist, an inheritor of the legacy and literature of Paul. As the remainder of the chapter will show, the Paulinist reworked the material in his possession, drastically in places, to serve the perceived needs of his own time and place.

Exactly when the Paulinist wrote is, like many issues related to the Pastorals, still debated. Some scholars claim a date of c.125 C.E. or even later.¹² Others say he wrote within a generation after Paul.¹³ This paper will maintain that the Pastorals were written c. 105 C.E. To establish this date, we can look at literary sources contemporaneous with the Pastorals. In a letter dated c. 135 Polycarp refers to 1 Tim 6:7, 10. This date would be the latest the Pastorals could have been written. The early limit for their dating can be established with the help of other biblical and extrabiblical material. In 2 Tim 3:11 the

¹¹See Harrison, The Problem of the Pastorals 115 ff. for a listing of these fragments believed to be genuinely Pauline.

¹²Dewey, 1 Timothy 353.

¹³Alan Padgett, "Wealthy Women at Ephesus: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 in Social Context," Interpretation 41/1 (Jan. 1987) 20.

Paulinist writes about “persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra,” which seem to refer to Acts 13:50 and 14:5, 19. Acts is dated c. 90 C.E. Around 112 C.E. Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, received a letter from the emperor Trajan authorizing a persecution of Christians in the area. The Pastorals show no sign of such a persecution. Neither do they hint of the persecutions suffered at the time of the Apocalypse of John, believed to have been written c. 96 C.E. Therefore the Pastorals could have been written after the persecution reported by John and before the one authorized by Trajan, around 105 C.E.¹⁴

Outside of the Pastorals themselves, there is next to no evidence indicating from where or to whom the letters were addressed. Scholars, then, unanimously accept the internal biblical references and proceed on the assumption that the Pastorals issued from Asia Minor.¹⁵

By far the most important issue regarding the Pastorals as a whole is the question of why the Pastorals were written. As this issue has direct bearing on the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11-15, we will treat it at some length. This chapter will propose four foes against which the Paulinist may have been contending, and these foes provide for authorial intent: the genuine teaching of Paul regarding women and marriage, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the cult of the Ephesian Artemis, and incipient Gnosticism.

¹⁴Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966) 7.

¹⁵See Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* 19: “There is practically no evidence to inform us where the Pastorals were written. In view of references in the Epistles themselves to Ephesus and the province of Asia (1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:15, 18; 4:12), and of the quotations in Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna), there is perhaps no better guess than that they were written in this neighborhood...but it would be a serious mistake to regard this as more than a plausible guess.”

The main theme of the Pastorals has to do with “false teaching.” The Paulinist, however, unlike Paul, spends no time arguing against false teaching. Instead, the Paulinist simply mandates what his readers should do to avoid it. Only occasionally do readers discover a direct reference to false teaching. These references include “myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations” (1 Tim 1:4); “meaningless talk” from those who desire “to be teachers of the law, without understanding what they are saying” (1 Tim 1:6); those who “renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits” and “forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods” (1 Tim 4:1-3); those who have “a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words” and also do not agree with the “teaching that is in accordance with godliness” (1 Tim 6:3-4) and those who engage in “the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” ([*gnoseos*] 1 Tim 6:20). In addition to these fairly direct references to false teaching, we may also find clues that the author is attacking “false teaching” indirectly. For instance, if no woman is speaking out in assembly, or if no woman is teaching a man, there would be no reason to forbid it (1 Tim 2:11-12). By the Paulinist’s very defensiveness readers may determine the purpose of his writing.

Anyone reading the Pastoral letters will notice that they do not flow well. They move from one topic to another in a disjointed or disconnected fashion. Because of this, scholars believe that the Paulinist was writing a handbook of rules for the church and for personal behavior, which he put in the form of letters and attributed to Paul. The *Haustafel*, or “Household rules” occur throughout the Pastoral letters. A typical example

of *Haustafel* is 1 Tim 2:11-15,¹⁶ where they delineate behavior for women. These rules also mandate qualities and qualifications for bishops (1 Tim 3:1-7), deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13), widows (1 Tim 5:3-16), elders (1 Tim 5:17-24), slaves (1 Tim 6:1-2) and others. The Paulinist seems to desire order and harmony at all costs. The Paulinist's favorite word for religion, *eusebia*, does not appear in any other Pauline material, and interestingly, the word connotes almost "middle-class," or even "*bourgeois*" religion.¹⁷

These "Household rules" are a drastic departure from the style and content of the genuinely Pauline works. Why, then, were they written? Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza asserts that

The writers of the post-Paulinist literature advocated the adoption of the Greco-Roman patriarchal order of the house with its injunctions to subordination and submission of the socially weaker party. At first they might have done so with a view to lessening the political tensions between the Christian group and the pagan patriarchal household. However, at the same time, Christian writers apply this pattern of patriarchal submission to their own communal self-understanding and life in the church as the household of God.¹⁸

The "Household rules" indicate a desire to conform as much as possible to the predominant social order of the Greco-Roman world (without, of course, denying their identity as Christians). Men of the Christian community should act *in loco paterfamilias*; women and slaves should submit to the men as they would in a hellenistic family. This submission is not for its own sake but rather to "lessen the tension between the Christian

¹⁶See Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters* 15; William O. Walker, Jr., "The 'Theology of Woman's Place' and the 'Paulinist' Tradition," *Semeia* 28 (1983) 102-3; for information on the origin and form of the *Haustafeln*, see David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Press) 1981.

¹⁷Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters* 2.

¹⁸Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* 245.

community and the pagan patriarchal household.”¹⁹ The Pastorals as a whole ask members of the community to be as inoffensive to as many people and institutions as possible; the community is required to pray “for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Tim 2:2b).

The “domesticated Paul” presented in the Pastorals counters the passionate Paul of the genuine epistles, and the “liberated Paul” who proclaimed in Galatians 3:28 that “there is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.”²⁰ Paul proves his words with deeds by enthusiastically welcoming a number of women as coworkers: Prisca (Priscilla), whom Paul says “worked with me in Christ Jesus” (Rom 16:3);²¹ Phoebe, “a deacon of the church at Cenchrae” (Rom 16:2); Mary, “who worked very hard among you” (Rom 16:6); Junia, who was in prison with Paul (Rom 16:7) and seven more women in Romans 16. In Philippians 4:2-3, Paul exhorts Eudia and Syntyche, who “struggled beside me in the work of the gospel” and “whose names are in the book of life.” Many more examples of women holding positions of teaching and authority could be listed.²² By advocating and accepting women in leadership roles, the branch of early missionary Christianity represented by Paul could not help but threaten the established Greco-Roman order.

¹⁹Ibid., 262,

²⁰For more on the tension between the Pastorals and Galatians 3:28, see Ben Wiebe, “Two Texts on Women (1 Tim 2:11-15; Gal 3:25-29) A Test of Interpretation,” Horizons in Biblical Theology 16/1 (June 1994) 54-85; Fiorenza, In Memory of Her 205-41; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, There Is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) 1987.

²¹Priscilla’s role in teaching will be discussed more fully below.

²²See Fiorenza, In Memory of Her chapter 5, “The Early Christian Missionary Movement: *Equality in the Power of the Spirit*” 160-204.

The Pastorals may also oppose yet another group that claimed Paul for its own and produced the Acts of Paul and Thecla. In this document a young woman, Thecla, hears the preaching of Paul and immediately deserts her fiancée and her home. She faces many tribulations, including persecutions from her loved ones and death from the wild beasts to which she is thrown (she is saved by a female lion). She baptizes herself, cuts off her hair, dresses as a man and travels about as a wandering preacher and teacher. This story received mixed reviews in the second century and following, and while many considered it canonical up to the third century, others did not accept its veracity, and eventually it was branded apochryphal.²³ While the first evidence we have of the Acts of Paul and Thecla in its written form is from Tertullian at the end of the second century C.E., a persuasive case has been made that in its oral version, at least, the author of the Pastorals probably knew of it.²⁴

One can only imagine the effect of this story on the orderly, conservative, everyone-and-everything-in-its-place author of the Pastorals. The Paulinist's views regarding the household are quite similar to those of his pagan neighbors, at least within the Roman milieu. In the early empire, under Augustus, laws were passed requiring marriage and procreation of certain social classes. The state rewarded those who married and produced children and penalized those who did not.²⁵ As a result, refusing marriage,

²³For the English text of the Acts of Paul and Thecla and a summary of its early attestation, see "The Acts of Paul," trans. J.K. Elliott, The Apochryphal New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 350-80.

²⁴Dennis Ronald MacDonald, The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon (Philadelphia: Westminster) 1983. See especially chapter 3, "The Pastoral Letters against 'Old Wives' Tales'" 54-77.

²⁵Dio Cassius 56.1-10, "Roman History" trans. Earnest Carey, Loeb (London: William Heinemann/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924) 3-25.

and thus childbirth, could be tantamount to disloyalty to the state.²⁶ At the end of the first century, the same time at which the Pastorals were written, the emperor Domitian reinforced this legislation.²⁷ Refusing marriage and childbirth removed women from the household (*oikia*) and from the guardianship of men, be they fathers, husbands or sons. It also threatened the security of widows. Thecla's mother, for example, lost the support a son-in-law could have given her. The behavior of Christian women of the Thecla mold would be a definite affront to the established secular order as well as to men with the mindset of the author of the Pastorals.

While an expectation that women would marry, produce children, and care for their aged relatives was a commonplace in the secular milieu of the first century Roman Empire, such may not have been the case within the Pauline school of the Christian community. Realizing that biblical words and actual practice may not coincide, one should recall 1 Corinthians 7. The chapter does not forbid marriage. It even encourages it for some. But Paul's attitude could be summed up in v. 38: "He who marries his fiancée does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better." Nevertheless, Paul was quick to record that his opinion about marriage was simply that, an opinion, and not the mandate of God (1 Cor 7:25; see also 1 Cor 7:6-7).

There are at least two other groups that the author of 1 Timothy could have been battling. Recently some scholars have placed the blame on a "mother goddess" cult, the

²⁶As history would have it, the renunciation of marriage, childbirth and also service to the state did eventually have some impact on the existence of the Roman Empire. The flourishing of the ascetic movement in the late fourth century and later coincided with the fall of the Empire and may have helped contribute to it. See W.H.C. Frend, The Rise of Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 710.

²⁷Fiorenza, In Memory of Her 225.

cult of Artemis, in Ephesus.²⁸ If the Pastorals were indeed directed to the Ephesian community, the presence of the enormously popular temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the world, cannot be ignored. While Artemis in her Greek incarnation was a virgin huntress, within the oriental setting she became a fertility goddess. Coins from Ephesus portray the goddess

wearing a veil on her head; her figure is bound from waist to ankles in shroudlike bands; and the upper part of her body from waist to neck is covered with breasts...The head-dress, the many breasts, and the bands about the body have all been associated with other eastern representatives of the mother goddess.²⁹

Sharon H. Gritz asserts that the cult of the Ephesian Artemis³⁰ was one of the “mystery religions” characterized by ecstatic worship.³¹ A great number of women and men participated in this cult,³² and some scholars believe that under the empire a priestess, not

²⁸Sharon Hodgkin Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century (Lanham, MD: University Press of America) 1991. Gritz’ work differs from this one significantly; i.e., she maintains Pauline authorship of the Pastorals; hers is not a feminist reading of the material. In addition, it is riddled with uncritical assertions; i.e., as we have seen in chapters 3 and 4 of this document, early Judaism did *not* blame Eve for sin and death entering the world (Gritz 138). The value of Gritz’ work is drawing attention to the presence of the Artemis cult in Ephesus and its possible influence upon the Pastorals. See also Catherine Clark Kroeger, “1 Timothy 2:12--A Classicist’s View” Women, Authority and the Bible ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986) 225-53; Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker) 1992. For a refutation of the Kroegers’ position, see S.M. Baugh, “The Apostle Among the Amazons,” Westminster Theological Journal 56 (1994) 153-71.

²⁹Lily Ross Taylor, “Artemis of Ephesus,” The Beginnings of Christianity v. 5, F.J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979) 254.

³⁰The cult of Artemis was widespread in the ancient world. Strabo mentions “the temple of Artemis Munychia” in Pygela and another temple of Artemis in Panormus in his Geography 14.1.20. He also notes that “Both in Rhodus and in Emporium they worship Artemis of the Ephesians...” Geography 3.4.8. The fullest treatment of the Ephesian Artemis in classical sources occurs in the Geography 14.1.21-26. See Strabo, Geography trans. Horace L. Jones, Loeb (London: William Heinemann/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) 1929.

³¹Gritz, Paul, Women Teachers and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus 31-36.

³²Fiorenza, In Memory of Her 249. Other scholars believe that the ancient inscriptions cited

a priest, officiated. While the priests were eunuchs, both maidens and matrons took an active role in the cult.³³ While women throughout the classical world took active roles in religious activities, women in Asia Minor were unusually prominent and influential.³⁴

A cult of such magnitude and fame would surely affect the economic status of Ephesus. This can be seen in the only direct reference to the cult of the Ephesian Artemis in the New Testament, Acts 19:21-41. Demetrius, a silversmith who made his living fashioning shrines of Artemis, realized what Paul's preaching of Christ would do to the cult (and so to Demetrius' livelihood). He incited a riot whose warcry was, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:28, 34). Demetrius' worries were well-founded; by C.E. 160, the Ephesian Senate had to issue a decree whose purpose was to restore the cult to its former status.³⁵ It is very likely that this religious, social and economic tension would be reflected in the Pastoral epistles.

Finally, a number of scholars believe that the Paulinist was attempting to refute Gnosticism. Irenaeus certainly uses the Pastorals for that end, opening his *Adversus Haereses* (c. 185) with an allusion to 1 Tim 1:4.³⁶ It is necessary to note that there is no written evidence that the "advanced Gnosticism" that Irenaeus and others fought in the mid-second century and later was flowering in the late first and early second century.

for supporting a single high priestess are inconclusive. See Taylor, "Artemis of Ephesus" 253-54.

³³Taylor, "Artemis of Ephesus" 254.

³⁴A plethora of inscriptional evidence from this time and place undergirds this claim. See Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* 249; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Woman's Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) 1988, and Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (NY: Oxford University Press) 1992.

³⁵The Greek text of the decree is given in Taylor, "Artemis of Ephesus" 255-56.

³⁶Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses* Book One, Preface, 1, *Ancient Christian Writers* 55, trans. Dominic J. Unger, O.F.M. CAP. (NY: Paulist Press, 1992) 21.

Rather we should speak of “early Jewish or Judaizing forms of Gnosticism”³⁷ or “incipient Gnosticism.”

We cannot rule out the possibility, however, that later forms of Gnosticism were present earlier than their literary attestations allow. The origins of Gnosticism remain obscure,³⁸ and we cannot with certainty place particular tenets of Gnosticism within a particular time in history. Nevertheless, we can and must discuss some of the major tenets of Gnosticism that may directly affect the character of Eve.³⁹

The fundamental tenet of Gnosticism is its dualism; the deity is completely “other.” Knowledge of the deity is impossible through natural means. In order to do this one needs special enlightenment or *gnosis* (literally, knowledge). As one scholar describes this dualism, “spirit is good; matter is evil. The goal of salvation is for spirit to free itself from the entanglement of matter.”⁴⁰ Gnostics considered the Hebrew YHWH the “demiurge,” a wicked being far below the true deity. The demiurge is responsible for the creation of the earth and thus responsible for the evil of matter and the suffering of all creation, including humanity. Between the true deity and the demiurge are layers of

³⁷Dibelius/Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles 17. See also Barrett, The Pastoral Epistles 2, 12.

³⁸Elaine Pagels in The Gnostic Gospels (NY: Random House, 1981) xxxv. cites C. Colpe, who has criticized historians’ search for the origins of Gnosticism. This search “leads to a potentially infinite regress of ever remoter ‘origins’ without contributing much to our understanding of what gnosticism actually is.” See also Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion 2nd ed., rev. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963) 33-4; E.M. Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker) 1983.

³⁹Gnosticism was no more a monolithic set of beliefs accepted by all adherents at all times than was Judaism or Christianity. There were many different schools of Gnosticism that developed their own unique cosmologies. This listing of “fundamental tenets” is not a creed, but rather a general list more or less commonly held. See Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism 14-15.

⁴⁰David R. Kimberly, “1 Timothy 2:15: A Possible Meaning of a Difficult Text,” Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society 35/4 (Dec. 1992) 484.

archons, or rulers.⁴¹ The predilection of Gnostic practitioners to categorize the archons in involved and complex lists could have given rise to the mention in 1 Tim 1:4 of “myths and endless genealogies.”⁴² Only a few were privy to this knowledge, however; only the “chosen” or “elite” would achieve salvation.⁴³

Because of their contempt for the world, the *pneumatics*, the elite of Gnosticism, did not wish to defile themselves with contact with it.⁴⁴ They recommended abstinence in eating, drinking and sexual practices, including marriage and childbearing. These topics have obvious counterstatements in 1 Timothy, which denounces those who engage in “myths and endless genealogies”(1:4) and “forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods” (4:13). Positively, the author of 1 Timothy requires widows to marry and have children (5:14) and connects salvation with childbirth (2:15).

In summary, then, the author of the Pastoral Letters may have been writing in

⁴¹Jonas, The Gnostic Religion 42.

⁴²The Greek for “myth,” *mythos*, is found only one other place in the NT, 2 Pet 1:16, another non-Pauline work. While Hanson, The Pastoral Letters 23 believes that “myths and genealogies points to Gnosticism, he also notes that the citation of “ ‘Jewish myths’ in Titus 1:14 shows that the word could be used of Judaistic teaching. Moreover, *genealogies* suggests Judaism; the word could be used to describe the stories of the patriarchs in Genesis” as well as the genealogies in the Book of Jubilees. Hanson concludes by positing that the “author of the Pastorals is facing a form (or forms) of teaching that combined both Gnostic and Jewish elements.”

⁴³Many Pauline writings seem made-to-order for the Gnostics, i.e. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8: “Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” The heresiologists of the second century were completely aware of the Gnostic use of Pauline theology and the implications of that use for orthodox Christianity. It is interesting that “Paul’s influence on ecclesiastical theology before Irenaeus remains astonishingly slight.” Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin and Athenagoras revere Paul as a leader but remain silent of Pauline theology. The Pseudo-Clementines even suggest that Paul is satanically inspired, usurping authority that is rightfully Peter’s. Irenaeus is the first to defend Paul, and Pauline theology, for ecclesiastical Christians. See Elaine Heisey Pagels The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 57, 161.

⁴⁴Jonas, The Gnostic Religion 46.

opposition to Paul's genuine writings, i.e. Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 7; later interpretations of Paul, i.e. the Acts of Paul and Thecla; devotees of the Artemis cult at Ephesus, or incipient Gnosticism. The following analysis will begin to help determine which of these factors prompted the Paulinist author of the Pastorals to use Eve in 1 Timothy 2: 13-14.

Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15

This passage is located within an example of *Haustafel* for both men and women (2:8-15). Instructions to men, however, disappear from the text after verse 8. Women receive the author's undivided attention in verses 9-15. Verses 9-10 tell women that they should dress simply, without ornamentation.⁴⁵ It is in verses 11-15 that the reader encounters material that has confounded modern non-specialists and biblical exegetes alike. While Eve appears by name only in verses 13-14, it is vital that we closely examine the verses immediately surrounding that pericope. We will analyze this section verse by verse and word by word, applying insights gained above as needed.⁴⁶

The New Revised Standard Version of 1 Tim 2:11-15 reads:

- 11) Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.
- 12) I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.
- 13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve;
- 14) and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.
- 15) Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. [This saying is sure. 3:1]

⁴⁵Far from applying solely to Christian women, this instruction, like the marriage and childbirth legislation, had been mandated earlier in the Roman Empire through Augustus, who asked others to look at his wife Livia as an example of sartorial simplicity.

⁴⁶For a guide for grappling with passages such as these, see Arthur Rowe, "Hermeneutics and 'Hard Passages' in the NT on the Role of Women in the Church: Issues from Recent Literature," Epworth Review 18/3 (Sept. 1994) 82-88.

From verse 11 we will examine four words: woman (*gyne*), learn (*manthaneto*), silence (*hesuchia*) and submission (*hupatage*).

In Greek *gyne* can indicate either a woman or a wife. In this context *gyne* most likely signifies “woman” in general, rather than a wife, for the men (*tous andras*) and women (*gynaikas*) in verses 8 and 9 could not be transformed into “husbands” and “wives” without damaging the sense of the passage.⁴⁷ It is likely that the meaning of *gyne* remains constant throughout the pericope.

If early Jewish practice was consistent with rabbinic writings, the Christian invitation that a woman may learn (*manthaneto*) was a significant break from first century Judaism. In rabbinic writings Jewish women were not specifically forbidden to learn from the Torah, but they were exempted from it, which, for all practical purposes, amounted to the same thing. A woman’s place was in the home, and anything that took her away from the home was discouraged. Even when she went to the synagogue, she remained in the back.⁴⁸ If this is the case, we should give the Paulinist some credit for allowing women to learn at all. However, “rabbinic sources may be used only with the greatest caution to reconstruct the social realities of any Greco-Roman Jews.”⁴⁹ Other evidence, including archaeological and nonrabbinic writings, shows that at least some Jewish women

⁴⁷In this I differ from a minority position represented by Gordon P. Hugenberger in “Women and Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8-15,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 35/3 (Sept. 1992) 341-60.

⁴⁸Aida Besancon Spencer, “Eve at Ephesus (Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors According to the First Letter to Timothy 2:11-15?)” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 17 (Fall 1974) 216-19. Evelyn and Frank Stagg, Women in the World of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978) 53 note that the role of women the synagogue was restricted, but no one knows exactly when this occurred.

⁴⁹Kraemer, Her Share of the Blessings 93. See also Bernadette J. Brooten, Women Leaders in

experienced quite a different reality than the rabbis portray.⁵⁰

The next word under consideration, *silence* (*hesuchia*) may not be as restrictive as it appears in English translation. It is used in 1 Tim 2:2 in such a way that it does not prohibit speech, asking readers to pray for those in authority “so that we may lead a quiet (*hesuchion*) and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” If the Paulinist wished to tell women, in effect, to “sit down and shut up,” he could have used the verb *sigao*, which directly prohibits speech (1 Cor 14:28-29, 34).⁵¹ It is only natural that anyone, man or woman, learn quietly, i.e., in the “absence of disruption.”⁵² The author, with his love of peace and harmony, might be expected to make such a remark.

On the other hand, the author does not issue the same mandate of learning in *hesuchia* to men. The reader must remember that this text proceeds from a context of patriarchy. We cannot accept the male author’s opinion of women at face value, but must apply a “hermeneutic of suspicion.” The request for women to learn quietly, or without disruption, may be the expression of the Paulinist’s distaste with women’s speech. Later in the epistle the author reports that women, specifically widows, are “gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say” (5:13). Then he advises widows to marry, presumably to keep them busy (5:14)! There is, of course, no way of determining what these women were saying; all the modern reader knows is that the Paulinist did not agree with the

the Ancient Synagogue, Brown Judaic Studies 36 (Chico: Scholars Press) 1982.

⁵⁰Examples of epigraphical, archaeological and nonrabbinic sources concerning Jewish women may be found in Kraemer, Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics.

⁵¹Wiebe, “Two Texts on Women” 58.

⁵²Timothy J. Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P.W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” Evangelical Quarterly 62 (1990) 340. See also Steve Motyer,

content or the “idleness” that prompted the conversations in the first place. The word submission (*hupatage*) may lend credence to the view that the Paulinist simply did not like to hear women speak things he disagreed with. As the object of a prepositional phrase, it does not let us know to whom or to what the women are expected to submit *en paze*, or in full, submission. It could be to the teaching, the teacher or to men in general.

Even though a woman is allowed to learn, women are not allowed to teach (v. 12). Speaking in the first person, the author says, “I do not permit (*ouk epitrepo*) women (*gynaiki*) to teach (*didaskein*) or (*oude*) to have authority (*authenthein*) over a man (*andros*), but to be in silence (*hesuchia*).” As opposed to the word “learn” (*manthaneto*) in v. 11, which is the present imperative form, “I do not permit” (*ouk epitrepo*) is in the present indicative form. Thus *ouk epitrepo* could be translated “I am not presently allowing.”⁵³ This translation is one piece of evidence that some conservative or fundamentalist feminists cite to allege that 1 Tim 2:11-15 is a culturally bound, as opposed to a universally applicable, saying.

The two verbs *didaskein* and *authenthein* are best interpreted together. *Didaskein* translates in a straightforward way “to teach.”⁵⁴ Here the object of the verb is “a man.” The author of the Pastorals does not forbid women teaching children or other women. On the contrary, he encourages it (cf. 2 Tim 3:14-15; Tit 2:3-4). Therefore the reader cannot assume that he believes women to be unintelligent or otherwise unfit to instruct.

“Expounding 1 Timothy 2:8-15,” *Vox Evangelica* 24 (1994) 93-95.

⁵³Spencer, “Eve at Ephesus” 219. For more analysis of *epitrepo*, see P.B. Payne, “Libertarian women in Ephesus: A Response to D.J. Moo’s article, ‘1 Timothy 2:11-15; Meaning and Significance,’” *Trinity Journal* 2 (1981) 170-73.

⁵⁴Robert L. Saucy, “Women’s Prohibition to Teach Men: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Contemporary Application,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37/1 (March

Analyzing the verb *authenthein*, traditionally translated “to have authority over,” may help clarify the author’s intentions. However, the verb has puzzled many exegetes, whose numerous studies have generated more heat than light.⁵⁵ *Authentein* is a *hapax legomenon*. The author of 1 Timothy could have used the more common word for “exercise authority over,” *exousiaztein*.⁵⁶ What, then, did he mean by employing this word? A recent computer study gives a host of meanings for *authenthein* in its use over the course of eleven centuries. About the time the Pastorals were written the word signified many things, including to “murder” or “commit suicide,” to “build or own” or to “proclaim oneself the sole power over.” It seems to have acquired the meaning of “have authority over” within the patristic age. Eusebius and Chrysostom used *authenthein* in this way.⁵⁷

If the Paulinist did intend *authenthein* to connote “rule, dominate or have authority over,” he might have been reacting violently to the presence of women teachers in the ministry of Paul himself. The most visible of these is Priscilla, who with her husband Aquila “explained the word of God” to Apollos (Acts 18:26). This incident took place in Ephesus, to which the Pastorals were ostensibly sent. It is noteworthy that Priscilla’s name appears before that of her husband, as it does in several other references (Acts

1994) 85-86 gives a list of different verbs indicating “teach” in the New Testament.

⁵⁵See Andrew C. Perriman, “What Eve Did, and What Women Shouldn’t Do: The Meaning of AUTHENTEIO in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (May 1993) 129-42; Ronald W. Pierce, “Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: 1 Tim 2:8-15: A Test Case,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36/3 (Sept. 1993) 348-50; Kroeger, “1 Timothy 2:12: A Classicist’s View” 229-32.

⁵⁶Motyer, “Expounding 1 Timothy 2:8-15,” 95.

⁵⁷L.E. Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to AUTHENTEIO in Timothy 2:12,” *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988) 127.

18:18, Rom 16:3 and 2 Timothy 4:19 [the latter two read “Prisca”]).⁵⁸

The author of the Pastorals may also be reacting to the role of Thecla in the Acts of Paul and Thecla. After Thecla overcomes death several times, she searches out Paul, who bids her, “Go, and teach the word of God.”⁵⁹ Later in the story the narrator reports that “she went to Seleucia and enlightened many by the word of God.”⁶⁰ The Paulinist branch of Christianity that created the Pastorals might have been diametrically opposed to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.⁶¹

It is less likely that 2:12 was used against the cult of the Ephesian Artemis. Gritz undermines her own thesis in rightly noting that mystery cults are not characterized so much by “doctrine or correct belief” by “emotional yearning and experience as opposed to thought and rational content.”⁶² If this is so, there might have been little competing teaching or doctrine for the Christian community to counter. As seen above, men took an active role in the cult of Artemis, and yet men are not forbidden to teach. It has also been pointed out above that matrons as well as maidens took part in the cult, yet these “older women” are urged to teach the younger ones (Titus 2:3-5).

⁵⁸The fact that her name appears first does not mean she is more important. By accepting this assumption, one falls prey to the same logic used in saying “Adam was created first, and then Eve; therefore Adam is more important.” Nevertheless, a great majority of ancient texts emerging from a patriarchal context, if they mention women at all, mention them after men.

⁵⁹In all honesty note must be made that Paul reluctantly accepted Thecla; he had earlier refused to baptize her, fearing that she might “fall into temptation” (Acts 25); and he had deserted her when twice she had been condemned to death. Judging his character by this document alone, a feminist would not find Paul an enthusiastic supporter. The “Acts of Paul and Thecla” itself, however, is enthusiastically supportive of Thecla and her ministry.

⁶⁰“The Acts of Paul” 41, 43, *The Apochrypal New Testament* 372.

⁶¹Bernadette Brooten, “Feminist Perspectives on New Testament Exegesis,” *Conflicting Ways of Interpreting the Bible* ed. Hans Kung and Jurgen Moltmann, Concilium 138 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark/NY: Seabury Press, 1980) 58-9.

⁶²Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus* 32.

Another possible meaning for *authenthein* may be in response to Gnostic teaching. Citing a number of ancient sources, one scholar claims that the verb may be used to mean to “represent oneself as the author, originator or source of something.”⁶³ Within this context 2:12 would read, “I do not allow a woman to teach nor to represent herself as the originator or source of man.”⁶⁴ In light of certain Gnostic documents, this may not be as far-fetched as it sounds. These documents show that some Gnostics represented Eve as existing before Adam and giving him life. Valentinus called her “the great creative power from whom all living things originate.”⁶⁵ A text found at Nag Hammadi, *On the Origin of the World*, says,

After the day of rest Sophia sent Zoe, her daughter, being called Eve, as an instructor in order that she might make Adam, who had no soul, arise...When Eve saw her male counterpart prostrate she had pity on him, and she said, “Adam! Become alive! Arise upon the earth!” Immediately her word became accomplished fact. For Adam, having arisen, suddenly opened his eyes. When he saw her he said, “You shall be called ‘Mother of the Living.’ For it is you who have given me life.”⁶⁶

“Sophia” is literally “Wisdom” and “Zoe,” “Life.” While it cannot be proven that the author of the Pastorals had access to this document or its earlier oral form, the argument that *authenthein* may combat Gnostic teaching is intriguing. The point becomes even more convincing in light of 1 Timothy 2:13, which reads in Greek, *Adam gar protos eplasthe, eita Heua* (for Adam was created first, then Eve). The Greek *gar*, for, connects v. 13 with v. 12, which contains *authenthein*. Reading these two verses together in this way helps

⁶³Kroeger, “1 Timothy 2:12: A Classicist’s View” 231.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 232.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 234-35.

⁶⁶“On the Origin of the World” (II, 5) 115.31-116.8, trans. James M. Robinson, gen. ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988) 182.

explain why the Paulinist would assert Adam's alleged temporal priority in creation, much less connect it with a prohibition of teaching men. Tribble, above, has argued that the creation of male and female took place simultaneously. Even if the Paulinist would assert Adam's priority in creation, it is difficult to imagine how that would make Adam a superior teacher. Carrying this analogy to its logical fulfillment, the animals would be teachers *par excellence*!

The Greek of v. 14 reads, *Kai Adam ouk apatethe, he de gyne exapatetheisa en parabasei gegonen* (And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was exceedingly deceived and became a transgressor [author's trans.]). General consensus exists that *exapatetheisa*, "exceedingly deceived," is a clear reference to 2 Corinthians 11:3, which also uses a form of *exapatao*. Unlike Paul, however, the Paulinist asserts that while Eve was quite deceived, Adam was not deceived at all! The careful reader will hear loud echoes of Ben Sira and especially the Life of Adam and Eve/Apocalypse of Moses: Eve is denigrated, and Adam is exonerated. Since the "deception" does not apply to Adam, we may assume that the connotation of sexual seduction elicited by *exapatetheisa* (discussed in the section on 2 Cor 11:3 above) is strong here. Looking at rabbinic sources, the word *parabasei*, "transgressor," may also have sexual overtones indicating adultery.⁶⁷ This "sexual" interpretation of v. 14 is further verified by 1 Tim 2:15.

The first part of v. 15 reads, *sothesetai de dia tes teknogonias* (but she will be saved through childbirth [author's trans.]). The Greek *sothesetai* poses immediate problems. First of all, no subject is named. We might assume it is "the woman" of v. 14,

⁶⁷Hanson, Studies in the Pastoral Epistles 72-3.

who is named as Eve in v. 13. However, the *sothesetai* is in the future tense. This would rule out the use of Eve. How can someone who has died find her salvation through childbirth? The only reasonable option remaining is the anonymous “any-woman” mentioned in v. 11. But how will she be “saved through childbirth?” In order to determine the meaning of this phrase, we need to look carefully at two words, *sothesetai* and *teknogonias* (childbirth).

Sothesetai (*sodzo*) can have several meanings. Some scholars have asserted that it denotes physical salvation, i.e., that a woman will be brought safely through childbirth.⁶⁸ This is a minority view, however. A much stronger case can be made for *sothesetai* indicating eschatological salvation. Virtually every reference to the word in the authentically Pauline letters uses it in this way. In addition, every other reference in the pastorals indicates eschatological salvation (cf. 1 Tim 1:15; 2:4; 4:16; 2 Tim 1:9, 4:18; Tit 3:5).⁶⁹

The opinion that 1) women have a different path of salvation than men and 2) that path of salvation is through childbirth could not be more antithetical to the teaching of Paul, who insists it is by faith and grace that all are saved (Rom 4:16-24; Eph 2:8 et al.) and that “there is no longer male and female” (Gal 3:28). If this author is writing in the name of Paul, why would he assert something so contrary to acknowledged Pauline theology? We cannot look for other New Testament citations of *teknogonias*, for it, like *authentain*, is one of the many *hapax legomena* of the Pastoral Letters. One way that

⁶⁸Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* 56, notes on v. 15; Pierce, “Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s” 351.

⁶⁹Stanley E. Porter, “What Does It Mean to be ‘Saved By Childbirth?’ (1 Timothy 2:15),” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993) 93-4.

confused readers have attempted to resolve the problem is to believe that he meant, “she will be saved by the birth of the Child,” meaning Jesus, born of Mary. This “salvation” could apply equally to Eve, the Ephesian woman, or any woman.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, neither the word itself nor the context it is in can bear the weight of such an interpretation.

It is extremely unlikely that this verse may have been prompted by the Artemis cult, simply for the reason that it was a fertility cult. In at least this one matter, the cult of the Ephesian Artemis and the author of the Pastorals were in concord: both promoted the birth of children.

Regarding the subject of childbirth, we can consult the book of Ephesians, another document that arose from Asia Minor. The author of Ephesians does not simply mandate marriage, as the Paulinist does; he spends a good bit of time on his philosophy of marriage within a Christian context (Eph 5). Most importantly, “there is no hint that fertility, even child-bearing, is the main purpose of marriage.”⁷¹ This section of the book of Ephesians seems a more likely counter to the Artemis cult than 1 Tim 2:15.

The best explanations for this troublesome verse again come from the genuine writings of Paul, the Acts of Paul and Thecla and the Gnostic documents, all of which so drastically reject the patriarchal Greco-Roman household. We have seen Paul’s opinion about marriage and celibacy (1 Cor 7). We also know that the character of Thecla deserts her fiancée in particular and marriage in general, thus giving up childbearing altogether. Believing the words of Paul, she had good reason to do so. For from Paul’s sinister

⁷⁰Modern examples of adherents to this view include Spencer, “Eve at Ephesus” 220; Padgett, “Wealthy Women at Ephesus” 29; Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus” 177-81.

⁷¹Markus Barth, “Traditions in Ephesus,” New Testament Studies 30/1 (Jan. 1984) 16.

companions, Demas and Hermogenes, the reader hears that Paul

deprives the husbands of wives and maiden of husbands, saying, “There is for you no resurrection unless you remain chaste and do not pollute the flesh.”⁷²

Taking Paul quite seriously, Thecla does not want to risk her salvation by losing her chastity in marriage. This has the immediate effect of removing her from the jurisdiction of the men in her life, creating in the minds of many characters in the novel, and probably the mind of the author of the Pastorals, a disorderly, disharmonious situation totally at odds with the secular order. Thecla’s mother, Theoclia, is so angered that she passionately condemns her own daughter to death: “Burn the wicked one; burn her who will not marry...”.⁷³ It is quite possible that the author of the Pastorals counters the Acts of Paul and Thecla with 1 Tim 2:15, “she will be saved through childbirth.”

“She will be saved by childbirth” may also be a refutation of the Gnostics. Believing the earth to be a place of suffering, Gnostics would be illogical to wish to prolong the existence of humanity upon it. Hence they reviled childbirth. Clement of Alexandria reports that in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, Salome asks, “Until when shall men die?” and “the Lord” replies, “As long as women bear children.”⁷⁴ Only by denying all functions particular to females could a woman be a *pneumatic*, one of the elite who would be saved. The more “masculine” she became, the better. One of the final sayings of the Gospel of Thomas reflects this attitude:

Simon Peter said to them, ‘Let Mary leave us, because women are not

⁷²“Acts of Paul” 12, *The Apochryphal New Testament* 366.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 20, 368.

⁷⁴Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.9.64, trans. John E. L. Oulton and Henry Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, Library of Christian Classics vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954) 70.

worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘Look, I shall lead her so that I will make her male in order that she may also become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.’⁷⁵

If second century women had the Acts of Paul and Thecla or these Gnostic passages in mind, they would know exactly what the author of the Pastorals was telling them in 1 Tim 2:15: they did not have to give up marriage and childbirth (“become male”) in order to be saved.

It is interesting that the Paulinist does not mention the difficulties surrounding childbirth that YHWH gives Eve in Genesis 3:16. It appears that the author wishes to avoid at all cost any indication of a “curse” or “judgment” on women through childbirth.⁷⁶ We have seen that the Paulinist, like the author of the Apocalypse of Moses, treats Eve from a background of sexual politics. Unlike the Pseudepigraphal writer, however, he completely avoids any discourse regarding the pains of childbirth.

The final part of 1 Tim 2:15, *ean meinosin en pistei kai agape kai hagasmo meta sophrosunes* (“if they remain in faith and love and holiness with moderation” [author’s trans.]), produces “a very banal effect.”⁷⁷ That notwithstanding, the section is not without difficulties. There is a shift in person from the singular *sothesetai* (she will be saved) to the plural *meinosin* (if they remain). Some have taken “they” to be the children of the woman, but this, again, is illogical. No one purporting to be Paul, or any reasonable person, for that matter, would hazard a woman’s salvation on the continued good

⁷⁵“The Gospel of Thomas,” 114, trans. J.K. Elliot, The Apochryphal New Testament 147.

⁷⁶Hanson, Studies in the Pastoral Epistles 67.

⁷⁷Robert Falconer, “1 Timothy 2:14-15. Interpretive Notes,” Journal of Biblical Literature 60 (1941) 377.

behavior of her children. The most sensible reading of “they” will refer to the women (*gunaiki*) of v.12.

Finally we mention the remark *pistos ho logos* (“this saying is sure,” 3:1). Adding a feeling of defensiveness to the entire preceding section, this sentence provides further evidence that the author of the Pastorals is combating some variety of “false teaching.”

CONCLUSIONS

A close reading of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 has shown that sociological factors and patriarchal bias had a huge impact on the text. The pericope presents many problems in vocabulary, syntax, and thus interpretation, but after closely examining it with the tools of literary, sociological and feminist analysis some conclusions regarding its *sitz im leben* can be determined. If indeed 1 Timothy 2:11-15 came from the vicinity of Ephesus, it arose from a complex urban environment. Ephesus was one of the largest and most influential cities of the eastern Roman empire, a place in which many different cultural traditions coexisted and mingled.⁷⁸ It is more than likely that all of the sociological and literary factors examined in the bulk of this chapter had some impact upon the Pastoral epistles. Nevertheless, some factors are more apparent than others.

It should be clear that this chapter regards the theory that 1 Tim 2:11-12 is prompted largely by the Ephesian Artemis cult as untenable. Doubtless the cult had enormous influence in Ephesus and thus a great impact on the Christian community there, but the section of 1 Timothy analyzed in this chapter does not seem to be countering it in any significant way.

While it is extremely tempting to attribute 1 Tim 2:11-15 and other sections of the Pastorals to Gnosticism, one must be quite cautious. Firstly, Kroeger's rendition of *authentēo* (2:12) as "represent oneself as the author, originator or source of something"

⁷⁸Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1983 is the standard study of the complexities of the urban environments of the first century.

seems forced. Secondly, to date there is no firm evidence that the advanced forms of Gnosticism examined above, which come from the mid-second century and later, directly impacted literature written at the time of the Pastorals. Nevertheless, the parallels are striking and explain much that is obscure in 1 Tim 11-15. This theory deserves a more thorough study than is possible here.

It seems quite likely that the author of the Pastorals was opposing the genuinely Pauline teaching concerning female roles, marriage and celibacy seen in Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 7 and 11 and the other biblical literature that attests to the active participation of women in the early missionary stages of Christianity. The Acts of Paul and Thecla suffer from the same issue of chronology as does Gnosticism. However, a strong case has been made that the apochryphal Acts, at least in their oral form, were contemporaneous with the Pastoral epistles.

How, then does the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, portray the character of Eve?

Paul's choice of vocabulary in 2 Cor 11:3 hints that he believes Eve to have been "seduced" by the cunning of the serpent. He separates Eve from Adam, setting up her character for the Paulinist's interpretation. Paul does not use his interpretation to oppress the women he encounters or women in general. Nevertheless, his interpretation uses Eve in a way inconsistent with the entire Old Testament.

Within his teaching regarding marriage and virginity, Paul clearly states that his opinion is strictly an opinion, and that "I have no command of the Lord" (1 Cor 7:25).

The Paulinist, in contrast, is not as humble as Paul. He gives no disclaimers about his teaching regarding the roles and functions of women, and even undergirds the section with “this saying is sure” (3:1). He uses Eve as the foundation on which to forbid women teaching and having authority over men (2:12). By connecting 2:12 and 2:13 with the particle *gar*, we can only determine that he is countering the Gnostic claim of Eve’s priority in creation, or else that he believes man is superior because, in the Paulinist’s opinion, he was created first. Like the author of the Apocalypse of Abraham and Apocalypse of Moses, the Paulinist certainly takes Eve’s deception in a sexual sense. Eve was “deceived,” with all of the connotations of seduction in that word, and Adam was not. Through the adversative particle *de*, “but,” verse 14 connects with 15, continuing the sexual references through the citation of childbirth. The Paulinist applies Eve’s transgression to all women by the shift in person from the singular *sothesetai* (“she will be saved”) to the plural *ean meinosin* (“if they remain”).

Thus the author of the Pastorals combines genuinely Pauline material (2 Cor 11:3), which expresses one view of Eve among many, that of a victim of seduction, and his own patriarchal bias to create a universal prohibition against women teachers and authority and a proclamation exclusively for her role as wife and mother. The Paulinist does not qualify his remarks, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 7:25. He does not acknowledge the societal factors that probably prompted his writing, but instead silently gives the impression that they are valid for everyone, in all places. In this way he participates in “remaking” the character of Eve. His interpretation of Eve is not the character we first encounter in Genesis 2-3.

The portrait of Eve that the reader of the New Testament takes away is that of an easily deceived, or seduced, woman. Because she is so easily deceived, she does not deserve to teach or have authority over men. Second in creation, she is somehow “less than” the one created before her. While not cursed through childbirth, the act of physically bearing children has something to do with her eternal salvation.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the author of the Pastorals may have had many different reasons for writing as he did. Separated in space and time from his sociological milieu, we reconstruct those reasons with difficulty. Even though an attempt to reconstruct them does not lead to perfectly satisfactory conclusions, nevertheless it does lead to more clarity and understanding of this difficult passage and the role Eve plays in it.

The author of the Genesis 2-3 and the author of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 have at least one thing in common: both created maddeningly ambiguous portraits of the character of Eve. Indeed, it is the very vulnerability of the character at the end of Genesis 3 that allows the Paulinist to take such advantage of her in his work. Others, in turn, have continued the process in their interpretations of 1 Tim 2:11-15.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

We have seen the character of Eve move from her literary debut at the hands of the Yahwist through various lead and cameo roles for more than a millennium's worth of literature. Writers who chose to use the character of Eve in their works did so in harmony with or opposition to the sociological milieu of their own times, manipulating the character of Eve to accomplish their own ends. At this point it is possible to summarize the many and varied interpretations of the character of Eve examined in this paper.

Chapter One introduced the main topics of this paper: flawed readings of Genesis 2-3 have greatly influenced how we perceive the character of Eve and have negatively impacted how we view gender. While no completely "objective" reading of Gen 2-3 is possible, a patriarchal, misogynistic interpretation of the text has dominated our minds and literature and inhibited alternative readings of the character of Eve. In order to engage in an alternative reading, we need to use different exegetical tools than the ones that produced the patriarchal interpretations. The remainder of Chapter One described the tools this paper would utilize: feminist hermeneutics, literary criticism and social world analysis.

Chapter Two surveyed two influential feminist readings of Gen 2-3. Tribble's rhetorical analysis and Meyers' social world study were indispensable in helping readers of the biblical text identify and shed assumptions about Eve that they may have acquired simply because they live within our own sociological milieu. These two works challenged traditional (male) scholarship. Their studies demonstrate how important an understanding

of Gen 2-3 is in contemporary ecclesial communities. They differ in terms of methodological approaches, and the *sitz im leben* of each (Christian and Jewish) serves to define the purpose and presuppositions of their studies. While the works are quite different, they do demonstrate that a long and complex interpretational history attached to the character of Eve has transformed both the story and Eve's characterization from what the reader "reads" in Gen 2-3 to what the author of 1 Timothy offers a millennium later.

Trible lists various assumptions taken from Gen 2-3 that many modern readers tend to take for granted. These include the idea that YHWH God created man first and woman second, with the result that man is superior to woman; that woman tempted man to disobey YHWH God's command, with the result that she is responsible for sin in the world, and that woman was cursed in childbirth and put under the domination of man by YHWH God, with the result that she may not hold positions of authority over man. Through literary analysis we see that the creation of gender was a simultaneous process, and one gender is not superior to another; that woman did not "tempt" man to sin, but that the man was at least equally responsible; and that woman was not at all cursed in childbirth. Neither did YHWH ordain man's "rule" over woman, but rather acknowledged it as a natural result of the pair's actions.

Meyers uses Tribble's analysis but opens the readers' eyes to a totally different interpretation of Gen 2-3 drawn from sociological evidence. Eve emerges as a character representing women of Iron Age I, pioneers in a strange and hostile environment. The emphasis on food and eating in the text points to the fact that basic survival needs were difficult to satisfy in Upper Galilee in Iron Age I. Particularly through her exegesis of Gen

3:16 Meyers reveals that the character of Eve is drawn as a woman who was bound to produce as many children as humanly possible to ensure survival and success upon the land. Within this social and political framework the concept of “sin” has no place.

In Chapter Three a study of the book of Ben Sira revealed that Eve, as a character drawn from Ben Sira’s reading of Gen 2-3, was portrayed as the beginning of sin and the cause of death. In this first appearance of the characters of both Adam and Eve since the writing of the book of Genesis, Eve is denigrated and Adam excused for the roles they played in the primeval garden. In his writing Ben Sira, too, seems to be influenced by the social upheaval of the time, in his case the advancement of hellenism. Hellenistic syncretism threatened the faith of some Jews. This syncretism may have been a factor prompting Ben Sira to write. Hellenism also began to allow women more freedom than they had previously enjoyed. These factors may have influenced Ben Sira, who applies to the character of Eve the same hearty dose of misogynism he wields upon the majority of women in his work. As we have seen in this paper, it is Ben Sira’s view of Eve that some writers of the Pseudepigrapha and the author of the Pastorals would adopt.

In Chapter Four a survey of the Pseudepigraphal literature that used Eve as a character produced many different and sometimes striking characterizations and interpretations. 1 Enoch portrays her as a victim of circumstances beyond her control. Jubilees uses her solely to explain why certain things are the way they are, i.e. the time of ritual impurity for a woman following childbirth. The Sibylline Oracles present contradictory interpretations of Eve: while the text emphasizes harmony between man and woman and utterly omits any mention of Genesis 3:16, it is also the first to portray

the woman as a “temptress” and “betrayer.” The Apocalypse of Abraham emphasizes the connection between the deeds in the garden, the woman, and sexuality. The Life of Adam and Eve/Apocalypse of Moses hammer into the consciousness of the reader that Eve is weak, physically, morally and spiritually, that she is responsible for the advent of sin and pain in the world, and that neither her deeds nor the grace of God will save her. To these themes the Apocalypse of Moses adds a harsh and heavily sexualized reading of Genesis 3:16.

Chapter Five examines the work of the authentic Paul and the Paulinist, demonstrating that both continue the polarization of Adam and Eve begun in Ben Sira and continued throughout the Pseudepigrapha. In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Paul chooses to use words that imply sexual connotations of deception. He does not apply these words to Adam. In 1 Timothy 2:11-15 the Paulinist uses his interpretation of the deeds of Eve to justify a prohibition of women teaching or having authority over men. Conspicuously sidestepping any “curse” of Eve or any woman through childbirth, the author posits some relation between bearing children and salvation. The social world of the author of the Pastorals seems to have influenced his use of Eve as a character and his interpretation of ancient sources. These factors include his reaction and that of others to the genuine letters of Paul; his desire to conform as much as possible with dominant patriarchal mores of the Greco-Roman culture; the view of women and women’s roles advocated in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, and incipient Gnosticism.

Interpretations of the character of Eve did not end, of course, with 1 Timothy 2:11-15. The patriarchal, rather than the egalitarian, views of Eve and Adam were

adopted by New Testament writers. Because of the ascent and triumph of Christianity in our culture, and the incalculable influence exerted by the New Testament, alternative views of the character of Eve were eclipsed. This paper has attempted to shed light upon the neglected characterizations of Eve and demonstrate factors leading to the views we have inherited.

Each of the interpretations or portrayals of the character of Eve surveyed in this paper share at least one common factor: each author, and each reading, emerges from its own particular community of readers. The community of readers, in turn, is influenced by many factors: political, financial, cultural, environmental, attitudinal, religious and many others. These factors, which influence the communities, also help define both the communities themselves and their responses to those very issues.

Because the Yahwist, through his ambiguous treatment of the character of Eve, left her so vulnerable, later readers of the text could exploit her “nakedness” to further their own ends. Their “ends” were largely dependent upon the needs of their communities of readers. Because each community had different needs, each author addressing a community perceived and portrayed the character Eve differently. The authors’ personal attitudes and biases, sociological factors, and the influence of earlier and contemporary literature intermingled to produce numerous and diverse readings of Gen 2-3.

Reading is not a value-neutral activity. We read what we know how to read, and what we see (interpret) depends on where we stand. While this holds true of anyone reading anything, the plethora of interpretations of Eve surveyed in this paper demonstrate that truth stunningly. Readers from a patriarchal culture read Gen 2-3 in a

patriarchal manner. Readers from a fundamentalist background read it in a fundamentalist manner. Readers from a feminist background read it utilizing feminist hermeneutics, and derive interpretations more friendly to feminist women.¹ Like viewing a mosaic of color in a kaleidoscope, with each twist of the lense a new picture falls into place.

There is a great need for further study regarding many of the issues brought up in this paper. At least three of these merit mention. First, very little feminist work has been published concerning the Pseudepigrapha. This paper merely surveyed views of Eve and touched upon the role of women within that corpus not at all. Second, very few non-Evangelical women have devoted serious attention to 1 Timothy or the other Pastoral letters. While most scholars have abandoned this literature, fundamentalist interpretations continue to draw attention to it. We cannot leave interpretations of these texts to one particular group. Third, a need exists for more closely examining the correlations between the Eve, the Pastorals and Gnostic literature.

Like their predecessors, feminist scholars who investigate these areas of study will not produce objective readings regarding Genesis 2-3, or Eve, or women in general. They will, nevertheless, begin to pry the character from the misogynistic interpretations that have weighed heavily upon her and women in general these millennia. The readings of new scholars, in turn, will offer a foundation of scholarship for the millennium to come.

¹This does not mean that simply utilizing feminist tools can yield an interpretation friendly to women. Many passages in the Bible and elsewhere cannot. Many people argue about what an "interpretation friendly to women" actually is. But because the Genesis text is so ambiguous, some exegetes such as Tribble and Meyers can produce an alternative to a patriarchal reading.

APPENDIX

Genesis 2:4b-3:24

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up--for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground--⁷then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flows out Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹²and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken."

²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.' " ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also

gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸ They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." ¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals,
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat,
all the days of your life.

¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you."

¹⁷And to the man he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'

cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"--²³therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

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