

DECEIVED, BROKEN, WHOLE: HOW THE GARDEN EXPLAINS THE CROSS

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Introduction

The story of Eve and Adam eating the fruit is one of the oldest stories in Western civilization. It has captured the imagination of artists and theologians alike. Recorded in Genesis 3, it describes the fracturing of a perfect creation. The story is active and moves quickly in this two-part back-and-forth dialogue beginning with the serpent and Eve and culminating between God and the man and the woman He created. Speiser is surely correct when he writes, “The characterization is swift and sure, and all the more effective for its indirectness.”¹ This concept of “indirectness” is what, in some ways, drives the entire chapter. What is most important sometimes is what is not said, only implied for the careful reader.

This paper proposes to look at the narrative from this perspective of indirectness, deception, and brokenness. It will not exegetically cover all issues in the text but will instead focus on those that have been used to create the traditional scholarly interpretation of Eve and her pride or desire that led to the eating of the forbidden fruit.

¹E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964), 25. While Speiser does admirable work with the text, he misses the grand theme of the narrative by narrowly focusing it on the “spiritual experience” of the Hebrews rather than seeing this as an explanation for all humanities issues with God and devolves into only looking for Mesopotamian parallels.

Instead, a new picture will be proposed. This one will feature brokenness and it leads Eve to eat the fruit. In conclusion, this paper will discuss several theological challenges which are affected by this proposed new perspective. Issues arising from this short story include questions of why death is the only mandated punishment, whether God Himself has good intentions towards His creation, what the atonement must look like, and how Christ's nature is hinted at.

The Setting

The story begins with a serpent. The serpent functions as the connection between, on the one hand, the “very good” of God's creation found in Genesis 1:31 and the “not ashamed” of Genesis 2:25, and on the other hand, the “craftiness” of the account of the fall in Genesis 3:1. To begin with, it should be noted that the serpent, שָׂרָפָה, does not carry any negative connotation itself. Perhaps its place in the story is that it was one of the creatures that God had placed under the dominion of the couple in Eden and thus not one to be suspicious of.¹ Later stories will connect this with the verb שָׂרַף where it is understood as divination. Other Near Eastern stories connect the serpent with various forms of divination² but this is not present here. Thus, the reader can conclude that the presence of the serpent should not be understood, *prima facie*, as a negative symbol. Rather, the text seems to indicate precisely the opposite. Or at least, as Turner notes, its

¹Allen Ross, *Genesis*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 50–51.

²Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 187. See also, Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1987), 72, 73. Skinner is perhaps more correct than he realizes when suggests that in earlier “legends” the notion of a “god or demon” is behind the serpent. John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Scribner, 1910), 72.

“actions remain shrouded in mystery.”¹

The serpent is described as crafty or subtle, עָרוּם.² It is well noted that this term has some degree of ambiguity. While the word itself seems to naturally take on a sinister character, even if ever so subtly hinted at by the common translation of crafty, it does not need to be overly burdened with this connotation from the beginning. In other Hebrew Bible appearances, the Book of Job has two uses where a negative implication is present. Eliphaz is the speaker in both situations. In Job 5:12, he states that God frustrates the plans of the “crafty” while in Job 15:5, Eliphaz accuses Job of choosing “the tongue of the crafty.” In the first case, עָרוּם is in parallel with the wise, הַכָּם, in the first line of 5:13. While the individual described with this trait is frustrated by God, nevertheless it is ascribed to a wise individual, illustrating the challenge of simply assigning it an overtly negative character. There are other later usages where the term does not carry any negative weight. These all appear in Proverbs. In that book, the crafty or subtle, עָרוּם, is usually contrasted to the fool, אָוִיל, as in Proverbs 12:16.³

The linguistic connection to copper, נְחֹשֶׁת, is perhaps helpful here, suggesting the beauty that this creature might have possessed if indeed it had a bronze shine to its skin.⁴ In the narrative, hints such as this highlight the tension Eve would be experiencing as the conversation with the serpent takes place. This adds to the disorientation she might have

¹Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 30.

²Unless noted, all Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

³The other appearances of this adjective and the related verb and noun forms are Ex 21:14; Josh 9:4; 1 Sam 23:22; Ps 83:3; Prov 8:5, 12; 12:23; 13:16; 14:8; 14:15, 18; 22:3; 19:25; 27:12.

⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 187.

when beginning the fateful conversation with the crafty or subtle animal at the tree. In her mind, the question might be, “Why would something so beautiful be connected with evil?”

In using עָרוֹם, or crafty, the author makes a connection back to the nakedness, עָרוֹם, which the man and woman originally revel in as a result of the creation account of Gen 2.¹ While the wordplay between these two words is obvious, what seems to be highlighted is the fact that, still today, humans struggle to define whether these are good or bad. Is nakedness good? Is it bad? Similarly, is craftiness good or is it bad? Again, this is precisely the point the author is communicating in this scene. While many studies find it odd that Genesis describes the serpent as עָרוֹם rather than הָקָם (which would have an overtly positive attitude)² what would be glossed over if that had been done was the ambiguous setting that Eve was in. On that day, she was challenged to determine good from evil, right from wrong. Thus, when Hamilton says it is best to take עָרוֹם as a strategy of prudence and not as implying anything of a moral defect, he lessens the dilemma that Eve was facing.³

These are initial hints of the predicament that Eve faced. This is heightened by the fact that the serpent is specifically connected to God with the statement “any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.” Thus, whatever the serpent is, it is made by God. And this uncertainty is further highlighted by the very name of the tree where the serpent encounters the woman, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is not just

¹H. Niehr, “עָרוֹם,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001), 11:362.

²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 187, 188.

³Hamilton, 188.

Good and not just Evil, but rather both Good and Evil. And to further this mystery, Eve does not even mention the tree by name, choosing to only do so by its geographical location: “in the midst of the garden.”

All of these facts work together to set the stage for the conversation that is about to take place.

The Conversation

In considering the conversation that follows between the serpent and the woman, this paper will seek to offer an alternative view to what is typical of the scholarly reading of this narrative. Observers have often described the way that elements in the conversation between the woman and the serpent betray the negative state of her relationship with God. This section will suggest a different interpretation of these elements that will craft a narrative told from the perspective of Eve being in an entirely good relationship with God up to this point.

It has been rightly observed that the serpent begins its conversation with the woman with a question. This is how almost all English translations read. “Did God really say . . . ?” Walsh, however, argues that it should rather be understood differently. He writes, “The snake’s first speech is a statement, not a question. Nowhere else in the OT does *’ap kî* have interrogative force. It is here an expression of surprise (“Indeed! To think that. . . !”). The woman’s response is not an answer but a correction.”¹ With this understanding, the serpent’s words seem shaped in such a way as to lead Eve to continue

¹Jerome T Walsh, “Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96, no. 2 (June 1977): 164. For similar perspectives, see Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 186. Wenham helpfully notes that the narrative seems to encourage the reader to ask how the serpent knew anything of God’s command. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:73.

the conversation out of good faith—to defend the honor of God which has been impugned by the serpent.¹

So, perhaps Eve, at this point, is not betraying God but honoring Him. While Leibowitz suggests that the serpent’s words have already had some effect, he notes that she still is defending God in the conversation.²

In his conversation, the serpent initiates a shift by referring to the Creator simply as “God,” אֱלֹהִים, rather than “Lord God,” יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים. While the Genesis narrative has referred to the Creator as God in chapter 1, a shift takes place beginning in 2:4 and continues through the end of chapter 3. He is referred to as Lord God during this retelling of the creation story.

However, in the conversation between the serpent and the woman in Gen 3:1–5, the serpent refers to the Creator only as God, providing an abrupt shift in language. Picking up on this change, some modern commentators suggest that since the woman follows the serpent in referring to the Creator as only “God,” she had moved away from God in her heart already at the beginning of the conversation with the serpent.³

This is all predicated on the idea that using “Lord God” as the covenantal name is

¹Sigve Tonstad sees God’s freedom in question in the serpent’s question. “*When the voice of the Ancient Serpent was heard in Genesis, it made lack of freedom a characteristic of God’s government (Gen. 3:1).* [italics original]” Sigve K. Tonstad, *Revelation*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 296.

²Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit (Genesis)*, trans. Aryeh Newman, 4th ed. (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1981), 30. Her initial conversation with the serpent will be discussed further below.

³Jacques Doukhan, *Genesis*, Seventh-Day Adventist International Bible Commentary, v. 1 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2016), 91, 92; Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 236; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:73.

a means of showing a close relationship between the Creator and His creatures. While this might seem a plausible interpretation, a close analysis of the different ways to refer to the Creator in the opening chapters of Genesis is needed before making this statement. In doing this, however, it should be noted that the use of “God” rather than “Lord God” happens here in direct speech. In the entire section of 2:4b–3:24, “Lord God” is never used in direct speech, only by the narrator using indirect speech.

When, later, Eve speaks of God in Gen 4:25 at the naming of Seth, she again uses “God” instead of “Lord God.” Abraham speaks of God using “God” rather than “Lord God” when talking with Abimelech in Gen 20:11, 13. In Gen 21:6, Sarah praises “God” who blessed her with a son. In Gen 21:17, the angel of the Lord says that “God” has heard the voice of the boy, Hagar’s son. In Gen 21:22, Abimelech says that “God” is with Abraham. In the famous passage of the testing of Abraham in Gen 22:8, he says to the question from Isaac regarding the missing sacrifice that “God” would provide it. And, again, in Gen 22:12, the Angel of the Lord says now I know that you fear “God.” In Gen 23:6, the Hittites refer to Abraham’s “God.” In Gen 26:24, God refers to himself in His self-revelation to Isaac as the “God” of Abraham, rather than “Lord God.” In Gen 27:28, Isaac uses “God” when blessing his son Jacob and again in Gen 28:4. Jacob says that the place where he is sleeping is the house of God in Gen 28:17 and refers to Him again only as God in 28:20, 22. In talking with Rachel in Gen 30:2, he refers to Him as God. In Gen 31:5, 7, 9, 11, Jacob again refers to Him as God in talking with his wives before returning from Paddan-Aram. Further along, in Gen 32:3, Jacob names the place the camp of “God.” In Gen 32:29, the angel says that Jacob has struggled with “God” and prevailed. And then in Gen 32:31, Jacob says that he has seen “God” face to face. He tells Esau about the children that “God” has given him in Gen 33:5 and then in Gen 33:10, he again tells Esau that seeing his face is like seeing the face of “God.” Once more in Gen 33:11,

Jacob tells Esau of “God’s” blessing. All of these appearances are where someone speaks about God and references Him as “God” rather than as “Lord God.”

The first to use the name “Lord God” in direct speech is Noah. He states, “Blessed be the Lord, God of Shem” in Gen 9:26, but then in verse 27 of the same prayer, he refers to Him simply as “God.” Abraham, in Gen 14:22, refers to Him as “Lord God Most High.” In Gen 15:2, Abram uses the Lord God, אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה, and repeats this in verse 8.¹ But this is different from the typical אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה found in the creation and fall narrative of Gen 2 and 3. In Gen 24:12, 27, 42, 48, Eliezer refers to Him as the “Lord God of my master.”

Based on this analysis, it does not seem warranted to interpret much of the change in the naming convention that the serpent initiates and Eve imitates. There are multiple accounts in Genesis of people using both “God,” “Lord God,” and “Lord” in direct speech, and no pattern is observed that would cause one to believe that an individual is in a distant relationship with God and views Him as remote and transcendent based upon the name that is used.

Another point that is sometimes used to demonstrate the distance between Eve and God at this point in the narrative is her recounting of the command of God

¹Sarah refers to God as Lord in Gen 16:2, 5. Abraham does also in Gen 22:14. In Gen 24:3; 7, Abraham again refers to Him as Lord. In that same context, Eliezer refers to Him as Lord in 24:35, 40, 44, 56. Laban, in Gen 24:31 praises the Lord and refers the plans as from the Lord in 24:50, 51. In Gen 26:22, Isaac uses the name of the Lord in his prayer about a well. Abimelech in 26:28, 29, refers to the Lord in speaking to Isaac. Isaac again uses the name of the Lord in speaking to Esau about the blessing in Gen 27:7. Jacob deceives his father and speaks of the help of the Lord in Gen 27:20. In Gen 27:27, Isaac refers to the Lord when blessing Jacob. In Gen 28:13, God refers to Himself as the Lord in speaking to Jacob in a dream and in waking, Jacob also says that the Lord is in that place in Gen 28:16 and in 28:21 he says that the Lord will be his God. Laban says to Jacob in Gen 31:49 calls on the Lord to watch between he and Jacob. In Gen 32:10, Jacob prays to the God of Abraham, addressing Him as Lord.

concerning the tree in the midst of the garden in Gen 3:2, 3: “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 midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” When she is engaged in the conversation with the serpent, she adds to the command of God as recorded in Gen 2:16, 17. There God had said that Adam should not eat the fruit of the tree because in the day that he ate from it, he would surely die. In recounting this conversation to the serpent, however, Eve adds a crucial piece of information lacking from the original command.

Eve told the serpent that they can neither eat the fruit nor touch it, lest they die. Some assert that this shows the growing disconnect and distrust already between Eve and God.¹ Kidner argues that her addition to God’s command indicates that she is now interpreting God as “overly strict.”² Ross argues that in failing to preserve God’s word, Eve has opened the door to sin and that this becomes the “heart for the temptation.”³

Ross sees two other areas where Eve added to God’s command in addition to the touch prohibition statement. First, she does not use “freely” in reporting what the couple may eat which “minimizes the privileges” afforded by God. This is done in the Hebrew

¹Doukhan, *Genesis*, 91. On the possibility that it was not really an addition, Luzzatto suggests that touching it could mean something like, “Do not touch it, to eat even a little of it” citing Ex 22:7 as a place where setting one’s hands on one’s neighbors things was a way of saying that you had taken them. Samuel David Luzzatto, *The Book of Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. Daniel A. Klein (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 47.

²Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 72. See also Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 24.

³Ross, *Genesis*, 51. Similarly Erich Renner argues that “That which is at stake is life itself in obedience to the Word of God.” J. T. Erich Renner, *Genesis*, Chi Rho Commentary (Adelaide, Australia: Lutheran Publishing Houe, 1984), 51.

text by eliminating the infinitive absolute in her reported speech.¹ This does not seem significant given that the woman did not list any restrictions in countering the serpent's negative question saying that they may eat of the trees of the garden. Secondly, Ross notes, she again drops the infinitive absolute in reporting the death command. So instead of saying "you will surely die" she only reports "you will die." In doing so, he argues, she is lessening the severity of the punishment.²

The introduction of death here, referring back to God's command in 2:17, has often brought the challenge that in such a perfect world, Adam and Eve could not have known what death was.³ Sarna agrees and thus limits their understanding of what this would mean to only "divine disapproval." While it seems reasonable to assume they could not have understood death experientially, it should not be taken to mean that Adam and Eve could not conceptualize what nonexistence would be. And in no way does this lack of experiential knowledge prevent Eve from understanding the divine command. As this paper will suggest, when death does not take place when it should have, Eve is pushed further toward making her fateful decision.

While the original inclusion of the infinitive absolute in the phrase, "you will

¹The Hebrew infinitive absolute with the verb "to die," מוֹת, appears several times and seems to typically indicate the results of failing to abide by a command given by some authority. Examples occur in Gen 20:7; Num 26:65; 1 Sam 14:39, 44; 1 Kings 2:37, 42; Jer 26:8. Walton notes that the emphasis here is on the certainty of the death. John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 174, 175.

²Ross, *Genesis*, 51. Leibowitz adds to the changes Eve makes regarding what God said they were to eat by noting that she also drops "every" from her statement. Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit (Genesis)*, 29. Here Leibowitz also notes that possibility of translating the "אִם-יֹאמַר" or "Did God say . . .?" to "Even if God said . . ." However, Luzzatto notes that this is never translated "even if" elsewhere. Luzzatto, *The Book of Genesis*, 46.

³See, for example, Sarna, *Genesis*, 21.

surely die,” מות תמות, in God’s original prohibition (Gen 2:17) and Eve’s decision not to use it perhaps does indicate a slight shift, the more significant part of God’s statement is the expression “in the day,” בַּיּוֹם, and its intended meaning. Walton suggests that God’s usage of “in the day” does not necessarily imply that events will take place within the next “24-hour” period.¹

While there may be some room for differing interpretations of this phrase,² in the context of chapter 3, it seems probable that both the serpent and the woman understood it as something that would happen almost immediately. This is demonstrated by how the serpent uses it in the counter-statement to the woman in Gen 3:5. He says, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,” כִּי בַּיּוֹם אֲפָתְכֶם מִמָּוֶת.³ Translators, almost without exception, realize this; thus, the most common translation of the Hebrew phrase בַּיּוֹם, “in the day,” in this verse is “when.” In other words, the serpent argues that when the woman eats the fruit, her eyes will be opened. When looking ahead to what follows, it will be seen that this is indeed what happens. The first thing that happens after the man and woman have eaten the forbidden fruit is their eyes are opened. There is no apparent lengthy delay between when the fruit is eaten and when their eyes are opened. And this is just exactly how the serpent used the phrase in the conversation with the woman.

With this understanding, it does not do justice to the Hebrew phrase to conclude

¹Walton, *Genesis*, 174.

²It appears in the following verses just in Genesis. Gen 1:18; 2:2, 4, 17; 3:5; 5:1, 2; 7:11; 15:18; 21:8; 22:4; 26:32; 30:33, 35; 31:22, 40; 33:16; 34:25; 35:3; 40:20; 42:18; 48:20

³For a helpful overview of the ambiguity of the serpent’s counter-statement “you will not surely die,” see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:74.

as Walton does, “This penalty was enacted when they were driven out of the garden and prevented access to the tree of life. Without such access, they were doomed to die.”¹

Walton does correctly argue against a “spiritual death” notion in God’s original command, but he then equivocates on this and adds that “there is no reason to dispute the concept of spiritual death.”² In thinking about what this should mean, Sarna writes, “Logically, therefore, the transgression should incur immediate capital punishment, not mortality as opposed to immortality. But man and woman did not die at once, and it is not stated that God rescinded the death penalty.”³ Sarna, therefore, also concludes that the result should simply refer to the loss of access to the Tree of Life, which would ultimately result in death.

While scholars have tried various means of interpreting God’s command of “you will surely die,” doing so typically results in resolving the tension that the narrative has built. This section argues that understanding “in the day that you eat it, you will surely die” as a statement that meant that physical death would follow *that day* is important in identifying why Eve chose to eat the fruit.⁴ In other words, the narrative of the story is much more coherent if God’s command is understood this way. By doing so, the reader is left sensing that there is a growing disconnect between what God has said regarding

¹Walton, *Genesis*, 175. See also Sarna, *Genesis*, 21.

²Walton, *Genesis*, 175. For a good overview of several other possibilities for interpreting God’s death sentence, see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:74–75.

³ Sarna, *Genesis*, 21.

⁴Wenham is one of the very few commentators who notes the problem that seems to be posed for God since they do not die until more than 900 years later. It thus appears that the serpent is telling the truth and God is the one who is the liar. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:73, 74. However, Wenham fails to connect the ambiguity of the serpent’s words in contrast to God’s command with the ultimate reason why Eve eats the fruit in verse 6.

eating the fruit (and the results of doing so) and what Eve is experiencing as she dialogues with the serpent.

However, there is little in the narrative to suggest that the serpent's words are ultimately what leads Eve to eat the fruit. However, this is not how most commentators read the story.¹ Most commentators focus on the serpent's statement in verse 5 rather than what comes next in verse 6. While the serpent's words should not be diminished, they are also carefully guarded. In them, the subtle character of the serpent is again highlighted. For as von Rad notes, "The serpent neither lied nor told the truth."² The role of the conversation with the serpent versus what leads the woman to eat will be seen more clearly below when noting the way that 3:6 functions as the pivot point for the story.

There are, however, elements in the narrative that do indicate that the woman has been very intent on following God's command. For example, the woman has always kept far from the tree. This fact is demonstrated by the reasoning given in verse 6 for why she ultimately eats from the tree.³ If the tree is going to get her killed by eating it, she acts with the assumption that it must be harmful to one's existence, and thus, it is completely logical to not even touch it. Her thinking seems to be that if eating from the tree was going to get her killed, then touching the fruit might do the same. Her reply to the serpent is, therefore, better seen as providing a demonstration of her desire to follow God's one

¹Wenham writes in commenting on the scene, "Perhaps we should not take his words at their face value as the woman did." Wenham, 1:72.

²Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Revised edition, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972), 90.

³Discussed in more detail below.

law given to Adam in 2:17. This seems to suggest that rather than seeing Eve in a weak place relationally with God before her encounter with the serpent, she still has a positive relationship with God.

However, by seeking to protect herself from the death God had described as connected with the tree by adding the phrase “nor touch it,” Eve sets herself up for the deception about to fall on her.¹ What at first seems a perfectly defensible addition to the command of God will ultimately be used to bring about her undoing by the crafty, cunning serpent.

The serpent responds to the woman’s explanation. Genesis 3:4, 5 states, “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely 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.’” This opening statement garners the majority of the attention among commentators. The focus seems to concentrate on the obvious lie that the serpent has blatantly cast against God’s word.

The problem with this reading of the text is that it seems to be based more upon one’s desire to assert the rightness and goodness of God over and against the evilness of the serpent. This approach, however righteous it may feel, does not do justice to the narrative as it describes the confusing world into which the woman is falling. The

¹Ross again argues that “The nature of the temptation was a discussion about the word of God.” Ross, *Genesis*, 51. His focus in this is on Eve’s changing of the word of God and not holding only to what God said. However, this again misses the place of brokenness that Eve will face. While trust in the word of God was surely part of the temptation, focusing on that alone minimizes the deception that Eve was facing and replaces it with only a temptation. In Ross’s commentary on these verses, he consistently refers to the temptation and the serpent as the tempter and only once mentions the concept of deception and then, only in passing. For similar renderings, see W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1946), 48. It should be noted that the term temptation is not found in this periscope.

ultimate problem in the whole narrative is that at least from one obvious perspective, the serpent is correct. The man and the woman do not die in the day that they eat the fruit. As far as can be determined from the text, both things the serpent says will take place. They will not die and their eyes will be opened.

The Eating

The moment of eating is described in one half of one solitary verse.¹ “So 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.” While no reasoning is given as to why Adam eats the fruit other than it was given to him by the woman, for Eve we are given a concise three-part description of what led to her decision. Von Rad describes these thoughts as follows, “With it we rush through an entire scale of emotions. ‘Good for food,’ that is the coarsely sensual aspect; ‘a delight to the eyes,’ that is the finer, more aesthetic stimulus; and ‘desired to make one wise,’ that is the highest and decisive enticement.”² This description focuses on the enticement of the senses, again drawing on

¹Hamilton notes that in the Hebrew, “Despite the brevity of description, there is a distinctive sonant structure in this verse.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 190. “The actions of the woman are described with breathtaking rapidity: three *wayyiqtöls* in four words. Yet the extremely difficult pronunciation (six doubled consonants in the four words, all of them voiceless plosives) forces a merciless concentration on each word.” Walsh, “Genesis 2,” 166.

²Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 90. An Italian rabbi of the 19th century, Samuel Luzzatto (ShaDaL), notes that 15th century Portuguese rabbi Abravanel said that the serpent was eating the fruit and was not dead. Luzzatto, *The Book of Genesis*, 46. This is a key insight that is not picked up on by many modern commentators. Nehama Leibowitz notes that Abravanel argues that eating represents indulgence and the “forsaking of the contemplation and acknowledgement of God.” Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit (Genesis)*, 19.

the negative imagery that must have been felt by the woman before she eats. However, what is missing in this description is any attempt to ascertain what had happened to the relationship between God and the woman.

In reflecting on this verse, many scholars fail to realize the full depth of brokenness that Eve faces, instead attributing her eating of the fruit to her pride. Doukhan, in a brief analysis of verse 6, says that when the text describes the woman as seeing that “the tree was good,” this is copying God’s own words uttered during the creation described in chapter 1. In so doing, “Eve has already replaced the divine creator with her own opinion.”¹

While Hamilton correctly identifies the issue of wisdom “as the most attractive,” he also attributes Eve’s reason for eating the forbidden fruit to her “covetousness” adding that “It is the attitude that says I need something I do not now have in order to be happy.”² Wenham also describes Eve’s problem as “covetousness” connecting the semantic idea behind both תַּאֲוָה and תַּמְדָּה, two of the things the woman saw, to the meaning of coveting proscribed in the tenth commandment.³ This pattern of interpretation can be traced back to Augustine who noted that the man could not have fallen unless he had developed a proud spirit.⁴ Sarna describes it by stating, “The allure of the forbidden has

¹Doukhan, *Genesis*, 93.

²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 190. So Westermann will say in the context of desiring wisdom that “the new possibilities of life that are apparently opened by the transgression” are what is most powerful. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, trans. John J Scullion, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 249.

³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:75. For other modern interpreters who follow this basic line of reasoning see Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 238.

⁴Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” *Ancient Christian Writers*, 42.II, n.d., 11.5.7. In the Reformation era, Willit writes of Eve that she was, “Ravished by an ambitious desire to better her estate.” Andrew Willit, *Hexapla*, ed. John L. Thompson,

become irresistible.”¹ But Westermann argues that the text doesn’t say that she wanted to be like God.²

If an attempt is to be made to determine what caused the change between the woman and God, then it is necessary to look more closely at the three motivating factors that led Eve to set aside her relationship with God and instead eat the fruit in direct opposition to His command. To more clearly see what is happening, it will be helpful for the reader to “look ahead” to the point when God and the woman again come together (verse 13) and note the explanation the woman gives to God when asked what she did. This is a very necessary interpretative point for verse 6.

In verse 13, in response to God’s inquiry, the woman reports that she was deceived by the serpent. This experience of being deceived, this paper suggests, is what drives the entire narrative. And the full significance of this notion is typically skipped over entirely by commentators.³ But there are two looming questions that this surprise revelation by Eve opens up. First off, what was the deception? And then, perhaps even more importantly, what was the deception designed to get her to change in her thinking than what she had thought before? While the bare facts are clear (she was deceived and she ate) this only scratches the surface as to what has taken place in Eve’s thought processes.

When commentators mention the deception, it is usually only to contrast Eve with

Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 47.

¹Sarna, *Genesis*, 25.

²Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 249.

³At the extreme, Westermann calls it simply “completely natural perfectly human” in view of the senses being appealed to. Westermann, 249.

Adam. They typically refer to Paul's summary of this event in the Christian New Testament where Eve alone was deceived. Matthews is representative when he writes, "unlike the man she can rightly claim to be the 'victim' of deception."¹ Doukhan at least picks up on the idea that Eve thought she was doing right, though he does not explain why.² Many commentators, however, do not even mention the deception in discussing the fall, focusing rather on the "lie" of the serpent.³

The underlying Hebrew verb נָשָׂא carries with it the idea of leading someone to believe something falsely. It is only used this once in the Pentateuch though it appears later in the narratives relating the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and King Hezekiah in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah.⁴ It also appears in Jeremiah and Obadiah.⁵ It is almost always used in these later appearances in the context of uncertainty regarding safety when God's people are being attacked by an enemy.

What is missing in these later Hebrew Bible usages is something being used to act as the deception. In none of these verses does the text indicate that some deceptive means are being used to give an illusion of safety. This means that the verb does not necessarily have to denote that the deceiver is using some sly means to encourage the one being deceived to fall for the trick.

However, things are different with its lone, early appearance in the Hebrew text.

¹Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 242.

²Doukhan, *Genesis*, 97.

³So Ross writes, "Since she was not convinced of the certainty of death for sin, he was free to deny it" Ross, *Genesis*, 51. This argument highlights the reading of many scholars that Eve was not in a trusting relationship with God during the conversation.

⁴2 Kings 18:29; 19:10; 2 Chron 32:15; Is 36:14; 37:10.

⁵Jer 4:10; 29:8; 37:9; 49:16; Ob 3, 7.

In the Gen 3 narrative, nothing is explicitly stated. When the initial description of the serpent is considered again with this pivotal verb now in mind, the need to look for a deception becomes more obvious. As previously noted, the story began with the assertion that the serpent was the most crafty or subtle of all of God's created animals. This is a clear hint for the reader to be looking for something deceptive in contrast to the later usages of the verb "to deceive," נָשָׂא where no means of deception seems required. This is in contrast to what would have been expected had the text informed the reader that the serpent was the biggest liar. In that case, the reader would have been looking for a lie. But as noted, this is not the case. Therefore, the reader should not be looking for a lie but rather some means of crafty, cunning, or subtle sleight-of-hand that the serpent uses to convince the woman to disregard God's prohibition.¹

But what is this deception? An important point that has not been discussed yet is the talking serpent. On what was the serpent's ability to speak based?² While the text says nothing directly about "who" the serpent might be, other than just being the most crafty creature that the Lord God had made, there are two points that need to be addressed. First off, God speaks to the serpent in multiple ways, and He does so in a way that points to the serpent being just that, an animal. God speaks to it in Gen 3:14 saying that it will be cursed and go about on the ground. There does not seem anything more in this brief statement than hinting at the fact that before this point, the serpent did not move about on

¹This idea of the agent of the deception having some means or instrumentality by which to deceive is also hinted at in Paul's reference to this story in 2 Cor 11:3. There he notes that the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning. The instrument used for carrying out the deception was the serpent's cunning. Thus, Paul also picks up on the fact that something is used by the serpent in order to carry out the deception. In 2 Cor 11:3, Paul uses the same root as the LXX of Gen 3:13, ἐξαπατάω and ἀπατάω.

²See Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 232. He suggests that possibly it was connected to the serpent's craftiness.

the ground as it was to do now. God is changing this animal's means of motion.

God also makes a statement regarding the relationship between the woman and her seed and the serpent and its seed. At the purely animal level, this verse seems to suggest a reason why women often hate snakes.

In addition, in continuing to look at Gen 3:15, it seems that something more is present than just God speaking to an animal. This seems especially true with the phrase, "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." The foreshadowing of some violence between a future seed of the woman and the serpent itself points markedly to something behind the serpent. It should be seen here, as well, that God does not say that the seed of the woman will strike the seed of the serpent and vice versa. Rather, the seed of the woman will strike the serpent itself. This hints at the shift between the statements spoken directly to the serpent in contrast to what God is saying to something behind the serpent. While the future conflict will not be waged by the woman, but rather her seed, yet on the serpent's part, there is no such substitution. The serpent itself will be engaged and receive a mortal wound. This seems to highlight that the serpent is more than what meets the eye.

But from Eve's perspective, the serpent is perceived as nothing more than an animal. And this then adds to the deception. For the serpent is talking and nothing in the text suggests that this should be considered normal. So how does it talk? The text hints at the answer to this by listing the three reasons given on which the woman bases her decision to eat the fruit. As noted above, these three pivotal facts are delineated rather briefly in Gen 3:6, and yet each of them deserves the reader's full attention to gain a full appreciation for the deception.

First, the text says that the woman saw that the "tree was good for fruit." As mentioned above, this statement has possible overtones to the earlier creation account

where it is God who declares things good.¹ In Genesis 1, the phrase is “And God saw that it was good.”² In Genesis 3, the phraseology is much the same. However, while here the same phrase is used, the statement is made based on being good for some reason other than being something created by God. In this case, the fruit is good as food itself, not because it was made by God.

But following this line of reasoning seems more of a distraction. A different reading is to see this phrase as demonstrating that before this point, Eve had thought that the fruit of this tree was bad for food. In other words, it was bad for her health. It was to be understood as the opposite of the Tree of Life. While that tree gave life unending, presumably healing any ailments or injuries that might come their way, the other was dangerous to one’s health. But now she sees that it is good for food. So there has been a shift in her thinking. But, one should ask what has caused this change. What has allowed her to see that the tree is good for food? The implication is that someone was eating the fruit and not experiencing any negative effects. This then hints at why Eve is having trouble determining if she should trust God’s word or not. There seems to be something that is directly challenging the veracity of God’s command as she understood it.

What is now clear is that at least one piece of evidence has been put forward to provide the basis upon which Eve can later say to God that she was deceived. In other words, her eyes tricked her. In her mind, if anyone eats from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they should suffer ill effects and die. But what she sees now is that

¹See Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31. While some see this connection, another reading of the text demonstrates that God “sees” that something is good in much the same way that the woman “sees” that the tree is good for food. One must question whether this is indeed represents something lacking in Eve’s character. So Matthews, 238.

²וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב.

someone, or something, is eating from the tree and is not dead. This plays a key part in her deception and is the essential first straw that must break before she eats the fruit herself.

The second reason given for Eve's eating of the fruit is "it was a delight to the eyes." This fact further develops that of the previous one. If something is bad for you, humans typically imagine that it also looks bad. But now she sees that it is beautiful. This fact also reinforces the interpretation that Eve wants to follow God's command and has intentionally stayed away from the Tree. This is the first time that she has been close enough to the tree order to be able to see it.¹

And finally, the third reason why the woman ate the fruit is found in the statement, "the tree was to be desired to make one wise." Turner seems correct when he notes that the tree no longer is distinguished from the other trees in the garden by its threat of death but instead becomes one that is "desired to make one wise."² But what brings about this change? What did Eve see that would lead her to believe that the fruit would make one wise?

God told them that in the day that you eat from the tree, you will die. However, when she came to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that day, she did not find a dead serpent. Instead, the serpent was very much alive, enjoying the tasty fruit, and telling the woman that should would not surely die. God and the serpent could not both be right. She can see it with her own eyes. The serpent is alive and *talking* with her.

¹This fact is rarely noted by modern commentators, though Liebowitz does catch this subtle hint. Liebowitz, *Studies in Bereshit (Genesis)*, 33.

²Turner, *Genesis*, 31. But he seems to take the mystery of the story to an extreme when he earlier suggests "the possibility that neither the Serpent nor the Woman knows fully what they are talking about." Turner, 30.

In seeing the serpent eating the fruit, her conclusion must have been that the fruit from the tree was what gave the serpent the ability to talk. This was the deception. This was what made everything the serpent said believable. Eve only needs to answer one question: who is the liar? What she sees answers her question for her. And now she must see her own way forward in a world in which her Creator was not trustworthy. In fact, He was an outright liar.

In the end, the serpent leaves the woman to her own thoughts. He does not even explicitly invite her to eat from the tree.¹ The idea of taking, *הקח*, is itself also obscure. It does not let us know if the woman took the fruit from the serpent or took it from the tree. Either way, it does not matter. She has seen with her eyes that God cannot be trusted. The eating of the fruit is the natural result of having one's faith in someone else shattered. When a relationship is broken, humans always turn inside themselves to find a new direction forward. This is exactly what Eve did.

The Results

The narrative gives a terse description of what happened after Eve ate the fruit. The first thing to take place is that she gave some to the man who was with her. She doesn't want to be alone on this journey into the unknown. But she has not died yet, and that is significant.

In fact, neither of them dies. Instead, their eyes are opened, as the serpent had said, but in place of knowing good and evil, the text notes that they now realize that they are naked, and they are filled with shame. In this context, nakedness now stands for the knowledge of good and evil. That they do have the knowledge of good and evil is shown

¹Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 90.

by God's words in Gen 3:22. This is, of course, in contrast to the way the creation narrative of Gen 2 ends with the man and his wife naked and not ashamed. What are the implications of this change regarding their nakedness? At a basic, human relationship level, the two have separated. They are in paradise, on their honeymoon, and they do not like their shared nakedness. In the first attempt at clothing production, they are said to have sewn fig leaves to cover up their shame.

When God comes walking in the garden, Adam and the woman are now fearful to be seen by Him.¹ Here again, the issue of relationships is in the foreground. Though the two have attempted some level of producing a covering for their nakedness, they do not trust this, and the man tells God while hidden in the trees that he is afraid because he is naked. This leads to the interview between God and his creatures.

While much more can be said regarding the interactions between God, the man, the woman, and the serpent, for this paper, the focus will be on just several key points. What deserves the focus here is how Adam relates to both the woman and God in this interchange. First, when Adam is asked if he has eaten from the tree which God commanded him not to eat from, he immediately places the blame on the woman who gave him the fruit, then on God as her creator, before finally admitting to having eaten the forbidden fruit. What is clear is the continued state of brokenness for the man. He has previously wanted to cover his nakedness when it is only the two of them in the garden. Then he hides when God comes walking. And now, he blames the woman and God for his failure to abide by the prohibition of eating the fruit. Several subpoints follow this.

As noted earlier, Adam never has any direct connection with the serpent. His

¹Tonstad notes that here, humans “become hostages to distrust, alienation, fear, and the need to keep a distance.” Tonstad, *Revelation*, 332.

connection to the fruit is always mediated directly through the woman, not the serpent. While the text has stated that the woman “gave some to her husband who was with her” (Gen 3:6b), there should not lead the reader to assume the man was standing back and watching the entire conversation between the serpent and the woman and thus party to the entire deception. There is a clear disconnect between the man and the serpent in the text. And later, when God pronounces a sentence on the man, stating, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,” both the connection between the woman and the man and the separation between the man and the serpent are maintained. Thus, the “with her” must be understood to be after the conversation with the serpent, not indicating the man’s presence at the tree but rather his connection to the woman.

This is important in understanding the man’s actions as having been taken without any deceit involved. He chose to eat the fruit knowing full well what he was doing. He was choosing his relationship with his wife over his relationship with his God. But what follows that decision is a broken relationship with his wife as well. The loss of trust in God leads to a loss of trust in all relationships.

While the man blames the woman and God, Eve turns to the serpent and places blame on the serpent’s powers of deception. The implications of saying she was deceived are great. Primarily, she can lay claim to not being at fault. Her ability to make a correct decision was compromised by the presence of the deception. It was not a fair decision that she was challenged to make. This fact is highlighted by God’s sentence given to her in Gen 3:16. When God speaks to her, he does not begin with any variation on the phrase “because you have done this.”¹ This is in contrast to the man and the serpent. Thus, God’s words to the woman highlight that He accepts her defense, she was deceived and

¹Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 248.

thus not at fault in the same manner as the other guilty parties. However, while her fault may have been different, the results that she experienced were nevertheless profound. Not only is her trust in God destroyed, but her relationship with her husband is also shattered as well.

After asking both the man and the woman what they have done, God begins His interactions with the serpent by cursing it. Commentators do not pick up on why God did not interview the snake in the same manner as He did the man and woman. Sarna suggested that God's reason for not asking the snake any questions was a demonstration "of God's withering disdain for it."¹

However, when this fact is combined with what has been stated earlier concerning the means of the serpent's deception of the woman, it seems better to see this as simply an acknowledgment by God that the talking serpent of itself cannot talk. Lurking in the background is some unnamed power that has used the serpent for its nefarious purposes. In terms of the entire biblical narrative, the full identification of the power behind the serpent must wait until the end of the Bible in Revelation 12:9 where the reader finds reference to the ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.² So rather than asking a question of the dumb serpent, God simply pronounces the first curse.

After telling Eve what He will do to ensure that the human race can survive the broken relationship between the only man and woman on the planet, God curses the ground and tells Adam of the pain he will endure providing food to keep alive those lives that the woman is able to bring into this world and the final loss of life that will be his at

¹Sarna, *Genesis*, 24.

²For a helpful overview of this identification among various interpreters, see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 1:80, 81.

some unknown time in the future. However, the ultimate problem that must be acknowledged when looking at the results of eating the fruit is that, just as the snake had said, Adam and Eve do not die from eating the fruit.

Differing explanations are offered for this astounding fact. As noted earlier, some argue that what was meant by God when He said in the day that they ate from the tree, they would surely die, is that they would be barred from access to the Tree of Life. This made them succumb to mortality.¹ Others have suggested that theirs was a spiritual death.² Perhaps, the narrative wants to continue in the place where Eve was in trying to find out if God's word can be trusted. It seems on the surface that it cannot.

But perhaps there is another way to understand the story. To determine this, the reader should consider that God has not in fact punished the man and woman. While this might seem counter-intuitive to the narrative that has just been outlined, it should be remembered that neither the man nor the woman was cursed by God for what has happened. Only the serpent and the ground are cursed. Furthermore, there was only one punishment that was given for breaking the divine prohibition. God had said, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2:17). Since this had not taken place, it should be clear that whatever God had said in his pronouncements to the man and the woman should not be construed as punishment.³ But if it was not punishment, then what was it? And why did God not punish the two lawbreakers?

¹Sarna, *Genesis*, 21.

²Walton, *Genesis*, 175.

³This view is not supported by commentators. For the prevailing view that God's statements are punishment for the couple's sin, see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 255.

To further understand this, it will be helpful to briefly consider God's final acts in dealing with the broken pair. First, we read in Gen 3:21, "And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them." God makes garments of skin to replace the inferior garments of fig leaves originally designed to cover the pair's shame, nakedness, or knowledge of good and evil. But perhaps here again is an indication that what God is doing is not punishing them but saving them. He provides a better solution to their brokenness. And in doing so, a subtle hint is given as to the origins of a sacrificial system that appears in Gen 4. God suggests that something or someone will die to cover their shame and nakedness.

Then finally, Genesis 3:22–24 states "Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." The reason why Adam and the woman are sent out from their garden and barred access to it is because of the power of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of it. The power of this tree is best seen in contrast to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Whereas Eve thought that eating from the forbidden tree would be detrimental to her health, the Tree of Life was the elixir for all health maladies. In fact, contrary to the common opinion of many readers, this text highlights the fact that sin does not kill humans. Based upon God's statement here, humans could live forever even today if they were to have access to the Tree of Life.¹ So

¹On the eschatological implications of the Tree of Life as described in the Book of Revelation, see Tonstad, *Revelation*, 328, 329. While Tonstad is correct that in Revelation, the Tree of Life has "healing" connotations, the healing and disease model he

God prohibits them from having access to the Tree of Life. But as noted, this should not be taken as punishment for their sin. That, as already noted, did not happen.¹ Future research remains to be done to draw out the implications of seeing God's actions here as salvific rather than punitive.

Theological Challenges

A common complaint raised against events described in Gen 3 is that this whole "test" was not a good thing for God to arrange. Why would it be necessary to have any prohibition at all? What does it say of the relationship in the first place if it must have a test? It, however, should be seen in its true light. It was a very simple test. To eat or not eat. That was the only decision to be made. But it was fraught with difficulty created by the deceptions of the serpent. What makes this test effective is that it allows for the one key issue to become apparent. Everything revolves around it; trust in a relationship with God. If Eve trusts God, then no matter what she sees with her eyes, she will not eat the fruit. The fruit is not significant in and of itself. It only represents the relationship or lack thereof.

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that the reason Eve ate the forbidden

proposes should not be the exclusive paradigm. The moral component is just as important. What is seen from Genesis is that the death that ultimately results from not having access to the Tree of Life can only be healed by regaining access to the healing properties of this tree. This can only be done, however, when trust is restored. Tonstad is correct that the moral dimension is not disconnected from the healing motif. However, Genesis shows that culpability and guilt and interconnected with disease. So, the disease and healing model should not be disconnected from culpability and guilt.

¹For a New Testament view on this, consider Paul's words in Romans 3:25 "This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins." Here, Paul confirms what Genesis hints at. The death experienced by Adam and Eve was not as punishment for their sin. That God had passed over.

fruit is that she truly believed that God had lied to her, that it was God who had failed in the relationship and who could not be trusted. If this is indeed the role that God finds Himself in, it gives meaning to future prophetic utterances like those that one finds in Hosea and Jeremiah.¹ In commenting on the Hosea passage, Grace Emmerson writes of God's actions: "His is the initiative, Israel's the response."² This is exactly the picture that one expects to find coming out of the Genesis 3 narrative. Since it is God who is seen to be the faithless party in the relationship, it is incumbent on Him to be the initiator of the effort of reconciliation. Out of this also comes the idea that salvation is really about restoring the relationship of trust. It is from this view, as well, that one sees that all salvific activity belongs to God.

In discussing the nature of humanity that was capable of sin, Augustine writes, "right reason tells us that that creature is better which finds absolutely no pleasure in what is forbidden."³ He contrasts this as inferior to the nature of humans which could choose whether to reject evil or not. The clear inference is that humans sinned because of our nature and that they ate the fruit because they found pleasure in what was forbidden. However, this paper has suggested that human nature was not at fault; neither was there a desire for pleasure that drew Eve to eat of the fruit. As already noted, eating the fruit itself did not harm her and she did not eat it because of a desire for pleasure. Rather, she ate it in a desperate attempt to establish control over her life after experiencing the

¹Hosea 2:9 has God speaking of the materials used to cover Israel's nakedness and then in 2:14, God speaks of attempting to allure Israel back into a relationship with Him. In Jer 2:2, God states, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride."

²Grace Emmerson, "Hosea," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James Dunn and John Rodgerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 677.

³Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," 11.7.9. p. 140.

devastating effects of finding out that the one she had trusted entirely was, in fact, a fraud. The loss of trust in God is what had such a devastating impact. The effects of this take place rather quickly, as seen from the loss of relationship that happens between the man and the woman upon eating the forbidden fruit.

In this narrative, God's only response was one of love. As such, it was not forced upon Him. An important suggestion of this paper is that it would have been a loving thing for God to have followed through with the judgment that had been stated for eating the fruit—"In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." Had God killed Adam and Eve for their sin, He would have spared the whole world the innocent suffering that has fallen upon our race. The problem that theodicy presents to anyone daring to claim the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God, in the face of innocent suffering, is one of the most common reasons given for not believing in the existence of the God of the Bible. Had God carried out the death sentence, He would have prevented the one thing that has caused so many people to reject His very existence. Thus, he would have been loving in carrying out the sentence.

By not killing Adam and Eve, God has not opened Himself up to the kinds of descriptions that are common among the post-religious "nones" of today. Richard Dawkin's description describes this well. "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a pretty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleaner; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."¹

¹Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 51.

And God looks just like that. But perhaps that is what happens when God allows humans to live in the context of the knowledge of good and evil rather than killing them. God must now deal with humanity in a world where good and evil are intertwined, where humans live for themselves, rather than the other and all relationships are lost. Instead of destroying the couple, He introduces a plan of reconciliation. But this plan must unfold in the context of knowing good and evil. As such, it is a plan which is founded upon the entrance of pain into the world.

And yes, it is God who introduces pain into the world. In the text, each of God's responses includes elements of pain. The serpent is deprived of its former beauty and status as an animal, degrading it to the point of eating and slithering in the dust and, ultimately, having its head crushed. To the woman, pain will be a prime concern when bringing life into the world, and she must now deal with a ruling husband. To the man, pain will undergird all his attempts to provide food to sustain life. And ultimately, his entire being will return to dust.

It is easy to see why the common understanding is to see God's actions as punitive. Pain is thought to be the result of punishment by an authoritative power. And so, when God uses it, He is seen as an authoritative power who is upset because we didn't obey Him. We ate His piece of fruit when He said not to. And so the charge of being a malevolent bully is one that He must now deal with.

In addition, God also has a charge against Him of being soft regarding sin. And from a certain perspective, he is now complicit in the pain, destruction, and death that follows. He has allowed evil to reign. This will lead to the situation that Paul addresses in Rom 3:25, 26 of God's apparent unrighteousness for overlooking human sinfulness.

While sin and salvation are not terms found in the Gen 3 narrative, they are nevertheless the backdrop to the entire story. Disobeying God's law becomes the

definition of sin, but this must somehow be defined in such a way that God does not become guilty of what Dawkins ascribes to Him. The story is one of forgiveness and salvation. The identifying marks of God's glory, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation, as they will be later shown,¹ are on full display, even though they are nameless here. The groundwork is now laid for the path forward. God must chart a way to show Himself faithful and worthy of our trust. If Christ is to become the means of God's self-revelation, the definition of Christ's nature becomes much more significant, theologically and relationally. If Jesus is to be the one who restores human trust in God and he is the demonstration that humans can have a relationship with God, then His divine nature becomes essential to fixing the problem that appeared in the Garden. To this end, God has made Himself vulnerable by doing what any sensible person would not have done. He has gone back on His word, and humanity has never trusted Him since.

¹See Exod 33:19.