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ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN AND DIVINE
CAUSATION OF DEATH IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN
LITERATURE AND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

Lazarus Castang

Adviser: Randall W. Younker

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN AND DIVINE CAUSATION OF DEATH IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE AND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Name of researcher: Lazarus Castang

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The present dissertation attempts a comparative analysis of both the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the main flood accounts in the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature and the Hebrew Old Testament (OT). Both literatures are examined for their implicit or explicit conceptions of the origin and divine causation of death. The origin of death in the ANE literature is located in the Egyptian Osirian myth and the Mesopotamian Enki-Ninmah myth, Enûma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, and the Adapa legend. The divine causation of death is studied in the Eridu

Genesis, Atra-Hasis Epic, Gilgamesh Epic, and Berosus flood story. The origin of death in the OT is located in the creation account of Gen 1–3, and the divine causation of death is dealt with in context of the flood story of Gen 6–9. Two tables outlining the similarities and differences between the individual ANE accounts and the OT are respectively placed at the end of the section on the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the flood accounts.

Following chapter 1, the introductory chapter, chapter 2 examines the ANE (Egyptian and Mesopotamian) and Hebrew OT creation accounts to discover the origin of death. The two accounts are treated separately. However, in chapter 3 the individual findings of the two accounts on the origin of death are compared and contrasted. I conclude that in the ANE literature death originated with divine deicide in war and also in a god-given human mortal nature, whereas in Hebrew literature mortality and death originated with human sinful choice to flout the divine proscription against eating the forbidden fruit.

In chapter 4 on the divine causation of death, the Mesopotamian and Hebrew flood accounts are also treated separately. But in chapter 5 the respective findings of the two accounts are compared and contrasted on the divine causation of death. In both the ANE and Hebrew accounts of the flood there is direct divine agency of the flood event; the flood is a global event involving the physical destruction of humanity, and a human remnant is divinely saved from the inundation. In contrast, in the ANE flood account,

god-given *rigmu* (noise) resulting in divine insomnia seems to be the sole cause of the flood, and the gods are capricious, deceptive, and fearful in the flood. But the Hebrew account portrays human sin as the conditional cause of the flood, *lex talionis* as the judicial principle in the flood judgment, and God is presented as gracious in probation, salvific in intent, and just in retribution.

In conclusion, the twin concepts (origin and divine causation of death) studied in this dissertation find convergence in the ANE account when the gods who created mankind endowed them with mortality, thus, the divine creators of mankind are at once the causal originators or original causers of death. This convergence is absent from the Hebrew account because at creation humanity was endowed with immortality, not mortality, and mortality and death originated with human sin. In ANE flood account, human noise leading to divine insomnia and apparent arbitrary divine will are the cause of the flood, but in the Hebrew OT flood, human sin is the conditional cause and God the effectual cause of the flood.

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Dedicated to
my dear wife, Carol-Ann,
and our four loving children,
Daniel, Jesse, Sharon, and Tamara

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABD* *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
- ANE* Ancient Near East(ern)
- ANET* *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by J. B. Pritchard. 3d ed. Princeton, 1969
- AUSS* *Andrews University Seminary Studies*
- BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
- BDB* Brown, F., S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907
- Bib* *Biblica*
- CAD* *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago, 1956–
- CAR* Center for Adventist Research
- CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
- COS* *The Context of Scripture*. Edited by W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997–
- ECT* *Egyptian Coffin Texts*. Edited by A. de Buck and A. H. Gardiner. Chicago, 1935–1947
- JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- NIDOTTE* *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by W. A. Vangemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997

- Pyr. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Translated into English by R. O
Faulkner. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969
- TLOT *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by E. Jenni, with
assistance from C. Westermann. Translated by M. E. Biddle. 3 vols.
Peabody, Mass., 1997
- ZAW *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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PREFACE

I wrote this dissertation on the origin and divine causation of death to gain a historical-contextual understanding of the relationship of the divine to death in particular events (creation and flood). Some have posited divine non-involvement in all acts of death and destruction attributed to God in the Bible, while others have accepted divine involvement wherever it is mentioned in sacred history. I embarked on this study to understand death and the divine in an ANE context. My previous unpublished study of the role of the divine in death and destruction was confined to the Bible. This study which covers the Hebrew OT as well as the ANE literature allowed me to study them separately, comparatively, and in historical context.

The academic achievement of completing this dissertation came by faith and prayer, spousal support, personal sweat, financial assistance, the generous accommodations and insights of my humble, caring, and scholarly Christian professors and the inspirations of the almighty God. My mother, Linda Castang, though she was unable to give me financial assistance, constantly reminded me of her faithful prayers on my behalf. My supportive wife, Carol-Ann, though in graduate school herself, gladly filled the gap of my absences to take care of our four children. My frequent night work and the financial assistance from Andrews University helped me stay financially afloat to complete this dissertation, though there were disconcerting lows.

My dissertation committee consisted of Dr. Randy Younker, Dr. Richard Davidson and Dr. Jiri Moskala. I am indeed grateful for their guidance, contributions, and suggestions. The gracious willingness of Dr. Younker to accept me in the Old Testament program; to serve as my dissertation committee chairperson; to allow me to write the dissertation involving history of antiquity, exegesis, and theology; to make insightful contributions in the area of history of antiquity and give occasional encouragement to keep ploughing to the end of this project all demonstrate his compassionate zeal for my success. The critique and affirmation of Dr. Davidson in the areas of exegesis and theology, his unique ability to treat his students as equals while he gives guidance, and his humble Christian spirit in scholarly interactions are worthy of emulation. Though having a hectic schedule, I am grateful for the contribution of Dr. Jiri Moskala. Thanks to Dr. Nicholas Miller for assisting in the dissertation process by accepting the fourth-reader role. Above all, I thank God for life, intelligence, opportunity, and energy to complete this dissertation. May it be to his name's honor and glory.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

A review of literature demonstrates that there is no consensus among Old Testament (OT) scholars with regard to the origin of death¹ in the creation account and the divine causation of death in the flood narrative of the OT. The distinct differences of opinion are found in both temporal and etiological perspectives. Some OT scholars posit that death anteceded the fall of humanity,² while others advocate that it entered creation

¹Death is used to refer to the cessation of physical life and consciousness.

²Sarna avers, “Man, created from perishable matter, was mortal from the outset, but that he had within his grasp the possibility of immortality. . . . Man was mortal from the beginning. Logically, therefore, the transgression should incur immediate punishment, mortality as opposed to immortality. But man and woman did not die at once, and it is not stated that God rescinded the penalty. For these reasons, ‘you shall die’ must here mean being deprived of the possibility of rejuvenation by means of the ‘tree of life,’ as existed hitherto—in other words, inevitable expulsion from the garden.” Nahum H. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 18–19, 21. Bailey asserts that mortality was programmed into humanity from the beginning, and therefore death is from within, a natural and acceptable condition. Lloyd R. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 4, 109. Ramm says, “There was disease and bloodshed in Nature long before man sinned.” Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 233. Rahner assumes that man is mortal from creation and would die regardless of sin. Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 34. Goldingay states that, like animals and plants, death is intrinsic to human existence, and there was no qualitative difference in body and mind between original and present man. John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Gospel* (Downers

with sin.³ Moreover, concerning divine causation of death in the Hebrew OT flood

Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 1:120. Fretheim concludes: “Death per se was a natural part of God’s created order.” Terrence C. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 77. Ross and his staff see “very good” of creation as meaning perfect for what it was intended for, but not that there was no death or disease. Hugh Ross, K. Samples, M. Harman, and K. Bontrager, “Life and Death in Eden: The Biblical and Scientific Evidence for Animal Death before the Fall,” audiocassette, *Reasons to Believe*, 2001. Dalton alleges, “Death before the first human sin from old age, predation, earthquakes and other forms of natural evil was not caused by sin.” Dalton D. Baldwin, “Does Death before Sin Destroy the Plan of Salvation” (CAR, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI), 4. Whybray believes that the writer of Genesis regarded mortality as intrinsic to human nature and not imposed as a consequence of sin. R. N. Whybray, “The Immortality of God: Reflections on Some Passages in Genesis, Job, Exodus and Numbers,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 72 (1996): 91.

³Keil and Delitzsch indicate that immediately after the breach of the divine command, man became mortal, came under the power of death, and received into his nature the germ of death. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 3:105; Concerning the first sin of man in Eden, Wenham points out that “the consequences of his actions are both physical—toil, pain, and death—and spiritual—alienation from God. The spiritual consequences follow the act of disobedience immediately, but the physical penalties—pain, suffering and death—may take longer to become evident.” Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 90. Maher asserts: “Death is not a natural event but rather the consequence of sin.” Michael Maher, *Genesis*, Old Testament Message (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 2:47. Nichol indicates that “the divine pronouncement ‘in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,’ literally, ‘dying thou shalt die,’ means that upon the day of transgression sentence would be pronounced. Man would pass from the status of conditional immortality to that of unconditional mortality.” “Genesis,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953–57), 1:225. Hameling concludes that the view that the earth is billions of years old and that death and decay were part of God’s original creation plan is faulty and a misrepresentation of God’s character. James Hameling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in Context of Creation” (M.Th. thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2001), 99. Randall W. Younker, “A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspectives on Death” (CAR, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI), 1–4. Harold states that etiologically, death as a punishment for disobeying God is more compatible with the wide range of biblical texts than death as a part of the original plan for humans. R. K. Harold, “Death,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 109.

account,⁴ some theologians have impugned the divine character as an agent of death,⁵

while others have denied divine causation of death.⁶ Yet another has treated the entrance

⁴Hartley says in his comments on Gen 6:5: “God had caused the deluge to punish intolerable violence on earth, not to transform human nature.” John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 105; Matthews avers in his exposition of Gen 7:4–5: “God does not shrink from the responsibility of the impending cataclysm. The Hebrew construction of vs. 4 emphasizes the first person (‘I’) role of God as the responsible agent for the destruction.” Kenneth A. Matthews, “Genesis 1–11:26,” *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 373. Brueggeman declares that the speech of the judgment announces what everyone knows about the flood story: “God gets angry with his world and causes a flood to punish.” Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 80. Nichol points out about Gen 6:17 that “the repeated and emphatic ‘I’ is a clear indication that the coming catastrophe was a divine visitation and not a natural occurrence.” “Genesis,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953–57), 1:254. Wenham says in his comments on Genesis 6:17: “The repetition of the personal pronoun makes it perfectly clear that God is author of the flood. It is not a force that gets out of divine control as in Babylonian tradition. . . . God the giver of life (cf. 2:7) is now taking it away.” Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 174.

⁵Crenshaw declares that a “cruel streak exists in the depiction of God within the Bible.” James L. Crenshaw, “Reification of Divine Evil,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28 (Winter 2001): 327; idem, *A World of Torment: Israelite Traditions of God as an Oppressive Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Penchansky speaks of God as “dangerous,” “malevolent,” and “abusive” in relation to causing death. David Penchansky, *What Rough Beast?: Images of God in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999). Ludeman claims, “Cruelty remains cruelty even if the Bible attributes it to God.” Gerd Ludeman, *The Unholy in Holy Scripture: The Dark Side of the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 48, 49. Miles indicates that God’s action in the flood exposes the deepest of all fault lines in the divine character, in that as creator—both as God and Lord—he becomes an outright destroyer. Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1995), 42. Templeton contends that in order to sustain the view that God is love, one has to avoid reading the flood story in which God drowned every man, woman, child, animal, and lesser creature on the face of the earth. Charles Templeton, *Farewell to God* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 53.

⁶Wright defends the divine character by the absolutization of God’s withdrawal in all acts of destruction attributed to God in the Bible. F. T. Wright, *Behold Your God* (Queensland, Australia: Destiny Press, 1979). Maxwell believes that sin, which separates

of death into God’s lively and good creation and the cause of death in the biblical flood account as accidents.⁷

Not surprisingly, most OT scholars have explored this issue of the origin of death in the creation account or divine causation of death in the flood account mostly within the confines of the OT text. However, the OT writers lived, thought, and worked within various ancient Near Eastern (ANE) contexts—contexts that developed their own views on the relationship of the divine and death, and with which the OT writers were undoubtedly familiar and interacted. Given this broad literary context, this study attempts a comparative analysis of the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the flood narratives of the ANE and the OT. This analysis is approached by exploring several fundamental questions on the origin and divine causation of death in the select accounts. These questions include:

1. Principally, what is the relationship of the divine to death in the creation accounts and the early flood narratives in the ANE literature and the OT?

2. How does the nature of death—whether biological, spiritual, eternal, or human, _____ the sinner from God, the Source of life, changes the sinner and results in automatic death. God is not arbitrary, harsh, vengeful, and unforgiving. A. Graham Maxwell, *Can God Be Trusted?* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1977). Clute resolves the issue of divine agency of death by positing two Lords: God, good and true, and Satan, false and evil. All death-causing acts attributed to God in the Bible are reinterpreted to refer to Satan. Michael F. Clute, *Into the Father’s Heart* (Newberg, OR: God’s Last Call Ministries, 1982); idem, *The Wonderful Truth about Our Heavenly Father* (Newberg, OR: God’s Last Call Ministries, 1986).

⁷Doukhan believes that after God created man “death happened as an accident (something certainly not essential to life).” He declares that the biblical flood was a “cosmic accident.” Jacques B. Doukhan, “Where Did Death Come From? A Study in the Genesis Creation Story,” *Adventist Perspectives*, January 1990, 16.

divine or semi-human/divine—differ between the ANE and OT accounts on the origin and divine causation of death?

3. What comparative theological concepts and moral images of divinity can be gleaned from an analysis of the respective ANE and OT narratives on the origin and divine causation of death?

Statement of Purpose

The major twofold purpose of this dissertation is: (1) to identify, analyze, and compare the explicit and implicit conceptions of the origin of death in the *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, the Mesopotamian Enki-Ninmah myth, Enuma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, Adapa legend, and the Hebrew OT in relation to divinity, and (2) to determine, describe, and compare the role attributed to the divine in the event of death in the four main extrabiblical ANE flood stories (Eridu Genesis, Atra-Hasis Epic, Gilgamesh Epic, Berossus flood story) and the OT flood account (Gen 6–9).

The study entails a close investigation of relevant ANE and OT writings, their terminological and conceptual markers in the original languages and/or modern English translations and expositions. The Egyptian and/or Mesopotamian and OT writings on the origin and divine causation of death are examined separately and in relation to each other.

Justification of the Study

The study derives its justification on two grounds: first, its direct bearing on whether the traditional idea that God in the OT truly destroys rebellious people is tenable and second, a shortage of relevant studies on the subject of the origin and divine

causation of death in ANE literature and in the OT. Some scholars have argued that divine destruction in the Bible is natural cause and effect. This means that God only withdraws his protecting presence because of human incorrigibility and allows nature to take its course in the punishment of sinners. This study of the origin and divine causation of death goes behind the destructive effect to establish primary and effectual cause of death and so it has direct relevance for the study of whether God directly, historically, and eschatologically destroys sinners.

The second reason for this study is that there is a paucity of historical-contextual⁸ studies that combine and compare the issues of the origin and divine causation of death in ANE literature and in the OT. Lloyd Bailey's book, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*,⁹ is the only major scholarly theological work comparing the ANE literature to the OT on the causes of death. Nonetheless, Bailey does not address the question of the origin of death, the derivative theodicean and theological implications, or the genre classification of the accounts.

James Harmeling, in his master's thesis, deals only with the nature of death, the nature of God and his historic dealings with death.¹⁰ Marco Terreros, in his dissertation, focuses on the secularization of the traditional fall account by Darwinian evolutionary

⁸I use "historical-contextual" in reference to ANE literature of Old Testament parallels of the same chronological period and/or thematic issue.

⁹Lloyd R. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

¹⁰James Hameling, "A Very Good Death?"

theory and its impact upon the evangelical theology of the atonement.¹¹ Though the latter two writers address the issue of the origin of death theologically, their works are not historical-contextual, and do not speak comparatively to the combined issues of the origin and divine causation of death in ANE literature and the OT. The paucity of historical-contextual writings that combine and compare the issues of the origin and divine causation of death in ANE literature and the OT both necessitates and justifies an examination of these issues.

Research Assumptions

No study is absolutely objective. Implicit and explicit assumptions underlie all theological research. As such, this research is guided by the following assumptions:

1. The ANE culture is the social milieu within which the OT perspectives were born and cradled. Moreover, ANE parallels inform us about the historical and cultural setting, but do not determine or dominate the biblical meaning.

2. A text-based approach is preferred over against an extrabiblical approach in the interpretation of the biblical record on the origin and divine causation of death. The question or phenomenon of God's historic role in causing death can be approached within the framework of the revelation in Scripture.

3. The OT is a valid and unique source for biblical inquiry into the origin and divine causation of death. While we should not claim the Divine perspective on the origin and divine causation of death, an approximation in understanding this matter seems

¹¹M. Terreros, "Death Before the Sin of Adam" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, Berrien springs, Michigan, 1994).

reasonable.

Methodology

The study attempts to investigate the contribution of literary sources on the issues of the origin and divine causation of death in the ANE, in particular, Egypt and Mesopotamia. To ascertain the translational accuracy of terminologies in the primary sources that is crucial to the purpose of this dissertation, the respective ancient languages (Akkadian, Egyptian, and Greek) are consulted where possible or necessary. Though the Hebrew OT writings on the origin and divine causation of death constitute a part of ANE literature, for the purposes of individual, then comparative analytic treatment, the OT is not placed under the rubric of ANE literature. The genre classification¹² (whether poem,

¹²V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); Roland H. Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955); Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, eds., *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993); Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide of the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); William Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2000); G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1970); Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Alan Dundes, ed., *The Flood Myth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Stephanie Dalley, "Near Eastern Myths and Legends," in *The Biblical World*, ed. John Barton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1:41–64; A. D. H. Mayes, "Historiography in the Old Testament," in *The Biblical World*, ed. John Barton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1:65–87; Kenneth Kitchen, *On Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); Fritz Gray, "Myth and Mythology," *ABD*, 4:946–965; Bernard Batto, "Myth," *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 697–698; Ivan Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Levi-Strauss and Malinowski* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1987); J. D. Castelein, "Myth," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Water A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 809; Philip Freund, *Myths of Creation* (New York:

prophecy, or myth), ethical motivation, as well as the theological and theodicean implications of both the ANE literature and the Hebrew passages on the origin and divine causation of death will be examined. The question of the origin and divine causation of death will be linguistically and contextually assessed.

In the investigation of the OT, specific attention will be focused on Gen 2:17; 3:19, 21; Ps 104:21; and Isa 65:20 which throw light on death's origin. Divine causation of death in the early flood narratives will be approached by an analysis of key passages that are contextually and linguistically indicative of a causative agent of death. Importantly, the emergent relationship between the broader ANE world and the OT on the origin and divine causation of death will be explored and underscored.

I accept the biblical text in its final canonical form¹³ as recognized by the Christian community as a theological foundation. I rely specifically on historical/grammatical exegesis¹⁴ for the study of the OT passages. The

Washington Square, 1965), 25; J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974).

¹³Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); idem, *The World of Biblical Literature* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979); idem, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985); idem, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972); John Barton, "Looking Back on the 20th Century: 2. Old Testament Studies," *The Expository Times* 110, no. 11 (1999): 348–351.

¹⁴Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 94–95; Gordon M. Hyde, ed., *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1974); Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical*

historical/grammatical approach allows me to be sensitive to the grammar and historical context of the text, and to engage in a close and intertextual reading of the text. Thus, the understanding of the OT writings on the question of the origin and divine causation of death can be grounded in revelation rather than in an extraneous source.

A key theological issue arising from such a study of ANE literature and the OT concerns theodicy.¹⁵ Therefore, the ANE literature and the OT passages will also be studied comparatively in terms of the theodicean implications for the origin and divine causation of death. The theological perspectives of the ANE and the OT will be juxtaposed to determine their inter-relationship on the question of theodicy.

Interpretation (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991); Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970).

¹⁵Green defines theodicy as “the effort to defend God’s justice and power in a world marred by suffering.” Ronald M. Green, “Theodicy,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 14:430–441. Crenshaw says, “Theodicy is an attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity’s indifference or hostility toward virtuous people.” James Crenshaw, “Theodicy,” *ABD*, 6:444–447. This volume deals with theodicy in the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, Early Jewish Writing, New Testament, and in Rabbinic Judaism. See also Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor, eds., *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003); D. Penchansky and P.L. Redditt, eds., *Shall the Judge of All the Earth Do Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to J.L. Crenshaw* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000); Barry L. Whitney, *Theodicy: An Annotated Bibliography on the Problem of Evil* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University, 1998).

The Scope of the Study

The first section of the study is limited by two constraints: geographical and biblical. Geographically, Egypt and Mesopotamia are two ANE regions which contain a concept of the origin of death in the *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*¹⁶ (*Pyr.*), and the *Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)*, *The Context of Scripture (COS)*, and various other translations/expositions. In the *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, “Utterance 571” (*Pyr.* 1466) alludes to an Egyptian mythology of death, which implies the origin of death.¹⁷

In the ANE literature,¹⁸ the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh alludes to the issue of the origin of death with the episode of “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant” (Tablet XI),¹⁹ and touches it with the divine ordination of death in Tablet X.²⁰ The Enûma Elish locates the origin of death in divine deicide, and the Enki-Ninmah and Adapa myths put it in a God-given nature. Biblically, the passages of Gen 1–3; Ps 104; Isa 14:12–15; 65:20; and Ezek 28:11–19 are the natural confines for the study of the origin of death, since they are

¹⁶*The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, translated into English by R. O. Faulkner (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 226.

¹⁸“The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 72–99).

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 96–97. Other translations and/or expositions of the Epic are found in: Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1954); N.K. Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1972); John Maier, ed., *Gilgamesh* (Wauconda, IL: Bolahazy-Carducci, 1997); Ronald A. Veenker, “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant,” *Biblical Archeologist* 44, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 199–205; Randall W. Younker, “A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspectives on Death,” 1–13.

²⁰*ANET*, 90.

the main passages of the OT, which throw more or less direct light on the issue.

However, such textual confinement will not result in the neglect or overlooking of other supporting texts.

The second section, which deals with divine causation of death, covers the Deluge narratives in ANE literature and in the OT (Gen 6–9). It is devoted to analyzing four main extrabiblical ANE flood stories: the Eridu Genesis,²¹ the Atra-Hasis Epic,²² the Gilgamesh Epic,²³ and Berosus flood story.²⁴ The ANE corpus has other translations and/or expositions²⁵ apart from the *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* and *The Context of Scripture*, which provide comparative leverage for the assessment and interpretation of the literature.

²¹“The Deluge,” translated by S. N. Kramer (*ANET*, 42–44); “Eridu Genesis,” translated by Thorkild Jacobsen (*COS*, 1.158:513–515).

²²“Atra-Hasis,” translated by Benjamin R. Foster (*COS*, 1.130: 450–453); “Atrahasis,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 104–109).

²³The flood tablet is Tablet XI in “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 72–99); “Gilgamesh,” translated by Benjamin R. Foster (*COS*, 1.132:458–460).

²⁴The Chaldean Berosus, *The Babyloniaca of Berosus*, trans. Stanley Mayer Burstein, Sources from the ANE, 1 (Malibu, CA: Undena Publication, 1978).

²⁵Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1954); W. G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969); Thorkild Jacobsen, “Eridu Genesis,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 513–529; Alan Dundes, eds., *The Flood Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, eds., *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

The *locus classicus* of the biblical flood narrative is Gen 6–9. The biblical flood account of Gen 6–9 is selected because of its fuller account of the flood, its literary primacy on the question of divine causation of death, and its many parallel accounts in ANE literature. The ANE corpus is chosen based on its being parallel to the OT account, with sufficient material to make a determination on the questions of the divine causation of death, the genre of the composition, and the attendant theological and theodicean implications. Berosus’s flood account, though the latest of the ANE accounts, and of Greek composition, is included in this study as a Mesopotamian flood story. Berosus, a priest of Marduk at Babylonia, included the flood story when he compiled the history of Babylon.

The concept of death in both sections of the dissertation is confined to the physical death of humans and/or animals, and is not extended to plants, cells, or denatured microbes. However, the idea of the death of gods will have determinative value for the study of the origin of death in the selected ANE material, and, as far as possible, will be studied in relation to human and/or animal death. The operational definition of death is a loss of life and consciousness or biological cessation.

Definitions of Terms

Divine Causation of Death: Divine causation of death has to do with the historiographical attribution of the event of death to the direct action of god(s) or God. This may involve the use of natural elements like water and wind. The question of a causative relationship between the divine and death cannot be presently and empirically

validated or demonstrated; therefore an examination of this issue relies solely on literary evidence irrespective of the provenance. The aim of this dissertation is not to establish the authenticity or historicity of the events examined, but to analyze at face value their explicit and implicit perspectives on the origin and divine causation of death on the basis of the divine claim, the specific language, the context of the accounts, and the intra- or inter-textual harmony.

Relationship Between Origin of Death and Causation of Death: Both “origin” and “causation” have to do with etiology. Etiology is defined as “the science of causes or origins.”²⁶ This study has to do with the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the flood narratives in the ANE and OT literature. This dissertation is fundamentally etiological in perspective. The first section (chapters 2 and 3) deals with the origin of death and the second (chapters 4 and 5) with the divine causation of death.

In this dissertation, the term “origin” emphasizes the point of beginning or a temporal reference point for death’s inception. Origin has to do with the first occurrence of death reported in the creation account, whether by execution or natural cessation, whether divine or human or semi-human/divine. Origin also entails death in the god-given nature of the creature, that is, mortality as constitutive of the divine creation. In this context, mortality is primarily a primordial concept.

The term “causation” or cause has to do with divine agency of death in the flood narratives. Though both origin and causation can be primordial concepts, causation is not

²⁶*New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 1976 ed., s.v. “Etiology.”

used as a primordial concept in the second section of the dissertation. While the first section accentuates the point of beginning or the initial occurrence of death, the second explicates the divine actions that effect death.

It is possible to talk about the cause of death in addressing the origin of death in the creation narratives, but it would be anachronistic to talk about the origin of death in the flood narratives because the origin of death preceded the flood in the creation narratives of the ancient Near East and the OT. It is self-evident that creation preceded the deluge else there would be no objects of diluvial destruction. Temporal sequence negates their concurrence.

However, origin coalesces with causation in the creation accounts when the divine agent endows the creature with mortality from the inception of the creation, or executes the first death immediate to the creation. Divinity, then, would be the originator, creator, introducer, or imposer of death in the creation. The originator of death becomes the causer of death.

Since the flood is subsequent to the creation and the initial occurrence of death was not in the flood but in the creation account in both the ANE and OT, then divine causation of death is etiologically primordial only with respect to creation. Origin of death is never in the divine causation of death in the deluge accounts. However, where divinity causes the first death in the creation accounts, or bestows a mortal nature upon creatures at creation, origin of death coalesces with divine causation of death, though the occurrence of actual death may temporally succeed the origin of death as possession of a mortal nature. Only then is the causation of death in the origin of death—initial agency

of death marks temporal inception of death.

Ethical Motivation: Ethical motivation is an item of theodicy, that is, the justice of God/gods. In light of the question of the causative relationship between the divine and death, ethical motivation includes issues like the reason for the divine action, the principle of equivalence, the morality of the action of the offenders, and the counteraction of the divine. Ethical motivation is dealt with in context of the theodicean implications of each of the accounts.

Genre Classification: Since meaning is genre-dependent, that is, the genre or type of literature provides the hermeneutical principles by which one understands a literary portion or a text,²⁷ then determining or describing the genre (whether historiography or mythography or “mytho-historical account”)²⁸ of the literary portion is necessary. Because it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to try to establish the historicity (the actual occurrence of the events in human time and space) of the written events, the genre will be assessed from the interpretive verbal accounts of the past. In this case, the history to be examined is not the past events, but the selective telling of those events, which is really historiography.²⁹

²⁷Grant Osborne, “Introduction,” *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 26.

²⁸Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 528; cf. 149–150; cf. Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 26 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 150.

²⁹Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 60.

The genre classification (whether myth or mytho-historical account) of the written events will presuppose a “historical kernel”³⁰ without attempting to list its precise constituents in entirety. This approach is in clear contrast to the views of critical scholars and the Naturalistic School in which myths are fictional and unhistorical. Also, it differs from the Historical School in which “myths are factual accounts of the world’s past, chronicles of long-ago happenings.”³¹

I share an anthropological perspective³² like that of Richard Clifford and Chun Sik Park, in relation to the ANE accounts under investigation. Such anthropological perspective has a sense of history, and of tradition, and refrains from exclusively depicting the pertinent ANE accounts as mere stories about gods,³³ thus eliminating or minimizing human role and context. In this light, then, the pertinent ANE stories of the origin of death are myths that have a historical kernel that reflects the existence of the divine in human history. Also, the ANE stories pertaining to the question of divine

³⁰Chun Sik Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, MI, 2005), 13.

³¹Philip Freund, *Myths of Creation* (New York: Washington Square, 1965), 25; Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 13.

³²Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*, 149–150; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 13; Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 528.

³³For a detailed treatment of myth as mere stories about gods and for the various other definitions of myths: Historical-philosophical (etymological, literary, sociological) and phenomenological (descriptive) see John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 29–46. A more extended comparative discussion of ANE literature vis-a-vis the OT can be found in John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

causation of death in the flood accounts are myths that indicate the existence of a cataclysmic flood in the early stage of human history.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN OF DEATH

The chapter is divided into two sections: the ancient Near Eastern and Hebrew sections. Under the ancient Near Eastern section the concept of the origin of death is examined in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature. The focus of the Hebrew section is on the Old Testament.

Ancient Near East

This section examines the origin of death in specific Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature. The Egyptian concept of the origin of death is drawn primarily from the earliest Egyptian literary material—*The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*.¹ The *Pyramid Texts* date from the middle of third millennium B. C. during the period of the Old Kingdom.² The Old Kingdom is estimated to have existed from 2740–2270 B.C.³

¹Faulkner's translation of the *Pyramid Text* is used for this study.

²The *Pyramid Text* is a collection of hieroglyphic texts inscribed on the interior walls of the pyramids of certain of the pharaohs, that is, the pyramids of Unis, the last king of the fifth dynasty, and of Teti, Pepi I, Merenre I, and Pepi II, the first four kings of the sixth dynasty. S. G. F. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 15; idem, "The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions," *Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (1966): 218; idem, "Ritual Technique of Salvation," in *The Saviour God*, ed. S. G. F. Brandon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963), 18; idem, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), 32, 34; George Hart, *Egyptian Myths* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), 9; William Kelly Simpson, ed., *The*

The language of Mesopotamians was Akkadian. The Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians were participants of Mesopotamian civilization. Mesopotamian civilization was uniquely cosmopolitan and its religion tended toward universalism. These two features of Mesopotamian civilization enabled it to transcend ethnic, linguistic, and political boundaries to achieve cultural unity.⁴ Hence, the concept of the origin of death in the Sumerian and Babylonian literature is treated in the Mesopotamian section. Assyrian as well as Hittite literary fragments are considered only where they are used in the reconstruction of Mesopotamian myth called the Epic of Gilgamesh.⁵ Otherwise, the Assyrian or Hittite literature is not utilized in this Mesopotamian section because it is either too fragmentary, or not extant, or just a reiteration of its analogue or prototype.

The concept of the origin of death in Mesopotamia is gleaned from four of the earliest Mesopotamian myths: the Sumerian Enki-Ninmah myth, the Babylonian Enuma Elish, Gilgamesh Epic, and the Adapa Myth. The Enki-Ninmah myth is a creation story that dates to the third millennium B.C.⁶ The Enuma Elish is generally thought to date

Literature of Ancient Egypt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 247; Anthony S. Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1978), 48.

³Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 15.

⁴Roland H. Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, 40–43.

⁵“Enki-Ninmah,” translated by Samuel Noah Kramer (*ANET*, 237–238).

⁶S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1961), 69.

from the period of the First Babylonian Dynasty (1894–1595),⁷ that is, the early part of the second millennium B.C. It is likely based on “earlier Sumerian texts, especially since many of the gods mentioned are of Sumerian origin.”⁸

The Gilgamesh Epic “dates from about 1600 B.C., at the end of the Old Babylonian period, and was composed in Akkadian.”⁹ It is divided into twelve tablets, though the twelfth appears to be a secondary addition to the original eleven.¹⁰ Like the Enuma Elish, the Gilgamesh Epic has Sumerian analogues or prototypes.¹¹ The Adapa

⁷Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 91; Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 14; Thorkild Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. H. and H. A. Frankfort et al. (Chicago; The University of Chicago Press, 1946), 169.

⁸David Leeming and Margaret Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23; cf. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 67; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 12; Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 28, 120; G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 120–121.

⁹Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University, 1976), 195; Maureen Gallery Kovacs, Introduction to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, xxii. Heidel fixes the date of composition of the *Gilgamesh Epic* at about 2000 B.C. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 15.

¹⁰“The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 72–73); *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. Kovacs, 116–117.

¹¹“The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 73); Kovacs, Introduction, xxii; Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, 195. Concerning the relationship between the Sumerian fragments of the Gilgamesh Epic and Semitic Babylonian version, Heidel offers this caveat: “But the question as to the origin of the material of the various episodes cannot as yet be answered with any certainty. To judge from the Sumerian fragments of the epic which have so far come to light and from the fact that the Semitic Babylonians became in general the heirs of Sumerian culture and civilization, it appears reasonable to assume that also the other episodes in the Gilgamesh Epic were current in Sumerian literary form before they were

Myth is extant in four fragmentary clay tablets (I, II, III, and IV)¹². The oldest and longest fragmentary account (II) dates from the first half of the fourteenth century B.C.¹³

Egypt

The Egyptian subsection of the study examines the origin of death in “Utterance 571” and in the legend of Osiris by presenting their genre classifications and functions, giving account analyses, and by laying out their theological and theodicean implications.

The two are selected because only “Utterance 571” in the *Egyptian Pyramid Texts*

provides a brief allusion to the origin of death, and the legend of Osiris serves as the

embodied in the composition of this Semitic Babylonian poem. From this, however, it does not necessarily follow that all this material had its origin with the Sumerians, either in their former home or after they had occupied the plains of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Instead, the material itself may have originated, at least in part, with the Semitic Babylonians, from whom the Sumerians may have taken it over, adapting it to their own views and beliefs and giving it expression in their own script and language. But irrespective of the origin of the raw material, the earliest literary form of most, if not all, of the tales or episodes imbedded in the Gilgamesh Epic was doubtless Sumerian, as far as available evidence goes. And these Sumerian literary pieces were then utilized by the Babylonians Semites in the production of their great national epic. The work of the Semites, however, did not consist simply in translating the Sumerian texts and combining them into one continuous story; rather, it constituted a new creation, which in the course of time, as indicated by the different versions at our disposal, was continually modified and elaborated at the hands of the various compilers and redactors, with the result that the Semitic versions which have survived to our day in most cases differ widely from the available Sumerian material.” Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 14.

¹²Heidel uses the Roman numerals I, II, III, and IV to differentiate the fragments. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 147–153; Speiser alphabetizes the fragments in the *ANET* as A, B, C, and D. *ANET*, 101–103.

¹³“Adapa,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 101); cf. S. G. F. Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), 87; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 147; cf. Robert William Rogers, ed., and trans. *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1926), 67–68.

raison d'être of the Egyptian mortuary cultus. The account analysis seeks to draw out the relevance of the allusion to the origin of death, crystallize the inferential importance of the Egyptian hieroglyphic determinative sign for *mwt* (death), and correlate the probable connection of the origin of death to the legend of Osiris. Both the theological and theodicean implications are considered in relation to the origin of death and are principally built on the legend of Osiris.

Genre Classification and Function

Simpson indicates that the *Pyramid Texts* constitute

the oldest collection of Egyptian religious and mythological texts, consisting of mortuary rituals which had developed over a period of centuries. The general theme of these texts is the burial and rebirth of the deceased king, and the texts themselves are rich in varied mythological traditions of the Old Kingdom. The texts were constructed from a number of originally separate mythological strains and were used during and after the burial rituals of the king.¹⁴

“Utterance 571,” which contains a brief reference with an assurance of Pharaoh’s birth preceding the existence of death, is a part of the mortuary rituals of Egypt written in poetic form.¹⁵ Mercatante declares that some of the oldest funerary texts were discovered in the pyramids and date from the end of the Old Kingdom. These ritual or funerary texts

¹⁴Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 247. Brandon characterizes the *Pyramid Texts* as “an amorphous collection of spells, incantations, hymns and what appear to be fragments of mystery plays, which clearly derived from various sources and range in date from a very archaic period down to the time of the construction of the pyramids in which they were inscribed.” Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 34; idem, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219; Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 9.

¹⁵Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 247; cf. Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219.

were recited while the priests burned incense over the bier and mourners gathered together to walk to the necropolis.¹⁶

“Utterance 571” as well as the legend of Osiris participated in the mortuary ritual of Egypt. The mortuary rituals, in words (e.g., hymns, prayers, and tales), in actions (dramatic performances), in objects and pictures (e.g., images, non-figural emblems, plants, and heavenly bodies), or in living beings (e.g., the king and animals) cause or recall a spiritual experience and support the idea that Egyptian mythology was reflective rather than imaginative and poetic. The mortuary ritual being mythological was symbolical of an entity in the divine world. It was considered true as long as it made something of the divine world conceivable in human terms and was accepted by faith.¹⁷

Account Analysis

“Utterance 571” is analyzed to determine its contribution to the concept of the origin of death. This account analysis is not an exhaustive dissection of the full account, but of the relevant portions in context of the full account. The analysis of the account involves an examination of the pertinent terminological and conceptual markers that illumine the concept of the origin of death.

¹⁶Mercatante further states that “the texts were created to grant eternal life to the dead. The magic words were written on the walls of the tombs or on the furniture and on the papyri which were placed in the tombs. At first the texts were written for the Pharaoh alone who was certain to enter into eternal life. In time, however, the hope of eternal life was granted to all.” Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 48.

¹⁷Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 21–24.

Utterance 571

The King's mother was pregnant with him,
(Even he) Who was in the Lower Sky,
The King was fashioned by his father Atum¹⁸
Before the sky existed,
Before the earth existed,
Before men existed,
Before the gods were born,
Before death existed.¹⁹

Our principal concern in this passage is with the statement: "The King was fashioned by his father Atum . . . , before death existed." Simpson translates it as "This Pepi has been begotten by his father Atum . . . , (at a time) when death had not yet come into being."²⁰ The obvious conclusion from this statement in context of the rest of "Utterance 571" is the doctrine of the immortality of the king,²¹ whether as an individual

¹⁸Hart identifies Atum as "lord of Heliopolis" and "lord of the sky," "the demiurge, the creator of the world, who arose out of Nu at the beginning of time to create the elements of the universe. . . . The underlying notion of the name Atum is one of totality, thus as the sun god he is *Monad*, the supreme being and quintessence of all the forces and elements of nature. Therefore, he contains within himself the life-force of every other deity yet to come into being. In Egyptian thought totality had a positive power, as in the idea of completing an eternity of existence, as in consigning an enemy to the flames. This dualism inherent in the Monad allows for the future birth of a constructive goddess such as Isis as well as a god of chaos and confusion such as Seth." Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 11-12.

¹⁹*Pyr.*, 226. I have followed Faulkner's translation of the passage with Simpson's block format for visual effect. Cf. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 262.

²⁰Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 262.

²¹Samuel A. B. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary* (New York: Longmans, 1952), 716.

king (whom Brandon²² and Simpson²³ assume to be Pepi) or as a corporate king—the dynasty of the pharaohs.

The immortality of the king is supported repeatedly in the following ascriptions to the king: “The King escapes his death” (*Pyr.* 1467); “This King will not die” (*Pyr.* 1468); “For the King is an Imperishable Star” (*Pyr.* 1469); “Rē has taken this King to himself to the sky so that this king may live” (*Pyr.* 1469); “Horus²⁴ has offered this King his arms on his own account” (*Pyr.* 1471). In “Utterance 422,” passage 764 says: “O King . . . May your name live on earth, may your name endure(?) upon earth, for you shall not perish, nor shall you be destroyed.”

The birth of the king preceded death’s existence.²⁵ The account does not indicate whether the sequential anaphoric enumeration within the passage above indicates the creational order or priority of existence of sky, earth, men, and gods and then death. However, such creational order would be incompatible with the theogony of the priests of Heliopolis in which the existence of some gods preceded the existence of sky, earth, and

²²Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 16.

²³Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 262.

²⁴In ancient Egypt, rulers worshiped Horus, the last of the god-kings, and traced their descent from him, each king being a reincarnation of Horus himself. Ludlow Bull, “Ancient Egypt,” in Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, 7.

²⁵Concerning this passage Brandon indicates: “The logic implicit in the statement is the king could not really die, since he belonged to the order of being that was prior to that in which death had power or currency. Clearly a primordial state was envisaged, existent even before the so-called ‘first time’ (*sp tpy*), when there was neither death nor decay; in other words, a state of being outside Time. Of how death did originate, and whether it was contingent on creation and the start of the temporal process, nothing is said.” Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219.

man. Osiris, the god of the underworld, the god of death, is the sixth god of the strict Ennead from Atum to Nephthys.²⁶ The implication is that death preceded human existence.

The king really belongs to a different order or a primordial state of being that pre-existed the inanimate creation, mankind and gods, when there was neither decay nor death. This observation creates confusion and an anomaly since Atum was the father of the king, and Atum arose out of Nu or Nun, the primeval being, a limitless ocean of inert water, symbolic of non-existence before creation.²⁷ Since both Nu²⁸ and Atum (the king's father) were Egyptian gods, then the pre-Nu existence of the king appears illogical. Mercer provides a solution for such conundrum when he states: "Here Atum, like Nun is made to precede the gods, as according to Heliopolitan theology he did, bringing gods into being by masturbation, even his later wife, Nut. Apparently, there was a time when nothing existed, except perhaps Atum and the Abyss (male and female)."²⁹

The four classic cosmogonic systems of Egyptian mythology were the Heliopolitan, Memphite, Hermopolitan, and Theban systems.³⁰ Though illogical at

²⁶Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 11; Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 112-114; *Pyr.* 1655.

²⁷Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 11; "The Theology of Memphis," translated by John Wilson (*ANET*, 5).

²⁸In Egyptian literature, Nun is both deified and personified. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 17; Nun is called "the eldest god" in *ANET*, 11.

²⁹Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, 715.

³⁰Brandon, "The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions," 219.

certain ideological junctures, the post-Heliopolitan systems were syncretistic and conservative, thus accommodative of the previous system(s). Consequently, the Egyptians were able to hold together in their religious thinking ideas that are mutually contradictory.³¹

With this observation of cosmogonic accommodation, we can now briefly survey death's origin in relation to Egyptian cosmogonic thought on a whole. The idea that the king's birth preceded death's existence puts his birth before or within the primordial age or state. In this regard, "Utterance 486," passage 1040, proclaimed the king as "born in the Abyss (Nun) before the sky existed, before the earth existed, before that which was to be made firm existed, before turmoil existed, before that fear which arose on account of the Eye of Horus existed."³²

Brandon unequivocally concluded that the Egyptians regarded the creator-god Atum (Re) as himself the creature of the pre-existing Nun.³³ Nun, the primaeval waste of water, both personified and deified as "the eldest god," "the father of gods,"³⁴ and his female counterpart Naunet constitute the first pair of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad.³⁵ The

³¹Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 51, 52, 54. Kramer talks about this Egyptian accommodation as a mythological concept involving "the tendency to both change and continuity." Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 25.

³²*Pyr.*, 173.

³³Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 25.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 16; "Delivery of Mankind from Destruction," translated by John Wilson (*ANET*, 11).

³⁵The other three pairs are Huh/Hauhet, Kuk/Kauket, and Amun/Amunet. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 46; Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 20.

Ogdoad or eight primordial beings were the first gods of the first time (the Golden Age). According to Brandon, it is believed that after these eight primordial beings completed their work of creation, they apparently died and returned to the underworld, where they continued to serve the world above by causing the Nile to flow and the sun to rise each day.³⁶ If this observation is correct, then the death hypostatized in “Utterance 571” in Heliopolitan cosmogony refers to and finds illumination in the probable death of the Ogdoad of Hermopolitan cosmogony.

The temporal location of the Egyptian origin of death, though imprecise, accordingly is situated after the primordial birth of the king, whether within time as it is humanly known or outside time, that is, in eternity. Brandon correctly points out that the *Pyramid Texts* say nothing about how death originated, and whether it was contingent on creation and the start of the temporal process.³⁷ In Egyptian cosmogonic speculation, the Egyptian apparently never tried to account for or produce a myth concerning the origin of death.³⁸

“Utterance 571” offers only the temporal idea that death’s existence is after the birth of Atum’s son. If the death of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad is accepted, then death was actually within or ends the primordial or Golden age. Death happened with the first gods and its etiology is indeterminate or unknown.

³⁶Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 48, 49.

³⁷Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219.

³⁸Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 64; idem, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219.

The determinative sign of *mwt*

The *Pyramid Texts* express a prior death-free age or state of the world. In “Utterance 571,” passage 1466, the term “death” in its Egyptian determinative sign can be logically or inferentially connected to the death of Osiris. The word *mwt* (“to die”) has as its determinative sign the figure of the falling man with blood streaming from his head. The same determinative sign are used for the substantives *mwt* (“death”) and *h_fyt* (“enemy”).³⁹ Two other expressions used for death (“*mni*” and “*h_pt*”) have as their determinative signs the figure of a recumbent mummy or embalmed body.⁴⁰

The Egyptian semiotic identity between the terms “death” and “enemy” is the figure of a falling man with blood streaming from his head. This determinative sign suggests that the Egyptians may have conceived of “death as an enemy, and the process of dying as the consequence of a hostile attack.”⁴¹ There is a correlation between this conception of death/enemy pictured in the determinative signs and the legend of Osiris. In the *Pyramid Texts*, “Utterance 478” expresses the ideas of hostility and of a man falling: “You have come seeking your brother Osiris, for his brother Seth has thrown him down

³⁹Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 436 (A.14), 521 (Z.6); cf. Brandon, “The Personification of Death in Some Ancient Religions,” 319.

⁴⁰Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 440; Brandon, “The Personification of Death in Some Ancient Religions,” 319; idem, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 66, n. 3.

⁴¹Brandon, “The Personification of Death in Some Ancient Religions,” 319.

on his side in yonder side of *Ghsty*,”⁴² and “Utterance 532” says: “They have found Osiris, his brother Seth having laid him low in Nedit.”⁴³

The ideas of blood streaming from the head and of mummification or embalmment seem apparent from indications in “Utterance 532.” Concerning Osiris it is said: “They prevent you from rotting”; “They prevent your putrefaction from dripping to the ground”; “They prevent the smell of your corpse from becoming foul.”⁴⁴ The idea of “falling” may be captured by “thrown down”; of “death” by “corpse”; of “enemy” by “Seth”; of “embalmment/mummification” to “prevent your putrefaction” and of “blood” by prevention of putrefaction fluid “dripping” to the ground.

If this inference drawn from the Egyptian determinative signs is correctly reflective of the Egyptian conception of the Osirian legend, then, in Egyptian mythology, the death of Osiris marks the entrance of death into the world. The death of Osiris appears to be a stronger argument in favor of death’s beginning than the alleged death of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad. Consequently, the primordial death-free state and age would be prior to the Osirian death, if not prior to the alleged death of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad.

The legend of Osiris

The legend of Osiris is pivotal for a theology of death in ancient Egypt. The *Pyramid Texts* portray the death of Osiris at the hand of his antagonist-brother, Seth (also

⁴²*Pyr.*, 166.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 200.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

spelled Set). In “Utterance 532,” Seth laid his brother Osiris low in Nedit. Simpson points out that the term “Nedit” refers to the bank of a river, which is used as a mythological location where Osiris was struck down by Seth.⁴⁵ Posthumous expressions of prevention of the physical results of death like “rotting,” “putrefaction,” and “the smell of the corpse from becoming foul” in “Utterance 532” presuppose the biological death of Osiris.

Osiris was the eldest son of Geb (the earth god, who personified the land of Egypt and through him the link was established with the throne of the reigning pharaoh) and Nut (the sky goddess). Nut bore Geb four children—Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. As the eldest son, Osiris inherited the right to govern the land of Egypt. In pre-dynastic times, Egypt was under the rule of a succession of gods—Ptah, Re, Shu, Geb, Osiris, Seth, and Horus.⁴⁶

Among those pre-dynastic gods, Osiris was the one murdered by Seth. Seth usurped the throne of Egypt by violent assault. Osiris and Isis (his sister-wife) were ruling in “a golden age,” with “an idyllic scene.” Egypt was in prosperity and “all animal life followed a perfect pattern of procreation.” As a result of Seth’s monstrous usurpation and murder of Osiris, violence and chaos became attributes of Seth,⁴⁷ and death seems to have entered the world.

⁴⁵Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 252, n. 7.

⁴⁶Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 14, 29–30.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 30.

Theological Implications

The myth of Osiris provides a window into Egyptian theology of the origin of death. The first theological implication is that though the gods were considered immortal,⁴⁸ they can physically die like humans. Osiris died a violent death, and for the Egyptian the death of Osiris came to symbolize and epitomize the experience of all men.⁴⁹ Obviously, the creation or physical death of the gods was not conceived as a negation of their immortality.

The coexistence of the concepts of the physical death and immortality of the god Osiris can be explained in relation to *Ka*, “the double or abstract personality,”⁵⁰ an independent existence, a symbol of “divine life,”⁵¹ which “could separate itself from or could unite itself to the body and could move from place to place. A dead man’s *Ka* had to be preserved if his body was to become everlasting. Funeral offerings, such as meats, cakes, wines, and unguents, were made to the *Ka*, and when the food was not available,

⁴⁸Tobin indicates that the Egyptian gods were “by nature immortal, while man was mortal. Even the pharaoh himself was mortal despite his divinity. Frequently, however, the mortuary literature shows the deceased as identified with the various gods. Such seems to indicate that the deceased had within himself something of the divine nature which enabled him to conquer death.” Vincent Arieh Tobin, *Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion*, American University Studies, series 7; Theology and Religion vol. 59 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 129.

⁴⁹Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219–220.

⁵⁰Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 81; cf. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, 781.

⁵¹Tobin, *Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion*, 126.

offerings were painted on the walls, accompanied by the recitation of specific prayers.”⁵²

In the *Pyramid Texts*, “Utterance 600” says concerning Atum’s transmission of his *Ka* to Shu, Tefēnet, the king and the pyramid:

O Atum-Khoper, you become high on the height,
You rose up as the *bnbn*-stone in the Mansion of the ‘Phoenix’ in Ōn,
You spate out Shu, you expectorated Tefēnet,
And you set your arms about them as the arms of a *ka*-symbol,
That your essence might be in them.
O Atum set your arms about the King, about this construction,
And about this pyramid as the arms of a *ka*-symbol,
That the King’s essence may be in it, enduring forever.⁵³

The thought in this passage is that “the individual’s *Ka* did not exist before him, but rather was given to him at birth by a superior power, a deity, in this case Atum.”⁵⁴

Apparently, the *Ka* gave things, men, and gods their immortal (“enduring-forever”) nature. The king’s external royal *Ka* portrayed “the dualism of the king’s nature, which combines divine and mortal components: divinity is realized through the *Ka*.” In Egyptian hieroglyph, the *Ka* was represented by two upraised arms.⁵⁵

The second theological implication is that a god can bring death upon another god. In the *Pyramid Texts*, none of the five cosmic deities (Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb and Nut) of the Heliopolitan Ennead caused any of the other cosmic gods to die. Death occurred among the remaining four gods of the Ennead, the children of the cosmic

⁵²Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 81.

⁵³*Pyr.*, 246–247.

⁵⁴Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, 781.

⁵⁵Donald B. Redford, ed., *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 179, 180.

deities. Set, the son of Geb, and Nut, the god of chaos,⁵⁶ who became “the god of evil and darkness”⁵⁷ caused the death of Osiris, “god of the dead and resurrection.”⁵⁸ Set’s murder of Osiris demonstrates both the power of an Egyptian god to kill and the vulnerability of an Egyptian god to die physically.

The third theological implication is that there was a god of death in Egyptian thought. Paradoxically, the god of death (Osiris) did not cause the first death or subsequent death of anyone, but he (Osiris) was caused to die. Set can really be called the god of death from the perpetrator’s perspective, though he was never actually represented as the god of death.⁵⁹

In “Utterance 571,” death is hypostatized, but in the Osirian myth death is deified and ritualized. The death of the god of death provided the rationale of the Egyptian mortuary cultus in which “by virtue of the Osirian mortuary ritual, every deceased person, on whose behalf the rites were performed, was ritually assimilated to Osiris in both death and resurrection.”⁶⁰ Therefore, “the legend of Osiris constituted a dramatic aetiology,

⁵⁶Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 14–15.

⁵⁷Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 143.

⁵⁸Ibid., 112.

⁵⁹Brandon, “The Personification of Death in Some Ancient Religions,” 320.

⁶⁰Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219; cf. idem., *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 64.

which both explained the incidence of death and sanctioned hope that salvation could be had from its dread entail.”⁶¹

The fourth and final theological implication is that for the Egyptians death was an enemy. Death and enemy share the same Egyptian hieroglyphic determinative sign. The death of Osiris ensued from a brother-enemy attack. This suggests that death was an unnatural event and an unnecessary thing. Also, in Egyptian iconography, Set, the murderer of Osiris, “the Egyptian devil or god of Evil,” is the one who, “either by himself or through his assistant demons, brought death to man by violent assault.”⁶² Therefore, both the Egyptian hieroglyphic determinative sign and their iconography point to death as an enemy in Egyptian conception.

In the *Egyptian Coffin Texts*, death is personified in a prayer as an enemy that attacks and seizes its victim: “Do not seize me, do not catch me, do not against me your intent.”⁶³ The ideas of death’s seizure and catch of a person and of a god turning into a death-dealing devil suggest that to the Egyptian mind death was “essentially accidental, even if unavoidable.”⁶⁴ Death was inevitable because “the legend of Osiris really

⁶¹Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220-221.

⁶²Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220; idem, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 67.

⁶³ECT IV, 40, quoted in Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220; cf. J. Zandee, *Death as a Enemy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 85-87, 184-186.

⁶⁴Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220; Jan Assman, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 70.

constituted a typology of human fortune. . . . Osiris was ‘Everyman’. Accordingly, his passion and death typified the experience of all men.”⁶⁵ Also, death was an accident or chance event in that it was something unnatural, “something that should not be,” “something from an evil agency”⁶⁶ and something that unexpectedly or surprisingly seizes and catches its victims.

Theodicean Implications

Theodicy is defined as “an attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity’s indifference or hostility toward virtuous people.”⁶⁷ Such definition presupposes the existence of error, evil, injustice, and wrong to be righted. It also implies a vertical relationship between God/gods and man in which the divine justice and power are defended in relation to the presence and experience of evil.

The *Pyramid Texts* do not show “the presence of explicit theodicean discourse.”⁶⁸ They focus only on “the problem of evil from the cosmic side.”⁶⁹ The cosmogonies are concerned with “theology, not with anthropology”⁷⁰ and the Egyptian never tried to

⁶⁵Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 66; idem, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 119–220.

⁶⁶Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220; cf. Assman, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 67.

⁶⁷James Crenshaw, “Theodicy,” *ABD*, 6:444.

⁶⁸Loprieno, “Theodicy in Ancient Egyptian Texts,” 44.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 219.

account for the origin of death. “Death, therefore, seems to have formed no problem such as to cause him to question the divine providence.”⁷¹ This may be due to the Egyptian belief that “the conditions of their existence as a people had always been, and always would be governed by gods, whose will and purposes are utterly inscrutable.”⁷²

Any theodicean treatment of the origin of death in the *Pyramid Texts*, of necessity, will be in the cosmic realm and will be attained by a process of deduction. In this subsection, the theodicean implications will be drawn from the legend of Osiris. The legend is crucial to this study because it memorializes the first recorded fatal attack on a god and epitomizes the experience of all men.

The first theodicean implication derived from the legend of Osiris is that a problem of evil developed within the Ennead in which a beneficent god became an evil god among and against all the other beneficent gods. According to tradition, Seth, one of the god-offsprings of Geb and Nut, “ripped himself from the womb of Nut in the Upper Egypt at Naqada where his major temple in the south was later erected. Violence and chaos became attributes of Seth.”⁷³ Seth was originally a beneficent god before he became a natural opponent of all that was good and life-giving in the universe.⁷⁴

The *Pyramid Texts* portray Seth as the one who delivered a fatal attack on Osiris, resulting in the grief of Isis—Seth’s sister but Osiris’s wife. Seth engaged in a bloody

⁷¹Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 64.

⁷²Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, 33.

⁷³Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 30; Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 143.

⁷⁴Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 143.

coup d'état—the assassination of a god-king and the violent transfer of royal power to himself.⁷⁵ Seth became an enemy of the Egyptian pantheon, the archenemy of the god Ra and represented the cosmic opposition of darkness and light. Even Nephthys, his sister-counterpart, was herself a goddess of darkness and decay.⁷⁶ Therefore, the problem of evil is depicted from the cosmic side.

The second theodicean implication is that death was brought about by the intervention of an evil agency or hostile force.⁷⁷ If death originated with the evil action of Seth against Osiris, then Seth's direct action caused the origin of death. Etiology and agency coalesced in the same subject.

The myth of Osiris tells of the death of Osiris at the hands of evil Seth. In Egyptian iconography, Seth is depicted with “a human body and the head of a strange repulsive animal, having a long snout and erect ears.”⁷⁸ As the murderer of Osiris, Seth became “the Egyptian Devil or god of Evil.”⁷⁹ It is not certain to what extent this caricature or depiction of Seth helped the Osirian believer in his relationship to the gods,

⁷⁵Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 32.

⁷⁶Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 144.

⁷⁷Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 64; idem, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 67.

⁷⁸Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220; Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 144; Hart, *Egyptian Myths*, 30.

⁷⁹Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220.

since for the Egyptian death was apparently not a problem that drove him to doubt the divine providence.⁸⁰

The third and final theodicean implication is that ultimately truth triumphed over error in the *post-mortem* judgment by the gods. In the *Pyramid Texts*, “Utterance 477,” a legal proceeding is initiated against death, with Seth as the accused and Osiris as the complainant. In “Utterance 581,” passage 1556 gives the verdict of the gods concerning Osiris and Seth: “Seth is offered up, Osiris is in the right (*maat*) in the mouths of the gods on that happy day of going up to the mountain.”

Gardiner defines *maat* as truth, right, and justice.⁸¹ In the same vein, Tobin adds that *maat* was much more than righteousness, truth, or order. *Maat* can be defined “as a symbol, as an abstract principle, or as a personal goddess . . . , the basis for the unity of all things, the basis of cosmic order, of political order, of morality, of life itself, of art and science, and even good etiquette in normal everyday affairs.”⁸² Therefore, Osiris being in the right (*maat*) received the victory of vindication in the judgment of the gods.

Justice triumphed over injustice in the resurrection of Osiris. Seth killed Osiris but Osiris resurrected. “The revivification of Osiris and his vindication *vis-à-vis* Set by the council of the gods surely symbolizes the reversal of injustice which had befallen him, and the hoped-for repetition of this situation in the case of the individual deceased must,

⁸⁰Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 64; idem, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 67.

⁸¹Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 198.

⁸²Tobin, *Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion*, 77.

therefore have constituted in effect the solution of the problem of death and evil.”⁸³

Osiris’s resurrection and vindication was a victory for himself and prefigured victory for every Osirian devotee. Consequently, the *post-mortem* life of every devotee became almost entirely the concern of Osiris,⁸⁴ who went to the underworld after his death.

Finally, order triumphed over disorder when Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, defeated Seth,⁸⁵ and took over the throne of Egypt.⁸⁶ According to tradition (both the epic and satirical versions),⁸⁷ in one of the many battles between Seth and Horus, Seth gouged out Horus’s left eye, which Horus managed to retrieve. However, in the last battle, Horus used a harpoon against Seth who had assumed the form of a red hippopotamus. The first cast caught the red hippopotamus full in the head and entered his brain. Thus, Horus

⁸³Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 67. In the Osirian mortuary ritual, good triumphed over evil when “every deceased person, on whose behalf the rites were performed, was ritually assimilated to Osiris in both death and resurrection.” Idem, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220; “By virtue of the ritual assimilation to Osiris in death, every devotee believed that he would be raised to a new post-mortem life as the divine hero had been.” Idem, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 64; Assman, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 70.

⁸⁴Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 220.

⁸⁵Mercatante, *Who Is Who in Egyptian Mythology*, 144.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 59–66.

⁸⁷Amour defines the epic version as “entirely serious”; as depicting fantastic events; and as “similar to the epics of the Western world (great battles, heroes fighting villains with gods taking an active role, supernatural events, and an oral tradition including repetition of key phrases.” In the satirical version, a “parody” of the epic version, “the gods in the central roles are ridiculed and the battle is reduced to a squabble among deities who possess very human characteristics.” There is no way of determining which version was first. Robert A. Armour, *Gods and the Myths of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo, Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 98.

avenged the humiliation of his father, and Isis could rest. In the satirical version, after eighty years of fighting, Seth agreed to end the fighting and permitted Horus to accept the position of Osiris awarded by the court.⁸⁸

Mesopotamia

The Mesopotamian section of the study of the origin of death examines the genre classification and function, and presents account analyses, theological and theodicean implications of the Sumerian Enki-Ninmah myth, the Babylonian Enuma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, and the Adapa Legend. It is focused on the origin of death in ancient Mesopotamian literature. It attempts to highlight the specific portions of the literature that are relevant to the origin of death, while taking into consideration their larger context.

The Enki-Ninmah Myth

Genre classification and function

Professor Kramer is credited with the discovery and decipherment of the most important Sumerian text which ascribes the planning and directing of the creation of mankind to Enki.⁸⁹ The Sumerian composition was written on two duplicating tablets. It is etiological in character⁹⁰ and therefore has implications for the study of the origin of death in ancient Mesopotamia. This Sumerian poem, as the earliest composition dealing

⁸⁸Ibid., 98–109.

⁸⁹Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 76.

⁹⁰Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 68.

with the creation of man, may have served as a Sumerian prototype or analogue to other Mesopotamian creation stories like the Babylonian Enuma Elish. It is believed to antedate both the Hebrew and Babylonian versions of creation. Kramer dates it to the third millennium B.C.⁹¹

This Enki-Ninmah (or -Ninhursag) myth is a creation poem that tells us how Enki created mankind as surrogate laborers for the unwilling gods and found employment for human misfits.⁹² It provides “reasons both for the creation of the human race and for the many ills that afflict it.”⁹³ Also, it offers “an answer well in keeping with the Mesopotamians’ social and psychological approach to forces in the universe: the gods, for all their power, have their human sides.”⁹⁴ The myth reveals “a rather mature and sophisticated approach to the gods and their divine activities”; visible behind it is “considerable theological and cosmogonic reflection.”⁹⁵

Account analysis

The Enki-Ninmah myth can be divided into two independent parts. The first part covers man’s creation from pieces of clay placed in the womb of the mother-goddesses. Man was created to relieve the gods from hard labor, especially from digging canals for

⁹¹Ibid., 69; cf. Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 221; “Enki and Ninmah,” translated by Jacob Klein (*COS*, 1.159: 516).

⁹²Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*, 42.

⁹³Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 76.

⁹⁴Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” 161.

⁹⁵Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 95.

irrigation agriculture. The second part addresses a contest between the mother-goddess Ninmah and Enki during a feast celebrating mankind's creation. Ninmah creates six defective or abnormal creatures for which Enki "decrees their fate," assigning them a function in society.⁹⁶

In turn, Enki creates an abnormal creature, either an aborted fetus or an old man (*U₄-mu-ul*),⁹⁷ with which Ninmah is unable to cope. At this point, the second part of the text is so damaged, fragmentary, and obscure that it is not included in *The Context of Scripture*. However, specialists in the area have deciphered and surmised that Enki made a misshapen and diseased creature with which Ninmah can do nothing. She curses Enki,

⁹⁶"Enki and Ninmah," translated by Jacob Klein (*COS*, 1:159: 516); Samuel Noah Kramer and John Maier, *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 13–14.

⁹⁷Klein's literal translation of the term is: "the-day-was-far-off" or "my day is far off." He believes that it refers to a creature, which is totally unable to function, that is, a prematurely born baby or a very old man, born long ago. "Enki and Ninmah," translated by Jacob Klein (*COS*, 1:159: 516), n. 1. Jacobsen translates it as "my day is remote." He depicts the creature referred to as "a very old man whose birthday lies back in the past. The eyes of this unfortunate are diseased, his life is ebbing, his liver and heart give him pain, his hands tremble." Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State," 163. Kramer and Maier see it as a "weak or handicapped person." Kramer and Maier, *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God*, 1. Brandon says that Enki's creation appears "to embody the ills of disease and old age." Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 83. Kilmer takes the position that *U₄-mu-ul* (*umul*), which he calls the "first baby," is not a failure of an old man, but is simply a new-born baby with the normal lack of physical abilities. His name means 'My day (of death) is far (off),' attesting to his extreme youth as well as to his expected longevity. Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, "Speculation on Umul, the First Baby," in *Kramer Anniversary Volume: Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer*, ed. B. L. Eichler et al. (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Butzon and Bercker, 1976), 265. Kilmer's translation of *umul* as new-born baby carries some validity, seeing that the suggested meaning of the name *umul* as "My day (of death) is far (off)" indicates youthfulness, rather than old age, which would be supported in the translation "My day (of birth) is far (off)." The context, however, of *umul* in the *Enki-Ninmah* myth seems to favor a defective being.

because apparently what he had made could not be unmade, and mankind must include those who are hopelessly malformed and diseased. Therefore, Enki prevailed over Ninmah in the contest.⁹⁸

The Enki-Ninmah myth is both teleological and etiologial for the existence of mankind. According to Brandon, it is designed to explain:

1. The purpose of mankind, namely, to serve the gods
2. The origin of such freaks as barren women and eunuchs—they are due to the sports of gods, but they could be integrated into the social system—‘given bread to eat’, according to the accepted phrases
3. The origin of disease, and perhaps old age, thus leading to death.⁹⁹

The myth has implicit relevance for the study of the origin of death in ancient Mesopotamia. It tells of Enki using a water bath and incantation to remove death (“fate”—a demon of fatal sickness)¹⁰⁰ from the body of a man discharging semen whom Ninmah had fashioned. It ends with Enki fashioning an aborted fetus or an old man with which nothing can be done.

⁹⁸*COS*, 1:159: 516; Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 103–105; idem, *Sumerian Mythology*, 68–72; Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” 161–165; Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 76–78; idem, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 221–222.

⁹⁹Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 222.

¹⁰⁰“Enki and Ninmah,” translated by Jacob Klein (*COS*, 1.159:518), n. 36.

Theological implications

The three main characters of the myth are Enki, Ninmah (also called Ninhursag[a], or Nintu), and Nammu. Enki is the god of the subterranean fresh/sweet water, wisdom and magic, and creator of mankind.¹⁰¹ Ninmah, the exalted or lofty lady,¹⁰² is (“one of the epithets or manifestations of the Sumerian birth-goddess par excellence”¹⁰³) the goddess of the earth.¹⁰⁴

Nammu is depicted in the myth as the primeval mother, the bearer of the senior gods, Enki’s mother, and as “the chief midwife, who activated and assisted the ‘birth-goddesses’ in giving birth to Man.”¹⁰⁵ There are the Anunna-gods—“gods of the universe” or “the gods of a local pantheon”; goddesses or goddess-mothers (*amalu*),¹⁰⁶ minor gods (Ninimma, Shuzianna, Nimada, Nimbara, Ninmug, Musardu, and Ningunna) and “a pair of birth-goddesses (i.e., divine wombs, matrices), wherein two male and female clay figures were planted, developed and given birth.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹Ibid., 516, n. 9.

¹⁰²Ibid., 517, n. 20; cf. Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” 161–162.

¹⁰³*COS*, 1.159:517, n. 20.

¹⁰⁴Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” 161.

¹⁰⁵“Enki and Ninmah,” translated by Jacob Klein (*COS*, 1.159:517), n. 22.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., n. 4, 5.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., n. 14.

The Enki-Ninmah myth is polytheistic. Every key function in the Sumerian myth involves god(s), from marriage, to insemination, to pregnancy, to birthing and giving birth, to hard work, to sleeping, to midwifery, to rebellion, to drunkenness, to rivalry, and to creation of normal or abnormal humans. The gods—Enki and Ninmah—are closely linked to deformity, disease, and death. Therefore, from this “divine” myth several theological implications for the origin of death can be drawn.

The first theological implication is that human disease, abnormality, and death are constitutive of the divine creation. Those physical ills of the society came with, at, and from the divine creation. Mankind is morbid and mortal or moribund primarily by divine default and the consequent nature imposed upon him by the god(s).

The physical conditions of the creatures are not of the creature’s making or choice. Ninmah’s fourth creature, a man leaking urine, needed Enki’s water bath and incantation to eliminate death (a demon of fatal sickness) from his body. On the other hand, Enki, in his contest with Ninmah, fashioned an aborted fetus or a moribund old man who was dysfunctional. Both cases illustrate the vulnerability of an unfortunate segment of mankind to morbidity and consequent mortality from the inception.

Second, the whole spectrum of human ills from birth to death springs from divine inebriation, sport, and poor judgment. These god-fashioned human ills “do not really belong in the world order; they were not part of the plan. They came in a moment of irresponsibility, when the gods were in their cups and succumbed momentarily to envy and a desire to show off.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” 165.

During a banquet, presumably to celebrate Enki's creation of man, the text tells us that "Enki and Ninmah were drinking beer, and their heart became elated." In their intoxication, Ninmah, seemingly desiring to humble Enki, challenges Enki to see if he can find a function for her abnormal human freaks. She arbitrarily and capriciously fashioned six defective creatures for Enki. Enki was able to "decree their fate" and assign them a function in society. However, Ninmah was unable to find a function for a fatally defective *U₄-mu-ul*, a diseased and dying or mortal creature Enki had created in response. Apparently, Ninmah, in her resentment and envy, underestimated Enki's cleverness, and Enki, in his anger overestimated Ninmah's ingenuity, in order to embarrass and humiliate her.¹⁰⁹

Third, there is a theocratic hierarchy among the gods, and the gods are sovereign over normal or abnormal humanity. The text indicates: "The gods who baked their daily bread, (and) set therewith their tables—the senior gods did oversee the work, while the minor gods were bearing the toil."¹¹⁰ Man is created to take the place of the working minor gods, outside the hierarchy. Enki and Ninmah are sovereign over their creatures, over human disease, deformity, and death, whether near as in the case of old age or far as in the case of a newborn. The senior gods are not answerable to the minor gods or to humans for their creation of humanity with malformation, mortality, or moribundity.

Fourth, human enjoyment of life is not a divine value or priority. Humans were created to do the hard work of the complaining and rebellious gods as victims in a divine

¹⁰⁹Kramer and Maier, *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God*, 13–14.

¹¹⁰"Enki and Ninmah," translated by Jacob Klein (*COS*, 1.159:516).

bitter rivalry between Ninmah and Enki, and to remain until death as a permanent misshapen or a memorial of Enki's cleverness and Ninmah's failure. Man's deformed and mortal or dying condition is not eliminated or mitigated by the gods, but is retained and he is given functions in society compatible with his plight. There are more diseased, deformed, and dysfunctional humans (about 8) in the myth than normal humans (2 or 3).

The fifth and final theological implication is that gender bias attended the entrance of human disease, abnormality, and eventual death in the world. It is Ninmah (the female god) who proposed the challenge to Enki (the male god). However, it is the male god who repeatedly won out over the female in six of her challenges and in the two he possibly proposed. The divine masculine dominance and position are evident in Enki's planning and directing the creation of mankind, and in portraying Enki as clever and capable, while showing up the female god Ninmah as not clever enough to assign a social function to a mortal or dying creature.

Theodicean implications

The Sumerian myth does not address divine benevolence or moral evil. However, it references and demonstrates the initiation of physical evils in Ninmah's challenge to Enki and the subsequent creation/birthing process. The text lays out the scene of challenge:

Enki and Ninmah were drinking beer,
and their hearts became elated.

Ninmah said to Enki:

“What(ever) makes the form of good
or bad—it is within my power;
As my heart prompts me, I can make
(Its) ‘fate’ good or bad!”

Enki answered Ninmah:
“Let me counterbalance the ‘fate’
desire your heart—good or bad!”¹¹¹

Subsequent to this challenge, Ninmah and Enki fashioned a total of about seven or eight abnormal humans, victims of various ills—stiffness of hand, blindness, crippled feet, incontinence of urine, barrenness, eunuchry, abortion, and/or senescence. In the text above, “as the mother-goddess par excellence, who represents all females in whose wombs the embryo develops and takes form, Ninmah boasts that she can give birth to any form of human being.”¹¹²

Mankind is mute in the myth and apparently incognizant of the divine contest and misjudgment that preceded his existence. He does not question the character of the gods for his state or station, nor do the gods offer moral justification or remorse for their abnormal introduction of physical evils into human society while under intoxication. The gods cared for the gods by dumping their hard work on man. Human ills—diseases, abnormality, mortality, or moribundity—are not cured or mitigated by the gods. With their disabilities, humans are instead either divinely assigned a function in society or left to languish to the grave.

¹¹¹Ibid., 517–518.

¹¹²Ibid., 517, n. 27.

Enûma Elish

Genre classification and function

The Enûma Elish is a “creation” epic recorded on seven clay tablets. It was known in Akkadian as *Enûma Eliš*, “when on high,” after its opening words.¹¹³ Though the Enûma Elish is not primarily a creation story, it is a significant and principal source for “the study of the theogonic and cosmogonic views of the Mesopotamians.”¹¹⁴

This Babylonian epic is both a religious and political treatise. Leeming calls it “a timely propaganda piece.”¹¹⁵ It is so called because it was written “to justify Marduk’s ascendancy to supreme rulership over all the Babylonian divinities and to support Babylon’s claim to pre-eminence above all the other cities in the country.”¹¹⁶

The Enûma Elish was intended for “musical recital,”¹¹⁷ hence it is cast in poetry. It was recited by the high priest before the statue of Marduk “at the end of the fourth day of the New Year’s celebration in Babylon, which lasted from the first to the eleventh of Nisan.”¹¹⁸ It is surmised that this epic chant served as “a magical aid in Marduk’s

¹¹³Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 1; *ANET*, 60; cf. David Leeming and Margaret Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23; Jacobsen, “Mesopotamia: The Cosmos as a State,” 169.

¹¹⁴Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 1, 10.

¹¹⁵Leeming and Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths*, 25.

¹¹⁶Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 14, 11; Leeming and Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths*, 25; Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 120.

¹¹⁷S. Langdon, *The Babylonian Epic of Creation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 18.

¹¹⁸Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 16; Langdon, *The Babylonian Epic of Creation*, 18–33; cf. Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern

deliverance from imprisonment” or “as a magic formula against the coming inundation of Babylonia caused by the rise of the Tigris and the Euphrates.”¹¹⁹

Account analysis of the Enûma Elish

The Enûma Elish depicts the circumstances leading to the physical death of four gods (Ti·âmat, her son Mummu, and her two consorts—Apsû and Kingu) as well as the origin and the order of the universe as a whole. Apsu, the primeval monster, the father of all the gods, and Mummu were slain by Ea (also called Nudimmud or Enki) because of their relentless intention to destroy the younger gods in order to achieve silence and sleep. Ea, representing the younger gods in battle, slaughtered Apsû and Mummu, and established his residence on the body of Apsû.

To avenge the death of Apsû, her spouse, Ti·âmat, decided on war against the gods. Neither Ea’s efforts nor Anu’s peaceful measures quieted Ti·âmat. So the threatened gods selected and endowed Marduk, Ea’s son, with supreme and undisputed authority and powers to defeat and kill Ti·âmat. In the process of the battle, Marduk struck Ti·âmat’s heart and destroyed her life. Having thus killed Ti·âmat, he split her skull, cut her arteries, and carry her blood southward to out-of-the-way places. Then, Marduk divided the colossal body of Ti·âmat, utilizing half of her corpse to form the heavens, and the other

Religions,” 222.

¹¹⁹Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 16, 17.

half was used for the earth. Therefore, death in the Enûma Elish pre-existed the creation of the universe.¹²⁰

Marduk also created other regions in the likeness of the Apsû, the abode of Nudimmud. In the tribunal of the gods, Kingu, Ti·âmat's chief accomplice, the ringleader of the rebels, was indicted for his crime of instigation. Ea severed his arteries and created mankind with his blood, acting on the ingenious plans of Marduk. So, both father and son, Ea followed by Marduk, then Ea acting on Marduk's plans, were responsible for the deaths of Apsû, Ti·âmat, and Kingu.

Divine death, whether solely contemplated or otherwise effected, is a central theme of the Enûma Elish. To solve the noise problem of the heedless younger gods, Apsû and his son-vizier—Mummu—with adamant tenacity, pushed for the extermination of the younger gods. Instead, however, they experienced a reversal of desired fortunes in which Apsû and Mummu were slain, but the younger gods lived on. To avenge the violent death of Apsû on other gods (i.e., her children), Ti·âmat gave birth to eleven kinds of monster serpents and ferocious dragons. But again a reversal of fortunes occurred when the lives of both Ti·âmat and Kingu were cut off and their god-sympathizers were imprisoned.

The Enûma Elish delineates the physical death of gods. Concerning Apsû, Tablet I says that Ea made a spell and “poured sleep upon him. Sound asleep he lay. . . . Having fettered Apsû, he slew him.”¹²¹ Marduk's physical dismemberment of Ti·âmat is graphically portrayed in Tablet IV:

¹²⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 138.

¹²¹“The Creation Epic,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 61).

1. He released the arrow, it tore her belly.
2. It cut through her insides, splitting her heart.
3. He cast down her carcass to stand upon it.
4. He trod on the legs of Ti·âmat.
5. With his unsparing mace, he crushed her skull.
6. He severed the arteries of her blood.
7. He paused to view her dead body.
8. He split her like shellfish into two parts.¹²²

Kingu's blood vessels were severed by the gods and mankind was fashioned out of his blood.¹²³

The Enûma Elish does not deal with the origin of human death.¹²⁴ It only briefly addresses the creation of man from the blood of Kingu and the imposing of the menial service upon man which was previously the responsibility of Ti·âmat's captured sympathizers. Nonetheless, as the earliest "creation" poem of Babylon, which narrates the earliest generation of gods, the Enûma Elish gives us an implicit account of the origin of divine death. It teaches that "while the proverbially immortal gods could not die a natural

¹²²Ibid., 67.

¹²³Ibid., 69.

¹²⁴Brandon indicates that it is not likely that the *Enuma Elish* had any intention to account for human mortality as stemming from his creation from the blood of Kingu—namely, that since the creation of man involved death, then he has to pay back with his life by himself dying. Brandon, "The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions," 222.

death, they could perish through violence.”¹²⁵ Four gods (Apsû, Mummu, Ti·âmat, and Kingu) perished as a result of divine war. However, it is the death of Apsû which constitutes the first divine death in the Enûma Elish.

Theological implications

Four theological implications for the origin of death are drawn from the Enûma Elish. First, the gods are passable and vulnerable to death by violence. Divine passability is evident in that:

1. The younger gods “disturbed Ti·âmat as they surged back and forth.”¹²⁶
2. “They troubled the mood of Ti·âmat.”¹²⁷
3. Their “hilarity” in the abode of heaven was “troublesome” and “loathsome” to Apsû and Mummu.¹²⁸
4. At the prospect of death the younger gods were “astir.”¹²⁹
5. Ti·âmat’s god-sympathizers did “suffer” in Anshar’s storm.¹³⁰
6. At the creation of Marduk, Ea “exulted and glowed, his heart filled with gladness.”¹³¹

¹²⁵Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 137.

¹²⁶“The Creation Epic,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 61).

¹²⁷*Ibid.*

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 62.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

7. Ea experienced “anger” when he heard about Ti·âmat’s death plot.¹³²

Divine vulnerability to death is attested in the deadly plots and graphic deaths of the gods. The gods who did not die are portrayed as fearful or distraught over such prospect. Distraught over the real prospect of death drove the gods to launch a preemptive deadly strike on Apsû and Mummu, Ti·âmat, and Kingu. This indicates that the Babylonian gods in the Enûma Elish, though considered divine, were mortal in conflict with each other.

There was a time “when no gods whatever had been brought into being,”¹³³ and only Apsû, Ti·âmat, and Mummu pre-existed. Many of the gods are ascribed a beginning and even those not ascribed a beginning (Apsû and Ti·âmat) in the Enûma Elish experienced an ending. They may have had longevity defined by immunity from natural death—a form of conditional immortality, but not absolute immortality, for violence reduced immortality to mortality in the realm of divinity.

Second, the first death occurred within the first divine family. Apsû (god of sweet water ocean) and Ti·âmat begot Mummu, Lahmu and Lahâmu, Anshar and Kishar. Anshar and Kishar brought forth Anu. Anu brought Nudimmud (Ea) into being. Nudimmud and Damkina were the parents of Marduk. Apsû (the father of all gods) was first to die at the hand of his third-generation grandson Ea. Ea’s preemptive fatal strike against his primordial father constitutes deicide and patricide. Therefore, divine death has its origin in the paternal killing.

¹³²Ibid., 63.

¹³³Ibid., 61.

Third, before the existence of death in the divine realm, death was conceived and plotted prior to being effected. For silence and sleep, Apsû and Mummu planned and plotted death against the younger gods. But their death plot uncovered descended upon their own heads. Death effected by Ea was the ultimate antidote for death plotted and attempted by Apsû and Mummu.

Fourth, death originated as a tool of divinity against divinity in the context of incorrigible hostilities. The first divine death (Apsû), the second (Mummu), the third (Ti·âmat), and the fourth (Kingu) came about as a result of sheer physical force.¹³⁴ Peaceful measures as well as magic failed to achieve compromise or resolution. So, the more potent god(s) survived and the weaker died in battle. None of these gods died accidentally or naturally out of old age or frailty. Therefore, death appears unnatural and as a divine imposition on enemy-gods.

Theodicean implications

The Enûma Elish does not present an explicit justification of divine justice in the context of divine death. Man is neither the object of divine justice, nor the subject of crime. The problem of death is approached from the divine side. Evil is eradicated by the eradication of the evil gods during physical battle or through a judicial mandate for execution from the tribunal of the gods.

¹³⁴Bainton says that in Mesopotamian religion “no god was the sole source of power and authority. All the leading figures of the pantheon had themselves been created. None was fully secure in his status, none really omnipotent. Authority resided in the community of the gods.” Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, 43, 55, nn. 50, 63.

Apparently, good gods can become evil gods by murderous intentions. Fatal fate then becomes their inescapable lot. The death of an intended divine killer seems justified in the *Enûma Elish*, even if it is a father-god or mother-god or brother-god. Though death seems to be treated as an evil from evil divine entities, death is still used by the good gods to check the evil of death before its inception. Tenacious or attempted evil from its conception must be extinct before it emerges to extinguish the life of its divine opponents.

The moral line between the company of good gods and the company of bad gods is clearly drawn. Lahmu, Lahamu, Anshar, Kishar, Anu, Ea, and Marduk appear as the good gods, while their father Apsû, their oldest brother Mummu, their mother Ti·âmat, their foster father Kingu, and other lesser known or anonymous gods are called or presented as evil-doers or accomplices. The good gods on every military occasion prevailed over the evil gods. Therefore, death is a tool of the divine for good or evil, by the good gods or by the evil gods.

Gilgamesh Epic

The Gilgamesh epic is “very explicit as to the origin of death.”¹³⁵ The etiology of death is addressed in Tablet X, column iii,¹³⁶ and human-squandered opportunity for perpetual rejuvenation is narrated in Tablet XI, in the third short episode known as “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant.” The perspectives on the origin of death from the two tablets will be dealt with conjointly.

¹³⁵Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 222.

¹³⁶“The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 90).

Genre classification and function

The Gilgamesh Epic is a secular poem. The Akkadian title of the poem was taken from the opening words, *Ša nagba imuru*, “He who saw every thing.” It addresses mundane things as “man and nature, love and adventure, friendship and combat” against the backdrop of death.¹³⁷ The poem is not concerned with “the gods and the rule of the universe but with man; its problem is man’s mortality, the fact that we must all eventually die.”¹³⁸ Nortwick points out that the Gilgamesh Epic is “driven by two interconnected polarities, nature/culture and mortal/immortal, and the pivot for the entire structure is the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu.”¹³⁹ Though the epic recounts the deeds of a famous hero-king of Mesopotamia, it abounds with adventure and encounters with strange creatures, men and gods.¹⁴⁰

Gilgamesh was a famous king of Uruk during the Second Early Dynastic Period in Sumer (ca. 2700–2500). It is assumed that the stories about him circulated during his own time.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, in spite of his historical existence,

¹³⁷Ibid., 72.

¹³⁸Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, 195.

¹³⁹Thomas Van Nortwick, “The Wildman: The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *Gilgamesh: A Reader*, ed. John Maier (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1997), 346.

¹⁴⁰Kovacs, Introduction, xvii.

¹⁴¹Jeffrey H. Tigay, “Summary: The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic,” in *Gilgamesh: A Reader*, ed. John Maier (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1997), 41; Kovacs, Introduction, xvii.

the adventures of Gilgamesh mentioned in the Sumerian stories and the Akkadian epic are so overlaid with legendary and mythical motifs that one can only speculate about their possible historical basis. They may reflect certain aspect of magical/priestly and military roles that Gilgamesh would have played as the ruler of Uruk, and conceivably a real preoccupation of his with death. On the other hand, some elements in these stories may be anachronistic projections of later events, and some are due to folkloric and mythological imagination.¹⁴²

Account analysis

Creation in Gilgamesh Epic. Though the Gilgamesh Epic is not a creation poem, it tells of the antediluvian creation of Gilgamesh by the great gods, of Enkidu by Aruru (goddess of creation¹⁴³), and of mankind by the gods. Gilgamesh's mother was the goddess Nunsun and his father was an unknown mortal whom the Sumerian list calls "the high priest of Kullab,"¹⁴⁴ a district in the city of Uruk. Gilgamesh was created two-thirds god and one-third man.¹⁴⁵ He was a superman or demigod. Enkidu was created in the image of Anu. Mankind, including Gilgamesh and Enkidu, was created mortal. Only the

¹⁴²Tigay, "Summary: The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic," 41.

¹⁴³Eva M. Thury and Margaret K. Deviney, *Introduction to Mythology* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2005), 149.

¹⁴⁴Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 90–91; Henrietta M'Call, *Mesopotamian Myths* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), 38; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 4.

¹⁴⁵Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 18, 66; "The Epic of Gilgamesh," translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 73, 88).

gods have immortality.¹⁴⁶ Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, and his wife were the only mortals who were made immortal by the gods¹⁴⁷ for reasons unknown.

The presence of death. The Gilgamesh Epic is “a meditation on death, in the form of a tragedy.”¹⁴⁸ The reality, ubiquity, and threat of death pervade the epic. The following outline delineates death as present and active in human nature, against human nature through human nature, and from the divine nature.

1. Gilgamesh and Enkidu killed a terrible ogre called Huwawa (Old Babylonian and Hittite versions), or Humbaba (Assyrian recension) by decapitation,¹⁴⁹ whose breath is death.¹⁵⁰

2. Apparently, they killed a fearful watchman whom Humbaba placed at the gate of the forest.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 36; *ANET*, 79.

¹⁴⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 88, 66; *ANET*, 95, 88.

¹⁴⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 10.

¹⁴⁹From the mutilated Assyrian fragment, it has been concluded that Gilgamesh and Enkidu decapitated Humbaba. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 49. The translation reads: “the head of Humba[ba they cut down. . .].” *ANET*, 83.

¹⁵⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 35; *ANET*, 79.

¹⁵¹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 44; *ANET*, 82.

3. They slew the bull of heaven Anu gave to Ishtar who was intent on destroying Gilgamesh because of his rejection of her marriage offer.¹⁵²

4. Gilgamesh slew bears, hyenas, lions, panthers, tigers, stags, and ibexes—the wild beasts and creeping things of the steppe.¹⁵³

5. Gilgamesh's close friend Enkidu dies by the decree of the gods because he was an accomplice in the deaths of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven.¹⁵⁴

6. Death is stated as the fate or lot of mankind.¹⁵⁵

7. Gilgamesh is obsessed with the fear of death.¹⁵⁶

8. The gate of the mountain of Mâshu through which Gilgamesh must pass to get to Utnapishtim, in order to find out the way to immortality, is guarded by a pair of scorpion-men (half man, half dragon) whose glance or look is death.¹⁵⁷

9. To arrive at the shores of the land of the blessed Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh and Utnapishtim's ferryman, Urshanabi, had to cross the sea and the Waters of Death, which kills if the hand touches it.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 54, 72; *ANET*, 85.

¹⁵³Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 79; *ANET*, 92.

¹⁵⁴Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 56; *ANET*, 85.

¹⁵⁵Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 70, 73; *ANET*, 90, 91.

¹⁵⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 73, 64; *ANET*, 88, 91.

¹⁵⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 65; *ANET*, 88.

¹⁵⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 77; *ANET*, 92.

10. In preparation for the flood, Erragal or Irragal, that is, Nergal (the god of the nether world [underworld], god or lord of death),¹⁵⁹ tears down posts.¹⁶⁰

12. In the flood all mankind return to clay.¹⁶¹

13. Gilgamesh confesses near the end of the epic—“Death is dwelling [in] my bedroom; and wherever [I] set [my feet] there is death.”¹⁶²

14. The nether world seizes its victims as was done to Enkidu who attempted to retrieve Gilgamesh’s *pukku* (drum) and *mikkû* (drumstick)¹⁶³ from the underworld (world

¹⁵⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 84, n. 185; 97, n. 233; *ANET*, 94, n. 205.

¹⁶⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 84; *ANET*, 94, 102.

¹⁶¹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 86; *ANET*, 94; To “return to clay” is synonymous to returning to the dust or grave. The flood drown mankind to death. At the death of Enkidu, Gilgamesh commented that Enkidu had “returned to clay,” which is indicative of the cessation of physical existence. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 73; *ANET*, 91.

¹⁶²Heidel, 90; “In my chamber lurks death, and wherever I se[t my foot], there is death!” *ANET*, 96.

¹⁶³Speiser indicates that the present Tablet XII, an Akkadian version, is a direct translation from the Sumerian legend. The first part of Tablet XII was disregarded by the Akkadian translator. He briefly summarized the beginning as follows: “Shortly after the creation of the universe, a tree growing on the bank of the Euphrates was uprooted by the south wind. Inanna (Ishtar) took the floating trunk and planted it in her garden in Uruk. She intended to use it, in due time, as timber for her bed and chair. When several hostile beings interfered with Inanna’s plan, Gilgamesh came to her rescue. In gratitude, Inanna made the base of the tree a *pukku*, probably a drum, and from the crown a *mikkû*, apparently a drumstick of similar magic potency and gave them both to Gilgamesh. One day both of these precious objects fell into the nether world. Gilgamesh sought to retrieve them but could not. Lamenting his loss, he cried ‘O my *pukku*, O my *mikkû*.’” Then, he points out that it is at this point that the Akkadian translation, known to us as Tablet XII, sets in. “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 97); cf. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 93–94.

of the dead, perceived as below the earth).¹⁶⁴ “The mother of Ninazu”¹⁶⁵ did not allow Enkidu to ascend from the nether world.¹⁶⁶

Death as physical cessation. Every description of death in the Gilgamesh Epic is of a physical nature. Humbaba died by decapitation at the hands of Gilgamesh and Enkidu: “the head of Humba[ba] they cut down.”¹⁶⁷ The Bull of Heaven died by the sword and a severed heart. His death is depicted as follows:

Enkidu chased (him) and [...] the bull of heaven.
[He sei[zed] by [the thick of] his [ta]il.
Between the nape (and) the horns [he thrust] his sword
When they had killed the bull, they to[re out his] heart
(And) placed (it) before Shamash.¹⁶⁸

The death of Enkidu is delineated with several physical characteristics. In grief, Gilgamesh rhetorically asks and says about his deceased friend:

Now what (means this) sleep which has taken hold of [thee]?
Thou has become dark and canst not hear [me].
And [indeed] he does not lift [his eyes].
He touched his heart, but it did not beat.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 95, 97–99; *ANET*, 97, 98.

¹⁶⁵“Ninazu was one of the husbands of Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld.” Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 96, n. 228; cf. *ANET*, 97, n. 240.

¹⁶⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 97; cf. *ANET*, 98.

¹⁶⁷*ANET*, 83 (Assyrian fragment); Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 49.

¹⁶⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 54; cf. *ANET*, 98.

¹⁶⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 63; *ANET*, 87–88.

Sleep (unconsciousness), deafness, motionlessness, and no heartbeat are a physical picture of death. Gilgamesh did not leave the corpse of Enkidu “until the worm fell upon his face”¹⁷⁰ or from his nose. He lamented: “[My friend, whom I loved, has turn]ed to clay; Enkidu, my friend, whom I loved, has turned to clay.”¹⁷¹ Also, in the flood account, it is said that “all mankind turned to clay.”¹⁷²

Origin of death. Neither the death of Humbaba, nor the death of Enkidu or the animals in the epic has significance for the origin of death. Since the Gilgamesh Epic is not a creation epic, Humbaba’s death cannot be considered a marker for the origin of death. Only Tablet IX, which deals with human mortality as decreed by the gods from creation, and Tablet X, which confirms man’s retention of mortality because of Gilgamesh’s squandered opportunity to benefit from the magic plant of ever recurrent youth, virtually immortality,¹⁷³ contribute in an explicit way to the concept of the origin of death.

The *locus classicus* for the concept of the origin of death in the Gilgamesh Epic is Tablet X :

Gilgamesh, whither rovest thou?
The life thou pursuest thou shalt not find.

¹⁷⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 70, 73; *ANET*, 90, 91.

¹⁷¹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 73, 76; *ANET*, 91, 92.

¹⁷²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 86; *ANET*, 94.

¹⁷³Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 11.

When the gods created mankind,
Death for mankind they set aside,
Life in their own hands retaining.¹⁷⁴

Here, human mortality is a divinely allotted concomitant of the divine creation of humans. The seeds of death, so to speak, were planted in human nature from the inception. In the same vein, Brandon asserts: “Death was natural to man, being inherent in the nature with which he was endowed.”¹⁷⁵ Heidel makes the point even more forceful by stating that “death was the result of man’s natural constitution; it was one of the inexorable laws of nature, a law divinely ordained at the time of man’s creation.”¹⁷⁶

In Tablet XI, there are the flood story and three short episodes based on the motif of “squandered opportunities for immortality.” The first episode has to do with a contest between Gilgamesh and the “gods of slumber.” The second episode is called “A Bath in the Fountain of Youth.” However, it is the third episode called “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant”¹⁷⁷ which has implicit and noteworthy significance for the study of the origin of death.

The third episode entitled “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant” confirms human confinement to mortality because Gilgamesh unwittingly allowed the serpent to snatch away the plant named “Man Becomes Young in Old Age”¹⁷⁸—man’s one chance of

¹⁷⁴*ANET*, 90; cf. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 70.

¹⁷⁵Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 223.

¹⁷⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 138.

¹⁷⁷Veenker, “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant,” 199.

¹⁷⁸*ANET*, 96.

finding rejuvenation, a sort of quasi-immortality.¹⁷⁹ Heidel holds that the magic plant “bestowed ever recurrent youth, which is virtually synonymous with immortality.”¹⁸⁰

Implicitly, instead of man, the serpent, by eating this magic plant, shed its slough and renewed its life. “The serpent, by sloughing off its skin, has learnt the secret of self-rejuvenation at the expense of man.”¹⁸¹ Hence, thereafter, man’s loss was irretrievable and irreplaceable.

Utnapishtim revealed to Gilgamesh the secret of the gods concerning the magic plant. Unfortunately, this revelation did not lead to the thwarting, or reversal, or change of the decree of the gods with respect to humanity’s endowment with mortality.

¹⁷⁹I use the term “quasi-immortality” to refer to an intermediate condition between mortality and immortality, in which after having eaten the magic plant in old age a man returns to the state of his youth as a man in his prime. It appears that a single eating rather than repeated eating of the magic plant initiated renewal of life, recurrent youthfulness, or automatic rejuvenation, virtually immortality. Cf. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 91–92; *ANET*, 96. On the same wavelength, Heidel asserts that “the purpose of this plant was to grant rejuvenated life; and it was to be eaten after a person has reached old age. For this reason Gilgamesh does not eat the plant at once but decides to wait until his return to Uruk, until he becomes an ‘old man.’” *Ibid.*, 92, n. 211. Veenker argues that “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant” in “its original form was a myth accounting for the belief in antediluvian longevity.” Veenker, “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant,” 203.

¹⁸⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 11.

¹⁸¹Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 224.

Immortality remained in the realm of the divine.¹⁸² Only Utnapishtim and his wife were deified or immortalized by the gods for unspecified and unknown reasons.¹⁸³

Theological implications

Pantheon in the Epic. In the main, among other mundane things, the Gilgamesh Epic narrates Gilgamesh's odyssey in search of eternal life and so it is considered a secular poem. The Epic, however, is not devoid of the presence, influence, sovereignty, and discourses of gods. The Epic mentions several gods:

1. Aruru—goddess of creation.¹⁸⁴
2. Anu—father of the gods, patron god of Uruk, god of the firmament, sky god.¹⁸⁵
3. Ishtar—(Sumerian Inanna) goddess of love, war and fertility.¹⁸⁶
4. Shamash—god of the sun.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸²Thury and Devinney assert that “according to Mesopotamian religion, only the gods are immortal.” Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 143.

¹⁸³Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 88; M^cCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 49.

¹⁸⁴Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 149.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 18, n. 27; *ANET*, 74, n. 14; Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 160; M^cCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 25.

¹⁸⁶Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 149; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 7; M^cCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 25.

¹⁸⁷Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 149; M^cCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 26.

5. Sumuqan—goddess of cattle and vegetation.¹⁸⁸
6. Enlil—god of earth and wind (Sumerian for Ellil), father of Ninurta.¹⁸⁹
7. Ea—god of wisdom and sweet water, a creator, (Sumerian Enki, god of fresh water).¹⁹⁰
8. Ninsun—goddess noted for wisdom, mother of Gilgamesh.¹⁹¹
9. Namtar—a demon of the underworld, god of death and pestilence.¹⁹²
10. Siduri—goddess of brewing and wisdom, a divine barmaid.¹⁹³
11. Ninurta—the south wind, goddess of war, of wells and irrigation;¹⁹⁴
12. Adad—weather-god.¹⁹⁵
13. Erragal or Irragal—Nergal, god of the nether world.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 6; *ibid.*, 19; *ANET*, 74, note 17.

¹⁸⁹Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 151.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*; McCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 25.

¹⁹¹Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 151.

¹⁹²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 97, n. 232; Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 158.

¹⁹³Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 165; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 9, 69, n. 145.

¹⁹⁴Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 169; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 19, n. 30.

¹⁹⁵McCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 26.

¹⁹⁶*ANET*, 94, n. 205; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 84, n. 185.

14. Anunnaki—the judges in the underworld.¹⁹⁷
15. Ninazu—one of the husbands of Ereshkigal.¹⁹⁸
16. Ereshkigal or Irkalla—the queen of the nether world.¹⁹⁹
17. Mammetum—mother of destinies.²⁰⁰
18. Igigi—the heavenly gods.²⁰¹

The multiplicity of gods mentioned in the Gilgamesh Epic shows that it is not a godless but a polytheistic poem. The gods are involved in: (1) creation, (2) the flood of water, (3) the allotment of mortality or immortality, (4) the forces of nature, (5) the world of the dead, (6) discourses with humans and other gods, (7) being sovereign over the universe, (8) expressing fear, (9) a frenzy over sacrifices, (10) responding to prayer, and (11) the origin of death. The gods are directly associated with death. Namtar is the god of death. Nergal is the god of the underworld and Ereshkigal is the queen of the nether world. Anunnaki and Mammetum determine whether humans live or die. Therefore, “things on earth were directed from heaven.”²⁰²

¹⁹⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 84, n. 187; Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 170; M^cCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 28.

¹⁹⁸*ANET*, 97, n. 240; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 96, n. 228.

¹⁹⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 61; *ANET*, 87; Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 162.

²⁰⁰Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 168.

²⁰¹*ANET*, 214, n. 214; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 87, n. 200.

²⁰²Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, 55.

Theological implications. The first theological implication for the origin of death is that the Gilgamesh Epic teaches what I call theocratic predetermination of “mortal”²⁰³ destiny. Human death originated with or resulted from the divine will, council, and decree.²⁰⁴ This theological implication is captured in Tablet X: 32–39:

From the days of old there is no [permanence]
The sleeping (?) and the dead how alike [they are]:
Do they not both draw the picture of death?
(Whether) he was a servant or a master, (who can tell it)
after they have reached their [destiny]?
The Anunnaki, the great gods, ga[ther together];
Mammetum, the creatress of destiny, de[crees] with them the destinies
Life and death they allot;
The days of death they do not reveal.²⁰⁵

This passage teaches that life is uncertain, but death is sure. The impermanence of all things is demonstrated in the fateful transition of the commoner and the noble from life to death. “All is thus ephemeral and uncertain. Everything is in the hands of the gods, but man is kept in ignorance of their plans.”²⁰⁶ Therefore, the time of death is unpredictable, hence mortals are “doomed to be restless and insecure.”²⁰⁷

The allotment of human death and immortality is a divine prerogative. Divine conception of and decrees for death or immortality precede divine allocation of death or

²⁰³I use the term “mortal” to refer to mankind, Gilgamesh (two-thirds god, one third man), and Enkidu (womanlike, beast-like man).

²⁰⁴Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 223.

²⁰⁵Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 79; *ANET*, 90.

²⁰⁶Bainton et al., *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, 68.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*

immortality. The time of human death is a divine secret, though Ea, unknown to the other gods, secretly alerted Utnapishtim about the impending flood. Nonetheless, death originated in the mind, will, and council of the gods before it came to reside in the creature's nature, existence, and action. The gods are the effectual cause of death in human nature. The gods are sovereign over human life and death.

The theocratic pre-determination of "mortal" destiny is also forcefully exemplified in the divine death decree against the life of Enkidu. Tablet VII: 4–10 stages the proceedings:

Anu, Enlil, Ea and heavenly Shamash [took counsel together].
And Anu said to Enlil:
'Because they killed the bull of heaven and Huwa[wa],
[That one of the two shall die],' said Anu,
'Who stripped the mountains of the cedar!'
But Enlil said: 'Enkidu shall die;
Gilgamesh shall not die!'²⁰⁸

In this scenario, although both Gilgamesh and Enkidu were guilty of the death of the Bull of Heaven, Huwawa, and of stripping the mountains of the cedar, yet in the council of the deities only Enkidu faces the death sentence. Though a demi-god, Gilgamesh was not immortal. So, it is not clear whether Gilgamesh was spared because he appears closer to deity, being two-thirds god, than his womanlike friend Enkidu, or that one had to pay for two, the more innocent (Enkidu) for the less innocent²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 56; *ANET*, 85.

²⁰⁹God Shamash questioned Enlil who said that Enkidu should die: "And now the innocent Enkidu shall die?" Thereafter, with a rhetorical question, Shamash seems to take the responsibility for the deaths of Huwawa and the bull of heaven because he induced Gilgamesh and approved or sanctioned the deaths. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 56 (Assyrian version), 36 (Old Babylonian version); cf.

(Gilgamesh) and the more guilty (Shamash). Nevertheless, the gods arbitrarily condemned only Enkidu to death. The point here in evidence is that death is a decision of the gods before it becomes an experience in the creature's life and realm.

The theocratic pre-determination of "mortal" destiny is also illustrated in the experience of Gilgamesh. Though Gilgamesh is described as two-thirds god and one-third man, he is still mortal, represents mortal man, and seems to be more identified with human vulnerabilities than with the gods in the Gilgamesh Epic. From the inception of his quest for immortality or eternal life, Gilgamesh confesses to Enkidu what has been revealed to him: "Only the gods d[well] forever with Shamash. (But) as for mankind, their days are numbered."²¹⁰

Later, Shamash (the sun-god) and then Siduri (the divine barmaid) alerted Gilgamesh of the theocratic pre-determination of the outcome of his odyssey: "The life which thou seekest thou wilt not find."²¹¹ This divine prediction holds true for Gilgamesh to the end of the Gilgamesh Epic as it is presently known. The magic plant in Tablet XI seemed to offer "rejuvenation, not immortality."²¹² While the gods can alter an individual's status from mortal to immortal, lower creatures in general are imprisoned in mortality.

ANET, 85–86.

²¹⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 36; cf. *ANET*, 79.

²¹¹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 69, 70; cf. *ANET*, 89, 90.

²¹²*ANET*, 96, n. 227.

Second, while death is ultimately and inevitably a decision of the gods, it is also immediately and unavoidably a consequence of the mortal nature of man. Death is inherent in human creation. Divine creation of humans comes with the liability of mortality, therefore, human mortality is divine responsibility. The gods set aside death for mankind, but they retained eternal life for themselves and whomsoever or whatsoever they desire to deify or immortalize. Utnapishtim was given immortality.²¹³

The gods chose not to die. At creation, mankind did not choose but dies. Post-creation, if he chooses and seeks not to die, before reaping the benefit of that choice, he forfeits his opportunity of not dying, as in the case of Gilgamesh and the magic plant. Therefore, mankind is inevitably death-bound by a divinely imposed mortal nature.

The third and final theological implication is that death is personified and envisaged as a baleful daemonic or monstrous being, which seizes its victim and carries it off.²¹⁴ In moribund morbidity, Enkidu recounts his dream encounter with such awful being:

[. . .] . . He transformed me,
[That] mine arms [were covered with feathers] like a bird.
He looks at me (and) leads me to the house of darkness,
to the dwelling of Irkalla;
To the house from which he who enters never goes forth;
On the road whose path does not look back;
To the house whose occupants are bereft of light;
Where dust is their food and clay their sustenance;
(Where) they are clad like birds, with garments of wings;

²¹³Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 222.

²¹⁴Ibid., 223–224; cf. idem, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 97–99.

(Where) they see no light and dwell in darkness.²¹⁵

Preceding this passage, in lines 17–20, the supernatural being is described as having his face like Zû, talons as an eagle, and as overpowering him (Enkidu). In the dream, Enkidu sees himself carried off by a death-god or his demonic assistant (his minion) to the dwelling of Irkalla or Ereshkigal (queen of the underworld). Brandon concludes that the Mesopotamian evidence shows that “even where a definite effort was made to account for death as the inevitable consequence of the mortal nature of man, popular imagination persisted in envisaging death as a violent seizure of the individual by some supernatural being, fearfully conceived as the death-god or his minion.”²¹⁶

Theodicean implications

There is no explicit attempt to justify the deities’ action in the presence of evil in the Gilgamesh Epic. Therefore, the theodicean implications for the origin of death are drawn from one of two cases involving theological offense and death originating from the divine council. The two cases are: (1) Divine death decree against Enkidu; (2) Enlil and Ea discourse over the flood. The second will be addressed in the second section of the dissertation dealing with the divine causation of death under the rubric of the Gilgamesh Epic.

²¹⁵Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 60; cf. *ANET*, 87.

²¹⁶Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 224.

Divine death decree against Enkidu. The justice of the gods and the presence of evil are two important factors to be considered in drawing up the theodicean implications of the passage below.

Anu, Enlil, Ea and heavenly Shamash [took counsel together].
And Anu said to Enlil:
'Because they killed the bull of heaven and Huwa[wa],
[That one of the two shall die],' said Anu,
'Who stripped the mountains of the cedar!'
But Enlil said: 'Enkidu shall die;
Gilgamesh shall not die!'
Now the heavenly Shamash replied to Enlil, the hero:
'Have they not killed the bull of heaven and Huwawa at my command?
And now the innocent Enkidu shall die?'
But Enlil was enraged
At the heavenly Shamash (and said):
'Because daily thou descendest to them as though thou wert one of their own
(?)!'"
En[kidu] lay ill before Gilgamesh.
(Gilgamesh said to him): "My brother, my brother, why do they acquit me instead
of thee?"²¹⁷

The text appears to present a legal proceeding involving a prosecutor, a judge, charges, a defending lawyer/accomplice, a witness of the proceedings, defendants, and a sentence. Anu is the prosecutor; Enlil, the judge; Ea, the witness; Shamash, the defending lawyer/accomplice; the defendants are Enkidu and Gilgamesh, and the sentence is death. The charges are the killing of the Bull of Heaven and Huwawa, but more so, the stripping of the mountain of cedar.

The severity of the sentence (suffering and death), Shamash's question as to whether innocent Enkidu shall die, and Gilgamesh's questioning of his acquittal instead

²¹⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 56–57; *ANET*, 85.

of Enkidu's, presuppose that the gods considered the killing of the Bull of Heaven and Huwawa, but more so, the stripping of the mountain of cedar as theological offense. Theological offense, then, constitutes the presence of evil in the eyes of the gods. The theological response to the theological offense is the divine sentence of death.

While Enlil establishes the basis for the sentence of death as principally the stripping of the mountain of cedar, Shamash, the defending lawyer/accomplice, complained to Enlil: "Have they not killed the bull of heaven and Huwawa at my command? And now the innocent Enkidu shall die?" Enlil appointed Huwawa to preserve the cedar forest as a (sevenfold) terror to mortals.²¹⁸ The mountain of cedar was "the dwelling-place of the gods, the throne-dais of Irnini."²¹⁹ The stripping of the mountain of cedar as well as the killing of Huwawa seems to represent an indirect insult on the gods, especially Enlil's authority.

In Shamash's rhetorical question to Enlil about Enkidu's indictment, he left out the stripping of the mountain of cedar, which both Gilgamesh and Enkidu intended to do,²²⁰ but was accomplished by Gilgamesh alone.²²¹ However, only Enkidu is punished with death for it. Shamash's impugnation of Enlil's death sentence against Enkidu did not

²¹⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 35–36; *ANET*, 79.

²¹⁹Irnini is a goddess; may be a form of Ishtar. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 45, n. 86; *ANET*, 82, n. 86.

²²⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 36; *ANET*, 79.

²²¹The text says: "[Gilgamesh] seized [the axe in his hand] [and cut] down [the cedar]." Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 48; *ANET*, 82.

lead to divine justice but to Enlil's rage against and criticism of Shamash for his condescension to mortals as if he were also mortal.

The plan to kill Huwawa (Humbaba) originated with Shamash, and had a moral basis. Ninsun, Gilgamesh's goddess mother, asks why Shamash gave her son a restless heart to pursue fierce Humbaba until he kills him and destroys from the land all the evil which Shamash abhors.²²² The evil of Humbaba is the object of Shamash's abhorrence. Somehow the evil of Humbaba is synonymous with or symbolic of all the evil of the land, so that the killing of Humbaba ushers in the destruction or banishment of all evil from the land.²²³

This Enlil-Shamash encounter shows that the gods are passible, fallible, not always or all in agreement, and can be arbitrary in sentencing. There is no evidence in the Epic of the gods forewarning Enkidu of the stripping of the mountain of cedar as constituting theological offense or evil. Moreover, Shamash induced Gilgamesh to kill Huwawa, and Gilgamesh recruited Enkidu to join him. Anu created the Bull of Heaven for Ishtar who was intent on killing Gilgamesh who refused to marry her. The Bull of Heaven was slain by Enkidu and Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh cut down the cedar of the mountain for which Enlil sentenced Enkidu to death. No wonder, with a sense of just desserts, Gilgamesh asked Enkidu a question that impugns the divine sentence: "My brother, my brother, why do they acquit me instead of thee?"

²²²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 41–42; *ANET*, 81.

²²³Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 34, 41; *ANET*, 79.

Gilgamesh as well as god Shamash questions the divine justice in light of theological offense. Who is guiltier—Enkidu, Gilgamesh, Shamash, or all of them? Is the cedar more important than the life of Huwawa, of the Bull of Heaven, and even of Enkidu? Does the offense match the sentence? Apparently divinity is not obliged to defend their decision in the most favorable light or any light whatsoever. Since the ways of the gods are inscrutable, unpredictable, and unfathomable, then their arbitrariness finds justification in this revelation:

The Anunnaki, the great gods, ga[ther together];
Mammetum, the creatress of destiny, de[crees] with them the destinies
Life and death they allot;
The days of death they do not reveal.²²⁴

Adapa Myth

The origin of death is implied in the Adapa myth. Death inheres in human nature. This concept of the origin of death can be deduced from the god-given creational order of Adapa and from Adapa's post-creation forfeiture of immortality.

Genre classification and function

The first fragment of the story of Adapa is inscribed in poetry, while the other three are prose narratives.²²⁵ The story is a myth (or legend) set in the earliest time (antediluvian) of south Mesopotamia to give expression to certain distressing situations

²²⁴Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 79; *ANET*, 93.

²²⁵Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 148.

like human mortality.²²⁶ It is believed that the Adapa Myth was “used as part of an incantation against illness and disease,”²²⁷ that is, “to remove and ward off disease.”²²⁸

Account analysis

Overview. The narrative describes Adapa as a perfect, moral, mortal man, a leader among mankind, a model of wisdom, skill, devotion, and obedience to his god(s), especially his creator Ea. As a servant of Ea, he was the temple provisioner and the observer of rites. He baked and fished in the Persian Gulf for the city of Eridu in southern Mesopotamia.

Once, while he was fishing, the south wind capsized his boat. Impulsively, he cursed the south wind, magically breaking its wing and preventing it from blowing for seven days. This action offended and angered Anu (Sumerian An). So Anu summoned Adapa to his tribunal in heaven to give account of his crime.

Before Adapa left for heaven, Ea (god of wisdom) advised Adapa to do two things: (1) To wear mourning garb in order to gain the sympathetic assistance of Tammuz and Gizzida (vegetation gods) in the presence of Anu, and (2) to refuse the bread and water of death offered to him, but to accept oil for anointing himself and new garments.

²²⁶Neils-Erik A. Andreasen, “Adam and Adapa: Two Anthropological Characters,” *AUSS* 19, no. 3 (1981): 189.

²²⁷Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 148.

²²⁸Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 88; cf. idem, *Time and Mankind: An Historical and Philosophical Study of Mankind’s Attitude to the Phenomena of Change* (New York: Hutchinson, 1951), 52.

Adapa strictly followed Ea's advice. However, his refusal of the food and water of life offered him by Tammuz and Gizzida, unwittingly led to the loss of the opportunity to receive immortality.

Locus of the origin of death. There is neither divine nor human death in the Adapa Myth. What the myth contains is "the motif of man's aboriginal loss of immortality."²²⁹ The loss is a lack of acquisition of immortality rather than a dispossession of it. The mortality of Adapa is clearly indicated in the following five ways in the myth:

1. Adapa was not given eternal life (*napiš-tam da-er-tam*).²³⁰
2. Adapa unintentionally refused food and water of life as if they were the food and water of death.²³¹
3. Adapa was called an *amēlūta*.²³²

²²⁹Brandon, "The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions," 224. Speiser calls it "the motif of man's squandered opportunity for gaining immortality." "Adapa," translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 101). Bing avers that "one theme of the myth is that Adapa lost an opportunity for immortality for himself and perhaps for all humanity." J. D. Bing, "Adapa and Humanity: Mortal or Evil?" *The Journal of The Ancient Near Eastern Society* 18 (1986): 2.

²³⁰Rogers, ed. and trans., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 75.

²³¹Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151; *ANET*, 102.

²³²Heidel translates the Akkadian term as "an impure man." Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151. Speiser's translation is "a worthless human." *ANET*, 102. Another translation is "impure mankind." Rogers, ed. and trans., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 75.

4. After Adapa refused the food and water of life, Anu said, “You will not live forever” (*balātum*).²³³

5. Adapa is called the “human offspring,”²³⁴ “seed of mankind” (*zēr amelûti*).²³⁵

In Fragment I, Adapa is called *riddi ina amelûti*,²³⁶ “a model of man,”²³⁷ that is, “a human archetype”²³⁸ with wisdom but without eternal life.²³⁹ The Akkadian term translated “eternal life” here is *napiš-tam da-er-tam*.²⁴⁰ There is another statement in Fragment II where, for Adapa’s breaking of the wing of the south wind and subsequent adherence to Ea’s advice of not eating or drinking, in heaven, he is told by Anu: *ammīni lā tākul lā taltīma lā baltāta â nišī dašāti*, “Why didn’t you eat and drink? You will not live forever!”²⁴¹ The verbal negation *lā baltāta*, “you will not live forever,” can also be

²³³Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151; *ANET*, 102.

²³⁴ *ANET*, 102.

²³⁵Stephen Langdon, *Sumerian Epic of Paradise, the Flood and the Fall of Man* (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1915), 47, 22, n. 4; 40, n. 3; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 152.

²³⁶Bing, “Adapa and Immortality,” 55, n. 25; cf. Rogers, ed. and trans., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 69.

²³⁷Adapa is a model of man in the sense of “something to be followed.” *ANET*, 101, n. 1. In the same vein, Heidel’s translation is: “a leader among mankind.” Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 148.

²³⁸Andreasen, “Adam and Adapa: Two Anthropological Characters,” 188.

²³⁹Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 148.

²⁴⁰Rogers, ed. and trans., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 75.

²⁴¹Bing, “Adapa and Immortality,” 55; cf. Rogers, ed. and trans., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 75; *ANET*, 102; Heidel’s translation is: “Art thou not well?” Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 151.

translated as “you are not in strength.”²⁴² However, contextually, in the former translation the meaning of the text is retained as “being alive” (*balātum*).²⁴³

Bing points out that one of the meanings of *balātum* in Babylonia is clearly “to live forever.” He insists that in two instances this meaning is evident in the Old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh Epic: “Eternal life (*balatam*) which you seek, you will not find” and “Eternal life (*balatam*) in their own hands they, i.e., the gods retained.”²⁴⁴ These passages lend support to the translation of *balātum* as “eternal life” or “to live forever.” Therefore, Adapa’s mortality is confirmed by negation in reference to the past and the future in that at his creation Ea did not endow him with immortality, and in heaven Anu unveiled Adapa’s unwitting, yet decisive forfeiture of immortality.

Ea told Adapa to refuse the food and water of death, but in heaven Adapa was offered the food and water of life instead of death, which he mistakenly refused, thereby forfeiting his opportunity for immortality. The fact that he was offered the food and water of life presupposes his mortal condition. There is no evidence in the text that the food and water of life are the food and water of death as if Anu intended to trick Adapa to death. Moreover, if this was the case, then Adapa’s mortality would still be established.

²⁴²Giorgio Buccellati, “Adapa, Genesis, and the Notion of Faith,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 5 (1973): 63.

²⁴³Bing, “Adapa and Immortality,” 55; idem, “Adapa and Humanity: Mortal or Evil?” 2, n. 5.

²⁴⁴Bing, “Adapa and Immortality,” 54; idem, “Adapa and Humanity: Mortal or Evil?” 2, n. 5; R. Campbell Thompson, *The Gilgamesh Epic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 53.

It would establish his non-possession of immortality, his possible possession of longevity typical in antediluvian times, and his premature death at the hand of Anu.

The terms *amēlūta*, whether translated “impure man”²⁴⁵ or “worthless human”²⁴⁶ or just “human being,”²⁴⁷ and *zēr amelûti*, translated “seed of mankind,” used to depict Adapa, despite the pejorative translations, accentuate his humanity and, *ipso facto*, his mortality. The term *zēr amelûti* is to be understood as meaning that “the hero was a human being because he was of human descent.”²⁴⁸ Speiser italicizes “worthless” in the *ANET* and Heidel places a question mark after “impure” to show their dissatisfaction with their translations.

After Dumuzi and Gizzida spoke favorably about Adapa’s character of piety to Anu and calmed his anger, Anu asked himself: *ammīni Ea amēluta lā banīta ša šamê u erseti ukillinši?* The translation is: “Why did Ea reveal inappropriate things (*lā banīta*) of heaven and earth to a human being?”²⁴⁹ In the phrase *amēlūta lā banīta ša*, literally “to a human being not appropriate things,” *lā banīta* (not appropriate) modifies *ša* (things) instead of *amēlūta* (man). The direct object of the verb is *lā banīta ša* (inappropriate things) and the indirect object is *amēlūta* (to man). It is the adjectival association of *lā*

²⁴⁵Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151.

²⁴⁶“Adapa,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 102).

²⁴⁷Bing, “Adapa and Immortality,” 54.

²⁴⁸Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 88; cf. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 152, n. 33.

²⁴⁹Bing, “Adapa and Immortality,” 54.

banīta with *amēlūta* that yields the apparent out-of-context translation: “impure or worthless human being.”

Adapa is neither impure nor worthless. The text pictures Adapa as blameless; of clean hands; anointed; observer of the divine statutes; a hunter; baker, and fisher; a faithful servant of Ea.²⁵⁰ Ea predicted that Tammuz and Gizzida would speak “good words” (a-mi-ta da-mi-ik-ta),²⁵¹ not *lā banīta ša* (inappropriate things) to Anu about Adapa’s character. “The implication clearly is that Adapa is a ‘good man’; his piety and repentance are manifested by his clothes of mourning as well as his lament at the departure from earth of Dumuzi and Gizzida.”²⁵²

Adapa is called a “model of man” in the text. In the myth, he is portrayed as heroic, human, moral, religious, industrious, and representative of mankind. So, matters pertaining to all mankind, especially mortality, are explicable in reference to him.²⁵³ The fact that Adapa was neither given eternal life, nor possessed it then or later, indicates his mortality. Since Ea had created Adapa as a sort of prototype or human archetype of mortality—a mortal creature, so clearly portrayed in the Adapa Myth—then death originated or sprang from human nature.

²⁵⁰Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 148; *ANET*, 101.

²⁵¹Rogers, ed. and trans, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 74.

²⁵²Bing, “Adapa and Humanity: Mortal or Evil?” 2, n. 4.

²⁵³Andreasen, “Adam and Adapa: Two Anthropological Characters,” 188.

Theological implications

The Adapa Myth mentions five gods: Ea (god of wisdom and creation),²⁵⁴ Tammuz and Gizzida (vegetation gods,²⁵⁵ forces of fertility,²⁵⁶ fertility divinities,²⁵⁷ Anu's gate-keepers),²⁵⁸ Anu (god of the heavens),²⁵⁹ Ilabrat (Anu's vizier)²⁶⁰ and Ninkarrak (goddess of healing and medicine)²⁶¹. The gods are neither omnipotent nor omniscient. They engaged in division of labor and are superior to man. Though gods are present and sovereign in the myth, Adapa's character, mortality, and loss of immortality feature prominently in the myth.

There are three theological implications for the origin of death that can be drawn from the myth. First, human death originated as a concomitant of the divine creation of mankind. Ea created Adapa, the prototype of mankind, mortal from the inception of his existence. Adapa came into existence without eternal life, consequently and subsequently in need of immortality.

²⁵⁴Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 148, n. 22.

²⁵⁵Ibid., 180.

²⁵⁶Bing, "Adapa and Immortality," 55.

²⁵⁷Bing, "Adapa and Humanity: Mortal or Evil?" 1.

²⁵⁸Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 149, 150; *ANET*, 101, 102.

²⁵⁹Brandon, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, 88; cf. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 87.

²⁶⁰Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 149; *ANET*, 101.

²⁶¹Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, 126; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 153, n. 35.

Second, human immortality was temporarily within human choice through a divine offer. Anu offered Adapa the food of life and the water of life, not the food of death or the water of death. Adapa appears here as inflexible in his unswerving loyalty to Ea or less wise and discriminating in this matter, seeing that there was a clear distinction between the offer of the food and water of life and the offer of the food and water of death. Apparently, Adapa followed Ea's advice without discrimination, though Ea's advice was discriminatory—"Do not consume the food and water of 'death.'" Instead, Adapa chose to refuse the food and water of life Anu offered him in heaven, thereby unwittingly forfeiting the opportunity to gain immortality.

Lastly, human penitence and care for the gods turn away divine anger and punishment, probably, by death. Adapa's ingratiating of Tammuz and Gizzida, their good report of Adapa's character to Anu, and his mournful garb of humility and repentance for his impulsive angry act of breaking the wing of the south wind abated Anu's anger. Anu forgave him.

It appears as though Anu's abated anger was not anticipated by Ea, and so he prepared Adapa to refuse the food and water of death that would be offered to him as punishment for his deed. Ea may have anticipated an attempt on Anu's part to kill Adapa. This may explain why he forbade him to eat neither the food nor drink the water of death. However, if Ea in his wisdom foreknew Anu's change of heart and gracious offer of immortality, but tricked Adapa, then it shows Ea as selfishly wanting to retain Adapa as his servant on earth. If this perspective is correct, then Ea's plan backfires on

him, because Anu, by decree, released Adapa from “compulsory service for [the city] of Ea” (Eridu).²⁶²

Theodicean implications

Human mortality is divine responsibility in the Adapa Myth. Ea created Adapa, a model of mankind, mortal. Mankind had no choice in the manner of his constitutional emergence. Human mortality is a divine choice, but immortality, though a divine offer, is principally a human reception to make. Mortality is not a barrier to the offer or reception of immortality. There is no attempt in the text to defend the divine creation of human as mortal or his forfeiture of immortality because of apparently conflicting or tricky directives from the gods (Ea and Anu).

In the Adapa Myth, humans are mortal by their god-given nature. The text does not explain human mortality as a consequence of an evil nature. The association of *lā banīta* (inappropriate) with *amēlūta* (man) seemed to have given rise to Heidel’s and Speiser’s translations: “impure man”²⁶³ or “worthless human.”²⁶⁴ In addition, Bing points out:

The long-standing tendency to associate the Babylonian Adapa myth with the garden of Eden story perhaps influenced some scholars to give *lā banīta* a rather harsh Augustinian/Calvinistic meaning that portrays mankind as evil, presumptuous, or even self-willed. Such an interpretation strengthens the parallels with Adamic Man found in the Genesis story. However, *lā banū* does

²⁶²Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 152; *ANET*, 102.

²⁶³Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 152.

²⁶⁴*ANET*, 102.

not convey the notion of being evil or even self-willed but rather unfriendly, ungracious, unpleasant, or ignoble.²⁶⁵

Adapa's theological offense is not an alleged "evil nature,"²⁶⁶ not his refusal of Anu's food and water of life,²⁶⁷ not his Ea-given possession of the *lā banīta* (inappropriate things) of the heart of heaven and earth²⁶⁸ (contextually, "wide understanding . . . to expound the decrees of the land,"²⁶⁹ and "magic power" displayed in his encounter with the south wind),²⁷⁰ not his following Ea's directives,²⁷¹ but his angry and impulsive breaking of the wing of the south wind, causing an ecological disaster of seven-day windlessness and the disappearance of fertility divinities (Tammuz and Gizzida).²⁷² If Ea is truly an expert on the things of heaven,²⁷³ then his advice to Adapa to refuse Anu's hospitality of food and water of death (actually life) suggests that Anu's punishment for Adapa's offense would have been capital punishment. Instead, Adapa receives Anu's forgiveness on account of his penitence and the divine sympathy and

²⁶⁵Bing, "Adapa and Humanity: Mortal or Evil?" 1, n. 3.

²⁶⁶Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 152; cf. *ANET*, 102.

²⁶⁷Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151; *ANET*, 102.

²⁶⁸Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151; cf. *ANET*, 102.

²⁶⁹Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 148; *ANET*, 101.

²⁷⁰Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 151, n. 29.

²⁷¹Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 150; *ANET*, 102.

²⁷²Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 149; *ANET*, 101–102.

²⁷³Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 149; *ANET*, 101.

support of Tammuz and Gizzida, then, Anu dispatches him back to earth freed from the service of Ea.

In the myth, neither Ea's apparent trick of Adapa, nor Adapa's wrathful cursing and breaking of the wing of the south wind, or Anu's apparent manipulation of the situation is specifically classified as evil. Anu does not malign Ea. The gods misunderstand each other, but do not attack or punish the other. They are more cooperative than competitive. The myth remains anthropocentric in main character, theological offense, and divine resolution.

Hebrew

The concept of the origin of death in Hebrew literature will be examined primarily in Gen 1–3. If the date of the Exodus is accepted as 1445 B.C., then the book of Genesis was written “in what archeologists call the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–ca. 1200 B.C.).”²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 14; cf. James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on Genesis* (Abilene, TX: A. C. U. Press, 1985), 18–20. Advocates of the Documentary Hypothesis assume a later and longer period for the present shape of the Pentateuch of which Genesis is the first book. They assume that four literary strands (JEDP) behind the Pentateuch date from about 960 B.C. to about 450 B.C. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 13–14. For a detailed discussion of the Documentary Hypothesis or higher biblical criticism on the Pentateuch see A. E. Speiser, “Introduction,” *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964), xvii–lii; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “P and J in Genesis 1:1–11:26: An Alternative Hypothesis,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 1–15; Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991).

This Hebrew subsection of the study of the origin of death examine the genre classification and function and presents account analyses, and theological and theodicean implications of Gen 1–3. Genesis 1–3 will be studied by itself, and in relation to the new Creation and Ps 104. These texts are studied to see how they contribute to an overall understanding of the concept of the origin of death in the Old Testament. While these texts provide the starting point for and basis of the study, they do not negate consideration or use of other related relevant texts that illumine the concept of the origin of death. Psalm 104 is included in the study because v. 21 has been advanced as support for predation predating the Fall of humanity and marking the origin of death in the animal creation.

Exposition of Genesis 1–3

Structurally, the book of Genesis has two unequal divisions: “Chapters 1–11 are primeval history, beginning with the story of the regression of the human race from its creation and original perfection to its fall from innocence. . . . Chapters 12–50 then proceed to tell the story of patriarchal history, which is at the time the story of the origin of the nation of Israel.”²⁷⁵ The book of Genesis presents the origin of human history and a history of origins—the origin of the universe and of man, the origin of sin and of death.

²⁷⁵John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed., Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 108; cf. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 11, 16; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 1; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 10–11; Claus Westermann, “Introduction,” *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 2; Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 83–93; Wenham, “Introduction,” *Genesis 1–15*, xxxviii.

The texts relevant to the study of the origin of death are in the primeval history division of the book of Genesis. The first three chapters of the book of Genesis throw light on the question of the origin of death. A thematic outline of these three chapters is as follows:

1. Creation: Part I (1:1–2:3)
2. Creation: Part II (2:4–25)
3. The Fall (3:1–24).²⁷⁶

The idea of death appears once in chap. 2 (2:17), but four times in chap. 3 (3:3–4, 19, 21, 22). Therefore, these texts form the base of the study of the origin of death in the book of Genesis.

Genre Classification and Function

The book of Genesis is the first of the five books of the law in the Masoretic Text called the Torah or Pentateuch.²⁷⁷ The Hebrew term תולדות (toledot) occurs thirteen times (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 25:12; 11: 27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2) in it. While it provides structure to the book, it is also an index to the literary genre of Gen 1–3. It is translated “story” or “history” if it is followed by narrative. If it is followed by genealogy, then it is translated “descendants” or “generations.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis*, 17.

²⁷⁷Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, 68, 69.

²⁷⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 2; cf. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 8.

The first three chapters of Genesis, which fall under the broad category of primeval history, have both “prose and poetry.”²⁷⁹ The five specific texts that mention the idea of death (Gen 2:17; 3: 3–4, 19, 21–22) are historical and prosaic. They present the fall of man—the forewarning (2:17), the denial of the forewarning (3:3–4), and the consequences of sin (3:19, 21–22). In a study of the literary form of Gen 1–11, Kaiser gives an apropos description of its genre as “historical narrative-prose.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹J. P. Fokkelman, “Genesis,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 36.

²⁸⁰Walter C. Kaiser, “The Literary Form of Genesis 1–11,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970), 61. Some literary genre categories proposed for classifying Genesis include: “theology,” J. A. Thompson, “Genesis 1–3. Science? History? Theology?” *Theological Review* 3 (1966): 25; “parable,” John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis, the Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1981), 1:55; Donald D. Evans, *The Logic of Self-involvement* (London: SCM, 1963, 242–252; “doctrine,” Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 65; “metaphorical narration,” John H. Stek, “What Says Scripture?” in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World’s Formation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till, Robert E. Snow, John H. Stek, and Davis Young (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 236; “narrative,” Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1984), 80; “poem,” Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 26; “a hymn,” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 10; “cultic liturgy,” S. H. Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 119–121; “myth,” Conrad Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 93–114; Susan Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 219–224; John W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1974, 274–278. For the negation of Gen 1–11 as myth see Benedikt Otzen, Hans Gottliett, and Knud Jeppesen, *Myths in the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1980). Doukhan, in a detailed literary analysis of the structure of the Genesis creation story, labels Gen 1 as “prose-geneology.” Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 5:182.

Account Analysis

The account analysis involves a study of the texts in their literary context. It examines the origin of terrestrial life, the origin of death on earth, and the Fall of Lucifer. Under the origin of terrestrial life, the creation of man, animals, and plants is compared and contrasted. Under the origin of death, death is examined in the creation account to see how or whether it relates to humans, animals, and plants, and the divine and human roles are brought under close scrutiny to determine the relationship of God and primal man to the origin of death. The relationship between original sin and the origin of death is explored in context of the Fall of Lucifer and of mankind.

Origin of terrestrial life

Source of life. The very first text of the book of Genesis affirms God as the source of all life: “In the beginning God created (שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ) the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1). God, the uncreated Creator, created all life and non-life. The phrase “heaven and earth,” taken as a biblical merism, “a syntactical construction implying totality,”²⁸¹ encompasses the heaven, earth, and all between and within them—animate or inanimate. This text as well as the rest of the account of the creation (Gen 1, 2) indicates that all life

²⁸¹Hallo defines merism this way in his discussion of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. William Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” *Scriptura* 87 (2004): 267. Nahum sees a merism in Gen 1:1, which he defines as “the combination of opposites” that “expresses the totality of cosmic phenomena.” Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 5; Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 40; Johnson T. K. Lim, *Grace in the Midst of Judgment: Grappling with Genesis 1–11* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 99, n. 148. Another example of merism (“right and left”) is found in Louis Isaac Robinowitz, “Right and Left,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 14:179.

derives and depends on God. No life has a Godless origin or independent existence. All life owes its existence to him. He is Creator and Life-giver.

Creation of man. Human life originated with God: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female (זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה) created he them” (Gen 1:27); “The Lord formed (וַיִּצְרֶה) man of the dust of the ground (מִן־הָאֲדָמָה) (עֶפְרָה מִן), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים); and man became a living soul” (לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה) [Gen 2:7]; “And the rib (הַצֵּלַע), which the Lord God had taken from man, made (וַיַּכֶּן) he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen 2:22). On the sixth day of creation, man is created the ectype or effigy of the archetype (God). He is created sexual (male/female) and a living soul” (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה).

Man does not have a soul, but became and is a soul (נֶפֶשׁ). Human beings are not a dichotomy, but a unity of dust of the ground (מִן־הָאֲדָמָה) (עֶפְרָה מִן־הָאֲדָמָה) and the breath of life (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים). Man is flesh (Gen 2:21, 23; 6:3,13,17, בָּשָׂר), has ribs (Gen 2:21, 22, מִצְלַעֹתָיו), bones (Gen 2:23, מַעְצָמָיו), blood (Gen 9:5–6, דָּם), nostrils (Gen 2:7, בְּאַפָּיו), a face (Gen 4:5, פָּנָיו), a heart or mind (Gen 6:5, לֵבָבוֹ), and the power of contrary choice (Gen 1:16, 17). Man is capable of relationship (Gen 1:26, 28; 2:18, 24, 25) and can sleep (Gen 2:21, תָּרַדְמָה).

Creation of animals. On the fifth day, God created water and air creatures (Gen 1:20–23): swarms of living creatures (שָׂרִיץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה), birds (עוֹף), great sea monsters (כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרְמֹשֶׁת), all living creatures of every kind that creep (הַתַּחֲנִינִם הַגֹּדְלִים), which the waters bring forth in swarms and all the winged birds (כָּל־עוֹף כָּנָף). On the

sixth day, he created the cattle (בְּהֵמָה), creeping things (רֶמֶשׂ), and wild beasts of the earth (חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ) (Gen 1:24–25). The birds were created out of water (Gen 1:20, 21), and earth (הָאָרֶץ)/ground (הָאֲדָמָה) (1:24; 2:19), and the other animals were made only out of the earth/ground (1:24; 2:19).

In Gen 1:24–25, נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (living creatures) includes בְּהֵמָה (beast, animal, cattle), רֶמֶשׂ (creeping things, moving things), and חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ (living thing, animal). No distinction is made between vertebrates and invertebrates. In fact, רֶמֶשׂ is “a general term for creatures whose bodies appear to move close to the ground,” which apparently include “reptiles, creeping insects, and very small animals.”²⁸² In Gen 1:21; 2:19, חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ, נֶפֶשׁ also includes fowl and fish. Therefore, the idea that the Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה is “never applied to . . . invertebrates”²⁸³ seems untenable.

As living creatures, animals have life (Gen 1:30), flesh, and blood (Gen 9:3–4). They have the “breath of life” (רוּחַ חַיִּים). The vertebrate as well as invertebrate animals and fish are called “living creatures” (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה) six times in Gen 1:20, 21, 24, 28, 30; 2:19. They have life and are living.

Creation of vegetation. Humans and animals were made from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7, 19), but plants were called into existence (Gen 1:11–12). God endowed the earth with generative powers which he activates by saying: “Let the earth sprout vegetation”: plants and fruit trees (Gen 1:11). The corresponding and complementary

²⁸²Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 11.

²⁸³Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004), 205.

creation account says: “And out of the ground made the Lord 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 knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). The plants and fruit trees are meat (לֶאֱכֹלֹתָ, food) for man and the animals (Gen 1:29, 30).

The Hebrew term נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה is never used of plant life. This Hebrew phrase “means literally ‘animate life,’ that which embodies the breath of life. It is distinct from plant life, which is not considered to be ‘living.’”²⁸⁴ Neither Genesis nor the rest of the Bible equates plant life with human or animal life. While the Bible proscribes cannibalism, and, in post-Fall, post-flood times, allows the consumption of clean animals, it prescribes the eating of plants before the Fall of man. This means that the pre-Fall diet for man and animals was a vegetarian diet (Gen 1:29, 30, “fruits and grains”). This text teaches that “vegetarianism was a worldwide phenomenon, not just restricted to Eden. Even after the Fall, after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, their diet was vegetarian,”²⁸⁵ as Gen 3:18 says: “Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.” This seems to be the strongest argument against predation before the Fall of man.

²⁸⁴Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 10. Safati says that “plants do not have life in the sense of *nephesh*, while animals do.” Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 209.

²⁸⁵Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 207.

Plants are not **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** (living souls or creatures), do not have blood, breath, flesh, heart, nostrils, and face as man and animals.²⁸⁶ The eating of plants is not a moral issue, but a divine gift. God is the final arbiter of what constitutes life, what sustains life, what is appropriate to life, and what is living.

The “very good” of creation

Six times God evaluates each stage of his creation as good (**טוֹב**) (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), and the seventh time the total finished creation (**כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה**) receives the verdict of being “very good” (**טוֹב מְאֹד**). God’s seventh approbation of his creation comes at its completion and indicates its complete goodness. The Hebrew verb “וַיִּכְלֶה”²⁸⁷ (Gen 2:1) translated “completed” (NIV) or “finished” (KJV) carries the idea of the perfection of the whole creation. The adverb “very” (**מְאֹד**) serves as “an intensification and strengthening of **טוֹב**.”²⁸⁸ The Hebrew **טוֹב מְאֹד** can also be

²⁸⁶Cf. James Stambaugh, “‘Life’ According to the Bible and the Scientific Evidence,” *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* 6, no. 2 (1992): 98–121; Harmeling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in the Context of Creation,” 27.

²⁸⁷Doukhan insightfully points out that this Hebrew word “conveys more than the mere chronological idea of ‘end.’ It also implies the quantitative idea that nothing is missing, and there is nothing to add, confirming that death and all the evil which will strike later have not yet affected the world.” Jacques B. Doukhan, “Where Did Death Come From? A Study in the Genesis Creation Story,” *Adventist Perspectives* 4, no. 1 (1990): 16; cf. Randall Younker, “A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspectives on Death,” 2.

²⁸⁸Harmeling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in the Context of Creation,” 5; Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, 166.

translated as “exceedingly,” or “thoroughly” good.²⁸⁹ With these semantic contextual observations, the creation is good to an extreme flawless degree.

Good is the opposite of evil. If the creation was completely good, then there was no evil in it—whether it is called a good evil or bad evil. In general usage, the term “good” indicates a state or function appropriate to its purpose. It is used to describe moral standards of justice and mercy (Mic 6:8; 1 Sam 25:15; Prov 2:20; Isa 65:5), in clear contrast to overt evil (Num 24:13; Deut 13: 15; 2 Sam 14:17; Isa 5:20), and as a depiction of God (Pss 86:5; 100:5; 107:1; 118:1).²⁹⁰

The “very good” (טוֹב מְאֹד) of creation in Gen 1:31 is “a reference to the harmony and perfection of the created order and its complete correspondence to the divine purpose.”²⁹¹ The “very good” of the completed and complete creation describes it as a system working together in perfect order and harmony. The account of the physical perfection of the completed creation gives no intimation of the presence of death, disease, chaos, or the operation of the principle of evil in it. In fact, one clear theme of the creation account is that the creation was very good to support and nourish נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.

²⁸⁹Robin Wakely, “מְאֹד,” *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:824, 825.

²⁹⁰Robert P. Gordon, “טוֹב,” *NIDOTTE*, 2:353–257; Harmeling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in the Context of Creation,” 5; cf. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, 166–167.

²⁹¹Wakely, “מְאֹד,” *NIDOTTE*, 825; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–11*, 34; H. G. May and B. M. Metzger, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 3.

The creation is described as good not evil, friendly not hostile. Death is not natural to the pristine creation. Paul says that “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:26). In the eternal state, “death shall be no more” (Rev 22:4) and “there shall be no more curse” (Rev 22:3). In Gen 3:14–19, death and suffering are tied to the curse. Therefore, the general tenor of Scripture is to suggest a negation or absence of death as compatible with the idea of a “very good” creation.

Origin of death

God and death. God’s creative activities showcase him as the author of life. In Gen 1–3, God created life—human, animal (vertebrates/invertebrates), and plant.²⁹² There is no evidence of divine deicide, homicide, or killing of animals in the pre-Fall account. The first mention of death is in Gen 2:17: “But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Here God is presented not as a threatener wielding death to secure obedience, but as the fore-warner and predictor of the lethal consequences of a choice contrary to his explicit command.

Disobedience to the divine prohibition certainly eventuates in death. There is a clear link made between man’s choice to eat and death. You eat (Gen 2:17), or touch (3:3) the fruit, you die. You disobey, you die. To eat or touch is to disobey and to die.

²⁹²Plants are of a lower order of creation with some form of biological life not comparable to human or animal life.

Disobedience to God's command is death. Death originated with man's sinful choice²⁹³ to defy the divine authority by eating the forbidden fruit. God announces the potential death sentence, but the text does not indicate that he effected it on account of subsequent sin. God is neither exonerated from creating man with the possibility of sin and death, nor is he made the author of sin and death.

The reality of death in Gen 2:17 ("thou shalt surely die") finds explication in the judgment-curse of death in Gen 3:19 ("till you return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"). In the latter text, "death is not expressly named in the formulas that God uses, but is indicated only in symbolic metaphor."²⁹⁴ Nonetheless, in conjunction, the thrust of the two passages is not on spiritual death, which leads to physical death, but on man's eventual physical death—his mortality. Proleptically, man's return to the dust of the ground was already anticipated by his creation from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7).

The Hebrew *תָּמוּתְךָ תָּמוּת* (dying you will die)²⁹⁵ presupposes the God-derived immortality of mankind prior to his fall.²⁹⁶ The inexorable laws of his nature and of the

²⁹³Doukhan states that "sin is the origin of death," and that "the sinful act carries within itself the formula of death." Jacques B. Doukhan, "Hebrew Scriptures: To Live, to Die, and Then?" *Shabbat Shalom* 3 (1997): 15.

²⁹⁴Th. P. Van Baaren, "Death," *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987), 4:257.

²⁹⁵Brandon states that "the obvious inference from this is, of course, that Adam was already immortal by nature, or rather perhaps that his Maker had not decreed death as his end." Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 134.

²⁹⁶Gaster believes that "the gist of the whole story of the fall appears to be an attempt to explain man's mortality, to set forth how death came into the world. It is true that man is not said to have been created immortal and to have lost his immortality

nature of the created order were established by God—the Creator. While it can be correctly argued that “death is not a punishment concocted by God *a posteriori* to the sin,”²⁹⁷ and that death was not part of the original design, it would be foolhardy to reject the etiology or interpretation-possibility of death as divine punishment for sin.²⁹⁸

Death is mentioned *a priori* to the act of sin as a divine caveat in Gen 2:17, and *a posteriori* to the act of sin as divine punishment in Gen 3:19. In the divine pronouncement of judgment upon the serpent, Eve, and Adam (3:14–19), אָמַר is used in four different forms: אָמַרְתִּי (impf. v. 14), אָמַרְתָּ (pf. vv. 16, 17), and אָמַרְתִּי (inf. cstr. v. 17), and indicates the divine word of authority in the process of the judgment-curse. The texts neither distance God from the judgment process, nor do they eliminate the death consequence for man. In symbolic metaphor, v. 19 confirms and recognizes man’s destiny as a return to dust. Man defies God’s word of authority, so God uses his word of authority to pronounce his judgment of death on man.

God initiates a “legal process, . . . a trial and punishment by God”²⁹⁹ in Gen 3:6.

through disobedience; but neither is he said to have been created mortal. Rather we are given to understand that the possibility alike of immortality and of mortality was open to him, and that it rested with him which he would choose; for the tree of life stood within his reach, its fruit was forbidden to him, he had only to stretch out his hand, take of the fruit, and eating of it live for ever.” Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 33.

²⁹⁷Doukhan, “Hebrew Scriptures: To Live, to Die, and Then?” 15.

²⁹⁸Norman R. Gulley, “Death,” *ABD*, 2:109; Th. P. Van Baaren, “Death,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987), 4: 257; Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, 38.

²⁹⁹Claus Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1974), 96; cf. Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3,” *AUSS* 26 (1988): 123; idem, *The Fame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA:

The divine judgment³⁰⁰ of death on mankind (Gen 3:17–19, [2:17]) and God making the tree of life inaccessible to humans (3:22, 24) show that God was not opposed to the

Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 58–59. Many other scholars have recognized that God’s encounter with the man, woman, and serpent was nothing less than a legal trial judgment. Brueggemann says: “The scene [Gen 3:8–24] becomes a trial.” Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 49. Likewise Tribble comments: “God becomes the prosecutor in the court of law.” Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 117. Marris depicts Gen 3:8–13 as a “trial” and “verdict” succeeded by a “judgment” in Gen 3:14–19. Rick R. Marris, “In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen 1–3),” in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn, 2 vols. (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 2:27–28. Malphurs encapsulates the scene of Gen 3:8–13 in this way: “God as the prosecuting attorney probed the two defendants who reluctantly admitted some guilt but shifted the blame to others. Now God moves from the role of prosecutor to judge and pronounces final judgment.” Aubrey Malphurs, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: Understanding Masculinity and Femininity from God’s Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1996), 99; cf. Calum M. Carmichael, “Law and Narrative in the Pentateuch,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible*, ed. Leo G. Purdue, Blackwell Companions to Religion 3 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 332–333.

³⁰⁰The motif or pattern of sin and judgment in Gen 3 has been demonstrated by several scholars. Westermann identifies the motif as “crime and punishment” and lists six narrative passages of Gen 1–11 with a description of the major elements of the pattern. The ones of concern to us he lists in this way: Transgression (Gen 3:6), Verbal Expression (3:14–19), and Act of Punishment (3:22–24). The “Verbal Expression” is God’s judgment speech, his decision to judge, his direct judging response. Claus Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 3, 29. In the same vein, Clines sees a “sin-speech-mitigation-punishment” structure in Gen 3, which he charted as follows: Sin (3:6), Speech (3:14–19), Mitigation (3:21), and Punishment (3:22–24). David J. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOT Supplement Series, No. 10 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1978), 61–63. In her dissertation, Bratcher outlines the narrative of man’s fall in this schematic arrangement: Introduction (2:25–3:1a), Temptation (3:1b–5), Sin (3:6–7), Discovery (3:8–13), Judgment (3:14–19), Aftermath (3:20–22), and Expulsion (3:23–25). Margaret Dee Bratcher, “The Pattern of Sin and Judgment in Genesis 1–11” (Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 70–72.

punishment of mortality and death in relation to sin. It does not appear that the author attempted to dissociate God from death.³⁰¹

Disobedience is presented as an affront to God (3:11) which results in grave consequences of alienation, physical hardship, pain and suffering, mortality, and death. God created man with the power of contrary choice, thus placing before him the options of the tree of life and other trees (eating recommended in v. 16) and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (eating prohibited, v. 17). Death then was a “contingent possibility.”³⁰² If man eats of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he will be subject to death.

God constituted humanity vulnerable or susceptible to mortality if he sins. Mankind made the fatal fateful choice for evil and death. It appears that while death originated with man’s sin (Gen 3:17), death is also God’s judgment on sin (Gen 3:14–19).

Disobedience is clearly linked to death in Gen 2:17; 3:11, 19, 22, 24. The possibility of sin-death causality inhered in human nature before the Fall and the divine displeasure against sin finding penal manifestation and expression is necessitated by the nature of the divine authority. There appears to be no chance of sin without death or death without sin. The two are siamese twins. The moment there was sin, there was death. This proposition is evident in the sentence: “For in that day you eat from it, you

³⁰¹In fact subsequent to Genesis, there are numerous OT instances in which death was the divinely recommended or permitted civil penalty: premeditated murder (Exod 21:12–14); adultery (Lev 20:10–21); homosexuality (Lev 20:13); incest (Lev 20:11–12, 14); profaning the Sabbath (Exod 35:2, Num 15:32–36). For a discussion of death on account of sin/crime in the OT, see Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 90–92.

³⁰²Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 271.

will surely die” (כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת, Gen 2:17). The sentence proleptically accentuates man’s immediate essential change from immortality to mortality and his eventual destiny of death. Apparently, divine grace intervened to delay man’s physical death.

The divine caveat, מוֹת תָּמוּת (“dying you will die” or “you will surely die” Gen 2:17), is a “paranomastic infinitive in the original Hebrew” which uses “one and the same verbal root in immediate juxtaposition, once in the infinitive absolute form and once in the finite form.”³⁰³ Its function is “to define more accurately” or “to strengthen the idea of the verb.”³⁰⁴ On the strength of this argument, Hallo recommends this idiomatic translation: “you shall meet with death/be subject to death” as truer to the letter and spirit of the original Hebrew.³⁰⁵

The Hebrew מוֹת תָּמוּת expresses the “affirmation,” the “asseveration,”³⁰⁶ that is, the certainty of death,³⁰⁷ which was clearly communicated by God on the human level.

³⁰³Ibid., 271.

³⁰⁴Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 342f; cf. Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 271.

³⁰⁵Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 271.

³⁰⁶Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 2:422e.

³⁰⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–11*, 67; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 172.

Though death was unnatural to pre-Fall Adam, it was neither accidental to God nor man, suggesting human inculpability. Mankind chose to sin and, *ipso facto*, knowingly chose inevitable death,³⁰⁸ and consequently is responsible for his destiny.

An accident is neither a certainty nor an absolute inevitability, but a chance event. Neither the foretold condition nor the determining factor of human mortality and death was a mystery to humanity. Certainty of death in Gen 2:17 removes the idea of an accident. Therefore, though the idea of death as an “accident”³⁰⁹ for primal man may serve an apologetic or theodicean function, it is still untenable.

³⁰⁸Hallo believes that “death is not something inevitable” as though God created it. Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 271.

³⁰⁹Doukhan, “Where Did Death Come From? A Study in the Genesis Creation Story,” 16, 18. A philosophical definition of “accident” is: “An event that occurs without intention, foresight, necessity, or expectation, and which needs not have occurred at all. . . . That which interferes with (assists in) a process without itself being necessary or integral to that process.” Peters A. Angeles, “Accident,” *Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1981), 2; cf. Simon Blackburn, “Accident,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4; Steven J. Wagner, “Accident,” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5. Doukhan’s apparent philosophical idea of death as an accident, “something not essential to life,” seems awkward and misleading because prior to sin death was not a feature of life, and after sin in a truly biblical sense the death of the Messiah (Gen 3:15; 22:17–18; Gal 3:16, 19; Rom 5:17–21; 16:20a; Rev 12) became necessary to save mankind from sin and death, and the Messiah’s death was also essential for the eternal life of all who believe (Heb 9:22; John 3:16). While humanly speaking, human death is not essential to human life, from a biblical perspective death is a reminder of human fall into sin and of the fall of divine judgment on sin. While death is the end of human being in time and can obviously add no essentials to the life that has deceased, it still appears misleading to use the word “accident” to describe death which was a divinely foretold consequence of sin (Gen 2:17), the result of the conscious and intentional choice of Adam and Eve and a divine judgment in Gen 3. If death is accepted as a divine judgment, then it was essential for the satisfaction of divine justice, divine law, divine mercy, divine life in relation to humans in sin and the salvation of human life.

The serpent and death. The serpent (שָׁרָפִים) is expressly identified as חַיָּה, a living thing or animal of the field which the Lord God had made (Gen 3:1) on the sixth day like humans, with the divine approbation of being “very good” (Gen 1:24–25, 31). The God-given human sovereignty over the animal world includes the serpent (Gen 1:26, 28). Therefore, the serpent in Gen 3:1 is not a supernatural being or animal, or a “human animal”³¹⁰ but a “natural snake.”³¹¹

While Gen 3:1 refers to an ordinary snake God made, it has been recognized by scholars that textual hints show more than a reptile is implicated.³¹² The evidence seems

³¹⁰By “human animal” I mean a hybrid, an animal with humanlike abilities: walking, talking, thinking, knowing, seducing, lying, having moral consciousness though not made in the image of God.

³¹¹Afolarin O. Ojewole, “The Seed of the Woman: An Exegetical and Intertextual Study” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2002), 130.

³¹²In the same vein, Kaiser says: “Note the intelligence, conception, speech, and knowledge the serpent possesses—indeed, a knowledge that surpasses either what man or woman have. The tempter speaks as if he has access to the mind of God—or at least to the supernatural world. . . . When all these details are taken into account, the identity of the tempter can be none other than Satan, that old dragon, the serpent.” Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in the Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 38–39. Briggs asserts: “The serpent is evidently something more than the animal serpent. There is intelligence, conception, speech and knowledge higher than that of the man or the woman. The woman knew that she had to deal, not with a mere serpent, one of the animals under her dominion, but with a higher power, a spiritual intelligence, who had entered the garden in hostility to her Creator, with the avowed purpose of delivering man from bondage.” Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfillment of Redemption Through the Messiah* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons 1886), 72. Ojewole presents a good treatment of the serpent as an ordinary snake and as Satan’s medium in his dissertation. Ojewole, “The Seed of the Woman,” 126–152; Keil and Delitzsch conclude that “the proof, therefore, that the serpent was merely the instrument of an evil spirit, does not lie in the punishment itself, but in the manner in which the sentence was pronounced.” Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1:99; Ephrem the Syrian holds that the

to indicate that the snake was possessed by an evil power, and stands as “the symbol of evil,”³¹³ “the foe of man”³¹⁴ (Gen 3:1–4, 14–16). In fact, in the NT the serpent of Gen 3:15 is expressly identified as Satan in Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 11:3, 14; and Rev 12:9.

Therefore, in Gen 3 the evidence favors the interpretation that the Devil through the medium of the natural serpent tempted man to sin.

In Gen 2:17, God said: “מֹת תָּמוּת,” literally translated “dying, you (will) die,” but the serpent’s dispute and contravention are: “לֹא-מֹת תָּמוּתוֹן,” literally translated “not dying, you (will) die” (3:4). The implications of the serpent’s (Satan’s) rejoinder range from man’s retention of immortality alone to a combination of immortality/mortality to immortality defined or confirmed by mortality. The serpent’s clarification is actually a prevarication and a mumbo-jumbo. The serpent seduced mankind into dying by denying dying.

Subsequently, the talking serpent changes the subject from immortality to self-deification. The allegation is that God is depriving humanity of divinity by hiding divinity from humanity (3:5). According to the serpent, the divine attribute denied humanity is

serpent was acting as “the obedient instrument of the ‘the Evil One,’ and the ‘executor of the intentions of Satan.’” Triggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian: With Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition*, Old Testament Series 11 (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1978), 89, 93.

³¹³Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 1:142.

³¹⁴Ibid., 160.

the knowledge of good and evil,³¹⁵ which is attainable by touching and eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

One of the trees in the garden is called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (טֹב וְרָע עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע, Gen 2:9). The serpent proposes that the eating of the fruit grants humanity this divine prerogative: the knowledge of good and evil

(טֹב וְרָע יִדְעִי טוֹב וְרָע, Gen 3:5). This proposal is a total bluff because after man’s sin,

God said: “Behold the man is become like one of us, to know good and evil” (טֹב וְרָע לְדַעַת, Gen 3:22). The difference between human and divine knowledge of good and evil is that human knowledge is experiential but God’s is intellectual. By nature, God has no ability to do moral evil (Jas 1:13, Ps 86:5) even though he creates physical evil (רָע וּבִזְרָא) in terms of allowing “calamities” (Isa 45:7). By nature, humanity had the ability not to sin (the power of cooperative choice, Gen 2:15–16), but through the Fall, acquired the ability to sin³¹⁶ because of his sin nature (Ps 51:5, Jas 1:14–15) thus necessitating a Savior (Gen 3:15, Rev 12:9, John 3:16–17).

³¹⁵Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 19. Genesis 3:6 portrays Eve’s perception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil as she self-dialogued in the temptation. Eve said that “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” is a “tree good for food” and “a tree to be desired to make one wise.” So the temptation incorporates appetite and wisdom. It appears that a case can be made for her understanding of the “knowledge of good and evil” as human determination of what is good or evil, right or wrong for them. Determining what is good or evil for humans is a divine prerogative (Gen 3:22). Only God is Creator and omniscient, and this distinguishes him as the exclusive moral arbiter.

³¹⁶Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 198.

The interpretation of the knowledge of good and evil as “moral discernment and the ability to make ethical choice”³¹⁷ or as consciousness of sex or sexual knowledge³¹⁸ is textually and contextually incorrect. Sarna views “good and evil” as a merism, meaning totality or everything. His understanding of the knowledge of good and evil as “the capacity to make independent judgments concerning human welfare”³¹⁹ seems more satisfactory.³²⁰ Hallo believes that the tree of knowledge of good and evil is “functionally equivalent to the tree of death, for eating of it means death—and not just death but mortality, while eating of the tree [of life] means not just life but immortality.”³²¹

³¹⁷Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 275; Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, 242.

³¹⁸Cuthbert A. Simpson, “Introduction and Exegesis,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1981), 1:439–457; Brandon, “The Origin of Death in Some Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” 227; idem, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East*, 136–137; For a full discussion, cf. Robert Gordis, “The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and Qumran Scrolls,” *JBL* (1957): 123–138; also see, Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, 242–245. Sapp has given a response to the claim that the knowledge of good and evil is sexual consciousness or knowledge by indicating that sexuality was a “purposeful part of God’s good creation, with no indication whatsoever that sexual experience was jealously withheld from Adam and Eve.” Stephen Sapp, *Sexuality, the Bible, and Science* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 18; cf. 17–19 for additional opposition to this view. Davidson provides additional response to this view by pointing out that Adam’s nakedness in Gen 3 is more than “physical nakedness,” it includes “a consciousness of guilt, a nakedness of soul.” Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3,” *AUSS* 26, no. 2 (1988): 123; Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*, 33–34.

³¹⁹Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 19.

³²⁰Ibid.; cf. Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 275.

³²¹Hallo, “Adapa Reconsidered: Life and Death in Contextual Perspective,” 275; cf. Theodor Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New

The serpent is the tempter of man to sin, and sinning brought death in its train. Sin and death emerged simultaneously in a causal link. The serpent, symbolic of the Devil, is presented as the originator of temptation to sin (Gen 3:1–7), but not as the originator of death. However, the Devil, through the medium of the serpent, was intent on hoodwinking humans into the fatal sinful choice. Therefore, he is responsible for tempting humans to sin and *ipso facto*, in an indirect way, culpable for humanity’s fall from immortality to mortality, from life to death, from very good to good and evil, from innocent to guilty.

Man and death. The immortality of pre-Fall humanity is implied in Gen 2. God’s idea that mankind will die if they eat the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:17) implies that they were not created mortal. If death was already human destiny, then God’s idea that mankind will die if they eat the forbidden fruit is unintelligible and unnecessary, since humans would die anyway—whether they eat or not.³²²

Any assumption that premature death is referred to in Gen 2:17 is textually and contextually unsustainable.³²³ First, the certainty of death is not the prematurity of death.

York/Evanston: Harper and Row, 1969), 32–35.

³²²Bailey discusses the possibility of two etiologies or earlier folk explanations of human mortality behind Gen 2–3: one in which the protohuman couple was created to be immortal. In this case “death would thus be an intrusion into the creator’s design, a curse under which humans were of necessity placed, a manifestation of their ‘fallen’ state.” The other in which “the protohuman couple was designed by the creator to be mortal.” Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, 36; Andreason asserts that Adam was “destined to immortality,” had “the potential for immortality.” Andreason, “Adam and Adapa: Two Anthropological Characters,” 193.

³²³Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, 53.

While prematurity focuses on the time of death and implies curtailment of life, or hastening of death, certainty of death entails the inevitability of death whether hastened or prolonged. Second, no proper or usual time of death or length of life is specified in the creation account.

Third, the fact that immediate physical death did not occur indicates that the eventuation of death was in focus. Concerning the prepositional phrase “in the day” (בַּיּוֹם, Gen 2:17), Wenham states that though it can “mean vaguely ‘when’ (cf. 2:4; 5:1), it tends to emphasize promptness of action (e.g., Num 30:6, 8, 9, etc.), especially in the closely similar passage (1 Kgs 2:37, 42).”³²⁴ However, Hamilton, considering the phrase in conjunction with מוֹת תָּמוּת, points out that “the verse is underscoring the certainty of death, not its chronology.”³²⁵ It is “not concerned with immediate execution but with ultimate death.”³²⁶ Hamilton proceeded to cite many passages with מוֹת תָּמוּת: Jer 26:8, 2 Sam 14:44, and Ezek 3:18; 33:8, 14, in which death was either delayed or averted.³²⁷ It can also be argued that God’s covenant of grace³²⁸ (Gen 3:15) delayed rather than hastened man’s immediate physical death.

³²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–11*, 68.

³²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 172.

³²⁶Ibid.

³²⁷Ibid., 172–174; cf. Harmeling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in the Context of Creation,” 21.

³²⁸D. J. Clines, “Themes in Genesis 1–11,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 490.

Fourth, to modify the verb die (מָוֹת תָּמוּת) with the insertion of the adjective “premature” is to make mortality a creation design, God the originator of death, and thereby in theory mitigate the severity of sin’s effect. The possibility of sin is not the reality of mortality, and the possibility of mortality is not the reality of mortality (Gen 2:17). The clear implication of v. 17 is that on the day of man’s sin, a change of his nature from immortal to mortal³²⁹ occurred. He became destined to die.

The mortality of post-Fall man is implied in Gen 3:22–24. The Fall engendered a change in man from immortal to mortal. Man chose the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thereby excluding himself from the tree of life. God respected his decision by denying him access to the tree of life and excluding him from the garden of Eden. This divine action prevented his eating from the tree of life, which could have set up an antilogical situation of man virtually becoming “an immortal sinner.”³³⁰

It appears that the Hebrew יָדוּ וְלָקַח גַּם מִמֵּץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וְחַי לְעֵלָם (lest he put forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and preserve his life for long duration or for ever, v. 22) means that eating perpetuates life,³³¹ rather than a single eating granting instant unconditional immortality. The Hebrew verbs יִשְׁלַח (qal impf., “he sends”), וְלָקַח (vav qal consec. pf., “he takes”), and וְאָכַל (vav qal consec.

³²⁹D. Jobling, “A Structural Analysis of Genesis 2:4b–3:24,” *Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts and Seminar Papers* 1 (1978): 64.

³³⁰Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 60.

³³¹“In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct.” White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 60.

pf., “he eats”) suggest continuance of sending, taking, and eating for the perpetuity of life. Both the imperfect and the perfect with the vav consecutive can indicate continuance of verbal action.³³²

If the tree of life granted perpetuity of life (extended existence)³³³ rather than unconditional immortality (absolute endless existence), then this means that man may have eaten of the tree of life before sin. In this case any immortality man would have received from God would be conditional in spite of the crucial test in the garden. Though the biblical narrative is continuous from the creation to the Fall, there is no indication as to the amount of time that elapsed from the divine directives and forewarning in Gen 2:16–17 and the Fall of Gen 3. In any case, eating of the tree of life is not a negation of conditional immortality³³⁴ because even after humans will have received immortality at Christ’s second advent (1 Cor 15:51–56), in the eternal state, he is given access to the tree

³³²Both וְלֶקַח and וְאָכַל are gnomic or proverbial perfective with “a present habitual significance.” Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’ Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 484–485, 488.

³³³Brand hypothesizes that “the fruit of the tree of life contains a set of enzymes that activate a renewal or replacement mechanism in the cells of our bodies, that prevents aging.” Leonard Brand, “What Are the Limits of Death in Paradise” (CAR, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2003), 7; Baldwin asserts: “Evidently humans were not created immortal but had to receive what is symbolized by the tree of life for extended existence. Their not being immortal meant that they would die from natural evil such as old age.” Dalton D. Baldwin, “Does Death before Sin Destroy the Plan of Salvation?” (CAR, Berrien Springs, MI, 2003), 3.

³³⁴It appears that “conditional immortality” can be virtually equated with “perpetuity of existence,” “extended existence,” “endless existence.” The divine gift of endless life is not a gift of self-existence or existence independent of God. Humanity is not divinity, therefore, humanity remains eternally dependent on God for life from creation to recreation and beyond.

of life (Rev 22:14), which bears twelve manner of fruits every month (Rev 22:2).

Therefore, any immortality that man is given is a derived creaturely immortality unlike God's essential immortality (1 Tim 6:16, 1 Tim 1:17).³³⁵

Scripture declares that physical death came into the world through the federal head of humanity—Adam. In Gen 3, it is only when God addresses Adam he pronounces the death sentence. Physical death is pronounced in symbolic metaphor: “For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19). Death is attributed to Adam, not Eve or Satan. The connection between Adam and physical death is made by Paul: “For since by Adam came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor 15:21–22; cf. Rom 5:12–19). Both man's death and the resurrection of Christ are physical in nature in keeping with the context of 1 Cor 15.³³⁶ In addition, nowhere in Scripture is physical death tied to the angelic fall.³³⁷ Therefore, physical death originated with Adam's sinful choice to flout the divine authority.

³³⁵1 Tim 6:16 says that God alone possesses (ἔχει) immortality or everlasting undyingness (τὴν ἀθανασία). Sarfati concludes that “in God's case, immortality is part of his essence, while *creaturely* immortality is based on God's moment by moment sustaining power (Col. 1:16–17).” Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 203.

³³⁶Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 201–202.

³³⁷Lewis assumes that Satan first corrupted the animals, then humans. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 123. Harmeling points out that Lewis's view shows up his adherence to the Gap Theory which posits a gap of time between Gen 1:1 and 1:2. Harmeling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in the Context of Creation,” 5, n. 10.

Animals and death. There is no record of animal death or predation in the creation account of Gen 1 and 2. Neither the immortality or mortality of animals, nor zoological access to the tree of life³³⁸ is explicitly specified in the pre-Fall account.³³⁹ Therefore, Baldwin concludes by saying: “I do not think that created animals . . . were naturally immortal.”³⁴⁰ However, Genesis shows that the human fall had biological, zoological, and ecological ramifications (Gen 3:14–19).

The Bible ties the fate of the animal world to the Fall of humanity (Gen 3:14; Rom 8:19–22). Animals were not created in God’s image and so are not free moral agents. They are amoral creatures. Animals do not sin. However, Genesis connects man’s fate to the fate of the animals. It is only after Adam’s sin that God pronounces judgment on the serpent (Gen 3:14–15), Eve (3:16), and on Adam himself (3:17–18). In the divine interrogation, Adam is first addressed (3:9), next Eve (3:13), and the serpent (3:14). In the judgment pronouncement, the order is reversed. The man is the first in the former and the last in the latter. In response to God’s interrogation, Adam tries to evade responsibility by passing it to Eve, thereby implicating God. Eve blamed the serpent. But in the judgment God shows that the responsibility for the introduction of sin, suffering, and death into the world stops with Adam.

³³⁸Brand, “What Are the Limits of Death in Paradise?” 8.

³³⁹Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 164.

³⁴⁰Dalton Baldwin, “Does Death before Sin Destroy the Plan of Salvation?” 3.

The judgment on the serpent for being instrumental in successfully tempting and deceiving Eve into a moral fall is: אָרֹר אֶתְּהָ מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה (thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field” [3:14]). The serpent is cursed above all (מִכָּל, “more than all”) the animals. This passage expresses a comparative superlative³⁴¹ like Gen 3:1. In Gen 3:1, the serpent is more shrewd than the animals of the field (עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה). The serpent is not only more shrewd than the cattle or beast, it is more cursed than them (3:14).³⁴² This means that the rest of the animal kingdom is also cursed but less cursed than the serpent.³⁴³

In Gen 3:14,15, the serpent is cursed (אָרֹר) with slithering on its belly, and eating (תֹּאכֵל) dust (עֲפָר) all the days of its life (כָּל-יְמֵי חַיָּיָה), and it will be bruised on its head by the seed of the woman. In consequence of man’s sin, in v. 17 the ground is cursed (אָרֹרָה) and man will eat (תֹּאכֵל) of it in sorrow all the days of his life (כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיָה). He came from dust and will return to the dust (עֲפָר). The phrase “all the days

³⁴¹Walke and O’Connor provide syntactical support for this translation of חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה מִכָּל חַיַּת as a comparative superlative in which the serpent is judged to surpass all other creatures with respect to shrewdness or the curse. Walke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 267–271; Joüon shows that מִן used with stative verbs express the comparative adjectival idea (more than) as in Gen 43:34, 1 Sam 9:2; 10:23. Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 522–524; cf. Ronald J. W. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 17, 55.

³⁴²Sarna sees this as “a kind of literary framework expressing the idea measure for measure.” Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 27.

³⁴³Keil and Delitzsch say that “the curse . . . was not pronounced upon all the beasts, but upon the serpent alone.” C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 98. Young believes that “the curse on the serpent cannot be extrapolated to the total animal kingdom.” Young, *Creation and the Flood*, 161.

of thy life” (Gen 3:14 and 17) has a beginning—the Fall, and an end—the dust of death. The evidence for its beginning is in the fact that God’s curse of the serpent is pronounced at the Fall.

The serpent’s diet of dust and human-impending dissolution to dust reflect the connection between eating and dying and the concept that eating is dying. The divine punishment of death on account of the sin of Adam shows that human destiny was linked to human appetite. Dust precedes the serpent and mankind, constitutes serpent and mankind (Gen 1:1;2:7, 19), and succeeds serpent and mankind in their dissolution. For both mankind and the serpent, their essence is their precedence and their destiny. Dust (עפר) connects the serpent’s eating to its dust-derivation and dust-destiny.³⁴⁴

The serpent as Satan’s medium and a symbol of sin shares in man’s fate of death as it shared in his downfall. The curse of death touches mankind, the serpent, and the other animals. Their death-bound existence is axiomatic. God’s use of coats of skin to clothe Adam and Eve provides early evidence of post-Fall death in the animal world.

The idea that there was predation before the Fall³⁴⁵ lacks biblical support. In discussing the limits of death in Eden, Brand presents the optional argument that invertebrates like insects “all have a genetically determined life span (as is currently true) and then die and are replaced by new offspring.”³⁴⁶ This conjecture is based on an

³⁴⁴Young opposes this conclusion with his idea that “the curse on the serpent does not involve death for the other animals nor does it involve structural changes in the animal world.” Young, *Creation and the Flood*, 162.

³⁴⁵Dalton Baldwin, “Does Death before Sin Destroy the Plan of Salvation?” 4.

³⁴⁶Brand, “What Are the Limits of Death in Paradise?” 8.

analogy between post-Fall and pre-Fall conditions, moving backward from our guilty present to the innocent past, from the known to the known or unknown.³⁴⁷ Such an argument that makes pre-Fall conditions continuous with or similar to post-Fall conditions more or less expunges the curse from death, disconnects the cause (sin) from the effect (death), makes death compatible with a very good creation, or even older than, or native to the innocent pair in Eden, and showcases death as an indispensable phenomenon for the maintenance of lower or all forms of life.

But in Gen 3:21, we read: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make (שָׁעַר) coats of skins, and clothed them.” Unlike בָּרָא (create, Gen 1:1), which intertextually refers to creation *ex-nihilo*³⁴⁸ (Ps 33:9; Heb 11:3; Rom 4:17), שָׁעַר (make) points to the use of pre-existing matter as in God’s use of the dust of the ground in making Adam (Gen 1:26; 2:7) or of Adam’s rib in making Eve (Gen 2:22). From the foregoing observation, it seems reasonable to conclude that God made the coats of skin from the hide of a dead animal(s). If this conclusion is correct, then Gen 3:21 constitutes the first intimation of animal death in the Bible.³⁴⁹ It appears that the animal hide may

³⁴⁷Such analogy or identity of conditions is a denial of sin’s fundamental and far-reaching effects upon the creation, making death as natural or as vital as life.

³⁴⁸Lim, *Grace in the Midst of Judgment: Grappling with Genesis 1–11*, 99, n. 147.

³⁴⁹Concerning Gen 3:21, Doukhan believes that “death now makes its appearance, since an animal must have been killed in order to provide the cover for man’s nakedness.” Doukhan, “Where Did Death Come From? A Study in the Genesis Creation Story,” *Adventist Perspectives* 4, no. 1 (1990): 17.

have come from (an) animal(s) slaughtered by Adam.³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, no matter who killed it/them—man or God—the coats of skins as clothing were used to substitute Adam and Eve’s makeshift fig-leaf clothing (עֵלֶּה תְּאֵנָה, Gen 2:7), which still left them naked (Gen 3:10).

In Genesis, animal death is post-Fall, perhaps human, and may serve a ritualistic purpose. Genesis 3:21 provides an inchoate hint of the role of the sanctuary services³⁵¹ intended to teach man about the gravity of and remedy for sin—“the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:33), “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb 9:24), “all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6), “for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10).

Vegetation and death. In Gen 1:11–12, רִשְׁוֹן (vegetation, NIV) is the genus or generic term, and מִזְרֵיעַ עֵשֶׂב (seed-bearing plants) and עֵץ פְּרִי עֵשֶׂה פְּרִי (fruit trees) are species. The book of Genesis does not apply חַיָּה נֶפֶשׁ to plants. But, plants and fruits are the God-given food for חַיָּה נֶפֶשׁ (Gen 1:29–30). All creatures are herbivores. Therefore, it is a conjecture of rationalization to ascribe carnivorous activity to the pre-Fall animals in spite of clear biblical evidence to the contrary. Any analogy

³⁵⁰Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Narrative for the Coming Millennium,” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 11, no. 1–2 (2000): 111–112.

³⁵¹Davidson observes that “God’s clothing of Adam and Eve with skins appears to represent more than a concern for physical covering, more than a demonstration of modesty appropriate in a sinful world, though these are no doubt included. The skins from slain animals seem to intimate the beginning of the sacrificial system and the awareness of a substitutionary atonement.” Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3,” *AUSS* 26, no. 2 (1988): 123.

which allows post-Fall conditions and activities to invariably dictate pre-Fall conditions and activities is methodologically flawed from the inception.

The idea of death before the Fall of man is only applicable to man and animals, not plants. Again, **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** is never applied to plants in the Bible.³⁵² In fact, God gave mankind and animals plants and fruits as food. Plant life is neither equated with human or animal life in the Bible. That plant life is not considered **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** means that it is not considered living.³⁵³

The consumption of all or parts of plants as food means the interruption to or cessation of their growth and life.³⁵⁴ Even though plants are never referred to as living creatures, from post-Fall evidence, their existence does come to an end. It seems that plants or, more so, parts of plants die. The Hebrew verb **מוֹת**, used with reference to the death of mankind (Gen 2:17) as well as animals (Eccl 3:19), is also used concerning the stump of a plant which regrew (Job 14:7–10). Nevertheless, there is no recorded pre-Fall evidence of plants and fruits dying by or existing in spite of human consumption.³⁵⁵

³⁵²Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 205, 209.

³⁵³Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 10.

³⁵⁴Harmeling surmises that “consuming grass or leaves of plants does not destroy them.” Harmeling, “A Very Good Death? A Biblical Study of the Incompatibility of God and Death in the Context of Creation,” 26.

³⁵⁵In the book of Revelation, the tree of life is again made accessible to mankind, that is, saved humanity. White sees a symbolic transfer of the tree of life from Eden to heaven after the Fall of Adam. “After the entrance of sin, the heavenly Husbandman transplanted the tree of life to the Paradise above; but its branches hang over the wall to the lower world. Through the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, we may still eat of its life-giving fruit.” Ellen White, *Heaven* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 172.

Since plants are not considered “living” like humans or animals, and God intended them for the nutrition of living things, then whatever death they experience, if any in pre-Fall Eden, has no significance for the origin of death. Such speculation cannot stand as an explicit or implicit proposition of the Bible.

Genesis 1–2 and the new creation

Genesis 1–2 pictures a very good creation in which man was at peace with God, the animal world and himself. There was no sin, no death, no predation, no suffering, and no diseases. These conditions lost through human sin will be restored in the eternal state. With the new creation of the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, and pain (Rev 22:4, Isa 25:8); once more there will be peaceful coexistence between humans and animals (Isa 11:6–9).

Isaiah 65:20 is not a negation of the deathlessness of the New Earth or a contradiction of Isa 25:8: “He will swallow up (destroy, Isa 3:12) death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” The death that is destroyed is “principally the death as evidencing the curse imposed in consequence of sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23; Heb. 2:15; Rev. 21:4; 22:3).”³⁵⁶ The idiomatic text (Isa 65:20, RSV) says: “No more shall there be in it (New Jerusalem) an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.” In this prophetic vision (Isa 65:17, 18; cf. 66:22) Isaiah uses “aspects of present life to create impressions of the life that is yet to

³⁵⁶J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 209.

come.”³⁵⁷ He talks about premature death and accursed sinners but in a subjunctive sense. In the life to come “one would be but a youth were one to die aged a hundred”³⁵⁸ and the sinner a hundred years old would be accursed.

Isaiah 65:20 does not imply the presence of death or sinners in the life to come because there will be no death (Isa 25:7–8) or sinners (Isa 65:6–7, 12, 15) in the new Jerusalem. If it were possible for a sinner to sneak into the city and escape detection for a century he would still be accursed and face death. The contextual point of the text is not “the nature and/or length of life in the new earth, but that the deadly conflict that typified Israel’s existence will no longer claim life.”³⁵⁹ In the new earth there will be no more curse (Rev 22:3). Therefore, the fact that there will be no death in the new creation is clear evidence that a death-free Genesis creation was not an impossibility. Death on earth originated with the Fall of humanity.

Fall of Lucifer and of Adam and the origin of death

In a detailed exegesis of Isa 14:12–15 and Ezek 28:12–19, Bertoluci has concluded that there is sufficient evidence to interpret these passages as referring to the chief fallen angel known as Satan.³⁶⁰ Both pericopes present a case of hubris. They seem

³⁵⁷Ibid., 530.

³⁵⁸Ibid.

³⁵⁹Yunker, “A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspective on Death,” 11.

³⁶⁰José M. Bertoluci, “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Great Controversy Between Good and Evil” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1985), 293, 295.

to exhibit vertical typology in the figures of the king of Babylon or the king of Tyre respectively, who ultimately represents the originator of evil,³⁶¹ whose activities of pride and pretension to be like God are in the heavenly or cosmic realm.³⁶² These passages are shown to have some affinities to Rev 12:7–9, and all three “transcend the present historical realm,” and intimate “an event that occurred in the heavenly realm”³⁶³ involving a divine being or member of the heavenly council (Ps 82; Ezek 28:12–19).³⁶⁴

The fall of Lucifer is of a moral, spiritual, geographical, and essential nature. He fell from perfection into iniquity (Ezek 28:15); from being “the shining one” (הַיְיָ לְלֹ) to being “Beelzebub, the prince of devils” (Matt 9:34; 12:24); from being the “covering cherub” (Ezek 28:14, 16), the “son of the dawn” (Isa 14:12), to being “the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan,” “the adversary” (1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:9); from “Eden, the garden of God,” from “the holy mountain of God,” from heaven to earth (Isa 12:12; Ezek 28:13, 14, 17; Rev 12:8, 9); and from being a divine being in or member of the heavenly council or angelic hosts³⁶⁵ (Ps 82:1, 6, 7), to fallen, being placed under the condemnation of death (Ezek 28:18, 19; Isa 14:15; Ps 82:6, 7). His fall represents the highest fall from the highest heaven to the lowest depth—the netherworld (Isa 14:12, 15). His sin introduced sin into God’s universe (Ezek 28:15–16; 1 John 3:8).

³⁶¹Ibid., 302–303.

³⁶²Ibid., 292.

³⁶³Ibid., 214, 220, 292.

³⁶⁴Ibid., 143.

³⁶⁵Ibid., 141.

The deceptive serpent symbol of the devil in Eden (Gen 3:1) indicates that the cosmic war in heaven (Rev 12:7–9) preceded the fall of mankind in Eden. Though the fall of humans is treated before the fall of Lucifer, in chronological sequence, the iniquitous fall of Lucifer comes before the fall of man into sin (Rev 12:7–9; Gen 3:1–5). The sin of Satan constitutes original sin in God’s universe and among the angelic order of beings (1 John 3:18). Adam’s sin is the original sin in the human family, which engendered the universal sinfulness and mortality of all humanity (Rom 5:12). It is the sin of generic man that affected human nature, environment, and the lower creatures because humanity was given “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Gen 1:26). Human dominion shared in his fate (Gen 3:17–19; Rom 8:19–23).

Satan claimed: “I will be like the Most High” (Isa 14:14). His desire was to be like God in authority, not character. Since he was unable to usurp divine authority, he attempted to usurp human authority or dominion over the earth and exercise it over humanity himself by deception in the garden of Eden (Gen 3). The sin of Satan which constitutes original sin in God’s universe preceded his sin of enticing humanity to sin in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:1–5). The former was in heaven (Isa 14:12–15; Ezek 28:13, 14, 17; Rev 12:7–9), the latter on earth in Eden (Gen 3:1–5; Isa 14:12; Rev 12:9).

The sin of Satan and the sin of the first pair centered in self-deification (Isa 14:12–14; Gen 3:1–6, 22) and led to mortality. We have seen that through sin Adam and

Eve moved from conditional immortality to mortality (Gen 2:17; 3:19). On account of his sin, Satan is subjected to mortality. In this context, God says:

1. “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isa 14:14).
2. “Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee”; “never shall thou be any more” (Ezek 28:18, 19).
3. “Behold ye shall die like men” (Ps 82:7).
4. “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal 4:1).
5. “Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 12:41).
6. “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev 20:10).

Both Satan’s and Adam’s sin brought mortality and death. The righteous death of the seed of the woman, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, provided a means of escape from death for the first Adam (Gen 3:15) and the rest of humanity. Christ did “abolish death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10). The unconditional prophecy of Satan’s extinction confirms his irrevocable death-destiny and incurable opposition against God.

Both Satan’s and Adam’s sin results in their demise. The Bible causatively and directly ties the fall of Satan to his own death (Ezek 28:18, 19), and not to the death of

humanity or to death within the human domain or dominion. While the finally impenitent are united in the destiny of death to Satan (Mal 4:1; Rev 20:10, 15), they are disunited in death's origin. Paul avers that death passed on all men through Adam's original sin (Rom 5:12), not through Satan's original sin. It is Satan's sin of enticing the first pair in Eden to sin that is directly tied to the human fall into sin (Gen 3:1–5, 14, 15), and not Satan's sin in heaven (Rev 12:7–9). Therefore, Satan's sin of enticement, and not his original sin, is directly connected to the human fall into sin.

The original sin of Satan and of Adam led to spiritual and eternal death. Spiritual death, as being dead in sin (Eph 2:1–5), moral nakedness, alienation from and fear of God, (Gen 3:8–13), and separation from God (Isa 59:2), seems applicable to both Adam and Satan in sin. Satan was expelled from the society of holy beings in heaven, and acquired the name Satan instead of Lucifer. He is engaged in the sin of deception in opposition to God (Rev 12:7–9). He is presented as the originator of evil, the source or fountainhead of or the power behind all that is in opposition to God and his government (Isa 14; Ezek 28).³⁶⁶ Since his doom is sealed and settled, he is hopelessly spiritually dead.

The biblical record does not indicate that any angel ceased to exist as a result of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan in heaven (Rev 12:7–9), or thereafter. The end of Satan and his fallen angels is in the end when God will bring down and close the curtain on the history of sin and sinners (Rev 20:7–15). In a real sense, the first death was angelic, and of a spiritual nature. Adam and Eve first died spiritually when they sinned,

³⁶⁶Ibid., 296.

before they eventually died physically. The first physical human death was the death of Abel—Cain’s fratricide (Gen 4:8). The first physical death in Eden was animal death to clothe Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). The spiritual death of Satan due to his sin in heaven did not pass spiritual death to mankind in Eden. Man was created in God’s image and likeness (Gen 26, 27), “very good” (Gen 1:31) and upright (Eccl 7:29). He was not created with a sin-nature or a broken relationship to God inherited from Satan.

The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that death ensues and emanates from sin (Gen 2:7; Ezek 20:4, 20; Rom 6:23). The Bible intimates that Lucifer was created with conditional immortality like humanity. In both cases of angelic and human creation, mortality and death were not constitutive of the divine creation. Satan’s death like man’s is tied to his sin (Ezek 28:18; Gen 2:17). He will die like man (Ps 82:8). If angelic death was native to their nature, then Satan would die in any event. If this were the case, then Satan’s condemnation to death would only be a matter of premature death, or of a severer death in intensity, or a difference in the mechanism of death imposition or advent, and not of the introduction of mortality and death as a new entity.

In Luke 20:36, the future immortality of saved humanity is equated with the immortality of the angels: “Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels.” Satan is a fallen angel. The certainty of his death and doom prophesied in the Bible indicates that either he never had immortality, or he lost it through sin. The option of Satan being an immortal sinner is incompatible with Ezekiel’s declaration of Satan’s extinction: “never shalt thou be any more.” It seems reasonable to conclude that Satan’s

fall was not only from good to evil, but also from immortal to mortal.³⁶⁷ The everlastingness of his hell-fire is in its irreversible effects (Ezek 28:18–19; Rev 20:10), and not in the nature of the fire. Divine destruction of Satan is not in an undying Satan who is being destroyed but never becomes destroyed. In other words, Satan will not be dead alive after hell-fire punishment.

The phenomenon of Satan's impending death points to the real possibility of his untimed, unspecified, and unmentioned transition from immortality to mortality. The general thrust of Scripture seems to indicate his fall from perfection (Ezek 28:15, 18) as the transition point. His mortality means that he will die the second death (Rev 20:10, 14), not the first or natural death that humans experience. Between Satan's loss of immortality and his actual second death in the end, the continuity of Satan's life is by divine permission in apparent mortal angelic longevity.

Theological Implications

God created man in his own image to live forever. Man was created with the possibility of wrongdoing. The possibility of sinning does not automatically render one mortal. Also, the possibility of mortality is not the reality of mortality. Man's creaturely immortality was conditioned on continued obedience to the divine authority. Death among earthly creatures originated with human choice to flout divine authority (Gen 2:17; 3:19). Death was not a creation design for mankind or angels, not an arbitrary pre- or

³⁶⁷Bertoluci observes that the being in Isa 14, Ezek 28, and Ps 82 is "a creature subjected to mortality." *Ibid.*, 213, 143. His time of death is unspecified. *Ibid.*, 143, n. 5.

post-Fall imposition, but a corollary of human and angelic choice against the God of his nature and the nature of his nature.

God has immortality as an essential attribute of his divine nature. He is not a death-dealer but a life-giver. He brought angels into existence. He gave the breath of life to man and animals, and called the plants into existence. He prepared the earth to sustain life in an ecological and symbiotic balance. Death is the privation or absence of life. Sin separates man from God—the Source of life. Separation from the Source of life means spiritual, physical, and eternal death. Though Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death in terms of alienation from their Maker, physical death featured prominently as a result of their rebellion. Before sin, death was unnatural. After sin, death became natural. All life on earth is destined to death.

Satan's sin is the introductory sin into God's universe, but it is the sin of Adam that has deadly effects on humanity and human dominion (Gen 3:17–19; Gen 1:26; Rom 8:19–23). While sin is the origin of death (Gen 2:16–17), death is God's judgment on sin (Ezek 28:18; Gen 3:17–19) and death is death's destiny (Rev 22:4). God anticipated the entrance of death and predicts the end of death.

Sin in Genesis is a choice (Gen 2:14–15), a broken relationship and a nakedness of soul (3:6–11, 17, 24). Sin as choice logically preceded sin as nature. Sin brought suffering, hardship, and death (3:16–19). Sin is a moral evil, but death is a physical evil that has been and will be used by God in post-Fall judgments. The morality of death is contingent on the divine command. God is the universal moral arbiter in a post-Fall world.

In Genesis it is God who pronounces judgment on the guilty. God was not just confessing or confirming the natural outworking of sin he observed or foresaw. Specific effects of man's choice to sin are enumerated as divine prescriptions. God created human nature with freedom of choice and with the potential for sin-death causality. In response to sin, human nature works as God ordained it. Death is not only an inherent reaction of unfallen human nature to the experience of sin but an inevitable judgment of God's holy nature in relation to sin. So, sin is the origin of death, and death is God's judgment on sin. The end of sin and death is the end of sin and death by death.

Theodicean Implications

In Eden, the presence of evil was symbolized by the tree of knowledge of good (the character of God) and evil (the character of the devil). The talking serpent was Satan's medium and became a symbol of sin. Man was successfully tempted to sin against God in pursuit of wisdom and self-deification. Like Lucifer, the desire to be like God had something to do with man determining what is moral and beneficial for him in contravention to the explicitly stated divine command.

While Adam blamed Eve and God for his sin (Gen 3:12), Eve blamed the serpent God created. The serpent (Satan) is guilty of tempting man to sin, which is a sin in itself. Satan is not responsible for man's sin. God does not justify himself against man's implicit blame shift to him, but he proceeds to pronounce judgments upon man as a consequence of his sin. The fact that God created the human pair in his own image as free moral agents and with a sin-free nature and placed them in Eden exposed to

temptation did not automatically constitute them as sinners. Before the fall sin was unnatural for Adam and Eve. They not only went against the divine nature in sinning but also against their own pre-fall human nature.

The good God created a very good creation without disease, decay, or death of **נֶפֶשׁ** creatures. Man (the federal head of the creation) and nature coexisted in an ecological balance and symbiotic relationship. Human sin brought the curse of death and disease upon Adam and Eve as well as the rest of the **נֶפֶשׁ** creatures under their dominion. Orderly nature became disorderly. The link between sin and consequences was ubiquitous to mankind. Sin brought its own distaste and deterrence to mankind, and magnified the human need of God. Sin, which separates from God (Gen 3:24), finds resolution only in God (3:15).

God created man with the ability to yield or withhold obedience. He alerted and forewarned man about the emergence of the sin-death causality of his choice. It was not possible for God to create humans with immunity to sin with impunity. The result of sin is death (Rom 6:23; Ezek 18:4). The chain reaction from sin to death was potential with the nature of the creation from the hand of God. The nature of God is antagonistic to sin (Hab 1:13). By his authority it must be driven away into oblivion. His grace (Gen 3:15) does not annul responsibility for sin, but may delay or avert punishment through substitutionary atonement.

Psalm 104 and Genesis 1–3

The Psalms, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, belong to the division of the Bible called Wisdom Literature. Psalm 104 is a unique Psalm in this book of the Bible. It is a Creation Psalm that provides the polemical, aesthetic, intricate, and profound interpretation of the original creation.³⁶⁸ It lacks the usual superscription that ascribes authorship to David, but like Ps 103, which is ascribed to David in the Greek LXX and Latin (Vulgate) versions, it begins and ends with “bless the Lord O my soul,” which suggests Davidic authorship.³⁶⁹

Genre Classification and Function

Bellinger identifies four main genres in the book of Psalms: Praise, Lament, Royal, and Wisdom.³⁷⁰ Psalm 104, like Pss 8, 19, 65 and 148, is classified under the primary genre of Praise Psalms called Creation Psalms.³⁷¹ Psalm 104 as well as all the

³⁶⁸Richard M. Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” *Science and Faith Council*, Andrews University, August 2008, 4.

³⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 2; VanGemenen, “Psalms,” *The Expository’s Bible Commentary*, 657; cf. Robert L. Alden, *Psalms*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 13; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1959), 722.

³⁷⁰W. H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 23.

³⁷¹Mark Mangano, ed., *The College Press NIV Commentary*, The Old Testament Introduction (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2005), 379.

other Psalms in the book is in the form of poetry³⁷² and almost all were put to music for the purpose of corporate worship.³⁷³

Account Analysis

The predation problem

Animal death is post-Fall in the Genesis creation account. However, on the basis of the description of creation in Ps 104 and the presence of predation in the geologic column assumed to be there long before there were any human beings who could sin, it has been argued that “death before the first human sin from old age, predation, earthquakes and other forms of natural evil was not caused by sin. It was also not caused by God. . . . Let us call this death which is caused by natural evil, natural death.”³⁷⁴ This conclusion is substantiated by a pre-Fall application of Ps 104:21, which says: “The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.”

³⁷²Ibid., 363, 379–383. “Psalm 104 . . . must be reckoned as poetry of the highest level.” Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T, 1990), 70; see also Patrick D. Miller, Jr., “The Poetry of Creation: Psalm 104,” in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 96; Mitchell Dahood, S. J., *Psalms III:101–150*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 33, n. 1.

³⁷³Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 21 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 28. Craigie suggests the setting of the dedication of Solomon’s temple for the Psalm, and an apologetic role of stressing Yahweh’s transcendence in relation to the sun (cf. 1 Kgs 8:12). P. C. Craigie, “The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry: Psalm in the Light of Egyptian and Ugaritic Poetry,” in *Semitics*, vol. 4 (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1974), 19–21.

³⁷⁴Dalton Baldwin, “Does Death before Sin Destroy the Plan of Salvation?” 4.

Structure of Psalm 104

The idea that Ps 104 is a Creation Psalm with clear linkages to the Genesis creation account has been recognized by many scholars.³⁷⁵ Doukhan has convincingly outlined the thematic and lexical correspondences between Gen 1–2 and Ps 104.³⁷⁶ It has been noted that the Psalmist follows a thematic sequencing of the days of creation from the first day to the seventh day.³⁷⁷

Apart from the sequencing of the days of creation, certain literary patterns have also been detected in Ps 104. Allen proposes a concentric structure (or chiasm) of the

³⁷⁵Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 5. “The psalm is a poetic retelling of the Genesis Story, and it therefore falls under the rubric of ‘innerbiblical interpretation.’” Adele Berlin, “The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104,” in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 75. “A summary of the creation account is contained in the psalm, similar to the record in Genesis chapter one.” Walter D. Zorn, *Psalms*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2004), 2:264; see also W. T. Purkiser, “Psalm,” *Beacon Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1967), 356; Derek Kidner, *Psalm 73–150*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity, 1975), 365. “The poetic version of Creation is complementary to the prosaic of Genesis 1.” VanGemeren, “Psalms,” *The Expository’s Bible Commentary*, 657.

³⁷⁶Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 5: 83–90.

³⁷⁷Delitzsch calls Ps 104 “a Hymn in Honour of the God of the Seven Days,” and sees it as “an echo of the heptahemeron (or history of the seven days of creation) in Gen. I. 1–ii.3. Corresponding to the seven days it falls into seven groups. . . . It begins with the light and closes with an allusion to the Sabbath.” Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, n.d.), 3:127–128; see also Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, 84–87; Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 9–25; William H. Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 430–431.

Psalm containing five strophes: A (vv. 1–4), B (vv. 5–13), C (vv. 14–23), B' (vv. 24–30), A' (vv. 31–35).³⁷⁸ Terrien has suggested symmetrical “strophic couplings” of Ps 104 into eight strophes.³⁷⁹ Davidson sees the Psalm as poetically displaying a chiasmic structure.³⁸⁰ The verse of concern—Ps 104:21—is a part of the middle division or the center section or panel of Allen and Davidson’s structures of Ps 104. Doukhan, Shea, Kidner, and Davidson locate and/or discuss Ps 104:21 under day four of the creation week. Verse 21 is in the section delimited by vv. 19 and 23/24. This section (Ps 104:19–24) shows that the Psalmist was providing a poetic interpretation of Gen 1:14–19.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸Allen, *Psalm 101–150*, 32.

³⁷⁹Terrien’s strophic couplings is outlined this way: I [Light] and VIII [Glory] (vv. 2–4 + 31–34); II [Earth] and VII [Terrestrial Creatures] (vv. 5–9 + 27–30); III [Spring and Rain] and VI [The Great Sea] (vv. 10–13 + 24–26); IV [Vegetation] and V [Night and Day] (vv. 14–18 + 19–23). Samuel Terrien, *The Psalm: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003), 718.

³⁸⁰Davidson’s thematic chiasmic arrangement of Ps 104 is displayed as follows:

- A. Introduction or inclusio (v. 1a): “Bless the Lord O my soul”
 - B. Day One (vv. 1b–2a); praise and theophany; “Yahweh, my God”
 - C. Day Two (vv. 2b–4): emphasis upon the wind/spirit/breath (Heb *ruach*, 2x)
 - D. Day Three (vv. 5–18): emphasis upon the deep, sea waters, and springs
 - E. Day Four (vv. 19–24): moon, sun, and climactic exultation
 - D’. Day Five (vv. 25–26): emphasis on the sea and its moving things
 - C’. Day Six (vv. 27–30): emphasis upon the spirit/breath (Heb *ruach*, 2x)
 - B’. Day Seven (vv. 31–35); theophany and praise: “Yahweh, my God”
 - A’. Conclusion or inclusio (v. 35b): “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” Coda: “Hallelujah.”
- Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 27.

³⁸¹Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 17.

Predation or vegetarianism

The events of Gen 1:14–19 are pre-Fall in occurrence. If Ps 104:19–23, of which Ps 104:21 is a part, is an interpretation of Gen 1:14–19, then this suggests that Ps 104:21 can be taken to mean that lions preyed on other animals as food before the fall of humanity, as some have maintained.³⁸² As a result, then, animal death by predation predated the fall of humanity and can be considered a part of the original creation. Such an approach and conclusion, however, is both a “hermeneutical transgression” that pits Scripture against Scripture and a “hermeneutical inversion” that subordinates Scripture to the tentative or latest findings of science.

In five different instances the original diet for humanity and/or animals is specified as vegetarian (Gen 1:29, 30; 2:16; 3:2, 18). It is also important to note that even after the fall of humanity, the human diet is herbal food (עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה), Gen 3:18). Divine allowance for flesh-eating is not given until after the flood: “Everything moving that liveth (כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא־חַי) shall be meat for you; even as the green herb (עֵשֶׂב הַיָּבֵשׁ) have I given you all things” (Gen 9:3). Therefore, herbal food, not animal or human flesh, constituted the diet for humans and the animals.

³⁸²Dalton Baldwin, “Does Death before Sin Destroy the Plan of Salvation?” 4; Also, Ross views carnivory as a part of the original created order. H. Ross, K. Samples, M. Harman, and K. Bontrager, “Life and Death in Eden, the Biblical and Scientific Evidence for Animal Death before the Fall,” audiocassette, *Reasons to Believe*, 2001.

The temporal movement in Psalm 104

The linkages or correspondences between Gen 1–3 and Ps 104 do not automatically indicate that the Psalmist was only describing the pre-Fall creation like the author of Genesis. Shea observes the literary movements or oscillations of the Psalm when he indicates that while Ps 104 follows the order of the days of Creation in Gen 1, it “utilizes an anticipation of what would come about from those days; it looks forward to their potential, their function, and their benefit.”³⁸³ In the same vein, Delitzsch says: “The poet sings the God-ordained present condition of the world with respect to the creative beginnings recorded in Gen i.1–ii.3.” Berlin observes that “the psalmist uses the Genesis blueprint, but he does not structure his picture of creation exactly the way Genesis does.”³⁸⁴ Therefore, Ps 104, though based on Gen 1–3, and though Ps 104:19–23 is an interpretation of Gen 1:14–19, they are not a carbon copy or duplication of the Genesis creation account that lacks the Psalmist’s imprint and evidence of the fallen world as he knows it.

The creation before the Fall is the creation after the Fall but marred by sin, and the knowledge of good and evil. In its unfallen or fallen condition, the Psalmist sees it as

³⁸³Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 430–431.

³⁸⁴Berlin, “The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104,” in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 76. Similarly, concerning the relationship between Ps 104 and Gen 1, Leupold says: “What is its relation to the creation account found Gen. 1? This psalm is not based directly on this Scripture passage, but it does show familiarity with it and may well be regarded as a free treatment of the known facts of creation with particular attention to various other factors that the concise account of Gen. 1 could not have brought into the picture.” Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 722.

God's creation.³⁸⁵ Creation as it stands in the now is a continuing general revelation of God's creative power and activity in pre-Fall history (Ps 19:1, Rom 1:20). In Ps 104:31, **סָבַר** (create) speaks of God's abiding preservation of his creation. Along these lines, Davidson points out that "it is not inappropriate to speak of Psalm 104 as describing both the original creation (*creatio prima*) and the preservation of creation (*creatio continua*) by the sovereign Creator, Yahweh. Thus the poetic depiction of the events of creation includes not only completed action (indicated in Hebrew by the perfect) but also ongoing action (indicated in Hebrew by the imperfect and the participle)."³⁸⁶

While the Psalmist followed the common motifs of the Genesis creation,³⁸⁷ there are several pointers showing that he was describing his "contemporary world of creation"³⁸⁸ with God's creative historic and continuing activity as the basis of its

³⁸⁵In the same vein, Younker asserts: "God's creative acts penetrate the fallen world—He is the Creator, even of this Fallen world." Younker, "A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspective on Death," 12.

³⁸⁶Davidson, "Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104," 9. "The psalm describes the creative and providential acts of Yahweh in the world." David G. Barker, "The Waters of the Earth: An Exegetical Study of Psalm 104:1–9," *Grace Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 65.

³⁸⁷Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, 83–85; cf. Allan M. Harman, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 1998), 339.

³⁸⁸Younker, "A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspective on Death," 12. Wilcock says: "Yet an account of the past is exactly what 104 is not. Certainly it looks back to what happened at the beginning, but really it is celebrating the way the creation works now." Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 122.

existence. The Psalmist talks about the past and the present and the past in the present.³⁸⁹ Psalm 104 is both “a hymn of God’s acts in the past” (vv. 5–9) and “a hymn of praise for God’s provisions in the present” (vv. 10 onwards).³⁹⁰ The hymnic nature of Ps 104 is conspicuous in vv. 1, 24, 31, 33, 34.

Post-Fall perspective in Psalm 104

The idea that in Ps 104 the Psalmist incorporates post-Fall aspects in his description of the Creation can be demonstrated by the eight elements listed and explained below.

1. The Hebrew word for labor (עֲבוֹרָה) used in Genesis describes human activity in and outside the garden, before and after the Fall (Gen 2:15; 3:23). This same Hebrew word is used in Ps 104:23 intimating that Ps 104 is a poetic interpretation of Gen 1–3. Plus the pre-Fall task of keeping and tending the garden of Eden may have differed from the labor envisioned by the Psalmist.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹“By blending into a seamless whole the account of creation week with the present conditions of the earth after the Fall, moving effortlessly and almost unnoticeably from the time of origins to the present, the Psalmist may be implying relative temporal continuity between the past and the present, i.e., a relatively recent and not remote creation.” Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 34.

³⁹⁰Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 209; cf. Allan M. Harman, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 339; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III*, The Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 33.

³⁹¹Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 18, 29.

2. The mention of the “cedars of Lebanon” (Ps 104:16) seems to put the Psalmist’s depiction of creation post-Fall when the name Lebanon would have been assigned to a place (Deut 1:7).

3. The movement of ships on the great and wide sea (Ps 104:25, 26) speaks of post-Fall vessels made by humans to traverse the oceans.

4. The hiding of God’s face which meant trouble, the withdrawal of breath from creatures, the advent of death, and the return to dust (v. 29) suggest the presence of sin leading to death (Ps 104:29) and portray a post-Fall perspective. The concept of the return to dust (עָפָר) in Ps 104:29 is mentioned in Gen 3:19 only after human sin.

5. Psalm 104:13, in a reference to rainfall, talks about God watering the hills from his chambers. However, Gen 2:5–6 refers to a mist that ascended from the earth in pre-Fall Eden.

6. Adam and Eve in Eden may not have known of earthquakes and volcanoes mentioned in Psalm 104:32.

7. The presence of sinners and the wicked on the earth (Ps 104:35) to be eradicated differs from the pre-Fall or unfallen perfect conditions of Eden (Gen 1–2).

8. The reference to the flood of water that covered the earth, fled from its surface and established in its place (Ps 104:6–9),³⁹² and the eschatological renewal of the face of the earth (v. 30) further attests to the post-Fall perspective of the Psalm.

³⁹²Barker, “The Waters of the Earth: An Exegetical Study of Psalm 104:1–9,” 75, 79.

These eight pointers indicate that the Psalmist was dealing with “God’s created world from the perspective of how it functions after the Fall”³⁹³—the post-Fall realities and conditions, and not the original creation.³⁹⁴

Predation—Pre- or Post-Fall in Psalm 104?

Psalm 104:21, which is used to support the idea of predation before the Fall, is located in the pericope (Ps 104:19–24) below.

He appointed the moon for seasons:
The sun knoweth his going down (v. 19).
Thou makest darkness and it is night:
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth (v. 20).
*The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God* (v. 21).
The sun ariseth,
They gather themselves together,
And lay them down in their dens (v. 22).
Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening (v. 23).
O Lord how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom has thou made them all:
The earth is full of thy riches (v. 24).

The seamless blend in the account of the past and present is almost indistinguishable in this pericope. The original creation of sun, moon, animals, and man still functions after the Fall. The young lions’ feeding behaviors are said to be neither

³⁹³Ibid., 29.

³⁹⁴Younker draws up a similar conclusion: see also “It is the Psalmist’s world that is being described and not the pristine, unfallen world.” Younker, “A Look at Biblical and Ancient Extra-Biblical Perspective on Death,” 12; see also Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, 209.

continuous or discontinuous with their pre-Fall behaviors, yet their existence penetrates the Fall.

The idea that Ps 104:21 refers to the existence of predation before the Fall is a case of eisegesis. First, it must be noted that both the Psalmist and the author of Genesis wrote in postlapsarian times. Second, the author of Genesis gives a depiction of the unfallen world (Gen 1–2), then the fallen condition (Gen 3). There is absolutely no evidence of predation in the Genesis creation account. But the Psalmist gives several indications that the post-Fall conditions both in terms of the present and the future are also in view.

Third, Genesis shows a progression of the creation from its beginning to its completion, but the Psalmist refers to the creation as a finished product, from the point of its appearance and its present existence and usefulness. Psalm 104:21 is a part of vv. 19–23, which deals with the Creator’s rule over the seasons. Verses 19–20 correspond to Gen 1:14, in which God made the sun, moon, and stars to serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years. The regularity of and orderliness about the creation is God’s design. The activities of both animals and man are regulated by day, night, and seasons.³⁹⁵

The young lions roar at night for their “prey” and return to their dens, and man works during the day until the evening (Ps 104:21–23). Significantly, the text does not say that the predatory behavior of the lion predates or postdates the Fall of man, or is as old as or older or younger than the luminaries. The moon was created on the fourth day

³⁹⁵Harman, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 341.

and the beasts of the earth (including lions) were made on the sixth. God gives the beasts of the earth (חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ) only green herb (יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב) for food in Gen 1:30, not animal or human flesh.

Fourth, the two verbs used in Ps 104:21 about the young lions are: “roaring” (שֹׁאֲנִים, qal active participle) and “to seek” (לְבַקֵּשׁ, piel infinitive construct). They indicate an ongoing and purposeful present behavior of the young lions in their quest for food from God. The Hebrew word for prey is טְרֵף, meaning prey, food, leaf. In the book of Genesis, it refers to: (1) a fresh-plucked olive leaf the dove returned with to the ark (Gen 8:11), (2) animals (sheep and goats) torn of wild beasts (31:39), and (3) the conquest of Judah under the metaphor of a lion returning from its prey (49:9).³⁹⁶ The verb טָרַף means to “tear, rend, pluck.”³⁹⁷

The various uses of the Hebrew noun טְרֵף are post-Fall. Neither the verb nor the noun is used to describe the behavior of the pre-Fall animals in Genesis. Food for the animals in the Genesis pre-Fall account is only called green herb (יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב), not טְרֵף. Furthermore, טָרַף in Ps 104:21 does not absolutely negate the possibility of יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב in the pre-Fall account for it also carries the meaning of a fresh-plucked leaf (Gen 8:11). The evidence from Genesis about the vegetarian diet of the pre-Fall animals is clear, unequivocal, and singular. All the animals were herbivores. Therefore, the origin of death cannot be located in a conjectured or hypothesized pre-Fall predation.

³⁹⁶BDB, s.v. “טְרֵף.”

³⁹⁷Ibid., “טָרַף.”

While flesh-eating is added to man's diet after the flood (Gen 9:3), there is no biblical account of a dietary change or biological change from herbivore to carnivore for the animals.³⁹⁸ Consequently, biblical silence has led back to speculation about pre-Fall predation and answers from post-Fall scientific research on fossils. Ramm argues that "to insist that all carnivora were originally vegetarian is another preposterous proposition. Why such huge teeth and sharp claws?"³⁹⁹ Snoke believes that anteaters, sharks, and vultures would require complete overhaul of their biology to be vegetarian, and that biblical silence on change of predator means that it did not occur.⁴⁰⁰ Lewis like Ramm sees Eden as a death-free locality with vegetarian diet and no hostilities, and the world outside as "natural" from the beginning with death and decay.⁴⁰¹

In response to the above positions, it must be noted that flesh-eating was not an option for the original pair because "to eat meat would have entailed killing and

³⁹⁸Lewis points out that "nothing in the account suggests that the realm of nature was altered in a fundamental way so as to make death and violence the new fate of all animals. There is no indication that the Lord God added thorns to the rose-bushes, or pointed teeth to the carnivorous beasts." Arthur H. Lewis, "The Localization of the Garden of Eden," *Bulletin of Evangelical Theological Society* 11 (1968): 174.

³⁹⁹Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 209. Ramm alleges: "There was disease and death and bloodshed long before man sinned." Idem, *Offence to Reason: A Theology of Sin* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 113.

⁴⁰⁰David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for the Old Earth* (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1998), 29.

⁴⁰¹Arthur H. Lewis, "The Localization of the Garden of Eden," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11 (1968): 170–175; Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 334–335.

bloodshed.”⁴⁰² It is not known or revealed whether some animals genetically mutated from herbivores to carnivores, or whether their attack and defense features anticipated the Fall as dust of the ground anticipated death in Genesis. It is quite possible that the original function of the shearing and stabbing teeth of carnivores was for the dismantling of fruit.⁴⁰³

What Genesis reveals is that all living souls and creatures were vegetarians. There is absolutely no biblical evidence for the origin of death by predation within or without Eden. It is the new scientific thinking, first in geology and then in biology, that has led many theologians and exegetes during the nineteenth century to abandon or accommodate the traditional straightforward reading or interpretation of Gen 1–11 to the latest orthodoxy in science.⁴⁰⁴

Theological and Theodicean Implications

Psalms 104 is a poetic interpretation of Gen 1–3. Both Gen 1–3 and Ps 104 are pre-Fall and post-Fall in orientation. The Psalmist seems to raise the idea of predation in Ps 104:21, which says: “The young lions roar after their prey.” The automatic pre-Fall

⁴⁰²Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change* (Bristol, England: Mentor, 1997), 228; Von Rad concludes: “Killing and slaughter did not come into the world, therefore, by God’s design and command. . . . No shedding of blood within the animal kingdom, and no murderous action by man!” Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 59.

⁴⁰³Brand, “What Are the Limits of Death in Paradise?” 7.

⁴⁰⁴Nigel S. de Cameron, *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible* (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, 1983), 17–18, 72–83; cf. Kelly, *Creation and Change*, 48–49.

allocation of the behavior of the young lions in Ps 104:21 places the origin of death in the animal kingdom. This interpretation, however, collides with the account of Genesis in which death, whether of animal or human, is post-Fall. There is nothing in Ps 104 that coerces a pre-Fall interpretation in opposition to Gen 1–3.

Both human and animal diet is vegetarian in the Genesis creation account (Gen 1:29–30). The idea that predation predates the Fall is a specific denial of the authenticity of God’s specific recognition of the animals’ feeding behaviors as vegetarianism—“And it was so.” Predation says: “And it was not so.” Predation as the origin of death not only places animal death at the inception of death, it introduces skepticism over the specific words of God. It promotes the idea that pre-Fall predation and vegetarianism were rival or alternate diets for the beasts of the earth.

If the origin of death is located in pre-Fall predation, then the sin of Adam is not the cause of predation in his dominion. Then, predation would be constitutive of the divine creation of the lower creatures. So while human sin would be responsible for the human death within the human world, God would be responsible for pre-Fall death by predation in the animal world. While animal death by predation would be natural, human death would remain consequential. Therefore, before the Fall of humanity, the human domain and dominion would have already been reflective of mixed signals of the Creator’s design—life and death, pain and peace, bloodshed and innocence, suffering, destruction, corruption, and perfection.

The evidence in Ps 104 does not coerce a pre-Fall interpretation of the behavior of the lions. In fact, a post-Fall interpretation of Ps 104:21 is more in keeping with the

thrust of Ps 104 (creation and preservation), than one that places predation before the Fall and out of line with the Genesis creation account. The evidence does not favor a discordant interpretation that makes predation innocuous.

The Psalmist gives no theodicean treatment of predation. His depiction was merely of the animals' behavior and their quest for God's provision. However, predation before the Fall makes death a creation design in the animal world. The creation design is God's and this makes God the author of death before human sin.

Predation after the Fall of humanity ties predation to the Fall rather than to creation. Human's fall affected his dominion—fish of the sea, fowl of the air, cattle, all the earth, and creeping things (Gen 1:26). So God is not the author of death in the animal world. Human sin introduced death into this world.

CHAPTER III

A SUMMARY AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN AND HEBREW PERSPECTIVES ON THE ORIGIN OF DEATH

The Egyptian and Mesopotamian perspectives on the origin of death were studied under the rubric of ANE in chapter 2. The Hebrew perspective derives primarily from the OT Scriptures with supporting evidence from the New Testament. The ANE perspectives on the origin of death are not monolithic, but multifaceted and even in part contradictory in its constituents. The Hebrew perspective is not pluralistic, but explicit or implicit in some respects. This chapter first summarizes, then compares, the findings of chapter 2 about the origin of death in the ANE and in the Hebrew OT accounts.

Summary Analysis of Ancient Near East

Egyptian Perspective

There is no explicit account of the origin of death in *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Only "Utterance 571" mentioned the existence of death as succeeding the birth of Atum's son. The victims of death are unspecified. However, it can be reasonably surmised that the origin of death is either associated with the alleged death of Ogdoad of Hermopolitan cosmogony, or more credibly with the death of the god Osiris at the hand of another god, his brother-enemy, Seth.

The Ogdoad are eight primordial beings. They are believed to have completed their work of creation, died, and returned to the underworld. If their death marks the origin of death, then their death is prior to the death of Osiris, who is a third-generation god. Nevertheless, the death of Osiris is the principal celebrated death in Egyptian tradition. The death of Osiris provided the rationale for the Egyptian mortuary cultus and constituted a dramatic etiology which explained the incidence of death. Also, there is a correlation between the conception of death/enemy pictured in the Egyptian determinative sign—the figure of a falling man with blood streaming from his head—and the legend of Osiris. This determinative sign was used for the substantives *mwt* (“death”) and *h_fyt* (“enemy”). Therefore, the legend of Osiris in which death was deified and ritualized in Egypt appears a more appropriate marker for the origin of death hypostatized in “Utterance 571” in *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*.

Taking the death of Osiris as the first death means that the origin of death is divine, physical, inimical, unnatural, unnecessary, and accidental. The god Seth committed divine deicide by imposing death on the god Osiris. The biological death of Osiris is depicted with images of a foul corpse, putrefaction fluid dripping to the ground and with ideas of embalmment/mummification. This depiction demonstrates the inimical nature of Osiris’s death by Seth’s violent attack. If death originated with the evil action of Seth against Osiris, then Seth’s direct and/or indirect action caused the origin of death. Etiology and agency coalesced in one subject.

Osiris’s death is unnatural because his brother-enemy Seth terminated his life, thus fracturing the Ennead. The death was unnecessary because it only introduced death

to the world without real benefit to the cosmic deities or humanity. It is an accidental death in that it is something that should not be, something from an evil agency, something that unexpectedly or surprisingly seizes and catches its victims, and not that it was unintended by Seth.

The legend of Osiris places the origin of death in a cosmic war context. Death originated through an evil god—Seth. Seth was a beneficent god who became an evil god among and against all the other beneficent gods. He successfully killed another god and usurped his authority. Seth's act of murdering his brother Osiris constituted him as "the Egyptian devil or god of evil." He became an enemy of the Egyptian pantheon, the archenemy of Ra, and represented the cosmic opposition of darkness and light.

Mesopotamian Perspectives

The Mesopotamian perspectives on the origin of death are derived from the Sumerian Enki-Ninmah myth, the Babylonian Enûma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, the Adapa Legend.

The Sumerian Enki-Ninmah myth is both etiological and teleological for the existence of man. Human disease, abnormality, and death are constitutive of the divine creation. Mankind is morbid, mortal, or moribund primarily by divine default and the consequent nature imposed upon him by the gods. The whole spectrum of human ills from birth to death sprang from divine inebriation, sport, and poor judgment. Also, there is implicit evidence that death may have been conceived as a demon of fatal sickness. The myth tells of Enki using a water bath and incantation to remove death ("fate") from

the body of Ninmah's fourth creature, a man leaking urine. Therefore, death in the myth is of a physical nature and divinely crafted. Death originated with Enki and is constitutive of the creation of mortals.

As the earliest "creation" poem of Babylon, which narrates the earliest generation of gods, the *Enûma Elish* implicitly presents Apsû (the father of all gods) as the first to die at the hand of his third-generation grandson Ea. Ea's preemptive strike against his primordial father constitutes deicide and patricide.

The *Enûma Elish* deals only with divine, not human death. It recounts the physical death of four gods, namely Ti·âmat, her son Mummu, and her two consorts—Apsû and Kingu. Ea killed Apsû and Mummu because of their relentless intention to destroy the younger gods in order to achieve silence and sleep. Therefore, origin of death in the *Enûma Elish* occurred in the context of a divine war which resulted in divine deaths. This myth teaches that while the gods are proverbially immortal in the sense that they cannot die a natural death, they can perish through violence.

The *locus classicus* for the concept of the origin of death in the *Gilgamesh Epic* is Tablets X and XI. According to Tablet X, human mortality is a divinely allotted concomitant of the divine creation of humans. The seeds of death were implanted by the gods in human nature from the inception. Therefore, death is natural or inherent in human constitution and resulted from the divine will, council, and decree.

The episode in Tablet XI known as "Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant" confirms human confinement to mortality because Gilgamesh unwittingly allowed the serpent to snatch away the plant named "Man Becomes Young in Old Age"—man's one chance of

finding rejuvenation, a sort of quasi-immortality. Immortality remained in the realm of the divine and within their prerogative to allot it to whomsoever they please.

Human mortality is a divine choice, and potential immortality is a human-squandered opportunity. Death finds its origin in the mind, will, and council of the gods before it resides in human nature, existence, and actions. The gods are sovereign over human life and death, and are the effectual cause of death in human nature. Every death recounted in the Gilgamesh Epic, whether of Humbaba, or the Bull of Heaven, or of Enkidu, is of a physical nature. Enkidu died and turned to clay as well as all humanity in the flood account in the Epic. The flood is an unprovoked arbitrary invention of the gods against mankind and demonstrates the mortality of humanity.

There is neither divine nor human death in the Adapa Myth. The myth presents the lack of acquisition of immortality rather than a dispossession of it. Immortality was temporarily within humanity's choice through a divine offer. The possession of mortality originated as a concomitant of the divine creation of human.

The fact that Adapa was neither given eternal life, nor possessed it then or later, indicates his mortality. Since Ea had created Adapa as a sort of prototype or human archetype of mortality—a mortal creature, so clearly portrayed in the Adapa Myth—then death originated or sprang from human nature. Death, then, is implicitly physical, seeing that Adapa was but human, and a model of man. Therefore, the origin of death in the Adapa Myth is not in divine deicide or homicide, but, implicitly, in a god-given mortal nature and the unaccounted natural death of humans.

Conclusion about ANE Accounts

Taken as a whole, the ANE perspectives on the origin of death is not monolithic, but multifaceted and even contradictory in its constituents. While the Egyptian perspective appears more uniform, the Mesopotamian perspectives are more diverse and varied. The ANE perspectives on the origin of death, derived from the Egyptian and Mesopotamian implicit and/or explicit accounts, locate the origin of death in divine death and human mortality.

In the Egyptian Osirian legend and the Babylonian Enûma Elish, the origin of death is in divine deicide. In the Enki-Ninmah and Adapa myths, the origin of death resides in human nature from the hand of his creator. The Gilgamesh Epic places the origin of death first in the mind, will, and council of the gods in relation to mankind, before it resides in human nature, existence, and actions. Therefore, the ANE accounts show that the origin of death is associated with the mind and judgment of the divine to make mankind mortal, the actions of deities to kill other deities, and the god-given mortal nature of humans which dies naturally or at the hands of the gods in recompense for misdeeds or ill-will.

Summary Analysis of the Hebrew Old Testament

There is no evidence of divine deicide, homicide, or killing of animals in the pre-Fall account in the OT. The first mention of human death is conditioned upon human choice contrary to the prohibition against eating or touching the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The first actual physical death is the death of an animal for

clothing Adam and Eve. The first actual physical human death is the death of Abel at the hand of his brother Cain. However, prior to both the animal and Abel's death is the sin of the first pair, which is inseparably and mainly tied to their physical death (Gen 2:17, 3:19).

The divine judgment—"You will surely die"—suggests a prior state of deathlessness or immortality. If man was already mortal, then he would die anyhow, whether he sinned or not, thus rendering the divine judgment unnecessary or redundant. The biblical record evidences that it is human sin that brought human mortality (Rom 5:12, 17, 18).

God creating humans with freedom of choice, with moral boundaries (Gen 2:16, 17), and with the possibility of a sinful fall to mortality and death means that God inevitably created humans potentially vulnerable to death through their own choice. The retention of immortality was conditioned upon obedience. These observations appear most compatible with the data provided in the creation story. Therefore, sin, that is, human choice, is the origin of human death as a divine judgment on sin.

Comparative Analysis of the ANE and Hebrew Perspectives

The comparative analysis of the ANE and the Hebrew perspectives on the origin of death will cover the divine contribution, divine mortality, human choice and nature, the nature of death, the trajectory of the human/angelic/divine condition, the devil's role in death's advent and theological offense. Each of these subsections will be addressed separately. These subsections will be used to compare and contrast the ancient Near

Eastern and the Hebrew perspectives on the origin of death.

Divine Contribution

The divine contribution to the origin of death in the ancient Near Eastern accounts is notable on the levels of divine deicide in divine war in the Osirian legend and the Enûma Elish, and in the divine blueprint, that is, the will and judgment of the gods to allot death to human nature at creation in the Gilgamesh Epic. In the Osirian legend, the god Seth violently killed the god Osiris. Death originated with the evil action of Seth against Osiris. Etiology and agency coalesced in the same divine subject. Divine deicide in a cosmic war setting, as the origin of death in the Enûma Elish, is in the god Ea preemptively killing the god Apsû, who planned and plotted to kill the younger gods in order to achieve silence and sleep. In the Gilgamesh Epic, the gods allotted death to mankind in their divine council. Therefore, in the ANE the gods are directly involved in the origin of death either by divine deicide or by creating mankind mortal.

In the Hebrew OT account, God is not directly involved in the origin of death, nor is there any evidence of divine deicide. Mortality is not constitutive of God's original creation of mankind or angels. Nevertheless, there is no attempt to distance God from death as divine judgment on sin (Gen 2:17; 3:19). Death as divine judgment on sin implicates God's authority, prescience, and his just nature. The death pronounced by God on account of human sin is in the context of a legal process, a trial and punishment by God for the offense (Gen 3:9–19; 2:17).

The mortality of mankind after sin appears inherent in human nature as a return to

the dust of his creation than in a divine imposition upon the dust-breath soul. Yet divine imposition after sin is not exempted. This means that the death sentence on account of sin in Genesis entails the immediate spiritual death, the eventual physical death, and the ultimate eternal death in the end. Nonetheless, the divine Messiah has provided a means of escape from death for mankind in the person and death of Jesus Christ (Gen 3:15; 2 Tim 1:10).

Angelic spiritual death marks the origin of death in God's universe. Human spiritual death stands at the threshold of the origin of death in the human family and its domain and dominion, if physical degeneracy as a process is not counted as death in entirety. Humans were created by God with conditional immortality, and with freedom of choice, which means that humans were created with a sinless nature that was potentially vulnerable to mortality/death by sinful choice. The divine contribution to death is only by human and angelic perversion of their innocent gift of freedom of choice in the context of God's authoritative moral prohibition against rebellion and the inevitable consequences of death as penalty.

Divine Mortality

The ANE accounts present the gods as both mortal and immortal. There is divine deicide in both the Osirian legend and Enûma Elish, thus confirming divine mortality. Physical death of the gods was not conceived as a negation of their immortality. The Egyptian *Ka*, an independent existence, was a symbol of divine life that can separate from and reunite with the body. The gods of the ANE were considered immortal because they

do not die naturally. They were mortal because they can die by violent attack.

In the Hebrew account, only God is essentially eternal (Deut 33:27), or immortal as evidenced in the New Testament (1 Tim 1:17; 6:16). He cannot die. However, Lucifer, now Satan, a divine being (Ps 82:1, 7), is scheduled for eternal death (Matt 25:41). Only God has original immortality, and will abolish death in the end and for the hereafter (Rev 20:14; 21:4).

Human Choice and Nature

Humans are choiceless in the origin of death in the ANE accounts. In the Adapa Myth, Enki-Ninmah Myth, and the Gilgamesh Epic, mortality is given to humanity at creation. Gilgamesh unexpectedly loses the magic plant of rejuvenation to a serpent, and Ea gives Adapa misguided information, which led him to refuse Anu's offer of the bread and water of death, actually, of eternal life. In the Enki-Ninmah Myth, mankind is created normal or abnormal with handicaps that are deadly or eventuate in death.

In all three accounts, mankind has no choice in the manner of his constitutional emergence. In all three, human mortality is a divine choice, but immortality in the Adapa Myth and the Gilgamesh Epic, though a divine offer, is principally a human choice either to accept with the risk of losing it, or reject it in ignorance or divine misguidance. Man is portrayed as forfeiting or squandering the opportunity for immortality, which seems to indicate that mankind was created with conditional mortality pending a lucky chance for immortality from the whimsical gods.

The Hebrew accounts depict sin as a choice (Ezek 28: 15; Gen 2:16, 17). The

human pair were to choose between eating freely of the trees of the garden and abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Mortality or death was not the divine choice for mankind or angels. God created humans and angels immortal (Gen 2:17; Luke 20:30). Sin, that is, angelic and human choice, brought the divine judgment of death upon God's creatures. Both angelic and human sin represent rebellion against the divine government.

The Nature of Death

In both the ANE and the Hebrew accounts, death, whether of gods or humans, is of a biological or physical nature. The physical nature of death in the Osirian legend is captured in the picture of Osiris as the figure of a falling man with blood streaming from his head. In the Enki-Ninmah Myth, some humans are created with abnormalities and disease, which lead to societal dysfunction and possible eventual death. The Enûma Elish tells of Ea pouring a spell of sleep upon Apsû and slaying him. In the Gilgamesh Epic, the god-derived mortal nature of mankind is attested by the fact that every death in the Epic is of a physical nature. While no death occurred in the Adapa Myth, mankind is mortal by nature, and forfeits the acquisition of immortality from Anu by the unintentional rejection of the physical means of eternal life—the food and water of life.

The death of mankind in the Genesis is also recounted as physical in their return to the dust from which they were created (Gen 3:19; 2:7). However, human mortality encompasses more than physical death. It entails spiritual as well as eternal death. The ANE accounts envision neither spiritual nor eternal death, while the Hebrew account

knows nothing of the death of a god or divine deicide in a cosmic war context as the origin of death. The idea of the spiritual death of an angel or human as the origin of death in the angelic and human spheres respectively is unique to the Hebrew account.

The Trajectory of the Human/Angelic/Divine Condition

In the ANE accounts, immortality seems to be a self-possession of the gods. In the Gilgamesh Epic, the gods are said to allot death to mankind, but retain eternal life or immortality for themselves. Only Utnapishtim and his wife were ever granted immortality, which Gilgamesh relentlessly sought to find, only to be deprived of it by a serpent. The scarcity of immortality among humanity, Gilgamesh's relentless search for it, as well as its exclusive possession by the gods make immortality an ascent to divinity, to the society of the gods like deified Utnapishtim. Therefore, since mankind is created mortal, and his mortality is not due to or associated with sin, or punishment, or a loss of immortality at his creation, then immortality amounts to an ascent for mankind, and mortality as a descent for the gods to the human lot.

The ANE accounts do not present a fall from perfection to iniquity, from sinlessness to sinfulness, or from immortality to mortality for gods, angels, or mankind. The gods are already immortal, but can die by violent attack, only to return or continue existence in another world like the netherworld. Moreover, for the ancient Egyptian, the *Ka* was given to him at birth by a superior power, a deity, and at death divinity is realized through it. Apparently, the *Ka* gave things, men, and gods their immortal ("enduring-forever") nature. So, the ANE traditions do not provide a unified trajectory. Human life

begins mortal and may ascend to immortality or stay mortal. Human life may be on a continuum of immortality through the god-given *Ka* from creation, through death, and beyond. Divine life may descend to death, yet not die, but remain alive on the continuum of immortality through the *Ka*.

The Hebrew account places only God on the continuum of original, underived, unearned, and inalienable immortality. In his divine nature, he neither descends to mortality nor ascends to immortality. On the creature level, fallen angels as well as fallen humanity descended from immortality to mortality, from innocence to guilt, from life to death. Humanity's ascent back to immortality will be a gift of grace from God through the Messiah Christ Jesus, who condescended to human mortality in order to cause many to ascend with him to immortality (Gen 3:15; Phil 2:5–9; 2 Tim 1:10; 1 Cor 15:51–54). No ascent to immortality is available to the fallen angels (Ezek 28:18; Matt 25:41; Rev 20: 9, 10), only farther descent into extinction and oblivion.

The Devil's Role in Death's Advent

The ANE accounts portray the origin of death in a cosmic war context in the Osirian legend and the Enûma Elish. Seth becomes the Egyptian devil because he murdered his brother Osiris. The Enki-Ninmah Myth seems to present abnormality and sickness as a divine invention as well as a demon of fatality to be eliminated with a water bath and incantation. In the Enûma Elish, the gods that were compassionate to the boisterous younger gods gained victory in battle over the gods who were planning the death of the younger gods. Divine deicide seems to be viewed as justice, peace, and a

return to harmony among the gods by elimination of the bad gods. In the Osirian legend, though evil seems to triumph over good in the death of Osiris, the legend later indicates the defeat of Seth at the hand of Horus, Osiris's son.

The origin of death in human mortality is seen as the inscrutable will of the gods in the Gilgamesh Epic, Adapa Myth, and the Enki-Ninmah Myth. The god Seth, turned devil (a bad god) in violent lethal attack, marks the origin of death in the Osirian legend. The arbitrary gods of the Enûma Elish planned and plotted to kill younger gods, only to be killed themselves, marking the origin of death by the death of Apsû. The gods of the Gilgamesh Epic, Adapa Myth, and the Enki-Ninmah Myth apparently created the mortal nature of mankind as the origin of death without demonization of the god-creators or extraneous demonic influence. Therefore, in the ANE accounts, death came from a “god-devil”¹ and from normal god-creators.

From the Hebrew accounts, the origin of death is not marked by God killing Satan, or Satan killing Adam, or God killing both Adam and Satan because of their sin. The sin and condemnation of Satan to death (Ezek 28:15, 18) was not transmitted to Adam and Eve at creation. Humans came from the hands of the Creator sin-free and death-free (Gen 1:31). The original sin of Satan, which occurred prior to Adam's sin, is not the threshold for the original sin of Adam. The original sin of Satan initiated the great cosmic conflict between God and Satan, good and evil, truth and error (Rev 12:7–9). In

¹I use the compound term “god-devil” in reference to Seth who was first a good god before he was labeled a devil. Though an Egyptian devil, he was still a god, a bad one, because of his murderous action against his brother Osiris. The title “devil god” would be just as suitable with the emphasis on devil qualifying the kind of god.

context of this cosmic conflict, the original sin of Adam passed sin and death upon all mankind, the seed of Adam (Rom 5:12). All mankind sinned and died in Adam.

Therefore, while sin originated with Satan, it is the sin and death of Adam that is passed to mankind.

Unlike the ANE accounts, the devil did not become a devil because he killed a good god, or because he was a devil of fatal sickness. Lucifer became Satan because of his own impenitent sin against God. In sinning, Satan committed a suicidal act resulting in spiritual death now and eternal death in the end.

In Genesis, the devil's role in the original sin of Adam was that of enticing and deceiving humans (Gen 3:1–6; 1 Tim 2:14). The fall of Lucifer influenced the fall of humans only insofar as it made him a devil who successfully tempted humans to sin and fall from innocence and immortality as he fell previously. Original sin brought death to mankind as it had brought death to Satan.

Theological Offense

In the Hebrew account, theological offense is sin. It is the creature's (angel or human) choice to rebel against the explicit command of his Creator-God (Isa 14: 12–15; Ezek 28:12–19; Gen 2:16, 17; 3:6). In this context, theological offense is vertical rebellion, the inferior being, in attempted self-deification, dishonoring the superior being. Satan and Adam sinned originally thus initiating the origin of death in the angelic and human realm respectively. While Satan's original sin in heaven did not pass death to mankind or the angels (fallen or unfallen), Adam's original sin passed death to all

mankind (Rom 5:12).

Sin as the origin of death is a concept foreign to the ANE accounts, though there is evidence of theological offense as grounds for punishment by death. The Enûma Elish attests to counter theological offense as leading to the origin of death. In this context, theological offense is first a horizontal disturbance—the noise and boisterousness of younger gods depriving Apsû of sleep, then a horizontal evil (Apsû’s relentless plot to kill the noisy gods) to be averted or subverted. In this account, deities offended deities, and death first fell upon one of the offended but belligerent deities (Apsû), rather than on the offending, younger deities. Therefore, like the Hebrew account, the ANE account shows theological offense at the threshold of death, but unlike the Hebrew account, the ANE account places theological offense and counter theological offense in the plot of divine deicide and a counter, divine pre-emptive fatal strike.

See table 1 for an outline of the key similarities and differences between the OT and ANE on the question of the divine causation of death in the creation accounts.

Table 1—The origin of death in creation accounts

Factors	Egypt	Mesopotamia				Hebrew OT
		Enki-Ninmah	Gilgamesh	Enûma Elish	Adapa	
Victims of Death/Mortality	The god Osiris The Hermopolitan Ogdoad	<i>Umul</i> —a defective, diseased, dying, mortal creature	Humanity	Gods: Apsû in particular; Tiamat, Mammu and Kingu	Humanity (Adapa)	Humanity (Adam/Eve)
Agent of Death and Mortality	The god Seth Unknown for Ogdoad	The god-creator: Enki	The gods	Ea killed Apsû	The gods, esp. Ea	Humans
Type of Death	Physical/biological (Fratricide); Natural/Unknown	Physical	Physical	Physical (Patricide)	Physical	Physical preceded by spiritual
Victims' Nature	Divine	Human <i>Umul</i>	Human	Divine	Human	Human
Moral Picture/ Impression	Deicide—Evil	Divine misjudgment of intoxicated gods	Capital crime/ Punishment	Capital crime/Punishment	None	Sin
Images of Death	Figure of falling man with blood streaming from his head	A suffering, diseased being	Returning to clay	Body of Apsû for Ea's residence; Apsû's dismemberment	None	Return to dust
Motivation Leading to Death	Divine power usurpation	Divine sport; Rivalry; Misjudgment	Arbitrary tit-for- tat divine policy	Ea/Marduk preempted violence by violence	Unknown	Human quest for deification

Table 1—Continued.

Factors	Egypt	Mesopotamia				Hebrew OT
		Enki-Ninmah	Gilgamesh	Enûma Elish	Adapa	
Origin of Death	Action of a god against a god	God-given mortal nature	God-given mortal nature	Action of gods against gods	Inherent in human nature	Human choice, rebellion
Temporal Location of Mortality/Death	Primordial time; a golden age; Before human existence (Precedence)	At/with creation of mankind (Concurrence)	At/with creation of mankind (Concurrence)	Before creation of humans and of the universe (Precedence)	Inception unknown (Indeterminacy)	Post-creation of mankind in Eden (Subsequence)

CHAPTER IV

DIVINE CAUSATION OF DEATH

This chapter focuses on the divine causation of death in the flood accounts in the ANE and in the Hebrew OT. Since Egypt does not have a parallel flood account to the Hebrew OT like the other Mesopotamian sources, it is excluded from this section. Specifically, four main extrabiblical Mesopotamian flood accounts are examined, namely, Sumerian Eridu Genesis, Babylonian Atra-Hasis Epic, Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, and book two of the Greek *Babyloniaca* of Berosus. The Hebrew OT flood account is based principally on Gen 6–9.

Extrabiblical Ancient Near Eastern Flood Accounts

The examination of divine causation of death in each of the four ancient Near Eastern flood accounts entails a brief introduction of each account followed by a study of the literary genre and function, an analysis of the account, and theological and theodicean implications for the divine causation of death. In each account the concept of the divine causation of death is pinpointed and treated in the context of the total narrative account.

The Eridu Genesis

Eridu Genesis is composed in Sumerian and took its literary form around 1600 B.C. It gets its title from Eridu, one of the first pre-flood cities. Enki was the patron god

of Eridu.¹ The account derives principally from the lower third of a clay tablet from Nippur inscribed with six columns of Sumerian text.²

Genre Classification and Function

The Eridu Genesis has been called a “Sumerian myth,”³ or “a Sumerian legend.”⁴ But Jacobsen’s new and separate genre for the narrative is “mytho-historical genre.”⁵ He based the coinage of this new genre on the several observable characteristics of the narrative: its similarity of structure with the biblical account (its tripartite order, logical progression from cause to effect, its mythological data) and its similarity of style (its dependence on the Kinglist and its interest in chronology dealing with precise figures like

¹Samuel N. Kramer’s translation of Eridu Genesis was published in 1950 in *ANET*, 42–44. About twenty years later, Miguel Civil restudied the text in his chapter entitled “The Sumerian Flood Story,” in *Atra-Hasis* by W. G. Lambert, A. R. Millard, and M. Civil, 138–145; cf. Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 513, n. 2; see also “The Eridu Genesis” translated by Thorkild Jacobsen (*COS*, 1.158:513–515); Heidel’s translation is in Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 102–105. Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 513; *COS*, 1.158:513; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 13. Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 513.

²*Ibid.*, 513; *COS*, 1.158:513; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 13; Edmond Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood* (London: British Museum Publication, 1971), 20; “The Deluge,” translated by S. N. Kramer (*ANET*, 42).

³*ANET*, 42.

⁴Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 20.

⁵Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 528.

length of reigns and lifespans of the persons, which is the style of chronicles and historiography).⁶

Eridu Genesis is “a story of beginnings, a Genesis.”⁷ It concerns the creation of men and animals, the institution of kingship, the founding of the first cities, and the great flood.⁸ A degree of dependence is assumed in the sense that Eridu Genesis may have served as a model or inspiration for the biblical account.⁹ Heidel conjectures that the present deluge version may have been used as “a part of the introduction to an incantation in order to increase the efficacy of the spell, by reciting some of the mighty deeds of the gods.”¹⁰ Cohn believes that it was composed for the political purpose of strengthening the established order to which the kingship was central as a divine institution.¹¹ The epic is seen as the closest and most striking parallel to biblical material as yet uncovered in Sumerian literature, and provides considerable significance for Mesopotamian cosmogony.¹²

⁶Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 528; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 14.

⁷Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 513.

⁸Ibid.; *COS*, 1.158:513; *ANET*, 42.

⁹*COS*, 1.158:513; Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 529.

¹⁰Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 105.

¹¹Norman Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 3.

¹²*ANET*, 42.

Account Analysis

The account analysis of the Eridu Genesis examines the divine creation of mankind and animals, the origin of kingship and the first cities, and attempts to establish the divine causation of death in the Sumerian flood.

Divine creation

Despite the many lacunas, what we have of Eridu Genesis opens with the creation of mankind and animals. Anu,¹³ Enlil,¹⁴ Enki,¹⁵ and Ninhursag¹⁶ are the gods who created the black-headed people,¹⁷ an epithet for “mankind as a whole.”¹⁸ They created the small animals that came up from the earth, gazelles, wild donkeys, and four-footed beasts in the deserts. Though creation of mankind is attributed to all four gods, it appears that only

¹³Anu is “father of gods.” Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 149. He is “the nominal head of the pantheon.” A. D. Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” *Orientalia* 41 (1972): 162.

¹⁴Enlil is “the head of the pantheon.” “Atrahasis,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 104).

¹⁵Enki is the “water-god.” *ANET*, 43, n. 32.

¹⁶The four gods are presented as creators of mankind. According to both Kramer and Jacobsen, Nintur in line 39 is identical with Ninhursag, goddess of birth, mother of mankind. *ANET*, 43, n. 12; Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 514; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 103, n. 5.

¹⁷ *ANET*, 43, nn. 47–49.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 42, n. 23. Kramer says that it also refers to the inhabitants of Sumer and Babylon. *ANET*, 43, n. 23. Black- or dark-headed people here refers also to the Sumerians themselves. *COS*, 1.158:514, n. 3.

Enki and Ninhursag (Nintur) did the actual creation, since Nintur calls mankind “my creatures” in line 39, and Enki shows special concern for mankind in the story. Jacobsen labels the concern of these two divinities “*mutatis mutandis* ‘parental’ protectiveness.”¹⁹

Kingship and first cities

The account indicates that kingship was lowered from heaven and man built at least five antediluvian cities and temples for the gods. The cities are Eridu for Nudimmud,²⁰ Bad-Tibira for the prince (presumably the god Dumuzi)²¹ and sacred one (epithet of Inanna’s),²² Larak for Pahilsag (god of trees),²³ Sippar for Utu,²⁴ and Shurupak for Ansud (grain goddess).²⁵ The half-bushel baskets show that these cities were economic centers, distribution points.²⁶

¹⁹Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 516.

²⁰Nudimmud is a name for Enki. *ANET*, 43, n. 32. He is god of the waters in rivers and marshes and the god of practical wisdom. *COS*, 1.158:514, n. 13.

²¹*COS*, 1.158:514, n. 7.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 514, n. 8.

²⁴Utu, Akkadian Shamash, was a god of the sun and of righteousness. *ANET*, 514, n. 9; cf. Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 21.

²⁵*ANET*, 514, n. 10.

²⁶Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 519.

The Sumerian deluge

After the founding of the five cities, a lacuna of about thirty-seven lines follows which may have described the noisy behavior of the people that incurred divine displeasure, and the decision of the gods to bring a flood to destroy “the seed of mankind.”²⁷ It appears that human infernal noises vexed the chief god Enlil to the extent that he persuaded the divine counsel to vote the destruction of man by the deluge. It is at this point that Ziusudra, the counterpart of the biblical Noah, who is depicted as a pious and god-fearing priest-king, and always on the lookout for divine revelations in dreams and incantations, is introduced.²⁸

While Ziusudra was carving a god of giddiness out of wood to worship and consult as oracle, in this manner he was informed of the grave decision of the gods: “By our hand a flood will sweep over (cities of) the half-bushel bas[kets, and the country].”²⁹ Jacobsen points out that Ziusudra’s statue of a god served the function of inducing ecstasy by giddiness. Divination was a way of accessing the will of the gods and acting in conformity to it.³⁰ As a *guda-abzu* (lustration priest or ensi diviner), Ziusudra’s senses perceive the supernatural and he becomes conscious of what is happening in the realm of the gods. He sees the gods assembling in Ki-ùr, the forecourt of Enlil’s temple in Nippur

²⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 103; *ANET*, 44; *COS*, 1.158:515; M. Civil, “The Sumerian Flood Story,” in *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood with Sumerian Flood Story* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 143.

²⁸*ANET*, 42.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 44; cf. *COS*, 1.158:515.

³⁰*COS*, 1.158:514–515, n. 15.

in a corner or place of divine assembly called Ubshuukkinna. The gods came in their boats and with thwarts as seats in the assembly.³¹

In the assembly, Enki calls Ziusudra up to a wall and informed him about the impending catastrophe and what he must do to save his life. A break in the account occurs here and when the text becomes intelligible again, it describes the violence of the flood during seven days and seven nights. After the flood the sun god (Utu) appears and brings light into the interior of the giant boat. Ziusudra prostrates himself before Utu and offers sacrifices of oxen and sheep. After he prostrates himself before Anu and Enlil, he is deified and translated to Dilmun,³² “the place where the sun rises,”³³ a pure, clean, and bright place where there is probably neither sickness nor death.³⁴

³¹Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 523; *COS*, 1.158:514–515, nn. 15, 17.

³²Noort identifies Dilmun (or Tilmun) with Bahrein in the Persian Gulf and the coast of Saudi Arabia or the island of Failaka. Ed Noort, “The Stories of the Great Flood: Notes on Gen 6:5–9:17 in Its Context of the ANE,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez et al., Themes in Biblical Narrative (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 23. Jacobsen says that Dilmun stands for present Bahrain, but in the tale it is apparently a faraway, half-mythical place. *COS*, 1.158:515, n. 18; cf. Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 21; Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, 112.

³³*ANET*, 44.

³⁴“Enki and Ninhurag: A Paradise Myth,” translated by S. N. Kramer (*ANET*, 37). He also calls it “a divine paradise.” *ANET*, 37, n. 8; cf. Daniel Hämmerly-Dupuy, “Some Observations on Assyro-Babylonian and Sumerian Flood Stories” in *The Flood Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 56.

Divine causation of death in Sumerian deluge

Patheonic oath. In vision of the divine assembly, Ziusudra, the seer, sees An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursaga having the gods of heaven and earth swear by the names of An and Enlil. There is a swearing of oaths by heaven and earth. The process of coming to a decision seems to have been by a majority rule or perhaps by the autocratic rule of the supreme deity (Enlil) to which the other gods were to accede.³⁵ General divine consensus achieved by unanimity of loyalty by oath was of such paramount importance that it had to be substantiated by “a touching of the throat,”³⁶ which symbolizes a wish that the throat “be cut if the person doing it (the oath) breaks his or her oath.”³⁷

Pantheon oath means pantheon responsibility for their decisions. It does not appear that divine dissent in word or counteraction was outlawed, but unanimity of mind and action to resolve a divine problem was conversed. The account suggests that there was a unanimous vote to flood mankind to extinction, which did not negate remorse from some gods or counteraction with impunity by a god (Enki) to preserve a seed of mankind. It can be argued that divine causation of the flood began with psychological and volitional unanimity of the gods by oath despite their emotional ties or misgiving about the fate of mankind.

³⁵Jacobsen says that the conversation and swearing of the introductory oaths indicate loyal divine abidance by what the assembly may decide. *COS*, 1.158:514, n. 14; Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” 523.

³⁶*COS*, 1.158:515.

³⁷*Ibid.*, n. 16.

Pantheonic hierarchy and responsibility. The fact that the gods of heaven and earth had to swear by the names of An and Enlil suggests their superior stature in the pantheon. Enki's revelation to Ziusudra that "an order of An and Enlil is not known ever to have been countermanded"³⁸ speaks of the supremacy of these two deities or judges of the pantheon. Heidel does not regard An and Enlil as two deities in this text but as one deity—Anu Enlil. He says that this title shows that "Enlil has received the supreme power and functions of Anu, the highest god of the Sumerian pantheon, and that he thus exercises not only his own authority but also that of Anu."³⁹ This means that An (Anu) was only a nominal master of the pantheon, and Enlil, his son, was the real authority behind the flood.⁴⁰

The order or authority to execute the flood came from An (and) Enlil. It is not clear whether there was an all-inclusive deliberation over what to do with mankind, resulting in a corporate decision or only a pantheon deliberation but an individual (Enlil's) decision, which required the loyalty of the divine assembly. The former possibility makes the flood decision equally the responsibility of the pantheon, but the latter grants Enlil ultimate responsibility. The evidence within the text assigns some degree of responsibility to all the gods as perpetrators.

³⁸*COS*, 1.158:515; Kramer translated it as: "By the word commanded by Anu (and) Enlil." *ANET*, 44.

³⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 103, n. 4; cf. Arno Poebel, *Historical Texts* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1914), 36–37.

⁴⁰William J. Fulco, "Enlil (Deity)," *ABD*, 2:507; Park, "Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9," 15.

Pantheonic causation of the flood. Enki, the friend of mankind, says to Ziusudra: “By our hand a flood will sweep over (the cities of) the half-bushel bas[kets, and the country].”⁴¹ The prepositional phrase “by our hand” makes the flood an act of the gods. Enki, the speaker, is not exempted from the divine coalition for the destruction of mankind. The plural “our” may have primary reference to the major deities of the pantheon (An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursag), and does not necessarily negate the roles of minor deities of the pantheon.

The plural-possessive pronoun “our” shows that the gods owned up to the flood as a god-wielded instrument to sweep over the land. It also indicates that the gods are the agents of the flood. They created mankind but also created a flood to “uncreate” mankind. The hands of the gods are involved in the introduction, implementation, and effectiveness of the flood. The phrase “our hand” and the divine instruments of water and evil stormy winds say that the flood was a physical event. The god-caused physical means imply physical death of mankind.

The purpose of the gods is unmistakable: “[The decision] that mankind is to be destroyed, has been made.”⁴² The object of the flood is more than mere destruction of cities or country, it is the destruction of mankind. This intimates a global flood. In such a flood, the hand as well as the mind of the gods is implicated.

More than that, the flood is a divine judgment and prescription. It is called a divine “verdict (a final sentence), a command (word) of the assembly,” that cannot be

⁴¹*COS*, 1.158:515; *ANET*, 44.

⁴²*COS*, 1.158:515; *ANET*, 44.

revoked, “an order of An (and) Enlil” that is not known ever to be countermanded.⁴³ An (and) Enlil is (are) the supreme judge(s). From the conception of the inevitable flood to its deliverance, from its irrevocable verdict to its corporate command or autocratic order from An (and) Enlil, the flood is a divine plan, a divine act, a divine event, a divine judgment on mankind. Therefore, the divine causation of death in the Eridu Genesis is axiomatic.

Theological Implications

In the Eridu Genesis, the divine creators of mankind and animals are the destroyers of them. No basis for punitive action against mankind is found in the extant text with so many lacunas. In the extant text, it appears that structural improvement in human culture and civilization exacerbated the situation detested by the deities. Other ANE accounts of the flood call the human problem “clamor,” that is, noise that gave Enlil insomnia.

Creators as destroyers of their creatures demonstrate divine sovereignty. The gods are in charge of human entrance into and exit from the land of the living. Though gods may weep (Nintu), or grieve (Inanna) over, or even counteract the decision of the divine assembly to annihilate mankind (Enki) in a single but significant way, the majority rules and the decision must be furiously and irrevocably effected. Moreover, despite Enki’s quiet but subtle dissent, as the water god he was inevitably involved in the flood as was

⁴³*COS*, 1.158:515; *ANET*, 44.

Enlil, the storm god.⁴⁴ The two instruments of the flood were wind and water over which Enlil and Enki were respectively sovereign.

The extant text tells us more about the survivor of the flood than the victims. Ziusudra, the hero in the account, was saved from death on the advice of the wise god Enki. Therefore, human salvation through a dissenting god despite divine orchestration of a violent flood is conspicuous in the account. The gods are not all enemies of mankind. Nintu wept over her creatures, holy Inanna grieved for them, and Enki devised the rescue plan of a giant boat to deliver man from the unleashed elements of nature. The flood was unleashed on the “seed of mankind”⁴⁵ but the “seed of mankind”⁴⁶ was preserved in Ziusudra. Divinity, then, was not absolutely antagonistic to mankind. Absolute wrath against mankind was not an experience of all the deities.

The gods are mutable in decision-making. At the end of the flood, the gods, especially An (and) Enlil, turned from wrath against the seed of mankind to mercy and forgiveness for the survivor of the flood, from the sweeping gift of death to the gracious gift of deification. Consequently, Ziusudra was elevated from man to god, from mortality to eternal life, and from the half-bushel-basket cities⁴⁷ of earth to the mount Dilmun (paradise). Though the planned universality of the flood was short-circuited, the wrathful

⁴⁴Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 102; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 17.

⁴⁵*ANET*, 44; cf. *COS*, 1.158:515.

⁴⁶*COS*, 1.158:515; *ANET*, 44..

⁴⁷Cities serving as economic centers. *COS*, 1.158:514, n. 4.

god(s) experienced a radical conversion leading to the apotheosis of Ziusudra. It appears that the gods were appeased by Ziusudra's humble kissing of the ground before Utu and An (and) Enlil, his offer of sacrifice of oxen, sheep, and barley cakes, and Enlil's mollification by Enki.

Theodicean Implications

The Eridu Genesis in its extant form does not present moral evil as the basis for the diluvial catastrophe. However, the flood is clearly a divine effort to eradicate the object of their wrath. In the main, the gods of the Eridu Genesis are benevolent by name and/or function:

1. An—father of gods, sky god⁴⁸
2. Enlil—god of storm⁴⁹
3. Enki—Ea or Nudimmud, the water god⁵⁰
4. Ninhursag—Nintu(r), goddess of birth, creatrix of man⁵¹
5. Holy Inanna—the sacred one, goddess of love and war⁵²

⁴⁸Thury and Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology*, 149, 160; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 18, n. 27; *ANET*, 74, n. 14; McCall, *Mesopotamian Myths*, 25.

⁴⁹Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 102.

⁵⁰*ANET*, 43, n. 22; *COS*, 1.158:514, n. 13.

⁵¹*COS*, 1.158:513, n. 1. Heidel identifies Ninhursag with Inanna. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 102. Kramer opposes this idea and makes the identification with the Semitic Ishtar instead. *ANET*, 43, n. 12.

⁵²*COS*, 1.158:514, nn. 7 and 12.

6. Pahilsag—god of trees⁵³
7. Utu—Shamash, god of sun and of righteousness⁵⁴
8. The prince—Dumuzi, the shepherd god⁵⁵
9. God of giddiness—a statue of a god for divination purposes⁵⁶
10. Ansud—grain goddess.⁵⁷

However, Enlil’s destructive side as the god of storm is often displayed in the execution of the decisions of the assembly of the gods.⁵⁸

The flood is a capital punishment for an unknown or uncertain capital crime. Whether the divine punishment matched the human crime is indeterminate. Mankind built cities and temples for the gods, yet a resolution to inundate mankind came from the divine assembly. No effort is made in the text to justify divinity against accusations of capriciousness, arbitrariness, or hastiness of decision. There is no evidence in the extant text of human incorrigibility or universal guilt. The mind of divinity concealed from mankind is only accessible via a seer or divination. Whatever the gods do is not subject

⁵³Ibid., n. 8.

⁵⁴Ibid., n. 9.

⁵⁵Ibid., n. 7; “Dumuzi and Enkimdu: the Dispute between the Shepherd-God and the Farmer-God,” translated by Kramer (*ANET*, 41).

⁵⁶*COS*, 1.158:514, n. 15.

⁵⁷Ibid., n. 10.

⁵⁸Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 102; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 17.

to human scrutiny or conscientious objection. Mankind seems to accept his lot in quiet resignation and without questioning or impugning the divine character.

The philosophy that might is right seems to attend the decision of the divine assembly, especially that of An (and) Enlil, in relation to mankind. The decision to destroy mankind caused a god to weep, a god to grieve, and a crafty god to circumvent the order from An (and) Enlil that has never been countermanded. Internal dissent in the assembly, whether by overt or covert means, seems to weaken the united front of the gods in the vision of Ziusudra. The deification of Ziusudra at the end of the account appears to provide contrary evidence for the philosophy that might is right. The man who was destined to be dehumanized in the lethal destruction of the flood was actually deified having escaped a life-sweeping flood in a giant boat. Innocent Ziusudra got the upper-hand by the wisdom of Enki and probably by his own moral/spiritual high ground.

On the matter of the deluge, apparently certain gods (Nintur, Inanna, Enki) were more pro-humanity than pro-divinity. A degree of divine democracy and agreement to disagree seems to be in evidence. But more than that, there appears to be an intimation of moral relativity in that one god's justice is another god's injustice. Some gods were pained if not strained by the flood decision of the gods.

Divine causation of death is compatible with the will, mind, hand, command, word, and order of the gods. Genocide, even on an absolute scale, is compatible with the action, behavior, and character of the gods, especially An (and) Enlil, despite the silent reservation or emotional distress of a few gods. The myth does not distance or exonerate deity from introducing, implementing, and executing the death-causing inundation of the

land. Gods with reservation about or distress over the flood seem to have participated in the flood. Therefore, the divine causation of death in the deluge suggests that honoring the divine authority, whether as humans or gods, whether for a physical matter like sleep or a moral matter like disregard for the well-being of others, is more important than the preservation of human life.

The Atra-Hasis Epic

The most complete text of the Atra-Hasis Epic⁵⁹ has been approximately dated 1630 B.C.⁶⁰ It is nearly complete in composition in a late Old Babylonian recension in three tablets, and is also known in several fragmentary later recensions.⁶¹ The colophons

⁵⁹Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1–38; “Atra-Hasis,” translated by Benjamin Foster (*COS*, 1.30:450–453); W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, with M. Civil, *The Sumerian Flood Story* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 1–130; “Atrahasis,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 104–106).

⁶⁰Alan Ralph Millard, “A New Babylonian ‘Genesis’ Story,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967): 4; cf. Norman Cohn, *Noah’s Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 3; Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” *Orientalia* 41 (1972): 160. For some scholars the date of composition is estimated about 1700 B.C.E. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” *Biblical Archeologist* 40 (1977): 150; Robert A. Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” *ZAW* 93 (1981): 198; Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, 3.

⁶¹*COS*, 1.130:450.

of the Old Babylonian tablets of the epic has Ku-Aya, a junior scribe, as copyist in the reign of king Ammisaduqa (ca. 1646–1626).⁶²

The name Atra-Hasis (Old Babylonian Atram-Hasis)⁶³ means “exceedingly wise” as well as “exceedingly devout.”⁶⁴ The epic is named Atra-Hasis after the name of its main hero—Atra-Hasis, the Babylonian Noah. Speiser points out that the Atra-Hasis Epic cycle “bore originally the name *Enuma ilu awelum* ‘When god, man.’”⁶⁵

⁶²Dalley believes that Nur-Aya was the author, in the sense of being the compiler and arranger of the traditional material, though his personal contribution to it cannot be assessed. She sees the copyist names Ku-Aya and Kasap-Aya as earlier misreads. She also puts the reign of Ammi-saduqa, king of Babylon, from 1702–1682. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, 3; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 18. Also the colophon of Tablet II says that the tablet was written by Ellit-Aya. *ANET*, 105; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 110; cf. Hämmerly-Dupuy, “Some Observations on Assyro-Babylonian and Sumerian Flood Stories,” in *The Flood Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes, 54, 55. Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” 198, n. 5; cf. Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 4, 5, 31; *ANET*, 104.

⁶³*ANET*, 104. The later Assyrian form of the name is Atra-Hasis, but the Old Babylonian form is Atram-Hasis. Hämmerly-Dupuy, “Some Observations on Assyro-Babylonian and Sumerian Flood Stories,” in *The Flood Myth*, 55, n. 19.

⁶⁴Millard, “A New Babylonian ‘Genesis’ Story,” 13; “Atra-Hasis,” translated by Benjamin R. Foster (*COS*, 1.130:450); Cohn, *Noah’s Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought*, 4; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 18. “Extra-wise” according to Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, 2.

⁶⁵*ANET*, 104. The Atrahasis Epic, well known by ancient scholars, finds its ancient title in its first line: *Inūma ilu awīlum*. Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 160; Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” 148; Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 22; Stephen Herbert Langdon, *Semitic [Mythology]*, *The Mythology of the Races*, vol. 5 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1964), 276.

Genre Classification and Function

In Akkadian, the Epic of Atra-Hasis comprises the earliest and most systematic Mesopotamian formulation of the “primeval history” of humanity.⁶⁶ It explains “the creation of man as intended to relieve the lesser deities of their toil, and the attempted destruction of humanity as divine response to the noise of the expanding human population which threatened the very rest that their creation had sought to provide for the gods.”⁶⁷ The Epic is called “an Old Babylonian poem”⁶⁸ and may have functioned as “a birth incantation to facilitate delivery”⁶⁹ or “to educate mankind generally in the greatness of Marduk.”⁷⁰

Account Analysis

The account analysis traces the story and the motif of divine causation of death from the refusal of the gods to do oppressive work, to the creation of mankind as

⁶⁶COS, 1.130:450. Frymer-Kensky rings the same bell: “The Atrahasis Epic presents the flood story in a context comparable to that of Genesis, that of a Primeval History.” Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” 148; cf. Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 160.

⁶⁷COS, 1.130:450.

⁶⁸Cohn, *Noah’s Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought*, 3; Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 160.

⁶⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 107; *ANET*, 104.

⁷⁰Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 7.

substitute slaves instead of the Igiḡū, to measures to eliminate the noise of mankind and control his overpopulation.

Igiḡū revolt

The opening Akkadian words of the Epic *Inūma ilu awīlum*, “When god, man,”⁷¹ in context of the Epic, seem to favor and focus the relationship between man and gods in terms of function rather than authority or nature. Before the creation of man, the great Anunna-gods or Anunnakū (senior [*rabutum*] gods)⁷² forced the Igiḡi-gods or Igiḡū (junior/lesser gods), who bear the corvée (*dullum*) and carry the work-basket (*šupšikum*).⁷³ They do the hard back-breaking work of digging watercourses: canals, springs, wells, rivers (Tigris and Euphrates) and shoulder the strenuous task of irrigation

⁷¹*COS*, 1.130:450; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 108. Some scholars have translated it as: “When the gods worked like Mam.” Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” 148. “When the gods like men.” Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 43; Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, 36, n. 1. “When god (as) man.” Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 160. “When (some) gods were mankind.” W. L. Moran, “Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood,” *Bib* 52 (1971): 51–61. “When ilu was boss.” Thordild Jacobsen, “*Inuma ilu awilum*,” in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Finkelstein*, ed. Maria De Jong Ellis (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1997), 116. “When a god-man.” Langdon, *Semitic [Mythology]*, 276. “When the Gods were man.” Andrews R. George and Farouk N. H. Al-Rawi, “Tablets from Sippar Library VI. Atra-hasīs,” *Iraq* 58 (1996): 147.

⁷²They are the authoritative governing gods. Jacobsen, “*Inuma ilu awilum*,” in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Finkelstein*, 117.

⁷³Jacobsen, “*Inuma ilu awilum*,” in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Finkelstein*, 116; Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” 200–201; Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 162.

agriculture for the sustenance of the greater gods. This was their assigned role on earth, Enlil's domain, while Anu resides in the heavens above and Enki in the fresh waters below.

After forty years or more of grumbling under such intolerable drudgery, the lesser gods conspired to revolt by taking industrial action. They burned their tools and besieged Ekur (the temple of Enlil in Nippur) in the middle of night, with the intention of demanding release from slavery. The doorkeeper locked Enlil's door. Enlil's vizier, Nusku, woke him up. In apparent fear of the gods' raucous demonstration and show of force, Enlil immediately convened a meeting of the major gods.

At Anu's suggestion, Nusku was sent out to the protesting gods to demand an explanation of their behavior. He returned to Enlil with the answer of excessive hard work and a unanimous decision of the gods to defy authority. Enlil called for Anu's return to heaven and his exaction of punishment on one of the rebel gods, but Anu responded that the grievances of the gods were legitimate. Then Enki, the crafty god, proposed the creation of mankind to do the hard work of the Iggū.

Divine causation of death

Deicide—Payback time. The first evidence of the divine causation of death in the Atra-Hasis Epic is in the creation of man which involved the slaughter of a god by gods. At the divine convention, Enki proposed the creation of *Lullû* (mankind)⁷⁴ through

⁷⁴Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 54, 55.

an admixture of clay and the flesh and blood of a god. Enki was to cooperate with Mami⁷⁵ in this creative process.

The god slain is called “Wê” or “Wê-ila.”⁷⁶ The Akkadian word for man is *awēlu*. A play on these two Akkadian names (“Wê-ila” and *awēlu*) shows that the name of man is derived from the personal name of the god who was slain to make him.⁷⁷ Kilmer advanced another interpretation possibility in which *Ilu-we-e-la* is actually *Ilu-(a)wēlu*, that is, a god-man, “a special category of divine being from which a mortal could be made.”⁷⁸

The text says: “*Wê-ila (we-e-i-la)*, who had personality (*te-e-ma*), they slaughtered (*it-ta-ab-hu*) in the assembly.”⁷⁹ This slain god is said to have a *temu*-quality. Lambert-Millard argues for the meaning of *temu* as “self” or “personality.”⁸⁰ But more precisely

⁷⁵Mami is the birth- or womb-goddess, a midwife, creatress of mankind. Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 57; she is also variously called mother goddess, Mama, Nintu, and Bēlet-ilī. Ibid., 9; Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 23.

⁷⁶Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, 9; Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164. Foster calls the slain god “Aw-ilu.” *COS*, 1.130:451. Dalley gives the name “Geshtu-e.” Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, 15.

⁷⁷Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164; George and Al-Rawi, “Tablets from Sippar Library VI. *Atra-hasīs*,” *Iraq* 58 (1996): 150.

⁷⁸Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164. Cf. Langdon, *Semitic [Mythology]*, 276.

⁷⁹Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 58, 59.

⁸⁰Ibid., 153, n. 223; Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164–165. Among the meanings given to the

and contextually, given that *temu* also carries the meanings “report/intelligence,” or “purpose/plan,”⁸¹ it may refer to the god’s “ability to plan” or “the capacity to scheme.”⁸²

Concerning the execution of the god with this *temu*-quality, an earlier line says: “Let one god (*ilam iš-te-en*) be slaughtered.”⁸³ Assuming that the Assyrian recension accurately reflects the Old Babylonian source, *ilam iš-te-en* may indicate the leader-god, the main rabble-rouser, the chief culprit, the rebel leader of the Igigū.⁸⁴

The phrase *ilam iš-te-en* suggests that a specific god is in reference. The gods were not to settle for just any god as a victim. The number of gods to be slaughtered is one. The personal name of the god seems to be *Wê-ila*. The god had a *temu*-quality

Akkadian term *temu* in Atrahasis and/or other texts are: “sense,” “reason,” or “intelligence,” “order,” “report,” “purpose,” and “a special quality of immortality.” Kilmer, 163–164; Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, 15, 36, n. 11. Also “idea.” Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 118. Also “rationality.” Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” 149.

⁸¹Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164; W. G. Lambert, ed., *Babylonian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 325.

⁸²Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” 202, 210; Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164, n. 22.

⁸³Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 58, 59.

⁸⁴William L. Moran, “The Creation of Man in Atrahasis 1 192–248,” *BASOR* 200 (1970): 51–52.

which is slaughtered with him,⁸⁵ and humans acquire that *temu*-quality.⁸⁶ *Temu* seems to serve as a functional descriptor of the god as the ringleader of rebel gods,⁸⁷ who was not identified by the Iggū besieging Enlil's house. It appears that in the break in the text, he was identified by the Iggū,⁸⁸ traded and sacrificed for their release from hard labor.

The Anunnakū slaughtered (*it-ta-ab-hu*) *Wê-ila* in the assembly. The Akkadian verb *it-ta-ab-hu* is the preterite, third-person plural of the infinitive *tabahu*, which means “to slaughter, butcher, slit the throat.”⁸⁹ The butchering of a god to create man is clearly attributed to the Anunnakū.⁹⁰ The death of *Wê-ila* is a divine action. It is also a physical event involving the use of divine flesh and blood with clay to form mankind.

⁸⁵Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 58, 59.

⁸⁶Both the *temu* and the *etemmu* in mankind may have been intended as a memorial of human origin, status, and dangers of rebelling against the senior gods. Cf. Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” 202.

⁸⁷“Indeed, this characteristic serves as one of identification for the rebel god.” Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” 202.

⁸⁸Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 47–51. Especially in lines 128–130 and 146, Anu, Enlil, Ninurta and Ennugi sent Nasku out of the meeting to ask the protesting gods: “Who is [the instigator of] the battle? Who is [the provoker of] hostilities? Who [declares] war? They responded with a half-truth: “Every single [one of us gods has declared] war.” Ibid., 51. Moran draws the same conclusion about the *temū*-quality of the slain god: “If *temū* is characteristic of him, it can only be in a specific case or role, and since the latter also explains his death, it is most easily understood of the part he played in the rebellion. It is he, we submit, who was ‘the god who had the scheme’ to overthrow Enlil, and it is this scheme that is effectively ended with his death; he dies ‘along with his scheme.’” W. L. Moran, “The Creation of Man in Atrahasis I 192–248,” *BASOR*, no. 200 (1970): 52; Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 118.

⁸⁹*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, 2006, s.v. “*Tabahu*.”

⁹⁰Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 58, 59.

The plan to slaughter a god was concocted by Enki, god of fresh water, to which the great gods acceded.⁹¹ Mami was assigned the creation of man by the Anunnakū. After completing her task she says: “You assign me a task, I have completed it; You slaughtered (*ta-at-buha*) a god together with his personality.”⁹² The reference is clearly to the Anunnakū as the legal executioners of the god in a court setting. The Igiḡū may have been involved as witnesses against the rebel leader for their emancipation as reward.

Further evidence that the death of a god was caused by other gods can be had in the purification rite advanced by Enki:

Enki opened his mouth
And addressed the great gods,
‘On the first, seventh, and fifteenth day of the month
I will make a purifying bath.
Let one god be slaughtered
So that all the gods may be cleansed in a dipping.’⁹³

Lambert-Millard’s translation above suggests that the gods slaughtered a god in order that the gods may be purified in the blood of the slain god. Moran believes that such meaning

⁹¹Ibid., 56–59.

⁹²Ibid., 58, 59, 85. Though there is no evidence of the resurrection or reincarnation or immortality of *Wê-ila* in the Epic, from his knowledge of ancient Near Eastern literature, Kilmer observes: “Even though gods can be ‘killed’ in the myths, everyone accepts the fact that they do not really die. They continue to exist, move on to the other myths, can be transformed, brought back to life, and so on.” Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 164.

⁹³Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 56, 59.

is based on a defective manuscript, and in Mesopotamian thought there is no evidence of blood being endowed with magical cleansing power.⁹⁴

The purification rite established by Enki is not a bloodbath, but ritual cleansing by the Enki himself, the god of fresh waters, the purifier *par excellence*. Moran avers: “Apparently all the gods must bathe, and the magical powers that are Enki’s alone are required.”⁹⁵ Enki’s ability to cleanse (*ullulu*) everything, his having the magical know-how to purify ritually, finds clarity in Nintu’s words: “Skill lies with Enki. He can cleanse everything.”⁹⁶

The ablution required after the god is killed may have been for the purpose of washing off “the splatterings of blood,” and “defilement resulting from the common association with, and responsibility for, death.”⁹⁷ Jacobsen comes to the same conclusion when he says: “Enki instituted ablution rites on the first, seventh, and fifteenth of every month to expiate them for the killing.”⁹⁸ Therefore, the purification rite that Enki instituted for deicide is clear evidence of the guilt or involvement or responsibility of the

⁹⁴Moran, “The Creation of Man in Atrahasis 1 192–248,” 51; Oppenheim supports Moran’s argument by his explanation of ritual bathing of the gods, instead of “blood consciousness” of the West, its awareness of the magic power of blood, not paralleled in Mesopotamia. Blood was of no importance in Mesopotamian cult or even magic. A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 192, 365, n. 18.

⁹⁵Moran, “The Creation of Man in Atrahasis 1 192–248,” 51.

⁹⁶Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 56, 57.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 118.

gods in the death of another god. Ritual cleansing would not be necessary where divine guilt or responsibility is negated.

Human decimation. In addition to the divine causation of the death of a god, there is also divine causation of human death in the Atra-Hasis Epic. About twelve hundred years after mankind was created, the text says:

When the land was extended [and the peoples multiplied].
He got disturbed [with] their noise,
[With] their uproar [sleep] did not overcome him.
Enlil convened his assembly
And addressed the gods his sons,
'The noise of mankind has become too intense for me,
I have got disturbed [with] their noise,
[With] their uproar sleep does not overcome me.
Command that there be plague,
Let Namtar diminished their noise.
Let disease, sickness, plague and pestilence
Blow upon them like a tornado.'
They commanded and there was plague,
Namtar diminished their noise.⁹⁹

In the assembly of the gods, Enlil gives the directive to Namtar to punish mankind with disease, sickness, plague, and pestilence for their sleep-disturbing noise (*rigmu*) and uproar or tumult (*hubūru*). The punishment of mankind in its authorship, command, and implementation is divine or pantheonic. The punitive measure is a divine judgment. Enlil, his sons—the gods—and Namtar, that is, the convention of gods, appear to give Enlil, the head of the pantheon, the “green light” to punish mankind. “They,” not only Enlil, “commanded and there was a plague.”

⁹⁹Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 106, 107.

Overpopulation or the multiplication of people apparently corresponds to the intensity of noise of mankind in the passage. Therefore, the diminution of their noise by Namtar, god of the plague, appears to inversely correspond to the unmentioned decimation of mankind. The less noise means the more decimation. If this conclusion is correct, then for each of the other punitive pre-flood measures (disease, drought, famine, salinization of the soil, the itch, and starvation)¹⁰⁰ Enlil took against mankind to diminish their noise, there was human decimation, followed again by human procreative resilience and overpopulation after twelve hundred years, and intense noise, leading to Enlil's insomnia and anger and back to a morbid /lethal punishment. For each of Enlil's measures to reduce noise and humanity, Enki saves a remnant of the human race by advising a wise man called Atrahasis.

Since "the land was bellowing like a bull,"¹⁰¹ Enlil said in the divine assembly: "Let Namtar ('Fate')¹⁰² diminish their noise." This was successfully accomplished: "Namtar diminished their noise." If human noise (*rigmu*) is negatively correlated to human population as it is positively correlated, then diminution of human noise corresponds to diminution of human overpopulation. It is not clear whether the text indicates noise diminution due to a diseased human overpopulation or noise diminution due to a disease-decimated human population. While Kilmer believes that the gods used

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 72–87.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 73.

¹⁰²Kilmer, "The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology," 168.

the punitive measures as methods of decimating the population, he concluded that man's numbers were not diminished.¹⁰³ He bases his conclusion on Enlil's announcement: "The people were not diminished, but have become more numerous than before!"¹⁰⁴

However, it is possible to view Enlil's announcement as an assessment of the human count and repopulation long after their decimation. In this case man's prolific procreation would have re-increased his numbers resulting in the present count exceeding the previous count, hence Enlil's observation: "The people were not diminished." Moreover, there is clear evidence of human diminution by cannibalism. In starvation during the pre-flood punitive measures, mothers served up their kids for food; one house consumed another.¹⁰⁵

The passage indicates that it was the sleep-depriving nature of man's noise or clamor (*rigmu*) that disturbed Enlil, not human overpopulation per se. It would appear that with human din or clamor, mankind was being ungrateful to Enlil (god of the earth) in his own domain. But on closer observation, the reverse might be truer. It may be that Enlil is the unreasonable party instead of mankind. When mankind was created, the gods endowed mankind with clamor (*rigmu*).¹⁰⁶ Clamor is a god-given (Enlil-bestowed)

¹⁰³Ibid., 168, 169.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 109.

¹⁰⁵Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, 113 (Assyrian recension); *ANET*, 106 (neo-Assyrian version II).

¹⁰⁶*COS*, 1.130:451; "[You] raised a cry [for mankind]." Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 60, 61, 85. "Enlil judged humankind because of inherent character that he bestowed upon mankind." Park, "Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9," 21.

inborn attribute of mankind for which Enlil punished mankind. Mankind is diseased and decimated by the gods for a god-bestowed inevitability upon his nature.

In the Atra-Hasis Epic, the term *rigmu* refers to a characteristic of gods and of divine action, as well as human activity. The sound of Adad's thunder,¹⁰⁷ of the deities' complaints around Enlil's house,¹⁰⁸ and the terrible roar of the flood itself¹⁰⁹ are referred to as *rigmu*.¹¹⁰ After Enlil imposed disease on mankind, Enki advised Atrahasis to tell his elders to make a loud noise (*rigmu*) in the land, thus substituting *rigmu* in the place of the worship of their personal deities in order to shame Namtara into removing the disease.¹¹¹ Interestingly, *rigmu*, the implied reason for the divine punishment, is a part of the tactic used on a god to remove the divine punishment. Therefore, *rigmu* can refer to voices (human or divine) or sound (human, divine, or natural).

Rigmu, construed as human noise, is "characteristically human, evidence of man's presence, and its absence suggests devastation."¹¹² Clifford calls it "a sign of life and activity without negative connotation" of human evil.¹¹³ Moran concludes that the Epic

¹⁰⁷Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 92, 93; *COS*, 1.130:452.

¹⁰⁸Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 46, 47.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 94, 95; *COS*, 1.130:452.

¹¹⁰Ogden, "Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11," 209.

¹¹¹Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 68, 69.

¹¹²Moran, "Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood," 57.

¹¹³Richard J. Clifford, review of *Mythos im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt: Festschrift für Hans-Peter Müller zum 65*, by Hans-Peter Müller, *CBQ* 62 (2000): 782.

presents a “tragic anthropology” in which man, “due to forces beyond his control,” “acquired guilt simply by being.”¹¹⁴

In the pre-flood punitive measures, *rigmu* does not appear to carry moral significance in terms of human evil or sin as the cause of the divine punishment. It is not exclusively a sign of human overpopulation,¹¹⁵ but is positively correlated to it in the sense that population increase results in noise increase. Sleep-depriving noise provoked Enlil to effect disease, drought, and famine upon and decimation of mankind. Divinity decided to endow mankind with *rigmu*, decided that *rigmu* is annoying, and deserves morbid, lethal punishment to diminish or eliminate *rigmu* in order to promote divine (Enlil’s) sleep.

The final solution—Genocide. Since the previous punitive measures failed to diminish the sleep-depriving *rigmu* of mankind for Enlil, more drastic steps were taken to permanently quell human noise. Morbidity and/or decimation did not suffice, therefore,

¹¹⁴William Lambert Moran, “A Mesopotamian Myth and Its Biblical Transformation,” in *The Most Magic Word*, ed. Ronald S. Handel, The Catholic Quarterly Monograph Series 35 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2002), 71.

¹¹⁵*Rigmu* has been interpreted as noise that signifies human overpopulation. Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” 149, 150–151. “In fact, there are several problems with the claims that *rigmu* and *huburu* are symptomatic only of an increase in human numbers.” Ogden, “Divine Aspirations in Atra-Hasis and in Genesis 1–11,” 207.

annihilation of mankind is the “final solution.”¹¹⁶ This “final solution” is a catastrophic flood judgment, the Deluge, the *Abūbu*.

The fruitless punitive measures of Enlil to diminish human noise may have suggested to Enlil by now that mankind is getting help from a god. Apparently, in a convention of the gods, Enki got frustrated with the behaviors of the gods and became derisive of and alienated from the assembly. The text says: “[Enki] got fed up with sitting in the assembly of the gods laughter overcame him.”¹¹⁷ The Anunnakū’s decision to obliterate mankind may have led Enlil to secure the cooperation of all the gods by pantheonic rule and oath. Crafty Enki, divine creator, savior and friend of mankind became the divine cynosure: “Let us bind prince Enki . . . by an oath.”¹¹⁸

Apparently, Enki attempted to circumvent the oath or disown the planned *abūbu* (flood) to annihilate his people. He complained:

Why will you bind me with an oath [...]?
Am I to lay hands on [my own peoples]?
The flood you are commanding [me],
Who is it? I [do not know].
Am I to give birth to a [flood]?
That is the task of [Enlil].¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology,” 169; Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” 64.

¹¹⁷Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 83–85.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

Enki was addressing and responding to the gods, his brothers,¹²⁰ who seem to be commanding him to deliver the flood upon mankind. Enki, in turn, lays this role to the authority of Enlil, the head of the pantheon, the noise-disturbed, sleep-deprived god. It is clear from Enki's complaint that the flood is a patheonic plan sealed with an oath, a patheonic authorization, a divine task (Enlil's), and has divine origin. The task of Enlil, not Enki, is to give birth to an *abūbu*. The flood, then, is a divine act.

The passage above implies that Enki shows parental protectiveness and ethical restraint over against the gods' requirement of a flood upon his peoples. It shows that Enki was free to dissent and pass the task to warrior Enlil, though it does not mean his absolute non-involvement in bringing the flood upon mankind. In fact, divine responsibility for the flood clearly incorporated all the gods. The genocidal intent of all the gods is clearly enunciated: "The gods commanded total destruction, Enlil did an evil deed on the peoples."¹²¹ Divine genocide in the Epic is called "Enlil's evil deed," a "divine command" and a divinely intended "total destruction of peoples." Therefore, causation of death in the flood account of the *Atra-Hasis Epic* is undoubtedly divine. All the gods were active participants in the corporate judgment of the flood.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid., 87.

Theological Implications

Divine justice and mortality

The Atra-Hasis Epic ascribes immortality to gods like other Mesopotamian myths. However, it depicts a god among the Igiḡū as mortal by the very fact of his stated death. *Wê-ila* was killed by the great gods probably because of his ringleader role among the Igiḡū, who refused to work for the great gods, and defied the authority of Enlil. Gods caused this god to die in order to build mankind to take the slave position of the Igiḡū. Heidel makes this important observation: “Immortal gods could not die a natural death, but they could perish through violence.”¹²² Therefore, a god can die and gods can kill. Death is explained as neither extinction nor reincarnation.

The role of *Wê-ila* and the Igiḡū in the demonstration and show of force can be labeled a “legitimate rebellion” against the Anunnakū. Although Anu recognized the hard-work complaint of the Igiḡi-gods as legitimate,¹²³ and Enlil shed tears¹²⁴ either in frustration over or pity for them, the pantheonic response was the death of the ringleader to quell the uprising. Apparently, the divine justice meant that the role of *Wê-ila* amounted to a capital crime necessitating capital punishment. *Wê-ila*’s parts (blood and flesh) combined with clay were used to construct humankind. The *temu*-quality may have

¹²²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 137.

¹²³Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 53.

¹²⁴Ibid.

been passed from the god to mankind as a reminder of the “butchering” consequences of spearheading an insurrection against the Anunnakū.

Divine inscrutability

Mankind is incognizant of how he is affecting divinity. No opportunity for grace, or change, or coming to self-realization is directly revealed to him. Measures to reduce human noise are all felt and seen by them. Humans were aware of the punitive measures but not its reason. Only Enki secretly informs Atrahasis about the divine measures at its height or threshold and the countermeasures to escape them.

Divine rest

Human noise disturbed divine sleep and necessitated punitive divine measures to restore Enlil’s rest. Divine rest is more important than human health, safety, or preservation. Igigi-gods are to serve the Anunnaki-gods, and humankind is to serve all the gods. Noiselessness means rest for Enlil, but decimation or devastation for the population of mankind.

Divine limitation

The gods of the Epic are not omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, or omnicompetent. They need the help of each other in creation, in bringing plagues, drought, famine, and the flood upon mankind. The gods display anthropomorphic and anthropathic tendencies—they kill, die, cry, fear, get angry, scheme, have flesh and blood, can be appeased, make noise, and need sleep.

Divine fallibility and mutability

“Total destruction”¹²⁵ of mankind turns out to be short of Atrahasis in the Epic.¹²⁶ Enki joins the pantheonic oath about the impending flood, a secret of the gods, but only to disclose it later in a dream and interpretation to Atrahasis and tell him the way of escape.¹²⁷ Mami’s remorse over the flood is evident: “In the assembly of the gods, how did I, with them, command total destruction?”¹²⁸ The gods also regretted their hasty decision to inundate the earth when they found themselves hungry and thirsty¹²⁹—their laborers are dead. At first Enlil was angry at the preservation of Atrahasis, but was appeased by Enki and Atrahasis’s offering to the gods. The gods agreed to a proposal that certain classes of humanity not reproduce.

Theodicean Implications

Human or divine evil

There is no account of human evil as a cause of the pre-flood or deluvian punitive measures in the Epic. Neither cannibalism nor overpopulation is the presenting cause of the punitive divine actions. The pre-flood punitive measures of famine and drought leading to human starvation drove mankind to cannibalism for survival.

¹²⁵Ibid., 99.

¹²⁶Ibid., 105.

¹²⁷Ibid., 89.

¹²⁸Ibid., 95.

¹²⁹*COS*, 1.130:452; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 95.

On the contrary there is evidence of divine evil in the Epic. The flood is called Enlil's "evil command"¹³⁰ and his "evil deed."¹³¹ The whole pantheon of gods, Anunnakū as well as Igigū, is implicated in the attempted total destruction of mankind. They took an oath to cooperate in this corporate judgment of the flood. So the deluge involved the total pantheon, total earth, total mankind, and total (ultimate) punishment.

Pantheonic authority and authorization is the cause of the flood. Human sleep-depriving noise amounted to a capital crime in the punitive response of the gods. The incessant noise provoked Enlil to wrath and lethal revenge. There is no automatic connection between human noise and ecological disaster in the Epic. The causative agents behind the movement of the blind forces of nature in the flood are the gods.

Divine justification

In general, there is no explicit attempt to justify the actions of the deities against mankind in the Epic. There is, however, evidence of a sort of divine absolution or expiation in the ablution rite of Enki for the deicidal act of the gods. It suggests divine responsibility for the death of *Wê-ila* and divine cleansing through the magical know-how of Enki, the god of fresh waters. In a sense, a degree of the moral sense of the gods is apparent after the flood in the tears of Nintu, the remorse of Mami, Enki's rescue operation and preservation of Atrahasis in a boat, the regret of all the gods for their

¹³⁰Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 95.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 87.

destruction of mankind, and their structuring of humankind to avoid overpopulation commensurate with noise that led to the *abūbu*.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

In the previous section on the origin of death, the Gilgamesh Epic was examined on a whole. In this section on the divine causation of death in the deluge, only the Flood Tablet (XI) will be studied. The Flood Tablet (XI), however, is not all flood. Apart from the flood narrative which makes up the major portion of the Tablet, there are three short episodes based on the motif of “squandered opportunity for immortality.” Following Heidel’s enumeration of the Tablet and Veener’s episodic division of it, the three short episodes relate: (1) a contest between Gilgamesh and the “gods of slumber” (XI: 197–233), (2) “a bath in the Fountain of Youth” (XI: 234–257), and (3) “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant” (XI: 258–300).¹³² So more specifically, the focus will be only on the largest division of Tablet XI containing the flood narrative (XI: 1–197).

Tablet XI is said to be “virtually in a state of perfect preservation,”¹³³ and is “a more detailed and complete account of the Flood.”¹³⁴ Like the rest of the Epic, it “dates

¹³²Veener, “Gilgamesh and the Magic Plant,” 199; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 80–92.

¹³³“ The Epic of Gilgamesh,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 72).

¹³⁴Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 24; cf. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 1; Cohn, *Noah’s Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought*, 21.

from about 1600 B.C., at the end of the Old Babylonian period, and was composed in Akkadian.”¹³⁵

Genre Classification and Function

Like the rest of the Epic, Tablet XI is a secular poem,¹³⁶ “driven by two interconnected polarities, nature/culture and mortal/immortal.”¹³⁷ The Tablet recounts how Utnapishtim, the Mesopotamian Noah, after being saved from a deluge upon mankind, became immortal, and Gilgamesh’s squandered opportunity for immortality or eternal rejuvenation. Utnapishtim told Gilgamesh the flood story to explain how he became immortal.¹³⁸

¹³⁵Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 195; “Introduction,” *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans., Maureen Gallery Kovacs, xxii. Heidel fixes the date of composition of the *Gilgamesh Epic* at about 2000 B. C. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 15.

¹³⁶ANET, 72; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, 262.

¹³⁷Thomas Van Nortwick, “The Wildman: The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *Gilgamesh: A Reader*, ed. John Maier (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1997), 346.

¹³⁸ANET, 93. In the same vein, Noort says: “The flood narrative is intended to explain how Utnapishtim came to be immortal.” Noort, “The Stories of the Great Flood: Notes on Gen 6:5–9:17 in Its Context of the ANE,” 24. The flood “is not a historical scientific narrative, but simply the relation of an episode in Ut-napishtim’s life as told by himself, a very old man, to a young king afraid of death.” Sollberger, *The Babylonian Legend of the Flood*, 25.

Account Analysis

Antecedent context of Tablet XI

Two principal characters of the Gilgamesh Epic are Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu. After several thrilling adventures, Enkidu dies and his death has a profound impact on Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh laments: “When I die, shall I not be like unto Enkidu?” Henceforth, Gilgamesh’s spirit is obsessed with the fear of death, and his sole interest lies in escaping the fate of mankind and gaining immortality by whatever means, no matter how arduous.

Gilgamesh thinks of interviewing the only man ever to have received immortality—Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, the survivor of the flood. Henceforth Gilgamesh embarks on an odyssey, fraught with dangers towards the place beyond the lethal waters where Utnapishtim and his wife have been dwelling since the flood. In Tablet X of the Epic, Gilgamesh is approaching his destination. Tablet XI opens with Gilgamesh interviewing Utnapishtim about the secret of his survival, to which Utnapishtim answers with the story of the flood.

Overview of the flood event

Gilgamesh’s first question to Utnapishtim is: “[Tell me], how didst thou enter into the company of the gods and obtain life (everlasting)?” At first sight of Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh begins to wonder how is it that he and Utnapishtim share humanity, yet he is mortal and Utnapishtim immortal. Utnapishtim decides to give him an answer in a

revelation of the flood which he calls “a hidden thing” (*amat niširti*) and a secret of the gods (*pirišta ša ilāni*).

Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh that in the ancient city of Shurippak (or Shuruppak), situated on the bank of the river Euphrates, the gods were in its midst, and they decided to produce a flood on mankind. Only Ea, also called Ninigiku,¹³⁹ breaks rank with the gods and repeats their words to a reed hut and brick wall in which Utnapishtim lived, in this way avoiding the guilt of disclosing the secrets of the gods to a mere mortal. Ea says:

Reed hut, reed hut! Wall, wall!
Reed hut, hearken! Wall, consider!
Man of Shurippak, son of Ubara-Tutu!
Tear down (thy) house, build a ship!
Abandon (thy) possession, seek (to save) life!
Disregard (thy) goods, and (save) life!
[Cause to] go up into the ship the seed of all living creatures.¹⁴⁰

Following Ea’s blueprint, Utnapishtim built a ship according to the precise measurements and loaded it with silver, gold, seed of living things, cattle, wild beasts, and he, his kith and kin and craftsmen board it.¹⁴¹ Then the set time for the flood arrives, and:

Six days and [six] nights
The wind blew, the downpour, the tempest, (and) the flo[od]
overwhelmed the land.
When the seventh day arrived, the tempest and the flood,
Which had fought like an army subsided in (its) onslaught.
The sea grew quiet, the storm abated, the flood ceased.
I open the window, and light fell upon my face.

¹³⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 80.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 80–81.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 84.

I looked upon the sea, (all) was silence,
And all mankind had turned to clay;
The . . . was as level as a (flat) roof.
I bowed, sat down, and wept.¹⁴²

During the flood, “the gods cowered like dogs” because they were terror-stricken at the deluge and crouched in distress over it.¹⁴³ After the flood subsided, Utnapishtim made a huge sacrifice to the gods. They “gathered like flies over the sacrificer,”¹⁴⁴ Utnapishtim.¹⁴⁵ After a quarrelsome exchange among the gods, Enlil made Utnapishtim and his wife immortal, saying:

But now Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto us gods,
In the distance, at the mouth of the rivers, Utnapishtim shall dwell!¹⁴⁶

Utnapishtim’s story about the flood in which he tells Gilgamesh how he became immortal ends here. The flood story is a unique event which will never recur, and, *ipso facto*, it offers no recipe or set of instructions for Gilgamesh to secure or be granted eternal life. Therefore, its irrelevance for his situation vitiates all basis for hope that drove him on his quest.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴²Ibid., 85–86.

¹⁴³Ibid., 85.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 87.

¹⁴⁵He is given the descriptive epithet “Atrahasis” meaning “exceedingly wise.” Ibid., 88.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 206; Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 28.

Divine causation of death

Pantheonic impulsive imposition. The flood in the Gilgamesh epic is neither related to creation—the origin of human history nor—provoked by incorrigible human evil. Concerning the gods who were in Shurippak, the account indicates that “their heart (*ŠÀ-ba-šú-nu*) led the great gods to produce the flood.”¹⁴⁸ The gods are said to bring (*ub-la* from *abālu*) the deluge. They are the cause of the flood.

The pantheon of gods present in Shurippak are Anu their father, warrior Enlil the counsellor, Ninurta their chamberlain, Ennugi their canal-controller, and far-sighted Ea.¹⁴⁹ The flood emanates from the prompting of their divine heart. The pantheon of gods is the planners and producers of the flood (*abūbu*). The flood is an unprovoked arbitrary invention of the gods against mankind.

Pantheonic responsibility. The flood is depicted as an irrational act of Enlil, an ambiguous *kibtu* by Ea, and a corporate divine effort. Both Ishtar and Ea blamed Enlil by making the same accusation against him. Twice it is said that “without reflection (*la imtalkuma*, without discussing it)¹⁵⁰ he brought on the deluge.”¹⁵¹ Enlil’s imposition of

¹⁴⁸ *ANET*, 93.

¹⁴⁹ Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 87.

¹⁵⁰ John Gardner and John Maier, *Gilgamesh* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1984), 242, 243.

¹⁵¹ Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 87, 88.

the flood without the necessary consultation showcases him as an autocratic head of the pantheon on this matter, who self-reliantly adjudged the necessity of the *abūbu*.

In light of Enlil's apparent autocracy, after the flood, Ea gives Enlil late ethical instructions: "On the sinner impose (*emid*) his sin, on the transgressor impose his transgression. (Yet) be lenient, lest he be cut off."¹⁵² From Ea's words, Heidel concludes that "the flood was due to the sin of man."¹⁵³ However, Ea is literally saying that the imposition of the sin/crime should be on the owner (*be-el*) of sin or crime alone. Justice is not served when the innocent unjustly suffers without leniency and almost to extinction.

Gardner and Maier conclude that in "one line, Ea establishes an ethical norm that rids mankind of the burden of collective responsibility."¹⁵⁴ Since no sin or evil is ascribed to man in the Epic, collective, exclusive responsibility for the flood rests on the gods and on Enlil as the head of the pantheon. Enki's "point here is that Enlil, in not distinguishing between the sinful and the righteous, has totally disregarded ethical considerations."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the flood is a divine caprice, a thoughtless, unwarranted destruction, a fatal divine event that metes out punishment upon mankind without human sin or crime, and

¹⁵²Ibid., 88.

¹⁵³Ibid., 225.

¹⁵⁴Gardner and Maier, *Gilgamesh*, 243.

¹⁵⁵David J. A Clines, "The Theology of the Flood Narrative," in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays*, vol. 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 509.

attempts total destruction without human guilt. The gods are responsible for this injustice to mankind.

Ea's deceptive circumvention of the impending flood also speaks of the responsibility of the gods for the flood. Utnapishtim was worried about what he should say to the city, people, and elders when he is seen building the ship. Ea told him to tell them that Enlil hates him, and he must depart from Enlil's land to the Apsu, and dwell with Ea. With a double entendre he adds: "[In the evening the leader] of the storm(?) will cause a *kibtu* to rain down upon you."¹⁵⁶ The phrase "*kibtu* to rain" can refer to a "wheat-rain" or "a rain of misfortune."¹⁵⁷ The pun on *kibtu* is intended to hoodwink the inhabitants of Shurippak about the impending catastrophe, without making an outright lie.

The term "leader of the storm" may be a reference to Enlil or Adad, "the god of storm and rain."¹⁵⁸ Either of these gods is represented as raining (*zanānu*) misfortune (*kibtu*) upon Shurippak in the evening. Shamash set a definite time (*adannu*) for this flood of misfortune. The term "leader of the storm,"¹⁵⁹ used about three times in the Epic, accentuates divine responsibility for the flood.

Many gods are shown to be involved in making the deluge happen. The approach of the developing flood is described in this fashion:

As soon as the first shimmer of the morning beamed forth,

¹⁵⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 87, 81–82.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 82, n. 170.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 84, n. 184.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 93–94.

A black cloud came up from out the horizon.
Adad thunders within it,
While Shullat and Hanish go before,
Coming as heralds over hills and plain;
Irragal pulls out the mooring posts;
Ninurta comes along (and) causes the dikes to give way;
The Anunnaki raised (their) torches,
Lightening up the land with their brightness;
(And) turned into the darkness all that was light.
[...] the land he broke (?) like a po[t(?)].¹⁶⁰

Several gods share in the responsibility for the flood. Their active participation represents a corporate divine effort. After the flood, Ishtar chided herself for “ordering battle for the destruction of (her) people.”¹⁶¹ Therefore, divine causation of death in the flood narrative of the Gilgamesh Epic is beyond question. The gods as agents of the flood are evident in the language of the text, the confessions, and speeches of the gods and in their active participation in the deluge.

Theological Implications

Divine killing and human death

The flood narrative of the Gilgamesh Epic shows that the gods can massacre humans without prior warning, without justification, without moral basis, and without leniency or compassion. Humans are expendable for the fulfillment of any divine impulse. The deities are in charge of the forces of nature and can unleash violent winds and waters to do their dictates and follow their whims and fancies. The need for divine

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 84–85.

¹⁶¹*ANET*, 94.

unity and corporate effort in the deluge outstrips and trumps divine reserve and scruples. Human death is caused by divine genocide.

Divine groupthink and human death

The decision for the flood is a consensus of the gods. Their consensus is manifested in their unity of action. Enlil may have birthed the flood idea to which the other gods acceded. There may have been divine comfort and a sense of infallibility in the meeting of a multitude of divine minds over the plan. The political maxims that “might is right” and “majority rules” seem to have guided their diluvial plan. Divine scruples are not revealed until after the lethal, terrifying effects of the flood. It seems that the gods were totally ignorant of the cataclysmic impact of their combined effort. Therefore, human death apparently sprang from divine groupthink.

Divine lability and human death

The gods are united in bringing the flood, but after the flood they are accusatory of Enlil for the flood. Ea’s quiet opposition to the flood before the flood is not stated as being based on Utnapishtim’s piety. Ea is naturally crafty and as Utnapishtim’s personal god he may have been keeping his service intact by preserving his servant. It is only after the flood that Ea proposes ethical considerations to Enlil concerning just punishment. Also, after the flood, Ishtar is regretful of her role in deciding the flood. Enlil, although angry at first at Utnapishtim’s preservation, gathers with the other gods around the sacrificing Utnapishtim. So from pre-flood to post-flood, the gods transitioned from resolve to regret, from subtle to open, from guilty or angry to placated or appeased.

Utnapishtim, a mere man, who was earmarked for death, is instead transformed by Enlil's decree into something "like us gods," presumably deified and immortalized.

Theodicean Implications

Divine injustice and human death

There is no explicit theodicy in the Gilgamesh Epic. The presence of human evil is not indicated. Divine justice in the absence of any stated human evil is actually divine caprice or even injustice. Ea's ethical instruction to Enlil—"On the sinner lay his sin; on the transgressor lay his transgression"—addresses Enlil's power of discernment between the righteous and the sinner and fairness in allocating responsibility for sin or transgression. Though the statement implies the presence of the sinner and unmentioned righteous, it does not necessitate the presence of both groups for the authenticity of the statement. The focus of the statement is on Enlil's allocation of guilt where perhaps there is none.

The translation: "Let loose, that he shall not be cut off; pull tight, that he may not ge[t (too) loose],"¹⁶² is also put in this way: "(Yet) be lenient, lest he be cut off, be patient, lest he be dis[lodged]!"¹⁶³ or "Give play so he is not cut free; pull him in, lest he be lost."¹⁶⁴ Gardner and Maier point out: "What the metaphor is in line 181 is not entirely clear; presumably, the 'evil doer' is likened to a fish on a line, with a paradoxical

¹⁶²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 88.

¹⁶³*ANET*, 95.

¹⁶⁴Gardner and Maier, *Gilgamesh*, 240.

relationship between letting loose and pulling, a metaphor that would be appropriate to the character of Ea, whose sign is a goatfish.”¹⁶⁵ So Ea’s statement seems to be addressing the limiting of punishment and the need for leniency in anticipation of mankind’s potential waywardness. There is no evidence of mankind’s evil doing in the Epic.

Divine evil and human death

Ishtar’s post-flood comments about the flood are significant for the study of divine evil in the commentary on the flood.

Like a battle it came over the p[eople].
No man could see his fellow.
The people could not be recognized from heaven.
(Even) the gods were terror-stricken at the deluge.
They fled (and) ascended to the heaven of Anu;
The gods cowered like dogs and crouched in distress(?).
Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail;
The lovely-voiced lady of the go[ds] lamented:
‘In truth, the olden time has turned to clay,
Because I commanded evil in the assembly of the gods!
How could I command (such) evil in the assembly of the gods!
(How) could I command war to destroy my people!
For it is I who bring forth (these) my people!
Like the spawn of fish they now fill the sea!’
The Anunnaki-gods wept with her;
The gods sat bowed (and) weeping
Covered were their lips . . . ¹⁶⁶

The word “evil” is used twice in the passage above. The statement: “I commanded evil” is explained by “I commanded war to destroy my people.” The divine

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 243. Gardner and Maier’s suggestion seems to be supported in the Epic by the post-flood description of deceased mankind like fish in the sea: “Like the spawn of fish they (now) fill the sea!” Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 85.

¹⁶⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 85.

pre-flood speech of Ishtar in the divine assembly was a speech in favor of human destruction for which she expresses remorse. Here Ishtar confesses divine evil in the attempted annihilation of mankind.

Divine evil is not only in the inundation of mankind to death, but also in the divine terrorization. During the flood, the gods were terror-stricken, fled to heaven, and cowered like dogs. The gods wept with their lips drawn taut. They were their own worst enemy, being a terror unto themselves.

The divine “evil” affected the emotions and behavior of the gods, as well as the existence of mankind. No humans were to survive the flood because they were all consigned to total destruction by Enlil. After the flood, save for Utnapishtim, his wife, his kith and kin, and all the craftsmen, mankind “like the spawn of fish they fill the sea,” and “all mankind had returned to clay.”¹⁶⁷

Divine deception and human death

In the divine assembly, the heart of the gods prompted them to bring a flood. Ea, who was present in the assembly, disclosed the secret of the gods to Utnapishtim by talking to Utnapishtim’s reed hut. Ea provided an escape plan for Utnapishtim, suggesting that he should abandon his possessions, build a boat, and make the seed of all living creatures to go into the boat. In order that the city, people, and elders not know about the flood, Ea told Utnapishtim to tell them that he is building a boat because Enlil hates him, he can no longer dwell in the city, and in the evening the leader of the storm

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 86; *ANET*, 94.

will rain *kibtu* on the city. Ea knows that for the people *kibtu* would mean wheat only, not misfortune. So Ea's pun is a deliberate deception of the people who will be looking for wheat but will receive the misfortune of a destructive flood instead.

After the flood, Enlil was angry at the preservation of some humans. Ea was identified by Ninurta as the possible culprit. After praising Enlil as the "wisest among the gods," Ea proceeded to give him a brief ethical lecture. In it Ea emphasizes the injustice of Enlil's act and the alternative course he could have taken, that is, decimation by using animals, a famine, or Irra, "the god of pestilence,"¹⁶⁸ instead of annihilation by using a flood of water. From here Ea engages in a half-truth when he says:

(Moreover,) it was not I who revealed the secret of the great gods;
(But) to Atrahasis I showed a dream, and so he learned the secret of the gods.
And now take counsel concerning him.¹⁶⁹

The secret of the gods is the divine decision to inundate the land and exterminate mankind. Ea's intention in talking to Utnapishtim's reed hut was to save his servant Utnapishtim from the impending flood. Ea even dialogued with him telling him what to say to the people of Shurippak. But now he pretends to have only given Utnapishtim a dream and Utnapishtim, being Atrahasis, "the exceedingly wise,"¹⁷⁰ managed to figure out the secret of the flood.

Ea saves a minority of humanity from death in the deluge, but deceives a majority in the face of that death. He is neither for the total preservation of mankind nor for the

¹⁶⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 88, n. 203.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 88, n. 204.

total destruction of mankind. In his mitigation speech, he proposed alternative routes Enlil could have taken.¹⁷¹ Basically, he proposed that Enlil could have chosen the method of decimation instead of annihilation of mankind. Ironically, Ea, by saving Utnapishtim, his wife, kith and kin and the craftsmen, virtually turned Enlil's attempted annihilation of mankind into a decimation. What he suggested to Enlil, he himself fulfilled by deception of many and secret preservation of a few.

Berosus's *Babyloniaca*

The flood story in the *Babyloniaca of Berossus*¹⁷² is in the section entitled "Book Two: The Book of Kings." It is the latest known Babylonian deluge version. Berossus, a Babylonian priest of Marduk, wrote this work in Greek about 275 B.C.¹⁷³ He wrote a history of Babylon which is now lost, but excerpts of his version of the flood were preserved by a few later writers including Josephus, Polyhistor, Eusebius, and Syncellus. The flood hero is called Xisuthros or Sisuthros.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹Ibid., 88.

¹⁷²The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 18–22; Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 116–119; Robert M. Best, *Noah's Ark and the Ziusudra Epic* (Fort Myers, FL: Enlil Press, 1999), 259–261; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 134–137; Robert Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 108–112; Isaac P. Cory, *Ancient Fragments* (London: W. Pickering, 1832), 26–34.

¹⁷³Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 116; J. P. Lewis, "Flood," *ABD*, 2:798.

¹⁷⁴Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 116, 118, n. 55; Best, *Noah's Ark and the Ziusudra Epic*, 24; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 134.

Genre Classification and Function

Berosus's flood story is part of a book written in prose. The book was written "to present Babylonian history, with its vast antiquity, to the Greeks."¹⁷⁵ Historically, the book locates the flood after the reign of ten kings, the last two being Otiartes (or Ardates) and Xisuthros. Otiartes is a corruption of Ubār-Tutu. He is the father of Xisuthros, that is, Ziusudra. Xisuthros reigned for eighteen saroi,¹⁷⁶ about "68, 800 years."¹⁷⁷ Laragchos or Larak is identified as the place of their reign.¹⁷⁸

Account Analysis

The instrument and object of utter destruction

On May 15, Cronius or Kronos, "the Babylonian Ea,"¹⁷⁹ in a dream, disclosed to Xisuthros that "mankind would be destroyed (διαφθάρησεσθαι) by a flood (κατακλυσμοῦ). The Greek verb διαφθείρω means "to destroy utterly," "to make away with, kill, ruin."¹⁸⁰ The genitive κατακλυσμοῦ comes from κατακλυσμός which means "a

¹⁷⁵Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 134.

¹⁷⁶The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 19; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 135.

¹⁷⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 116.

¹⁷⁸The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 19; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 135.

¹⁷⁹The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 20, n. 49; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 135.

¹⁸⁰*An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (1889), s.v. "διαφθείρω."

deluge, inundation.”¹⁸¹ The instrument of utter destruction is the deluge, and the object of the destruction is mankind.

The agent of utter destruction

After Xisuthros, his wife, children, close friends, and the animals had embarked on the boat, the agent of the utter destruction is later stated in this way: “[And straightaway the things from the god came upon him.]”¹⁸² Heidel’s translation is: “The rainstorms sent by the god came upon him.”¹⁸³ Lambert and Millard put it this way: “What the god had announced happened.”¹⁸⁴ The sentence is derived from an “excerpt, which Abydenus (probably second century A.D.) made on the basis of Polyhistor’s epitome.”¹⁸⁵

The “things” are the “rainstorms,” and are “what the god (Ea) had announced,” the impending deluge. The divine agency of the flood is clearly established since it was “from the god” or “sent by the god.” The text does not shy away from depicting the god as directly involved in the deluge by way of announcement and causation. The use of the

¹⁸¹Ibid., s.v. “κατακλυσμός.”

¹⁸²The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 20.

¹⁸³Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 118.

¹⁸⁴Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 136.

¹⁸⁵Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 118; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 136.

singular “god” is a reference to “the chief god of the pantheon, i.e., Marduk,”¹⁸⁶ and “not Kronos (i.e., not Ea).”¹⁸⁷

Divine involvement is implied in Ea’s command to Xisuthros that if asked whether he is sailing, he should say: “To the gods, in order to pray that it may be well with mankind!”¹⁸⁸ Ea’s words imply the presence or existence of gods, the gods’ superiority over man, human worship of the gods, divine determination of human weal or woe, and divine ability to create or forestall a catastrophe. Without the direct and implied indication of divine causation of the flood in the text, then the flood in *Babyloniaca of Berossus* could have passed as a natural event foreseen and announced by the god.

Morality of the divine deluge

There is no human provocation of deity as a cause of the flood. Human immorality is not advanced or stated as a reason for the deluge. On the contrary, Xisuthros is portrayed as a righteous man. He is:

1. Obedient to Ea—“He obeyed and built a boat.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 20, n. 55a.

¹⁸⁷Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 118, n. 56.

¹⁸⁸Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 117. “To the gods, to sue that things may be well with men.” Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 110. “To the gods to pray for blessings on man.” Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 135. “To the gods to pray for good things for men.” The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 20.

¹⁸⁹Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 117.

2. Prayerful—“To the gods, in order to pray that it may be well with mankind.”¹⁹⁰
3. A family man—He had a wife, daughter, and relatives.¹⁹¹
4. Friendly—He had “close friends.”¹⁹²
5. Religious—“After he had prostrated himself to the ground, had built an altar, and had sacrificed to the gods.”¹⁹³
6. Apotheosized on account of his piety—“For because of his piety he had gone to dwell with the gods, and his wife and (his) daughter and pilot had received a share in the same honor.”

Even though from the two textual statements, “To the gods, in order to pray that it may be well with mankind” and “for because of his piety he had gone to dwell with the gods, and his wife and (his) daughter and pilot had received a share in the same honor,” one can infer Xisuthros’s intercessory prayer for mankind and his vicarious piety for his family and pilot, and *ipso facto*, the presence of human impiety, such meaning is not coercive. Such inference comes with alternative interpretations.

Xisuthros’s would-be prayer could have targeted human preservation, or deliverance or prevention of the cataclysm, instead of forgiveness of human sin or evil. His wife, daughter, and pilot who shared in his honor may have also shared in his piety, having believed and joined him on the boat. Moreover, Xisuthros’s close friends and

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid.

other possible relatives, who were left on the boat when he disembarked, were probably preserved because of their own piety, and not in spite of their probable sin.

Those who may have been inundated to death are not spoken of as unrighteous, in fact, they are not spoken of at all. In Berossus's flood account, humans may have died in utter ignorance of an impending flood and because they were not provided with an opportunity for escape from diluvial death in a boat. It seems that Ea, the personal patron god of Xisuthros, saved Xisuthros to keep him in his service. Other members of mankind may have also been devout to their personal deity.

If this is the case, then the gods of Berossus's deluge are immoral. They treat innocence as guilt, humans as trivial or dispensable, and would have utterly destroyed all mankind, had it not been for Ea's apparent secret intervention of pious Xisuthros, his family, and his cohorts. Therefore, the divine deluge is arbitrary, capricious, and causeless from the human side. The story offers an implicit indictment of the deities in the causation of the flood.

Theological Implications

The gods display selfish benevolence and silent nonchalance toward mankind. The revealed deluge plan was apparently concealed from most of humanity. Ea wanted the rest of mankind to see Xisuthros's embarkation of the boat as a going "to the gods, in order to pray that it may be well with mankind."

One god (Ea) cares about a man, his obedient servant, Xisuthros. Nothing is said about the care of the other gods for the rest of mankind. Diluvial death comes without

human provocation, but deification is appended to human piety. Xisuthros's piety of obedience, sacrifice, and humility to the gods, especially Ea, earns him residential status of and as a god, but nothing is required for the utter destruction of mankind. The rest of mankind is not automatically impious. The gods could have arbitrarily overlooked the piety of other humans to fulfill their impulse in the destruction of mankind.

In Berossus's flood account, death is divinely imposed. It is unpredictable, arbitrary, and cataclysmic. For no reason, most, if not all, humans could have been swept away to their hopeless graves.

Theodicean Implications

The deluge account of Berossus offers no explicit statement of theodicy. There is no evidence of human sin or evil. Divine evil appears to be in divine inconsistency in saving Xisuthros with his family and cohort because of his piety, but utterly destroying the rest of mankind without reason. In this sense the divinities appear both good and evil, and probably alternately so.

Human death could have been for divine sport. Ea's preservation of some humans still left countless unaccounted for, and without the benefit of warning, opportunity for grace or suggestions for escape. Moreover, Ea engaged in deception or questionable diplomacy in teaching Xisuthros to conceal the real purpose of the boat and the knowledge of the impending flood from unsuspecting human victims. If it were necessary for diluvial escape, then freedom of choice to be on or off the boat, or the

opportunity for repentance, forgiveness, and change were either arbitrarily denied or deliberately overlooked.

The Hebrew Old Testament Flood Account

The examination of the divine causation of death in the Hebrew OT will be focused on the flood account of Gen 6–9. A brief prologue of the text followed by its literary genre and function, account analysis, and theological and theodicean implications for the concept of the divine causation of death are the general areas under which the Gen 6–9 will be discussed.

Exposition of Genesis 6–9

The book of Genesis may have been written “in what archeologists call the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550 –ca. 1200 B. C.).”¹⁹⁴ Scholars have identified two divisions of the book: Gen 1–11, categorized as primeval history, and Gen 12–50, related to the patriarchal cycles and history of Israel. Genesis 6–9 falls within the primeval history division (Gen 1–11) of the book.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis*, 14; cf. Coffman, *Commentary on Genesis*, 18–20.

¹⁹⁵Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, 108; cf. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis*, 11, 16; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 1; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 10–11; Westermann, “Introduction,” *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, 2; Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 83–93; Wenham, “Introduction,” *Genesis 1–11*, xxxviii.

Genesis 1–11 deals with the “pre-literary . . . stage of society,”¹⁹⁶ and presents the “cosmic and worldwide emphasis” in antiquity.¹⁹⁷ Michael Fishbane (1975) identifies the idea of God’s will in conflict with human will as the “sacred center” of Gen 1–11. This volitional conflict led to the flood (Gen 6:1–4).¹⁹⁸

Genre Classification and Function

Walter Kaiser’s assessment of Gen 1–11 led him to classify this section of Genesis with the genera of “historical narrative-prose, interspersed with some lists, sources, sayings, and poetical lines.”¹⁹⁹ This genre of “historical narrative-prose,” which is also applicable to Gen 6-9, is supported by internal evidence in Genesis. The historical nature of the Genesis flood narrative is substantiated by the תּוֹלְדוֹת formula and the

¹⁹⁶John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1951), iv.

¹⁹⁷Gary Smith, “Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1–11,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 309–310; cf. Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 31.

¹⁹⁸Michael Fishbane, “The Sacred Center: The Symbolic Structure of the Bible,” in *Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to Nahum N. Glatzer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday by His Students*, ed. Michael A. Fishbane et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 6–13; cf. idem, *Text and Texture: Close Reading of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 17–40.

¹⁹⁹Walter C. Kaiser, “The Literary Form of Genesis 1–11,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Payne (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 61; cf. Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” *Origins* 22 (1995): 59; idem, “The Genesis Flood Story: Crucial Issues in the Current Debate,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (Spring 2004): 51; Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Biblical View of the Extent of the Earth,” *Origins* 2 (1975): 87.

double *inclusios* (genealogical frame or envelope construction) in the structure of the narrative.²⁰⁰

The genealogical term תּוֹלְדוֹת (“generations,” “accounts of men and their descendants,”²⁰¹ or “histories”)²⁰² comes from the root יָלַד “to bear, beget.”²⁰³ It occurs thirteen times in Genesis, structuring the entire book.²⁰⁴ It introduces the genealogical lines of ancient historical figures like Adam (Gen 5:1–6:8), Noah (6:9–9:29), and Noah’s sons (Gen 10:1–11:9). The Genesis flood narrative is included in the תּוֹלְדוֹת of Noah (Gen 6:9–9:29). The flood is accepted as a historical event in context of the successive genealogical lineage of Adam, Noah, and his sons and by תּוֹלְדוֹת literary function of making “descent a keystone of biblical history.”²⁰⁵

The rhetorical device of double *inclusios* (“envelope construction”) also indicates the historical nature of the Genesis flood narrative. The narrative is introduced and concluded by primary genealogies (Gen 5:32 and 9:28–29) and secondary genealogies

²⁰⁰William H. Shea, “The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications,” *Origins* 6 (1979): 8–29; Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 37.

²⁰¹BDB, s.v. “תּוֹלְדוֹת.”

²⁰²P. J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis: A Case for Literary Unity*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1985), 62.

²⁰³J. Külewein, “יָלַד,” *TLOT*, ed. Ernst Jenni et al. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:544.

²⁰⁴Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” 59.

²⁰⁵W. Gunther Plaut, *Genesis: Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1974), 19; Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 38.

(Gen 6:9–10 and 9:18–19).²⁰⁶ The genealogical frame or envelope construction (Gen 5:32 and 9:28–29) and the secondary genealogies (Gen 6:9–10 and 9:18–19) of the literary structure of the flood narrative show that the account is intended to be factual history, an accurate record of a real, literal, historical event, and not a non-historical, symbolic, or mythical account written only to teach theological truth.²⁰⁷

Account Analysis

Five aspects of the flood necessitate examination in considering its contribution to the concept of the divine causation of death: (1) The Diluvial Instruments, (2) The Diluvial Extent, (3) The Diluvial Causation, (4) The Diluvial Legal Context, and (5) The Diluvial Salvation. Aspects one, two, four, and five have received more or less extensive treatment by various scholars in articles and commentaries. However, the third, which has to do with the divine causation of death in the flood, has not been given extensive attention either because it is taken for granted or explained away with concepts of a

²⁰⁶Shea, “The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications,” 11–13.

²⁰⁷Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” 58–59; idem, “The Genesis Flood Story: Crucial Issues in the Current Debate,” 51; Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, 167–220; Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, The New American Commentary (NAC), vol. 1A, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 26–41.

purely natural catastrophe,²⁰⁸ a cosmic accident,²⁰⁹ or with the intimation of an automatic inevitable chain reaction between the moral-spiritual condition of humankind and the total or partial collapse of creation.²¹⁰

The diluvial instruments

The instruments or natural means used in the cataclysm of Gen 6–9 are called in Gen 7:9; 8:2: (1) “all the fountain of the great deep” [כָּל־מַעְיִיֶּנֶת תְּהוֹם רַבָּה], and (2) “the windows of heaven” [וַאֲרַבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם], or “the rain” [הַגֶּשֶׁם]. These two together are “the waters of the flood” (וַיְמִי הַמַּבּוּל) in Gen 7:10; 8:1–2. Genesis 6:17 explains the flood by putting the “waters upon the earth” (מַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ) in apposition to the word “flood” (הַמַּבּוּל). The wind (רוּחַ) was involved after the flood of water, assisting in the abating of the water (Gen 8:2).

Gerhard Hasel devoted an entire article to a study of the phrase “all the fountain of the great deep.” He concluded that the bursting forth of “all the fountain of the great deep” is related to the universal deep or world-ocean (תְּהוֹם) in Gen 1:2 (cf. Ps 104:6) and it refers to all the springs of subterranean waters of the earth, not just

²⁰⁸Such interpretation is based on the uniformitarianism mode of thought which denies preternatural cause and attempts to explain away everything in an evolutionary naturalistic framework. A. Hallam, *Great Geological Controversies* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1989); Ariel A. Roth, “Catastrophism—Is It Scientific?” *Ministry*, July 1986, 24.

²⁰⁹Doukhan, “Where Did Death Come From? A Study in the Genesis Creation Story,” 16.

²¹⁰See Wright, *Behold Your God*; Douglin, *The Character of God and His Dealing with Sin*. Similar ideas are proposed by Clute. Cf. Michael Clute, *Into the Father’s Heart*; idem, *The Wonderful Truth about the Heavenly Father*.

Mesopotamia.²¹¹ The opening of “the windows of heaven” refers to “torrential rains”²¹² (Gen 7:12). Therefore, springs of subterranean waters of the earth and torrential rains, “the lower and upper waters met together to produce the deluge.”²¹³

The diluvial extent

Davidson enumerates three conflicting schools of interpretation on the extent of the Genesis flood in an article dealing with the universality of the flood. He calls them:

1. The traditional, which asserts the universal worldwide nature of the Deluge
2. Limited or local flood theories, which narrow the scope of the flood to a particular geographical location in Mesopotamia

3. Non-literal (symbolic) interpretation, which suggests that the flood story is a non-historical account written to teach theological truth.²¹⁴ In the same article, he convincingly argues with eight different terms or phrases in Gen 6–9 and fourteen other biblical evidence for a worldwide flood.²¹⁵ Only a brief outline of some of the evidence will be presented in order to establish the extent of the flood.

²¹¹Hasel, “The Fountains of the Great Deep,” *Origins* 1 (1974): 67–72; cf. Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” 63.

²¹²Gerhard Hasel, “Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative,” *Origins* 5 (1978): 92–93; cf. Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” 64.

²¹³*The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1926), s.v. “Deluge”; Hasel, “Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative,” 92.

²¹⁴Davidson, “Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood,” 58.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, 60–70; cf. Gerhard Hasel, “The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood,” *Origins* 2 (1975): 80–87; Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 78–138.

The Hebrew term כָּל “all/every” is found eight times in Gen 7:19–23. It accompanies those words that depict the extent of the flood. First, the text indicates that “all/every living substance or existence” (כָּל־הַיְקָוִים, v. 23) on the face of the ground was destroyed. The “living substance” is enumerated as man, cattle, creeping things, and fowl of the heaven. Only Noah, his wife, his three sons, their wives, and animals in the ark are preserved from diluvial death. Therefore, “all” is with reference to the “living substance” outside the ark during the deluge. Even this statement needs further qualification since among the animals that perished in the flood aquatic animals are not mentioned.

The qualification that aquatic animals survived the deluge is not a negation of the universality of the flood, but a specification of its terrestrial impact. The destruction is described as involving “all/every flesh” (כָּל־בֶּשָׂר), “all/every creeping thing” (הַשֹּׁרֵץ), “all/every humankind” (כָּל־הַשָּׂרִיץ), “all/every thing in whose nostrils was the breath of life” (כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־נְשָׁמַת־רוּחַ־חַיִּים), and “all that was in the dry land” (כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בַּחֲרָבָה, v. 22). The deluge covered “all/every high mountains” (הַגְּבוּהִים) under “the entire heavens” (כָּל־הַשָּׁמַיִם, v. 19). The highest mountains covered by the flood were fifteen cubits high (vv. 19, 20).

While the biblical text offers the exemption of some living things (eight persons, animals in the ark, and aquatic animals) from the diluvial destruction, it offers no spatial or geographical exemption of any land from the global extent of the flood. God said: “And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall

die” (Gen 6:17). The flood is announced for the “earth,” to destroy all life “under the heaven.” In the creation account, “the entire sphere of earth consisted of ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ (Gen 1:1; 2: 1, 4).”²¹⁶ Furthermore, a local flood in Mesopotamia²¹⁷ cannot have the universal effect of wiping out all mankind under the whole heaven.

The diluvial causation

There are two sides to the causation of the flood—the passive human and active divine sides. The passive human side rests on mankind’s moral/spiritual condition necessitating the active divine side of supernatural judgment. From both perspectives the flood is not an impersonal, or accidental, or coincidental, or automatic event, but a saving/judging event foreknown, forewarned, and personally executed by God. In the flood episode, the divine side is a reaction and response to the human side. The human side is prior to the divine side. The flood would not be without the human side primarily and the divine side secondarily. The former is the conditional cause, the latter the effectual cause. The human sinful condition is causally and inevitably connected to the divine causal effects in the deluge.

Human side of diluvial causation. In the Genesis flood narrative, the sins of humankind portray their moral and spiritual condition and determine the destiny of the inhabitants of the earth. The sins of mankind are labeled רעת “evil” (Gen 6:5), שחת

²¹⁶Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 85.

²¹⁷Cassuto believes that waters of the flood submerged only part of the world, the Mesopotamian region. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:45.

“corruption” (Gen 6:11, 12, 13), and חַמַּס “violence” (Gen 6:11, 13). These sins are broadly enumerated without details or specificity, but in a context of a volitional conflict between God and man (Gen 6:3).²¹⁸

In Gen 6:7, 11, 13, the causal conjunction כִּי, which carries the meanings “if,” “lest,” “indeed,” and “because,”²¹⁹ occurs thrice. The diluvial destruction of mankind came because of the wickedness of mankind. “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for (כִּי) it repenteth me (נִחַמְתִּי) that I have made them (v. 7); “God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for (כִּי) all flesh had corrupted (כָּפְרוּ) his way upon the earth” (v. 12); “God said unto Noah, ‘the end of all flesh is come before me; for (כִּי) the earth is filled (מְלֵאָה) with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth’” (v. 13).

There is a causal connection between the sins of the antediluvian sinners and divine destruction of those sinners.²²⁰ The sinners became identified with their sin. Human evil, corruption, and violence provoked divine grief and destruction of mankind. The flood judgment is not an arbitrary act of God. It is “an event of interaction between

²¹⁸Cf. *ibid.*, 41.

²¹⁹Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 32.

²²⁰“The portrayal of humanity’s moral depravity as the cause of the flood highlights human responsibility for sin.” Richard Davidson, “Flood,” *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 262.

God and human beings.”²²¹ So it involves personal, not natural, cause and effect. The flood is not presented as inherent punishment in natural nature or human nature. It is a divinely imposed punitive measure to check the unchecked flood of human wickedness and save a human remnant.

The flood is not a spontaneous, or accidental, or coincidental event, or a freak of nature. The antediluvians chose (Gen 6:2), thought (6:5), and acted (6:11) contrary to the divine will. God determined or willed the probationary time of grace (120 years, 6:3), the imminence (in 7 days), the duration (40 days, 40 nights, 7:4), the extent of the flood (universal, 6:17), and the type of punitive response (flood of water, **הַמַּבּוּל מַיִם**, 6:17). Mankind chose sin and *ipso facto* punishment, but God determined the type of punishment and sent the punishment because of mankind’s moral and spiritual plenary putrefaction beyond remedy (6:11–14, 17; 7:4). From a dual perspective of diluvial causation, it can be argued that man brought the punishment upon himself and God sent the punishment upon him. The Genesis flood narrative neither denies divine participation nor affirms human exoneration.

Sin is a moral human choice. The flood judgment is a moral divine choice. God says: “I will destroy man (**אֶת־הָאָדָם**) whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gen 6:7). Mankind’s wickedness or sin is depicted as incorrigible and endless:

²²¹Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 40.

“Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only (רַע) evil continually” (6:5).²²²

When divine patience is exhausted and divine grace spurned (6:3), then the divine ministration of punitive justice commences (6:7). The moral/spiritual condition of the antediluvians did not automatically trigger the diluvial cataclysms. The flood as punishment for sin is not methodologically fixed and unchanging in nature or in God’s choice. The moral precondition for the flood is the moral/spiritual condition of the antediluvians. Therefore, the Genesis flood is a moral divine judgment on sin.

The Genesis flood narrative portrays the destruction of the antediluvians as a punishment from God as well as a self-punishment. Genesis 6:11 says: “God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt (נִשְׁחָתָהּ, niphil); for all flesh had corrupted (הִשְׁחִיתוּ, hiphil) his way upon the earth.” שָׁחַת means “be marred, spoiled, corrupted, corrupt” (niphil), “pervert, corrupt” (hiphil), “spoil, ruin” (piel).²²³ The hiphil form means “to cause oneself to ruin something suddenly” (inner-causative or cognate action).²²⁴ Since in Gen 6:12 “all flesh had corrupted (הִשְׁחִיתוּ, hiphil) his way,” then God says: “I will destroy them” (בִּשְׁחִיתָם, hiphil, 6:13). These two verses show a

²²²“רַע is used in the restrictive, intensive, and asseverative sense.” Ibid., 46; cf. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 483; Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 616–617; Walke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 668–669; Francis I. Anderson, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, Janua Linguarum, Series Practica, 231 (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 171, 175. “The wickedness is an inner compulsion that dominates their thoughts and is not just overt action; they plot evil as a matter of lifestyle.” Matthews, *Genesis 4:27–11:26*, 340.

²²³BDB, s.v. “שָׁחַת.”

²²⁴D. Vetter, “שָׁחַת,” *TLOT*, 3:1317.

“semantic link between corruption and destruction, as seen in the root שחת.” “To act corruptly and destroy are one concept in Hebrew thought. . . . What God destroys in the flood has already destroyed itself.”²²⁵

שחת incorporates the meanings of “corrupt” and “destroy.” It is used as a hiphil perfect (הִשְׁחִיתוּ, 6:12) to indicate mankind’s self-causing destruction, and as a hiphil participle (מִשְׁחִיתִים, 6:13) to state divine causation of mankind’s destruction. The two meanings of שחת and the causation significance of the hiphil forms show that moral corruption is moral and physical destruction, and that the concept of self-destruction²²⁶ in the flood narrative involves a forfeiture of the right to life through sin. In this case, “the judgment of the flood finalized the destiny that was already fixed before the flood.”²²⁷ In the same vein, Harland avers: “Ruin and destruction are of humanity’s own making, and irresponsible behavior has brought disaster. Whilst human life is of value in God’s eyes, sin makes that life unworthy of continued existence and liable to the ultimate sanction. As far as the OT is concerned, God is justified in taking the life of the sinner, since man

²²⁵P. J. Harland, *The Value of human Life: A Study of the Story of the Flood (Genesis 6–9)*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 30; D. Clines, “Noah’s Flood: the Theology of the Flood Narrative,” *Faith and Thought* 100 (1972): 128–142.

²²⁶Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 87.

²²⁷Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 48.

has made himself unworthy of life.”²²⁸ Hamilton puts it this way: “God’s decision is to destroy what is virtually self-destroyed or self-destroying already.”²²⁹

The divine side of diluvial causation. The flood came because of the incorrigible wickedness of mankind. The flood also came because God brought (Gen 6:17; 2 Pet 2:5) or sent it in response to mankind’s irredeemable moral and spiritual condition. God did not initiate or introduce a flood on the human population without a moral basis or cause, nor did the antediluvians select or direct the type of punishment or manner of destruction—a deluge.

On four occasions in the flood narrative, God shows that the flood is not an atheistic, agentless, or impersonal event. He says:

1. “I will destroy (אֶמְחֶה, qal impf. “I will wipe out”) man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gen 6:7).
2. “Behold, I will destroy them (מְשַׁחֲתֵם, hiphil ptc.) with the earth” (6:13).
3. “And, behold, I, even I, do bring (מַבִּיא, Hiphil ptc.) a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy (לְשַׁחֵת, piel inf. cstr.) all flesh” (6:17).
4. “For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain (מִמְטֵר, hiphil ptc.) upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy (מְחַחֵת, qal pf.) from off the face of the earth” (7:4).

²²⁸Harland, *The Value of Human Life*, 30.

²²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 278.

In these four verses, the personal pronoun “I,” whether separable or inseparable from the verb, appears five times. In Gen 6:7 and 7:4b, it is inseparable from the verb, but in four other instances it appears twice as a suffix attached to an interjection (אֲנִי, 6:13, 17), and twice as independent pronouns (אֲנִי, 6:17; אֲנִי, 7:4a). If the language of the text is taken seriously, then such repetition emphasizes the personal presence and participation of the divine “I” in the sending of the flood to destroy mankind. The divine agency of the flood is intensified or accentuated in Gen 6:17, where the personal pronoun is juxtaposed as an independent and suffix pronoun (אֲנִי אֲנִי). God is the subject of the act of destruction, the flood of water is the instrument of the destruction, and mankind the object of the destruction.

The qal, piel, and hiphil stems of the respective verbs—מַחֲדֵד (“wipe out,” 6:7), שֹׂחַת (“destroyer,” 6:13), בּוֹא (“bringer,” 6:17), מַטֵּר (“causer or sender of rain”)—as used in these four verses portray the divine role in the deluge as active, intense, personal, and causative. The emphatic repetitive language of divine destruction in the text supports more than a mere strong affirmation of divine sovereignty.²³⁰ It denies the idea that God

²³⁰“Hebrew thought often does not separate causality and function. In the strong affirmation of the sovereignty of God, biblical writers at times attribute responsibility to God for acts He does not directly perform but permits to happen There is no conflict in Hebrew thinking: God is said to cause that which in his sovereignty He allows.” Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, ed. George Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 82. Note well that Davidson does not apply this statement to the flood account as if the flood came by divine permission, but not by divine action. On the contrary, he accepts the flood as a divine act. See Davidson, “Flood,” 262.

is presented as doing what he did not prevent.²³¹ The supernatural nature of the deluge is affirmed by the language of personal causation (Gen 6:7, 13, 17; 7:4), the universality of the flood (6:13, 17; 7:19–23), the cosmic undoing or reversal of the creation in the flood,²³² the volume of the flood waters (7:17–20), the preservation of a remnant (7:6, 23), by the unilateral, unconditional, everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם, 9:16) promise never again to destroy the world by means of a deluge (Gen 9:11–17; Isa 54:9) in spite of man’s continued wickedness, and by parallel passages (Ps 29:10; 2 Pet 2:5; Matt 24:38; Luke 17:27).

Only the Creator of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1) can undo the creation from creation to uncreation in the manner in which it was done. At creation, “God made the expanse and separated (וַיַּבְדֵּל) the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so” (Gen 1:7, NIV). With the coming of the flood Gen 7:11 says:

On that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth,
and the windows of the heavens were opened. (RSV)

²³¹See Wright, *Behold Your God*; Douglin, *The Character of God and His Dealing with Sin*. Similar ideas are proposed by Clute, *Into the Father’s Heart*; idem, *The Wonderful Truth about the Heavenly Father*.

²³²The flood is the means of uncreating the creation. The uncreation, as the *tohu* and *bohu* of Gen 1:2, does not imply “a chaotic, unorganized state,” as some have claimed. Miller, “The Poetry of Creation: Psalm 104,” in *God Who Cares in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, 90; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984) 434; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Pentateuch* (Chicago: ACTA Foundation, 1971), 46–47; idem, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 83. The uncreation is a state of ‘unproductiveness and emptiness.’ David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Study*, JSOT Supplementary Series, 83) Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 155–156; Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in the Book of Psalms—Part 1: Psalm 104,” 13, n. 42.

Gerhard Hasel, in a perceptive analysis of this verse, indicates: “The words ‘burst forth’ correspond to the words ‘were opened’ and the expression ‘the fountain of the great deep’ corresponds to the ‘windows of the heavens.’ This chiasmic parallelism indicates that the waters below the ground came forth as the waters above the ground broke loose.”²³³ In the creation, the waters above and below the expanse were separated, but in the flood, the subterranean waters (“fountain of the great deep”) joined the torrential downpour of waters stored in the atmospheric heavens (“windows of heaven”) and a worldwide flood occurred.²³⁴ The flood, then, is a reversal of the creation.²³⁵

²³³Hasel, “The Fountain of the Great Deep,” 71.

²³⁴*Ibid.*, 70, 71.

²³⁵That the flood is a reversal of the creation has been recognized and indicated by many scholars. “The Flood is a cosmic catastrophe that is actually the undoing of creation.” Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 48. Frymer-Kensky says that the flood is “the original, cosmic undoing of creation.” Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O’ Connor (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 41). “We see water everywhere, as though the world had reverted to its primeval state at the dawn of Creation, when the waters of the Deep submerged everything.” Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964), 97. Gerhard von Rad portrays the divine undoing of creation when he says that “we must understand the Flood, therefore, as a catastrophe involving the entire cosmos. When the heavenly ocean breaks forth upon the earth below, and the primeval sea beneath the earth, which is restrained by God, now freed from its bonds, gushes up through yawning chasms onto the earth, then there is a destruction of the entire cosmic system according to biblical cosmology. The two halves of the chaotic primeval sea, separated—the one up, and the other below—by God’s creative government (ch. 1:7–9), are again united; creation begins to sink into chaos. Here catastrophe, therefore, concerns not only men and beasts . . . but the earth (chs. 6.13; 9.1)—indeed, the entire cosmos.” Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 128. See also David Clines, “Noah’s Flood. Part I: The Theology of the Flood Narrative,” *Faith and Thought* 100, no. 2 (1972): 136; *idem*, “Theme in Genesis 1–11,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 500; Richard Davidson, “The Genesis Flood Narrative: Crucial Issues in the Current Debate,” *AUSS*

The Hebrew verbs נִבְקְעוּ (‘burst forth’) and נִפְתְּחוּ (‘were opened’) are both niphil perfects. The specific and most common meaning of the niphil stem is passive. The passive sense means that “the subject is in a state of being acted upon or of suffering the effects of an action by an implicit or explicit agent.”²³⁶ In Gen 7:11, “On that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened” (RSV) is an incomplete passive construction because the agent is not indicated.²³⁷

The verse does not say that the “bursting forth” and the “opening” were done by God. Divine agency is silent and implicit in this verse, but explicit in context. God’s personal involvement in the flood is undeniably evident in the account (Gen 6:7, 13, 17; 9:11, 15). In Gen 7:1, 2, where the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven are again mentioned, God is involved in subsiding and stopping them.

The divine passive does not mean divine absence or disappearance, while nature takes its mindless course in the destruction of the old world. The focus of Gen 7:11 on this global uncreating “natural process” demonstrates the invisible supernatural Agent behind the process, intimates the withdrawal of God’s Spirit and protection from the impenitent (Gen 6:3, 5), and emphasizes the finality of the judgment. The natural neither forgoes nor supersedes the Supernatural, but the Supernatural works in and through the natural process.

42, no. 1 (2004): 67.

²³⁶Walke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 382.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 384.

The moral/spiritual corruption of the antediluvians did not automatically trigger a diluvial cataclysm as if postdiluvians will experience the same mechanism of destruction by a flood, when their sin reaches the same measure, in spite of God's negation of any other punishment by flood of water. The Noahic flood is not an atheistic flood. It is not an agentless, or impersonal event, or "ecological accident."²³⁸ Nor is it totally correct to say about the punishment of the antediluvians: "Punishment is not God's punishment, but is self-punishment incurred by humans as the natural consequence of their choices."²³⁹ Punishment is inevitable both from the nature of sin as self-destructive (Gen 2:17; Ezek 18:4, 20; Rom 6:23) and the nature of the God of holiness (Hab 1:13, Gen 6:3, 13, 17).

Ideas that mere natural, or automatic, accidental processes are involved in the flood event are intended to minimize, if not delete, the direct divine involvement in the deluge, and exonerate the divine character from a perceived moral fault in executing the flood in retribution on sin. Such ideas are essentially theodicean or apologetic in intent, but carry within them a subtle skepticism over the historicity and reliability of Scripture on supernatural involvement. It is as if God and nature are totally independent of each other in the flood event despite what Scripture says.

While we can learn from the flood that to choose sin is to choose punishment (Gen 6:5, 12, 13), we can also learn that it is God who determines when sin has reached an unbearable limit and is ripe for punitive destruction (Gen 6:3; 13). Moreover it is God

²³⁸Doukhan, "Where Did Death Come From? A Study in the Genesis Creation Story," 16.

²³⁹Park, "Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9," 49.

who determines the type or mechanism of divine judgment (Gen 6:17). A hermeneutical judgment on divine judgment in the flood that totally eliminates the Divine is left with natural cause and effect—a retributive theory of atom, motion, and pure chance in the flood event.

The diluvial legal context

The legal context is evident in the announcement of divine judgment.²⁴⁰ God, the moral judge of the universe, gave man a probationary period of 120 years (Gen 6:3). Thereafter, he judicially investigated the earth before him and saw “the wickedness of man,” “the corruption and violence of the earth” (Gen 6:5, 11, 12), and determined the sentence of certain universal destruction (Gen 6:7) and its execution (the bringing of a flood of water, Gen 7:11–24). In Matt 24:37–39 and Luke 17:26, 27, 30, the judgment of the flood typifies the final eschatological judgment.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰The legal trial dimensions of Gen 6 have been recognized by some scholars. Sarna notes: “This phrase [“The Lord saw . . . ”] has juridical overtones, implying both investigation of the facts and readiness for action.” Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 46. In the same vein, Cassuto says: “[God as it were, says:] sentence of destruction upon all flesh has been presented before my court of justice, and I have already come to a decision concerning it, and I am about to execute it.” Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:57.

²⁴¹Davidson, “Flood,” *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 262.

The talionic principle of equivalence or “a pattern of measure for measure”²⁴² demonstrates the legal context of the flood. The punishment is commensurate with the crime. “All flesh” (כָּל־בְּשָׂר) was corrupting the earth and corrupted by nature (Gen 6:11–12)—both the subject and object of שָׁחַת. “All flesh” involves mankind and animals.²⁴³ “All flesh is both injurer and victim. Their natures were corrupted to the verge of ruin.”²⁴⁴ Therefore, God says “I will destroy/corrupt them” (וְהָנִי מִשְׁחִיתֵם);

²⁴²Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 29. The *lex talionis*—the principle of just retribution, the law of “an eye for an eye”—is God’s measure of justice throughout Scripture (Gen 9:5, 6; Exod 21:23–25; Num 35:31; Lev 24:19, 20; Deut 19:21; Isa 40:2; Jer 16:18; 17:18; Rev 18:6,7). In this law the punishment is like the injury, that is, it corresponds to the crime and is confined to the one party involved in the injury (Deut 19:18–21). It was applied to all members of society (Lev 24:22). The talionic law is a judicial principle that rejects family feuds and the spirit of personal revenge. In Matt 5:38–42 Jesus did not abolish the talionic law, but indicates how Christians can surpass the letter of the law. The talionic punishment is purely retributive, not preventive or remedial (Rev 16: 5–7). It is in clear contrast to the humanitarian concept of punishment which sees evil as sickness needing therapy for the purpose of reformation, or rehabilitation, or education. With this concept the offender is not being punished at all. See Tim Crosby, “Does God Get Angry?” *Ministry*, July 1990, 10-11; C. S. Lewis, “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 287–289.

Kline did a study of “double” in Isa 40:2; Jer 16:18; 17:18; and Rev 18:6 and found that it refers to “matching equivalent,” not to double trouble/punishment. Instead, the punishment is commensurate with the sin, equal to the offense. Kline concludes the article by indicating that “the talion principle of eye for an eye and life for a life is foundational to the temporal, human administration of justice as prescribed by God in Scripture for both the common-grace state and the Israelite theocracy as well as in the direct execution of judgment by the Lord himself.” Meredith Kline, “Double Trouble,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32, no. 2 (June 1989): 171–179.

²⁴³Harland, *The Value of human Life*, 31; “Hasel, “Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative,” 83–91.

²⁴⁴Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9,” 50.

“The end of all flesh is come before me” (Gen 6:13). The self-destroyed will be destroyed.

The talionic principle of equivalence can also be detected in that a life of sin, with 120 years’ probationary time, robs sinners of nondestructive uncorrupt lives while living. Sin forfeits one’s right to life in the divine scheme of things. Human sin also brings grief to God (Gen 6:6). God’s punishment involves a grieving death by drowning (Gen 6:17). The antediluvians “filled the earth with violence” (Gen 6:11, 13); “sacred violence” fell upon the violent antediluvians.

The diluvial salvation

The diluvial destruction of the antediluvian sinners by water is at once the diluvial salvation of the righteous from water. Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven other members of his family were “saved through water” (NIV, 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5). After the flood, Gen 7:23 says: “Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained” (נֹחַ וְאֵשֶׁתוֹ). The antediluvians deserved their punishment because of their incurable sin (Gen 6:5; 8:21). Noah, a righteous man (Gen 7:1), did not deserve God’s grace, but “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8) together with the rest of his family (a remnant of eight) because he believed God (Heb 11:7).

The principal message of the flood narrative is not “punitive judgment but divine salvific grace.”²⁴⁵ The construction of a boat to save a remnant (Gen 6:14–21), Noah’s life and preaching of righteousness (Gen 6:9; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5), as well as the

²⁴⁵Davidson, “Flood,” 262.

everlasting covenant with all humanity never to destroy the earth with a deluge disclose God's grace. Several scholars have noted that the structural and theological center of the flood narrative is in the phrase: "God remembered Noah" (Gen 8:1)²⁴⁶ and the animals. This does not mean that God suffers from amnesia. Wenham points out that when God remembers, he acts, for example, in saving Lot (Gen 19:29), giving Rachel children (Gen 30:22), and bringing Israel out of slavery (Exod 2:24; 6:5).²⁴⁷

The antediluvian sinners are never addressed directly. After the brief account of the sins of the wicked (Gen 6:5–7, 12–17) and their destruction (Gen 7:17–24) they fall from the account. It is not that human life is not valuable, but sin devalues and even forfeits human life. Such forfeiture is not a divine imposition, but comes with human choice.

God addresses Noah directly about the divine plan to destroy the earth (Gen 6:13), the embarkation of the ark (Gen 7:1), the disembarkation of the ark (Gen 8:15, 16), procreation, diet, the law of homicide, and the covenant promise not to inundate the earth again (Gen 9:1, 8). God is the One who shut Noah in the ark (Gen 7:16), and excluded

²⁴⁶Ibid.; Bernard W. Anderson, "From Analysis to Synthesis: The Interpretation of Genesis 1–11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97, no. 2 (March 1978): 38; Shea, "The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications," 11; Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 28 (1978): 338; idem, *Genesis 1–11: Word Biblical Commentary*, 1:156; Davidson, "The Genesis Flood Narrative: Crucial Issues in the Current Debate," 53.

²⁴⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–11*, 184. "The memory theology of Scripture does not imply that God has literally forgotten; for God to 'remember' is to act in deliverance." Davidson, "Flood," 262.

the incurably impenitent. This indicates that salvation of the faithful is the primary focus and the central message of the Genesis flood account.

Theological implications

The language of divine causation of death indicates the literality of the divine action in human time and space. Skepticism over the literality of the divine action raises doubts about the historicity of the event of the deluge, the reliability of Scripture, and the mental health of the biblical writers. They wrote either history or fiction, were either hallucinating or witnessing to the truth. Since the **תולדות** of Noah (Gen 6:9–9:29) includes the Genesis flood narrative, the flood is accepted as a historical event—God’s interposition to save primarily and to punish secondarily.

God adjudged death by water to be the most appropriate punishment for the incurable sin of the antediluvians (Gen 6:17). Though punishment for sin is unavoidable (Ezek 18:4, 20; Rom 6:23), it is God who determined and predicted the start, duration, end, intensity, purpose, and type of punishment (Gen 6–9). This indicates that the ultimate cost of sin is the loss of life. The loss of life is not accidental or purely natural. The Supernatural works through nature—his handiworks—to accomplish his strange work on identifiers with sin.

In the context of the deluge account, the divine claim to having sent the flood is not an empty claim, or a false pretense, or a face-saving mechanism, or an evil action, or a demonic response to sin. Direct divine punishment by death is compatible with the divine character of righteousness. God says: “The earth is filled with violence through

them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:13). The wickedness, corruption, and violence of the antediluvians are tied to their divine destruction by water (Gen 6:5, 11–13). Sin is so serious that it requires the death of the sinners to atone to their sins. Death is necessitated both by the nature of sin and the nature of God in relation to sin.

Human life is not to be preserved at all costs to God. Life is the cost of sin. Sin is of no value to God or humanity. If sin is maintained in the life of the sinners, then the life of the sinner is unsustainable before God without probation or the offer of grace. If God is to remain God, and maintain his government, then he must see to it that his covenant laws are obeyed. God intended his creation to be theocentric, not anthropocentric. God says: “I have created him for my glory” (Isa 43:7; cf. 1 Cor 10:31). God is the highest value in God’s universe, not humanity. Therefore, human life cannot be maintained at all costs to God.

All life belongs to God. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Ps 24:1; cf. 1 Cor 10:26). So when God says about the antediluvians and the earth, “The earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:13), he was revealing his determination to deal with antediluvians as he saw fit. Only God is sovereign over human life and has the autonomy to punish sin with death wherever and in whomsoever it exists (1 Cor 3:16, 17).

Sin causes God’s Spirit to be withdrawn from sinners (Gen 6:3), but divine withdrawal is not the totality of God’s punishment in the flood account. Sin deprives

humanity of life. Sin and death are inseparable. Natural death as well as directly imposed death is directly connected to sin. The divine causation of death in the flood account serves a retributive and deterrent function for the ungodly (2 Pet 2:4–6; Luke 17:26, 27, 30).

Divine grace saves the faithful from death (Gen 6:9; 8:1), but wickedness leads the unfaithful to death (Gen 6:5, 7). Noah was not saved by perfectionism or human merit, but by divine grace. Noah’s spiritual salvation preceded his physical salvation in a boat by God’s miraculous power. Outside the boat of divine salvation was the raging waters of death by divine determined action.

While God does not change in being (Mal 3:6), he changes in relation to human sin and responds personally and emotionally to sinners. Genesis 6:6 says: “And it repented (וַיִּנְחַם, niphel impf. 3ms) the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved (וַיִּתְעַצֵּב, hithpael impf. 3ms) him at his heart.” The *niphel* stem of the Hebrew verb נחם means to “be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion, rue, suffer grief, repent, of one's own doings, comfort oneself, be comforted, ease oneself, by taking vengeance.”²⁴⁸ The explanatory parallel verb in the second clause of the passage, עצב, means “to hurt, pain, grieve.”²⁴⁹ Both verbs clearly depict the divine emotional and relational response to human depravity (Gen 6:5).

²⁴⁸BDB, s.v. “נחם.”

²⁴⁹Ibid., s.v. “עצב.”

The two Hebrew verbs are not expressions of anthropopathia as if God is an “unmoved Mover,”²⁵⁰ a non-relational being, who does not relate to humans in historical time. On the contrary they indicate God’s feelings of grief, pain, hurt, sorrow, compassion, and pity in relation to human incorrigibility in antediluvian time. God’s grief was not over his “very good” creation of mankind in his image but over the wickedness of mankind and their incessant evil heart (Gen 6:5).²⁵¹

God was grieving even while he was destroying the antediluvians. This is not divine ambivalence as if God was double-minded over whether to destroy or save wicked humanity. Genesis 6:7, 13, 17 is emphatic about God’s resolution and determination to eliminate the antediluvian sinners. God’s grief is in relation to the fact that while he is

²⁵⁰I mean a God who affects everyone else while remaining unaffected by others in any way. Everson believes that “God is not only without body and parts; he is also without passions.” Philip Everson, *The Books of Origins*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2001), 156. On the contrary, Matthews asserts: “God is no robot. We know him as a personal, living God, not static principle, who while having transcendent purposes to be sure also engages intimately with his creation. Our God is incomparably affected by, even pained by, the sinner’s rebellion. Acknowledging the passibility (emotions) of God does not diminish the immutability of his promissory purposes.” Kenneth Matthews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1–11:26* (Nasville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 344. For discussion see Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 5–8, 109–113.

²⁵¹“God’s response of grief over the making of humanity, however, is not remorse in the sense of sorrow over a mistaken creation; our verse (Gen 6:6) shows that God’s pain has its source in the perversion of human sin. The making of ‘man’ is not an error, it was what ‘man’ has made of himself. By recurring reference to mankind (*ʿā dām*) in 6:5–7, the passage focuses on the source of his grief. God is grieving because this sinful ‘man’ is not the pristine mankind whom he has made to bear his image. The intensity of the pain is demonstrated by the use *nām* elsewhere in Genesis, where it demonstrates mourning over the loss of a family member due to death. But his regret is not over destroying humanity; paradoxically, so foul has become mankind that it is the necessary step to salvage him.” Matthews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1–11:26*, 343.

gracious (6: 8), he is also just, and sin calls for and brings destruction and death on the sinner. God deals with sin by substitutionary or personal atonement.

Genesis 6:6 says: “And it repented (נִחַם) the Lord that he had made man on the earth.” The other meanings of נִחַם, “repent, of one's own doings, comfort oneself, be comforted, have compassion, ease oneself, by taking vengeance,” also seem to bear some relevance for the depiction of God in flood account. While the Hebrew verb נִחַם are used in parallel with עָצַב (as “grieve” in Gen 6:6) it is also used with נָקַם (as “avenge” in Isa 1:24).²⁵² The *niphal* use of נִחַם in Gen 24:67 has been translated as “was comforted” by most versions. The contextual differences of נִחַם are reflected in its NIV translations: “grieved” in Gen 6:6–7, “change his mind” in 1 Sam 15:29, as well as “relent” in Exod 32:12, 14, and Amos 7:3, 6.²⁵³ The contextual implication of the range

²⁵²Matthews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1–11:26*, 342, n. 148; H. Van Dyke Parunak, “A Semantic Survey of *NHM*,” *Bib* 56 (1975): 519.

²⁵³Matthew, *The New American Commentary*, 342, 343; Parunak indicates that in several passages, נִחַם with the meaning “suffer emotional pain” is parallel with an expression for emotional pain (Gen 6:6; Job 42:6; 7:16, 21; Jer 31:9; Ezek 21:17). Parunak, “A Semantic Survey of *NHM*,” 519; Butterworth, commenting on נִחַם as meaning “be sorry, repent, change one’s mind,” says: “The word is used to express two apparently contrasting sentiments in 1 Sam 15, where God says, ‘I am grieved (*n̄m*) that I have made Saul king’ (v. 11; cf. v. 35), but where Samuel also announces that ‘the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind (*n̄m*), for he is not a man, that he should change his mind (*n̄m*)’ (v. 29). The explanation seems to be that God does not capriciously change his intentions or ways of acting. It is the change in Saul’s behavior that leads to this expression of regret. The reference is notable as being one of the rare occasions when God is said to repent or change his mind concerning something intended as good (cf. Gen 6:6).

In many cases the Lord’s ‘changing’ of his mind is a gracious response to human factors. Thus in Jeremiah we often read that repentance on the part of people (usually *šwb*, but *n̄m* in Jer 8:6 and 31:19) will make it possible for God to repent, change his mind (*n̄m*): 18:8, 10; 20:16; 26:3, 13, 19; cf. 42:10.” Mike Butterworth, “נִחַם,”

of meanings of נחם is that human sin caused divine grief/anguish and God eased his pain or comforted himself by vengeance against human sin.²⁵⁴

The Hebrew verbs נחם and שׁוּב are synonyms.²⁵⁵ Scripture uses both verbs to depict divine action. שׁוּב carries the meanings: “repent, turn; return, go back; go back

NIDOTTE, 3:82.

²⁵⁴Parunak demonstrates that the *Niphal* use of נחם affirms that “God himself, as well as his people, is comforted when his judgment falls on their oppressors”; God’s “relief of emotional tension (specially, wrath) [is] through its execution” (Ezek 5:13; 16:42; 37–41, 21, 22; 24:13) and also “a cessation of wrath [is] through its execution” (Lam 4:11; Ezek 6:12; 7:8; 13:15; 20:8, 21). He concludes his article by indicating: “The *Niphal* and *Hithpael* stems develop the ‘comfort’/‘compassion’ dualism much more fully. The element of sympathy involved in ‘compassion’ fades into the background, until the word comes simply to mean ‘suffer emotional pain’. The sense ‘be comforted’ is retained in contexts of mourning for the dead. But it is also extended to describe the release of emotional tension involved in performing a declared action (executing wrath), or retracting a declared action (such as sin, punishment, or blessing).” Parunak, “A Semantic Survey of *NHM*,” 521, n. 1, 521–522, 532. Similarly, Matthews says that נחם may “also indicate the execution of God’s wrath to relieve his emotional pain.” Matthews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1–11:26*, 343.

²⁵⁵Thompson and Martens state: “The personal relationship of God and the people is underscored by the use of *nμm*, a synonym for *šwb*. The *ni.* form of the vb., be sorry, change one’s mind nuances the emotional dimension of remorse in making a change. The vb. *nμm* is used of God, e.g., repenting, being grieved in having made Saul king (1 Sam 15:11). God is a responding God, who takes account of people’s changing stance, alters his course of action, and relents (*nμm*) accordingly (Jer 18:8, 10; cf. 26:3, 13, 19; Amos 7:3; Jon 3:10). God’s change in plan is not fickleness but represents integrity of a person and a consistency of enunciated principle. The root *nμm*, while used frequently with God, is used sparingly of persons (Exod 13:17; Job 42:6; Jer 8:6; 31:20).

Not only do persons turn (*šwb*); God also turns (*šwb*). That action whereby God receives to himself the repentant person is also described by the word *šwb*. Now God is the subject. He promises to turn (*šwb*) to the one seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. His response to someone’s plea for restoration is to turn (*šwb*) away from his anger (Hos 14:4[5]).” J. A. Thompson and Elmer A. Martens, “שׁוּב,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:57.

and forth; revert; turn back, change one's mind; withdraw."²⁵⁶ It "functions in a physical sense (a person makes an about turn); it also functions in a religious (and metaphorical) sense (people turn away from or to God)."²⁵⁷ God's repents (שׁוּב) when he turns away his anger from the repentant person seeking forgiveness and reconciliation (Hos 14:4). While נחם like שׁוּב carries the meanings of repent or change of mind, נחם includes the meanings of comfort, console, have compassion, suffer emotional pain, be sorry, regret. It "nuances the emotional dimension of remorse in making a change."²⁵⁸

Repentance entails a change of one's mind. However, God's repentance is not like human repentance. Human repentance concerns faithlessness, sin, waywardness, apostasy, turning away from or to God.²⁵⁹ God's repentance has to do with his gracious or retributive response to human factors. In the context of the flood the Lord said: "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." It is mankind's unending and inveterate wickedness that caused emotional grief to God and divine change in relation to mankind. Human sin brought divine change from salvific grace (Gen 6:3) to fatal punishment or vengeance (Gen 6:13, 17), from extreme satisfaction (Gen 1:31) to intense grief over his creation (Gen 6:6), from general preservation (all humans and animals) to specific preservation (only humans [a remnant of eight] and animals aboard the boat).

²⁵⁶Ibid., 4:55.

²⁵⁷Ibid., 4:56.

²⁵⁸Ibid., 4:57.

²⁵⁹Ibid., 4:56–57.

Theodicean implications

The biblical writers provided no explicit theodicean treatment of the divine causation of death in the flood. However, God is presented as suffering emotional pain because of what had become of his human creation. God is grieving even as he has to execute judgment on the antediluvian world. He takes no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:23). He grieved not over their execution but over their moral/spiritual condition that calls for execution. It appears that their non-creation or the non-existence of the wicked antediluvians is preferable to their sin in the divine estimation (Gen 6:6).

The divine punitive action in the flood is not presented as moral evil that overcomes or attempts to get rid of the moral evil of human sin. Human sin is presented as the evil to be graciously removed, or avoided, or atoned for. The divine action to remove sin and sinners is a final resort after their life of rebellion and a probationary period of 120 years. Divinity is not impugned by the biblical writer for punishing sin with death, nor is any attempt made to defend divine justice or rationalize antediluvian sin.

However, the talionic principle of equivalence seems operative in the text. Grief to God implies grief over their loss of salvation, self-destruction brings divine destruction; change in mankind from righteousness to sin leads to a change in God's relation from life to death. The lives of the antediluvians could not be justly or mercifully preserved in sin. Divine righteousness cannot protect incurable sinners without at the same time protecting and perpetuating unending, inveterate sin. Sin must be given limits

by God, if he will remain sovereign. The destruction of the ancient world in the flood is but an eschatological foreshadowing of the destruction in the eschaton (Luke 17:26, 27, 30). Divine eradication of sin and those identified with sin remains forever inevitable.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN AND HEBREW PERSPECTIVES ON DIVINE CAUSATION OF DEATH

The principal flood accounts studied in chapter 4 under the rubric of ANE that are parallel to the biblical Noahic flood account derive from Mesopotamian sources (Sumerian/Babylonian). The Mesopotamian accounts from which the ANE perspectives are drawn on the divine causation of death provide very similar perspectives. The Hebrew perspective derives primarily from the OT Scriptures with supporting evidence from the New Testament. The *locus classicus* for the OT flood account is Gen 6–9. The rest of the biblical material on the flood provides a reflection of the Genesis account.

The ANE accounts give a picture of mytho-historical genre, polytheism, divine wrath on humanity; impulsive, arbitrary, divine sending of a lethal deluge; remorse over human annihilation; divine dissent; deception; covert preservation of a human remnant; divine lability; and human deification. The Hebrew accounts portray a historical genre, monotheism, divine remorse over humanity in sin, divine wrath against or judgment on impenitent sin, salvific preservation of a human remnant, and divine passibility. Their similarities and dissimilarities may point to a common oral tradition or selective literary dependence. Any assignment of chronological priority of composition based on the

shorter account being first and longer later is a matter of pure conjecture.

There are similarities and dissimilarities between the ANE and OT flood accounts. The general similarities between them on the divine causation of death have to do with the participative or determined action of God/gods in the flood event/advent, divine wrath and remorse, and preservation of a human remnant. The general dissimilarities include mytho-historical genre versus historical genre, polytheism versus monotheism, noise versus sin, post-flood deification of flood hero versus post-flood covenant with flood survivors, remorse over human annihilation versus remorse over human creatures in sin, and divine judicial execution versus impulsive arbitrary divine execution.

This chapter first summarizes, then compares, the findings of chapter 4 on the divine causation of death in the main ANE and Hebrew OT accounts.

Summary Analysis of ANE Accounts

Mesopotamian Perspectives

The four Mesopotamian accounts/sources, from which an analysis of the ANE perspectives on divine causation of death in the flood accounts are drawn, are: (1) *Eridu Genesis*, (2) *Atra-Hasis Epic*, (3) *Gilgamesh Epic*, and (4) *Babyloniaca of Berossus*.

Eridu Genesis

The basis for the deluge is left unknown apparently due to a lacuna in the Eridu Genesis account. However, the account indicates that it is at the hand of the gods that a flood swept over the seed of mankind. The natural means of water is used to bring about the physical death of humankind. Mankind as the object of the flood intimates a global

flood.

No warning or probationary time is granted humanity before the flood. The preservation of Ziusudra during the deluge is not a gracious offer of divine salvation, but a shrewd revelation of “the secret of gods” by Enki, a god of the pantheonic assembly, to his servant Ziusudra, apparently to retain his service. Ziusudra seems to have known of the impending flood through divination. His senses opened up to the supernatural and he became conscious of what was happening in the divine realm. In the assembly of the gods, Enki calls Ziusudra up to a wall and told him about the impending flood and how he can escape it.

Divine causation of the flood is evident in the pantheon’s (An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursaga’s) implicit “cut-throat” oath to inundate mankind to extinction. Neither divine dissent in word nor counteraction was apparently outlawed, nor did their unanimous vote negate remorse of some gods over the flood, or condemn the wily counteraction of a god (Enki) to preserve a seed of mankind with impunity. All the gods participated in and are responsible for the flood, though Enlil was the real authority behind the flood, having received the supreme authority of his father Anu in addition to his own.

Atra-Hasis Epic

There is divine causation of physical death of a god and mankind on a whole in the Atra-Hasis Epic. Weila, the apparent ringleader of the Igigū (minor-gods), revolts against the Anunna-gods or Anunnakū (senior gods) because of hard labor, and was put to

death by divine action. From an admixture of clay and the flesh and blood of Weila, *Lullû* (mankind) was created. After divine deicide, Enki, the god of fresh waters, instituted a purification rite to ritually cleanse the gods from killing a god.

Mankind is caused to die by divine agency because of clamor (*rigmu*), a quality which mankind possesses by divine creation. Mankind acquired guilt simply by being. First, preliminary measures of decimation (disease, sickness, plague, and pestilence) are used to quell human god-given *rigmu* (noise), but to no avail because human growth in number is positively correlated to human growth in Enlil-disturbing noise. Therefore, the gods turn to the final solution—genocide in a catastrophic flood judgment, the Deluge, the *Abūbu*.

The flood is a pantheonic plan sealed with an oath, a pantheonic authorization, a divine task (Enlil's), and has a divine origin. While the gods commanded total destruction, Enlil did an evil on mankind. Divine genocide in the Epic is called “Enlil's evil deed,” a “divine command” and a divinely intended “total destruction of peoples.” Therefore, causation of death in the flood account of the Atra-Hasis Epic is undoubtedly divine. All the gods were active participants in the corporate judgment of the flood and are responsible for the arbitrary destruction of mankind, who were without guilt of crime or sin.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Divine causation of death is evident in the Epic in that the gods impulsively massacred mankind in a terrible deluge without prior warning, without justification,

without a moral basis, and without leniency or compassion. In a corporate effort, the deities unleashed violent winds and waters upon mankind. After the flood, save for Utnapishtim, his wife, his kith and kin, and all the craftsmen, mankind “like the spawn of fish they fill the sea,” and “all mankind had returned to clay.” The use of natural means (water, wind) and all mankind filling the sea and returning to clay indicate that it was a global flood causing physical death.

The preservation of Utnapishtim, his wife, his kith and kin, and all the craftsmen was not an act of grace, but involved divine outwitting and human deception. Ea, who was present in the divine assembly, revealed the secret of the gods (*pirišta ša ilāni*) to Utnapishtim by talking to his reed hut. Ea told him to build a boat for the seed of all living creatures to enter. Ea’s half-truthful self-defense among the gods for his indirect disclosure of the secrets of the gods was that he only gave Utnapishtim a dream and Utnapishtim, being exceedingly wise, was able to figure out the impending deluge.

Ea gave Utnapishtim deceptive instruction to prevent the people and elders of Shurippak from foreknowing the impending flood. In order that the city, people, and elders not know about the flood, Ea told Utnapishtim to tell them that he is building a boat because Enlil hates him, so he can no longer dwell in the city, and in the evening the leader of the storm will rain *kibtu* on the city. Ea knows that for the people *kibtu* would mean wheat only, not misfortune. Ea’s pun is a deliberate deception of the people who will be looking for wheat but will receive the misfortune of a destructive flood instead. So Ea’s deception helped seal the fate of the rest of mankind and preserve Utnapishtim for his own service as a sort of selfish grace.

The flood emanates from the prompting of the heart of the deities. The pantheon of gods are the planners and producers of the flood (*abūbu*). The flood is depicted as an irrational act of Enlil, an ambiguous *kibtu* by Ea, and a corporate divine effort. It is an unprovoked arbitrary invention of the gods against mankind. Since no sin or evil is ascribed to mankind in the Epic, collective, exclusive responsibility for the flood rests on the gods and on Enlil as the head of the pantheon. Therefore, the flood is a divine caprice, a thoughtless, unwarranted destruction, a fatal divine event that metes out punishment upon mankind without human sin or crime, and attempts total destruction without human guilt. The gods are responsible for this cruel injustice to mankind.

Berosus's *Babyloniaca*

The gods are directly involved in the κατακλυσμός (a deluge, inundation) in Berosus's account. The object of destruction is mankind. The divine agency of the flood is clearly established since it was "from the god" or "sent by the god." The use of the singular "god" is a reference to "the chief god of the pantheon, i.e., Marduk,"¹ and "not Kronos (i.e., not Ea)."² The gods are involved in the deluge by way of announcement and causation. Human sin or crime is not advanced as the reason for the deluge, nor is Xisuthros's Ea-proposed intercession for mankind grounds for his preservation. In Berosus's flood account, death is divinely imposed. It is unpredictable, arbitrary, and cataclysmic.

¹The Chaldean Berosus, *The Babyloniaca of Berosus*, 20, n. 55a.

²Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 118, n. 56.

Divine involvement is implied in Ea's command to Xisuthros that if asked whether he is sailing, he should say: "To the gods, in order to pray that it may be well with mankind!"³ Ea's deceptive words imply the presence or existence of gods, the gods' superiority over humans, human worship of the gods, divine determination of human weal or woe, and divine ability to create or forestall a catastrophe. Ea's proposed intercession for mankind to Xisuthros turns out to be counterproductive for mankind seeing that intercession, piety, or impiety are not presented as factors that could have forestalled the diluvial catastrophe.

The survivors of the flood are the Babylonian hero Xisuthros, his wife, children, and his pilot. They shared in the same honor of deification as Xisuthros. Xisuthros's piety of obedience, sacrifice, and humility to the gods, especially Ea, earns him residential status of and as a god, but nothing is required for the utter destruction of mankind.

Conclusion from the ANE Accounts

All four Mesopotamian flood accounts indicate that the flood was planned and produced by the gods. The extent of the flood of water is global, destroying mankind as its object. No human incorrigibility or universal guilt is presented as a divine moral reason for the flood. In the Atra-Hasis Epic, human *rigmu* (clamor, noise), which drove Enlil to insomnia, drove the gods to quell human noise by a deluge. Mankind is punished

³Ibid., 117. "To the gods, to see that things may be well with men." Robert William Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1926), 110. "To the gods to pray for blessings on man." Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, with M. Civil, *The Sumerian Flood Story*, 135. "To the gods to pray for good things for men." The Chaldean Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 20.

because of guilt by being. The gods endowed mankind with *rigmu* at creation and impulsively and arbitrarily punished him for that *rigmu* in the deluge. There is no grace before the diluvial destruction in the Mesopotamian accounts. Humans are not warned or offered any probationary time. The pantheon of gods in the four flood accounts are capricious, immoral, and irrational. Their flood is not a divine retributive judgment on evil, but divine cruelty for being human, or for no cause, or for unknown reasons.

The Mesopotamian hero of the flood is variously called Ziusudra in the Eridu Genesis, Atra-Hasis in the Atra-Hasis Epic, Utnapishtim in the Gilgamesh Epic, and Xisuthros in *Babyloniaca of Berossus*. The god who appears to be the friend and savior of mankind is called Enki or Ea. Enki is the god who, by divination, dream, or announcement, revealed the secrets of the gods about the impending flood to mankind. In the Gilgamesh and Atra-Hasis Epics, he outwitted the gods to preserve the flood hero on a boat during the flood by indirectly disclosing the flood event to the hero. In the Gilgamesh Epic and *Babyloniaca of Berossus*, he instructed the flood hero to deceive mankind about the impending flood, so that they may not know the true reason for the heroic construction of a boat and about the diluvial catastrophe, thus sealing their fate without the possibility of escape.

In the Gilgamesh Epic, the gods cowered like dogs during the flood. All four accounts relate the preservation of the flood hero as a flood survivor. In the Atra-Hasis Epic, Enlil was angry at Enki's preservation of Atra-Hasis. However, after the destruction of mankind in the flood, in the Eridu Genesis and Atra-Hasis Epic, Nintu wept. Holy Inanna grieved in the Eridu Genesis; Mami and all the gods were remorseful

in the Atra-Hasis Epic; and Ishtar expressed regret over her role in deciding the flood.

Piety is not stated as the basis for the preservation of the flood hero, but is indicated as the basis for Xisuthros' deification or residence with the gods together with his wife, daughter, and pilot in the *Babyloniaca of Berosus*. Deification of the flood hero is absent only in the Atra-Hasis Epic. Apart from *Babyloniaca of Berosus*, the other three flood accounts indicate that the flood hero offered sacrifices to the gods. In the Atra-Hasis Epic, Enlil's wrath is mollified by the flood hero's sacrifice, and in the Gilgamesh Epic the gods gather like flies over the sacrificer—Utnapishtim.

On the key issues of the flood—the universality of the flood, physical death, water as the means, the gods as the agent, no grace or probationary time before destruction, no moral basis for the destruction, divine revelation as the means of knowing about an impending flood, the craft and/or deception of Enki (Ea) for the preservation of the flood hero, and more or less the offer of sacrifices to the gods and the hero's apotheosis—the Mesopotamian flood accounts show little variation. Though the names of the flood hero vary, there seems to be enough evidence to warrant the idea of the same hero being given different names in different localities or traditions, describing or recounting the same event.

Summary Analysis of Hebrew OT Account

The OT flood is a global flood involving all mankind and living things outside the ark, save the aquatic animals. The diluvial instrument of water in the destruction of all flesh indicates physical death in the flood event. There is dual causation of the flood

event in Genesis. Mankind through sin rendered themselves unworthy of life. The antediluvians were corrupted and self-destroying. So, as divine retribution, God sent the flood because of mankind's moral/spiritual putrefaction. Both human sin and the divine action are the cause of the flood.

The divine causation of the flood event is affirmed by the language of personal causation (Gen 6:7, 13, 17; 7:4), the universality of the flood (Gen 6:13, 17; 7:19–23), the cosmic undoing or reversal of the creation in the flood, the volume of the flood waters (Gen 7:17–20), the preservation of a remnant (Gen 7:6, 23), by the unilateral, unconditional, everlasting covenant (Gen 9:16) promise never again to destroy the world by means of a deluge (Gen 9:11–17; Isa 54:9) in spite of man's continued wickedness, and by parallel passages (Ps 29:10; 2 Pet 2:5; Matt 24:38; Luke 17:27).

Without the human side (sin) the divine side (flood judgment) would not occur. There cannot be the divine side without the human side, and there cannot be the human side without the divine side to check sin. God is the Moral Potentate who knows when sin has reached an unbearable limit and must be checked. The flood account teaches that sinners do not annihilate sin or themselves as retribution against sin, but perpetuate sin and themselves or in spite of themselves. Evil breeds evil in an escalating fashion. Sinners, if allowed, take over (Gen 6:5), if they are not overtaken. Therefore, sin must be punished. Sin will not be abated or tapered off by itself in a spontaneous or devolutionary process. Punishment is necessitated both by the nature of sin and the nature of God.

Sin deprives humanity of the Spirit's presence (Gen 6:3), the divine protection, and of life itself. Sinners lightly regard the benefits of probationary time and the terrible

horror of retributive punishment.⁴ Punishment, however, is not the lot of the righteous. Salvific grace grants the faithful remnant divine remembrance or preservation of life and a covenant promise to never again destroy the world with a flood of water. The flood waters as a means of the destruction of the wicked are at once the means of preservation for the faithful remnant of humanity in a boat.

The wicked are never addressed directly in Gen 6–9. Genesis 6 addresses their moral/spiritual putrefaction and includes them in the phrase “all flesh.” But more than what the antediluvians do, the verses indicate what God is going to do—put a stop to sin and sinners in the deluge. Apart from the total destruction of all flesh in Gen 7:21–23, nothing more is said about those humans who perished. No description of their reaction at the beginning of the flood, or their state after the flood is given. God even appears to recede from the picture or account of the flood in action, and the wicked forthwith fall into annihilation in the waters of the flood and into oblivion in the account.

God addresses Noah directly in Gen 6:13; 7:1; 8:15; 9:1, 8 and indirectly in Gen 8:1. From Gen 6 to 9 the movement of the flood story is toward the salvation of the faithful remnant by means of a flood that would destroy the wicked and curse the earth. Therefore, the central or primary message of the Genesis flood account is salvation, not

⁴Retributive punishment is the law of retribution, the law of equivalence, the *lex talionis*, the law of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, life for life,” which is clearly a judicial principle throughout Scripture (Exod 21:23, 24; Lev 24:19, 20; Deut 19:21), not a license for the personal revenge. In this law the punishment corresponds to the sin or crime. The “wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23; cf. Ezek 18:4, 20; Gen 2:17). Sin is a capital crime that dis-entitles sinners to life. Punishment by death was the lot of the antediluvian world because of their incorrigible moral putrefaction.

retribution.

Comparative Analysis of the ANE and OT Accounts

In this analysis, the ANE and OT accounts will be compared and contrasted. The similarities and dissimilarities will be discussed under these rubrics: The Agent of the Flood, Ethics of the Flood, The Nature of the Flood, and Post-flood Sacrifice and Reward.

The Agent of the Flood

In the ANE as well as the OT accounts there is divine agency of the flood event. However, divine agency in the ANE accounts is a pantheon of gods, and therefore polytheistic. In the OT account, divine agency in the flood is God (יהוה), and so, monotheistic. The personal, direct, determined involvement of the gods/God in the flood is indisputably affirmed in both the ANE and OT accounts of the deluge.

Ethics of the Flood

In the OT account, the divine plan and action in bringing the flood of water is not presented as an impugnation of God in the minds of the faithful remnant, or the wicked, or God himself. The flood, though a physical evil or catastrophe, is not a moral evil (Gen 6:5). The God of the Genesis flood chose the physical evil of the flood to check the moral evil of the antediluvians. In the ANE accounts the flood is a physical evil to deal with divine insomnia. Only the Atra-Hasis Epic specifies the reason for the flood as *rigmu* (clamor, noise). Since man was created with *rigmu*, then he is guilty by being. In

the OT, humanity was not created with sin, the cause of his physical inundation and annihilation. In the ANE, divinity either inadvertently created humanity for destruction, or with divine caprice and ignorance of the future, divinity condemned humanity to death by being because of divine insomnia.

Divine sleep is a higher value than human life in the ANE accounts. In the OT, sin forfeits human life in the divine scheme of things. In the former, depriving a god of sleep amounts to a capital crime, and in the latter sin is the capital crime. A loss of life is the final resort in the OT, but in the ANE a loss of life is the first and only resort. Death is wielded at the hands of the gods without a moral basis.

The reason itself for the destruction of humanity in the ANE accounts turns out to be immoral seeing that the gods destroyed humanity for that with which they had endowed them. In the OT humanity is destroyed for “not being” righteous and faithful, but in the ANE humanity is destroyed for “being” with noise (*rigmu*)—that with which they were created. Unlike the God of the OT, the gods of the ANE accounts are clearly arbitrary in their administration of justice. Humanity is punished for that which is beyond their control. Therefore, while the flood in the OT is divine retribution against sin, it is divine genocide in the ANE accounts.

In the ANE accounts, while all the gods participated in bringing the flood upon humanity, Enki/Ea secretly foiled the plan to a degree by indirectly informing the flood hero about the impending flood and the means of escape. After the flood, in the Atrahasis Epic, crafty Enki calls the flood “Enlil’s evil deed.”⁵ In Ishtar’s speech in the

⁵Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 87.

Gilgamesh Epic,⁶ she calls the flood a divine evil. In a sense, in the Atra-Hasis Epic, a small degree of the moral sense of the gods is apparent in the post-flood tears of Nintu, the remorse of Mami, the grief of holy Inanna (Eridu Genesis), and the regret of all the gods for the destruction of humanity. The degree of their moral sense is mitigated by the fact that they were emotional in the context of their loss of humans as slaves.

In the OT account, it is not the destruction of humanity that occasioned divine remorse over humankind. The sin or moral depravity of the antediluvians was so great and endless (Gen 6:5) that it led to divine grief and repentance over the creation of humanity (Gen 6:6). God regretted that he had made humanity who has descended to such moral depth that they were “un-creating” themselves in the image of God, and human undoing became evident, necessary, and final.

In the ANE accounts (*Gilgamesh Epic* and *Babyloniaca of Berossus*), Enki instructs the flood hero to deceive mankind concerning the reason for his sailing as intercession for human welfare, and the reason for the boat’s construction as Enlil’s hatred of him, so he can no longer dwell in the city, and in the evening the leader of the storm will rain *kibtu* on the city. *Kibtu*, which has the meaning of catastrophe for Utnapishtim and Ea, has the meaning of wheat for the people, so by this means all the rest of humanity was ignorant of the impending flood.

Ea’s deception of the people meant that there was no opportunity for repentance or change, and no probationary time of grace. In fact, the gods destroy mankind, unknown to mankind, both in terms of the reason and the divine agency for the flood.

⁶Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 85.

Even Ea's preservation of the flood hero with his relatives, craftsmen, and/or pilot was an apparent selfish gesture in order to keep humans in his service.

There is no deception in the OT account. The flood is predicted and mankind is given a 120-year probationary period of grace to relinquish sin. Humanity had become so hardened in wickedness that only eight people responded positively to salvific grace. The preaching of Noah (2 Pet 2:5) must have made the coming catastrophe as well as the reason for it known to the antediluvians.

Nature of the Flood

In both the ANE and the OT accounts, the flood is a global event destroying mankind as its primary object. It is a physical event bringing physical death to mankind by means of water. No efforts in any of the accounts are made to exonerate God or the pantheon from direct involvement in the flood by reducing it to a mere natural event, or an accident, or an automatic trigger between moral decadence and environmental cataclysm in retribution against sin or a perceived capital offense.

Post-Flood Sacrifice and Reward

Except for *Babyloniaca of Berosus*, both the ANE and the OT accounts indicate that the flood hero offered a sacrifice to God/gods. Except for the Atra-Hasis Epic account, all the other three ANE accounts attest to the deification or immortalization of the flood hero. In Genesis, Noah eventually died (Gen 9: 29). But in the wider context of the entire Bible, Noah is on God's honor roll of the faithful in Heb 11, scheduled for a glorious resurrection to immortality and residence with God in the earth made new (Job

19:25; 1 Cor 15: 50–54; Rev 21:1-3). In general, the ANE accounts portray the pantheon of gods as arbitrary destroyer(s) and a preserver (Enki) of human life as well as bestower(s) (Enlil) of immortal privileges or eternal life, while the OT depicts God as the Destroyer of human life in relation to sin, and the Savior and Preserver of a faithful remnant to inhabit and repopulate the earth (Gen 9:1, 7).

Table 2 provides a comparative chart on the key similarities and differences between the ANE and the OT flood accounts.

Table 2. Divine causation of death in the flood accounts

Factors	Mesopotamia				Hebrew OT
	Eridu Genesis	Atra-Hasis	Gilgamesh Epic	Berosus	
<i>Grounds for the Flood</i>	Arbitrary divine will (reason unspecified, unknown; no grounds)	<i>Rigmu</i> (clamor) of humans—guilt by being	Arbitrary divine will (reason unspecified, unknown; no grounds)	Arbitrary divine will (reason unspecified, unknown; no grounds)	Human rebellion and moral sinful condition
Object of the Flood	“Seed of mankind”	Mankind	Mankind	Mankind	Mankind
Agent of the Flood	Pantheon of gods	Pantheon of gods	Pantheon of gods	Gods	God
Flood Means	Water	Water	Water	Water	Water
Diluvial Extent	Global	Global	Global	Global	Global
Nature of Death	Physical	Physical	Physical	Physical	Physical/spiritual
Flood Awareness Information	Through divination (Enki)	Through a dream and meaning from Enki	Ea’s indirect disclosure of secret to reed hut	Through Ea’s announcement	Divine revelation
Divine Deception	No deception	Of gods	Of gods and mankind	Of mankind	No deception
Hero of the Flood	Ziusudra	Atra-Hasis	Utnapishtim	Xisuthros	Noah
Grace before Judgment	No warning or probationary time	No warning or probationary time	No warning or probationary time	No warning or probationary time	Warning and probationary time
Preservation amidst Flood	Boat: Ziusudra	Boat: Atra-Hasis	Boat: Utnapishtim	Boat: Xisuthros, wife, daughter, and pilot	Boat: Noah, family, animals

Table 2—Continued.

Factors	Mesopotamia				Hebrew OT
	Eridu Genesis	Atra-Hasis	Gilgamesh Epic	Berosus	
Post-flood Sacrifice	Oxen and sheep	Offerings to gods	Sacrifice; “Gods like flies over sacrificer”	No sacrifice	Clean beast/fowl as burnt offerings
Post-flood Reward	Deification; translation to Dilmun (paradise)	No deification; No Dilmun	Deification/Immortality of Utnapishtim/wife	Xisuthros’ deification/residence with gods	Resurrection/Immortality and residence with God

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the flood narratives in the ANE and in the OT yields more dissimilarities than similarities. In an effort to synthesize the material with clarity, six conceptual frameworks will be laid out, namely, between ANE creation and ANE flood; OT creation and OT flood; ANE creation and OT flood; OT creation and ANE flood; ANE creation and OT creation; and ANE flood and OT flood. The first four conceptual frameworks serve as a platform for the last two which are the crucial aspects to the conclusion of this dissertation. This approach will more clearly connect the origin and causation of death at relevant junctures in the comparative synthesis of the main points between the ANE and OT accounts.

In the ANE creation and flood accounts, human or divine death came by divine imposition. While no gods died in the ANE floods, gods perished in divine war before and after human creation. Humans perished because of their guilt by being. The gods created mankind with noise for which they punish mankind. The gods arbitrarily imposed the flood on mankind. In the ANE creation accounts, human death or mortality is

imposed from the inception while the gods retained immortality. In the ANE creation accounts, the origin of death is in the divine imposition of mortality on mankind and in divine deicide; and in the ANE flood accounts, the causation of death is in the imposition of diluvial death upon mankind without provocation.

In both the OT creation (Gen 2–3) and flood (Gen 6–9) accounts human sin preceded divine judgment of mortality or death. At creation, death was inherent in and accompanied the potential act of sin, and was not in the God-given conditionally immortal nature of mankind. Human choice stood between human immortality and human mortality (Gen 2:16, 17).

Death was a contingent reality. God created mankind with free choice and consequently with the possibility of sinning. That his nature could move from being immortal to mortal due to sin was not an accident but a divine design in relation to sin. The divine judgment “thou shall surely die” was not a pronouncement by an observer-status God concerning this matter, but by a God who naturally reacts negatively against sin, and believes that sin deserves death. The flood account directly connects humanity’s sin as the conditional cause of the flood to God’s supernatural act as the effectual cause of the flood. Human physical death is a post-sin event in both the creation and flood accounts of the OT.

In the ANE creation account, the origin of death is in the divine constitution of mankind. In the OT flood account, death, having been a post-Fall part of human nature, is a divine retributive judgment upon mankind. In the ANE creation account, death is imposed by divine fiat. The creation of mankind is neither connected to retribution nor

salvation, but serves as a divine relief of the minor gods from slave work. In the ANE creation accounts, the gods are directly responsible for the mortal nature or death of humanity, hence the origin of death. In the OT flood account, God is the effectual cause of the flood. In the ANE creation accounts, gods are virtually the effectual cause of the origin of death having endowed humanity with mortality.

In the OT creation, mankind becomes guilty by sinful choice, but in the ANE flood account, mankind is guilty by being as he came from the divine hand. In the former, human undoing in mortality came with human doing, but in the latter, human undoing came because of divine doing. In the OT creation account, sin is no accident, nor is death. Sin and death become a universal phenomena of all humanity. In the ANE flood account, there is no sin or crime, but death is of a universal nature.

Both the ANE and OT creation accounts deal with the fact or event of death, the involvement of God/gods vis-a-vis the mortal status of mankind, and death as a cessation of human physical existence. The ANE accounts include divine deicide in war in the origin of death and as something accidental (in Egyptian literature), which is absent in the OT, and the OT presents death as also spiritual (alienation from God, Gen 2:8–10), and not merely physical like the ANE.

In the ANE creation account, death originated with the gods either by divine choice and imposition of mortality upon mankind at creation or by divine deicide in war. Death is not the victim's choice, whether divine or human. Human death is a divine choice before and from the creation of humanity. On the contrary, in the OT creation account, mankind is immortal from the creative hand of God. While the options of good

or evil, life or death are placed before humanity in light of his God-given freedom of choice (Gen 2:16, 17), death is a human choice, not a divine choice. A choice for sin is at once a choice for death. A choice for obedience is at once a choice for continued life and immortality.

Both the ANE and the OT flood accounts present the flood as a physical event causing physical human death, humanity as the object of the flood of water, God/gods as causative agent(s) in the deluge, and a preserved remnant of humanity in a boat during the flood. The ANE accounts give no moral or spiritual condition for the coming of the flood. Sleep-depriving noise with which the gods created mankind led them to bring a flood to sweep over mankind. Therefore, divine causation of death in the ANE accounts, while physical and mostly global, is arbitrary and capricious. The divine decision and action to inundate mankind are polytheistic.

The OT flood account presents God as gracious in probation, salvific in intent, and just in retribution. The account lays out the sin of mankind as the conditional cause of the flood and the monotheistic strange act of God as the effectual cause of the flood. Both the nature of God (Gen 6:7, 13, 17) as intolerant of sin and the nature of sin as self-destructive merge as the divine and human sides in the advent of the flood. The flood is a divine judgment on sin, not a cosmic or ecological accident, or a natural catastrophic incident to be explained away with ideas of an automatic connection between moral decay and ecological disaster. The flood is a retributive act of God in response to impenitent sin.

The origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in

the flood accounts of the ANE converge when the gods who created mankind with *rigmu* (noise) as constituent of human nature decided to inundate mankind for the very thing with which they created mankind. Thus the divine imposers of death in human nature at creation are at once the divine causers of human mortality and death in the flood. This conceptual convergence is absent from the OT, in which human death originated with human sinful choice in the creation and was dually caused by human spiritual/moral condition and God's supernatural act of uncreating the creation in the flood event.

Suggestions for Further Study

An important corollary to this dissertation is a comparative study of the historicity and authenticity of the particular events related to the origin and divine causation of death in the creation and flood accounts respectively in the ANE and the OT. Of necessity, this study will take relevant archeological findings as well as the literary genre of the texts (mythography, historiography, or mytho-historical account), literary purpose, and hermeneutical principle arising from the texts itself into serious consideration.

A second suggestion is a detailed study of the *lex talionis* as a judicial principle undergirding divine judicial execution in different implicit and explicit OT contexts. This study will capture its historical as well as eschatological uses. It can also demonstrate the legitimacy of the principle as a matching equivalence—the sin or crime fits the punishment.

A third suggestion is an OT study of the relationship between the concepts of divine withdrawal of protection or presence and divine execution of sinners. The study

can examine whether divine withdrawal and divine execution converge as punishments or diverge in the relation of absolute divine non-involvement and direct divine action.

A fourth and last suggestion for further study is the development of a theodicy of divine violence in the OT in relation to divine violence in the ANE in specific contexts such as the creation and flood events. My dissertation dealt only with the theodicean implications of these events. It is not a detailed treatment of the concept of theodicy in several relevant representative contexts in the OT and ANE.

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