BPM's and Mythology and Parents and Children

Grof's theory of BPM's must be considered in the context of Western mythology in order to see its implications for culture and society. One aspect concerns families and children, a matter of much confusion in the development of modern psychology and its mythological heritage. Two Western mythologies are historically primary, the Greek and the Hebrew. They both weave very tangled tales about families and parenting.

The original figures in Greek mythology are Ouranos and Gaia. Ouranos (Uranus) was the Primordial god and personification of the Sky and Heavens. Gaia (Earth), was the first entity to come into existence after Chaos (Void). Then came Uranus, the Ourea (Mountains), and Pontus (Sea). Adam and Eve begin Hebrew mythology. It is much simpler in a way than the Greek, because of the simplicity of monotheism in comparison to polytheism.

The Romans inherited much of Greek mythology in their state religion, but an enormous change took place later when Constantine converted Rome to Christianity, which inherited Hebrew mythology and monotheism. Nonetheless, there is a shadow of polytheism in the Roman Catholic Church's panoply of saints, to whom one can pray like to the Greek gods. The Roman Church also appropriated some of Aristotle' ideas, which were a significant piece of Greek culture, although a technical piece, rather than his philosophy, which echoed important parts of Plato. Plato own writing, however, was mostly lost to medieval Europe, until it did resurface in Europe in the renaissance, thanks to its preservation by Arabs, along with the mathematics that the Arabs had developed. Where Greek philosophy had originated as a quest for the meaning of life, the Church proclaimed salvation instead, which meshed well with hierarchical monism, buttressed the Church's patriarchy, and provided revenue as well.

Earliest Greek culture practiced earth religion, emphasizing the mother. Gradually, however, it moved toward a sky religion. Earth religion held that blood had to be repaid with blood. But that led to an ongoing cycle of retribution. In their myth, Orestes and Electra fled to Athens to escape the pursuit of the Erinyes, the Furies who would have blood to avenge their murder of their mother Clytemnestra. They found protection from Athena, who decreed that the scales of justice had been balanced and no more blood needed to be spilled. This symbolically marked the religion of Greece turning to the high gods who dwelt with Athena on Olympus. Justice as a principle displaced the spilling of blood.

Christianity ironically availed the blood of Jesus to cleanse the sin of Adam but kept his mother, virgin and pure, in its panoply, and God reigned supreme as patriarch. The Church used Aristotle to support God's supremacy, eventually paying God the compliments of omnipotence, omniscience, and the like.

The Roman Church adopted an idea from Aristotle that still has consequences today for the issues of feminism, birth control, and abortion. Aristotle associated man with the Platonic ideal and woman with matter (Greek: *hyle*). Aristotle thought the ideal of the male was stamped on female material in the act of conception, much as a mold is stamped upon clay. One unfortunate consequence is the notion that birth defects were thought to therefore result from the imperfection of the female material, because the ideal of the male, like any ideal, is perfect. In the Church's understanding of natural law, contraception is considered an interference with nature that inhibits expression of the male ideal. Similarly, abortion represents interference with natural law. The Church advances varied theological arguments to support these ideas, but Aristotle's ideas form their basis. Thomas Aquinas, the Church's most important and culminating Medieval theologian also uses related ideas from Aristotle to support

resurrection of the body. A human being is thought of as a substance comprised of matter and soul. Soul is form, which is a Platonic ideal. On death the soul goes to heaven, but the completion of salvation requires the material body to reunite with the soul in the Resurrection of the body.

How, out of the chaotic intrigues of Greek and Christian mythology, can anyone extract reasonable principles to govern a family and raise a child? Freud nonetheless made a try, but he carried over ideas from the medieval Church, despite disavowing religion. One idea was the depravity of humans, deriving from Adam's original sin, which Freud turned into the concept of neurosis, a consequence of guilt. Freud blamed parents for causing neurosis and guilt. He supplemented this with his stipulation of the Oedipus complex, drawn of course from Greek mythology. But fused it with a myth from the Agamemnon story to stipulate an Electra complex, in a perverse attempt to treat women equally.

The Church's idea of the laws of God, became Newton's laws of physics that Freud used as the base of his mechanistic, hydraulic model of the psyche. Newton, interestingly, was born in the year that Galileo died. The Church imprisoned Galileo because his telescopic observation of the moon and Jupiter showed them not to be Divine, but material. The hold of the Church had loosened, however, in a short time between Galileo, and Newton got off free.

In the interval between Galileo and Newton, Descartes lived. He disavowed most of medieval theology and made human existence, in a way, more crucial than God's, but he carried over Aristotle's idea of substance as the fundamental nature of things. He conceived two basic substances, body and mind. He thought a third, Divine substance, held the other two together, but scientists didn't pay much attention to it after they realized the power of physics.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century Western culture was neatly divided between the physicists, who dealt with matter, and the philosophers, who retained jurisdiction over mind. But then came the discovery of physiology, which blurred the boundaries. In that blurry area, modern psychology found a foothold. Charcot, at the great Salpetriere asylum in Paris, started speculating about how the material brain affected mental states. German behaviorists tried to figure out how the habits of the body were correlated with the habits of the mind. The two endeavors, however, could not effect a synthesis, and the long-standing questions of will and intention remained unanswered. Modern psychology made an end run by separating into specialties, and bifurcation remained. In Europe behaviorism devoted itself to the classification of human activity as a means of securing control, and depth psychology pursued fantasies about the mind.

Division into specialties obfuscated the basic issue of bifurcation into matters of the body for behaviorism and matters of the mind for psychoanalytic romanticism. In both cases, however, parents came in for blame and children became victims, with families considered the breeding grounds of blame and blaming, causing suffering for all.

Grof's theory of BPM's offers an alternative if understood properly. He sees the origin of many psychological difficulties in the biology of birth. From Grof's perspective, the psychological phenomenon of blaming should instead be seen as a biological matter, rather than a moral one. The biological situation depends on evolution. Respecting evolution, we must instead think of a scientific principle of cause and effect, rather than a moral issue of blame. The human pelvis had to narrow to facilitate upright walking, which allowed descent from the trees to the open savannah, where one had to move fast to avoid becoming prey to the four-footed beasts. The evolutionary narrowing of the pelvis turned the easy birth of our chimpanzee ancestors into the difficult hero's journey through the birth canal. By

grasping the import of that journey Grof intuited the intersection of body and spirit, that turned singular experience of birth into an experience of death to the undifferentiated world of the womb and birth to the world of separate individuality.

Grof understood the human phenomenon of birth as no one had before. His realization that a child is not born a blank slate, *tabula rasa* as characterized by the empirical philosophy of John Locke, preceded the late twentieth century awakening of perinatal medicine and the importance of the human biome. Appreciating the psychological importance of the birth process led Grof to suggest that the origin of guilt was not to be found in the theology of Adam's sin or Oedipus's patricide. Rather, it originates in the biology of the birth struggle, where the baby necessarily impacts its mother's body, and the mother's body has to have the simultaneous resilience of pushing back. From understanding this phenomenon, we can see the foolishness of turning biology into morality the way the patriarchs of modern religion have done by spurning the old-time religion of shamanism and the mother goddess as primitive superstition.

Of course, the above account is a gross simplification, but it can provide a clue to find a way to the next stage of humanity. As the earth religion necessarily gave way to patriarchy, patriarchy must in turn give way to genderless ecology, lest we destroy our only home from which we can populate humanity in the vast universe. To do so we must conceive a new mythology to supersede the ancient ones.

The remainder of this essay provides a brief, partial, and simplified account of the two main mythologies that have influenced western culture, the Greek and the Hebrew/Christian:

Greek mythology

According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, Uranus mated with Gaia, and she gave birth to the twelve Titans: Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Tethys and Cronus; the Cyclopes: Brontes, Steropes and Arges; and the Hecatoncheires ("Hundred-Handed Ones"): Cottus, Briareus, and Gyges. The *Theogony* tells how, after Chaos, "wide-bosomed" Gaia (Earth) arose to be the everlasting seat of the immortals who possess Olympus above. And after Gaia came "dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth", and next Eros the god of love. Hesiod goes on to say that Gaia brought forth her equal Uranus (Heaven, Sky) to "cover her on every side".] Gaia also bore the Ourea (Mountains), and Pontus (Sea), "without sweet union of love" (i.e., with no father).

Next, according to Hesiod, Gaia conceived further offspring with her son, Uranus, first the giant one-eyed Cyclopes: Brontes ("Thunder"), Steropes ("Lightning"), and Arges ("Bright"); then the Hecatonchires: Cottus, Briareos, and Gyges, each with a hundred arms and fifty heads. As each of the Cyclopes and Hecatonchires were born, Uranus hid them in a secret place within Gaia, causing her great pain. So, Gaia devised a plan. She created a grey flint (or adamantine) sickle. And Cronus used the sickle to castrate his father Uranus as he approached his mother, Gaia, to have sex with her. From Uranus' spilled blood, Gaia produced the Erinyes, the Giants, and the Meliae (ash-tree nymphs). From the testicles of Uranus in the sea came forth Aphrodite.

In epic battle the Giants were succeeded by a new generation of Olympian gods, led by Zeus with his thunderbolt. The Olympians were a race consisting of a third and fourth generation of immortal beings, who became worshipped as the principal gods of the Greek pantheon and were named because they resided atop Mount Olympus. They gained their supremacy in a ten-year-long war of gods, which Zeus led to victory over the previous generation of ruling immortal beings, the Titans. The Titans were the

second-generation children of the primordial deities Uranus and Gaia. They vanquished the Giants by piling Pelion Mountain on top of Mount Ossa, where the Giants lived. The first Olympian generation of gods, offspring of the Titans Cronus and Rhea were Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Demeter and Hestia, along with the principal offspring of Zeus: Aphrodite, Athena, Artemis, Apollo, Ares, Hephaestus, Hermes and Dionysus. Although Hades was a major deity in the Greek pantheon and was the brother of Zeus and the other first generation of Olympians, his realm was far away from Olympus in the underworld, and thus he was not usually considered to be one of the Olympians. Olympic gods can be contrasted to chthonic (earth religion) gods including Hades and his wife Persephone, the daughter he kidnapped from Demeter. Persephone received sacrifices in a bothros (βόθρος, "pit") or megaron (μέγαρον, "sunken chamber") rather than at an altar. The goddess Demeter was the focus of the initiation (mystery) rites celebrated at Eleusis, the most important of the rites of Greek and early Roman culture.

House of Atreus

The **House of Atreus** begins with Tantalus. Tantalus, the son of Zeus and the nymph Plouto, enjoyed cordial relations with the gods until he decided to slay his son Pelops and feed him to the gods as a test of their omniscience. Most of the gods, as they sat down to dinner with Tantalus, immediately understood what had happened, and, because they knew the nature of the meat they were served, were appalled and did not partake. But Demeter, who was distracted due to the abduction by Hades of her daughter Persephone, obliviously ate Pelops's shoulder. The gods threw Tantalus into the underworld to spend eternity standing in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches. Whenever he reaches for the fruit, the branches raise his intended meal from his grasp. Whenever he bends down to get a drink, the water recedes before he can drink. Thus is derived the word "tantalizing" in English. The gods brought Pelops back to life, replacing the bone in his shoulder with a bit of ivory with the help of Hephaestus, thus marking the family forever afterwards. The action of Tantalus caused a curse on the House of Atreus, which descended from Tantalus.

Pelops and Hippodamia

Pelops married Hippodamia after winning a chariot race against her father, King Oenomaus, by arranging for the sabotage of his would-be-father-in-law's chariot which resulted in his death. The versions of the story differ. The sabotage was arranged by Myrtilus, a servant of the king who was killed by Pelops for one of three reasons: 1) because he had been promised the right to take Hippodamia's virginity, which Pelops retracted; 2) because he attempted to rape her, or; 3) because Pelops did not wish to share the credit for the victory. As Myrtilus died, he cursed Pelops and his line, further adding to the house's curse.

Atreus and Thyestes

Pelops and Hippodamia had many sons; two of them were Atreus and Thyestes. Depending on myth versions, they murdered Chrysippus, who was their half-brother. Because of the murder, Hippodamia, Atreus, and Thyestes were banished to Mycenae, where Hippodamia is said to have hanged herself.
Atreus vowed to sacrifice his best lamb to Artemis. Upon searching his flock, however, Atreus discovered a golden lamb which he gave to his wife, Aerope, to hide from the goddess. She gave it to Thyestes, her lover and Atreus' brother, who then persuaded Atreus to agree that whoever had the lamb should be king. Thyestes produced the lamb and claimed the throne.

Atreus retook the throne using advice he received from Zeus, who sent Hermes to him, advising him to make Thyestes agree that if the sun rose in the west and set in the east, the throne of the kingdom should be given back to Atreus. Thyestes agreed, but then Helios did exactly that, rising where he usually set and setting where he usually rose, not standing the injustice of Thyestes' usurpation. The people then bowed to Atreus, who had managed to reverse the circuit of the Sun.

Atreus learned of Thyestes' and Aerope's adultery and plotted revenge. He killed Thyestes' sons and cooked them, save their hands and feet. He tricked Thyestes into eating the flesh of his own sons and then taunted him with their hands and feet. Thyestes was forced into exile for eating the flesh of a human.

Thyestes responded by asking an oracle what to do, who advised him to have a son by his daughter, Pelopia, who would then kill Atreus. The son was Aegisthus, who was abandoned by his mother, because she was ashamed of her incestuous act. A shepherd found the infant Aegisthus and gave him to Atreus, who raised him as his own son.

The lineage of Atreus crosses with the Olympians in the history of Athens.

Aegeus, one of the primordial kings of Athens, was childless. Desiring an heir, he asked the Oracle of Delphi for advice. Her cryptic words were "Do not loosen the bulging mouth of the wineskin until you have reached the height of Athens, lest you die of grief." Aegeus did not understand the prophecy and was disappointed. He asked the advice of his host Pittheus, king of Troezen. Pittheus understood the prophecy, got Aegeus drunk, and gave Aegeus his daughter Aethra.

But following the instructions of Athena in a dream, Aethra left the sleeping Aegeus and waded across to the island of Sphairia that lay close to Troezen's shore. There, she poured a libation to Sphairos (Pelops's charioteer) and Poseidon and was possessed by the sea god in the night. The dual insemination of Aethrta gave Theseus a combination of divine as well as mortal characteristics in his nature; such double paternity, with one immortal and one mortal, was a familiar feature of other Greek heroes. After Aethra became pregnant, Aegeus decided to return to Athens. Before leaving, however, he buried his sandals and sword under a huge rock and told Aethra that when their son grew up, he should move the rock and bring the weapons to his father, who would acknowledge him.

Theseus was raised in his mother's land. When Theseus grew up to be a young man, he moved the rock and recovered his father's tokens. His mother then told him the truth about his father's identity and that he must take the sword and sandals back to the king Aegeus to claim his birthright. To journey to Athens, Theseus could choose to go by sea (which was the safe way) or by land, following a dangerous path, the hero's journey, around the Saronic Gulf, where he would encounter a string of six entrances to the Underworld,[iv] each guarded by a chthonic enemy. Young, brave, and ambitious, Theseus decided to go alone by the land route and defeated many bandits along the way. He also married a queen in a kingdom where each king was ritually killed after ruling for a year, but Theseus defeated his intended killers. His action marked a turn from the earth religion, which traditionally led to the ritual killing. He got to Athens and proved himself to his father by showing him the sword and sandals. There, the sky gods were represented by Athena and thus justice, as an Olympian principle that displaced the earth religion practice of blood retribution.

Before Theseus eventually succeeded his father as king of Athens, he volunteered to be one of the group of seven young men and seven young maidens sent in the annual tribute that Athens had to pay to Knossos. The youths engaged in a ritual 'dance' with the Minotaur, a primordial, earth religion bull-beast, for the entertainment of the Cretans, which usually ended in death. Theseus managed to organize a rebellion of the Athenian and other tribute bull dancers with the help of an earthquake caused by Poseidon. This represents the last major triumph of Theseus over the earth religion.

Oedipus

Another intersection of Athens with the house of Atreus occurs in the story of Agamemnon, who was a child of Atreus. He married Clytemnestra and became the commander of the Greek armies that went to war with Troy. But the expedition stalled from lack of wind. To propitiate the wind gods Agamemnon was persuaded to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. While Agamemnon was at war in Troy, Clytemnestra had an affair with Aegisthus to avenge the death of Iphigenia. When Agamemnon returned, he was murdered by Clytemnestra in his bath. In turn, Orestes and Electra, Iphigenia's siblings murdered their mother. For this murder they were pursued by the vengeful Fates, the Erinyes. But they eventually fled to Athens, where the they came under Athena's protection. And she decreed the principle of justice that said enough blood had been shed, and retribution was no longer necessary.

The myth of Oedipus is yet another episode in saga of the earth religion. Oedipus was the son of Laius and Jocasta, king and queen of Thebes. Having been childless for some time, Laius consulted the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The Oracle prophesied that any son born to Laius would kill him. In an attempt to prevent this prophecy's fulfillment, when Jocasta indeed bore a son, Laius had his son's ankles pierced and tethered together so that he could not crawl; Jocasta then gave the boy to a servant to abandon ("expose") on the nearby mountain. However, rather than leave the child to die of exposure, as Laius intended, the servant passed the baby on to a shepherd from Corinth, who then gave the child to another shepherd.

After many years, Oedipus was told by a drunk that he was a "bastard", meaning at that time that he was not their biological son. Oedipus confronted his parents (the king and queen of Corinth) with the news, but they denied this. Oedipus went to the same oracle in Delphi that his birth parents had consulted. The oracle informed him that he was destined to murder his father and marry his mother. In an attempt to avoid such a fate, he decided not to return home to Corinth, but to travel to Thebes, which was closer to Delphi.

On the way, Oedipus came to Davlia, where three roads crossed. There he encountered a chariot driven by his birth-father, King Laius. They fought over who had the right to go first and Oedipus killed Laius when the charioteer tried to run him over. The only witness of the king's death was a slave who fled from a caravan of slaves also traveling on the road at the time. Continuing his journey to Thebes, Oedipus encountered a Sphinx, who would stop all travelers to Thebes and ask them a riddle. If the travelers were unable to answer her correctly, they would be killed and eaten; if they were successful, they would be free to continue on their journey. The riddle was: "What walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon, and three at night?". Oedipus answered: "Man: as an infant, he crawls on all fours; as an adult, he walks on two legs and in old age, he uses a 'walking' stick". Oedipus was the first to answer the riddle correctly, and the Sphinx allowed him to continue on.

Queen Jocasta's brother, Creon, had announced that any man who could rid the city of the Sphinx would be made king of Thebes and given the recently widowed Queen Jocasta's hand in marriage. This marriage of Oedipus to Jocasta fulfilled the rest of the prophecy. Oedipus and Jocasta had four children: sons Eteocles and Polynices and daughters Antigone and Ismene.

Many years later, a plague of infertility struck the city of Thebes, affecting crops, livestock, and the people. Oedipus asserted that he would end the pestilence. He sent his uncle, Creon, to the Oracle at Delphi, seeking guidance. When Creon returned, Oedipus learned that the murderer of King Laius must be brought to justice, and Oedipus himself cursed the killer of his wife's late husband, saying that he would be exiled. Creon also suggested that they try to find the blind prophet, Tiresias, who was widely respected. Oedipus sent for Tiresias, who warned him not to seek Laius' killer. In a heated exchange, Tiresias was provoked into exposing Oedipus himself as the killer, and the fact that Oedipus was living in shame because he did not know who his true parents were. Oedipus angrily blamed Creon for the false accusations, and the two argued. Jocasta entered and tried to calm Oedipus by telling him the story of her first-born son and his supposed death. Oedipus became nervous as he realized that he may have murdered Laius and so brought about the plague. Suddenly, a messenger arrived from Corinth with the news that King Polybus had died. Oedipus was relieved for the prophecy could no longer be fulfilled if Polybus, whom he considered his birth father, was now dead.

Oedipus knew that his mother was still alive and refused to attend the funeral at Corinth. To ease the tension, the messenger then said that Oedipus was, in fact, adopted. Jocasta, finally realizing that he was her son, begged him to stop his search for Laius' murderer. Oedipus misunderstood her motivation, thinking that she was ashamed of him because he might have been born of low birth. Jocasta, in great distress went into the palace where she hanged herself. Oedipus sought verification of the messenger's story from the very same herdsman who was supposed to have left Oedipus to die as a baby. From the herdsman, Oedipus learned that the infant who was raised as the adopted son of Polybus and Merope, was the son of Laius and Jocasta. Thus, Oedipus finally realized that the man he had killed so many years before was his father and that he had married his mother. Oedipus went in search of Jocasta and found she had killed herself. Using the pin from a brooch he took off Jocasta's gown, Oedipus blinded himself and was then exiled. His daughter Antigone acted as his guide as he wandered through the country, finally dying at Colonus where they had been welcomed by King Theseus of Athens

Thus continued the tangled tales of incest, murder, and blood descended from the curse of Tantalus, but ended in Athens.

Christian/Hebrew myth

The opening chapters of the Book of Genesis provide a mythic history of the infiltration of evil into the world. God places the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) in his Garden of Eden, whence they are expelled; the first murder follows, and God's decision to destroy the world and save only the righteous Noah and his sons; a new humanity then descends from these and spreads throughout the world, but although the new world is as sinful as the old, God has resolved never again to destroy the world by flood, and the History ends with Terah, the father of Abraham, from whom will descend God's chosen people, the Israelites.

Adam and Eve, according to the creation myth of the Abrahamic religions, were the first man and woman. They are central to the belief that humanity is in essence a single family, with everyone descended from a single pair of original ancestors. They also provide the basis for the doctrines of the fall of man and original sin that are important beliefs in Christianity, although not held in Judaism or Islam.

In the Book of Genesis of the Hebrew Bible, chapters one through five, there are two creation narratives with two distinct perspectives. In the first, Adam and Eve are not named. Instead, God created humankind in God's image and instructed them to multiply and to be stewards over everything else that God had made.

In the second narrative, God fashions Adam from dust and places him in the Garden of Eden. Adam is told that he can eat freely of all the trees in the garden, except for a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Subsequently, Eve is created from one of Adam's ribs to be his companion. They are innocent and unembarrassed about their nakedness. However, a serpent convinces Eve to eat fruit from the forbidden tree, and she gives some of the fruit to Adam. These acts not only give them additional knowledge, but it gives them the ability to conjure negative and destructive concepts such as shame and evil. God later curses the serpent and the ground. God prophetically tells the woman and the man what the consequences of their sin of disobeying God will be. Then he banishes them from the Garden of Eden.

Neither Adam nor Eve is mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures apart from a single listing of Adam in a genealogy in 1 Chronicles 1:1, suggesting that although their story came to be prefixed to the Jewish story, it has little in common with it. The myth underwent extensive elaboration in later Abrahamic traditions, and it has been extensively analyzed by modern biblical scholars. Interpretations and beliefs regarding Adam and Eve and the story revolving around them vary across religions and sects; for example, the Islamic version of the story holds that Adam and Eve were *equally* responsible for their sins of hubris, instead of Eve being the first one to be unfaithful. The story of Adam and Eve is often depicted in art, and it has had an important influence in literature and poetry.

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Genesis creation narrative

Adam and Eve are the Bible's first man and first woman. Adam's name appears first in Genesis 1 with a collective sense, as "mankind"; subsequently in Genesis 2–3 it carries the definite article *ha*, equivalent to English "the", indicating that this is "the man". In these chapters God fashions "the man" (*ha adam*) from earth (*adamah*), breathes life into his nostrils, and makes him a caretaker over creation. God next creates for the man an *ezer kenegdo*, a "helper corresponding to him", from his side or rib. The word "rib" is a pun in Sumerian, as the word *ti* means both "rib" and "life". She is called *ishsha*, "woman", because, the text says, she is formed from *ish*, "man". The man receives her with joy, and the reader is told that from this moment a man will leave his parents to "cling" to a woman, the two becoming one flesh.

The Fall

The first man and woman are in God's Garden of Eden, where all creation is vegetarian and there is no violence. They are permitted to eat the fruits of all the trees except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The woman is tempted by a talking serpent to eat the forbidden fruit, and gives some to the man, who eats also. (Contrary to popular myth she does not beguile the man, who appears to have been present at the encounter with the serpent). God curses all three, the man to a lifetime of hard labor followed by death, the woman to the pain of childbirth and to subordination to her husband, and the serpent to go on his belly and suffer the enmity of both man and woman. God then clothes the nakedness of the man and woman, who have become god-like in knowing good and evil, then banishes them from the garden lest they eat the fruit of a second tree, the tree of life, and live forever.

Expulsion from Eden

The story continues in Genesis 3 with the "expulsion from Eden" narrative. A form analysis of Genesis 3 reveals that this portion of the story can be characterized as a parable or "wisdom tale" in the wisdom tradition. The poetic addresses of the chapter belong to a speculative type of wisdom that questions the paradoxes and harsh realities of life. This characterization is determined by the narrative's format, settings, and the plot. The form of Genesis 3 is also shaped by its vocabulary, making use of various puns and double entendres.

The expulsion from Eden narrative begins with a dialogue between the woman and a serpent, identified in Genesis 3:1 as an animal that was more crafty than any other animal made by God, although Genesis does not identify the serpent with Satan. The woman is willing to talk to the serpent and respond to the creature's cynicism by repeating God's prohibition against eating fruit from the tree of knowledge (Genesis 2:17). The woman is lured into dialogue on the serpent's terms which directly disputes God's command. The serpent assures the woman that God will not let her die if she ate the fruit, and, furthermore, that if she ate the fruit, her "eyes would be opened" and she would "be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). The woman sees that the fruit of the tree of knowledge is a delight to the eye and that it would be desirable to acquire wisdom by eating the fruit. The woman eats the fruit and gives some to the man (Genesis 3:6). With this the man and woman recognize their own nakedness, and they make loincloths of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7).

In the next narrative dialogue, God questions the man and the woman (Genesis 3:8–13), and God initiates a dialogue by calling out to the man with a rhetorical question designed to consider his wrongdoing. The man explains that he hid in the garden out of fear because he realized his own nakedness (Genesis 3:10). This is followed by two more rhetorical questions designed to show awareness of a defiance of God's command. The man then points to the woman as the real offender, and he implies that God is responsible for the tragedy because the woman was given to him by God (Genesis 3:12). God challenges the woman to explain herself, and she shifts the blame to the serpent (Genesis 3:13).

Divine pronouncement of three judgments is then laid against all the culprits, Genesis 3:14–19. A judgement oracle and the nature of the crime is first laid upon the serpent, then the woman, and, finally, the man. On the serpent, God places a divine curse. The woman receives penalties that impact her in two primary roles: she shall experience pangs during childbearing, pain during childbirth, and while she shall desire her husband, he will rule over her. The man's penalty results in God cursing the ground from which he came, and the man then receives a death oracle.

Adam and Eve, according to the creation myth of the Abrahamic religions, were the first man and woman. They are central to the belief that humanity is in essence a single family, with everyone descended from a single pair of original ancestors. They also provide the basis for the doctrines of the fall of man and original sin that are important beliefs in Christianity, although not held in Judaism or Islam.

Evangelical teaching today

This famous line of Benjamin's Harris' 1690 New England Primer expresses the basic Christian belief that Adam's sin had dreadful consequences for the rest of us. "In Adam's Fall We sinned all." The Alliance of

Confessing Evangelicals today maintains, “We need to meditate upon this regularly. It is not popular, it is not good for your self-esteem, and it doesn’t make you feel comfortable, but we must do it. Why? We need to do this because Scripture makes frequent mention of sin. We need to do this because it humbles our pride and exalts the grace of God. We need to do this because it actually benefits our souls by making us open vessels for the Lord to work within us.”