

**Notes on Genesis 2**  
**Fall Up, Fall Down, or Fall Apart?**  
**(Genesis 3:1-6:5)**  
**Fretheim Explores Genesis,**  
**Luther Productions, St. Paul, 2000**

**What Kind of Fall?**

- 1. a fall down
  - stumbling, falling on face
- 2. a fall up
  - becoming like God, knowing good and evil like God
- 3. a fall apart
  - The effects of sin: relationships begin to fall apart. There is alienation, estrangement, distance between God's creatures and within selves (alienation within self = shame)

**Sin is an Intrusion into God's World**

- God did not intend sin to be part of the world, although God did create a world where his creatures could resist his will
- God created the world with a "moral order:" sin has consequences

**Purpose of the Story of the Fall**

- 1. story of the past
- 2. a story of what it is like to be tempted, to fall into sin on a regular basis

**Who is the Serpent (or Snake)?**

- the serpent is never identified as the devil or as evil.
- God made the snake (God made every animal, and it was good). The snake is a creature of God.
- Consider the snake not as a personification of the devil, but a neutral figure, a *truth-teller* who facilitates the options open to human beings
- a problem with the interpretation of the snake as the devil: shifts responsibility for sin, "the devil made me do it."

**What Was the First Sin?**

- Disobedience?
- On a deeper level, it was a mistrust of God and of God's word leading to the secondary sin of disobedience.
  - a mistrust engendered by the snake's saying "God knows . . ." (God has not told human beings everything.)

## **The Complicity of the Man in the First Sin**

- Note that Adam was with Eve during her conversation with the snake, although he contributes nothing.

## **The Effects of Sin in the World**

- For the Snake:
  - continuing presentations of tempting possibility / tempting potential to humanity
  - there is no clear sign who might win
- For the Woman:
  - Pain in childhood will be increased. Your desire will be for your husband. The man shall rule over you
  - Is this *descriptive* or *prescriptive*? God is *describing* here the effect of sin, not God's intentions
- For the Man:
  - increasing agricultural difficulties

## **The Cain and Abel Story**

- shows the snowballing effect of sin
- note it begins at the core of human relationship: the family
  - we see increasing dysfunctionality in families as we read further in the Bible, showing the continuing and progressive effects of sin.

## **The Continuing Positive Effects of God's Work as Creator Despite Sin**

- God gives human beings the same responsibility outside Eden as they had in Eden
- Humans still play a part in the continuing creation of the world, with new technological and artistic achievements
- Genealogies show God continues to relate to the world and provide life,
- Human intimacy continues as positive aspect of our relationship to each other

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## **The Long Life Spans of People in the Bible**

- In those days, an extraordinary long life was common in stories of ancient times -- sometimes tens of thousands of years
  - longest life span in bible: 969 years
- successive genealogies in Genesis show life spans gradually decreasing over time: the progressive effect of sin

## **Original Sin versus the Originating Sin**

- Original sin (Genesis 6:5):
  - wickedness of humankind great, every inclination of their hearts only evil continuing
  - Original sin is sin become pervasive, an inevitable part of everyone's life

- Originating Sin
  - the first sin of Adam and Eve
  - note even after that first sin, Adam and Eve are not presented as despicable people
  - this was the beginning of the process that led to Original Sin

## References

- Video series: **Fretheim Explores Genesis**. Luther Productions. St. Paul. 2000.  
(Available from: <http://www.lutherproductions.com/bibleseries.htm#bible2>)
- "The Book of Genesis. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Terence E. Fretheim. In: **The New Interpreter's Bible, A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume I**. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1994.