Conflicts at Creation: Genesis 1–3 in Dialogue with the Psalter

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ABSTRACT

Gunkel in his "Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton" argued that the Chaoskampf *motif which had its origin in the Babylonian account of creation* Enuma Elish *is found in two groups of texts: those dealing with the dragon and those dealing with the primal sea. Scholars have since tended to regard the* OT *as portraying the creation of the universe as the result of a cosmic conflict between God and Chaos. The aim in this paper is not so much to challenge Gunkel's thesis, which others have already done, but to analyse the* OT*'s multiple and diverse voices regarding the protological events. This paper suggests that the relationship between creation and conflict is not that creation occurs through conflict; rather, conflict comes through the process of creation. That is, the fundamental conflict between God and his creatures is evidenced by two conflicts: conflict at sea with Leviathan/Rahab (Pss 74:12–17; 89:9–14), and conflict on land with the serpent and humankind (Gen 2:4b–3:24).*

A   INTRODUCTION

The positive evaluation of creation in the Gen 1:1–2:4a creation narrative is usually regarded as implying that creation in its original state was in an ideal state of perfection.[1] The tendency to regard creation in its original state as per-

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[1]   For Wenham the refrain in Gen 1:31 emphasises the perfection of the final work by modifying the previous formulas (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) in three ways: (1) it is applied to the whole creation; (2) the use of והנה instead of כי suggest God's enthusiasm as he completed his work; (3) the whole finished work is said to be "very good" not merely "good." See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 34. Atkinson states, "Before anything is said about evil, or pain, or sin, or disorder, we need first to hear this note of excited pleasure. What God made is good." See David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1–11* (Downers Grove: Inter–Varsity Press, 1990), 42. According to von Rad, "No evil was laid upon the world by God's hand, neither was his omnipotence limited by any kind of opposing power whatever. When faith speaks of creation, and in so doing directs its eye toward God, then it can only say that God created the world perfect." See Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. J. Marks; rev. ed.; OTL; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 61. Childs asserts, "God pronounced his workmanship good and blessed it. The creation rested in its perfection; no further work was needed." See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 385. Sarna states, "The formula

fect is intended to avoid a metaphysical dualism of creation, that is, a creation in which good and evil coexisted in its original state, thereby making God the author of both good and evil. In such readings evil is regarded as the consequence of the human fall and so outside of the scope of the protological act of creation. The problem with such a reading of Gen 1:1–2:4a is that this creation narrative is given the status of a canon within the canon, thereby becoming a yardstick by which other creation narratives are to be judged. The OT is not single voiced in its description of the protological act of creation; rather, it exhibits a plurality of voices which all stand in a dialogic relationship with each other; in this relationship they are mutually enriched. The fact that Gen 1:1–2:4a is strategically located at the beginning of the OT, as Hoffman notes, does not imply that this narrative had canonical status for other biblical authors, as evidence by the lack of citations and allusions from other canonical books.[2] The plural voices in the OT all have equal rights. It is, however, the duty of an interpreter to orchestrate dialogue between these plural voices, thereby bringing the ideas and worldviews within the OT into a dialogue with each other. The OT, to use Bakhtin's term, is a "polyphonic" text which brings worldviews, ideas, and perspectives into a dialogic relationship with each other in which they are mutually enriched.[3] For Bakhtin the chief characteristic of a polyphonic text is "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness."[4] Newsom observes, "No one voice can speak the whole truth. Rather, the

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of divine approbation, 'God saw that [it] was good,' affirms the consummate perfection of God's creation, an idea that has important consequences for the religion of Israel. Reality is imbued with God's goodness. The pagan notion of inherent, primordial evil is banished. Henceforth, evil is to be apprehended on the moral and not the mythological plane." See Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 7. Regarding God's completed work, Cassuto writes, "For both in detail and in its entirety it had emerged perfect from his hand." See Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah* (vol. 1 of *Commentary on Genesis*; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1961), 59.

[2]   Yair Hoffman, "The First Creation Story: Canonical and Diachronical Aspects," in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Henning G. Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; JSOTSup 319; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 32–53.

[3]   For Bakhtin a polyphonic text is "dialogic through and through" (Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984], 40). Bakhtin writes regarding Dostoevsky, "We consider Dostoevsky one of the greatest innovators in the realm of artistic form. He created, in our opinion, a completely new type of artistic thinking, which we have provisionally called *polyphonic*. This type of artistic thinking found its expression in Dostoevsky's novels, but its significance extends far beyond the limits of the novel alone and touches upon several basic principles of European aesthetics. It could even be said that Dostoevsky created something like a new artistic model of the world, one in which many basic aspects of old artistic form were subjected to a radical restructuring" (Bakhtin, *Problems*, 3).

[4]   Bakhtin, *Problems*, 6–7.

truth about piety, human suffering, the nature of God, and the moral order of the cosmos can be adequately addressed only by a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses engaging one another in open–ended dialogue."[5]

The focus in this paper is on the conflict motif as it relates to the protological act of creation. The conflict motif with regard to the creation has since the publication of Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeith: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 and Ap. Jon 12* (1895)[6] attained an esteemed position by being classified among the different models of creation: creation through action (*Tatbericht*), creation through the word (*Wortbericht*), and creation through conflict (*Chaoskampf*). In this paper Gen 1–3 is read in dialogue with Pss 74 and 89, which to some extent both deal with the protological act of creation. I will argue that the conflict motif with regard to the creation act points not to the causal effect—the origination of creation through conflict; rather, it points to the conflicts that occurred within the creation process between the creator God and his creatures exemplified by a conflict in the sea with the sea serpent, Leviathan, and by a conflict on land with the land serpent and humankind, thereby suggesting that rather than speaking of "creation through conflict" it would be more proper to speak of conflict(s) within the creation process.

B   CREATION THROUGH CONFLICT

Gunkel argued that in the ANE creation was generally thought to have emerged from primordial chaos—conflict between the creator god and another god or the sea or a dragon/monster representing the forces of chaos.[7] For Gunkel the *Chaoskampf* motif had its origin in the Babylonian account of creation *Enuma Elish.* He saw this motif lying behind the construction of Gen 1 and in two

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[5]   Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24. Similarly Vanhoozer writes, "[T]he essence of [canonical] drama is dialogic action. The question of propositionalism, then, is whether its monologic conception of truth does not end up losing the very dialogic quality that makes the drama, and the canonical script, what it is. Dialogic form cannot be reduced to monologic substance." See Kevin Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 270.

[6]   Originally published in German: Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeith: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 and Ap. Jon 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895). The English Translation was published as Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio–Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). See also the condensed version: Hermann Gunkel, "The Influence of Babylonian Mythology Upon the Biblical Creation Story," in *Creation in the Old Testament* (IRT 6; ed. Bernhard W. Anderson; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 25–52.

[7]   Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos.*

groups of texts within the OT—those dealing with the dragon, otherwise known as Rahab (Isa 51:9–10; Ps 89:10–14; Job 26:12–13; 9:13; Ps 87:4; Isa 30:7; Ps 40:5), Leviathan (Ps 74:12–19; Isa 27:1; Job 40:25–41:26; Job 3:8), Behemoth (Job 40:19–24; *1 En* 60:7–9; *4 Ezra* 6:49–52; Isa 30:6–33; Ps 68:31); those dealing with the dragon in the sea (Job 7:12; Ps 44:20; Ezek 29:3–6a; 32:2–7; Jer 51:34, 46, 42; Pss Sol 2:28b–34), the serpent (Amos 9:2–3); and those dealing with the primal sea at primeval times (Ps 104:5–9; Job 38:8–11; Prov 8:22–31; Jer 5:22b; Jer 31:35; Ps 33:6–8; Ps 65:7–8; *Sir* 43:23; Pr Man 2–4) and at the end times (Ps 46; Isa 17:12–14; Hab 3:8; Nah 1:4; Ps 18:16–18; Ps 93:3–4; Ps 106:9; Isa 59:15–20).

Gunkel, noting the parallels between the Tiamat–Marduk conflict and Gen 1 argued that Gen 1 is not a free construction of the Priestly source; rather, it goes back to the Babylonian creation myth.[8] Gunkel regarded the Babylonian Tiamat as corresponding with the primordial sea, *tĕhôm*, and he further associated the *tĕhôm* with other Hebrew monsters: Rahab, Leviathan, Behemoth, the dragon, and the serpent, which he regarded as variants of Marduk's battle with Tiamat. By the turn of the nineteenth century scholars generally agreed that Gen 1 was dependent on the Babylonian creation myth.[9]

Gunkel's argument for etymological relationship between *tĕhôm* and Tiamat has not gone unchallenged.[10] Day suggests that the background for both the term *tĕhôm* and the term Tiamat is a divine name in the Canaanite dragon myth, which in Gen 1 is depersonified, whereas in *Enuma Elish* it is personified.[11] In contrast to Day, Tsumura argues that there is no reason to believe that

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[8]   Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 76.

[9]   Following Gunkel, Anderson writes, "As in the *Enuma Elish* myth, Genesis 1 begins by portraying a precreation condition of watery chaos. Indeed, the Hebrew word for *deep* (Gen. 1:2: *Tehom*) appears here without the definite article (elsewhere it is in the feminine gender), as though it were a distant echo of the mythical battle with Tiamat, the female personification of the powers of chaos." See Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967/1987, reprint with postscript), 39–40; see also Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 86.

[10]   See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 110–111. For detailed arguments see David Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 42–49.

[11]   John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 50–51. See also John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOTSup 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 98–107; John C. L. Gibson, "The Theology of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle," *Or* 53 (1984): 202–219; *CTA* 3.3.33–44; *CTA* 5.1.1–5; Otto Kaiser, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel* (BZAW 78; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1962), 74–75; Yechezkel

the "nonpersonified uses of the Ugaritic *thm(t)* are the result of depersonification of an original proper noun," considering that *thm(t)* commonly appears without personification with two exceptions: it is used in one instance without the ending *t* as a part of the compound divine name Heaven–and–Ocean *šmm–w–thm*, and in the other instance as the divine name Ocean for the goddess *Thm(t)*, the latter not appearing in conflict scenes.[12]

Those who regard the Canaanite mythology as background for the Gen 1 creation account also regard the Baal–Yamm conflict as a parallel of the Babylonian story of Marduk's victory over Tiamat. This is so because the name of Baal's antagonist, *Yam* (Sea), is viewed as recalling Tiamat of Babylon.[13] In addition Yamm is associated with the Sea monster, variously called Lotan, the dragon, and the crooked serpent.[14] For Day, the Canaanites associated Baal's victory over the Sea and the dragon with the creation of the universe.[15] Fisher and Clifford, on the other hand, argue that the Baal cycle, although not necessarily concerned with the origination of the world, is nonetheless a true cosmogony concerned with the establishment of human society and its continuation.[16]

The Baal cycle, however, does not appear to have creation overtones: First, it does not deal with the creation in the cosmic sense but with the maintenance of the created order in the face of threats of chaos. Second, in Canaanite mythology El is the creator god; Baal is not. As Tsumura observes, "it is probably wise to limit the meaning of 'creation' to El's activities in the ancient Ugaritic and to distinguish *Chaoskampf* myths with a creation motif, such as

Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginning to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. M. Greenberg; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), 62; Hans–Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen* (BKAT 15/1; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), 518.

[12]   Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 44–45, 53–55.

[13]   Alberto R. W. Green, *The Storm–God in the Ancient Near East* (BibJS 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 186.

[14]   Mary K. Wakeman, "God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1969), 163.

[15]   Day, *God's Conflict*, 17–18. Note also J. H. Grønback, "Baal's Battle with Yam: A Canaanite Creation Fight," *JSOT* 33 (1985): 27–44; Wakeman, *God's Battle*, 149–64.

[16]   Loren R. Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *VT* 15 (1965): 313–24; Richard J. Clifford, "Cosmogonies in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible," *Or* 53 (1984): 183–201. *Pace* Fisher and Clifford, the Baal cycle does not appear to have any concern with the ordering of human society. The main focus of the Baal cycle, unlike that of *Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis*, which do have a concern with the ordering of society, is on the activities of the gods. See Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2* (vol. 1; VTSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 82. As Smith argues, in the Baal cycle, "the accent falls entirely on Baal's conflict with his enemies Yamm and Mot, and his kingship in the cosmos" (Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle 1*, 1:84).

Enuma Elish, from *Chaoskampf* myths without a creation motif, such as the Baal cycle."[17] Third, in the Baal cycle the existence of the earth is assumed prior to Baal's battle with Yamm.[18] Fourth, the existence of humankind is assumed prior to Baal's battle with Mot.[19] Therefore, Saggs' conclusion that the theme of divine combat has no essential connection with creation seems to hold water.[20] Furthermore, there are several other combat myths which evince no linkage between combat and creation: the myth of Nergal/Labbu, the myth of Tishpa/Lion Serpent, the myth of Ninurta and Asag, and the myth of Anzu.

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[17]   Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 145. See also Carola Kloos, Yʜᴡʜ's *Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 67–74.

[18]   "Prior to the battle, it is proclaimed: '*To the earth the noble will fall*, And *to the dust* the mighty.' And again when Yamm is struck by Baal it is said: Kothar fashions the weapons/And he proclaims their names: 'Your name, yours, is Ayyarmarri: Ayyamarri, expel Yamm/Expel Yamm from his throne, Nahar from the seat of his dominion/May you leap from Baal's hand, Like a raptor from his fingers/Strike the head of Prince Yamm, Between the eyes of Judge River/May *Yamm sink and fall to the earth*.' The weapon leaps from Baal's hand, [Like] a raptor from his fingers, It strikes the head of Prince [Yamm], Between the eyes of Judge River/*Yamm collapses and falls to the earth*, His joints shake, And his form sinks" (translation taken from Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle 1*, 323, 323, emphasis mine).

[19]   See Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westmister John Knox Press, 1992), 78; Bernard F. Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif," *CBQ* 49 (1987):197–201, esp. 198–99.

[20]   Henry W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), 59. Saggs further argues against the idea that the biblical writers considered monsters primordial or pre–existent can necessarily be built on the basis of Mesopotamian parallels. As he points out, there are many examples of monsters "which are neither primordial nor pre–existent, and not necessarily opposed to the gods. In *Enūma Eliš* itself there are monsters which are neither primordial nor pre–existent; such as those created by Tiamat ad hoc for the coming fight with Marduk. There are many mythical monsters of the deep mentioned as though still existing in historical times, fully analogous with Leviathan whom Yahweh created to sport in the sea: 'Shamash, your rays read down to the abyss, so that the Lahmu of the ocean behold your light.' Elsewhere '50 monsters of the sea' are said to praise Ea, suggesting that they are Ea's creatures and not his adversaries. Therefore there is no reason, on the basis of Mesopotamian evidence, to seek to resist the clear indication of several biblical passages (Isa. 27:1; Job 3:8; Ps. 104:26; 148:7 [ʀsᴠ]; Amos 9:3) that the sea monsters referred to in connection with Yahweh's power were monsters regarded as existing in historical and not merely mythic, time, and that, far from being pre–existent rivals of Yahweh, according to some passages the monsters had been created by Yahweh, and were his agents." See Saggs, *The Encounter*, 60–61.

The link between creation and the combat motif, as Watson points out, "resulted in an approach whereby divine conflict with the sea is often assumed in [OT] passages where the presence of such allusions could hardly be supposed on the basis of the biblical text itself."[21]

C   CREATION WITHOUT CONFLICT

In contrast to those who tend to regard Gen 1 as reflecting a creation through conflict, others regard this text as displaying a creation process without conflict—God creates without facing opposition. Some regard Gen 1 as a demythologisation of other ANE myths of creation.[22] Westermann from a diachronic perspective argued that in Gen 1

> there is no sign at all of any struggle between God and תהום corresponding with the struggle between Marduk and Tiamat . . . The similarity between תהום and Tiamat would go back to a stage in the history of the creation narrative when the story of the struggles between the gods had not yet been linked with creation. This is supported by the fact that in so many cosmonogies the sea or the deep or the primeval flood is there at the beginning.[23]

Others regard Gen 1 as a polemic against other ANE cosmogonies. According to Hasel, the Gen 1 cosmology "represents not only a 'complete break' with the ANE cosmologies but represents a parting of the spiritual ways brought about by a conscious and deliberate antimythical polemic which meant an undermining of the prevailing mythological cosmologies."[24] According to Smith,

> the first creation story in Genesis 1:1–2:4a points to a vision of a holy universe, which adds to the older model of the universe as a site of conflict. . . . With but a word, without conflict, God effects the opening of creation. In omitting the divine conflict, Genesis 1 marks a paradigm shift in the presentation of creation.[25]

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[21] Rebecca S. Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of Chaos in the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW 341; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 2.

[22] In this argument, what particularly differentiates Genesis from other ANE myths is its view of God. See Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (SBT 1/27; London: SCM, 1960), 42–43; James Barr, "The Meaning of 'Mythology' in Relation to the Old Testament," *VT* 9 (1959): 7; John L. McKenzie, *The Two–Edged Sword* (New York: Image Books, 1966), 101–102.

[23] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (CC; trans. J. J. Scullion, S. J.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 106.

[24] Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *EvQ* 46 (1974): 81–102.

[25] Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 168.

In Gen 1 the "cosmic monsters are no longer primordial forces opposed to the Israelite God at the beginning of creation. Instead, they are creatures like other creatures rendered in history."[26] On day four of creation God creates "the great dragons" (Gen 1:21). In Ps 104:26, Leviathan, which is commonly pictured as an enemy of Yahweh, is pictured as a harmless sea animal that God plays with as a pet. Ortlund claims that Leviathan is in this psalm "demythologised" and simply becomes an impressive animal—the greatest sea creature among the "small and great" sea creatures.[27] In Job 41, while Leviathan is pictured as a dangerous beast, yet Yahweh has the power to tame it with ease. In the Gen 1 creation narrative, as Walton observes, the element of theomachy is absent, and it is furthermore not a consistent motif in other ANE cosmogonies.[28] The theology underlying Gen 1 and Ps 104 may be properly summarised as creation without conflict.[29]

The idea that creation is without conflict should, however, be understood as a relative claim, which is true insofar as Gen 1 is treated in isolation as a polemic against other ANE mythologies. In dealing with OT creation narratives, it is necessary to make a distinction between creation through conflict, God's conflict with the forces of chaos that resulted in the world coming into being, and conflict within the creation process, God's conflict with his created order or creatures. The former is absent in the OT, whereas the latter is attested.

D   CONFLICTS AT CREATION

The following psalms have generally been treated as alluding to the *Chaoskampf* motif: Pss 24; 29; 65; 74; 89; 93; 104.[30] Watson in *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassesment of the Theme of "Chaos" in the Hebrew Bible* deals extensively with most of the texts alleged to allude to the *Chaoskampf*. However, our investigation will be limited to Pss 74 and 89, in which the conflict motif is linked to the theme of creation. While the other psalms may allude to the con-

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[26]   Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 38.

[27]   Eric Ortlund, "The Identity of the Leviathan and the Meaning of the Book of Job," *TJ* 34 (2013): 17–30, 22.

[28]   John H. Walton, "Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Ancient Near East," *CTJ* 43 (2008): 48–63, 55. Walton also notes that the term *Chaoskampf* was used for a variety of conflicts with the frequent assumption that theomachy, *Chaoskampf*, and cosmogony are all linked. See John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 68–74.

[29]   Levenson states it as follows: "In Genesis there is no active opposition to God's creative labor. He works on inert matter. In fact, rather than *creation ex nihilo*, 'creation without opposition' is the more accurate nutshell statement of the theology underlying our passage." See Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 122.

[30]   See Day, *God's Conflict*, 18–37. Dennis J. McCarthy, "'Creation' Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," *CBQ* 29 (1967): 393–406.

flict motif, they do not necessarily link it to cosmogony.[31] The Gen 2:4b–3:24 creation narrative, which is often overlooked in discussion of the *Chaoskampf*, also deserves consideration, as it also contributes to the biblical plural voices from another perspective. In our investigation, as will be evidenced below, creation is not a result of conflict between Yahweh with the sea or some primordial monsters; rather, the OT attests to conflict arising within the creation process. The conflicts within the creation process are evidenced by two conflicts: conflict at sea and conflict on land.

1   Conflict at Sea

In this section, focus will primarily be on two psalms, Pss 74:12–14 and 89:9–14. The precise historical situation of the psalms cannot always be identified; however, they do reflect concrete situations.

1a   Psalm 74

Ps 74:12–17 is commonly regarded as the *Chaoskampf* section of this psalm.[32] In this view the waters and the dragons are regarded as the enemies of the divine warrior, Yahweh. In the Psalter, especially in the lament psalms, Yahweh's ancient deeds are often evoked by the psalmists as they entreat him to act again in the present (Pss 44:2–9; 74:12–17; 77:12–21; 80:9–12; 83:10–13; 89:2–38).[33] The allusion in Ps 74 to Yahweh's act of dividing the sea and slaying the dragon alludes to two things: God's creation–redemptive act with regard to creation and his creation–redemptive act at Red Sea with regard to Israel.[34]

* Yahweh's Creative–Redemptive Act at the Red Sea

The shepherd motif in v. 1 is used in several other psalms in relation to the exodus event and wilderness wanderings (Pss 77:21; 78:52–53a; 79:13; 80:2; 95:7–11; 100:1–5). The reference in v. 2 to "the assembly, which you [God]

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[31]   See also Walton, "Creation," 53–54.

[32]   Day, *God's Conflict*, 21–25.

[33]   See, Richard J. Clifford, "Creation in the Psalms," in *Creation in Biblical Traditions* (ed. Richard J. Clifford and John J. Collins; CBQMS 24; Washington, DC.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1992), 57–69; Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (CBQMS 26; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 151–62; Richard J. Clifford, "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation," *TS* 46 (1985): 507–23.

[34]   Hans–Joachim Kraus, *Psalms: A Commentary* (vol. 2; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988–89), 303–304, 310; John Goldingay, *Psalms* (vol. 2; BCOT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 420–37; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC 20; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 239–55; James L. Mays, *Psalms* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 245.

acquired of old" culminating with his bringing the tribe of his possession to Mount Zion is the same pattern that we find in the Song of the Sea, Exod 15, especially vv. 16–18 (cf. Deut 32:6). The language of deliverance or redemption, the verb גָּאַל, in v. 2, alludes to the Red Sea event, which is Yahweh's first great redemptive act in Israel's history. The great redemptive act in Exod 14–15 also evokes creational images: the light shining in the darkness all night long (Exod 14:20), and the dividing of the waters by רוּחַ (wind) so that dry ground would appear (Exod 14:21; 15:8).[35] Thus, the redemptive act of Israel at the Red Sea is framed as a reenactment of the creative act in Gen 1.[36] From a progressive reading of the Pentateuch, the Gen 1 creation account is transformed into a historical account of God's creation of a people, Israel.[37] However, as already noted, the conflict motif is absent in the Gen 1 creation.

In Ps 74, Yahweh's redemptive act is particularly highlighted by the use of the concept "right hand" (v. 11). The psalmist entreats Yahweh not to withhold his "right hand" because it is his "purchased people," or "inheritance," and his dwelling place which are now threatened by the current enemies (see also Exod 15:13). The psalmist thus calls on Yahweh to act in a way as spectacular as at the Red Sea. Just as the divine warrior Yahweh destroyed the Egyptians at the Red Sea through his "right hand" (Exod 15:6, 12), the psalmist now calls upon Yahweh to deliver him from the enemies once more through his "right hand."

The enemy at the Red Sea was not the waters or the sea; rather, it was the Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen, who all perished in the sea (Exod 15:4, 19, 21). The sea was a mere instrument in Yahweh's hand through which and in which he destroyed the enemy. Exodus 15:4–5 reads:

> Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea (בַיָּם).
> The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea (בְיַם־סוּף).
> The deep waters (תְּהֹמֹת) have covered them;
> they sank to the depths (בִמְצוֹלֹת) like a stone. (NIV)

The use of the terms יַם and תְּהֹמֹת also recalls the primordial waters, thereby expressing the idea that the "emergence of Israel as a people during the exodus was due to a creative act by Yahweh equal to that of the original creation of the cosmos itself. The Egyptians, the evil force that threatens the exist-

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[35]   See Peter Enns, *Exodus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 213, 230; Bernard Och, "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation," *Judaism* 44 (1995): 226–243, 236; Terence E. Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation: Redemption and Law in Exodus," *Int* 45 (1991): 358; Ronald Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 109–112.
[36]   Och, "Creation," 236.
[37]   Fretheim, "Reclamation," 358; Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 109–112.

ence of this new creation, are appropriately cast into the sea to perish."[38] The psalmist by evoking the Red Sea event presents Yahweh's creative–redemptive act at the Red Sea as one source from which to draw confidence that Yahweh will equally intervene in the current crisis.

- Yahweh's Creative–Redemptive Act

The turning point in Ps 74 is v. 12: the psalmist does not stop at the Red Sea; rather, he looks back via the exodus to creation.[39] The event at the Red Sea and wilderness experiences may, on the one hand, be described as that point in Israel's history where Yahweh divided the sea and smashed the heads of the Egyptian Leviathan, provided Israel with water, and dried up the Jordan River.[40] At the same time, however, the language in vv. 13–17 also becomes more and more creation language. At the Red Sea, just as at creation, Yahweh divided and separated the sea so that dry land would appear.

Psalm 74:15–17 generally refers to God's authorship over all creation. At creation Yahweh separated the waters so that dry land might appear; day and light also belong to him, the heavenly luminaries as well as the seasons, winter and summer. The language here clearly recalls Gen 1. This passage's use of merisms (day and night, moon and sun, winter and summer) reflects a common notion found elsewhere in the HB (Gen 1; Gen 8:22; Isa 45:7) of the binary structure of the cosmos.

Taking into consideration the creation language in vv. 12–17, the conflict between Yahweh and Leviathan has to be understood not only within the context of the deliverance at the Red Sea, but also within the context of creation. The dragon in the water and Leviathan stand in a synonymous parallelism; thus, the name of the many–headed dragon (רָאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים) is Leviathan. Leviathan is also described here as many headed, as evidenced by the reference to "heads," although without specification of the number of heads. There is a close affinity between the descriptions of Leviathan in Ps 74, Isa 27:1, and Job 41:1–34 and the descriptions of the dragon and/or Lotan in the Ugaritic Baal Epic:[41]

Anat takes credit:	*Baal is credited*:
What enemy has risen against Balu (what) adversary against Cloud–Rider?	When you smite Lotan, the crooked serpent,

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[38]   Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 116.

[39]   See also Goldingay, *Psalms 2*, 430.

[40]   See Goldingay, *Psalms 2*, 431; Mays, *Psalms*, 245.

[41]   Green notes, "There is no indication, however, that either Lotan, the 'Crooked Serpent,' or Yam is of the same form, nor do the names *Yam* and *Lotan* ever appear in parallelism. In the one recorded instance in which they do appear together in the Anat text above, they represent two creatures, *each* of which is successively conquered by the goddess" (Green, *Storm–God*, 184, emphasis in original).

I have smitten Illu's beloved, Yammu,
Have finished off the great god Naharu.
I have bound the dragon's [*tnn* (cf. Heb. *tannîn*)] jaws, have destroyed it,
have smitten the twisting serpent,
the close–coiled one with seven heads.[42]

and made an end to the twisting serpent,
The tyrant with seven heads,
The heavens will grow hot and droop,
I will crush you to pieces and I will eat you.
You will descend into the throat of Mot the Son of El.[43]

Leviathan, as already observed, is also a many–headed creature, presumably seven headed, as is the dragon/Lotan in the Baal cycle. As Dahood observes, the seven heads of Leviathan/Lotan presumably correspond with the sevenfold "you are the one who. . . " in Ps 74. In Isa 27:1, Leviathan is described as a "fleeting serpent" (נָחָשׁ בָּרִחַ) and as a "twisting serpent" (נָחָשׁ עֲקַלָּתוֹן).[44] In Job 41:1–8, 18–21 Leviathan is described as a terrifying, powerful, fearless crocodile–like creature with an astonishing nose snorting out flashes of light and breathing out firebrands through its mouth.

For the psalmist, Yahweh's cosmic battle with Leviathan in primordial times is another symbolic representation that Yahweh can act again to redeem his people in their current history. Thus, in this perspective, the creation process also includes the redemptive aspect.[45] The cosmic framework sets Yahweh as the ultimate divine warrior, who brings order and stability in creation. The conflict between Yahweh and Leviathan, as Tate argues, points to "struggle for cosmic power and divine kingship."[46] Leviathan is an anticreational force, just as the Egyptians at the Red Sea attempted to abort Yahweh's creation of Israel and the contemporary enemy is destroying Yahweh's people and the temple. Thus in Ps 74, Yahweh's defeat of the primordial opponent is viewed as an act that had a salvific function, which is ground for hope that Yahweh will again defeat the contemporary political and military enemies to restore stability.[47]

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[42]   Dennis Pardee, "The Baʿlu Myth," *COS* 1.86.92., p. 252. *CTA* 3.iii.32–iv.51.

[43]   Translation of *CTA* 5, taken from Green, *Storm–God*, 197; compare with *COS*, 265.

[44]   Mitchell Dahood, *51–100* (vol. 2 of *Psalms*; AB 17; Garden City: New York, 1995), 205.

[45]   See John Goldingay, *Israel's Gospel* (vol. 1 of *Old Testament Theology*; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 288–89.

[46]   Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 251.

[47]   Middleton notes, "Particularly interesting, although only implicit in the psalm [Ps 74], is the connection between the combat myth and temple–building. Just as the conclusion of Baal's battles with his opponents (in the Ugaritic myth) results in the construction of his temple/palace, presumably if YHWH once more defeated the forces of Chaos, thus enacting the primordial battle in history, the culmination of the victory would be God's coming to rest in his royal sanctuary Zion. The implied outcome of the new battle would be a new temple. Israel's sacred historical cosmos would once

1b   Psalm 89

Verses 9–14 are commonly regarded as the *Chaoskampf* section of Ps 89. In this psalm, Yahweh is presented as in conflict with a sea creature called Rahab:

> [9] You rule the raging of the sea;
> when its waves rise, you still them.
> [10] You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;
> with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.
> [11] The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;
> you founded the world and all that is in it.
> [12] You created the north and the south;
> Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.
> [13] Your arm is endued with power;
> your hand is strong, your right hand exalted (Ps 89:9–14).

Venter regards the *Chaoskampf* section of Ps 89 as the focus of the psalm.[48] In this section of the psalm, the conflict theme is used to express, using Levenson's term, God's "cosmic mastery"—God's rule and might over creation through which order is established.[49] As Venter notes, three tier view of the cosmos is depicted in vv. 9–11: sea (vv. 9–10), heaven (v. 11), and earth/dry land (v. 11). Thus, Yahweh's mastery extends over all cosmic space.

- Yahweh's Mastery of the Sea

In vv. 9–10, Yahweh's mastery is evidence by his ability to bring order and stability on the waters. In these verses, the sea is not destroyed; rather, it is stilled. In Israel's view, the ordered primordial waters require Yahweh to con-tinually exercise his rule over them. The ordered waters if unchecked pose a threat of reversing creation to its non–functional state. The danger of the pri-mordial waters is perhaps reflected by the absence of the evaluation formula on day two of creation in the Gen 1 creation narrative. Furthermore, in Genesis the danger of the primordial waters is realised in the flood narrative in Gen 6–9. In Genesis, hope is derived from the divine promise not to destroy creation by the "floodwaters" (מַבּוּל), thereby stilling the primordial fears of heaven closing in on the earth through the reunification of the waters above and the waters below (see Gen 9:11–12). For Israel, while Yahweh is the one who set the boundaries for the primordial waters (Prov 8:29; Job 38:8; Pss 33:7), he also had the cos-mic responsibility of ensuring that they do not again cover the earth (Pss 89:9; 104:9).

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again be secure." See J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 247.

[48]   Pieter M. Venter, "The Translation of Psalm 89:13 and Its Implications," *HvTSt* 61 (2005): 531–544, 537.

[49]   Levenson, *Creation*, 6–7.

The fear of the primordial waters is also reflected in other ANE cosmologies. In Egyptian cosmology, creation begins with the primeval waters, Atum, from which evolved Shu, the god of air, and Tefnut, the goddess of moisture. Shu and Tefnut in turn gave birth to Geb, earth, and Nut, heaven. Nut and Geb, heaven and earth, are separated from each other by Shu, who is often depicted as standing with his arms raised supporting Nut. Shu, inasmuch as he stands as a separator between Nut and Geb, heaven and earth, "also ensures contact between them."[50] The depiction of Shu as supporting Nut also "is the personification of the archaic fear that the celestial vault will collapse and fall upon the earth."[51] In *Enuma Elish* Table IV, lines 137–139, we read:

> [Marduk] split her into two, like a fish for drying,
> Half of her he set up and made as a cover, heaven
> He stretched out the hide and assigned watchmen,
> And ordered them not to let her waters escape,
> He crossed heaven and inspected (its) firmament,
> He made a counterpart to Apsu, the dwelling of Nudimmud.
> He founded the Great sanctuary, the likeness of Essharra
> (In) the Great Sanctuary, (in) Esharra, which he built, (and in) heaven,
> He made Ea, Enlil, and Anu dwell in their holy places.[52]

Marduk, having ordered creation by slaying Tiamat and making the cover of heaven with half her body, assigned watchmen (gods) to see to it that Tiamat's waters do not escape. The escape of the primordial waters would imply the undoing of Marduk's great achievements.

Thus in the OT and in other ANE cosmogonies, the primordial waters had to be kept under check lest the ordered creation be in the danger of reverting to its primordial state of singularity. For Israel only Yahweh had the power to keep the primordial waters in their positions.

- Yahweh's Conflict with Rahab

The sea in v. 9, as argued above, is not depicted as an enemy of Yahweh; however, in v. 10, Yahweh is depicted as in conflict with a sea creature. The sea creature in this instance is called Rahab. The slaying of Rahab is presented as part of an exercise of Yahweh's royal function. In this psalm, the creation process is viewed from a royal perspective, as an exercise of rule and might (Ps 89:8, 9, 10, 13). It is Yahweh's exercise of his rule and might that guarantees

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[50]   Jeremy Naydler, *Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1996), 21.

[51]   Dirk L. Couprie, *Heaven and Earth in Ancient Greek Cosmology: From Thales to Heraclides Ponticus* (New York: Springer, 2011), 9.

[52]   Benjamin R. Foster, trans., "Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*)" *COS*, 1.111, 398.

the stability and functionality of creation. Furthermore, this psalm through the conflict theme elevates the Davidic king. As Levenson points out,

> It is now the Davidic throne that guarantees cosmic stability, the continuation of order established through primeval combat. In Psalm 89, as in the *Enuma Elish*, the bond between the exaltation of the deity and the imperial politics of his earthly seat of power is patent.[53]

Rahab is described in terms similar to those used to describe Leviathan in Ps 74 and Isa 27:1. Like Leviathan, Rahab's crushing by Yahweh is placed within the context of the "sea" (cf. Isa 51:9–10). In Isa 51:9–10 Rahab, like Leviathan a dragon (תַּנִּין) and a sea creature, is slain. Furthermore, the slaying of Rahab is set in the context of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, when Yahweh made a road in the depths of the sea for the Israelites to cross over. The mythic descriptions of Leviathan and Rahab make them indistinguishable.[54] In the book of Job, wherein both names are found, Rahab and Leviathan do not appear together.[55] However, as Watson argues,

> the motifs of the slaying of Rahab and Leviathan were [probably] not regarded as concerning independent events which might be presented sequentially, but rather that they existed as separate traditions which had, at least in part, acquired the same content and which were regarded as alternative of the presentations of the same event.[56]

Leviathan and Rahab are equated in the OT, and should, therefore, be viewed as one and the same creature under different names.

Rebellion forms part of the fabric of the heavenly pantheon in *Atrahasis*, *Enuma Elish*, and the Baal Cycle. In *Atrahasis* the rebellion of the junior gods leads to the creation of humans, whereas in *Enuma Elish* the conflict between Marduk and Tiamat forms the basis for the creation of the cosmos.[57] In the Baal cycle the focus is on the cyclical events of nature: Baal's kingship was not forever intact. Baal was in a continuous struggle with the two primordial antagonists, Yamm and Mot. "The Canaanites could explain the change from one season to another and the differences between good and bad years only by believing that sometimes Baal was weak, sick, or even dead."[58] The OT, with its

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[53] Levenson, *Creation*, 22–23.
[54] Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 304.
[55] Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 304.
[56] Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 304–305.
[57] Goldingay, *Israel's Gospel*, 65.
[58] Martin J. Mulder, "Baal," *TDOT* 2:200. As Gibson points out, "The battle is not once for all (as in the cases of Marduk and Yahweh and perhaps El Elyon of Jerusalm and for all we know, at one time, El of Ugarit) in order to make creation possible, but has to be fought anew every year in order to guarantee the continuance of life and fertility on earth. The kingship which Baal wins and has to keep winning that the

monotheism, unlike other ANE mythologies, does not entertain the idea of gods rebelling against Yahweh at creation; rather, the focus turns out to be on rebellion by Yahweh's sea creature. The battle between Yahweh and the dragon is depicted as an earthly one, not a heavenly one. Yahweh's defeat of the dragon at creation is regarded as the basis of faith that Yahweh will defeat the current enemies.

Yahweh's victory over the תַּנִּין is not presented in an unqualified way of an absolute and an unconditional victory in the primordial times.[59] Elsewhere in the OT Yahweh's conflict with the תַּנִּין is often historicised or reenacted in Israel's own history.[60] Yahweh victory over the sea dragon at creation is extended to other enemies of God and his people in creation.[61] Pharaoh or Egypt is regarded as a תַּנִּין (Ezek 29:1–5; 32:2–8) and as Rahab (Isa 30:7; 51:9–11, Ps 87:4);[62] the Babylonian king is regarded as the תַּנִּין (Jer 51:34); it is unclear whether Leviathan in Isa 27:1 represents Egypt, Babylon, or Persia;[63] and for Job Leviathan is the dreadful creature that if roused can cause great destruction for humanity (Job 3:8; 41:1–34). The dragon had become for Israel a symbol for those powers that threaten God's people.

In Isa 27 Yahweh's conflict with the תַּנִּין is eschatologised.[64] This text forms part of an Isaianic apocalypse (Isa 24–27). Leviathan in Isa 27:1 inasmuch as it was a symbol of an imminent historical enemy[65] is also a symbol of the anti–creational force that keeps on reinventing itself again and again.[66] The repetitive call upon Yahweh to act against the תַּנִּין is indicative of the continual threat posed by the anti–creational force.

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dangers of the flood and drought might be kept at bay is therefore a delegated kingship, the victor being called King because he is in effect El's regent or executive—the god who does and acts while El from his central office, as it were, thinks and plans." See John C. L. Gibson, "The Kingship of Yahweh Against its Canaanite Background," in *Ugarit and the Bible: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible Manchester, September 1992* (ed. George J. Brooke, Adrian H. W. Curtis and John F. Healey; UBL 11; Münster: Ugarit–Verlag, 1994), 105.

[59] Levenson, *Creation*, 14–50, esp. 16–18, 26–31.

[60] See Day, *God's Conflict*, 88–140.

[61] Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: An Encylopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech and Literary Patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 564.

[62] Psalm 87:4, as Day points out, mentions Rahab alongside Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, probably having Egypt in view, as Egypt is also called by this name elsewhere (cf. Isa 30:7; 51:9). See Day, *God's Conflict*, 90.

[63] Day, *God's Conflict*, 112–13.

[64] See Levenson, *Creation*, 48.

[65] Levenson, *Creation*, 48.

[66] Levenson, *Creation*, 28.

Psalms 74 and 89 exhibit that there was conflict during the creation process. The spatial location of such conflict is in the sea. The conflict model of creation is considered by scholars to be earlier and so dominant over the view of creation without conflict in Gen 1.[67] Whether one motif is predominant over the other is immaterial for us; the conflict motif remains one voice among other voices, and the predominance does not necessarily elevate it over the other voices.

2   Conflict on Land

The Gen 1 creation narrative has received more attention with regard to the conflict motif than the Gen 2:4b–3:24 creation narrative. For Gunkel the serpent in Gen 3 did not warrant attention, as it was derived from a different tradition from that of Tiamat in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, which is reflected in Gen 1.[68] In the traditional reading of Gen 2:4a–3:24, ch. 3 is commonly regarded as narrating events subsequent to God's good creation. However, Gen 2:4b–3:24 in toto has to be viewed as a creation narrative, not just Gen 2:4b–25; thus events narrated in Gen 3 are part of the creation process.[69]

It is true that in the first creation narrative in Gen 1:1–2:4a God creates without opposition. The first creation narrative is not, however, absolute, normative, or quintessential, nor is it the final word; it is just one perspective from which the creation process is described. Genesis 2:4b–3:24 stands in a dialogic relationship with the Gen 1:1–2:4a creation narrative; they mutually enrich each other. While the Gen 1:1–2:4a creation narrative does not exhibit conflict within the creation process, it is dialogically expanded by Gen 2:4b–3:24, which attests to conflict between God and his creatures within the creation process. As Ramantswana has argued elsewhere by tapping into the absence of the

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[67]   See Levenson, *Creation*, 6–7; Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 168. Smith elsewhere writes, "The presentation in Genesis 1 carries an especially powerful force for an audience that knows and presumes the traditional stories of its warrior–god's victories over the ancient cosmic enemies. Such a presentation assumes that the audience knows how such stories convey God's mastery over the universe. Genesis 1 plays on this knowledge and thereby extends the picture of divine mastery." See Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 98.

[68]   Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. M. E. Biddle; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 16.

[69]   Hulisani Ramantswana, "Humanity Not Pronounced Good: Humanity's Death within the Scope of God's Very Good Creation in Light of Genesis 2–3" *OTE* 26/3 (2013): 804–818; Hulisani Ramantswana, "From Bad to Good: A Dialogic Reading of Genesis 1" *JSem* 21/2 (2012): 237–268.

evaluation formula with regard to humanity, Gen 2:4b–3:24 is a resumption of the sixth day of creation.[70]

The serpent in Gen 3, as some scholars argue, should be viewed positively as an animal of life and wisdom. For Vreizen, the serpent is seen in the ANE—Canaan, Phoenicia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Babylonia—as an animal of fertility and wisdom, not a symbol of death (1 Kgs 18:4; Num 21:9).[71] For Westermann, the serpent is a creature of God that merely plays its part in the transgression and punishment story.[72] For Joines, Landy, and van Wolde the serpent has a combination of positive and negative elements: on the one hand, it is a symbol of life and wisdom, and on the other hand, a symbol of chaos.[73]

Genesis 3 may also be understood as evincing a conflict model of creation within God's creation process. This has to be distinguished from the *Chaoskampf* thesis, wherein the creator deity triumphs over the watery deity as an initial act of origination of the cosmos. Genesis 3 rather points to conflicts arising within the creation process between the creator God and the creatures: the serpent and humanity. In this case, unlike in the conflict with the watery serpent called Leviathan or Rahab which occurs in the sea, the spatial location of the conflict is the "dry land" (אֲדָמָה). Thus in this case it is the land creatures that are in conflict with the creator. Both rebellious creatures are to some extent tied to the dust of the dry land as a symbol of humiliation and defeat.

2a   The Rebellion: Serpent and Humanity

The Gen 2:4b–3:24 creation narrative is designed in such a way that it reaches its climax with God in conflict with the serpent and humanity, leading to the undoing of all the negatives in 2:5.[74] The serpent's conflict is exhibited by its attempt to reverse and invalidate God's words:

Concerning the trees in the garden:	
God	"You may freely eat from all the trees in the garden" (Gen 2:16).
Serpent	"Did God say, 'you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" (Gen 3:1b).
Concerning the eating from tree of knowledge of good and bad:	
God	"You will surely die" (Gen 2:17).

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[70]   Hulisani Ramantswana, "Humanity not Pronounced Good: A Re–Reading of Genesis 1:26–31 in Dialogue with Genesis 2–3," *OTE* 26/2 (2013): 425–444.

[71]   Theodore C. Vriezen, *Onderzoek naar de paradijsvoorstelling bij de oude semietische volken* (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1937), 173–180.

[72]   Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 237–239.

[73]   Karen R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament* (Haddonfield, N.J.: Haddonfield House, 1974), 1–11; Karen R. Joines, "The Serpent in Gen. 3," *ZAW* 87 (1975): 1–11; Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* (BLS 7; Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 228–246; Ellen van Wolde, *Words become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1–11* (Leiden: Brill 1994), 3–12.

[74]   Ramantswana, "Humanity Not Pronounced Good: Humanity's Death," 804–818.

Serpent	"You will not surely die" (Gen 3:4).
God	"...for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:18–19).
Concerning humanity's likeness to God	
Serpent	"God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5).
God	"Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Gen 3:22 RSV).

The serpent, though praised as the craftiest of all animals, turns out to be a conflicting force in opposition to God, twisting the command by which God gave humanity the freedom to eat of every tree in the garden by rhetorically making it sound like a command of bondage that leaves humanity without freedom. Thereupon the antagonist goes in for the kill: God's curse, "You shall surely die," with regard to the tree of knowledge of good and bad, is turned into a blessing: "You shall not surely die." The serpent's motivation is that humanity "will become like God, knowing good and bad." It should be noted, however, that it is this conflict between God and the serpent with humanity in the middle of the two opposing forces, which occasions the further creation process.

LaCocque argues that "the serpent has the distinct advantage of moving on the ground while coming from the sea (under the form of Leviathan). It is at any rate an infernal creature that ends up eating dust, a symbol of sterility and lifelessness, there where Adam returns after death (Gen 3:14)."[75] LaCocque, however, is of the opinion that the later symbolists and apocalyptists – Job 26:18 and Isa 27:1 – equate the sea serpent and the land serpent.[76] Because the equation of the two is found only in subsequent literature (*Apoc. Ab.* 23:7; *3 Bar.* 4:8 *Odes Sol.* 22:5; *T. Ash.* 7:3; Rev 12:9), it is better, *pace* LaCocque, to conclude that in the OT, the sea serpent and the land serpent are separate entities who rebelled against God at creation.

Genesis 3 not only depicts the serpent as rebellious towards God, it also depicts the serpent's seduction of humanity to rebel against God. Humanity succumbs to the serpent's seduction, thereby rebelling against God by doing what God commanded the first human being not to do. The desire to be like God becomes humanity's act of rebellion. In the rest of the biblical narrative, the desire to be like God becomes an archetypal evil/sin (cf. Gen 11:1–9; Isa 14:13–14). The desire to be like God is equated with wisdom and the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:5, 6, 22). While the Gen 3 narrative does not make apparent the motive behind the serpent's seduction of humanity, what

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[75] André LaCocque, "Cracks in the Wall," in *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies* (André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 14.

[76] LaCocque, "Cracks," 14.

is apparent is the reason humanity rebelled. Consequently, both the serpent and humankind are judged for their rebellion.

By falling for the seduction of the serpent, humanity missed the opportunity to slay the enemy of God. Humanity's encounter with the serpent was an opportunity for the human couple to help each other exercise their royal function in the garden. The human couple had the responsibility to עָבַד and שָׁמַר the Garden (Gen 2:15). We do not necessarily have to conceive the first human couple as ill–equipped guards. The verb שָׁמַר, which is used to describe humanity's role in the garden, is also used to describe the role of the cherubim. The human couple, instead of helping each other in fulfilling their royal or redemptive function, rebelled against God. If the human couple had successfully fulfilled their responsibility, their victory over the land serpent would have been a type of Yahweh's victory over the sea serpent; however, it was not to be so, as humanity also rebelled against God.

2b   The Defeat

The judgment scene in Gen 3 points to the defeat of the rebellious creatures. The land serpent, unlike the sea serpent which is slain, is not cut to pieces. The defeat of the land serpent is in three respects: first, it is brought low, from being praised as the craftiest of all animals of the field to being cursed of all animals, both domesticated and wild—cattle and beasts of the field (see v. 1 and v. 14). Second, it is humiliated; the eating of dust for the serpent is a symbol of humiliation and defeat (cf. Mic 7:17).[77] Third, while it is still given room to exist, the serpent will no longer do so in a cozy relationship with humanity, but in enmity; the declared enmity between humanity and the serpent is one that will end up in the crushing of the head of the serpent. Thus, the fate of the land serpent will be no different from that of the sea serpent—it will be slain. However, the honour of slaying the land serpent—unlike the sea serpent, whom Yahweh slays himself—will belong to humanity.[78]

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[77]   Bruce K. Waltke, *The Dance between God and Humanity: Reading the Bible Today as the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 275; Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 157.

[78]   The missed opportunity to crush the land serpent at the beginning was deferred to the future: "And I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring [the serpent's] and hers [Eve's]; he [her seed] will crush your head [the serpent's], and you will strike his heel [that of the woman's seed]" (Gen 3:15). See Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible: Unfolding of God's Plan for Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 223. It should be noted that the enmity is not between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed, but between the serpent and the woman's seed. It seems to me that there is a sense of particularity when it comes to the serpent. Reference is not to any serpent; rather this particular cursed serpent would be crushed.

The defeat of humanity is evidenced in the following respects: first, there will be the increase of pain in childbearing and skewed relationships, and of suffering as the cursed ground produces thorns and thistles that require humanity to put forth more effort to make a living. Second, there will be enmity between humanity and the serpent. Third, the fate of humanity is death—"for you are dust, and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:19). Just as the eating of dust by the snake is a symbol of humiliation and defeat, so is the return to dust for humanity. Consequently humanity was thrown out of the Garden, away from the tree of life. Adam becomes the archetypal human–king who was raised from dust to a position of authority in the garden and returned to dust.[79]

The conflict with humanity is also heightened by the setting of the cherubim to guard the entrance of the garden against humanity's encroachment. The cherubim in Gen 3:24 are said to have "flaming swords," a clear allusion to conflict between God and his creatures. In Ezekiel the cherubim are described as birdlike creatures with four faces: "One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle" (Ezek 1:4–28; 10:1–22). The cherubim also recall the multi–headed sea serpent, Leviathan. However, the cherubim are servants of God, whereas Leviathan is an enemy of God. If humans were to attempt to enter the garden, they would be cut to pieces, just as anyone entering unlawfully into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle/temple that was guarded by the cherubim would have been put to death.[80] Thus humanity was demoted from being servants and guards of the archetypal temple to being servants of the land outside, thereby losing the chance for immortality.

E   CONCLUSION

If we take the conflict motif seriously, "we must acknowledge that, at the very foundation of creation and in the cosmic environment of the earth, something rebelled against God and threatened the world."[81] In the OT, the rebellious something was serpentine (נָחָשׁ)—the rebellious sea serpent, וְעַל לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ עֲקַלָּתוֹן, לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ בָּרִחַ ("Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent," Isa 27:1) and the land serpent, הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַנָּחָשׁ ... חַיַּת ("the serpent . . . beast of the field"). The sea serpent is presented as a rebellious creature slaughtered by God at creation. The land serpent, on the other hand, is cursed but not slaughtered;

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[79]   Walter Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 1–18.

[80]   Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story" in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura; SBTS 4; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (CBET 25; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 410–417.

[81]   Boyd, *God at War*, 99.

one may perhaps say that the serpent was weakened but still given room to continue to operate within the created order. Thus it is probable that the serpentine language is metaphorical, representing the enemy of God whom humankind as guard of the Garden of Eden initially failed to recognise and counter. God's enemy is humankind's enemy as well.

One thing binds the sea serpent and the land serpent—they are both rebellious serpents. What differentiates these two is their sphere of operation; one operates in the sea, whereas the other operates on land. The OT does not seem to equate these two creatures.

Considering the canonical shape of the OT the land serpent "was the first to raise an explicit challenge to God in Bible, and this happened in Genesis 3."[82] This, however, does not make Gen 3 a canon within the canon; rather, it is and remains one voice among many other voices on the subject of creation within the OT. Genesis 3 falls among the voices that exhibit God's cosmic mastery—not, in this case, through slaying his enemies, but through humiliation, as the enemies are demoted from glory to the dust. This forms part of the creation process, as God brings order to creation through blessing and curses (cf. Gen 1:22, 28, 2:3 and Gen 3:14, 17).

During the protological act of creation, conflicts arose between Yahweh and the creatures—the sea serpent, land serpent, and humanity; consequently, conflict between the land serpent and humanity arose. Creation is functionally "very good," however, because it is moving towards the resolution of the primordial yet ongoing conflict between Yahweh and the anticreational forces, between human beings and their primordial enemy.

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[82] Richard E. Averbeck, "Ancient Near Eastern Mythography as it Relates to Historiography in the Hebrew Bible: Genesis 3 and the Cosmic Battle," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions: The Proceedings of a Symposium, August 12–14, 2001, at Trinity International University* (ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan R. Millard; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 328–356, 354.

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