

The 'Fall of Nature' in Scripture and Early Tradition

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Christians who are committed to the scientific establishment's view of earth history, including the belief that all living things descended from a common ancestor through an evolutionary process red in tooth and claw, must either deny the Bible is true or deny the Bible contradicts that view. Evangelicals are loath to deny the Bible is true, so evolutionists of that stripe commonly make intellectual peace by insisting the Bible is compatible with the belief that "natural evils" – carnivory, predation, disease, physical suffering, and death – existed in the world prior to the arrival of human beings.¹ They thus deny that Scripture teaches that these phenomena resulted from the judgment on Adam's sin.² According to them, the Edenic judgment did not affect the natural world, did not alter the nature or functioning of the nonhuman physical creation, and thus could not be the origination of natural evil. Having ruled out the only candidate for the introduction of natural evil into the already-completed creation, the remaining alternative is that these phenomena were an original part of creation, part of what was pronounced "very good," not an after-the-fact intruder.

I disagree with the claim the Edenic judgment did not affect the natural world because, as explained in this paper, I think the Bible teaches otherwise. While some insist the belief that Scripture teaches a fall of nature is "thoroughly erroneous" and without "any solid biblical support whatsoever,"³ others who have studied the matter closely are sympathetic toward that understanding. For example, Michael Murray writes:

While most of the commentary on the Fall and its consequences has focused on its legacy of human guilt and the human proclivity for sin, there is little doubt that the Hebrew and Christian **Scriptures provide encouragement** to accord even greater explanatory scope to the Fall. In the **Fall narrative itself** it appears that the author of Genesis intends to signal that the wrongdoing of the initial human

¹ These phenomena are documented throughout the geological record and believed by the scientific establishment to long predate human existence. See, e.g., Kurt P. Wise, "Paleoevil, Theodicy, and Models of Earth History," *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 2.2 (2017), 299-320, <http://jbtsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/JBTS-2.2.compressed.pdf> (retrieved on April 8, 2019).

² For critical reviews of William Dembski's novel claim that natural evils were a *result* of the Fall despite *preceding* it, see Terry Mortenson, "Christian theodicy in light of Genesis and modern science: A young-earth creationist response to William Dembski," *Answers Research Journal* 2 (2009), 151–168, <https://answersingenesis.org/reviews/christian-theodicy-in-light-of-genesis-and-modern-science/> (retrieved on April 8, 2019); Tom Nettles, "Review of 'The end of Christianity: Finding a good God in an evil world'," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13:4 (2009), 80-85, http://www.sbts.edu/resources/files/2010/02/sbjt_134_book_reviews.pdf (retrieved on April 8, 2019); Tom Nettles, "Tom Nettles responds to Paige Patterson and David Allen," *Founders Ministries Blog* (March 23, 2010), <https://founders.org/2010/03/23/tom-nettles-responds-to-paige-patterson-and-david-allen/> (retrieved on April 8, 2019); Andrew Hodge, "Dembski's god not worth finding," *Journal of Creation* 24:2 (2010), 38-42, http://creation.com/images/pdfs/tj/j24_2/j24_2_38-42.pdf (retrieved on April 8, 2019); Philip Bell, "The 'problem' of evil and the supremacy of Scripture" (Oct. 12, 2010), <https://creation.com/end-of-christianity-review> (retrieved on April 8, 2019).

³ Jon Garvey, *God's Good Earth: The Case for an Unfallen Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), Kindle Edition (location 144).

pair carried in its wake consequences not only for them and their progeny, but also for their *environment*.⁴

In this paper, I first sketch a perspective in which the curse, the fall of nature, is situated within the sovereignty of God and thus functions as his servant and a means of his glorification rather than as an opposing force outside his control. This may help identify some misguided arguments one encounters in the discussion of this subject. I then review the biblical basis for thinking the judgment brought by Adam's sin altered the natural world. Finally, I document that this understanding is amply represented in ancient Jewish and Christian writings outside the Bible.⁵

A Perspective on the Curse and God's Sovereignty

Adam and Eve's rebellion against God introduced the sin-plague into the human world thus spoiling the very good creation. God did not scrap the sin-infected creation and start anew but instead chose to redeem it, to rescue it from the consequences of sin's invasion. He cursed the natural world as part of his cursing of mankind so that it now resists mankind's use and purposes, as mankind resists God's, making survival a chore instead of an unmitigated joy. It is now a dystopian world stalked by toil, predation, disease, pain, suffering, sorrow, and death.

The curse God imposed in response to sin was intended not only as punishment but as the background necessary *in a sin-invaded creation* to optimize his appeal to sinners. In other words, the pervasive reality of the curse is needed in this sin-tainted world to reinforce, subliminally if not consciously, the truth that choosing sin over God yields disaster. Even the revolting horrors sprinkled throughout the natural world serve to keep fresh before mankind the horror of sin, to provide an ongoing, visceral display of the tragic consequences of rejecting God. It is a way of communicating to the emotional and subconscious side of mankind that this world is not the way it is supposed to be, which impression is part of the epistemological environment in which God calls humans to choose him.

And since God desires a great multitude of redeemed humans to spend eternity with him in the new heavens and new earth, the cursed creation must continue until that full number has been reached. To that end, the elements of the curse were designed and arranged to sustain the functionality of the biosphere for that length of time. In this way, even fallen creation reflects God's wisdom and glory. As part of his counteraction against sin's invasion, he has cursed creation in such a way that a world red in tooth and claw will continue for however many millennia are necessary for his purpose. Thus, God remains the ultimate source of provision for all his creatures in this fallen world, predators included, and rightly is praised for it, as well as for the integration of parts and ongoing balance of the entire system of nature.

⁴ Michael J. Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth & Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 74-75.

⁵ Throughout the paper I emphasize portions of texts with bold highlighting. Assume it is my emphasis and not that of the quoted writer. I have not bothered to ensure conformity with current citation rules, but I provide sufficient information in the first citation of a source to track it down. For later citations, one can easily search the document for the first appearance containing the complete information.

Creation continues to serve and glorify God, but because it now does so with the inclusion of remedial evil, in a way necessitated by sin, its current functioning is at odds with God's initial provision and eternal vision. In that sense, the cursed creation can be viewed as an enemy, as something opposed to God, even though he was its source and rules over it. The coexistence of these differing perspectives is made clear in the case of human death. God, in his righteousness, and thus to his glory, imposed death on mankind because of sin (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22), and yet death is identified as "the last enemy" to be expunged from this corrupted creation (1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4).

Without knowing just how the curse functions as a necessary background for God's purpose in this sin-invaded creation, we are in no position to assert with confidence that there is gratuitous suffering in or through nature. And attributing death and suffering to God's curse for sin does not make God responsible for death and suffering in the same way he would be if he employed death and suffering as a means of original creation. In the former, God is working for the good purpose of counteracting the effects of mankind's rebellion; in the latter, he is choosing to introduce suffering and death in the first instance, with no situational constraint.⁶ That distinction has moral significance.

The Nature-Altering Judgment on Sin According to Scripture

Scripture teaches that the judgment brought by Adam's sin altered the natural world. This is indicated in the Old Testament and clarified and confirmed in the New.

Prior to Adam's sin, God gave to mankind for food every seed-bearing plant and every tree with seed-bearing fruit that he had created, and he gave to the animals for food every green plant (Gen. 1:29-30). The obvious implication is that he originally forbid humans and animals from all carnivory and predation. That did not arise until later. This is acknowledged by many scholars, ancient and modern. For example, C. F. Keil comments:

From [vv. 29-30] it follows, that, according to the creative will of God, **men were not to slaughter animals for food, nor were animals to prey upon one another**; consequently, that **the fact which now prevails** universally in nature and the order of the world, the violent and often painful destruction of life, is not a primary law of nature, nor a divine institution founded in the creation itself, but **entered the world along with death at the fall of man, and became a necessity of nature through the curse of sin**. . . . the fact that, according to the biblical view, **no carnivorous animals existed at the first**, may be inferred from the prophetic announcements in Isa. 11:6-8; 65:25, where the cessation of sin and the complete transformation of the world into the kingdom of God are described as being accompanied by the **cessation of slaughter and the eating of flesh, even in the case of the animal kingdom**.⁷

⁶ It is consistent with God's omnipotence to believe it is *logically impossible* for him to optimize his appeal to sinners in a sin-invaded world without employing the background of the cursed creation. Logical impossibilities are not subject to power.

⁷ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. by James Martin (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, [1886 reprint] 2006), 1:40.

John Skinner states:

The plants are destined for food to man and beast. The passage is not wholly intelligible apart from 9:2ff, from which we see that its point is the restriction on the use of animal food, particularly on the part of man. In other words, **the first stage of the world's history—that state of things which the Creator pronounced very good—is a state of peace and harmony in the animal world.**⁸

Herbert Leupold states:

In brief, this verse [v. 30] is an indication of the perfect harmony prevailing in the animal world. **No beast preyed upon the other. Rapacious and ferocious wild beasts did not yet exist.** This verse, then, indicates very briefly for this chapter what is unfolded at length in chapter two, that a paradise-like state prevailed at creation.⁹

Umberto Cassuto says:

The Torah presents here a kind of idealized picture of the primeval world situation. Not only man but **even the animals** were expected to show reverence for the principle of life (see v. 30, which, too, is governed by the verb *I have given* of v. 29). In full accord with this standpoint is the prophetic view that the prohibition was never annulled, and that in the Messianic era it would be operative again and **even the carnivorous beasts would then feed only on vegetation** (Isa. xi 7; lxxv 25: *the lion shall eat straw like the ox*).¹⁰

Gerhard von Rad comments:

For nourishment, man is given every kind of vegetable food; the animals are given only the herb of the field. That is the only suggestion of the **paradisiacal peace in the creation as it came God-willed from God's hand. . . . Killing and slaughter** did not come into the world, therefore, by God's design and command. . . . **No shedding of blood within the animal kingdom**, and no murderous action by man!¹¹

Robert Davidson states, "It is implied in verses 29-30 that within the original harmony of God's creation, **man is vegetarian**. Grain and fruit are his food; **other living creatures feed on**

⁸ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 34.

⁹ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis: Volume I* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 98-99.

¹⁰ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part I: From Adam to Noah*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 59.

¹¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, rev. ed., trans. by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1972), 61.

other types of vegetation."¹² Nahum Sarna says, "God makes provision for the sustenance of man and beast – a reminder that man is still a creature totally dependent on the benevolence of God. **The narrative presupposes a pristine state of vegetarianism.** Isaiah's vision of the ideal future in 11:7 and 65:25 sees the carnivorous animals becoming herbivorous."¹³ Victor Hamilton comments:

What God creates he preserves. What he brings into being he provides for. Man is to have as his food the seed and fruit of plants. Animals and birds are to have the leaves. (The latter point accords with the description of the eschatological age when 'the lion shall eat straw like the ox,' Isa.11:7; 65:25.) **At no point is anything (human beings, animals, birds) allowed to take the life of another living being and consume it for food.** The dominion assigned to the human couple over the animal world does not include the prerogative to butcher. Instead, humankind survives on a **vegetarian diet.**¹⁴

Kenneth Mathews states, "God is depicted as the beneficent Provider, who **insures food** for both man and animal life **without fear of competition or threat for survival.**"¹⁵ John Goldingay states:

God now gives the plants and the fruit trees to humanity to eat and also gives to the rest of the animal world all the other plants, the ones human beings don't eat. **The shocking implication is that both humanity and the rest of the animate world were designed to be vegetarian.** It is only after humanity became disobedient to God that it eats meat; in the time of Noah, God then agrees to this (Genesis 9:1-3). But at the time of creation, the thought of humanity eating meat was not in God's mind.¹⁶

Following humanity's sin, God reveals in Gen. 3:14 that he cursed not only the serpent who was used to induce the sin but all the livestock and all the beasts of the field. This is implicit in the statement the serpent was cursed "more than" (NEB, NAS, NKJV, NASU, HCSB, LEB, ISV, CSB) or "above" (KJV, ERV, ASV, RSV, NIV'84, NET, NIV'11, ESV) those other animals. "The implication of the passage is that the effects of the curse on the Serpent are **simply more profound** than the curse directed at the rest of the organisms in nature."¹⁷ He is "the **most cursed** of the animals."¹⁸ Davidson says, "The opening words look back to the beginning of chapter 3. Just as the serpent was 'more crafty' (3:1) than any wild creature, so now he is

¹² Robert Davidson, *Genesis 1-11*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 26.

¹³ Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 13-14, n. 30.

¹⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, Victor P. 1990. *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 140.

¹⁵ Mathews, Kenneth A. 1996. *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 175.

¹⁶ John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone Part One* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 20.

¹⁷ Murray, 75.

¹⁸ John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 1:90.

accursed more than all cattle and all wild creatures (verse 14).¹⁹ Allen Ross remarks, "A comparison used in the construction shows that the serpent would be cursed **more than** the rest of the animals. **All creation would now lie under a curse, but the serpent more so** for his part in the crime."²⁰

The Lord curses the serpent by consigning it to crawl on its belly in the dust all the days of its life. Since this is punishment for its role in the episode, it makes no sense to claim the serpent already was crawling on its belly and the curse simply made its continuing to do so a sign of judgment. In that case, its crawling would function as a sign of escaping judgment! The Lord is imposing this condition on the serpent, changing its mode of locomotion, and the readers are assumed to understand that this change was unpleasant and thus punitive.

Keil declares: "If these words are not to be robbed of their entire meaning, they cannot be understood in any other way than as denoting that **the form and movements of the serpent were altered**, and that its present repulsive shape is the effect of the curse pronounced upon it, though we cannot form any accurate idea of its original appearance."²¹ Skinner states, "The assumption undoubtedly is that **originally the serpent moved erect** . . ."²² Otto Procksch says of the serpent, "Its **earlier way of life** appears to have been **different**."²³ Theodorus Vriezen states, "The presumption clearly is that **in primeval time the serpent walked upright on paws**."²⁴ Sarna comments, "This reflects a popular notion, often reflected in the art of the ancient Near East, that the **serpent originally walked erect**. Having arrogantly aggrandized itself in a challenge to God, it is now permanently **doomed to a posture** of abject humiliation."²⁵ Kenneth Gangel and Stephen Bramer say, "The curse would result in the **physical condition of the snake changing** (you will crawl on your belly) . . ."²⁶ Tremper Longman states, "The serpent is cursed first in terms of its **mode of locomotion**. When the serpent first appeared in the garden, apparently it **walked on legs** and spoke, an appropriate symbol of the force of chaos and evil."²⁷ This was understood by ancient interpreters, but various modern pressures make us resistant to that straightforward reading.

The first clause of Gen. 3:15 ("I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring/seed and her offspring/seed") speaks of the origin of the conflict between humans and snakes, the dislike and aversion that humans generally have for snakes.²⁸ Snakes can bring death, disfigurement, and disability to humans, so most people in the world have little

¹⁹ Davidson, 44.

²⁰ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 145.

²¹ Keil and Delitzsch, 1:62.

²² Skinner, 78

²³ Cited in Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 259.

²⁴ Cited in Westermann, 259.

²⁵ Sarna, 27.

²⁶ Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen J. Bramer, *Genesis*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 44.

²⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Genesis*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 66.

²⁸ Gordon Wenham says in *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 79, 89: "The human race, 'her offspring,' and the serpent race, 'your offspring,' will be forever at loggerheads. . . . snakes will fight a running battle with mankind as each tries to destroy the other."

tolerance for them.²⁹ Since there was no human death prior to Adam's sinning (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22), their capacity to kill is traceable to this judgment. They were altered at that time to become deadly.

This conflict between humans and snakes, something with which ancient Israelites were very familiar (Eccles. 10:8; Amos 5:29; Acts 28:3-6), is a perpetual and stark representation and reminder of the conflict between humans and physical creation that was introduced into the world by the Satan-induced rebellion against God. It epitomizes that conflict with creation, that consequence of Satan's work, and thus also symbolizes Satan's opposition to mankind.³⁰

The second clause of 3:15 ("he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel") alludes to that deeper, harmony-destroying conflict between Satan and mankind to which the enmity God created between humans and physical snakes points. It speaks of one man (he, singular), a descendant of Eve, who shall bruise the head *of the serpent* (your, singular) *not* that of the serpent's offspring.³¹ The conflict between Satan and mankind that is symbolized in the decreed conflict between humans and snakes ends with Christ, the God-man, prevailing over Satan, the fallen spirit-being who animated the serpent in the garden.

The curse upon the woman in Gen. 3:16 in some way alters her body that she and all subsequent women experience in childbirth pain that they otherwise would not have experienced. Whether stress on tissues during birth was increased, nerve receptors or pathways were altered, endorphin production was decreased, or some other biological/physiological change was introduced, the pain imposed on childbirth and the transmission of that condition to subsequent generations constitutes a change of the natural world.

Genesis 2:5 declares that two specific forms of vegetation were not yet present on earth. There was no "shrub (*śīaḥ*) of the field" on the earth, and no "plant (*'ēśeb*) of the field" had yet sprung up. These differ from the seed-bearing plants and fruit trees mentioned in 1:11-12; they are "desert shrubs" and "cultivated grains," respectively.³² The statement in 2:5 raises in the

²⁹ According to a World Health Organization, "Around 81,000 to 138,000 people die each year as a result of snake bites, and around three times as many amputations and other permanent disabilities are caused by snakebites annually." "Snakebite envenoming" (April 8, 2019) <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/snakebite-envenoming> (retrieved on April 9, 2019).

³⁰ I am aware that many understand the serpent's offspring in the first clause to be a reference to humans who take after Satan in character, those who are his "sons" in that figurative sense (see, e.g., Mat. 13:38; Jn. 8:44; Acts 13:10). What steers me away from that understanding of the text is that Eve seems an odd representative of the people of God, the faithful human lineage, given that she is described as the mother of *all* the living in 3:20 and the statement is in the context of her rebellion.

³¹ See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 39-40.

³² Hamilton says (p. 154), "the reference [*śīaḥ of the field*] is to some kind of desert shrub or bush." Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. and trans. M. E. J. Richardson (New York: E. J. Brill, 2001), 2:1321, includes: "for this see also R. Albertz *Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung* p. 222⁷⁴: a wild plant growing in the desert or steppe." Mark Futato argues cogently in "Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (Spring 1998), 3-4, that the terms for vegetation used in 2:5 are very precise and mean "wild shrubs of the steppe" and "cultivated grains." But as Michael R. Butler points out in "Additional Comments on the Genesis 2:5 Argument" in *The Report of the Minority of the Committee to Study the Framework Hypothesis*, presented to the Presbytery of Southern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church October 15-16, 1999, 148:

reader's mind the question, "What happened that this vegetation later arose on earth?" As the story unfolds, we learn of mankind's sin and God's sentence. In Gen. 3:17-18 Adam is told that *the ground itself* is cursed because of his disobedience, and as a result, it now would yield "thorns and thistles," which are an example of desert shrubs, and that man will through toilsome labor eat cultivated grains (wheat, barley, etc.), which is the exact phrase used in 2:5 (עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה). These are post-Fall forms of vegetation. Cassuto, a Jewish scholar and renowned Hebraist, explains:

What is meant by the term עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה *śīaḥ of the field* and the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה *'ēśebh of the field* mentioned here [in 2:5]? Modern commentators usually consider the terms to connote the *vegetable kingdom as a whole*; thence it follows that our section contradicts the preceding chapter, according to which vegetation came into being on the third day. . . . All interpretations of this kind introduce into the text something that is not there, in order to create the inconsistency. When the verse declares that these species were missing, the meaning is simply that *these* kinds were wanting, but *no others*. If we wish to understand the significance of the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה *śīaḥ of the field* and the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה *'ēśebh of the field* in the context of our narrative, we must take a glance at the end of the story. It is stated there, in the words addressed by the Lord God to Adam after he had sinned: THORNS AND THISTLES *it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה 'ēśebh of the field* (iii 18). The words עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה *'ēśebh of the field* are identical with the expression in our verse; whilst *thorns and thistles*, which are synonymous with the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה *śīaḥ of the field*, are a particularization of the general concept conveyed by the latter (cf. *one of the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה śīḥīm* in Gen. xxi 15). These species did not exist, or were not found in the form known to us, until after Adam's transgression, and **it was in consequence of the fall that they came into the world or received their present form.**³³

Hamilton concurs: "We suggest that the reference to shrub and plant in 2:5 is **anticipatory** and is **explained further by 3:18**, where God says to Adam: 'thorns and thistles [the *śīaḥ*?] it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants [*'ēśebh*] of the field.' . . . Neither of these kinds of growth appears in the fields until after the creation of man and after man's transgression."³⁴

Prior to the curse imposed for mankind's sin, there were no "desert shrubs" or "cultivated grains." There were no desert shrubs because there were no deserts. Before God had caused it to rain (2:5c), the earth was a lush paradise that was watered thoroughly by streams or springs that flowed up from the ground (2:6).³⁵ It was only after God substituted rainfall, which is sporadic

Later in his article, however, he assumes, without any argument or even comment, that the former stands for *all* non-cultivated vegetation. With this new sense of the term in hand he then assumes, again without any argument or comment, that these two types of vegetation (the non-cultivated and cultivated) together stand for all vegetation. In other words, he takes it as a given that 'wild shrubs' and 'cultivated grain' are to be understood as a merism for *all* vegetation. But this is certainly not the case.

³³ Cassuto, 101-102.

³⁴ Hamilton, 154; see also, Mathews, 194; Sailhamer, 74.

³⁵ "Mist" is used in AV, RSV, ERV, NASB, NKJV, and ESV (which footnotes "spring" as an alternative). NIV and NRSV use "stream(s)" (NIV footnotes "mist" as an alternative). NEB and JB use "flood," and REB uses "moisture." In specific reference to Gen. 2:6, Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of*

and uneven, for the original paradisiacal watering mechanism that deserts arose. There were no cultivated grains because prior to the Fall man had not been sentenced to backbreaking farming (2:5d); prior to the Fall, man worked the garden not the ground.

These are major alterations of the natural world that are tied to the cursing of the ground in the judgment on Adam's sin. The effect of that judgment cannot fairly be restricted to the human psyche and matters of the spirit. The nonhuman physical creation also was involved.

In addition to the cursing of the animals and the ground that changed the environment, physical death was introduced into the creation as part of the judgment on sin. Adam is told in Gen. 2:17 that he will surely die in the day he eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Gen. 3:17-19 God tells Adam that because he ate from the forbidden tree he will return to the ground from which he was taken -- to dust he shall return. This speaks of his physical decomposition and it is tied expressly to his sin, so whatever else the death penalty of 2:17 may have entailed it cannot be defined to exclude physical death.

Regarding "in the day that you eat" in Gen. 2:17, the penalty imposed on Adam for his sin was "total death," a penalty involving spiritual, physical, and eternal death. Adam died spiritually the day he sinned in that he was alienated from God, the source of all life. He was condemned to die physically in that he (and thus mankind) was that day excluded from the tree of life, God's life-sustaining provision; he that day became a dying creature.³⁶ He was also condemned to die eternally in that, barring forgiveness (the restoration of spiritual life) during his now temporary physical life, he would be condemned at the final judgment.

the Old Testament, ed. and trans. M. E. J. Richardson (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1:11, states, "the subterranean stream of fresh water, groundwater." The two most thorough studies of the meaning of 'ed are David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 94-116 and Gerhard F. Hasel and Michael G. Hasel, "The Hebrew Term 'ed in Gen 2,6 and Its Connection in Ancient Near Eastern Literature," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 112 (2000), 321-340. Tsumura concludes that the word probably refers to subterranean water that comes up to the surface of the earth. Hasel and Hasel agree (p. 324) "Tsumura is correct in deriving the 'ed-moisture from a source other than the sky and its clouds from which rain falls," but for philological and conceptual reasons, they reject his hypothesis that the ground was watered from a subterranean ocean. They also show that Dahood's interpretation "rain cloud" lacks philological, syntactical, and conceptual credibility. They conclude that 'ed in 2:6 is best understood as a mist/dew, which, in distinction to watering from above by rain, watered the ground through a continual rising from below, from the earth. "It seems certain that the watering of the arable land, the >>ground,<< by means of >>mist/dew<< ('ed) is radically different from the post-flood watering of the earth by rain (Gen 7,12; 8,2)" (339). Contrary to the suggestion of some, Job 36:27 is not helpful in clarifying the meaning of 'ed in Gen. 2:6. Since the term in Job 36:27 "appears in relationship to heaven and not to the earth . . . it does not seem to provide a contextual parallel except in contrast." Hasel and Hasel, 323. In addition, the Job passage has its own uncertainties. See, Tsumura (1989), 115-116; Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, Anchor Bible, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 273; Robert L. Alden, "ēd" in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:17.

³⁶ God had bound himself to bestow his grace of continuing life on humans who partook of the tree of life. The tree was a vehicle of divine grace not a means of life itself (see Leupold, 120). As man was the divinely appointed ruler of creation, it seems the immortality of other creatures was bound up with that of mankind so that it was not necessary for them to eat from the tree of life to continue living. Mankind was their proxy. Note how in Gen. 3:14 and 6:5-7 the fate of the animals is bound up with that of man.

That Adam's sin brought physical death to mankind is the clear implication of 1 Cor. 15:21-22, where the *bodily* resurrection brought by Christ is contrasted to the death brought by Adam. The parallel breaks down if one denies the causal link between Adam's sin and physical death. Romans 5:21 likewise contrasts the death brought by sin with the eternal life brought by Jesus Christ, an eternal life that includes bodily resurrection (see also, Rom. 8:10-11).

Physical death is an intruder into God's creation, something foreign and hostile. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:26, in his discussion of bodily resurrection, that death is an enemy to be destroyed (see also 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 20:14, 21:4). Its alien nature is implicit in the fact it brought uncleanness on all who touched a corpse, bone, or grave (Num. 19:11-22). The notion that mankind was created subject to death rather than death being a consequence of Adam's sin "runs contrary to the teaching of the church throughout its history."³⁷

In withdrawing his life-sustaining provision from mankind, thus rendering us mortal, God profoundly changed the nature of our physical existence. Our bodies now ultimately disintegrate. This change from continuous bodily life to physical death is an alteration of the material creation that was part of the judgment on Adam's sin. It is not true that everything continues as from the beginning of creation.

Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:25 describe a coming state of blessedness as one in which animals no longer pose a threat to each other or to mankind. Animals will no longer be carnivorous ("the bear shall graze" and "the lion shall eat straw"), so those that are predators today will at that time peacefully coexist with those that are now their prey (wolf/lamb, leopard/goat, lion/calf, bear/cow). And venomous snakes shall pose no threat even to little children. In this "end age," carnivory, predation, and killing will have no place because animals *hurting and destroying* each other or human beings is inconsistent with God's ideal: "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).³⁸ This same ideal was reflected in the pre-Fall prohibition of carnivory and predation as explained above. Carnivory and predation are hurting and destroying, and since hurting and destroying are contrary to God's ideal, he would not label as "very good" (Gen. 1:31) an existence that includes them.

Edward Young comments on Isa. 11:6-9:

³⁷ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 250. He adds, "According to Paul, death is the result of sin . . . a view . . . shared by Athanasius, Irenaeus, Gregory, Thomas Aquinas, and Luther."

³⁸ The reference in Isa. 65:20 to death at a hundred years old and to failing to reach a hundred in the context of the new heavens and new earth (65:17) probably should be taken, in light of Isa. 25:8, as a counterfactual hypothetical that serves to emphasize the length of life. Eternal life is portrayed as a state where if one *were to die* at a hundred (which one will not) he would be considered only a child and if one *were to fail* to reach a hundred (which one will not) he would be considered cursed. See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 530 and Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 721-722. Given John's reference to Isa. 65:17 in Rev. 21:1-8 (esp. vv. 1, 5), that is apparently how he understood it.

Wondrous indeed is this Messiah! In verses 2-5 we have seen Him completely distinguished from all earthly and temporal rulers. In verses 6-9 we learn that His kingdom also is to be contrasted with all earthly kingdoms. His is the kingdom as that kingdom should be. It will be the very opposite of what now is found in human kingdoms. All enmity will disappear, not only from among men, but **even from among beasts**, and even **between men and beasts** all will be in harmony. . . . At the same time, it should be noted that Isaiah has placed great stress upon the animals themselves, and this very fact shows that **it is impossible to carry through in detail a figurative interpretation**. If all is merely figurative, what is the point of such detailed statements concerning the change in animals? It would appear also that we have here a **parallelism or comparison with the condition before the fall of man into sin. Before the entrance of sin into the world** the animals were the helps of man and were named by him. All that God had made was good. Hostility between man and the animals, at least, was unknown. . . . May it not be that in Isaiah's language, "The lion shall eat straw like the ox," there is a reflection upon the command and permission granted to the animals that every green herb should be to them for meat?³⁹

Motyer notes "[t]here is an '**Edenic**' element in Isaiah's thinking" and then comments: "[T]here is a **change of nature** within the beasts themselves: *cow* and *bear* eat the same food, as do *lion* and *ox*. There is also a change in the very order of things itself: **the herbivoral nature of all the creatures point to Eden restored** (Gn. 1:29-30)."⁴⁰ Ronald Youngblood states, "The Messiah's rule would be so just and righteous (11:3-5) that **nature itself would be transformed** and peace would reign in the animal world as well (11:6-9; 65:25; Ezek. 34:25,28)."⁴¹ Gary Smith comments:

The future kingdom is described as something similar to a paradise with peace and security, even the **removal of the original curse** on the relationship between man and the animals (Gen 3:14-19). Natural enemies in the animal kingdom will live together, feed together, and play together, but the strong or poisonous beasts will not harm anyone. Fear and danger will disappear and they will be replaced with harmony and peaceful relationships. Formerly dangerous animals (like the wolf, lion, or cobra) will not even harm the most vulnerable children.⁴²

Geoffrey Grogan states:

Biblical eschatology may involve more than the simple **restoration of conditions as they were in the unfallen world**, but it certainly includes this (cf. Ge 1:26-28; Ps 8; 1Co 15:25-28; Heb 2:5-9). It is not now Adam who is to be king of the world but the Second Man, the messianic King. In his reign **nature will be at peace with itself and with human kings**. . . . There seems no reason to doubt

³⁹ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah Volume 1*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 387-388, 390-391.

⁴⁰ Motyer, 124.

⁴¹ Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 55.

⁴² Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 273.

that this is to be understood literally. . . . Any adaptation of the ecosystem involved will presumably be a restoration of the world to its **unfallen condition**. . . . Genesis 3 presents the serpent as the first enemy of human beings within the animal kingdom. In light of this fact, v. 8 moves even beyond vv. 6-7 by suggesting the **removal of the divine curse pronounced at the fall**.⁴³

David Firth states: "Besides providing security from enemies, the prophets anticipate a restoration of creation that is associated with the restored Davidic figure. This goes beyond the absence of warfare and sees a **restoration to the harmony of creation noted in Genesis 1–2**. A clear example of this can be seen in Isaiah 11:6-9."⁴⁴ Tchavdar Hadjiev says, "This is confirmed by Isaiah 11:6-9, where the new Davidic ruler (the shoot from the stump of Jesse – i.e., the second David [Is 11:1]) **brings peace to the whole of creation lifting the Edenic curse**, transforming the innate destructive instincts of the animal world and creating harmony and security."⁴⁵

In Hos. 2:18 Yahweh describes the eschaton as a time when he enters into a covenant with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground which, with the abolition of warfare, creates an environment in which his people can lie down in safety.⁴⁶ "Carnivores and other harmful creatures will do no harm in this time of peace because God will impose severe restrictions on them and effect a change in their natures."⁴⁷ As warfare is a post-Fall phenomenon, a consequence of sin's invasion, its unremarked pairing with animal dangers suggests that they are as well. Eugene Merrill states:

Hosea went so far as to include the animals in a reconciliation with human kind: "On that day I will make a covenant for them with the wild animals, the birds of the sky, and the creatures that crawl on the ground" (Hos. 2:18). **The curse of the fall will be undone**, and God's creatures – man and animal alike – will resume the roles *vis-à-vis* each other that God proposed for them **from the beginning**.⁴⁸

Duane Garrett comments:

Instead of the wilderness being a place of exposure to the dangers of the wild animals, the animals themselves are brought into covenant relation with the redeemed people. This promise also clearly echoes the description of God's creatures found in Gen 1:21, 24. Yahweh therefore mediates between humanity and the rest of creation to end the estrangement between the two (**see Gen 3:17-**

⁴³ Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah" in Longman and Garland, 6:545.

⁴⁴ David G. Firth, "Messiah" in Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 543.

⁴⁵ Tchavdar Hadjiev, "Peace, Rest" in Boda and McConville, 576.

⁴⁶ As Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freeman state in Hosea, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 280, "The covenant has three aspects. The animals are to be restrained (v 20a), war is to be abolished (v 20bA), and security established (v 20bB); **the last is the outcome of the first two.**"

⁴⁷ Thomas McComiskey, "Hosea" in Thomas Edward McComiskey, ed., *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 1:44.

⁴⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 285-286.

19; Rom 8:20-21). What Hosea has in view, therefore, is **a restoration of the creation order – a paradise regained.** It is the same vision that Isaiah has in 11:6-7, and that has its fulfillment in the new heaven and new earth of Rev 21:1.⁴⁹

As noted by Garrett, this eschatological removal of the curse pronounced in the garden is confirmed in Revelation. In contrast to the horrible fate of those whose names are *not* written in the Lamb's book of life, Rev. 21:1-4 describes the breathtaking splendor, glory, and joy that is the eternal blessing of those whose names are written in that book. As Osborne observes: "Not just the Book of Revelation but the whole Bible has pointed to this moment. **Since Adam and Eve lost their place in Paradise** and sin reigned on earth (Rom. 5:12-21), the divine plan has prepared for the moment when sin would finally be eradicated and the **original purpose of God** when he created humankind could come to pass."⁵⁰

The eschaton will be a creation that has been "heavenized," a creation from which sin and all its consequences have been expunged. Verse 4 declares, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." God transforms this creation by healing it, by removing from it everything that causes the suffering and sorrow that produce tears. This includes the hurting and destroying that Isaiah says are inherent in the carnivory, predation, and killing now practiced by animals. Those are post-Fall features of the world not divine ideals.

The link to Eden and the curse is unmistakable in the reference in Rev. 2:7 to "the tree of life in the paradise of God" and the references to that tree in Revelation 22. What was lost in Eden has been restored and even transcended. The curse to which God subjected creation at the time of Adam's sin, the curse from which creation has been longing to be freed (Rom. 8:19-23), is finally lifted. It is declared of the eschaton in Rev. 22:3, "No longer will there be anything accursed." All things have been made new; all sin-induced brokenness has been healed.

Romans 8:19-23 is, of course, a major text on the fall of nature, and it has been analyzed extensively.⁵¹ I will here content myself simply with identifying the position of some notable modern scholars on certain key questions surrounding the text. I realize the matter must be resolved by arguments and not authorities, but given how well this ground has been plowed, it may be useful to highlight the breadth and depth of academic support for the understanding that Paul here teaches that nature was altered in the judgment on Adam's sin.

Paul writes in Rom. 8:18-25:

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy [compared] to the glory that is going to be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the intense expectation of the

⁴⁹ Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 92.

⁵⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 726.

⁵¹ See, for example, the detailed treatment by Harry A. Hahne in *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 171-209. A less in-depth but still substantial assessment is Henry B. Smith, Jr., "Cosmic and universal death from Adam's fall: an exegesis of Romans 8:19-23a," *Journal of Creation* (April 2007), 75-85, which is available online at <https://creation.com/cosmic-and-universal-death-from-adams-fall-an-exegesis-of-romans-819-23a> (retrieved on April 11, 2019).

creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not willingly but on account of the one who subjected [it], in hope²¹ that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² For we know that all the creation groans and experiences birth pains together until the present;²³ and not only [that], but even ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we ourselves also groan in ourselves while eagerly awaiting [our] adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, through endurance we eagerly await [it].

To what does "creation" (*ktisis*) refer? By far the most popular modern interpretation is that "creation" refers to what we typically call "nature," that is, the nonhuman material creation (sometimes labeled the subhuman creation), both animate and inanimate. A cogent and concise explanation and defense of this understanding is provided by C. E. B. Cranfield.⁵² He concludes, "The only interpretation of *κτίσις* in these verses which is really probable seems to be that which understands the reference to be to the sum-total of sub-human nature both animate and inanimate." Those sharing this view include Sanday and Headlam, Murray, Morris, Dunn, Fitzmyer, Stott, Cottrell, Witherington III and Hyatt, Osborne, Jewett, Kruse, Longenecker, Schreiner, Moo, and Thielman.⁵³ Osborne says there is a "strong consensus" regarding this view,⁵⁴ and most who disagree have a broader understanding that *includes* the nonhuman material creation.⁵⁵

By whom was the creation subjected? Nearly all modern commentators agree that God is the one who subjected creation to the condition from which it longs to be freed and that he did so in his judgment on the sin of Adam. This is the understanding of Sanday and Headlam, Murray, Cranfield, Käsemann, Morris, Dunn, Edwards, Fitzmyer, Stott, Stuhlmacher, Mounce, Cottrell,

⁵² C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:411-412.

⁵³ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 207; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 301-302; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 320; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), 469-470; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 506-507; John Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 238; Jack Cottrell, *Romans Volume 1*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing, 1996), 487; Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 222-223; Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 208-209 (fn.); Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 511; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 347; Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 277 (fn. 5); Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 720-722; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 426; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 535-536; Frank S. Thielman, *Romans*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 402.

⁵⁴ Osborne, 208 (footer).

⁵⁵ For example, Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 321, says the term "can refer to all of creation, both human and subhuman."

Witherington and Hyatt, Osborne, Jewett, Hultgren, Kruse, Bird, Longenecker, Schreiner, Moo, and Thielman.⁵⁶ Hultgren states, "This is almost universally the view of major interpreters."⁵⁷

To what was creation subjected? A large majority of modern commentators understand the φθορά (decay/corruption) to which the nonhuman material creation was enslaved in God's judgment on Adam's sin to be a condition they variously describe as death, decay, dissolution, perishability, and transitoriness. This is the view of Sanday and Headlam, Murray, Cranfield, Käsemann, Morris, Dunn, Fitzmyer, Stott, Stuhlmacher, Mounce, Cottrell, Witherington and Hyatt, Osborne, Jewett, Hultgren, Kruse, Bird, Longenecker, Schreiner, Moo, and Thielman.⁵⁸ Paul is not referring to the presence in creation of morally corrupt human beings, as that state was not imposed on creation by God. Being enslaved to decay, the personified creation experiences ματαιότης (frustration/futility) in that it wants to act as originally designed but cannot because of the changes imposed on it as a result of human sin.

John Feinberg remarks on the implications of this text:

[Rom. 8:18-22] says that the creation was subjected to futility, but not of its own will (v. 20). Moreover, it was subjected in hope of a removal of that futile state when the sons of God are revealed (v. 21). As Moo, Cranfield, and other able commentators explain, this **must refer back to the results of the fall in Genesis 3 and the anticipation of the lifting of the curse** when believers are glorified and **creation is restored** in a coming day. But note also what verse 21 says about creation's subjection. It says that the creation is enslaved to **corruption or decay**, a corruption that will lift with the revelation of the glory of the sons of God. To what does this decay and corruption refer? Certainly not moral corruption, because animals and plants are not moral agents capable of moral decline. It must refer to physical decay, but doesn't that ultimately involve physical death? If not, then what? Certainly whatever it is, it must be rather painful, since Paul talks about the creation groaning and suffering the pains of childbirth as it awaits its restoration. What can such language mean if not that there is pain and suffering within the natural order? And the **most natural understanding of this is that such decay includes death**. Hence, it seems that **Adam's sin brought death into the whole world, not just into the human race**.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Sanday and Headlam, 208; Murray, 303; Cranfield, 414; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 235; Morris, 321-322; Dunn, 470-471; James R. Edwards, *Romans*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 213; Fitzmyer, 507-508; Stott, 238-239; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, trans. by Scot J. Hafemann (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 134; Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 184-185; Cottrell, 488; Witherington and Hyatt, 223; Osborne, 211; Jewett, 513; Hultgren, 322; Kruse, 343; Bird, 278; Longenecker, 722-723; Schreiner, 427; Moo, 538; Thielman, 403.

⁵⁷ Hultgren, 322 (fn. 331).

⁵⁸ Sanday and Headlam, 208; Murray, 304; Cranfield, 415; Käsemann, 235; Morris, 322; Dunn, 471-472; Fitzmyer, 509; Stott, 239; Stuhlmacher, 134; Mounce, 185; Cottrell, 490; Witherington and Hyatt, 223-224; Osborne, 212; Jewett, 515; Hultgren, 322-323; Kruse, 344, 347-348; Bird, 278; Longenecker, 722-723; Schreiner, 428; Moo, 539; Thielman, 404.

⁵⁹ John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 622.

The scope of disruption sin has produced in the created order is confirmed in Col. 1:19-20 and Eph. 1:9-10. Paul says in Col. 1:19-20 that God was pleased to **reconcile** to himself **all things** through Christ, whether things on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. He says in Eph. 1:9-10 that God made known the mystery of his will for the handling of the end of history, for the management of the completion of the ages, the content of which is to **bring all things together** in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. "That cosmic reconciliation is in view (and not just human creation) is implied by the thematic τὰ πάντα."⁶⁰

Regarding Col. 1:20, Scot McKnight comments, "Like the similar vision at Rom 8:19-23, Paul believes *all of creation is out of sorts with its Creator, and all of creation is in need of reconciliation*."⁶¹ Wilson states, "In regard to this 'cosmic' reconciliation, Moule observes, 'Perhaps the **best comment on this inclusive hope is Rom. viii**, with its promise of redemption for (apparently) Nature as well as Man."⁶² Douglas Moo says, "While modern theologians have therefore greatly exaggerated the implications of v. 20 in the service of an unbiblical universalism, this passage does, indeed, assert a thoroughly biblical universalism: that God's work in Christ has in view a **reclamation of the entire universe, tainted as it is by human sin** (cf. Rom. 8:19-22)."⁶³ David Garland states, "Our forgiveness by God is part of God's purpose for the whole cosmos to **reconcile all creation** to himself. God does not restrict this reconciliation to one segment of creation – humans. The **whole creation groans** and longs for the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8:15-29), when the world will be brought back into its 'divinely created and determined order.'"⁶⁴

Regarding Eph. 1:9-10, Andrew Lincoln comments:

The summing up of all things in Christ means the unifying of the cosmos or its direction toward a common goal. In line with this letter's close links with Colossians, a similar thought about Christ and the cosmos had been expressed in the Colossians hymn in terms of reconciliation and with explicit soteriological connotations (Col 1:20). **Both passages appear to presuppose that the cosmos had been plunged into disintegration on account of sin** and that it is God's purpose to **restore its original harmony** in Christ. . . . [Lindemann's view that sees a dissolution of the cosmos] posits a total break with Paul's gospel with its

⁶⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 103, fn. 45. See also, Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 135 ("The neuter form [Gk. *ta . . . ta*] and the parallelism with v. 16 make clear that all created things are included.") and David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 103 ("All things' [τὰ πάντα] parallels the references to 'all things' in vv. 16 and 17. In light of this parallelism, it most likely refers to both animate and inanimate entities."). Referring to the "all things" in Eph. 1:10, Harold Hoehner states in *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 223, "most commentators see the words 'all things' as referring to God's creation, animate and inanimate, which are going to be united under Christ."

⁶¹ Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 162.

⁶² Robert McL. Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005), 155.

⁶³ Moo (2008), 137.

⁶⁴ David E. Garland, *Colossians/Philemon*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 111.

hope of the redemption, not the dissolution, of the created order (cf. Rom 8:18-23).⁶⁵

John Stott says, "But 'all things' (*ta panta*) normally means the universe, which Christ created and sustains. So Paul seems to be referring again to that **cosmic renewal**, that regeneration of the universe, that **liberation of the groaning creation**, of which he has already written to the Romans" [fn. Rom. 8:18ff].⁶⁶ Peter O'Brien states, "Both Ephesians and the companion Letter to the Colossians presuppose that the **unity and harmony of the cosmos have suffered** a considerable **dislocation**, even rupture, requiring reconciliation or restoration to harmony."⁶⁷ J. B. Lightfoot says, "Thus the expression implies the **entire harmony of the universe**, which shall no longer contain **alien and discordant elements**, but of which all the parts shall find their centre and bond of union in Christ. Sin and death, sorrow and failure and suffering, shall cease. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth."⁶⁸

In Acts 3:21 Peter says that Jesus will remain in heaven until the times of *restoration of all things*, about which things God testified long ago through the prophets. In other words, when Jesus returns creation will be restored in the sense it will be purged of all the effects of sin (see Rom. 8:18-25; Rev. 21:1-4) in accordance with God's promise in the Old Testament to create a new heaven and new earth. The curse will be lifted (Rom. 8:21; Rev. 22:3) so that the new, redeemed creation will be a suitable place for God and redeemed mankind to dwell together eternally.⁶⁹

This understanding of Peter's words enjoys strong scholarly support. For example, Ernst Haenchen says the text refers to "a restoration of the **original order of creation**."⁷⁰ Paul-Gerd Müller states, "In accord with the Jewish principle that **end time = primeval time**, the Messiah is expected to bring about the eschatological return of things to their **original state**, the **universal renewal of the world** which reestablishes the **original integrity of creation**. The Christ of the Parousia will bring about the promised **restoration of the cosmic universe**."⁷¹ Joseph Fitzmyer says it probably "refers generically to an awaited **universal cosmic reconciliation** . . . a messianic restoral of everything to **pristine integrity and harmony**."⁷² David Peterson states, "But 'restoration' is quite suitable (NRSV, ESV, TNIV, KJV, NKJV, 'restitution'), reflecting the conviction that **the end will be as the beginning**: 'God, through Christ, will restore his **fallen world** to the purity and integrity of his **initial creation**'" [quoting

⁶⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 33.

⁶⁶ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 44.

⁶⁷ Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 114.

⁶⁸ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), 322.

⁶⁹ This does not mean the eschaton will be identical to the pre-Fall creation. It will have the pre-Fall aspects of this creation, and in that sense will be a restoration, but it will also have greater things.

⁷⁰ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. by Bernard Noble et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 208.

⁷¹ Paul-Gerd Müller, "ἀποκαθιστημι, ἀποκαθιστάνω" in Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, editors, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 130.

⁷² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 289.

Barrett].⁷³ Carl Holladay comments: "Here the end of history is envisioned as 'the time when all things will be **restored to their original state**' (3:21a). This expectation of a **return to the paradisaal era of creation** is presented as an ancient prophetic vision deeply embedded in Scripture (v. 21b)."⁷⁴ Darrell Bock likewise states:

The anticipated end was seen as **establishing again the original creation's pristine character**. This restoration is what Jesus brings with his return, an idea given later development in Rev. 19-22 but whose roots Peter declares here are already evident in that "of which God spoke through the holy prophets of old." . . . In the NT this idea is discussed in Matt. 19:28; Rom. 8:18-23; and Heb. 2:5-8. The point is that God has already indicated what the end will be like. So, to learn about the future, Peter urges them to read what God has already said through the prophets about the new era the eschaton would bring.⁷⁵

Finally, God values animals (Gen. 9:9-10; Ex. 23:12; Jonah 4:11), and though he permits them to be used for human benefit, he requires, at the very least, that people not capriciously injure or kill the animals they own (2 Ki. 3:17; Prov. 12:10, 27:23). Since God owns all the animals of the earth (Ps. 50:10), he would not kill or injure them without sufficient reason, and yet those who insist he created the various kinds of animals through an evolutionary process red in tooth and claw have him doing just that. Why would God create through that glacial, gruesome process when he could have directed the immediate appearance of the very same life forms and thereby avoided the suffering and death of so many of his animals? And having done so, why would he describe his creating activity so differently from how it was?⁷⁶

It is one thing to be unpersuaded by these biblical data that so many great expositors have found convincing; our scales differ for a variety of subtle and complex reasons. It is another thing to suggest the idea that Scripture teaches a fall of nature is a theological urban legend, something that has no basis and survives only through ignorance. That simply is not the case.

The Nature-Altering Judgment on Sin According to Early Tradition

The belief that Scripture teaches that the judgment brought by Adam's sin altered the natural world is amply represented in ancient Jewish and Christian writings outside the Bible. It is by no means an eccentric idea that was virtually unknown to ancient theologians. Indeed, the currency of these ideas in the first century fortifies the interpretations of Scripture offered above.

⁷³ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 182.

⁷⁴ Carl R. Holladay, *Acts*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 120.

⁷⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 177. See also, George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 369; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 47; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 289;

⁷⁶ See, for example, Ashby Camp, "A Note on Scripture and the Claim of Universal Common Ancestry," <http://theoutlet.us/ANoteonScriptureandtheClaimofUniversalCommonAncestry.pdf> (retrieved on April 13, 2019).

Jubilees was written in Hebrew by a Pharisee in 135-105 B.C. Only the Ethiopic version is nearly complete. Fragments of the work also survive in a Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Hebrew.⁷⁷ *Jubilees* 3:25-28 states:

²⁵ And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and you ate from that tree from which I commanded you that you should not eat, **the land shall be cursed because of you. Thorns and thistles shall sprout up for you.** And eat your bread in the sweat of your face until you return to the earth from which you were taken because you are earth and to the earth you will return."²⁶ And he made for them garments of skin and he dressed them and sent them from the garden of Eden.²⁷ And on that day when Adam went out from the garden of Eden, he offered a sweet-smelling sacrifice – frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and spices – in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day he covered his shame.²⁸ **On that day the mouth of all** the beasts and cattle and birds and whatever walked or moved **was stopped from speaking** because all of them used to speak with one another with one speech and one language.⁷⁸

The writer understands the land to have been changed by the curse so that it now produces thorns and thistles or produces them in a way it previously did not. And whatever one makes of the view that all the animals conversed with each other prior to Adam's sin, the writer clearly believes the judgment following that sin affected the natural world. Animals were deprived of the ability to speak.

This sheds light on the earlier statements in *Jubilees* 1:29.

And the angel of the presence, who went before the camp of Israel, took the tablets of the division of years from the time of the creation of the law and testimony according to their weeks (of years), according to the jubilees, year by year throughout the full number of jubilees, from [the day of creation until] **the day of the new creation when the heaven and earth and all of their creatures shall be renewed** according to the powers of heaven and according to the whole nature of earth, until the sanctuary of the LORD is created in Jerusalem upon Mount Zion. And **all of the lights will be renewed** for healing and peace and blessing for all of the elect of Israel and in order that it might be thus from that day and unto all the days of the earth.⁷⁹

James VanderKam says of this text that the concept of the new creation in Isaiah "lived on in texts from the Second Temple period and beyond." He states, "Jubilees is more expansive about what will constitute the new creation and transpire in it. The principal elements of the first creation – the heavens, the earth, and **all their creatures – will undergo renewal.** . . . The writer **includes the heavenly bodies** in the renewal, just as he declares that the **creatures on the earth** will be part of it (see 19:25)"⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 46.

⁷⁸ James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:60.

⁷⁹ Charlesworth, 2:54-5.

⁸⁰ James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees 1-21*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 165-166.

The fact these elements of creation will be *renewed* in the eschaton implies that something of their original state had been lost or diminished as to require fresh life or strength to be suitable for eternity. Given that the writer includes animals in the eschatological renewal and believed that animals had been diminished by the judgment on Adam's sin, and given his understanding that the curse created or increased the land/earth's production of undesirable products (thorns and thistles), one would assume, in the absence of a contrary indication, that he believed the loss or diminishment of the other elements of creation also was related to Adam's sin.

The *Apocalypse of Moses* is the Greek translation of a work originally written in Hebrew in the first century B.C. or A.D. The Latin translation of that same work is known as the *Life of Adam and Eve*. These two versions contain some differing material, which suggests they are products of independent development, but both contain the material most relevant to the subject of inquiry. The Hebrew text has not survived. The Greek and Latin translations were made between the second and fourth centuries.⁸¹

Michael J. Murray summarizes the setting of the text to be considered:

Although there are numerous manuscript variants of the text, most of them share in common a narrative account that bears directly on the connection between the Fall and the reality of the subsequent pain, suffering, and death, both in human and nonhuman animals. In the story Adam and Eve have been expelled from the garden and have had their first child, Seth. As a result of the expulsion, they are all now subject to natural decay and disease. At one point Adam, who has become mortally ill, implores Eve and Seth to return to the garden and to plead with God to allow them to take some of the oil from one of the trees of the garden so that Adam might be anointed with it. They agree. Along the way Seth is attacked by a ferocious beast.⁸²

Apocalypse of Moses 10:1 – 11:2 states:

And Seth and Eve went into the regions of Paradise. As they were going, Eve saw her son and a **wild beast attacking him**.² Eve wept, saying, "Woe is me! For when I come to the day of the resurrection, all who have sinned will curse me, saying that "**Eve did not keep the command of God**."³ And Eve cried out to the beast and said, "O you **evil beast**, do you not fear to attack the image of God? How was your mouth opened? **How did your teeth grow strong? How did you not remember your subjection**, for you were once subjected to the image of God?" **11:1** Then the beast cried out, saying, "O Eve, neither your greed nor your weeping are due to us, but to you, since **the rule of the beasts has happened because of you**."² "How is it that your mouth was opened to eat of the tree

⁸¹ Evans, 49.

⁸² Murray, 78.

concerning which God commanded you not to eat from it? **Through this also our nature was changed.**"⁸³

Eve cries out to the wild beast attacking her son, shocked by his aggression and audacity and by his teeth having grown strong. The animal declares that Eve is responsible for the beasts now ruling, now violently and successfully asserting themselves against mankind, and informs her that their (plural) *nature had been changed* as a result of her sin. They had been transformed into predators. Clearly the writer understood the judgment to have altered the natural world.

This is confirmed in *Apocalypse of Moses* 24:1-4, which states:

"God said to Adam: 'Because you transgressed my commandment and listened to your wife, **cursed is the ground** in your labors. ² For when you work it, **it will not give its strength**; it shall yield you brambles and thistles and with sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread. You will suffer many a hardship:

You will grow weary and not rest;

be afflicted with bitterness and not taste sweetness;

³ **be oppressed by heat and burdened by cold**;

you will toil much and not gain wealth;

you will grow fat and finally not be.

⁴ **And the animals over which you ruled will rise up against you** in disorder, because you did not keep my commandment."⁸⁴

Here the judgment changes not only how the earth reacts to agricultural efforts, but it also introduces oppressive heat and burdening cold. It adversely affects even the climate. And beasts are changed so that they now fight against mankind.

The judgment's effect on nature is also evident in *Apocalypse of Moses* 26:1-3. It states:

"And after he had told me these things, he spoke to the serpent in great wrath, saying to him, 'Since you have done this and become an ungrateful vessel, so far as to lead astray the careless heart, accursed are you beyond all wild beasts. ²

"You shall be **deprived of the food which you used to eat**, and shall eat dust every day of your life. **You shall crawl on your belly and you shall be deprived of your hands as well as your feet.** ³ "There shall be left for you **neither ear nor wing nor one limb** of all with which you enticed (them) in your depravity and caused them to be cast out of Paradise."⁸⁵

The serpent is understood to have been physically transformed in the judgment and to have had its diet completely changed. The writer obviously did not believe nature was exempt from sin's consequences.

⁸³ Charlesworth, 2:273-275.

⁸⁴ Charlesworth, 2:283.

⁸⁵ Charlesworth, 2:283-285.

The Jewish historian Josephus completed the *Jewish Antiquities*, a twenty-volume work, late in the first century A.D.⁸⁶ He makes clear his understanding that the judgment on Adam's sin affected the natural world. He writes in *Antiquities* 1:49-51:

Thereupon God imposed punishment on Adam for yielding to a woman's counsel, telling him that the **earth would no more produce anything of herself**, but, in return for toil and grinding labour, would but afford some of her fruits and **refuse others**. Eve He punished by child-birth and its attendant pains, because she had deluded Adam, even as the serpent had beguiled her, and so brought calamity upon him. He moreover **deprived the serpent of speech**, indignant at his malignity to Adam; He also **put poison beneath his tongue, destining him to be the enemy of men**, and admonishing them to strike their blows upon his head, because it was therein that man's danger lay and there too that his adversaries could most easily inflict a mortal blow; He further **bereft him of feet and made him crawl and wriggle along the ground**. Having imposed these penalties upon them, God removed Adam and Eve from the garden to another place.⁸⁷

Not only did the curse change the earth so that it no longer produced the same fruits in the same way, but the serpent, a beast of the field, was transformed. He was deprived of the ability to speak and was made venomous, thus becoming an enemy of mankind by becoming a source of physical death and disfigurement. And the serpent was deprived of its feet, its means of ambulation, leaving it to crawl and wriggle along the ground. The judgment altered the natural world.

Fourth Ezra comprises chapters 3–14 of the book of the Apocrypha known as *2 Esdras*. It was written in Aramaic or Hebrew in the late first century A.D. by a Palestinian Jew, but it survives only in Latin (and in a very small Greek fragment).⁸⁸ *Fourth Ezra* 7:11-13 states:

And he said to me, "So also is Israel's portion. For I made the world for their sake, and **when Adam transgressed** my statutes, **what had been made was judged**."¹² And so the entrances [Ethiopic text "**the ways**" is preferred by most modern scholars] **of this world were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil**,¹³ **full of dangers and involved in great hardships**. But the entrances [the ways] of the greater world are broad and **safe**, and really yield the fruit of immortality.⁸⁹

After Adam sinned, God judged *creation*, "that which had been made," the consequence of which was that mankind's existence became difficult, sorrowful, painful, and perilous. His environment now was full of dangers, which implies a fundamental alteration of nature. Referring to this judgment on what had been made, William O. E. Oesterley comments, "The reference is to the Creation, the created world, which is judged, because of Adam's sin; **the**

⁸⁶ Evans, 174.

⁸⁷ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Books I-IV*, trans. by H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 23-25.

⁸⁸ Evans, 11, 34.

⁸⁹ Charlesworth, 1:537.

whole physical world, that is to say, is condemned."⁹⁰ George H. Box similarly comments, "The thought of the apocalyptist is that the world, after Adam's sin, was **no longer the good world as it had been originally created** by the hand of God – the world which when finished seemed 'good' to the Creator. The whole creation has been 'subjected to vanity' (Rom. 8:29) – has fallen lamentably short of its appointed perfection."⁹¹

Fourth Ezra 8:51-54 states:

⁵¹ But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself, ⁵² because it is for you that Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand. ⁵³ The root of evil is sealed up from you, **illness is banished from you**, and **death is hidden**; hell has fled and **corruption has been forgotten**; **sorrows have passed away**, ⁵⁴ and in the end the treasure of immortality is made manifest.⁹²

"In vv. 52-54 the 'glory' spoken of in v. 51 is unfolded in a series of explicit references detailing the happy accompaniments of the future life of the righteous in heaven."⁹³ In that state, the illness to which mankind is now subject will no longer be present. The fact illness is included with other elements the writer believes are traceable to the judgment on Adam's sin⁹⁴ suggests he views illness the same way. And since illness includes biological and environmental causes, the introduction of it includes changes to the natural world. Thus, the writer understands the judgment on Adam's sin to have affected the natural world.

2 Baruch was written in Hebrew in the early second century A.D. It was translated into Greek, Syriac, Latin, and Arabic. There are no Hebrew manuscripts, and only a fragment of the Greek text survives. Critical discussion of the writing has focused on the Syriac version.⁹⁵

2 Baruch 56:5-7 states:

And as you first saw the black waters on the top of the cloud which first came down upon the earth; this is **the transgression which Adam, the first man, committed**. ⁶ For when he transgressed, **untimely death came into being, mourning was mentioned, affliction was prepared, illness was created**, labor accomplished, pride began to come into existence, the realm of death began to ask to be renewed with blood, the conception of children came about, the passion of the parents was produced, the loftiness of men was humiliated, and **goodness vanished**. ⁷ What could, therefore, have been blacker and darker than these things?⁹⁶

⁹⁰ William O. E. Oesterley, *II Esdras (The Ezra Apocalypse)* (London: Methuen & Co., 1933), 64-65.

⁹¹ George H. Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse: Being Chapters 3-14 of the Book Commonly Known as 4 Ezra (or II Esdras)* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1912), 101-102 (fn. t.).

⁹² Charlesworth, 1:544.

⁹³ R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:597.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., 3:7 (death); 7:11-12 (sorrows); 7:15 (corruption).

⁹⁵ Evans, 36.

⁹⁶ Charlesworth, 1:641.

The writer declares not only that death, mourning, and affliction arose in the judgment for Adam's sin but also that *illness* was created. As just noted, illness includes biological and environmental causes, and thus its creation implies an alteration of the natural world.

Continuing in rough chronological sequence, the first Christian writer outside of the New Testament to comment on the effect of Adam's sin on nature was Theophilus, bishop of Antioch. He wrote the following around A.D. 180 (**Theophilus to Autolyucus, 2.17**):

And **the animals** are named wild beasts, from their being hunted, **not as if they had been made evil or venomous from the first -- for nothing was made evil by God, but all things good, yea, very good, -- but the sin in which man was concerned brought evil upon them.** For when man transgressed, they also transgressed with him. For as, if the master of the house himself acts rightly, the domestics also of necessity conduct themselves well; but if the master sins, the servants also sin with him; so in like manner it came to pass, that in the case of man's sin, he being master, all that was subject to him sinned with him. When, therefore, man again shall have made his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil, **those also shall be restored to their original gentleness.**⁹⁷

Theophilus understands that animals were not evil or venomous as originally created, as that would be contrary to God having made all things good. Rather, they became so only after the judgment on Adam's sin. Both their disposition and physiology were altered so that they now have an intent and capability to inflict harm that they did not previously possess. In the eschaton, they will revert to their previously harmless state. Clearly in his view the judgment on sin transformed nature.

Irenaeus was bishop of Lyon in Gaul in the late second century. His five-volume work, *Against Heresies*, probably was completed in the mid-180s.⁹⁸ It is preserved intact only in a Latin translation, but books IV and V survive in an Armenian translation. Fragments of additional portions of the work exist in the original Greek and in Syriac and Armenian translations.⁹⁹ Irenaeus states the following in 5.32-1:

Inasmuch, therefore, as the opinions of certain [orthodox persons] are derived from heretical discourses, they are both ignorant of God's dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of **the [earthly] kingdom which is the commencement of incorruption**, by means of which kingdom those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature (*capere Deum*); and it is necessary to tell them respecting those things, that it behoves the righteous first to receive the **promise of the inheritance** which God promised to

⁹⁷ Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, American Reprint of Edinburgh Edition (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1895-96), 2:101.

⁹⁸ George Thomas Kurian, James D. Smith, III, *The Encyclopedia of Christian Literature* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 2:661 estimates the date to be 188.

⁹⁹ Antonio Orbe, "Irenaeus of Lyons" in Angelo Di Berardino, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2014), 2:350.

the fathers, and to reign in it, **when they rise again** to behold God in **this creation which is renovated**, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that **in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted**, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that **in the creation in which they were slain** because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and that **in the creation in which they endured servitude**, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. It is fitting, therefore, that **the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition**, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous; and **the apostle has made this plain in the Epistle to the Romans**, when he thus speaks: "For the expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature has been subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; since the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."¹⁰⁰

Irenaeus understands that resurrected saints will inhabit an earth that has been made incorruptible by having been restored to its primeval condition. He declares that Paul made this plain in Rom. 8:19-21. He thus understands that text to teach that the nonhuman material creation, the physical world of human habitation and experience, was subjected to a corruption that will be reversed, turned to incorruption, at the time of the resurrection thus restoring the creation to its primeval condition, to its condition before it was subjected to corruption.

He elsewhere makes clear that this corruption that is to be undone includes a restraint on the earth's fecundity and the carnivory and rebellion of animals. He states in 5.33-3:

The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the times of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule **upon their rising from the dead; when also the creation, having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth:** . . . In like manner [the Lord declared] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear should have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds (*quinque bilibres*) of clear, pure, fine flour; and that all other fruit-bearing trees, and seeds and grass, would produce in similar proportions (*secundum congruentiam iis consequentem*); and that **all animals feeding [only] on the productions of the earth, should [in those days] become peaceful and harmonious among each other, and be in perfect subjection to man.**¹⁰¹

He explains in 5.33-4, citing Isa. 11:6-9 and 65:25, that Isaiah prophesied about this time of the resurrection when animals would cease from carnivory and from posing a danger to mankind:

¹⁰⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, 1:561.

¹⁰¹ Roberts and Donaldson, 1:562-563. Irenaeus asserts at the beginning of 5.33-4 that Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis who heard the apostle John and was a companion of Polycarp, said the same thing in his writings, referring to his five-volume work *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord* that was written around A.D. 130.

When prophesying of these times, therefore, Esaias says: "The wolf also shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall take his rest with the kid; the calf also, and the bull, and the lion shall eat together; and a little boy shall lead them. The ox and the bear shall feed together, and their young ones shall agree together; and the lion shall eat straw as well as the ox. And the infant boy shall thrust his hand into the asp's den, into the nest also of the adder's brood; and they shall do no harm, nor have power to hurt anything in my holy mountain." And again he says, in recapitulation, "Wolves and lambs shall then browse together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the serpent earth as if it were bread; and they shall neither hurt nor annoy anything in my holy mountain, saith the Lord."¹⁰²

He adds, "And it is right that **when the creation is restored**, all the animals should **obey and be in subjection to man**, and **revert to the food originally given by God (for they had been originally subjected in obedience to Adam)**, that is, the productions of the earth." The reference to Adam leaves no doubt that Irenaeus understood the "Adam event" to be the time of the corruption, the alteration of nature, that will be reversed in the end.

Tertullian was a well-educated Christian writer from Carthage. He wrote *Against Hermogenes* between A.D. 200 and 206 as a defense of the Christian doctrine of creation against the gnostic claim that matter was eternal.¹⁰³ He stated in chapter 11:

But if, on the contrary, **there will be an end of evil** when its chief, the devil, shall go away into the fire which God hath prepared for him and his angels, having been first cast into the bottomless pit; **when the revelation of the sons of God shall have delivered from evil the creature which in every respect had been made subject to vanity; when, after the restoration of the innocence and purity of everything created, 'the cattle shall be at peace with the beasts of the field' and 'little children shall play with serpents'**; when the Father shall have 'put beneath the feet of His Son His enemies, for being the workers of evil – in a word, if evil can have an end, then it must needs also have had a beginning, and matter will have a beginning, since it also has an end of its evil. For whatever things are ascribed to evil, are [also] to be attributed [to matter] in accordance with the fact its condition is evil.¹⁰⁴

Referring to Rom. 8:19-21, Tertullian describes the creation's future deliverance from the evil to which it was subjected as the restoration of the innocence and purity of *everything created*. As prophesied in Isa. 11:6-9, this restoration is exemplified by the cattle being at peace with the beasts of the field and the little children playing with serpents. According to Tertullian, creation has been corrupted, has lost the innocence and purity to which it will one day be restored, and that corruption includes beasts becoming carnivorous and snakes posing a danger to

¹⁰² Roberts and Donaldson, 1:563.

¹⁰³ Paolo Siniscalco, "Tertullian" in Di Berardino, 3:716-718.

¹⁰⁴ Tertullian, *The Treatise against Hermogenes*, Ancient Christian Writers, trans. by J. H. Waszink (New York: Paulist Press, 1956), 41.

mankind. The natural world has been altered, and since Tertullian elsewhere indicates that the judgment on Adam's sin adversely affected nature,¹⁰⁵ he no doubt has that same event in mind.

Origen was a Christian teacher and prolific writer who is perhaps best known for his allegorical interpretation of Scripture.¹⁰⁶ Under the influence of Middle Platonism, he viewed the physical creation as God's means of encasing rebellious spirits in matter to arrest their fall toward nonbeing.¹⁰⁷ This led him to an eccentric view of Rom. 8:19-21, but he makes clear in his mid-third century work, *Against Celsus*, that he understood the curse in Gen. 3:17 to have altered the nature of the earth itself. He argues that neither Judea nor Jerusalem is the homeland promised the redeemed because the entire earth was cursed, and since those locations are part of the earth, they too are cursed. In reasoning from the premise that the curse affects all the earth he assumes it is independent of human presence or experience and thus is inherent to the land. He states in 7:28:

Celsus therefore supposes that what we say of a land which is much better and more excellent than this, has been borrowed from certain ancient writers whom he styles "divine," and chiefly from Plato, who in his *Phaedon* discourses on the pure land lying in a pure heaven. But he does not see that Moses, who is much older than the Greek literature, introduces God as promising to those who lived according to His law the holy land, which is "a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey;" which promise is not to be understood to refer, as some suppose, to that part of the earth which we call Judea; **for it, however good it may be, still forms part of the earth, which was originally cursed for the transgression of Adam.** For these words, "Cursed shall the ground be for what thou hast done; with grief, that is, with labour, shalt thou eat of the fruit of it all the days of thy life," were **spoken of the whole earth**, the fruit of which every man who died in Adam eats with sorrow or labour all the days of his life. **And as all the earth has been cursed**, it brings forth thorns and briers all the days of the life of those who in Adam were driven out of paradise; and in the sweat of his face every man eats bread until he returns to the ground from which he was taken. For the full exposition of all that is contained in this passage much might be said; but we have confined ourselves to these few words at present, which are intended to remove the idea, that what is said of the good land promised by God to the righteous, refers to the land of Judea.¹⁰⁸

He adds in 7:29:

If, then, **the whole earth has been cursed in the deeds of Adam** and of those who died in him, it is plain that **all parts of the earth share in the curse**, and among others the land of Judea; so that the words, "a good land and a large, a land

¹⁰⁵ He says in *Against Marcion*, 2.11 (Roberts and Donaldson, 3:306) that at the fall of man woman was condemned to give birth in pain and the earth was cursed so that briers and thorns immediately sprang up where grass, herbs, and fruitful trees previously had grown. The earth no longer yielded on every tree "spontaneous food and untilled nourishment."

¹⁰⁶ Evans, 274.

¹⁰⁷ H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), Kindle Edition (location 793-801).

¹⁰⁸ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans repr. n.d.), 4:623.

flowing with milk and honey, cannot apply to it, although we may say of it, that both Judea and Jerusalem were the shadow and figure of that pure land, goodly and large, in the pure region of heaven, in which is the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was martyred in that city in 258.¹¹⁰ He wrote in *The Treatises of Cyprian* 9:11:

But that it may be more manifestly and fully known how useful and necessary patience is, beloved brethren; let the judgment of God be pondered, which even in the beginning of the world and of the human race, **Adam**, forgetful of the commandment, and a **transgressor of the given law**, received. Then we shall know how patient in this life we ought to be who are born in such a state, that we labour here with afflictions and contests. "Because," says He, "thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which alone I had charged thee that thou shouldest not eat, **cursed shall be the ground in all thy works**: in sorrow and in groaning shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it give forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the food of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, **till thou return into the ground from which thou wast taken**: for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou go." **We are all tied and bound with the chain of this sentence**, until, death being expunged, we depart from this life. **In sorrow and groaning we must of necessity be all the days of our life**: it is necessary that we eat our bread with sweat and labour.¹¹¹

He adds in the following section (12):

Whence every one of us, when he is born and received in the inn of this world, takes his beginning from **tears**; and, although still unconscious and ignorant of all things, he knows nothing else in that very earliest birth except **to weep**. By a natural foresight, the untrained soul **laments the anxieties and labours** of the mortal life, and even in the beginning bears witness by its **wails and groans** to the **storms of the world** which it is entering. For the **sweat of the brow and labour** is the condition of life so long as it lasts.¹¹²

Cyprian understands that the world into which people are born after Adam's sin is a changed world. It is now, because of the curse of the ground and the sentence of death, a world that merits the tears, weeping, laments, wails, and groans with which a baby enters it. Creation is now resistant to man whereas before it provided for him freely.

Methodius, bishop of Olympus in Lycia, was martyred in Euboea in 311. His work *On the Resurrection* survives only in its Slavic translation.¹¹³ He states in 1.8:

¹⁰⁹ Schaff, 4:623.

¹¹⁰ Cross and Livingstone, 441.

¹¹¹ Schaff, 5:487.

¹¹² Schaff, 5:487.

¹¹³ Cristina Ricci, "Methodius of Olympus" in Di Berardino, 2:790.

But it is not satisfactory to say that **the universe** will be utterly destroyed, and **sea and air and sky** will be no longer. For the **whole world** will be deluged with fire from heaven, and burnt for the purpose of purification and renewal; it will not, however, come to **complete ruin and corruption**. . . . And **Paul clearly testifies this**, saying, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For **the creature was made subject to vanity**, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected the same in hope: because **the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God." For **the creation was made subject to vanity**, he says, and he expects that **it will be set free from such servitude**, as he intends to call **this world** by the name of **creation**. For it is not what is unseen but **what is seen that is subject to corruption**. **The creation**, then, **after being restored to a better and more seemly state, remains**, rejoicing and exulting over the children of God **at the resurrection**; for whose sake **it now groans and travails**, waiting itself also for **our redemption from the corruption of the body**, that, when we have risen and shaken off the **mortality of the flesh**, according to that which is written, "Shake off the dust, and arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem,"³ and have been set free from sin, **it also shall be freed from corruption and be subject no longer to vanity**, but to righteousness. Isaiah says, too, "For as the **new heaven and the new earth** which I make, **remaineth before me**, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name be;" and again, "Thus saith the Lord that created the heaven, it is He who prepared the earth and created it, He determined it; He created it not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited." For in reality God did not establish **the universe** in vain, or to no purpose but destruction, as those weak-minded men say, but to exist, and be inhabited, and continue. Wherefore the earth and the heaven must exist again after the conflagration and **shaking of all things**.¹¹⁴

Methodius is rebutting those who claim the material creation is destined to go out of existence, to experience what he labels "complete ruin and corruption." He says Paul refutes that notion when he says in Rom. 8:19-21 that creation was subjected to futility in the hope of being delivered from its bondage to corruption. It is destined to be restored from that bondage and thus will not experience the complete ruin and corruption that is annihilation. So clearly Methodius read Paul as saying the material creation had been subjected to a corruption that would end in its nonexistence if allowed to become complete. In other words, it had been subjected to decay or rendered "mortal," but since it was subjected in the hope it would be delivered, as the saints will be delivered from the corruption of their bodies and thus made immortal, it cannot end in extinction. Creation will be freed of its corruption and thus transformed into the eternal new heaven and new earth.

Methodius does not here specify that the universe was subjected to corruption in the judgment for Adam's sin, but he elsewhere makes clear that Adam's sin is the basis of human mortality.¹¹⁵ Given the parallel he draws between humans becoming immortal in the shaking off

¹¹⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, 6:365-366.

¹¹⁵ See, e.g., *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, 3.6 (Roberts and Donaldson, 6:318-319).

of their corruption and creation, in conjunction therewith, becoming immortal (the eternal new heaven and new earth) in the shaking off of its corruption, there is no reason to think he had separate corrupting events in mind.

Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria in 329. Around 340 he wrote the first two books of his work *Against the Arians*.¹¹⁶ In 2.63 he makes clear that the creation Paul says was subjected to the bondage of corruption includes the nonhuman material creation. As Denis Edwards explains:

[Athanasius] sees **the whole world** as sharing, in its own way, with human beings in salvation in Christ. In his second *Oration Against the Arians*, he builds on Rom. 8:19-23 **to include, completely unambiguously, the whole creation** in the liberation that comes about through Christ's resurrection:

The truth that refutes them is that he is called "firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29) because of the kinship of the flesh, and "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18) because the resurrection of the dead comes from him and after him, and "firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15) because of the Father's love for humanity, on account of which he not only gave consistence to all things in his Word but brought it about that the **creation itself**, of which the apostle says that it "awaits the revelation of the children of God," will at a certain point be delivered "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:19, 21).

In characteristic fashion, Athanasius then goes on to link together creation's deliverance and the divine adoption of human beings, stating that the risen Christ will be the firstborn of the **wider creation** delivered from the bondage of corruption and the firstborn of human beings made children of God. Christ is called "first," he says, to indicate that that which comes after him (humanity and **the rest of creation**) "may abide united to the Word as to a foundational origin and beginning."¹¹⁷

Edwards says in summary that "[Athanasius] believes that the **natural world will be healed** and glorified in its own way, participating with human beings in their deifying adoption as daughters and sons of God."¹¹⁸ Only that which first has been injured, made sick, or diminished in some way can be healed. Athanasius understood the sin in the Garden to be the

¹¹⁶ Alberto Camplani, "Athanasius of Alexandria" in Di Berardino, 1:274, 277.

¹¹⁷ Denis Edwards, "Incarnation and the Natural World: Explorations in the Tradition of Athanasius" in Niels Hendrik Gregersen, ed., *Incarnation On the Scope and Depth of Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 164-165. The text of Athanasius that is quoted is from the translation of Anatholios (p. 157).

¹¹⁸ Edwards, 167. Given this clear recognition that Paul in Rom. 8:19-21 speaks of corruption of the material world that will be healed in the end, Athanasius's statements in *On the Incarnation* (43.3) that only man in creation "had erred from the path of God's purpose for it" and that the other elements had not "swerved from their order" but "remained as they were made" should not be understood to mean the material world was not changed in any way. Rather, they should be understood to mean that, unlike man, the nonhuman material elements never rebelled but always did as directed, even in subjection to corruption. They remained as they were made in that sense.

time when mankind was cast out "to die and to abide in death and in corruption,"¹¹⁹ so there is no reason to think he tied the corruption of the material creation about which he understood Paul to be speaking in Rom. 8:19-21 to some other event.

Ephrem the Syrian was a fourth-century preacher and teacher in Nisibis who spent the last decade of his life (363-373) in Edessa where most of his extant works were written.¹²⁰ He says of Adam's naming the animals in *Commentary on Genesis* 2.9.3:

Moses said, "God brought them to Adam." This happened in order that God might make known the wisdom of Adam and **the harmony that existed between the animals and Adam before he transgressed the commandment**. The animals came to Adam as a loving shepherd. Without fear they passed before him in orderly fashion, by kinds and by species. They were neither afraid of him **nor were they afraid of each other. A species of predatory animals would pass by with a species of animal that is preyed upon following safely right behind.**¹²¹

Ephrem understood that Adam's sin altered the nature of animals. Before then, all the animals lived in peace and harmony with Adam and each other. Afterward the world was fractured and became the world of predator and prey with which we are familiar, the world red in tooth and claw.

Basil of Caesarea and his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, were two of the three fourth-century "Cappadocian Fathers" who are credited with defining Christian orthodoxy in the eastern Roman Empire. Basil became bishop of Caesarea in 370, and Gregory became bishop of Nyssa in 371.¹²² There is uncertainty as to which of them wrote the text quoted below,¹²³ but its relevance is apparent.

But vultures were **not yet** circling above the earth **to find carrion when the animals originated; nothing created nor imagined had yet died** in order to be food for the vultures. **Nature had not yet been divided**; everything was completely fresh. Hunters did not capture prey, since people did not yet practice this. **The beasts did not yet tear apart prey**, since they **were not meat eaters yet**. And it is customary for vultures to feed on corpses, but since **there were not yet corpses, not yet their stench**, so there was **not yet such food for vultures**. **But all followed the diet of swans and all grazed the meadows. So was the first creation, and to this creation will be restored after this [age]**. Humans will return to their original creation, rejecting hostility, a life encumbered with care, the slavery of the world to daily worries. Once they have renounced all this, they will return to that utopian life which is not enslaved to the passions of the

¹¹⁹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 3.4 (Schaff, 4:37-38).

¹²⁰ Cross and Livingstone, 551.

¹²¹ Andrew Louth, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 1:65.

¹²² Cross and Livingstone, 166, 712.

¹²³ See the discussion in St. Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, trans. by Nonna Vernon Harrison (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 14-15.

flesh, which is freedom, the closeness to God, a partaker of the life of the angels.¹²⁴

Whether Basil or Gregory, he understood that creation as it came from the hand of God did not include the death of animals. There were no corpses, no stench of death, no dead animals on which vultures could feed. Death is an intruder in God's very good creation.

John Chrysostom is considered "the greatest preacher in the early church, hence the name *Chrysostomos* ('golden-mouthed')." ¹²⁵ His *Homilies on Romans* most likely were composed and delivered in Antioch between 386-397. ¹²⁶ He states in homily 14 about Rom. 8:19-21:

Ver. 19, 20. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth," he says, "for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

And the meaning is something of this kind. The creation itself is in the midst of its pangs, waiting for and expecting these good things whereof we have just now spoken. . . . and **he personifies this whole world** as the prophets also do, when they introduce the floods clapping their hands, and little hills leaping, and mountains skipping, not that we are to fancy them alive, or ascribe any reasoning power to them, but that we may learn the greatness of the blessings, so great as to reach even to **things without sense** also. . . . It is then in imitation of these that the Apostle **makes a living person of the creature here**, and says that it groaneth and travaileth: not that he heard any groan conveyed from the **earth and heaven** to him, but that he might show the exceeding greatness of the good things to come; and **the desire of freedom from the ills which now pervaded them**. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same." What is the meaning of, "the creation was made subject to vanity?" **Why that it became corruptible**. For what cause, and on what account? **On account of thee, O man. For since thou hast taken a body mortal and liable to suffering, the earth too hath received a curse, and brought forth thorns and thistles. But that the heaven, when it is waxen old along with the earth, is to change afterwards to a better portion** (λῆξι v. p. 384) hear from the Prophet in his words; "Thou, O Lord, from the beginning hast founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They **shall perish**, but thou shalt endure; and they all **shall wax old** as doth a garment, and as a cloak shalt Thou fold them up, and **they shall be changed**." (Ps. cii. 25, 26.) Isaiah too declares the same, when he says, "Look to the heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, for the heavens are as a firmament of smoke, and the **earth shall wax old** like a garment, and **they that dwell therein shall perish in like manner**." (Is.

¹²⁴ The translation is mostly from Louth, 1:42. I filled in the ellipsed sentence from the translation in St. Basil the Great, 53.

¹²⁵ Robert Wilken, "John Chrysostom" in Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 622.

¹²⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, trans. by Panayiotis Papageorgiou (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013), xii.

li. 6.). **Now you see in what sense the creation is "in bondage to vanity," and how it is to be freed from the ruined state.** For the one says, "Thou shalt fold them up as a garment, and they shall be changed;" and Isaiah says, "and they that dwell therein **shall perish** in like manner," not of course meaning an utter perishing. For neither do they that dwell therein, mankind, that is, undergo such an one, but a temporary one, and **through it they are changed into an incorruptible** (1 Cor. xv. 53) **state, and so therefore will the creature be.** And all this he showed by the way, by his saying "in like manner" (2 Pet. iii. 13), which Paul also says farther on. At present, however, he **speaks about the bondage itself**, and shows for what reason it became such, and **gives ourselves as the cause of it.** . . . It was evil intreated for thy sake, and **became corruptible**; yet it has had no wrong done it. For **incorruptible will it be for thy sake again.** This then is the meaning of "in hope." . . .

Ver. 21. "That the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption."

Now what is this creation? Not thyself alone, but that also which is thy inferior, and **partaketh not of reason or sense**, this too shall be a sharer in thy blessings. **For "it shall be freed," he says, "from the bondage of corruption," that is, it shall no longer be corruptible**, but shall go along with the beauty given to thy body; **just as when this became corruptible, that became corruptible also; so now it is made incorruptible, that also shall follow it too.**¹²⁷

Chrysostom clearly understood Paul to mean that the nonhuman material creation was changed to a corrupt, ruined state in the judgment on Adam's sin, which state included the ills, the negative effects, of deterioration and perishability that are analogous to the mortality that was imposed on mankind in that same judgment. As mankind will be transformed in the eschaton from its present state of corruption to immortality, creation itself will be transformed from its present state of corruption to imperishability.

Elsewhere he speaks of that state as one in which "all things **relating to decay** are utterly removed, and incorruptible glory reigns **in every part.**" He urges his addressee to

consider the transfiguration to take place in the whole creation; for it will not continue to be such as it is now, but will be far more brilliant and beautiful, and just as gold glistens more brightly than lead, so will **the future constitution of the universe be better than the present: even as the blessed Paul saith** "Because the creation also itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." For now indeed, seeing that it **partakes of corruption**, it is subject to many things such as **bodies of this kind naturally experience**: but then, **having divested itself of all these things**, we shall see it display its beauty in an incorruptible form: for inasmuch as it is to receive incorruptible bodies, **it will in future be itself also transfigured into the nobler condition.**¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Schaff, 11:443-445.

¹²⁸ Chrysostom, *An Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall*, 1.11 (Schaff, 9:99-100).

He also speaks of Rom. 8:19-21 in *The Homilies to the Statues of the People of Antioch*, 10.10:

But since this subject is too lofty for our simplicity, permit me now to lead you to the sweet fountain of the Scriptures, that we may refresh your ears. For we will not discourse to you of the heaven and the earth separately, but will exhibit the Apostle declaring this very thing to us **concerning the whole creation**, in these plain terms, that **the whole creation is now in bondage to corruption**; and why it is thus in bondage, and at what time it shall be delivered from it, and unto what condition it shall be translated. For after he had said, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;" he goes on to add; "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For **the creature was made subject to vanity**, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope." **But what he intends is to this effect; "The creature," he says, "was made corruptible;" for this is implied in the expression, "being made subject to vanity." For it was made corruptible by the command of God.** But God so commanded it for the sake of our race; **for since it was to nurture a corruptible man, it was necessary itself should also be of the same character**; for of course corruptible bodies were not to dwell in an incorruptible creation. But, nevertheless, he tells us, **it will not remain so.** "The creature also itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption;" and afterwards, for the purpose of shewing when this event shall take place, and through whom, he adds, "Into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." **For when we are raised, his meaning is, and assume incorruptible bodies; then also this body of the heaven, the earth, and the whole creation, shall be incorruptible, and imperishable.**¹²⁹

Augustine became "coadjutor bishop" of Hippo (in Numidia, North Africa) in 395 and assumed sole direction of the diocese upon Valerius's death not long thereafter. He held that office until his death in 430. He wrote his famous *City of God* in installments between 416-422.¹³⁰ Augustine maintained the continual goodness of God's creation, as reflected in its beauty and harmonious operation, but he also attributed all present miseries of the human condition, including what we would call "natural evil," to the sin that was introduced by Adam. These miseries are considered good in the sense they are God's righteous punishment and provide potential spiritual benefits to mankind,¹³¹ but they would not exist but for Adam's sin. This is clear in *The City of God* 22.22, where he states:

¹²⁹ Schaff, 9:411.

¹³⁰ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 128.

¹³¹ He says in *The City of God* 11.22 (Schaff, 2:217), "This cause, however, of a good creation, namely, the goodness of God,-- this cause, I say, so just and fit, which, when piously and carefully weighed, terminates all the controversies of those who inquire into the origin of the world, has not been recognized by some heretics, because there are, forsooth, many things, such as fire, frost, wild beasts, and so forth, **which do not suit but injure this thin blooded and frail mortality** of our flesh, **which is at present under just punishment.**" In 22.24 (Schaff, 2:502) he says that the misery of the human race "reflects His **retributive justice.**"

That the **whole human race** has been **condemned in its first origin, this life itself**, if life it is to be called, **bears witness by the host of cruel ills with which it is filled**. . . . who can describe, who can conceive the number and severity of **the punishments which afflict the human race**, – pains which are not only the accompaniment of the wickedness of godless men, but are a part of the human condition and the common misery . . . **What numberless casualties threaten our bodies from without**, – extremes of heat and cold, storms, floods, inundations, lightning, thunder, hail, earthquakes, houses falling; or from the stumbling, or shying, or vice of horses; from countless poisons in fruits, water, air, animals; from the painful or even deadly bites of wild animals; from the madness which a mad dog communicates, so that even the animal which of all others is most gentle and friendly to its own master, becomes an object of intenser fear than a lion or dragon, and the man whom it has by chance infected with this pestilential contagion becomes so rabid, that his parents, wife, children, dread him more than any wild beast! **What disasters are suffered** by those who travel by land or sea! What man can go out of his own house without being exposed on all hands to **unforeseen accidents**? Returning home sound in limb, he slips on his own doorstep, breaks his leg, and never recovers. What can seem safer than a man sitting in his chair? Eli the priest fell from his, and broke his neck. How many accidents do farmers, or rather all men, fear that the crops may suffer from the weather, or the soil, or the ravages of destructive animals? . . . As to **bodily diseases**, they are so numerous that they cannot all be contained even in medical books. And in very many, or almost all of them, the cures and remedies are themselves tortures, so that men are delivered from a pain that destroys by a cure that pains. . . . From **this hell upon earth** there is no escape, save through the grace of the Saviour Christ, our God and Lord.¹³²

Peter Kaufman comments on this text, "'The human race's present condition is a **punishment' for its parents' sin** – for and among the sins that followed (civ. Dei 22.24)."¹³³ Alan Bernstein says:

To understand Augustine's belief, it is necessary to see how he introduced his account of heaven by adverting again, eloquently and vehemently, to **the fallen human condition**. In the *City of God* 22.22-23 he lists natural disasters, sickness, accidents, human crimes, and even, for the righteous, the war of spirit against flesh. And these, as we have seen, are not "natural," "chance," or "human" phenomena but part of the **penal regime** applied by Providence **since the Fall**.¹³⁴

So for Augustine it seems there was no fall of nature in the sense the inherent qualities of the nonhuman material creation were altered, but after Adam's sin God directs the material creation to act differently than it otherwise would have, to act in a way that brings physical harm and misery to mankind as punishment for its sinfulness. Creation serves God's punitive purpose

¹³² Schaff, 2:499-501.

¹³³ Peter Iver Kaufman, "Augustine's Dystopia" in James Wetzel, ed., *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 56.

¹³⁴ Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 331.

by his immediate direction rather than by a change of its nature. But either way, the present behavior of nature is different than it was before Adam's sin. That sin is the cause of the suffering.

Pseudo-Macarius was a Syrian monk who wrote *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies* between 380/90 and 430.¹³⁵ He states in 11.5:

Take the example of a king who has goods and servants under him ministering to him. However, it happens that he is taken captive by enemies. When he is captured and led out of his country, his servants and ministers must want to follow after him. So also Adam was created pure by God for his service. **All these creatures** were given to him to serve him. He was destined to be the lord and king of all creatures. But when the evil word came to him and conversed with him, he first received it through an external hearing. Then it penetrated into his heart and took charge of his whole being. **When he was thus captured, creation, which ministered and served him, was captured with him.**¹³⁶

The writer understands that the nonhuman material creation was tied to the fate of Adam as its designated ruler. When Adam was captured by sin, the creation that ministered and served him was captured with him. Adam's sin thus affected the natural world.

As for rabbinic literature, *Genesis Rabbah* is a collection of ancient rabbinical interpretations of Genesis that was written around A.D. 425-450.¹³⁷ In *Gen. Rab.* 12.6 it is reported that Rabbi Judan said in Rabbi Abun's name that six things were taken away from Adam: "his lustre, his immortality [lit. 'life'], his height, the fruit of the earth, the fruit trees, and the luminaries." It is declared later in that section, "R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman: Though these things were created in their fullness, yet when **Adam sinned they were spoiled**, and they will not again **return to their perfection** until the son of Perez [viz. Messiah] comes."¹³⁸

The rabbi clearly understood that Adam's sin altered the natural world. Indeed, in *Gen. Rab.* 19.1, Rabbi Hoshaya the Elder is reported to have said of the serpent, "He stood out distinguished [erect] like a reed, and **he had feet**."¹³⁹ According to *Gen. Rab.* 20.5, "When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, UPON THY BELLY SHALT THOU GO, ministering angels descended and **cut off his hands and feet**."¹⁴⁰ The curse's effect on creation also is evident in *Gen. Rab.* 20.8: "CURSED IS THE GROUND FOR THY SAKE, so that it **will produce accursed things, such as gnats, midges, and fleas**."¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Cross and Livingstone, 1015.

¹³⁶ Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, George A. Maloney, trans. and ed. (New York: Paulist, 1992), 92.

¹³⁷ Evans, 238.

¹³⁸ Rabbi H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, (London: The Soncino Press, 1939), 1:91-92.

¹³⁹ Freedman and Simon, 1:149.

¹⁴⁰ Freedman and Simon, 1:162.

¹⁴¹ Freedman and Simon, 1:167.

John of Damascus was a priest at the monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem. In the second quarter of the eighth century he wrote *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, which was the main body of his work *Fount of Knowledge*.¹⁴² He states in 2.10:

Indeed, **before the transgression** all things were under his power. For God set him as ruler over all things on the earth and in the waters. . . . Moreover, **the earth of its own accord used to yield fruits**, for the benefit of the animals that were obedient to man, and **there was neither rain nor tempest on the earth**. **But after the transgression**, when he was compared with the unintelligent cattle and became like to them, after he had contrived that in him irrational desire should have rule over reasoning mind and had become **disobedient to the Master's command, the subject creation rose up against him whom the Creator had appointed to be ruler**: and it was appointed for him that he should till with sweat the earth from which he had been taken.

But **even now wild beasts** are not without their uses, for, by **the terror they cause**, they bring man to the knowledge of his Creator and lead him to call upon His name. And, further, **at the transgression the thorn sprung out of the earth** in accordance with the Lord's express declaration and was conjoined with the pleasures of the rose, that it might lead us to remember **the transgression on account of which the earth was condemned** to bring forth for us thorns and prickles.¹⁴³

John understood that after the judgment on Adam's sin the earth ceased to yield of its own accord fruits for animals and that rain and violent storms began. The creation at that time "rose up against" mankind. Wild beasts became sources of terror, but *even now* (in this post-Fall world) they are useful in bringing people to a knowledge of God. In other words, God has cursed creation in such a way that it continues to serve his purpose. And painful thorns sprang up and were joined with the rose that the juxtaposition might remind us of Adam's sin and the earth that was thereby condemned.

Earlier in 2.10, John says that God in his omniscience foresaw Adam's sin and the corruption to which humanity consequently would be subject, and in anticipation thereof he endowed creatures with qualities that would be useful to mankind in its fallen state. So God made some animals to be suitable for human food, some to be suitable as work animals, and others to be suitable simply for enjoyment. He made varieties of plants and herbs for similar purposes, including some for the healing of disease. John does not say, however, that God made things in anticipation of the Fall that would be harmful to man. Those are post-Fall products of creation's rebellion against mankind. Whatever one makes of John's distinction in that regard, it is coherent, and the point is not that John's understanding necessarily is correct but that he understood nature to have been altered in the judgment on Adam's sin. That is clear.

John also says in 2.28:

¹⁴² Cross and Livingstone, 891.

¹⁴³ Schaff, 9:28.

Of things that are not in our hands some have their beginning or cause in those that are in our power, that is to say, the recompenses of our actions both in the present and in the age to come, but all the rest are dependent on the divine will. For the origin of **all things** is from God, but **their destruction has been introduced by our wickedness** for our punishment or benefit. **For God did not create death, neither does He take delight in the destruction of living things. But death is the work rather of man, that is, its origin is in Adam's transgression,** in like manner as all other punishments. But all other things must be referred to God.¹⁴⁴

He understands that the destruction of all things created by God was introduced by Adam's sin. Moreover, he ties the death of all living things to that sin. God did not create death originally; it is the work of man in that it was imposed as judgment for Adam's sin.

Simeon the New Theologian was abbot of the monastery at St. Mamas near Constantinople from 980-1009.¹⁴⁵ He wrote in his Homily 38: "The words and decrees of God become the law of nature. Therefore also the decree of God, uttered by Him **as a result of the disobedience of the first Adam** – that is, the decree to him of **death and corruption** – **became the law of nature**, eternal and unalterable."¹⁴⁶ Wolfgang Smith comments:

There is reason to believe that even the so-called laws of nature, as we know them, came into force **with the Fall**; St. Symeon the New Theologian, for example, suggests this quite clearly when he writes: [quotes text given above]. We need however to understand these last two adjectives in a relative sense, for surely St. Symeon understood well enough that these "eternal and unalterable" laws will again be suspended on "the last Day," when "the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matt. 24:29), and there will be "new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall be remembered no more . . ." (Is. 65:17). It thus appears that what we know as the laws of nature – what the physicist, for instance, has his eye upon – apply only to an interim phase of the cosmos: to the period, namely, between the Fall and the general Resurrection.¹⁴⁷

These references should dispel the notion that it was rare for an ancient theologian to understand Scripture to teach that the nonhuman material creation was changed in the judgment on Adam's sin. That understanding was common. I submit it became so because that is what the Scriptures teach. Because of Adam's sin, the created order is not the way it is supposed to be, but a Day is coming when it all will be "heavenized," when sin and all its destructive consequences will be expunged, and creation will continue forever as the divine utopia of the new heavens and new earth, that perfect reality of love and fellowship in which there is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain for the former things has passed away.

¹⁴⁴ Schaff, 9:41.

¹⁴⁵ Cross and Livingstone, 1500.

¹⁴⁶ St. Symeon the New Theologian, Homily 38, Russian edition, vol. 2, p. 319 [New English translation by Fr. Seraphim in *The First-Created Man*, pp. 82-83.] This is citation from Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000), 661, fn. 45.

¹⁴⁷ Wolfgang Smith, *The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology* (Oakton, VA: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 2004), 113-114.