Becking, Bob, and Susan Hennecke, eds.

*Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters*

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*Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters*, a revision of an earlier work\(^1\) edited by Harm Goris and Susanne Hennecke, is a collection of essays concerned with *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which seeks to answer the following questions about the biblical story of Adam and Eve:

[What happened to Adam and Eve] in the period subsequent to the biblical paradise story being made history, not only in mainstream Christian thought and theology? In what ways has the story about the first two human agents been used through the centuries? How is it that it has come to function as a kind of cornerstone used in the construction of different religious identities? And in what ways have interpreters constructed the specific interaction between religious and sexual identity? How did they manage, for example, the tension between equality and difference, speaking not only about the relationship between the sexes, but also about the relationship between God and wo/man? (xi)

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1. Harm Goris and Susanne Hennecke, eds., *Adam en Eva in het Paradijs: Actuele visies op man en vrouw uit 2000 jaar christelijke theologie* (Utrechtse Studies 7; Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005). *Out of Paradise* has added a few essays to this earlier volume—at the expense of the removal of some essays in the previous volume—from the perspective of non-Christian traditions (xii).
As expected from title’s inverse of the typically phrased “Adam and Eve,” the underlying purpose of this volume is polemical. By surveying how diversely Eve and Adam were perceived and interpreted by select historical figures in reception history, the authors hope to challenge the deferral to the traditional view of the Genesis story as support for the suppression of women, for the traditional view is not as monolithic as one might think (xi–xii).

Chapter 1 begins by laying an exegetical foundation, as Bob Becking provides a narrative analysis of Gen 2–3. For Becking, the traditional view—rooted in 4 Ezra and Rom 5—that “the human, though created immortal, has become mortal as a result of the fall from grace is absent from the garden story” (12, emphasis added). Rather, the point of the Gen 2–3 episode is to resolve the problem-based plot found in 2:5: “there was not yet a plant of the field on earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up, since YHWH-God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was no human to till the soil” (Becking’s translation). Thus, “the meaning of human life is to be found in the tilling of acres, and not in dwelling in a luxurious garden” (6). This fits well with Becking’s proposed Sitz im Leben for the episode, the late monarchical era. Here the author of Gen 2–3 wanted to “portray the toilsome and hard life of Late Iron Age Palestinian peasants as being in continuity with the origin of the world” (5). Becking then offers a construct beginning with the creation of the androgynous human, to the observation that “walking in the garden is not tilling the soil,” to suggesting that the human action to eat of the fruit is simply a step in the process of resolving the narrative problem at hand (6–10). When one interprets the first human as androgynous and views actions in Gen 3 as crucial to the movement of the narrative structure, Eve is exonerated from any blame.

Becking is right that the idea of a “fall” is later imposed on the text. Further, his narrative analysis is a creative proposal and has brought to surface fresh dimensions of the textual story. Still, I find it unlikely that an Israelite of the late monarchical period (or any period, for that matter) would have seen the human’s actions, which perform the opposite of the divine command, as merely a necessary spring-board for fulfilling life’s purpose (= a toilsome life) and thus morally insignificant. True, from a narratological standpoint, Becking has observed an important thrust in the narrative structure, but the human(s) not heeding the divine command cannot be swept under the rug so easily. In my opinion, other arguments will better serve to vindicate Eve.

Geert van Oyen takes up the New Testament side of the discussion in chapter 2 (“The Character of Eve in the New Testament”), treating the two references to Eve in 2 Cor

2. On this point, see John R. Levison, Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch (JSPSup 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), passim.
11:3 and 1 Tim 2:13–14. Van Oyen rightly frames the issue at hand as hermeneutical: on the one hand, adhering uncritically to every statement in Scripture without consideration of the cultural context encroaches on a danger of “biblical literalism,” while only adhering to the statements in Scripture that accord with our culture encroaches on a danger of “selective reading.” It is the job of the interpreter to proceed responsibly through these two extremes, and once an interpretive decision is made, at least one is aware of the presuppositions that led to the position. Van Oyen highlights the textual context of 2 Cor 11 to highlight that the reference to Eve does not actually concern suppression of women, but it is only an analogy to support Paul’s broader point (16–21). That is, the Corinthians were easily swayed by instruction other than Paul’s (and thus ultimately moved from devotion to Christ), just as Eve was swayed easily from the instruction of the divine command by the serpent. At the least, this suggests some failure on Eve’s part, a thought that van Oyen demonstrates as abounding in the Jewish and Greco-Roman literature of the Second Temple period though the late first century (18–9, 23–25). To no surprise, this perspective has also permeated the mind of 1 Timothy’s author, as exegesis of 2:13–14 in its original context evinces (21–26). The solution for van Oyen is first to recognize that 1 Timothy’s author gives “conservative” instruction in accord with her or his cultural context, yet recognizing that the command “is too general and too negative vis-à-vis women” (27). Ultimately, then, the interpreter also should feel the freedom to interpret in accord with the “spirit of the times,” as did the biblical writers, for “the Christian community will always have to be translated in dialogue with the changing concrete situations” (28).

Van Oyen’s essay will prove helpful to all readers, for he writes objectively and frames the issues in a fair way. One aspect left undeveloped in his essay, which could have received comment, is the fact that Eve was seen as “deceived” in the texts in question, whereas Adam elsewhere is seen as the root cause of sin entering the world. Thus, Adam actually was more at fault than Eve, because he disobeyed the divine command without needing to be deceived. Engaging the church fathers here would have revealed an interpretation of Eve in the 2 Corinthians and 1 Timothy text in a more positive light.3

Chapter 3 turns to Augustine in an essay by Willemien Otten entitled “The Long Shadow of Human Sin: Augustine on Adam, Eve and the Fall.” Otten looks not only at how Augustine’s presuppositions (i.e., his views on Scripture’s authority, the relationship between man and woman, the church, and sexuality) shaped his perspective on Eve and

Adam but also how the Genesis story impacted his presuppositions (*Wirkungsgeschichte* proper; 36–49).

Otten rightly highlights that Augustine’s opinions on the garden story varied as he grew older, ranging from belief that the first couple were an ascetic couple, to the first couple being an “amicably married” couple, to the first couple being our “historical-genealogical but also fraught social-psychological forebears” (48). In light of this, one needs to be careful before asserting dogmatically what Augustinian belief is. As for Augustine’s view on sexuality, it has been erroneously attacked, for he indeed viewed sex as occurring before the fall (*City of God* 14.26). Sex in itself, then, is not a bad thing; only the “lust of the flesh,” which was a result of the fall, is problematic (47). Thus, while he certainly was not a feminist, Augustine may not be as bad as once thought.

Thomas Aquinas is the focus of chapter 4: “Is Woman Just a Mutilated Male? Adam and Eve in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas.” Here Harm Goris addresses some of the more misogynist-sounding assertions in Thomas’s works. Most notable are: “Eve is only created for the sake of procreation, in which the woman is passive and the man active; Eve is a ‘mutilated male,’ subordinated to Adam; women are not as intelligent as men, and are therefore less fully the image of God” (50). Whereas others have attempted to exonerate Aquinas from the sexist label by highlighting more egalitarian-sounding assertions elsewhere in Thomas’s writings or by arguing that Aquinas is sexist only because of his cultural context, Goris takes a different path and objects that Aquinas has been misread (50–51).

In order to understand St. Thomas’s thought properly, the essay begins by laying out the historical background in which Aquinas was situated. Although Aquinas was indeed impacted by a perfect storm of thirteenth century women-degrading forces—he *lived in the city, studied in the university, and was trained in the “new mendicant order of the Dominicans”—the reintroduction of Aristotle’s philosophy in the West would prove most influential (52–56). Against the backdrop of Aristotelian views regarding human anatomical and physiological distinctions (not to dismiss influences from non-Aristotelian traditions as well), Aquinas’s sharper assertions are buffered. (1) It is really the *sexual distinction* that is purposed for procreation, not women. (2) The “passivity” of the women “only regards the conception itself” (57–58). (3) It is the *nature* of a woman that is less than a male, not the woman as an individual. But this last point is only because of the belief that the body and the mind—though distinct in ways—are also “conjoined and dependent upon each other” (61–63). Thus Aquinas only makes an innocent observation that the physical stature of a male is (generally) more massive than a woman. (However, this idea, for whatever reason, is absent in Aquinas’s later works [63]).
In sum, Aquinas ultimately is still found androcentric and misogynist in ways, but the result of Goris’s study presents a much more “nuanced” understanding of Aquinas’s thought on Eve, Adam, and women in general.

Theo Bell discusses the difference of thought on Adam and Eve in the young and old Martin Luther as revealed in Luther’s Sermons and Lectures on Genesis (ch. 5). The three parts the essay concerns itself with is Luther’s interpretation of the imago dei (70–73), the garden narrative (73–82), and life after the fall (82–86). For Luther, the biblical story is the beginning point for all inquiries, literature that he interprets at face value and as historically true (70–71). Unlike his predecessors, Luther is not interested in matters of philosophical anthropology—scientifically, what is the body? What is the soul? What makes a male and female different?—rather, his starting point is theological. The imago dei, then, does not find definition in humanity’s rational capability, but “the right relationship of a person to God” (71). Defined in this light, Luther naturally also believes the image and the similitude was completely lost at the fall, since that “right relationship” was severed.

Before the fall, male and female were equal in every aspect, spiritually and physically (72). In spite of this, young Luther—that is, the picture of Luther we gather from his sermons—still viewed women as subordinate to men. The older Luther, however—whom we see in his Lectures on Genesis—appears a bit more nuanced: men and women are to be equal partners in ruling over the world (73); Eve is by no means a “mutilated male” (74); Eve, like Adam, was animated into life by the decree of God (75). For Luther, unlike present-day women, Eve was “more excellent and in no respect subordinated to Adam” (75). However, since women are physically different from men, Eve was slightly lower in glory and dignity—although still most glorious (74). Further, since the divine decree was given to and heard only by Adam, who in turn had to communicate the message to Eve, Adam was primarily responsible for preaching any divine word (77–79).

Luther’s views on life after the fall are quite different, although one may find one or two of his statements quite surprising. Both Adam and Eve are equally responsible for and equally guilty of their disobedience, for both sinned in unbelief, not believing that punishment would follow the eating of the fruit (Luther does not buy into the view that Adam and Eve sinned on account of lust; 82–83). Notwithstanding this equal guilt, women are now subjected to men and are no longer joint rulers of the creation. Rather, they are to serve as partners in procreation (84).

Luther is a mixed bag, at times highlighting equality, at times highlighting inequality, and at times ostensibly inconsistent (89). Bell prefers not to systematize the varying statements throughout Luther’s works, and he may be right that it cannot be done;
regardless, he has done well to give the reader substantial insight into the mind of this major reformation figure.

Chapter 6 turns to Isaac La Peyrère, in “Adam and Eve as Latecomers: The Pre-Adamite Speculations of Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676)” by Willem van Asselt. The essay is a bit off topic—it surfaces the first thoughts on the possibility of pre-Adamites rather than assaying La Peyrère’s perspective on the garden story as pertains to the first couple—but still nonetheless interesting and relevant to the interpretive development of the early chapters of Genesis. After a biographical introduction (90–94), van Asselt looks to the exegetical and scientific reasons behind La Peyrère’s views (94–98, 98–100), followed by a summary of the argumentation and select people who opposed his theories (100–105). The two exegetical texts in question for La Peyrère were Gen 4 (the existence of other people, unexplained by Gen 4’s author) and Rom 5:12–14. Determinative for the Romans passage were the phrases “before the law was given” (5:13) and “[death reigned] even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam” (5:14). The “law” in question is not the law at Sinai or any subsequent form of it; rather, it pertains to the Edenic law given to Adam (94–95). This is in dialectic with the assertion that there is a kind of sin unlike Adam’s sin in Rom 5:14, which La Peyrère identified as the “natural sin” of the pre-Adamites (ibid.). The historical context here is essential: the ongoing discoveries of new people and places during the early sixteenth through the seventeenth century (North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, Greenland, etc.; 98–100). This, conflated with La Peyrère’s biblical exegesis, led him to conclude that the Genesis story pertained only to Jewish history, not world history. Although La Peyrère did not challenge “the historical veracity of the two creation accounts” (105), one can certainly see how he was a forerunner to the critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (e.g., Astruc, Spinoza), who began to question the received tradition in light of new developments in the humanities (contra van Asselt).

Progress continues in regard to sexual equality as chapter 7 encounters Schleiermacher (“The Promise of a Salutary Difference: Adam and Eve in the Theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher”). Here Heleen Zorgdrager looks chiefly at Schleiermacher’s On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers (113–19) and Christian Faith (120–22). Although he holds a virtual Marcion appreciation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, the stories of Adam and Eve receive sufficient attention because they are directly referred to in the New Testament (111–13).

In On Religion, Schleiermacher begins by defining precisely what religion is: an experience affecting a human through the on-goings of the universe, which ultimately more fully connects the human with all living things in the world (113–14). How is one to achieve such an experience? The solution is found in the garden story, for it is only at the creation
of Eve that Adam’s “spiritual tones start to move within him” (114). It is only through the relational dialogue through woman and man that a person becomes fully human and fully capable of hearing and responding to the divine (114). This positive assessment of sexual difference differs from many of Schleiermacher’s predecessors in that an androgynous primordial human is not the ideal human. Typically, this view argues that sexual difference is a result of original sin, but for Schleiermacher sexual difference is a good thing (115–18). Further, the story of Adam and Eve is to be understood as the story of all humans, who likewise can achieve religious consciousness through relational dialogue with the opposite sex. Some, as Zorgdrager highlights, have suggested that Schleiermacher’s analysis of the garden story is androcentric, portraying the acquisition of a male’s religious consciousness and not a female’s. I am in agreement with Zorgdrager, however, that such an objection is unwarranted (118–19). As I see it, Schleiermacher’s male-centered narration is only on account of the presentation of the biblical text in Gen 2, where Schleiermacher perceives a male to be the protagonist/central-figure and Eve as a silent, complementary figure. Further, Schleiermacher is very clear elsewhere that both sexes are complete equals and that one is not complete without the other (118–19).

In Christian Faith, Schleiermacher continues his “allegorical” exegesis (Zorgdrager’s descriptive label) of Adam and Eve in a discussion on the topic of original sin (120–22). One does not need to refer to the biblical account of Gen 3 to acquire knowledge on the topic, but only needs to look within oneself, for the first humans were just like us, moody and often one-sided with regard to sexual difference (122). These weaknesses led the first humans to sin, as well as all subsequent humans (122).

Chapter 8, by Susanne Hennecke, concerns itself with “A Different Perspective: Karl Barth and Luce Irigaray Looking at Michelangelo’s The Creation of Eve.” Barth can express his thoughts in a very philosophical and abstract way, so one should naturally expect this chapter to be less than reader-friendly, notwithstanding Hennecke’s attempts to concretize the language (my comment on this chapter will thus be slightly longer). Hennecke’s thesis, in essence, is that Barth’s perspective on Michelangelo’s The Creation of Eve is the driving force in his exposition of the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans—one will note Barth’s explicit reference to this work of art (126). Very little is said about the many different facets of the garden story in Gen 2–3; rather, the focus here is only the components of the story that are depicted in the painting.

For Barth, Eve’s posture toward God is one of worship, but such “independent action” in actuality places her in opposition to God. In this light, *The Creation of Eve* foreshadows the sixth panel of the Sistine Ceiling (i.e., *The Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve*). Further, just after her creation Eve is found talking about God (with the serpent) rather than with him, inevitably objectifying the creator (126–27). Barth thus sees Eve as the “first religious personality,” and as such the garden story represents “religion” through Eve. This, of course, is not a good thing, since Barth has a negative view of religion.

The entire scene of the painting should be understood as tainted when compared with the original paradisiacal situation portrayed in *The Creation of Adam*, where all things are in unity (128). Granted, there were differences, but such differences were only perceivable to God: “God and men, ‘Higher’ and ‘Lower,’ ‘There’ and ‘Here’ and ‘absolute and relative’” (ibid.). With the creation of Eve and the eventual migration into a sinful state, all of these boundaries became evident, although Barth discusses the three most prominent. The first boundary is religion, which is “limited to something beyond it,” a boundary between God’s realm and humanity’s realm (129). The second boundary, closely related, concerns the relationship of the human (= “religious personality”) to God (129). The third boundary is the relationship between Adam and Eve, who represent “higher and lower possibilities.” Here Eve represents the higher religious possibilities and Adam the lower, solely human possibilities, such as “alcoholism, eroticism and also intellectualism” (129). Each of these “boundaries” can be viewed positively and negatively by comparing and contrasting them (132–35), but ultimately one must ask, “What do we actually have to do after our definitive fall from Paradise,” since one is essentially stuck in a world of limbo (135)? For Barth, ironically enough, one should become “more radically religious,” in an effort to more clearly define the boundaries which were once invisible (135). The result pushes one further away from God and in effect makes one completely dependent on God and his possibilities (135).

After this helpful presentation of Barth’s argument, Hennecke, through the influence and insights of French philosopher Luce Irigaray, spends the rest of the essay suggesting an alternative interpretation of Michelangelo’s painting (135–39). Irigaray posits that woman is not derived from man in any way, but each possesses his or her own space, with a third space existing between them for interaction (136). Thus, for Hennecke, the creation of Eve in Michelangelo’s painting should not be interpreted in the traditional way, which makes her subordinate to Adam. Rather, Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib is an “election” (137).

Just like *adam* (the human) has been elected from *adaama* (the dust from the ground), now *isha* (the woman) is elected from *adam* (the human). So, in the end, both come from *adam* (the human), first *isha* (the woman) and then *ish* (the...
man). Therefore, in the biblical logic we find quite the opposite of patriarchal derivation techniques. In the end, the election logic is reconfirmed when we read that man is to join himself to the woman. If the Adam in our painting turns to Eve for these reasons, he would turn to God at the same time and thus to his original and eternal destination as imago dei. (137, emphasis original)

This analysis is a microcosm of the positives and negatives to postmodern hermeneutics. On the one hand, this offers an interpretation that is unique and sensitive to our culture, where the meaning of art and the Bible is in the eye of the beholder. Certainly this is a worthy endeavor, especially with respect to gender issues, since most in the present era rightly observe the equality of all people (at least more than has been observed in antiquity). On the other hand, one may question the hermeneutical validity of imposing one’s own meaning on a literary work (i.e., interested exegesis). Leaving Michelangelo’s painting aside—interpretation of art (proper) is quite a complex matter—I would contest Hennecke’s claim that her analysis correlates with the “biblical logic.” For instance, the imposition of the “election” motif is foreign to the text. Further, although Hennecke rightly observes the artistic wordplay in biblical Hebrew, the ish derivates from the adama, not the adam (one might argue for an androgynous human—I am not sure if this is Hennecke’s point—but not on the basis of a lexical wordplay that is absent). For these reasons, one’s acceptance of Hennecke’s postulation (in the final section of the essay) will ultimately depend on one’s own hermeneutical presuppositions.

Chapter 9, Anne-Marie Korte’s “Paradise Lost, Growth Gained: Eve’s Story Revisited—Genesis 2–4 in a Feminist Theological Perspective,” looks at the history of resistance posed to the traditional view on Eve, especially from a woman’s point of view (140–42). After a rehearsal of the traditional misogynist view (142–45), Korte surveys the various attempts at “rehabilitating” the portrayal of Eve up through the early twentieth century (145–48), followed by an analysis of second-wave feminist theological approaches to the issue, which have been more successful penetrating mainstream thought (148–53).

Four main approaches to counter Eve’s evil persona emerged before the feminist second-wave. First is a view that argues for a “double-voiced” reading of the garden story (146). Such an interpretation ostensibly agrees with the traditional view, but then appeals to Eve’s “weak feminine nature” as an excuse for the disobedience. Since Adam is the stronger of the two, he is more to blame. The second view stresses the equality of man and woman from the beginning. Both were made equally in God’s image, and both are equally responsible for wrongdoing. Korte notes, however, that in this argument “the gender aspect is characteristically underplayed or neutralized” (147). Here the androgynous view of the first human finds its home. A third view is more gynocentric. Eve was created from “the most noblest, that is to say purely human, materials” (147).
True, she is created last, but this is because she is the “crown” of creation, in addition to being the mother of all the living (147). A final attempt comes from an appeal to humor, poking fun at Adam’s sleepiness and “childish excuses” (147). Further, if Eve is subordinate to Adam because she was created after Adam, what does this say of Adam, who was created after the animals (148)?

A more recent attempt by second-wave feminists interprets Gen 2–4 according to a “personal growth model.” Here many of the aforementioned arguments are repackaged (e.g., equally made in God’s image; an initial androgynous human), but the key addition is that the Gen 2–4 narrative has humanity’s independence in view as its goal. “The growth model interprets Eve and Adam’s experience—differentiating, longing for the forbidden, making independent choices and feeling ashamed of the consequences—as a sign of personal, social growth” (150). Eve also serves as an archetype for spiritual growth in this model. In Gen 4, the chapter begins with Eve’s “overestimation of her own importance” (“I have gotten a man from the Lord”) to a “more modest appraisal of herself” (“For God hath appointed me another”; 153). Further, a close look at the characterization in Gen 2–4 reveals how Eve has a more prominent role than Adam, for Adam is lexically linked with the ground (ha-adama and ha-adam), but Eve is lexically linked with YHWH (YHWH and Hawwah; 152). In my assessment, feminist interpreters need to be careful with such suggestions, lest the once oppressed in turn become oppressive by undermining the male gender.

In spite of this fresh and creative argument, Korte points out several objections against this model. For instance, in this model not every component of the garden story is considered (154). For example, how does the serpent fit into all of this? Further, the construct offered is too tidy of an interpretation, only highlighting aspects that fit the feminist bias while minimizing aspects that do not accord (155). Korte does not attempt to counter these objections; rather, she moves for a change in terminology, preferring to call this model one of “differentiation,” not “growth” (156). She expounds this just briefly in a Barthian sort of way (noting the existence of “boundaries”), but a more detailed elaboration would be most interesting and helpful (perhaps she can do this in a future article).

The final two chapters are especially valuable because they give insight into how Eve and Adam have been interpreted in other religions, although only Jewish and Muslim traditions are represented. Chapter 10, by Eric Ottenheijm, discusses “Eve and ‘Women’s Commandments’ in Orthodox Judaism Perspective.” In general, Ottenheijm informs us that “Eve functions as a catechism of dos and don’ts in female social conduct, especially regarding modest behavior” (158). But Ottenheijm’s focus in this essay is much narrower, namely, the impact Eve has had on women-specific (halakah) commandments (158–60).
Here, very much like the Christian tradition, interpretation of Gen 2–3 is a mixed bag. On the one hand, the earlier talmudic literature appears misogynistic, for some gender specific laws that women are to obey in Judaism (e.g., challah, nerot, and niddah) are instituted as a punishment for Eve’s disobedience. Women obey the commandment of challah because Eve made Adam impure; women obey the commandment of the light because Eve extinguished Adam’s light; women obey menstrual purity laws because Eve spilled Adam’s blood and needs to atone for it (160–62). Yet on the other hand the modern era has brought—especially in Reformed Jewish circles—liberation of Eve’s culpability. Some still refer to the topic of Eve’s culpability, but only to explain the “halakhic hierarchy of the priority of woman over man.” That is, why is a woman privileged to do this and not a man (163–64)? A look at modern commentaries likewise reveals that women-specific commands are more of an action “celebrating Jewish life” than a punishment (164). Tkhines, privately composed prayers by women, further enforce Ottenheijm’s thesis. Here the commands—formerly required as punishment on account of Eve’s disobedience—are performed “to transform … [a woman’s] household into a little Temple and to attach holiness to her realm” and for other more positive reasons (168–69).

In spite of all this “counterdiscourse” contesting the more traditional view, the state of the Jewish house is more conservative. Here women are to be submissive to male “religious discourse,” because “these women want to be Jewish” (173). This is strikingly similar to arguments made by conservatives in the Christian tradition, particularly women in the conservative tradition. They willingly subject themselves to a man’s authority because they want to be Christian, since that is what 1 Timothy says (see van Oyen’s discussion of the matter in ch. 2). It will be interesting to see in the future if Judaism will move from this firm stance in light of societal progress.

One observation that the reader might keep in mind when evaluating this essay: Ottenheijm views the absence of reference to Eve’s culpability in his selected sources as evidence for a “counterdiscourse,” but the logic here does not necessarily follow. He may very well be right, but it also may be the case that Eve’s culpability is assumed. The select commentaries and prayers he presents are not attempting to explain the origin of the gender-specific commands in question but are portraying what the obedience of the command accomplishes. I again compare with the conservative Christian tradition. Here women who subject themselves willingly to men may express the benefits of doing so without fixating on or referencing the Genesis story, yet they ultimately do so because they assume this Christian doctrine.

A final chapter, by Karel Steenbrink, deals with the Muslim side of things (“Created Anew: Muslim Interpretations of the Myth of Adam and Eve”). Throughout the essay one
finds both similarities with and differences between the Christian and Jewish traditions. On the topic of original sin, Adam and Eve are not responsible; rather, Satan is to blame. When God commanded the angels to bow to humans, Satan and his followers rebelled (Q 20.115–125; cf. with the similar Christian version in Life of Adam and Eve 13–16). Adam and Eve’s later disobedience did not impute sin to the rest of humankind in any way, and in fact they were eventually forgiven. Also notable is that Eve is not singled out (or mentioned) in the disobedience of the divine command (the command not to eat from the tree is implied), but both equally sinned and were both equally responsible (this is quite different from Life of Adam and Eve).

As for the person Adam, the Qur’an in places portrays him as an ordinary person, but in other places as the first ruler (Surah 2.30; 3) who is made in God’s image (176–77; Q 3.47, 59). In later Muslim thought, Adam’s role goes even further, being labeled the first prophet, priest, king, if not a combination of two or more of the three (179–81). In Adam one finds the origin of the Arabic greeting Assalam ‘alaikum (“peace be unto you”), because he first uttered the phrase to the angels (178; Sahih Bukhari 1.IV.342–43). Mystical thought contrasts Adam with Muhammad: though the last prophet, Muhammad actually preceded Adam in spirit. Thus, while Adam is the father of all humanity, Muhammad is the father of all spirits (182–83).

Just as the Christian and Jewish faiths felt the challenges of Darwin and modern science in regard to what their holy writings say about human origins, so also Islam. Various attempts at reconciling the problem of evolution with assertions in the Qur’an were made: a day is a thousand years to God (Q 32:5); Adam is the first human of a new generation of humans (the human race being actually quite old); there were several thousand Adams before the Adam spoken of in the Qur’an; and so on (184–85). Ultimately, Islamic religion, then, has no trouble accepting and integrating scientific developments in its religious thought (185). Feminist interpretations have also challenged traditional views (187–89). Here some have gone so far as to say Muslims should obey Islamic rules in “the ritual field alone, to the doctrine of God and to general ethics” (187). Otherwise, misogyny will continue to reign. Others do not go this far but counter with passages in the Qur’an that speak of total equality between man and woman (187).

This volume is a helpful compilation of essays and ultimately will serve its purpose in showing a diversity of thought with regard to how Eve and Adam have been interpreted throughout the years. The diachronic analysis of some of the selected historical figures is especially helpful (i.e., looking at the evolution of thought in one’s earlier works vis-à-vis one’s later works). One will sense at times a bending of the evidence to support a feminist agenda throughout the book—some figures are simply a product of their time and cannot be exonerated for their androcentric ways, regardless of how creatively one attempts to
construe their writings—but in general the analysis is straightforward. Most of the essays could have benefited from consulting other recently published books on the history of interpretation of Adam and Eve, especially on persons/topics already touched on in these other works. Still, most of the essays included here supplement these other volumes quite nicely.

5. E.g., Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*; Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, eds., *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History* (FAT 34; Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2008).