

CHRIS W. LEE

Death Warning in the Garden of Eden

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Mohr Siebeck

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Chris W. Lee

Death Warning in the Garden of Eden

The Early Reception History
of Genesis 2:17

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

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Busan, June 2019

Chris W. Lee

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List of Abbreviations

All abbreviations are taken from *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines, Second Edition* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). Below are abbreviations not found in the Handbook.

AYB	The Anchor Yale Bible
(C)IOSCS	(Congress of) the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
HUP	Harvard University Press
ISV	International Standard Version
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
LXX Gen	The Septuagint of Genesis
OEBB	<i>Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible</i> . 2 vols. Oxford: OUP, 2011.
OUP	Oxford University Press
P&R	Presbyterian & Reformed
SSL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
V&R	Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht
WdG	Walter de Gruyter
(W)JKP	(Westminster) John Knox Press
YUP	Yale University Press

Chapter 1

Introduction

A. Research question, objectives and scope

The Garden of Eden story in Genesis 2–3 is a crucial and foundational text for both historic and contemporary Jewish and Christian theology, not only in academia, but also in a popular context. It is also foundational to our understanding of the topic – the origin of physical death. Gen 5:3 reports that Adam, the very first human being created on Earth, died at the age of 930 years. This is not a report of the death of just any human being; it is the death of a person who many readers and non-readers of the Bible believe to be originally created as an immortal being and who enjoyed that status in the Garden of Eden until the catastrophic event of the so called “Fall,”¹ i.e. prior to his disobedience to God’s command in Gen 2:17. On the same note, it has been commonly understood within the major Christian tradition that the first humans, Adam and Eve, were created as immortal beings. On this, the first canon of the Council of Carthage (418 CE) takes a very strong position as it states emphatically: “Who-soever says, that Adam was created mortal, and would, even without sin, have died by natural necessity, let him be anathema.”²

At the turn of the era, Paul of Tarsus was the most prominent figure, of decisive importance in attributing the presence of death in the world to Adam’s disobedience to God’s command (Gen 2:17). Paul states in Rom 5:12, “just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” and “Since by a man came death ... in Adam all die” in 1 Cor 15:21–22. The Augustinian doctrine of original sin has developed based on Paul’s exposition of the story of Adam and Eve. Centuries later, in order to refute the claims of Pelagius, Augustine of Hippo writes:

¹ Although there are some disagreements on considering the central theme of the story of Adam and Eve as the “Fall,” the incidence of Adam’s disobedience to God’s command in Gen 2:17 will occasionally be referred to as the “Fall” in this thesis for the sake of convenience. For instance, instead of a “story of the origin of sin and evil,” James Barr considers the garden narrative a “story of how human immortality was almost gained, but in fact was lost.” James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (London: SCM press, 1992), 4. Barr’s stance will be discussed further in this and the following chapters.

² Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity: A.D. 311–600*, vol. 3 of *History of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 799.

“Man’s nature, indeed, was created at first faultless and without any sin.”³ In his other work, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants* (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione*), Augustine refers to some who “say that Adam was so formed that he would even without any demerit of sin have died, not as the penalty of sin, but from the necessity of his being,”⁴ disproving this notion by referring to Gen 3:19, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”⁵ He concludes that “Therefore, if Adam had not sinned, he would not have been divested of his body, but would have been clothed upon with immortality and incorruption.”⁶ In another work, *On Genesis Literally Interpreted* (*De Genesi ad litteram*), Augustine further affirms that,

This death occurred on the day when our first parents did what God had forbidden. Their bodies lost the privileged condition they had had, a condition mysteriously maintained by nourishment from the tree of life, which would have been able to preserve them from sickness and from the aging process.⁷

Augustine certainly has the introduction of the “physical” death, i.e. “mortality,” in view here. Similarly, John Calvin (1509–64) affirms that Adam, who had body and soul “without defect” and was “wholly free from death,” was cast down from his former state from the moment he violated God’s command. Calvin specifically deals with the issue of non-fulfilment of God’s warning of the death penalty on the day Adam ate from the tree of knowledge by insisting on a double notion of death (both spiritual and physical), which began from the moment of Adam’s sin. Calvin states in his commentary on Genesis as follows:

But it is asked, what kind of death God means in this place? It appears to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell. He was, in every respect, happy; his life, therefore, had alike respect to his body and his soul, since in his soul a right judgment and a proper government of the affections prevailed, there also life reigned; in his body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly free from death. ... We must also see what is the cause of death, namely, alienation from God. Thence it follows, that under the name of death is comprehended all those miseries in which Adam involved himself by his defection; for as soon as he revolted from God, the fountain of life, he was cast down from his former state, in order that he might perceive the life of man without God to be wretched and lost, and therefore differing nothing from death. ... Wherefore the question is superfluous, how it was that God threatened death to Adam on the day in which he should touch the fruit, when he long deferred the punishment? For then was Adam consigned to death, and death began its reign in him, until supervening grace should bring a remedy.⁸

³ Augustine, *Nat. grat.*, III, 1.

⁴ Augustine, *Pecc. merit.*, II, 2.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Augustine, *Gen. litt.*, XI, 32.

⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King, (vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 127–28.

Martin Luther's (1483–1546) stance is the same:

This threat, which was so clearly added, also proves that a Law was given to Adam. Moreover, it shows too that Adam was created in the state of innocence or was righteous. There was not yet any sin, because God did not create sin. Therefore, if Adam had obeyed this command, he would never have died; for death came through sin.⁹

The exegetes in the major Christian tradition from Paul onwards, although differing in minor details, generally follow Paul's assertion of human death coming about as a result of the sin of Adam.¹⁰ It is not surprising therefore that a number of modern scholars, particularly the New Testament commentators in their discussion of Paul's notion of death as the punishment, point to the Genesis text in their underlying presumption that such an idea finds support in the Genesis narrative itself.¹¹ However, if the garden narrative in the book of Genesis is not read through the lens of Paul's statements in 1 Cor 15:21–22 and Rom 5:12, the idea of an "immortal" Adam before the Fall finds no explicit textual support in the garden narrative itself. Such interpretations that affirm the immortal status of Adam and Eve prior to their disobedience are often purely inferential and influenced by later traditions that have no solid grounding in the original text. There are of course certain narrative elements that can be referred to in favour of the idea of the immortal status of Adam and Eve before the Fall, but these arguments can also be countered by those who point to the same narrative features and elements to insist on the very opposing idea of the existence of death before the Fall.

Conversely, there are some who suggest that the first human beings were in fact created mortal. A strong proponent of this argument is James Barr, who does not consider the garden story as the "story of the origin of sin and evil," but as a "story of how human immortality was almost gained, but in fact was lost."¹² According to Barr, then, the garden narrative presents an etiology not for the introduction of death, but for the mortal human's permanent loss of access to immortality, which became momentarily available only after and as a result of their disobedience to God's command. Barr's argument will be discussed later in chapter 3, but, in brief, he suggests the following points in his

⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1–5* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 110.

¹⁰ See, Jairzinho Lopes Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther on Original Sin and Justification of the Sinner*, (Göttingen: V&R, 2013).

¹¹ For instance, commenting on 1 Cor 15:21–22, Fitzmyer writes: "In two verbless clauses, Paul alludes to the account in Gen 3:17–19, which tells how it came about that *anthrōpos* experiences death. There Adam is punished by God for listening to his wife and eating the forbidden fruit: "On the day you eat of it, you shall surely die" (2:17); "You are dust, and unto dust you shall return" (3:19)." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 32 (New Haven: YUP, 2008), 569.

¹² Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, 4, 6–8.

argument: 1) the cultural assumption in the Old Testament is that death is natural for human beings; 2) there is an absence of any reference to words such as “sin,” “disobedience” or “rebellion” in the garden narrative; 3) within the HB itself the story of Adam and Eve [is] nowhere cited as the “explanation for sin and evil in the world”; 4) the view that “sin brought death into the world” is likely to be the product of a Hellenistic interpretation of the OT; and 5) the punishment brought upon the man does not include mention of death. The existence of different approaches to and controversial understandings of the physical status of Adam and Eve before their disobedience to God’s command is due to the ambiguous characteristic of the Genesis narrative itself as it lacks definite evidence about whether Adam and Eve were either immortal or mortal before the incident of the Fall. The narrator does not provide any description of the human condition or life in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Indeed, there are many gaps and inconsistencies in the narrative: it jumps from one event to another, skips details, and provides seemingly controversial details without explanation or resolution. Every reader of the garden narrative is either faced with the challenge of filling in these narrative gaps or being content with only what the text clearly provides.¹³

In this study, I reflect upon these presuppositions about the creational immortality or mortality of the first human beings and attempt to trace the early reception history of the divine prohibitive command in Gen 2:17, along with other related passages (3:14–24) with regard to the original physical status of Adam and Eve before their disobedience. “Reception history” is generally defined as the study of how the text has been received and understood by its readers over time with the conviction that the text cannot be understood in isolation from its reception and the interpretation of its readers. One of the editors of the Blackwell Bible Commentary series, John Sawyer, explains the perspective and aim of reception history in biblical studies:

What is also new is the notion that the reception of a text is more important than the text itself, and even that a text doesn’t really exist until somebody reads it. “The bare text is mute”. It is like the philosophers’ old question: If a tree falls in the forest and no-one hears it, does it make a sound? A text without a reader has no meaning. It is the readers of a text that give it meaning. In a sense the reader creates the text as much as the author does. The

¹³ The following points given in the narrative and the missing details in the gaps between them allow readers to consciously interact with the text and to interpret beyond what the narrative clearly gives them: 1) God commanded Adam that he will surely die if he eats from the tree of knowledge (2:17); 2) Eve tells the serpent that they will die if they eat or touch the fruit of the tree (3:3); 3) the serpent tells her that they will not die (3:4); 4) Adam and Eve do not die physically on the day they eat of the fruit (3:7); 5) Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden of Eden so that they do not eat from the tree of life in order to gain eternal life (3:22–24). Given such limited information, there arises further questions, such as: 1) why don’t they die immediately after their disobedience as God had predicted in 2:17; 2) what did God really mean by “you shall surely die?”

role of the reader as creator was a new concept and that is one of the concepts underlying the Blackwells Series.¹⁴

A recent multi-volume, international project encompassing a broader and comprehensive scope of the reception history of biblical texts, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (EBR), witnesses the increasing scholarly interest and importance of reception history within the biblical studies. The twofold aim of this projected 30-volume EBR is:

(1) Comprehensively recording – and, indeed, advancing – the current knowledge of the origins and development of the Bible in its Jewish and Christian canonical forms and (2) documenting the history of the Bible's reception in Judaism and Christianity as evident in exegetical literature, theological and philosophical writings of various genres, literature, liturgy, music, the visual arts, dance, and film, as well as in Islam and other religious traditions and contemporary movements.¹⁵

This study will primarily follow and retain the convictions and perspective of the BBC and EBR projects; however, the scope of this work will be limited to the early Jewish reception and interpretation of the prohibitive command (Gen 2:17) with the foremost aim of investigating and tracing how this particular command concerning the tree of knowledge has been understood and how the notion that the first man was punished with death for his sin developed in its early reception history. Thus, this study will attempt to trace the interpretative development and history of the origin of human death in its association with the divine death warning in Gen 2:17 from the HB to its subsequent translations, rewritten texts from the DSS and other Jewish literatures, such as the Book of Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon, etc., which share themes and language with Paul's assertion of the introduction of death through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Special attention will be given to the texts in which the authors deliberately quote or make references to the prohibitive command concerning the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:17).

The command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Gen 2:17 reads: “for in the day you eat from it you will surely die (כי ביום אכלך (ממנו מות תמות).” The question that often arises from a reading of Gen 2:17 – whether Adam and Eve were originally created physically immortal or mortal – is closely related to the question of: why do the first humans not die

¹⁴ John F.A. Sawyer, “The Role of Reception Theory, Reader-Response Criticism and/or Impact History in the Study of the Bible: Definition and Evaluation,” (paper presented at the biennial meeting of the authors of the series Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar, Germany, March 2004), 1. Available at: www.bbibcomm.info. See also, idem, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture* (Malden: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 1–7. For the historical background of the study of reception history, see Mary C. Callaway, “What’s the Use of Reception History?” (paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, San Antonio, November 2004), 1–14.

¹⁵ Hans-Josef Klauck et al., eds., “Introduction,” EBR 1: ix.

immediately after their disobedience, as God predicted in Gen 2:17? In the attempt to answer this question, there arises the suggestion that the death God meant was not an imminent death penalty, but simply humans becoming mortal. What follows this explanation is the presumption that had they not eaten from the tree, they would have lived forever. Or, had they continued to eat from the tree of life, they would have lived forever. I believe that the answer to this question could be better assessed, however, by scrutinizing the divine command in Gen 2:17, its intended meaning, usage and literary context within the HB. Therefore, this study will begin with a detailed exegetical investigation of the command in its literary and narrative context. This preliminary analysis is required, firstly because many ancient and modern interpretative and translational decisions about the Hebrew phrase *מוֹת תָּמוּת* (“you will surely die”) avoid analysis of the actual death warning and are primarily based on what happens in the narrative following the disobedience. The common rationale behind such a decision is that the death penalty is not carried out immediately, therefore the death warning is not about instantaneous death.¹⁶ The problem that Adam is not struck down on the day of his violation has been recognized by both ancient and modern readers, and from this apparent lack of agreement between the death warning and its fulfilment, there emerges different interpretations with regard to the meaning of the death warning in Gen 2:17.¹⁷ A careful analysis of the command is also required because, to ensure a thorough and reliable analysis of the reception history of the command, it is important to consider the original Hebrew text in order to determine its original meaning. Lastly, it should be noted that, although some aspects and development of the concept of spiritual death will be considered in relevant chapters, the discussion in this study will primarily be confined to the origin of “physical” death.

¹⁶ See footnote 62 on p. 40.

¹⁷ In his Greek translation of the Old Testament in the second century CE, Symmachus translated the phrase *מוֹת תָּמוּת* as *ἐσθήσεις θάνατον* (“you will become mortal”). This translation implies Adam and Eve’s loss of an original immortal status. Modern scholars, such as Budde, Speiser and Cassuto etc., also argue that the humans became mortal on that day, translating the phrase as “you shall be doomed to death,” therefore seeing the origin of the physical death of any human being as the consequence of the violation of the command. Occasionally, this interpretation is further supported by the suggestion that the translation of the prepositional phrase *בַּיּוֹם* “on the day” as a twenty-four hour day is too literal and should be translated more broadly as something like “when” or “if.” Following this line of argument, it is presumed that the nature of death is physical. The second argument we often encounter is as follows: it is possible to interpret the phrase *בַּיּוֹם* literally, that is, “in the day,” but the death warning itself should not be taken literally. Rather, it should be interpreted metaphorically or symbolically; for example, John C. Collins has argued that death here refers to spiritual death, while others see it as breaking the relationship between God and human beings. For the list and discussion of modern scholars who advocate the nonliteral meaning of death, i.e. spiritual death, see discussion in footnote 63 on pp. 40–41.

I will not attempt to engage broadly with the interpretative development of the immortality of the soul or immortal life after the point of physical death.¹⁸

B. Research context

The scholarly quest in search of the answer to the question of whether Adam and Eve were originally created immortal (or mortal) is not new, but no one has thus far focused exclusively on providing a detailed exegetical analysis of the divine prohibitive command (Gen 2:17) and its subsequent reception. In this work, pertinent and detailed discussions of scholarly literature will be provided in each relevant chapter, but a brief overview of those works that have some overlaps with this study will also be helpful. The influential book by James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, has been a starting point that inspired this study to further investigate the topic of immortality. His work is compelling in that he explicitly argues that Adam and Eve were in fact created mortal. Barr challenges the traditional view that affirms the immortal status of Adam and Eve before the incident at the tree. Specifically, in the first two chapters, Barr argues that in the garden narrative (as well as the entire HB) “death” is not presented as the punishment for sin, but rather ample evidence suggests that death was considered a good and natural part of human life that is willed by God. Barr also considers the “Pauline understanding of Adam and Eve” to be grounded not in the text of Genesis but in certain later strata of the OT including the books outside the Hebrew canon.¹⁹ Barr observes that, apart from Paul, in the rest of the NT, there is not much interest in Adam as the one who brought sin and death, and this typology of Adam and Christ is of Paul’s own exposition and confined, even in Paul’s own writings, to Rom 5, 1 Cor 15 and 1 Timothy. Barr states the following:

Clearly, the emphasis on the sin of Eve and Adam as the means by which death came into the world was not considered a universal necessity in New Testament Christianity: whole books were written which took no notice of it. It is a peculiarity of St Paul, and it is very likely that the thought originated with him; or, to be more precise, that its use as an important element *within Christianity* originated with him.²⁰

Barr’s work is certainly helpful in following and highlighting relevant themes and questions that are related to the discussion of death and immortality; however, as Barr informs the readers in the preface, this is not a detailed exegetical work that provides a “thorough or systematic discussion of immortality,” or engages “with all the vast discussion in the scholarly literature” and “every

¹⁸ Cf. Murray J. Harris, “The New Testament View of Life after Death,” *Them* 11.2 (January 1986), 47–52.

¹⁹ Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

biblical passage that might be relevant.”²¹ Moreover, Barr’s arguments are not without weaknesses and presuppositions that will be addressed later in this study.²² For instance, Barr is one of the exegetes who argues that Adam and Eve were originally created mortal because, for example, “to-be immortal” was dependent on partaking of the tree of life (Gen 3:22) and the death warning in Gen 2:17 would be more relevant to mortal beings, etc. However, there is no reason to assume that the warning of an immediate death penalty could not have been given to an immortal being, particularly in the scenario that the man was sustaining his immortal status through periodic consumption from the tree of life. Further, the suggestion that the man was originally mortal requires an underlying assumption that Adam and Eve did not have the chance to eat from the tree of life up to this point, which cannot simply be left to chance or explained away with other presumptive suggestions. Barr’s arguments will be further addressed in chapter 3.

There are various other scholarly articles that aim to provide the early reception history of the topic of immortality to a certain extent, although not thoroughly. The main points of argument that these works have in common are: 1) the Genesis text itself teaches that Adam and Eve were created mortal; and 2) other early Jewish literature uniformly report that human beings were created mortal from the beginning (some of them would place even Paul within the same line of interpretation). For instance, in his “Adam Citings before the Intrusion of Satan: Recontextualizing Paul’s Theology of Sin and Death,” Henry Kelly provides a short survey of each reference to Adam and Eve. His work is comprehensive in that his lists include most of the early references to the story of Adam and Eve, including those that make no mention of Adam’s physical status in the Garden of Eden, starting from the book of Tobit, through to the work of Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* (160 CE). However, Kelly does not engage with the texts exegetically, but instead gives a short introduction to each citation. Kelly forces his interpretation that even Paul depicts Adam as originally created mortal merely based on Paul’s description of Adam’s creation from the earth (ἐκ γῆς) in contrast to Christ who is from heaven (1 Cor 15:47). Kelly also argues that Paul’s view of death in Rom 5:12–21 is not necessarily “physical” when compared to Paul’s discussion of “the life of the next age” (15:21). His stance will be discussed further in the later chapters, but, in brief, his argument is not supported by Paul’s overall context, his use of the word “death” in the literal sense, or Paul’s clear assertion of “death” coming through one person within the context of justifying the physical death and resurrection of Christ, as well as of those who have died in him. Nevertheless, Kelly writes that “Paul was out of the ordinary in his focus on

²¹ Ibid., xi.

²² See discussion on pp. 61–65.

Adam, and that his interpretation of Adam's sin and its effect ... was not shared by other writers of his time."²³

John. J. Collins' article, "Before the Fall: The Earliest Interpretations of Adam and Eve," discusses a number of texts (the Book of Ben Sira, a few manuscripts from the DSS, the Book of the Watchers/1 Enoch) and their interpretations of Adam and Eve.²⁴ Collins notes the lack of attention to the story of Adam and Eve in the entire HB and argues that his selected texts do not consider the present human condition or death as a result of the "Fall." Rather, he insists that there is clear textual evidence in the book of Ben Sira and 1 Enoch that Adam and Eve were originally created mortal. However, he does not discuss the divine command in Gen 2:17 or Sir 14:17, which may be a reference to the divine command in Gen 2:17. Chapter 6 of this study will interact with Collins' argument, and in particular his argument that Ben Sira describes death as the natural lot of human beings will be questioned.

The work that has the most overlap with this study is Konrad Schmid's article, "Loss of Immortality? Hermeneutical Aspects of Genesis 2–3 and its Early Reception"²⁵ as he discusses the usage of the death warning in the HB in the first half of the article.²⁶ However, his analysis of the garden narrative in the HB and of his passages selected from a number of early Jewish literatures in the second half of the article leads him to the conclusion that the death in Gen 2–3 and its early receptions was considered to be a natural part of original creation, which echoes Barr and other scholars' views mentioned above. Schmid argues that Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Josephus, Philo and Paul all took the view that humankind was created mortal.²⁷ Schmid's work was helpful for this study in that it approaches each text from a reception historical point of view, focusing on the topic of the original immortal status of Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, given that Schmid's work does not aim to provide a detailed exegetical analysis of each text (similar to the previous two works by Kelly and Collins), its use of passages from each

²³ Henry R. Kelly, "Adam Citings before the Intrusion of Satan: Recontextualizing Paul's Theology of Sin and Death," BTB 44 (2014): 14.

²⁴ John J. Collins, "Before the Fall: The Earliest Interpretations of Adam and Eve," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, JSJSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 293–308.

²⁵ Konrad Schmid, "Loss of Immortality? Hermeneutical Aspects of Genesis 2–3 and its Early receptions," in Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, eds., *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and its Reception History*, FAT 2/34 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 58–78.

²⁶ Schmid considers the legal usage of the death warning in the HB involving the death penalty as one of the five problems with the garden narrative in relation to the traditional view of the original immortal status of human beings. Schmid, *ibid.*, 62–64. His suggested problems will be taken up in detail in the following chapters.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 65–73.

text and the discussion of the context of each passage that he uses to support his argument is selective and requires further investigation. Schmid's discussion of the meaning and usage of the divine command in Gen 2:17 was particularly helpful for this study's chapter on the MT, although there is still room for a thorough grammatical and exegetical analysis.

Contrary to the aforementioned scholars, the present study argues that there is a developmental process in the interpretation of the divine prohibitive command (Gen 2:17) with regard to its association with the introduction of death to humanity from as early as the LXX to Paul's conviction of death as entering the world through human transgression (1 Cor 15:21; Rom 5:12). This study is also unique in the way that it traces the reception history in early Jewish literature, adopting a text-critical and exegetical method, with a narrower focus on the prohibitive command (Gen 2:17) in relation to the issue of the non-fulfillment of the death penalty predicted by God in Gen 2:17. On the premise that neither the garden narrative nor the death warning convey information about whether the man was immortal or that he became mortal due to eating the forbidden fruit, the study will attempt to show how the association between the command and the introduction of death begins to appear in the subsequent interpretations and is further made explicit in the epistles of Paul. Although Paul is not the only one in the Second Temple Period in whose work it is possible to find traces of the interpretative attempt to attribute the transgression of Adam and Eve to the origin of death, Paul's explicit conviction and repeated emphasis on the idea that the transgression of the first man opened the way for the entrance of death into the world finds no precedent. In fact, Paul was also the only New Testament writer to take up the story of Adam's disobedience to God's command (Gen 2:17) and to relate it to the introduction of death to humanity. The subsequent major Christian interpretation that Adam and Eve were created as immortal beings certainly owes much to Paul and follows Paul's interpretation on the origin of death by means of Adam's transgression in Rom 5:12 and 1 Cor 15:21–22.²⁸ For this reason, post-Pauline interpretations – although some are discussed in subsequent chapters to a certain extent (e.g. Augustine, St. Jerome, Symmachus, etc.) – will be excluded from the scope of this study.

²⁸ Barr goes so far as to suggest that this correlation between death and Adam's transgression originated with Paul: "Clearly, the emphasis on the sin of Eve and Adam as the means by which death came into the world was not considered a universal necessity in New Testament Christianity: whole books were written which took no notice of it. It is a peculiarity of St Paul, and it is very likely that the thought originated with him; or, to be more precise, that its use as an important element *within Christianity* originated with him." Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, 5.

C. Course of analysis

Following this introductory chapter, the study will be divided into six main chapters and conclusion. The second chapter considers the details of the narrative elements in Genesis with the intention of finding any clues regarding the status of the first human beings in the garden before the forbidden fruit incident, then it analyses the meaning intended by the original command in Gen 2:17. Particular attention is given to the phrase ביום “in the day” and the usage of the death warning “you shall surely die” (מות תמות) in the passages of Genesis, Pentateuch, and the rest of the HB, in order to answer whether the notion of physical death entering the world through Adam’s disobedience is valid according to the literary usage and context of the death warning itself. The third chapter investigates the punishment and expulsion passages in Gen 3:14–24 in more detail to consider interpretative questions that emerge from their possible relationships with the death warning. The fourth chapter looks at the Greek (LXX) and Latin translations (OL, Vulg.) of the divine prohibitive command, how the translators understood the death warning and translated it in the book of Genesis, and the subsequent books in the rest of the LXX. After discussing the lexical choices and translational elements in the garden narrative of the LXX (2:4a–3:24) that deviate from the text of the MT, particular attention is given to the following translational elements of the prohibitive command in Gen 2:17: 1) the Greek idiomatic phrase ἡ δ’ ἂν ἡμέρα φάγητε ... (“in the day in which you eat ...”); 2) the implications of the plural verbs ἀποθανεῖσθε (“you [pl.] shall die”) used by the translator to render the singular of the MT; and 3) the usage of the cognate dative noun in the death warning θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε (“By death, you shall die”) in relation to the MT’s use of the infinitive absolute מות for emphasis. The fifth chapter focuses on the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts, the textual witnesses to the death warning מות תמות (“you shall surely die”) in 4QGen^b and 4QGen^{h2}, as well as the allusions and references to the creation, divine command (Gen 2:17) and punishment (3:14–24) found in 4Q422, 4Q423, 4Q303, 4Q504 and 4Q124. The sixth chapter considers the book of Ben Sira, which has two important interpretative verses regarding the mortality of the human beings (Sir 14:17; 25:24). In particular, this chapter questions the current scholarly view of Sira’s understanding of death as a natural part of creation and adds further textual support to the view that Sir 14:17 is indeed Sira’s allusion to the divine command and to Eve’s disobedience to the command found in Gen 2:17 and thus his explanation of the origin of death. Particular attention is given to the usage and meaning of the phrases גוע יגוע (“they shall surely die”) and חוק עולם (“perpetual statute”). The seventh chapter investigates passages in the Pauline Epistles and the rest of the New Testament that refer to the disobedience of Adam and Eve concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: John 8:44; Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22; 2 Cor 11:3; and 1 Tim 2:13–14. The two main passages that will be dealt with in this

chapter are 1 Cor 15:21–22 and Rom 5:12–21, in each of which Paul makes direct references to Adam’s disobedience in relation to the “coming” of death into the world. Finally, the last chapter will conclude this study by summarizing the key points observed in each chapter and by connecting the progressive line of interpretative route in the Second Temple Period where the link between the divine death warning in Gen 2:17 and the idea of the coming of mortality into the world is strengthened and made explicit.