DE-DEMONISING CAIN… AND WONDERING WHY?

Philip Culbertson

Philip Culbertson is the author of many articles and books on psychology, the Bible and theology. He teaches at the School of Theology, The University of Auckland.

Correspondence to Philip Culbertson: p.culbertson@auckland.ac.nz

Freud's theory of sibling rivalry is cited relatively frequently by both biblical scholars and psychodynamic theorists as an explanation for Cain's murder of Abel. But this seems inadequate to explain fully the dynamics of the story. There seem to be two intergenerational processes at work in Cain's violence that are often overlooked by biblical exegetes – maternal anger and paternal shaming. Yet this too seems overly-simplistic. A man – Cain – is so angry that he wants to murder someone. But who does he want to murder: the brother who seems to have stolen divine favour from him? The biological father whose shame he already carries, so that it erupts when he is shamed again? Or the great Father, the heavenly Lover with the ultimate power to bless or destroy?

In New Zealand, where I live, we are presently subjected weekly to those reality shows about how to manage problem children. In each case, parents have seemingly uncontrollable children who act out their murderous rage toward their parents, and their envy of each other, and so a psychologist is sent to sort out the situation. But to whom does the psychologist turn her attention? Not to the children, but to the parents. In every case, the psychologist's message is that children's behaviour reflects their parents' inability to parent adequately. And this is where I want to begin a psychodynamic exploration of the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 – not with the children, but with the parents.

Many traditional interpretations of Cain and Abel's conflict focus on Cain's jealousy as the motivating factor for his murder of Abel, occasionally citing Freud's theory of sibling rivalry.[1] One such recent application of sibling rivalry theory is the 4-volume *Psychology and the Bible* by Lyn Bechtel (2004). With due respect to the overall quality of Dr. Bechtel's work, I believe that she has succumbed to the now-'normalized' but psychoanalytically-too-facile interpretation of the story.[2] Nearly 25 years ago, Brueggemann (1982) cautioned readers against trivialising this particular story: 'It contains so many layers of meaning that attempted explanations are likely to hinder and mis-communicate rather than illuminate' (p. 55).

The hermeneutical methodology for this essay will combine psychoanalytic theory and method (Kille 2001), critical men's studies (Jackson 1990; Clines 1995; Harker 1997), and autobiographical critical engagement (Kitzberger 2002). I have chosen these three hermeneutical lenses because they presently inform my own search for intellectual and personal integration, and in an attempt to contain what Donald Capps (2004) calls 'the pathological characteristics of some biblical texts' (p. xi). I find the text of Genesis 4 to be so toxic that this essay has been a painful personal struggle to write.

In the first half of this essay, I will focus on intergenerational family dynamics, and in the second half on the psychodynamics of desire. The interpretive metaphor which holds both analytic lenses together is one of seeing and unseeing, including the Freudian narcissistic mirror and the Lacanian 'Blind Other'.

A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS?

The title of this essay is 'De-demonising Cain… and wondering why?'. You might wonder at first why I would wish to '*de*-demonise' Cain, when the normative Jewish, Christian, and Muslim readings of this story insist on Cain's demonisation, particularly by calling him 'the first human murderer'. The simplest answer is that my impulse in conceiving this research was to de-demonise myself. As Kille points out, 'It is only in dynamic encounter between the text and a *specific* reader, in a *specific* community, in a *particular* historical and cultural context that individuals engage, interpret, internalise and ultimately act on those texts' (Kille 2004, 56; emphasis added). I am that reader, with my own particular historical and cultural context. Until recently, I have not been able to get past the ways in which my childhood shaped my exegesis of this text.

> In the early 1950s, we took a number of long-distance road trips as a family. One unspoken rule in our family was that dad, as breadwinner, got to decide how we holidayed together, and apparently needed to put a great distance between him and his office at least once a year. I always sat in the back seat on the right hand side, just as Jesus sits at the right hand of God.
>
> As the older of two sons, I was haunted in childhood by a desire to murder my younger brother. Night after night, I dreamed of pushing him out the car door as we sped across the plains of Western Kansas. Surely I could relieve my own psychological displacement with a simple, surreptitious flip of the door handle: 'I don't know what happened, dad! The car door just flew open and he fell out!' What stopped me from carrying out my plan was the fear of how guilty I would feel for destroying our family happiness were I to act out my fratricidal fantasies. I already knew the story of Cain and Abel, having been raised in a religiously-conservative, Bible-believing family, and I was sure I was as doomed as Cain had been - not only to act out my fantasy, but also to be banished, away from the security of my family, to somewhere east of Eden.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Of course, in that car there were more than just two boys, just as in the story of Cain and Abel there are more people present, however invisible they might be in the narrative text. In Genesis 4:1-17, Cain's name appears 14 times (i.e., in almost every verse); Abel's seven times, and God's nine times. But there are two more characters who must be 're-membered' in the story (White 1997, 23) – Adam and Eve – and by forgetting their presence we become deaf to the text's fuller psychodynamics. Eve may be mentioned only once, and Adam not at all by name, but who is the child who does not carry his parents' presence with him, wherever he goes, no matter what age?

Cain. Gen. 4:1a acknowledges 'the man' as the sperm-donor in the story, but Eve appears to name God as her true partner in creating the child when she exclaims 'I have created a man together with the Lord' (Cassuto 1961, 198). Havea (2003, 97) correctly notes the ambiguity of Eve's statement: the Hebrew can mean with 'a man' or 'a husband'. The ambiguity directs our puzzlement – a cocked eyebrow, perhaps – toward Eve. I and others (Bloom 1990, 188; Pardes 1993, 187) interpret Eve's statement psychodynamically as a narcissistic response, a response

that points the reader's gaze toward her own agency in a self-serving manner. Narcissists do this, ironically, to cover their deeper, 'felt' lack of specialness.

Joan Lachkar (1992, 1–2) defines narcissism quite succinctly:

> Narcissists are individuals who need perfect mirroring, perfect stroking, perfect responses. Narcissists need to be in control… Narcissists are driven by the need to be desired and appreciated, tend to isolate themselves either physically or emotionally, fear a loss of specialness, and are easily injured or outraged when not properly understood. They… have idealized and omnipotent fantasies… Narcissists seek out others to confirm or justify exaggerated entitlement fantasies and distortions that the world is deeply indebted to them.

Narcissists often use their immediate families, including partners and children, as their most over-determined mirrors. Subtly and unconsciously, they again and again turn their 'mirrors' toward themselves, to reflect back to themselves an idealised image of importance, desirability, control, and perfection. Mirrors, of course, are not subjects, with which one can have potentially-healthy relationships, but objects, from which all energy flows back toward the narcissist alone, and who are themselves likely to develop brittle identities which in turn cause them to become quite narcissistic themselves. Cain, then, is what would be called a narcissistic extension, and is thus relationally dangerous to others, not because he is emotionally unstable, but because he carries his mother's narcissism (and as we shall see, his father's shame). He seems hungry for secure attachment, whether to his mother or to God - which would relieve him of the uncertainty and anxiety that characterise narcissistic extensions. Perhaps it is this hunger that prompts him to bring an offering which God has not commanded (Miles 1996, 41).

As a child of a narcissist, the one thing Cain would not have been given permission to do is to hate, and hate is what he most needed to learn how to manage. Narcissistic extensions are not allowed to hate those whom they are compelled to mirror, for a refusal to offer a narcissist anything other than the admiration that he or she desires generates a narcissistic rage which can feel lethal to the mirror. In situations of 'normal' development, Winnicott (1958, 201–202) declared, 'the mother hates her infant from the word go…' and the human child 'needs this hate to hate'. Jessica Benjamin (1988) expands on Winnicott's theory, arguing that a child in whom the experience of hate has not been allowed to emerge is less able to distinguish a real person from a fantasy. On the other hand, 'The child who has been allowed to hate and destroy his parents makes a crucial discovery: that he has destroyed everyone and everything, and yet the people around him remain calm and unhurt' (p. 212, in Lasine 2002, 46 n25). Cain, unaccustomed to managing the emotion of hatred, destroys his brother, and learns for the first time that 'murder is forever'.

Abel. Next to his biological father Adam, Abel is the least visible person in the story. He is nearly invisible to his mother, who identifies Abel as Cain's brother but not as her own son (4:2). In the biblical narrative, he does not speak: 'he was born, spoken of, he acted, was gazed at, and… spoken with' (Havea 2003, 107). We know so little about Abel: he was a shepherd; when his big brother decided to bring God a placatory offering, Abel imitated him (4:4); and he died young and violently. He seems, in so many ways, a lost child.

> Nor did my brother speak as a child. He was born, spoken of, acted, gazed at, and spoken with, but he seemed to have no voice of his own. When he was young, he was very cute, and adults enjoyed speaking to him, but he would only look back at them, often evoking in the adults a nervous titter.
>
> When he fell in love in his late 30s, he began to speak, but as my sister-in-law later pointed out, to this day he has no memories of his childhood and youth prior to graduating from high school.
>
> I asked my therapist at the time how it could be that a child has no memories. She pointed out that according to the literature, such a 'loss' is an indicator of how much psychological pain a child was in, and that the phenomenon is more common among males than among females. Like Abel to my Cain, my brother did not know how to speak.

The God of J. The character in this story who troubles me most is not Cain, but God as portrayed by J. J's God is arbitrary in his choice of whose offering to acknowledge; he displays partisan behaviour, based on preference rather than justice (Blumenthal 1993, 19; Bloom 1990, 188). Brueggemann (1982) calls him 'the strange God of Israel… capricious [in his] freedom'. God constructs Cain's crisis of rejection, and then leaves Cain to deal with his hurt alone. It is a tribute to Cain, not God, that the story ends as well as it does. At least the text suggests that 'a post-Genesis 3 man can do well. He is not "fallen". He is not the victim of any original sin' (pp. 56–57). It might have been better had God stayed in the Garden of Genesis 2, rather than leaving it to accompany Adam and Eve (Miles 1996, 40).

While Bloom (1990) and Pardes (1993) explore the narcissism of Eve, Stephen Moore (1996) and Stuart Lasine (2002) explore the narcissism of God. Narcissism is usually explained as the product of parental wounding, but in this case, we cannot know what made God so narcissistic, for as Lasine points out, 'the divine head of the family has no family background himself. Yahweh remains self-sufficient in the sense that he owes nothing to incorporated images of his parents, no genetic debt to his forbears, no siblings in comparison with whom he might look bad' (p. 49). Humanity seems created by God to mirror God back to himself. Lasine writes (p. 47):

> Like the depictions of Yahweh as a lone father who uses his children as mirrors… Yahweh's aloneness suggests the narcissistic desire to make the self absolute and omnipotent. Jessica Benjamin gives this desire a voice: 'I want to affect you, but I want nothing you do to affect me: I am who I am' (1995, 36; 1988, 32). According to Benjamin (1995, 36), narcissistic omnipotence is exhibited by the insistence on being one ('everything is identical to me') and all alone ('there's nothing outside of me that I don't control'.).

Ilona Rashkow (2004), David Blumenthal (1993), and Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker (1989) have all argued that J's God can also be interpreted as an abuser. This is not surprising, for narcissists and abusers frequently have one thing in common: they victimise others and leave no visible wounds (Miller 1996). Blumenthal (p. 79) genders the abuse, contending that 'God, as described in the Bible, acts like an abusing male: husband, father and lord'. This gendering seems unnecessary to me, for women can be as narcissistic and abusive as men. God's

capriciousness certainly appears to overpower Cain, provoking rage, driving Cain temporarily mad. Lasine (2002, 45) points out, 'Abusers *do* cultivate capriciousness as a tool to impose domination'.

But J's God is abusive to more than Cain; God is also abusive to Eve. Rashkow (2004) defines the relationship between God and Eve in 'The Fall' as equating to a Freudian 'sexualised father-daughter narrative' (p. 50). If God is Eve's father, however subliminally, then can he also father her sons? So it would seem. Overall, the picture that emerges from Genesis 4 is of God as an irresponsible lover who is more interested in sexual company than in ethics, who inserts himself into the Adam-Eve *conjunctio* which he 'blessed' in the first place, and who then, as grandfather, psychologically abuses Cain by playing favourites between the two boys.

Eve. We know that narcissistic parents produce narcissistic children (Donaldson-Pressman and Pressman 1994). It is then only a short leap to understanding how J's narcissistic God produced a narcissistic daughter Eve, and to Eve's rage as a result of her treatment, and then to Cain as himself narcissistic and the carrier of his mother's rage. At 4:1, Eve's statement about having acquired a child via God seems to wipe Adam out of existence, an act which Rashkow (2004, 42) terms 'narrative erasure',[3] itself a form of abuse. The carrier of rage at her powerlessness and victimisation by both God and Adam, Eve can fight back only through the construction of a 'Lacanian phallus' (Minsky 1996), fantasising her own power in acquiring two male children from her own father, the God of J: 'I have created a man together with YHWH'. Eve cannot see her own children because she is only looking in a mirror, admiring her phallus – twisted by her systemically-inherited, intergenerational narcissism. Her sons cannot see each other because they have not been first seen.

Adam. If Eve carries rage, then Adam carries shame. Adam's shame may have been doubly generated—by his disobedience in the Garden, then by God's 'divorce' (*g-r-s*) of Adam (3:25), expelling him from paradisical innocence. To compound matters, God his father followed him out, continuing to watch Adam's every move, like the 'eye' of the masculinist meta-narrative to which all males are held accountable (Harker 1997, 198). And indeed, why should critical men's studies not begin with the first man? As Lasine (2002) comments, 'Whatever else that might mean, in family terms this kind of mirroring means that if dad is narcissistic, he will view [his children's] bad behaviour as reflecting on himself' (p. 43). Adam seems again to fail in 4:1a, wherein he both has no name, and is denied his rights of paternity and of naming his first-born.

> 'What will the neighbours think?' I hear my mother ask when she was embarrassed by something I said or did. I also hear one of the five cardinal rules of patriarchal masculinity (Clines 1995): 'Do not fail; what will other men think?' (pp. 1–3). Men, including Adam the first man, are not meant to be weak, or to fail. In these words, I hear shaming. I feel in my body the patriarchal gaze, that purveyor of hegemonic masculinity. I feel in my body the threat of material disappointment, with its hint of potential abandonment.

> I might see this sort of family in my psychotherapy practice: a woman with two children, unsure who their father is, mourning the loss of her phallic power and desperate to reclaim it; a man, defeated and absorbed in shame and in memories of how good life was 'before,' before he messed up; an older son who is acting out his parents' emotional life, and a younger son who is lost. Or perhaps this

> describes the family that some of us carry in our heads. The term we therapists use – 'I might *see*' – paradoxically confronts the narcissistic mirroring which has so distorted this family dynamic in the first place. We believe we can *see* when the family cannot see.

GOD'S GAZE AND A BOY'S DESIRE

> A boy – he's about 7 or 8 – is standing at the window in the breakfast nook. He is looking out at his father, wishing his father would stop working so hard in the garden and look up, see his son in a state of melancholic desire, and smile at him.

I was talking about that boy – me, over 50 years ago – with my clinical supervisor, and how consuming that desire had been, for a powerful man to smile at me. I would, I remembered, have offered my father almost anything to secure his benevolent approval. And I thought about Cain, and his melancholic desire to be approved by God – so desperate that he even brought an offering that God hadn't asked for.

When I think back on that boy looking out the window, I feel a shame attached to that memory, as though the boy were doing something illicit, or sad, or unduly needy. The shame attached to the boy's looking, of course, wouldn't be there unless someone, some thing, had observed him looking - some Other who generates what Lacan calls the gaze. In his *Four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* (1986), Lacan begins his discussion of the gaze by citing Sartre's image of a voyeur being caught peeping through a keyhole. It doesn't matter whether there is really a gazer or not; the gazer could simply be part of one's internal landscape, as in the case of my adult gaze which catches the boy looking longingly out the window at his father. The gazer sees the seer seeing, and the seer is surprised, caught out by the gaze (Lacan 1986, 277, in Franses 2001). My adult gaze alights upon my boyish desire for a man, my own father, and is ashamed of that boy's weakness and need.[4]

If Jonathan Dollimore (1991) is correct in interpreting an early forever-loss as the genesis of desire (pp. 339–344; see also Franses 2001),[5] then a new theological problem opens up in the Genesis text. Not only has God failed to make known what, if anything, he desires from Cain; now we see that God also has not let Cain know that God desires Cain himself. In the vacuum of absent father-love, Cain's sacrifice confronts him with his own one-way desire: he desires a father who has given no evidence that he desires Cain first. Cain's desire comes too late, for it comes after the absence of any evidence of God's love. God is apparently 'blind' to his responsibilities to love Cain, even before Cain experiences his own desire. God has become what Lacan calls The Blind Other.[6]

In meeting the Blind Other – or perhaps the Blind (M)other[7] – Cain has met Death. A number of exegetes point out that Cain could not have understood the consequences of his enraged and unpremeditated attack on Abel. Physical death had not been experienced in creation, nor had God yet commanded humanity not to murder. But in Cain's meeting the Blind Other, a death other than mortal occurs - a death of the phantasy that the creator desires his creatures. Speaking in Auckland in 1999, Jacques Derrida reminisced about the death of his friend Emmanuel Levinas, who defined death as 'the death that we meet in the face of the other as non-responsive' (Derrida

1999, 5, in Davey 2000, 62). Cain has thus encountered death even before he murders Abel, for he has met the non-responsive, the failure of the Lacanian Blind Other to let Cain know he is loved. Cain tests this in deciding to bring an offering: (The small boy asks 'Does the Man in the Garden love me?') Indeed, as generations of exegetes have claimed, the axis of the drama in Genesis 4 is Cain's offering gift, his *minhah*. But it is not sibling rivalry that explains the murder of Abel, but rather, the seeming arbitrariness of God's response, and Cain's frustration at the failure of the divine parent to let creation know that it is loved. In an emotional storm, Abel, the over-determined object, is simply the victim closest to hand.[8]

DIGNITY, EAST OF EDEN

The story of Cain and Abel, then, is not about introduction of murder into the world, or even about sibling rivalry's unconscious drive toward violence, but about the power of narcissistic rage and shame, and, complementing the emotions in Eden, the role of loss and desire in creation. The story of Cain marks the introduction into creation of the human inner landscape, a condition possible only after human existence is no longer idyllic.

As a child, I misunderstood this story. I believed that its message was that God is fair as long as you don't displease him, and the punishment for displeasing God was to be sent away from your family, to wander homeless. The horror of that thought was enough to keep my guilt securely in place for wanting to push my brother out the car door. But in fact, Cain did not wind up wandering and homeless. He went on to marry, sire children, found the first city, and become the great-great-great-great-grandfather of the creative arts. Cain seems to have turned his back on death, and perhaps even on desire, and walked away, to get on with life. In a sense, he became the father his own father never was.

It strikes me that there is something dignified in Cain's departure and fate. John Steinbeck seems to have sensed this too, in his *East of Eden*. In Chapter 24, section 2, Lee and Samuel are discussing the difference between two English translations of Genesis 4:7. Is God commanding Cain to triumph over the 'sin which is crouching at the door,' or is God offering Cain a choice about the level at which he engages sin? Thou shalt, or Thou mayest? Lee argues that the text must be read 'mayest' if humans are to have any dignity, to be anything other than forever predestined to get everything wrong. Lee says, 'It is easy out of laziness, out of weakness, to throw oneself onto the lap of the death, saying, "I couldn't help it; the way was set." But think of the glory of the choice! That makes a man a man' (Steinbeck 1952, 305–306). Brueggemann (1982) understands 4:7 as 'a statement about the awesome choices daily before us and the high stakes for which we take daily risks' (p. 61). To accept personal responsibility for one's quality of life, and to leave behind one's parents, is part of what Winnicott (1971) calls 'the controlled failure' of human environmental development. But it is where we are offered the hope and dignity of human agency.

THREE CLOSING QUESTIONS

I will end this essay with three questions:

Did I ever kill my own brother? No. And Yes. Not literally, but psychologically I did. I eclipsed him by making it impossible for him to compete with me in accomplishment and reputation, and I disconnected from him emotionally. I made sure that death sits between us. Today we have

polar-opposite opinions on politics, theology, sexual morals, and almost everything else – in other words, we live out the Kleinian split. Interestingly, two of the few things we agree on are our father's distancing and our mother's narcissism.

Is this a good psychodynamic interpretation? I don't know how to tell. As Bion wrote, 'When two personalities meet, an emotional storm is created' (Eigen 2005, 5). Storms have no right or wrong; they just are. My interpretation 'just is,' and it is for someone else to decide whether it is adequate or not. Or again citing Bion (1987, 49), 'If you had been practicing analysis as long as I have, you wouldn't bother about an inadequate interpretation – I have never given any other kind. This is real life – not psycho-analytic fiction'. In real life, what I feel in my body should be as accurate a source of information about the text as are the more standard hermeneutical lenses. I cannot read Genesis 4 without my subconscious autobiography standing between me and the text itself. Perhaps this essay is the perfect example of what Jione Havea (2003) means by 'loving Cain more than God'.

Is this good theology? I suppose that depends on how one defines 'good,' and on the related question of *how* the psychoanalytic hermeneutic opens up space within the text for an exegesis which frees Bible readers from any of the destructive power of hegemonic and heteronormative theologies and the resultant human scarring usually attached to this text.

> Before becoming an academic, I was priest in a US parish in which a prominent member of my congregation was blind. She was a successful academic while raising three young children, and could knit the most incredibly intricate sweaters. She was firmly critical of the way that 'blind', 'darkness', and 'sin' were used in the lectionary readings, and particularly of my unthinking use of such metaphors in my sermons. Over the 25 years subsequent to her challenges to me, I have had to struggle with how much I am 'dis-abled' by the heteronormativity of the theological tradition in which I was originally trained – privileging the social construction of white, male, middle-class, Western, able-bodied, heterosexual ways of thinking – even as a gay man! I am still in so many ways more handicapped than my parishioner was.

British theologian John Hull, himself blind, states:

> 'The image of God in the Bible is a projection of the normal human, raised to the highest degree… When philosophers and theologians use the image of the face of God [which has eyes to see], this hegemony of the average is particularly noticeable. Blind people are only one of a number of human experiences without the face, and if the theological tradition is to be redeemed from the dominance of exclusion, the image of God must be poly-anthropomorphic rather than uniform' (Hull 2000, p. 215).

A. What if God were 'blind' not only to Cain, but to both boys? Would that suggest that God's nature is to be arbitrary by chance rather than out of choice or cruelty?
B. What if God left Eden with Adam and Eve because God needs our human eyes to be able to see in this world? Would that realisation explain how Cain found his sense of individual dignity?

C. What sort of theology would affirmative answers to these questions produce? Perhaps, a theology that devolves responsibility for the future of creation and humanity squarely onto our own shoulders, instead of our assuming that God is going to rescue us, or directs us involuntarily toward some pre-ordained resolution of the mess we are making out of this relational world? Could we bear our personal visibility in such a theology, and could we resist the urge to turn it into yet-another form of narcissistic mirroring?

ENDNOTES

1 Freud developed his theory of sibling rivalry in several of his case studies, most notably in 'Analysis of a phobia in a five-year old boy [aka Little Hans]' (1909) and 'A child is being beaten' (1919). Freud mentioned Cain once in his essay on the interpretation of dreams (1900, p. 458), but the connection to the Bible text is vague. However, he did describe the relationship between the Judaism and Christianity of his own times in sibling terms: 'I venture to assert that jealousy of the people which declared itself the first-born, favorite child of God the Father, has not yet been surmounted among [Christians today]' (Freud 1939, 91).

2 The psychoanalytic/psychodynamic interpretation of Biblical texts – particularly using Freudian and Object Relations hermeneutics – is alarmingly underdeveloped in Biblical studies as a whole, though Lacanian hermeneutics offer some partial way forward. Scholars who have applied the Freudian theory of sibling rivalry to the text of Genesis 4 are exemplified by Katz (1991), but a literature search shows that the interpretation of Cain and Abel as a case of sibling rivalry is much more common in psychology, family therapy, and social work journals than it is in Biblical journals.

3 Pardes (1993, 187) argues that Eve's cry of acquisition is an act of hubris, destined to be deflated in the tragedy of her sons. But Eve's hubris makes more sense to me when set alongside God's narcissistic abuse of his own daughter, a la Rashkow.

4 Perhaps this unrequited desire explains why Alan Ladd's 'Shane' is the first movie I fell in love with as a child. I saw it several times in a row, and was reduced to uncontrollable sobbing every time I watched the young boy run down the road after Alan Ladd, crying 'Shane! Shane!' All he/I wanted was for the adult male figure to turn around, look, and thus offer a way to manage the boy's loss.

5 The translation of the Hebrew word *tisuqato* (BDB, 1003) at 4:7 is complicated, and beyond the purview of this essay. Certainly it is not at all clear the 'desire' is the most accurate English equivalent, or certainly not in the sense that Freud used the term 'desire' as part of his 'drive theory'. If 4:7 is compared with the same word at Song of Songs 7:11, then the sense seems to be 'lust' in its sexual sense. While Freud's sense of drive is certainly 'erotic', it is so in a more complex, and not always sexual, sense than 'lust' would suggest.

6 Here I must declare my personal discomfort with the implications of the word 'blind'. Until quite recently, theology has almost exclusively been written by able-bodied white males. As Hull (2000) claims, 'The God of the Bible is the God of the able-bodied not of the disabled' (215). As scholars and theologians increasingly learn to listen to the many voices at the margins of theology, including their critique that theology has always created 'a community of exclusion' (Hull), I would hope that we are all increasingly uncomfortable with how much we have created God in our own image. But throughout this essay, I will continue to use the word 'blind' in order to stay in touch with Lacan's argument, unsure whether changing his terminology will change his argument.

7 The word-play is obvious enough, but should not necessarily be gendered, according to contemporary Object Relations theory. Psychoanalyst Andrew Samuels has argued, in light of Chodorow's critique of Winnicott's term 'good-enough mother' and Bowlby's attachment theory, that Winnicott should now be understood as meaning the 'good-enough mother of either sex'.

[8] Kohut (1972) posits that vengeance can be understood as an expression of narcissistic rage. The coercive economic control exercised by the vindictive individual – through the extinction of its enemies – enslaves and ultimately destroys the individual himself in the obsessively doomed attempt to maintain the grandiose self and the glorified idealised self-object.

REFERENCES

Bechtel, Lyn. 2004. 'Developmental psychology in Biblical studies'. In *Psychology and the Bible: A new way to read the scriptures, volume 1: From Freud to Kohut*, edited by Ellens, J. Harold; Rollins, Wayne G. Westport: Praeger.

Benjamin, Jessica. 1988. *The bonds of love: Psychoanalysis, feminism, and the problem of domination*. New York: Pantheon.

Benjamin, Jessica. 1995. *Like subjects, love objects: Essays on recognition and sexual difference*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bion, W. R. 1987. *Clinical seminars and other works*. London: Karnac.

Bloom, Harold. 1990. *The Book of J*. Translation by David Rosenberg. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.

Blumenthal, David. 1993. *Facing the abusing God: A theology of protest*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

Brown, Joanne Carlson; Parker, Rebecca. 1989. 'For God so loved the world'. In *Christianity, patriarchy and abuse: A feminist critique*, edited by Brown, Joanne Carlson; Bohn, Carole. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.

Brueggemann, Walter. 1982. *Genesis*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

Capps, Donald. 2004. 'Foreword'. In: editors. *Psychology and the Bible: A new way to read the Scriptures, Volume 1: From Freud to Kohut*, edited by Ellens, J. Harold; Rollins, Wayne G. Westport: Praeger.

Cassuto, Umberto. 1961. *A commentary on the book of Genesis*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

Clines, David J. A. 1995. *Interested parties: The ideology of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Davey, Tom. 2000. 'Mourning, Melancholia and Being Staunch'. *Forum: The Journal of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists* 6: 57–66.

Derrida, Jacques. 1999. 'Forgiving and unforgivable'. Unpublished lecture, University of Auckland.

Dollimore, Jonathan. 1991. *Sexual dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Donaldson-Pressman, Stephanie; Pressman, Robert. 1994. *The narcissistic family: Diagnosis and treatment*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Eigen, Michael. 2005. *Emotional storm*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Fox, Everett. 1983. *In the beginning: A new English rendition of the book of Genesis*. New York: Schocken.

Franses, Rico. 2001. 'In the picture, but out of place: the Lacanian gaze, again'. *Fort da* 7(2). Available from http://www.fortda.org/fall_01/picture.html.

Freud, Sigmund. 1900. 'The interpretation of dreams'. In *Standard Edition, Vol. 5*, edited by Strachey, J. New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud, Sigmund. 1909. 'Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy' [aka 'Little Hans']. In *Standard Edition, Vol. 10*, edited by Strachey, J. New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud, Sigmund. 1919. 'A child is being beaten'. In *Standard Edition, Vol. 17*, edited by Strachey, J. New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud, Sigmund. 1939. 'Moses and monotheism'. In *Standard Edition, Vol. 23*, edited by Strachey, J. New York: W.W. Norton.

Harker, Tim. 1997. 'Therapy with male sexual abuse survivors: contesting oppressive life stories'. In *Narrative therapy in practice: The archaeology of hope*, edited by Monk, Gerald; Winslade, John; Crocket, Kathie; Epston, David. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Havea, Jione. 2003. 'To Love Cain More Than God'. In *Levinas and Biblical Studies*, edited by Eshenazi, Tamara Cohn, Phillips, Gary, Jobling, David. Semeia Series, 43. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

Hull, John M. 2000. Blindness and the face of God: toward a theology of disability'. In *The human image of God*, edited by Ziebertz, Hans-Georg; Schweitzer, Friedrich; Haring, Herman; Browning, Don. Leiden: Brill

Jackson, David. 1990. *Unmasking masculinity: A critical autobiography*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Katz, G. A. 1991. 'The first-born son, rivalry, entitlement, loss, and reparation: Illustrations from Biblical legend and Freud's biography'. I*nternational Review of Psycho-Analysis* 18: 501–512.

Kille, D. Andrew. 2001. *Psychological biblical criticism*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Kille, D. Andrew. 2004. '"The Bible made me do it": text, interpretation, and violence'. In *The destructive power of religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Vol. 1, edited by Ellens, J. Harold. Wesport: Praeger.

Kitzberger, Ingrid Rosa, editor. 2002. *Autobiographical biblical criticism*: *Learning to read between text and self*. Leiden: Deo.

Kohut, Heinz. 1972. 'Thoughts on narcissism and narcissistic rage'. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 27: 360–400.

Lacan, Jacques. 1986. *Four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*. Sheridan, A., translator. Harmondsworth: Peregrine.

Lachkar, Joan. 1992. *The narcissistic/borderline couple: A psychoanalytic perspective on marital treatment*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Lasine, Stuart. 2002. 'Divine narcissism and Yahweh's parenting style'. *Biblical Interpretation* 10 (1): 36–56.

Miles, Jack. 1996. *God: A biography*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Miller, May Susan. 1996. *No visible wounds: Identifying non-physical abuse of women by their men*. New York: Ballentine.

Minsky, Rosalind. 1996. *Psychoanalysis and gender: An introductory reader*. London: Routledge.

Moore, Stephen. 1996. *God's gym: Divine male bodies of the Bible*. New York: Routledge.

Pardes, Ilana. 1993. 'Beyond Genesis 3: the politics of maternal naming'. In *A feminist companion to Genesis*, edited by Brenner, Athalya. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Rashkow, Ilona. 2004. 'What is Wrong with this Picture? Daughters and Fathers in Genesis'. In *Psychology and the Bible: A new way to read the Scriptures*, *Volume 2: From Genesis to apocalyptic vision*, edited by Ellens, J. Harold; Rollins, Wayne G. Westport: Praeger.

Steinbeck, John. 1952. *East of Eden*. New York: Penguin.

White, Michael. 1997. *Narratives of therapists' lives*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Winnicott, Donald W. 1958. *Collected papers: Through paediatrics to psycho-analysis*. New York: Basic Books

Winnicott, Donald W. 1971. *Playing and reality*. London: Tavistock.

Cite this article as: Culbertson, Philip. 2006. 'De-demonising Cain… and wondering why?' *The Bible and Critical Theory* 2 (3): pp. 28.1–28.11. DOI: 10.2104/bc060028.