

A LITTLE CAIN IN ALL OF US: *DE CHERUBIM* AS AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILO'S  
“CAIN TRILOGY”

Part I

The Place of *De cherubim* in the Allegorical Commentary

The original structure of Philo's Allegorical Commentary has long puzzled scholars. Was there ever a treatise on the Hexaemeron? Why does the Commentary apparently end abruptly with Gen 17 (or with Gen 20 with the multi-volume *Somn.*)? Why are there such large gaps in the lemmatic coverage, and why does Philo move away from verse-by-verse exegesis in the later treatises? Where do Philo's lost works fit into the mix, particularly *Περὶ ἀριθμῶν* and *Περὶ διαθηκῶν*? And, perhaps the most commonly-asked question, what are we to make of Eusebius' catalogue?<sup>1</sup>

Some of these questions will likely never receive definitive answers. But Gregory Sterling has recently opened new possibilities by focusing on secondary prefaces. This method allows us to utilize Philo's own words to group the four works from *Agr.* to *Sobr.*<sup>2</sup> *Fug.* also includes a backward reference to *Congr.*, as do *Heres* and *Somn.* book 1. But these latter two treatises refer back to works that are now lost. In total, six of the treatises of the Allegorical Commentary feature secondary prefaces that allow us to group together two or more of Philo's works.

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<sup>1</sup> *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.1–8.

<sup>2</sup> Sterling 2012, 60–63.

Sterling regards the employment of secondary treatises to be a “development,” and cautiously suggests the limited lemmatic coverage of the Noachide treatises explains the use of secondary prefaces. This may well be correct for those treatises, but does not account for similar prefaces in *Heres* or *Fug.*, both of which cover far more lemmatic material. I believe Philo’s intention with the secondary prefaces is to associate two or more closely-related treatises, especially at the beginning of new exegetical blocks. Secondary prefaces allow the following groupings of what we might call “double treatises:”

- *De agricultura/De plantatione*
- *De ebrietate/De sobrietate*<sup>3</sup>
- *De congressu/De fuga*

Since Philo offers secondary prefaces in only six treatises of the Allegorical Commentary, and these appear later in the collection, we must search for other explanations for his failure to do so in earlier treatises.

Although I agree with Sterling that Philo becomes more formalized in grouping his treatises by secondary prefaces, I believe the same structural tendency exists even in the earlier treatises of the Allegorical Commentary. First, it is well-known that *Leg.* 1–2 were considered originally one work, as in the Armenian tradition.<sup>4</sup> So, we have a double treatise at the beginning of a Philonic quartet (originally *Leg.* 1–4). Skipping for a moment the Cain treatises, we arrive at *Gig.* and *Deus.* Again, we have what scholars generally regard as a double treatise.<sup>5</sup> Although there are no secondary prefaces in these works to link them formally, literary traits and ancient

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<sup>3</sup> Philo does add a secondary preface to the beginning of *Ebr.* that apparently refers back to *De plantatione*.

<sup>4</sup> Cohn 1899, 393, 395.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Runia 1987.

testimony conspire to suggest they are indeed closely-related.<sup>6</sup> If we allow ourselves to conjecture the two books of Περὶ διαθηκῶν originally followed *Gig.–Deus*, as Cohn supposed, then we would have another quartet of treatises, this time on the flood account, a prominent, self-contained, exegetical block.<sup>7</sup>

Turning back to the Cain treatises, there are again four works. We have no reason to assume Philo ever authored a separate work on Gen 4:4b–7, and in fact Philo never refers to 4:6. If the same pattern of double treatises at the beginning of a quartet holds, then *Cher./Sacr.* ought to be read as a double treatise. Thematically, Adam and Eve are complimentary pairs, namely νοῦς and αἴσθησις. The creation of each is treated in continuous fashion by our current *Leg.* 1–2.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Cain and Abel are to be read as pairs, τὸ φίλαυτον and τὸ φιλόθεον δόγμα. Abel is mentioned only once in *Cher.* in the quotation of a primary biblical lemma.<sup>9</sup> We must await *Sacr.* to receive Cain’s complimentary principle. This suggests that we can reasonably conjecture a close relationship between the two treatises.<sup>10</sup>

The remaining two treatises, *Det.* and *Post.* are concerned with the internal struggle and fate of the twin principles within the soul. If this conjecture is correct, then the Allegorical Commentary begins with four exegetical blocks each consisting of four original treatises. The

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<sup>6</sup> For a general presentation, see Cohn 1899; Morris 1987; and more recently, Royse 2009.

<sup>7</sup> 1899, 397.

<sup>8</sup> *Leg.* 1–2 (*Leg.* 1 about the creation of mind and *Leg.* 2 about the creation of sense-perception).

<sup>9</sup> *Cher.* 40.

<sup>10</sup> I leave off here exegetical connections, such as the order of the virtuous patriarchs (Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, and Moses, an order found only twice, *Cher.* 40–41; *Sacr.* 5–10), Laban and Pharaoh as Cain character types (*Cher.* 67, 74; *Sacr.* 46–48), Abraham and the powers (*Cher.* 106; *Sacr.* 59), the nature of festival (*Cher.* 86–87; *Sacr.* 63), and God as the Cause (*Cher.* 124–27; *Sacr.* 92–96). While these parallels are not exclusive to the treatises, the structure of the Philonic argument seems to indicate the possibility that Philo wished them to be mutually informative.

structure of the Commentary is impossible to investigate after this point because of unfortunate lacunae in the Philonic text. But it seems reasonable to assume Philo's four-fold, double-treatise formula was not accidental.

## Part II

### Philo's Presentation of Cain

*De cherubim* divides itself into two unequal parts. §§1–39 are a progressive exegesis of Gen 3:24,<sup>11</sup> and §§40–130 of Gen 4:1.<sup>12</sup> The explicit treatment of Cain begins in §53, meaning that nearly 60% (ca. 448 of 756 lines) of the treatise deals with the significance of Cain. This focus serves to introduce the main figure of the so-called Cain trilogy. Some sixty-six times the name of Cain occurs in the treatises from *Cher.* to *Post.*, and only ten times does the name occur elsewhere in the Allegorical Commentary. Never does the name of Cain occur in the Exposition of the Law. Abel fares even worse, being mentioned outside the quartet only once (*Migr.* 74), and never in the Exposition.<sup>13</sup>

Beginning in *Leg.* Philo gives an archetypal and psychological reading of Gen 2–3. Adam is the mind formed within the soul, and Eve the implantation of sense-perception. The resultant

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<sup>11</sup> The LXX text reads as follows “And he cast out Adam and he dwelt over against the paradise of luxury [and he placed] the cherubim and flaming sword turning to guard the way of the tree of life” (καὶ ἐξέβαλε τὸν Ἀδὰμ καὶ κατώκισεν ἀπέναντι τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς [καὶ ἔταξεν] τὰ χερουβιμ καὶ τὴν φλογίνην ῥομφαίαν τὴν στρεφομένην φυλάσσειν τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς), §§1–10 provide commentary on the verb “cast out” (ἐξέβαλε), §§11–20 on the preposition “over against” (ἀπέναντι), and §§21–39 on the Cherubim and the flaming sword.

<sup>12</sup> §§40–52 on “knowing” one’s “wife,” and §§53–130 on “Cain.”

<sup>13</sup> Both Cain and Abel occur in the *Quaestiones* in the relevant passages, of course, but a host of allegorical characters are absent from the Exposition, including Laban, Aaron, Pharaoh, et al.

birth of the mind engaging the senses, depicted in *Cher.*, is self-infatuation (Cain), previous to the addition of the God-loving tendency (Abel) in *Sacr.* To Philo, this allegory is universal and programmatic, and is demonstrated by the some 167 secondary lemmata cited in the Cain treatises alone. Those biblical (and historical) characters who come after Cain and Abel represent types of people who feature to a lesser or greater extent the tendencies of Cain and Abel within their souls.

### The Progression of Cain

I suggest *Cher.* be read as an introduction to Philo's "Cain trilogy" (*Sacr.*, *Det.*, *Post.*), which symbolizes the journey of the soul. Each treatise develops along different lines the basic ideas set forth in *Cher.* Cain is initially introduced as the negative product of the mind's (Adam's) encounter with sense-perception (Eve). Because his name means "possession," Cain symbolizes self-infatuation, a mental disease typical of humanity. *Sacr.* answers the Cain conviction by the soul's birth of "Abel," the "God-loving conviction" (*Sacr.*). Just as it is God who adds sense-perception to the mind, so also it must be God who adds Abel to the soul. Before he can do so, however, Cain must be removed. Such a spin on the Septuagintal "he added to bear" is found only here in Philo's treatises.<sup>14</sup>

*Det.* utilizes a very different model. Cain and Abel are still twin principles located in the soul, battling for control of the mind. But they are also individuals who argue in favor of their respective positions.<sup>15</sup> Cain attempts to gain ground by his sophistic reasoning, dazzling Abel with "probabilities and possibilities" rather than the truth. Educationally, since Abel was not

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<sup>14</sup> *Sacr.* 1–10.

<sup>15</sup> *Det.* 32ff.

sufficiently trained in the “art of language,” he should have declined the debate (§36).<sup>16</sup> Morally, as a mere progressor (προκόπτων), he was unprepared, and should have humbly exercised caution (εὐλάβεια, §45). Nevertheless, in spite of Abel’s own foolishness, God came to his aid (§47). Cain thinks he has killed Abel (αὐτόν), but in fact has killed himself (αὐτόν, §47).<sup>17</sup> Having cut himself off from a virtuous life, Cain has no choice but to depart willingly from the soul, as Seth (“watering”) is raised up in place of Abel.<sup>18</sup>

*Post.* begins just as *Cher.* does, by discussing banishment “over against” a more desirable location.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, Cain moves away from rest and stability of knowledge to the land of “Nod” (“tossing”).<sup>20</sup> Having no real convictions, Cain is bound to wander through the wasteland of Academic skepticism, always feeling for, but never finding wisdom. At this point, God declares to Cain:

... I have filled the universe with Myself. I do this in pity for rational nature, that it may be caused to rise out of the nether world of the passions into the upper region of virtue guided step by step by Me, Who have laid down the road that leads to heaven and appointed it as a highway for all suppliant souls, that they might not grow weary as they tread it (*Post.* 30–31; trans. LCL).

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<sup>16</sup> All translations of Philonic texts are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>17</sup> Philo apparently reads the scriptural lemma as follows: καὶ ἀνέστη Καὶν ἐπὶ Ἀβελ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτόν (rather than αὐτόν) (Gen. 4:8).

<sup>18</sup> *Post.* 10.

<sup>19</sup> Gen 3:24 and 4:16 are discussed in light of one another.

<sup>20</sup> *Post.* 22. On the theme of stability, ubiquitous in the Cain treatises, see Graffigna 2004.

Because Cain leaves Eden (ὀρθὸς καὶ θεῖος λόγος) for Naid (“turmoil”),<sup>21</sup> his wife is not a specific virtue, as were those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses,<sup>22</sup> but rather an “impious reasoning faculty.”<sup>23</sup> This leads him to utter the boast of Protagoras: “man is the measure of all things.”<sup>24</sup> He thus bears offspring in his likeness, starting with Enoch, interpreted as a gift to the mind (Enoch means “your gift”). It is not until we reach Enosh that we find “hope.”<sup>25</sup> Cain begins with pretention, being enamored of the mind’s capabilities, and ends with separation, excluding himself from the hope of ethical progress. Having now surveyed Philo’s basic presentation of Cain across the treatises, we shall focus on his specific points of emphasis.

### The Typological Cain

Although Philo is sometimes said not to practice typology,<sup>26</sup> and although this may be true in the Patristic sense of the word, Philo regularly uses τύπος and its derivatives to refer to a “pattern of behavior.”<sup>27</sup> For Philo, Cain serves an archetypal role. He is the first to have an unshakeable confidence in human effort and its result. Cain regards sense-perception as the only means of judgment, and human experience the only criterion of truth. The hubris of this character type culminates in a sort of atheistic humanism, which selfishly and childishly regards all things as

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<sup>21</sup> *Post.* 32.

<sup>22</sup> *Cher.* 40–41.

<sup>23</sup> *Post.* 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Post.* 36; cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 152a.

<sup>25</sup> The Philonic etymology of Enosh is “hope” (*Det.* 139).

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Goppelt 1982, 50; Kannengiesser 2006, 230.

<sup>27</sup> For a focus on Cain and Abel as character types see Najman 2003.

one's own "possession."<sup>28</sup> Characters such as Cain exalt themselves as the Cause and allow God to be a mere instrument.<sup>29</sup> In this regard they qualify as "atheists" in the ancient sense.<sup>30</sup>

Philo finds evidence of Cain throughout history. Alexander the Great believed all things in all directions were his own possession, says Philo.<sup>31</sup> Protagoras declares "man is the measure of all things," regarding all the senses as gifts to the human mind.<sup>32</sup> The mythological Sisyphus serves as a powerful illustration of punishment, however, being forever condemned to a life of toil for his hubris.<sup>33</sup> Philo also finds matching character types in scripture, such as Esau, Laban, and Pharaoh. All of these are copies made in the mold of Cain. The theme of character types is fleshed out fully in *Post.* where Philo describes Cain's character "offspring."

### The Philosophical Cain

In addition to representing types of characters, Cain can also stand for a range of mistaken philosophical tenets. Philo takes aim at the Epicurean, the Skeptical Academic, and even the Peripatetic traditions as being associated with the madness of Cain. So it would appear that Cain comes to stand for any philosophical notion Philo wishes to oppose. By demonstrating that all bad philosophy has its origin in Cain, and by discussing the scriptural judgment of Cain, Philo can kill humanistic tendencies at their root.

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<sup>28</sup> *Cher.* 67–76.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the prepositional digression in *Cher.* 124–27.

<sup>30</sup> Of the Cain type as "atheistic" cf. *Leg.* 3.33; *Sacr.* 69 (of Pharaoh); *Post.* 52 (of Cain).

<sup>31</sup> *Cher.* 63.

<sup>32</sup> *Post.* 36. This indicates the influence of Plato (e.g., *Theaet.* 152a; *Crat.* 385e), and Aristotle, who associated Protagoras with the doctrine that sense-perception is equivalent to knowledge (*Met.* 4.5.12–15 [1009b]).

<sup>33</sup> *Cher.* 78.

The Epicurean view is, for Philo, equivalent to impiety and vain opinion.<sup>34</sup> Since the Epicureans separated God from the material world, they were led to exalt sense-perception as the supreme good, and human insight as the standard of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> For Philo, philosophy is a gift from heaven, and the responsibility of the human mind is simply to receive it.<sup>36</sup> Philo writes in *Leg.* 3.30: “Many claim that everything in the world carries on automatically without a guide, and that the human mind alone has established arts, pursuits, laws, customs, civic affairs, and matters of individual and communal justice, both for people and for irrational animals.”<sup>37</sup> Philo anticipates the later view of Clement that philosophy is just as much a revelation from God to the Greeks as the Law of Moses is to the Jews.<sup>38</sup> Thus, to reject the divine origins of philosophy and to seek understanding on one’s own is to violate the original principle of knowledge. Philo asks in *Cher.* 77, “What could be a more hostile enemy to the soul than the one who, out of arrogance, ascribes to himself what is the right of God alone!?”<sup>39</sup>

Philo also locates in Cain the foolishness of Academic Skepticism. If the Epicurean mindset attributes too much certainty to the human mind, the Skeptical Academy does not credit the mind enough. Philo holds out hope that those who search for wisdom will eventually stumble upon the divine. Apparently, since Cain is aware only of his own faculties and recognizes their limitations, he reaches the conclusion that he simply cannot know everything. “We rejoice with

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<sup>34</sup> *Post.* 2; *Somn.* 2.50. The material focus of the Epicureans is directly attacked at the beginning of *Post.*, but the groundwork is laid long before.

<sup>35</sup> On Philo and ancient Epicureanism see Booth 1994; Lévy 2000; Ranocchia 2008.

<sup>36</sup> *Spec.* 3.185.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *QE* 2.3.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Wolfson 1968, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Völker 1938, 120.

lovers of God,” Philo writes, for “their quest for the good is worthy of celebrating for its own sake, even if they never find it. But we are troubled for the self-infatuated Cain, who has left his own soul with no conceivable perception of the One who is, having deliberately blinded the only vision by which he could see.”<sup>40</sup> So, in the absence of divine illumination, Cain utilizes the art of sophistry to cover up his lack of knowledge.<sup>41</sup> In fact, there is a close connection in Philo between sophistry and Skepticism.<sup>42</sup> As intellectual descendants of Cain, both sophists and Skeptics admit only “probabilities and possibilities.” These terms (τὸ εὔλογον and τὸ πιθανόν) can be traced to Arcesilaus and Carneades,<sup>43</sup> and occur together thirteen times in Philo’s corpus.<sup>44</sup> For Philo, they represent the limit of human knowledge in the mind who refuses to acknowledge God.

A third philosophical tradition identified with Cain is Aristotelianism. The primary grievance of Philo here is against the Peripatetic exaltation of external goods, specifically the doctrine of the three-fold good. At the beginning of *Det.* Philo emphatically agrees with the Stoics that “only the morally good is good.”<sup>45</sup> Although the section concerns Laban and Joseph rather than Cain, one can trace back to *Cher.* Philo’s definition of knowledge: “For since ... knowledge consists of estrangement from sense-perception and the body, it will show lovers of

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<sup>40</sup> *Post.* 21.

<sup>41</sup> *Det.* 43–44. For the specific connection of this idea with Skepticism, see *Congr.* 52–53.

<sup>42</sup> For Früchtel, these terms both indicate philosophers of the New Academy (1968, 138).

<sup>43</sup> For texts see LS §§ 68–69, esp. 69.B–D, and for general discussion see Long 1985, 88–106; Schofield 2005.

<sup>44</sup> *Opif.* 45, 72; *Sacr.* 12, 13; *Det.* 38; *Ebr.* 70; *Mig.* 76; *Somn.* 1.220; *Ios.* 143; *Mos.* 1.174, 196; 2.261; *Spec.* 1.38.

<sup>45</sup> *Det.* 5–9.

wisdom rejecting rather than choosing sense-perception.”<sup>46</sup> Cain cannot truly know anything by utilizing sense-perception alone, and by agreeing to furnish the body a role in his pursuit of wisdom, he remains a fool.

### The Psychological Cain

Although the Cain standard of behavior can be applied typologically and traced philosophically, Philo’s principle allegory of Cain is of a generic force within the soul. Although the rabbinic יצרים are often cited as a parallel to Cain and Abel as twin principles,<sup>47</sup> the two models are very different. First, the rabbis regard the יצר הרע as positive, and even essential, in certain instances, whereas Cain for Philo is always negative. Second, the יצרים are present throughout one’s life, whereas Cain manifests himself in young souls, and ought to be managed or eradicated by maturity and education. In fact, immaturity is a primary trait of the Cain disposition. Scripture teaches this when it informs us that Cain was born first.<sup>48</sup> Education is, therefore, the means by which the Cain disposition is first controlled, and then eradicated, in favor of the God-loving disposition, Abel.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Cher.* 41.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., *b. Ber.* 61a; *Gen. Rabb.* 9.7.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., *Sacr.* 11–18.

<sup>49</sup> Secular education is a constant theme of Philo’s writings (cf. the famous Hagar allegory of *Congr.*). On education as the answer to the Cain disposition, cf. *Cher.* 71, 101–105; *Sacr.* 76.

Self-infatuation (φιλαυτία) is Philo's favorite quality to describe Cain, although he can use others.<sup>50</sup> The near-equivalent οἴσις, with the Stoic meaning "self-deceit," occurs eighteen times in the Allegorical Commentary, and Cain is commonly associated with ἀσέβεια, μεγαλαυχία, and the like.<sup>51</sup> The noun φιλαυτία, for its part, occurs some seventeen times, the adjective φίλαυτος some twenty-one times, and the verb φιλαυτέω once. Although the term can be found prior to Philo's time, particularly within the Aristotelian tradition, Philo appears to be the first to utilize the term specifically to refer to a psychological tendency.<sup>52</sup> Philo's dualistic psychology featuring the competing opinions of Cain and Abel provoked the linkage with an even rarer adjective, φιλόθεος. Therefore, φίλαυτος can be understood only in comparison with its opposite principle.<sup>53</sup>

Abel represents τὸ φιλόθεον δόγμα, the opinion that cedes control to God in all things. Philo uses the adjective φιλόθεος forty-eight times, but it is found in Greek prior to him only twice.<sup>54</sup> The term is reserved for the soul aspiring to know God in his essence,<sup>55</sup> and is used to describe Abraham,<sup>56</sup> Isaac and Jacob,<sup>57</sup> Moses,<sup>58</sup> and the Therapeutae.<sup>59</sup> The high priest stands in

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<sup>50</sup> See Warnach 1973; Deutsch 1998.

<sup>51</sup> *Post.* 52 offers a list of traits to describe the Cain disposition.

<sup>52</sup> Plato and Aristotle use the term to refer to types of people (Deutsch 1998).

<sup>53</sup> *Det.* 32.

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.17.6 [1391b2]; Diodorus Siculus 1.95.4. I owe the references to Geljon and Runia 2013, 148.

<sup>55</sup> *Post.* 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Cher.* 7; *Her.* 289.

<sup>57</sup> *Abr.* 50.

<sup>58</sup> *Mos.* 2.67.

<sup>59</sup> *Prob.* 83–84.

a unique position, being both θεοφιλής and φιλόθεος,<sup>60</sup> as is the nation of Israel.<sup>61</sup> But the term is not equivalent to moral perfection, as *Dec.* 108–110 illustrates. In Philo, Abel is the biblical character most often associated with the description.<sup>62</sup> As the true φιλόθεος, Abel offers *himself* in addition to his sacrifice.<sup>63</sup>

The φίλαντος is guilty of “the greatest evil.”<sup>64</sup> Although the adjective is applied to several biblical characters, such as Moab,<sup>65</sup> Onan,<sup>66</sup> and Pharaoh,<sup>67</sup> Philo’s star witnesses to a life of self-love is Cain.<sup>68</sup> Cain, however, refuses to seek God or sacrifice to him. Instead, he reserves all offerings for himself.<sup>69</sup> It is his objective to eliminate every trace of the God-loving conviction in the soul,<sup>70</sup> and he thus kills Abel. In so doing, however, he only kills himself.<sup>71</sup> Roberto Radice summarizes, “The principle of *philautia* (egoism) is thus what transforms the perfect universe of Paradise into a source of sin, both altering the axiological order of things and attributing to it what is really the work of God.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Her.* 82.

<sup>61</sup> *Spec.* 1.51; *Virt.* 184–185; see Bekken 2007, 105–107.

<sup>62</sup> E.g., *Sacr.* 3; *Det.* 32, 48, 78, 103; *QG* 1.60, 62.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Spec.* 1.248, 271. For additional comments see Nissen 1974, 458–77, esp. 470–77.

<sup>64</sup> *QG* fr. 1.10 (Petit).

<sup>65</sup> *Leg.* 3.231.

<sup>66</sup> *Post.* 180.

<sup>67</sup> *Cher.* 74.

<sup>68</sup> *Sacr.* 52; *Det.* 32, 68, 78; *Post.* 21; *QG* 1.62.

<sup>69</sup> *Sacr.* 53.

<sup>70</sup> *Det.* 78.

<sup>71</sup> *Det.* 47.

<sup>72</sup> Radice 2008, 166.

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Another psychological emphasis is the identification of Cain and Abel as δόξαι or δόγματα, Cain being “false” or “vain” opinion, and Abel representing truth.<sup>73</sup> The opening paragraph of *Sacr.* declares that Cain and Abel are “opposite and contradictory δόξαι in the soul.”<sup>74</sup> These “convictions,” as we shall translate the term, are rooted in entirely different sources. On the one hand, the mind derives the “Cain” conviction from personal experience, utilizing the senses to conclude “all things are its own possessions.”<sup>75</sup> The mind thus mistakenly claims to be its own sovereign.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, the “Abel” conviction is added to the soul only when Cain is subtracted.<sup>77</sup> This addition occurs through no human effort, but only when God chooses to bestow grace on the mind.<sup>78</sup> This grace, however, does not invalidate education. Philo writes, “But if you allow yourself to remain uneducated and untaught, you will forever be enslaved to harsh mistresses, self-deception, lusts, pleasures, injustices, foolishness, false convictions.”<sup>79</sup>

Education must begin, therefore, with humility. The God-loving disposition must first realize its passivity, and be open to removing its own opinions and self-taught doctrines.<sup>80</sup> This

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<sup>73</sup> David Runia has shown that δόγμα is generally more positive than δόξα, perhaps because of Philo’s repeated use of the familiar Epicurean κενή δόξα (2010).

<sup>74</sup> *Sacr.* 2–5.

<sup>75</sup> *Cher.* 66.

<sup>76</sup> *Cher.* 83.

<sup>77</sup> *Sacr.* 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Sacr.* 10. The classic statement is *Leg.* 3.78.

<sup>79</sup> *Cher.* 71.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. the excursus in *Cher.* 77–83.

was the problem with Pharaoh, who “took to himself all active functions and forgot the passive.”<sup>81</sup> In the words of Louth, “The soul is a creature, created by God, and nothing in itself. This means that self-knowledge is not identified with knowledge of God; in self-knowledge the soul comes to realize its own nothingness and is thrown back on God, Him who is.”<sup>82</sup> True knowledge can only come at God’s behest.<sup>83</sup>

### Conclusion

Philo’s presentation of Cain follows the trajectory of the biblical text. At first, Cain is present when the young mind becomes self-aware by means of sense-perception. Infatuated with itself and pretentious to the core, the mind arrogantly believes in its own self-sufficiency. God attempts to answer the illusion by introducing Abel to the soul. The addition of Abel represents an act of grace that the young mind must accept and develop by means of secular education. The mind dominated by the Cain disposition, however, rejects and destroys any God-loving vestige formerly stamped on the soul. He thus challenges to debate an undereducated and immature Abel, defeating the last hope for goodness in his soul. Cain then willingly leaves the stability of God’s presence to wander in the wasteland of “tossing” and “tumult.”

The life of Cain is, for Philo, a cautionary tale, and a teaching tool. One can imagine young students sitting under Philo’s tutelage, terrified that the Cain disposition, already present in their minds, might gain ascendancy and strangle out their love for God. The practical application of Philo’s allegory is clear: there is a little Cain in all of us, drawing us toward

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<sup>81</sup> *Cher.* 76.

<sup>82</sup> Louth 2007, 24.

<sup>83</sup> E.g., *Leg.* 1.38.

ourselves and away from the divine, inviting us to regard all things as our own possession, and rejecting God as the ultimate cause and source of the greatest good.

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