THE LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF GENESIS 2–3

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BY THE literary characteristics of Gen 2–3 I mean the literary species of the passage as a whole, its relations to extra-biblical literature, and its unity. A consideration of these questions leads one at once into the enormous mass of literature on the Paradise narrative, which I make no attempt to review. Feldmann's review in 1913 issued in a book of over 600 pages. I must take most previous studies for granted, referring by choice only to those which are more recent or of more permanent influence upon exegesis. I make no pretence of having seen all the literature.

A REVIEW OF OPINION

As far back as 1913, Feldmann accepted the judgment of Lagrange and others that the Paradise story is not literal history, nor allegory, nor myth, but "folklore." Lagrange classified Gen 1–11 as "primitive history." History rests upon chronology and geography; these are not found in Gen 1–11.[1] Oral tradition "cannot preserve facts and circumstances without the help of some very definite point by which to fix their position in time and place."[2] Tradition hands down certain customs. Tales often told and diffused in different places lose their original proper names and local color. "If memories fail, tradition creates."[3] There is no "real history" in the Bible extending from the first man down to Jesus Christ.[4] The primitive history of the Bible differs from such historical works as the books of Kings. On the other hand, it has drawn nothing from the Babylonian stories.[5] Primitive history is not myth, but it has an external resemblance to myth.[6] These stories relate some events which, like those of mythology, are unreal, and there is no reason to think that the author of the stories believed in the reality of the fact.[7] "Legendary primitive history has its place between the myth, which is the story of things

[1] *Historical Criticism and the Old Testament* (London, 1905), p. 183.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 185. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 186–87. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 190.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 194. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 196. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

personified and deified, and real history."[8] There are no historical records of the time before Abraham.[9] "When the Bible tells us that the arts developed little by little, that nomadic life gradually assumed its own general characteristics, different from those of town life, that men did not always play the kinnor and flute, nor work brass and iron—it is impossible otherwise to conceive the beginning and progress of civilization. But can that be said to constitute history, duly noted and handed down?"[10] The proper names in these chapters are not historical; often they are etiological, and thus obviously invented—such as Jubal (the musician), the father of all musicians. "It was quite out of the question to write real history. . . . The Bible is taken up with tangible things, with discoveries which are still known; it relates their origin and progress, and leaves them in a hazy light, which has no outward semblance of actual history. . . . Could the author have told us more clearly that there exists no history of these periods?"[11] The Israelites, unlike the Greeks, often merge the ancestor with his descendants.[12] Lagrange sets Gen 2–3 aside; but when he resumes its consideration, he does not understand it as outside the class of primitive history. "On account of the Church's definition, I believe in original sin according to the Church's definition; but abstracting from this dogmatic point, based upon the unshakeable foundation of revelation, there can be no objection to assigning primitive history its true character."[13]

Lagrange denies the presence of myth, but admits mythological traits. He attributes some subtlety to the author in thinking that the author was aware of the unreality of some elements of his stories; this opinion agrees with the more recent judgment of scholars on ancient authors and their material.

Feldmann also accepted the "historical-folklore" interpretation. He finds that in principle it already existed in Christian antiquity.[14] The historical nucleus of the events narrated is vested in details which do not correspond to reality in the proper sense. Comparison shows not only a close connection between the traditions of different peoples, but elements in the Israelite form which are common to ancient

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 202. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 203. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 205–6. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 208. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 211.
[14] *Paradies und Sündenfall* (Münster, 1913), p. 602.

Oriental modes of thought. It is quite probable that the Jahwist was acquainted with the modes. He was free to use ideas which were current among his people, derived either from common ancestors or from exchange with neighboring peoples, to represent truths and events of profound significance. The Paradise of the past, like the biblical Paradise of the world to come, is artistically described. The author of the Paradise narrative was not the man to regard the details of his story as historically real.[15]

The interpretation which Heinisch presents in his commentary is more conservative than that of either Lagrange or Feldmann.[16] He assumes as probable that the story rests on an immediate revelation to Moses. He follows what he himself calls a "historical-allegorical" interpretation. This means that the historicity of the story in essential points is maintained, while freedom in conception and form is admitted. The essential points, according to Heinisch, are those mentioned in the *quaesitum* to which the response of 1909 was given. In discussing these points, Heinisch distinguishes between the formal element and the religious element. Heinisch thinks it impossible to distinguish in every detail where the author represents reality, and where he presents doctrine under the vesture of images. These ideas are not modified in his more recent work, with two rather important exceptions: he withdraws the hypothesis of immediate revelation to Moses, and does not think that the existence of an original tradition can be affirmed with all certainty.[17]

A. Bea, S.J., commenting on the response of 1948, has pointed out that the first task of exegesis is to determine the intention of the sacred writer.[18] The intention of the author is manifested in his manner of speaking, the concrete circumstances in which he writes, and his choice of literary form. Gen 1–11 appears in the dress of a historical narrative; but the meaning of *history* must be determined. In the literature of the ancient Semitic peoples, history means the transmission of particular facts in the form of annals, a mixed presentation of facts and legends or myths, or popular tradition orally transmitted.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 602–3.
[16] *Das Buch Genesis* (*HSAT*; Bonn, 1930), p. 138 ff.
[17] *Probleme der biblischen Urgeschichte* (Lucerne, 1947), p. 102.
[18] *Çivilţà cattolica*, XCIX (1948), 123.

It is for the exegete to determine what events and doctrines the sacred author intended to relate, speaking the language of his time, using the literary forms of his contemporaries, speaking to a people of a determined profane, intellectual, and religious culture.[19] To accomplish this, all the scientific, paleontological, historical, epigraphic, and literary material must be collated.[20]

The most recent Catholic commentator on Genesis, the lamented M. Chaine, has followed the lines of Lagrange.[21] After pointing out the resemblances and the dissimilarities between Gen 2–3 and other ancient Oriental material, he asks how such "special resemblances" and such "profound differences" are to be explained. He rejects the hypothesis of a primitive tradition: "we must take our stand upon the level of revelation."[22] The religious truths of creation and the fall came to the Hebrews by the revelation of God to their ancestors. In the oral transmission of these truths they were invested with the concepts and images proper to the times and the people; and these were the concepts and images of the ancient Semitic world. "Voilà pourquoi il faut bien distinguer la vérité religieuse et son expression; et c'est cette distinction qui permet d'expliquer les différences et les ressemblances qui existe entre les premiers chapitres de la Genèse et les textes assyro-babyloniens."[23] For M. Chaine, the narrative of Gen 2–3 is a vehicle of religious truth, not of history in the proper sense.

Hermann Gunkel's treatment of folklore has had such widespread and lasting influence that we must recall at least its main lines; his introduction to Genesis has affected all subsequent commentators, whether they accept his propositions or not. Gunkel begins by observing that historiography in the modern sense does not appear among uncultivated peoples. Before history is written, the events of the past are recounted in popular tradition (*Sage*).[24] Popular tradition

[19] *Loc. cit.* [20] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[21] *Le livre de la Genèse* (Paris, 1949), p. 71 ff.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 71. [23] *Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

[24] *Das Buch Genesis* (*GHK*; Göttingen, 1922), p. vii. English seems to lack a word which properly renders *Sage*. "Saga" in English is limited to heroic and epic narratives. "Legend," almost the standard English equivalent, strictly defined as "a narrative based chiefly on tradition," is an exact translation; but in common use, it seems to me, the word has overtones which have made me hesitate to use it. *Sage*, as Skinner has pointed

is thus defined by Gunkel: "popular and poetic narratives of ancient tradition, which treat of persons or events in the past."[25] He gives six sets of criteria by which folklore is distinguished from history. (1) Folklore originally appears in oral tradition, history as written documents. Folklore arises in cultural levels which do not write; and oral tradition is not of such a character as to maintain itself pure through a prolonged series of transmission. To folklore are due variant forms of one and the same account.[26] (2) Folklore deals with personal and family stories; history is concerned with great events of public interest.[27] (3) History, to be credible, must be traced back to first-hand evidence; folklore is dependent both on tradition and on imagination. Folklore cannot preserve minute details of a narrative; these are supplied by the imagination of the raconteurs, which, again, exhibits itself in variant forms of a single account.[28] (4) The "most significant" criterion of folklore is that it narrates the impossible. Gunkel does not mean here the miraculous element. Here are some of his illustrations: the number of animals in the ark; Ararat the highest mountain on earth; the reality of the firmament; the origin of the stars after the plants; the derivation of all the streams of the earth from a single source; the chronology of 2666 years from the creation to the exodus.[29] (5) Comparison of folklore both with certainly historical Hebrew narratives (such as 2 Sam 9–20) and with folklore of other peoples. The differences, in one case, and the similarities, in the other, show us the type.[30] (6) The poetic tone of folklore. History is prose and prosy; folklore is poetic by nature. This is not, says Gunkel, a hostile

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out (*Genesis* [*ICC*; New York, 1910], p. iii), means things said, as opposed to *Geschichte*, things which happened. The distinction does not lie in the historical reality of the event but in the manner of its transmission. In this paper I employ by preference the terms "folklore" or "popular tradition" (Fr., *récit populaire*).

[25] *Ibid.*, p. viii.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. viii–ix.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. ix.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. ix–x.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. x–xi. Gunkel writes: "The way in which narratives speak of God is one of the most certain criteria by which they may be distinguished as historical or poetic. Here also the historian does not appear without his philosophy. We believe that God is operative in the world as the imperceptible and hidden cause of all things; many times his work can, as it were, be seized with the hands, in especially great and impressive events and persons; we surmise his power in the marvelous concatenation of events; but he never appears to us as one of a number of operative factors, only as the ultimate cause of all things." This is, at least, an agreeably honest philosophical profession.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. xi–xii.

judgment, but an understanding of the nature of literature. Folklore must delight, elevate, inspire, console; to measure it by the standards of prose is barbarism ("es gibt auch fromme Barbaren").[31] Bea has well pointed out that the ancients knew only three ways of recounting the past: annals, mixture of myth and legend, and folklore.[32] Whenever an ancient source goes beyond the mere annalistic recording of facts, the elements of folklore begin to appear. This means that it exhibits a poetic and imaginative character, a freely inventive embodying of the event which it recounts.

Gunkel goes on to distinguish two types of folklore in Genesis: (1) the traditions of the origin of the world and the primitive ancestors of man (Gen 1–11); (2) the traditions of the patriarchs. He finds two conceptions of God in these groups. In the early traditions God is viewed more universally; the narratives tell of His fearful judgments and suppose a great cleft between God and man, while God is, at the same time, represented anthropomorphically, and the divine action is, with a few exceptions, the central feature of the story. These Gunkel contrasts with the patriarchal narratives, which have their scene in Canaan; which deal with a single family and its relations with God; in which God manifests His favor rather than His judgments; in which men are the chief actors. Because of these differences, Gunkel calls the first group "faded myths." But the myth is a *Göttergeschichte.* Genesis, he says, contains no myths in the true sense. But these stories show mythological traits which are derived from Semitic myths. Like the etiological myths, they answer certain questions. Here is where the Israelites give their own peculiar interpretation of certain universal human problems, the most profound questions of the whole race.

In considering the artistic form of the folklore of Genesis, Gunkel first asks whether it is prose or poetry; and, with almost all exegetes, he denies any metrical form.[33] A second characteristic is archaism; the stories were already old when they were put in writing. Are they, then, the work of a single author, or the common possession of the people? Certainly a single mind stands at the beginning; but they come to us through many hands, each of which has left its impression, so that they have become a common possession.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. xii–xiv. [32] *Civiltà cattolica*, XCIX (1948), 124. [33] *Genesis*, pp. xxvii–xxx.

A highly important question is the unity of the legend.[34] One may consider the unity of the whole Pentateuch, or of Genesis, or of the "folklore book," of the folklore cycle, of the single tradition; which of these is decisive? Gunkel answers that folklore, of its very nature, consists of single traditions; the single tradition is the unit of which the larger unities are composed. Therefore each individual story is first of all to be interpreted in itself. The "context" of the cycle or the book is of later origin. The story in its earliest form is short; artistic elaboration is a work of later and more cultivated minds. The number of actors is small, two or three. The story unfolds itself in scenes, which are often variations of the same pattern.[35] The principal characters are not delineated; a single episode exhibits one or two traits of their character. Hence the principal actors appear as types rather than as individual personalities. In some cases the types represent peoples or social classes. In a folklore cycle, of course, the character of the hero takes on a more definite form.

Folklore and its oral tradition by their very nature antedate written documents; hence the history of the tradition, as sketched by Gunkel, is of necessity highly speculative.[36] Some of the folklore is of foreign origin; for the primitive history Gunkel accepts the theory of Mesopotamian provenance. But folklore in general is not of a uniform character; the diversity of origin is evident from the diversity of details and background. For the folklore of Genesis, Gunkel indicates a number of such heterogeneous elements. Foreign elements are, as far as their religious character is concerned, brought into harmony with Israelite conceptions; and Gunkel thinks that this assimilation can be traced in other details also. Folklore which was associated with one particular place was often contaminated by the folklore of another place or circle; and a similar contamination occurs when stories of diverse origin are collected into a cycle. The same phenomenon is observed of time; the background of the story is changed by changed conditions. The key to these divergences, according to Gunkel, is the variations which can be observed in different forms of one and the same story.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. xxxi–xxxix.

[35] This characteristic has also been pointed out by Bea, who calls it narration in concentric circles; of *Institutiones biblicae de Pentateucho* (Rome, 1928), pp. 66–67; *Civiltà cattolica*, XCIX (1948), 126.

[36] *Genesis*, pp. lvi–lxxx.

In particular, Gunkel calls attention to the fact that the religious ideas of a narrative may be those contemporary to the recounting of an event, not to the event itself. He qualifies this, however, by quoting with approval the remark of Gressmann that the religion of Genesis is not simply the religion of Israel. The same principle he applies to morality. In consideration of all these possible modifications, he confesses that we are often unable to determine the original form and purpose of a particular story.

This general summary of Gunkel's opinions is not intended to imply an uncritical acceptance of them. But it is evident that in many respects Gunkel's exposition is in harmony with the views of the interpreters quoted above. A comparison of these views with the very brief remarks on literary form and species contained in the *Divino afflante Spiritu* and the letter to Cardinal Suhard of 1948 shows that it is possible to work on principles which are accepted by exegetes of different beliefs and widely different critical and exegetical views.[36a]

Now if we consult once more the interpreters of Gen 2–3, we see that the chapters are not taken as folklore pure and simple. Père Dubarle classifies them as wisdom literature; other writers, similarly, give them a sapiential or prophetic character.[37] By this they mean that the story is intended to propose religious truths and moral principles in narrative form. The narrative, that is, is not esteemed for its own sake, nor did the author think it of primary importance that he should preserve the narrative as he found it. In adapting it to his purpose, which is didactic, the author has allowed himself that liberty of conception and expression which is characteristic of folklore in all its forms. In a word, there is no small similarity, in this respect, between the Paradise story and the "historico-didactic" account of creation in Gen 1:1–2:4a. I do not wish to commit here the error of assigning *a priori* the literary species of the passage; I wish merely to summarize the more important opinions proposed by respected authors,

[36a] *Divino afflante Spiritu*, nos. 35–39 (Eng. tr., NCWC, pp. 18–20); *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, X (1948), 319–20, 322–23.

[37] Driver, *Genesis* (7th ed.; New York and London, 1909), pp. 54–57; Feldmann, *Paradies und Sündenfall*, pp. 601–5; Gordon, *Early Traditions of Genesis* (Edinburgh, 1907), pp. 161–64; Heinisch, *Genesis*, p. 138; Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp. 29–33; Skinner, *Genesis*, pp. 94–97; Chaine, *Genèse*, pp. 69–70.

and to take these opinions as a working hypothesis. We are not obliged to begin our investigations *in vacuo*.

COMPARATIVE MATERIAL IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

The first step in determining more precisely the literary species of the Paradise story should be to compare it with other narratives and to determine whether it is dependent on any other work. Here there is no need to delay; this work of comparison has been done many times, and its conclusions may be found in all the commentaries cited above. It is an accepted conclusion among modern exegetes that there is no extant piece of literature which is the source of the Paradise story. The attempts which have been made to establish a dependence on Mesopotamian literature have all broken down against the unique character of the story.

But it would be a mistake to conclude from this, as some have done, that there is no connection between the Paradise story and other ancient narratives. The story as a whole is independent, but this does not imply that it is independent in all details. An examination of the relevant texts on the origin of man discloses that any similarity in detail is to be found in the Mesopotamian stories alone. These relevant texts are few and fragmentary. No Mesopotamian account is as anthropocentric as the Paradise story; this is one of its most striking and distinctive traits.

The material out of which man is made is not always the same in these accounts. In a fragmentary creation account man is made of clay, as in Genesis.[38] The same is true of Enkidu in the Gilgamesh epic, who is not, however, the first man.[39] In *Enûma Elish* man is made of the blood of the slain god Kingu, an ally of the chaotic monster Tiamat.[40] Man is also made of clay in an Egyptian account by the potter gods Ptah and Khnum.[41] These texts seem to suggest that the

[38] Ebeling in Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament* (Berlin, 1926), p. 134; Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, 1950), pp. 99–100.

[39] Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1946), p. 19; Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 74.

[40] Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago, 1950), pp. 46–47; Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 68.

[41] Erman, *Die Religion der Aegypter* (Berlin, 1934), pp. 25, 44.

idea that man is a creature of clay, molded by the divine hand, was fairly well diffused. But it was not the only idea. One may ask whether there is not a relationship between the blood of the god in the Mesopotamian account and the breath of Yahweh in the Paradise story. To the Hebrew narrator the idea that man was mixed of the blood of Yahweh was inconceivable; yet the traditional idea was that man partook, in some way, of the divine nature. It is altogether possible that the author wished to preserve this idea, and so invented the much nobler image of the breath of God to express it. The Bible more than once exhibits the common Semitic idea that the life was in the blood (e.g., Gen 9:4). It uses a different idea here, and the motive suggested explains it.

Nowhere in the accounts of the origin of man do I find the production of a single pair, except for a badly broken tablet which has lost its context.[42] All the other creation accounts speak of the creation of men, in several cases of men in a city, which obviously supposes a number. This concept appears also in Gen 1:26–27, which does not at all imply a single pair. These passages would seem to put it beyond doubt that the ordinary Sumerian and Babylonian conception of the origin of man was that man arose as a group. Indeed, in the close social organization of the Mesopotamian cities the idea of a single pair would have been impossible. The same principle is valid for the nomadic pastoral group, in which the individual or the family had no existence outside the clan.

Besides the fragmentary tablet mentioned above, there is only one place in Mesopotamian literature where we have the description of a single pair living alone. This is Utnapishtim and his wife, the survivors of the deluge. Oddly enough, they also live in a "Paradise of delight," and they are immortal. They are "like to the gods. In the distance, at the mouth of the rivers, Utnapishtim shall dwell."[43] In the Sumerian flood story, this is Dilmun, "the land of the living." Kramer identifies the two on the basis of the phrase, "the mouth of the rivers"; and he locates Dilmun at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates.[44] Eden also is situated where a river branches into four streams; shall we call this

[42] Ebeling in Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte*, p. 136.

[43] Heidel, *Gilgamesh Epic*, p. 88; Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 95.

[44] *BASOR*, 96, 18 ff.

"the mouth of the rivers"? The picture of the happy couple in the XI Tablet of the Gilgamesh epic has an undeniable, if merely external resemblance to the picture of Paradise. This by no means demonstrates literary dependence; but we do have here the one passage in ancient Near Eastern literature which resembles a very distinctive feature of the Paradise story.[45] Now the Gilgamesh epic is a compilation of independent stories; and there is no reason to suppose that Dilmun appeared in Sumerian and Babylonian literature alone as the home of primeval man.

Morris Jastrow once proposed a resemblance between the biblical Adam and Enkidu, the companion of Gilgamesh.[46] This parallel has generally been rejected. Jastrow tried to stretch the resemblance farther than it would go by drawing a parallel between the seduction of Enkidu by the harlot and the temptation of Adam by Eve.[47] Enkidu is described as half man, half beast; he is not the first man, but is made of clay by Aruru to do battle with Gilgamesh. He lives with the wild beasts in the open field, but abandons this manner of life after he is seduced by the harlot and becomes a city dweller. In rejecting Jastrow's theory, scholars have perhaps too hastily denied any resemblance between the figure of Enkidu, living alone in the state of nature, and the biblical Adam living, however briefly, alone with the beasts. As far as it goes, the resemblance (again, a merely external resemblance) is obvious; and the author of Genesis could easily have known the story of Enkidu.

The only Hebrew variant of the Paradise story is the episode found in Ezek 28:12–15. The popular story to which Ezekiel alludes is thus summed up by Cooke:

> Once there lived in the garden of God, with the cherub who kept it, a glorious being, blameless by nature, gifted with wisdom and beauty; and he roamed at will among the flashing stones of Paradise. Then came the tragedy. Elated by these tokens of favor, he grasped profanely at yet higher honors. Punishment followed swiftly; the cherub drove him from the garden on the sacred mountain, and hurled him to the earth.[48]

[45] This has also been noticed by Chaine, *Genèse*, p. 62.

[46] *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (New York, 1898), p. 475 ff.

[47] Heidel, *Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. 21–22; Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 74–75, 77–78.

[48] *Ezekiel* (ICC; New York, 1937), *ad loc.*

There are some indisputably common features in the two passages: Eden, the garden of God, primeval perfection and bliss, a fall. But there are some even more remarkable divergences: in Ezekiel the garden is full of precious stones; there are no trees; the being is clothed; he is endowed with marvelous attributes; he does not keep and till the garden, which is located on the mountain of God; there is no serpent; and, most important of all, there is no woman. To say that this passage is an imaginative handling of the Paradise story by Ezekiel is surely to abandon literary criticism; yet this opinion was proposed by Kraetzschmar.[49] Gunkel, on the contrary, called it an older and more mythological recension.[50] This seems to be also the opinion of Cooke, who believes that the mountain of God, the stones of fire, and the gemmed robe are Babylonian—"not that Ezekiel borrowed them directly, but the folklore upon which he drew had been steeped in Babylonian mythology from early times." He also points out that the being in the story is not said to be the first man, although this may be implied. Hölscher regards it as a Babylonian myth.[51] It is scarcely conceivable, if the Paradise story of Genesis was current, that the prophet would weaken his allusion by so altering it. But this introduces an interesting question. The passage is either original with Ezekiel or, in the views of such radical critics as Irwin, much later. In the critical hypothesis the Jahwist account took form in the ninth century. If such a variant account as this were current enough three hundred years later to be used as it is here, then Hebrew oral tradition must have preserved a marvelous flexibility even after it had been written down. But can we be sure, with Gunkel, that this is an older, and more primitive, version of the story? With the evidence available, it is hard to see how we can determine which of the two is

[49] *Das Buch Ezechiel* (*GHK*; Göttingen, 1900), *ad loc.* Bertholet's opinion in *Hesekiel* (*KHC*; Tübingen, 1897) was the same as that of Kraetzschmar; in *Hesekiel* (*HAT*; Tübingen, 1936) he agrees with Gunkel.

[50] *Schöpfung und Chaos* (Göttingen, 1895), p. 148 f.

[51] Cooke, *Ezekiel*, *ad loc.*; Hölscher, *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Beih. 39 (1924), 142. Widengren has pointed out some elements of Mesopotamian mythology in Manichaeism which are quite like the story of Ezekiel; cf. *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism* (Uppsala, 1946), pp. 16–30. Steinmann suggests Ugarit as the source of the myth; cf. *Le prophète Ezéchiel* (Paris, 1953), p. 147. Fohrer follows Hölscher, adding parallels from the myth of Dilmun (cf. note 68 below); cf. *ZATW*, Beih. 71 (1952), 236–37.

older. We must, at the moment, be satisfied with the probability that they were both current.

What conclusions can be drawn from these comparisons? At this point, nothing more definite than something similar to those which have been drawn concerning the creation account of Gen 1. The simplicity and sublimity of the Hebrew account, when it is compared with the Mesopotamian cosmogony, stand out in bolder relief; yet there can be no doubt that the Hebrew narrative moves in the same circle of ideas as the Babylonian myth. Similarly, in Gen 2–3 there is no comparison between the Paradise story and any Mesopotamian myth; here also the dignity of the Hebrew narrative, the profound religious truths which it expresses, raise it far above such stories as those of Enkidu and the harlot. Is it not true, at the same time, that the Hebrew narrative moves in the same circle of ideas? We see these common ideas in the Hebrew account and in Mesopotamian mythology: a terrestrial Paradise inhabited by a single happy pair; a man living in solitude apart from civilization; man formed from clay mixed with a divine element. Some other common ideas will appear in the discussion which follows. This does not mean that the Hebrew narrative is derived from Babylonian myths, and I do not imply that it is. It does mean that, when we investigate the ideas of the ancient Semitic peoples, we find that the author of the Paradise story knew them and expressed them. It would be an unfounded assertion to say that he formed these ideas independently.

THE UNITY OF THE NARRATIVE

The question of the literary form and characteristics of the narrative reduces itself, sooner or later, to the vexing question of its unity. This does not mean the literary unity of the passage as it stands. With the majority of exegetes I accept the story in its present form as the work of one mind, and that a mind of no small dimensions. The question is the unity of the material which he employed. The first eleven chapters of Genesis are a collection of originally independent and unconnected stories. Have we here also a compilation of two or more stories, or is there only one? Neither is it a question of whether the narrative contains disparate elements; it certainly does, and, as

Coppens has pointed out, nothing but ignorance of Hebrew and a total lack of the critical sense would permit one to affirm that the Paradise story is perfectly homogeneous.[52] It is important to disengage these disparate elements; but this does not, of itself, answer the question of the original unity of the story. Here again the question is large; I do not even pretend to have seen all the literature, and I can mention only selected works.[53]

There is very general agreement that the pericope of the rivers of Paradise (2:10–14) is secondary. This is accepted by Feldmann and Heinisch.[54] In addition, Feldmann believes that 2:4b is corrupted; 2:5 is secondary; 2:6 is misplaced and perhaps should follow 2:9; 2:8b,15 are duplications; 3:20 is secondary. Scholars of more extreme critical views, basing their conclusions upon more or less the same verses, have attempted to reconstruct two or even three strands of narrative which the author has compiled into one. Abraham Menes distinguished two *Sagenmotiven*, a Paradise motif and an agricultural motif.[55] The Paradise motif is of Babylonian origin, the agricultural motif Palestinian. In the Paradise motif man lives alone among the beasts. Johannes Meinhold has a still more complicated analysis: J^1 is nomadic, J^2 agricultural.[56] Joachim Begrich finds one complete narrative supplemented by fragments from another.[57] Begrich has emphasized the fact that the narrative as it stands is thoroughly Israelite. Behind it, however, there is a peasant story and a nomad story; the peasant story forms the main strand. Within this strand there is a compilation of an originally independent creation story, and a Paradise story in which the only actors were the woman and the serpent. Simpson has distinguished a garden saga and an Eden saga; the garden saga is original, the Eden saga secondary.[58] Coppens regards 2:8b as a gloss, 2:10–14 as secondary, 2:15,23 as later additions.[59] A. Lefèvre has recently distinguished a history of Eve and a history of

[52] *La connaissance du bien et du mal et le péché du Paradis* (Louvain, 1948), p. 69.

[53] An extensive bibliography is found throughout Coppens's work cited above.

[54] *Paradies und Sündenfall*, p. 35; *Genesis*, p. 131.

[55] *ZATW*, XLIII (1925), 35 ff.

[56] *ZATW*, Beih. 34 (1920), 127 ff.

[57] *ZATW*, L (1932), 94 ff.; this is identical in principle with the opinion of Gunkel (*Genesis*, pp. 25–26).

[58] *Early Traditions of Israel* (Oxford, 1948), p. 94 ff.

[59] *La connaissance du bien et du mal*, p. 69 ff.

the garden of Eden.[60] A review of these articles leaves one with the impression that none of these schemes is quite successful, and the conviction that Coppens is correct in saying that nothing but ignorance and a lack of the critical sense will permit one to say that the narrative is entirely homogeneous. The analysis of parallel narratives is not as successful here as it is, for example, in the Deluge story; on the other hand, critics have pointed out a number of faintly discordant elements which it would be unscientific to dismiss altogether. It will be worth while to review them here.

The rivers of Paradise, as we have seen, are almost universally regarded as secondary. This block of verses can be removed from the context with no loss whatever, and the idea does not reappear in the story. But it has been woven into the context. The "duplicate" of 2:8b in 2:15 is a necessary resumption, once the description of the rivers has been introduced. If it is true, as several critics think, that an oasis is described in 2:6, then the rivers are out of harmony with the *'ed* of 2:6. But if *'ed* represents *edu*, "flood," this discordance is removed.[61] The idea of an oasis as the scene of the narrative is out of harmony not only with the rivers but with the whole conception of the garden and of Eden. The names Tigris and Euphrates and the picture of a river which is divided to irrigate the ground suggest Mesopotamian cultivation. Eden is a Mesopotamian conception, and it may be an Akkadian word, *edinu*, the plain. But, in any case, the geography of Eden is altogether unreal; it is a Never-never land, and attempts to locate it, even in the author's mind, are futile. Now Eden cannot be removed from the narrative. The garden reappears throughout the two chapters, and it is the scene of the action of chapter 3. The position of 2:6 after 8 or 9 can be defended only if 2:10–14 are excised. But what reason could there be for the transfer of 2:6 to its present position, even on the hypothesis that 2:10–14 are secondary?

[60] *Rech. de sc. rel.*, LXVI (1949), 465–80. This article deserves special attention. I have found no other Catholic interpreter who admitted the composite character of the Paradise story to this extent, that he formulated an analysis of its sources. Lefèvre thus divides the account: the history of Eve, 2:4b–7, (8), 9a, 16, (17), 18–25; 3:1–4, (5), 6–21; the history of the garden of Eden, 2:(8), 9b, 10–15, (17); 3:(5), 22–24. Parentheses indicate verses in which the two documents have been fused.

[61] Cf. Dhorme, *Revue biblique*, XVI (1907), 374. This etymology is mentioned with some doubt by Zorell and Koehler, and seems to be favored by Chaine, *Genèse*, p. 32. It has not, however, been generally accepted.

And if the scene, apart from the possibility that 2:6 describes an oasis, is Mesopotamian, why should the rivers of Paradise be treated as secondary? What independent elements there are in the narrative have now been so closely connected that it is impossible to disengage them. We may get some idea of the nature of these independent elements from the description of Eden in Ezek 28; but we cannot, on the basis of the passage in Ezekiel, detach them from each other.

The two trees of 2:9 have offered difficulty. Syntactically, the attachment of the two trees to 2:9a is clumsy. Yet they must be introduced somewhere. The title, "tree of knowledge of good and evil," is proleptic here; it has no meaning apart from the subsequent narrative, which it presupposes. Now it is quite true that the two trees never again appear together. Yet the sin in chapter 3 is certainly the eating of fruit; it is a sin from which man comes to know good and evil, and thus becomes like *'ᵉlōhîm*; and it suggests another possibility, the eating of the fruit of the tree of life, and a further assimilation to *'ᵉlōhîm* by immortality. Further, the two trees are in the midst of the *garden* in *Eden*. Again, if one attempts to disengage elements which may have been originally independent, the narrative falls apart.

The name of *man* is several times involved in a word-play. *'Ādām* and *'ᵃdāmāh* recur throughout, and the assonance is deliberate. It occurs in 2:7, where *'ādām* is made of *'āpār min hā'ᵃdāmāh*. Why does it not reappear in the companion piece, 3:17b, although it is found in 3:17a? In their present form, these two verses demand each other; and they cannot be isolated. On the other hand, a different word-play occurs in 2:23: *'îš* and *'iššāh*. This, again, does not reappear. But it is somewhat remarkable that the pair is called in chapter 3 *hā'ādām wᵉ'ištô*. There is, of course, no complementary word for *'ādām*, as *'iššāh* complements *'îš*; I speak of usage, not of etymology. But the use of this designation in the context suggests both *'ādām-'ᵃdāmāh* of 2:7 and *'îš-'iššāh* of 2:23; and they cannot be disengaged unless one follows the radical suggestion of Begrich that *'ādām* did not appear in the original Paradise story at all.

Is there a certain ambivalence towards agricultural life in the narrative? In 2:15 man is set in Eden to guard it and to till it (*lᵉʿobdāh*); in 3:23 man is expelled from Eden to till (*laʿᵃbōd*) the soil (*'ᵃdāmāh*).

In 3:19 man is to eat bread in the sweat of his brow; in 3:18 he is to eat "the grass of the field." These two are not the same. Certainly, it is some explanation to say that the curse consists in this, that the soil will be undocile to man's cultivation; and if one does this, then one must omit 3:18b or, with Meinhold and Begrich, incorporate it into a nomadic story. In either case, one conclusion is inevitable: the story as a whole has an agricultural background (if the nomadic life is mentioned at all, it is mentioned as an accursed mode of existence), and must come from an agricultural society. Chaine has noticed that "guard" shows that the author here forgets that the man is alone.[62]

If no parallel narratives can be successfully isolated, is it possible that the literary seam occurs between the creation account and the story of the fall? We cannot answer this before we isolate the creation account, and in this there are three stages: the man, the beasts, the woman. It is true that these three stages are now separated by the trees of Paradise (2:9), the rivers of Paradise (2:10–14) and the resumption (or duplicate) of 2:15; and all of these are questioned in the hypotheses of parallel narratives, and are treated as secondary by Feldmann and Coppens. The precept of 2:16–17 may seem indispensable for chapter 3, but it can well be supplied by 3:3, which could be the first mention of the precept as well as a repetition. The difficulty here is that the elements which are heterogeneous cannot be blocked off into a creation narrative and a sin narrative. It is also true that chapter 3 is intelligible as a unit without presupposing chapter 2 at all.

These examples will perhaps illustrate the difficulty of analyzing this passage. At first glance it appears that the mechanical methods of analysis employed at times with great success will do their work here also. One isolates distinctive features, and then checks off all the verses in which these features are found. One then adds the results and comes up with two or more documents. This method presupposes a mechanical compilation, and is successful only when the presupposition is correct. Here the analysis must be more subtle, because we are dealing with an author who is, by common consent, one of the most subtle in the Old Testament. If we grant, as it seems we must, that he has used material from diverse sources, we must also grant that he

[62] *Genèse*, p. 38.

has assimilated this material and fused it into one account which is his own. The material from the sources has lost its distinct identity, and shows traces only where the assimilation, because of the nature of the material, is imperfect. This implies that the Paradise story, in its present form, did not exist before its composition by the author of the account of Genesis; and we do no more than justice to the genius of the author if we accept this implication.

PRE-EXISTING MATERIALS

But if we cannot reconstruct the sources of the story, we may by an examination of details arrive at least at some determination of the pre-existing material which the writer employed. This is to accept, with most commentators, the substantial unity of the account. By so treating the narrative I do not wish to regard the question of its unity as altogether decided; I mean merely that, with our present knowledge of ancient Near Eastern literature, we have no reason to suppose two or three strands of narrative. But we cannot ignore the possibility that further discoveries may reveal an earlier form of the story.

We may first consider 2:7, in which man is made of "dust from the soil." The play on *'ādām-'ᵃdāmāh* is obvious. I have pointed out above, after many writers, that the idea of man from clay is not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern literature, and that it is very probable that the author knew of this and used it. What is original is the union of clay with the divine breath. The whole picture is highly imaginative and indicates the peculiar position of man as the link between the animal creation and the divine. This is by no means too subtle an idea; clay mixed with the divine blood, as in the *Enûma Elish*, expresses substantially the same idea. The kinship of man with the animals is further indicated in 2:19, where almost the same words (*yāṣar*, *'ᵃdāmāh*) are employed to describe the creation of the beasts. This is altogether artificial and tends to the author's purpose; man was not in fact nor in the cosmogony of Gen 1 created before the lower animals. The divergence from Gen 1 need not be deliberate, but we are certainly in the presence of different conceptions. *'Āpār* is not used in 2:19; this word has a peculiar force when used of man, since it is resumed in the sentence of mortality in 3:19.

The creation of woman is of a different character. In the first place,

we have in other ancient sources no indication of a separate creation of the two sexes. The idea found in the *Timaeus* of Plato that the original human beings were asexual does not appear in ancient Near Eastern literature, nor is it a common Greek idea; it may have been Pythagorean.[63] In the *Enûma Elish* the distinction of sex is as primeval as the world, as deity itself. Here, on the other hand, it seems no exaggeration to say that the creation of woman is the climax towards which the whole preceding narrative tends. Compare, for instance, the preliminary utterance of 2:18, the mystic sleep of 2:21, and the introduction of woman to man in 2:22, which elicits the doxology of 2:23, with the terse and comparatively undramatic recital of 2:7. And if the preceding verses show the kinship of man with the brutes, the naming of the animals shows his superiority; he is not one of them, nor can he find a mate among them. To give him a companion fit for him requires a new creative intervention. More than this, the narrative treats woman as an equal and a partner of man. This feature does not appear in any ancient Near Eastern story. Now if the contrast between man's kinship with the brutes and his superiority to them suggests two different sources—which I am not prepared to concede—it must certainly be granted that they have been marvelously united into a perfectly drawn picture of the paradox that is man. The stages—man, beasts, woman—are not fortuitous; they are the work of the creative imagination of the Hebrew story-teller, who thus expressed profound truths.

Now if the creation account of chapter 2 leads up to the creation of woman as its climax—and so I have taken it—there are two questions which arise. Is the divergence between the glorification of woman in chapter 2, and the attribution of the disaster to the woman in chapter 3, so great that we must suppose that the two accounts were originally independent? Certainly, such a suspicion would not be altogether unfounded; but here again the two ideas have been so well united that we can scarcely hope to trace any sources. In the present narrative a

[63] *Timaeus*, 41e, 90e–91d; cf. also *Symposium*, 189c–193d, and A. E. Taylor, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 258, 635–39, 652–54. G. F. Moore mentions two rabbinical references to the idea that man was created androgynous, and calls it "probably a bit of foreign lore adapted to the first pair in Genesis;" cf. *Judaism* (Cambridge, 1927), I, 453. These references would not evince the existence of any such idea among the ancient Semitic peoples.

striking contrast is drawn between the primitive condition of woman, the "helper" for the man, his partner and equal, and the condition of woman as it was in the ancient world: the property of man, the most valuable of his domestic animals. We shall perhaps do better if we attribute this contrast to the author of the story, to whom the conception of the Paradise narrative as a whole belongs, than to any source which he employed.

The second question which arises may be put as follows. The creation account of chapter 2 reaches its climax in the doxology of 2:23 and the *mašal* of 2:24. If one attempts to read this account apart from its usual context, one feels that something is missing. The expected climax is not the meeting of man and woman, but the consummation of sexual union. This is not mentioned until 4:1, which Meinhold actually incorporated into the Paradise story.[64] If this verse was originally a part of this story, its place is at the conclusion of chapter 2, not between 3:20 and 3:24a, where Meinhold put it. Shall we say that this climax is insinuated in 2:25? Such delicate insinuation is characteristic of the Victorian novel rather than of the Old Testament, or of ancient Semitic literature. The climactic structure of chapter 2 suggests very strongly that the original conclusion has been suppressed by the author. If this is true, then the literary seam between the creation account and the story of the fall has been identified; the author of the Paradise narrative has employed a pre-existing account of the creation of man and woman which had its climax—and its conclusion —in the consummation of sexual union. He suppressed the conclusion, we may suppose, in order to unite this account with that of the fall, which is of necessity thus detached, in its original form, from the creation account. If the discordant elements of the two chapters are to be explained by a diversity of sources, then the explanation which I propose here affords some motivation for the manner in which the sources were fused.

The creation narrative is interrupted by 2:9–17. Now if some critics are right, these verses are a true interruption, alien in origin. I have pointed out above that the resumption of 2:8b in 2:15 now connects them with the context. Furthermore, it is altogether natural that the narrative of the creation of the man should be followed by a descrip-

[64] *ZATW*, Beih. 34 (1920), 127.

tion, or at least a mention, of the place where he is to dwell. It would have to come here or after the creation of the woman, where it would be no more in place. In fact, it would appear anticlimactic after the solemn effatum of 2:24. Is it not better to understand these verses as a part of the introduction to the creation of the woman? The man is created and set in his dwelling; but he lacks a partner to share his life and his dwelling.

On the other hand, the description of Paradise cannot be Israelite. If we concede with Begrich the essentially Hebrew character of the narrative, we must except these verses. This, however, is not a sufficient reason for thinking them secondary. We can do this only if we are certain that the author has used no non-Israelite material. It is certain that he has used such material. Here his indebtedness is manifest. I have indicated above that the idea of Paradise bears a resemblance to the home of Utnapishtim and his wife (the Sumerian Dilmun). Here we have an instance of an idea which the author could easily have known; and coincidence is not an attractive explanation. The incorporation of this idea, which had no connection with any creation account, into this narrative as the scene of the action of chapters 2–3 must be attributed to the author of the Paradise narrative, not to the original stories.

The trees of Paradise have been much discussed, recently by Coppens. Coppens understands the knowledge of good and evil to mean ". . . vouloir pécher, vouloir connaître à la fois le bien et le mal, vouloir ignorer et fouler aux pieds la distinction entre le bien et le mal, vouloir s'installer dans l'autonomie morale, au delà du bien et du mal, prétendument à la manière des dieux."[65] In the concrete, he understands the sin of chapter 3 to be a sexual transgression; and M. Coppens identifies it as the submission of conjugal life to the patronage of licentious cults.[66] The narrative is, in his interpretation, a polemic against Canaanite fertility and fecundity rites. In the theory of two independent stories which I have outlined, the tree of knowledge is not original in chapter 2; but in the present form of the story it is one of the links between the two chapters, and its presence must be due to the author of the Paradise narrative. Some kind of symbolism is surely to be sought in the trees; and M. Coppens has done well to

[65] *La connaissance du bien et du mal*, p. 18. [66] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

point out how, from rabbinical and patristic exegesis down to modern times, the theory of sexual symbolism has constantly recurred. This is due, as M. Coppens shows, to the obvious "sexual milieu" of the story. If, however, the expected climax of chapter 2 has been suppressed, the theory of M. Coppens raises an interesting speculation; for it has been suppressed in favor of the narrative of the sin in chapter 3. Consequently, I think M. Coppens is substantially right, and the author replaced the original climax, which must have been an epithalamion, by the story of the sin, which is in some way a perversion of the intended union of the sexes.

The symbolism of the tree of life is obvious. It occurs only in Prov 3:18 outside this passage, with no obvious dependence on Genesis. The tree in Ezek 47:12 is even less obviously dependent. The literary relationship of the tree of life to the rest of the story has caused much difficulty. Many critics believe that it is secondary, or that it belongs to a parallel narrative, or that it is a doublet of the tree of knowledge. Such hypotheses are scarcely possible now in the light of a pattern which Geo. Widengren has been tracing in ancient Near Eastern religion, a pattern which will without doubt prove to be of no small interest in the interpretation of the Paradise story.[67] Widengren points out the importance of the tree of life in Mesopotamian myth and ritual, and believes that the tree of life, growing beside the water of life, stood in a garden in each Mesopotamian sanctuary. Of this tree the king is the gardener and the "keeper." The garden represents the mythical garden at Eridu between the mouths of the two rivers (see my remarks on Dilmun above). Life is not communicated by eating the fruit of the tree but by contact with its branches; Widengren, arguing from plastic representations, supposes that the royal scepter represented a branch or twig from the tree of life. The tree is actually a mythic-ritual symbol of both god and king. Widengren himself establishes no connection between the tree of life and Gen 3, but believes that the mythic-ritual pattern is alluded to several times in the Old Testament, and lies at the base of some of the ritual paraphernalia of the temple of Solomon. The differences between this conception of the tree of life and the tree of life of Gen 2–3 are at once apparent: for instance, there is no "water of life" in Genesis, and

[67] *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala, 1951).

the fruit of the tree is eaten. The similarities are equally apparent; and if the pattern which Widengren is tracing is correctly drawn—and one cannot question his documentation—we shall find more features of ancient Semitic mythology from which the author of Gen 2–3 drew the imaginative vesture of his story, in accordance with the manner of composition which we have found in his work. The tree of life can symbolize nothing but immortality. This symbolism is put beyond all doubt by 3:22, and it is the symbolism of the "plant of life" of Gilgamesh and the "food and water of life" of Adapa.[68]

I do not believe we can exclude the possibility that the author has, in the two trees, amalgamated two conceptions which did not appear together in the original stories. The tree of knowledge is certainly original in chapter 3, and may have come from there into chapter 2. The tree of life, on the other hand, is most probably original in chapter 2, and may have passed from there into chapter 3. It has no place in the narrative of the sin, nor is it mentioned in the curse of 3:17–18.

M. Coppens has presented a large amount of material on the symbolism of the serpent; we cannot escape symbolism here. It is quite true, as many critics have remarked, that talking animals are a recurrent feature of folklore; but it is also true that we are dealing with an author who has handled folklore in a remarkably subtle manner. M. Coppens is certain that the symbolism of the serpent is non-Israelite.[69] The serpent he finds to be a phallic symbol, often associated with male and female fertility deities. The fact of this symbolism should not be denied; and it is one of the arguments on which Coppens leans most heavily for his interpretation of Gen 3.[70] But the serpent appears

[68] Speiser in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 96, 101–2.

[69] *La connaissance du bien et du mal*, pp. 92–117.

[70] R. de Vaux, in a review of Coppens, denies that the serpent is an "emblème phallique au sens précis;" cf. *Revue biblique*, XLVI (1949), 307. The opinion of Père de Vaux is worthy of the highest consideration; it is with regret that I must say that I do not see how it is possible to meet the evidence which Coppens amasses. Perhaps the difference lies in the "sens précis;" the serpent is certainly a symbol of fertility; cf. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology* (Boston, 1931), pp. 77–78, 90. The serpent is very frequently associated with the nude goddess, sometimes in a position which leaves little doubt about its sexual significance; cf. Albright's re-interpretation of a stele from Tell Beit-Mirsim, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore, 1942), p. 189; also his *Archaeology of Palestine* (Penguin, 1949), pp. 96–97; Galling, *Biblisches Reallexikon* (Tübingen, 1937), pp. 223, 227–28; Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, figs. 13, 15, 17, 69, 78, 94; Schaeffer, *Ugaritica*, II (Paris, 1949), fig. 10; Vincent, *Canaan* (Paris, 1914), pl. IX; pl. III, no. 9, fig. 103.

in other forms in the Bible, and I do not believe that these should be left out of consideration. In Isa 27:1, Job 25:13, the serpent is a monstrous adversary of Yahweh. The serpent on the floor of the sea in Amos 9:3 must be the same mythological monster, although it does not appear to be perfectly identical with the Ugaritic monster Yamm.[71] I do not think this significance of the serpent was altogether absent from the author's mind. It would not be difficult for the Hebrew to identify the chaotic monster of evil with the serpent of those rites which he found so offensive to his moral sense. The origin of this symbolism, whatever it is, is beside the point here; what matters is that the author accepted a common and easily understood symbolism, drawn from Semitic mythology, and incorporated it into his story.

The threefold curse, 3:14–19, is called by Abraham Menes the key to the narrative.[72] I am not so certain that these difficult verses are a key that fits; one is likely to explain the obscure by the more obscure. The verses have been neatly joined into the structure of chapter 3. The order of the sin is: serpent–woman–man. The order of the inquisition is: man–woman–serpent. The order of the curse is, once again: serpent–woman–man. One cannot help wondering whether the pre-literary story had a question addressed to the serpent. The threefold curse supposes not only the sin of chapter 3, but certain elements of chapter 2. The antithesis between the glorification of woman in chapter 2 and the curse in 3:16 is evident. The curse of the serpent refers no further back than chapter 3. If one accepts Coppen's interpretation of chapter 3, however, some interesting speculations arise once more which the learned Louvain doctor did not take into account. If the serpent is a phallic symbol, what are we to understand by the "enmity" of 3:15? It can mean nothing else but that sexual life is a curse to the woman; and this is stated expressly in 3:16. The seed of the woman, however, should not be limited to offspring of the female sex; the opinion suggests itself that the seed of the woman is doomed to an unending struggle against sexual sin, symbolized by the serpent. In a "sexual milieu" such as Coppens has suggested, this symbolism is quite in place. On the other hand, it may force the author into a

[71] Cf. Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook* (Rome, 1947), Text 68, p. 150; *id.*, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome, 1949), pp. 15–16; THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, XI (1950), 275–82.

[72] *ZATW*, XLIII (1925), 35.

too narrow conception of the symbolism which he has employed; and the general character of the story, as I have analyzed it thus far, shows greater freedom in the handling of the material. Perhaps, therefore, the curse, like the serpent itself, should be understood more broadly, with sexual sin in the foreground, but with sin in the general sense as the proper term of the symbol. Should this be predicated of the present form of the story, it would not necessarily be predicated of the pre-literary form of the story.

In no theory has an entirely satisfactory symbolism been found for the curse of the serpent. The mistake, perhaps, lies in searching for too recondite a significance. Symbolism which is not fairly obvious loses its point; and far-fetched symbolism, as the preceding examination shows, is not characteristic of this writer. The serpent itself suggests, in the popular mind, a degraded, stealthy, malicious being; and no more is necessary to understand the terms of the curse. M. Chaine gives substantially the same explanation; in addition, he finds in the curse a reaction against the Semitic cult of the serpent.[73]

The curse of the man is more difficult. It cannot be denied that the expression is somewhat redundant. There are three different references to the food of man: you will eat the soil (i.e., its products), you will eat the grass of the field, you will eat bread in the sweat of your brow. It is thought by many critics (Menes, Meinhold, Begrich, Simpson) that 3:18 is secondary or belongs to a parallel account. I have rejected, in general, the theory of parallel accounts, and so I cannot invoke it here. Mere redundancy is not enough to mark a verse as secondary. I must confess that I have not found a satisfactory explanation of this verse. Its language is reminiscent of 2:5, and of no other verse in the two chapters. If it is omitted, the formula of the curse loses much of its displeasing redundancy; a twofold repetition of a solemn formula is characteristic of Hebrew style. On the other hand, 3:17,19 contain an allusion to chapter 2: *'ādām-'ᵃdāmāh*, *'āpār*. I have already noticed that agriculture cannot be considered a curse if man is represented in chapter 2 as agricultural; but he is so represented, and hence the curse must draw a difference between types of agricultural conditions. Now the garden, as we have seen, suggests a Mesopotamian background; and Mesopotamian agriculture

[73] *Genèse*, p. 49.

was carried on by irrigating a fertile alluvial plain. There was no small difference between this and the struggle of the Palestinian peasant to wring a living from his rocky soil. In default of any other explanation, I suggest this as the background of the curse. It indicates, once more, the fusion of different ideas.

The curse of the man, as critics have pointed out, does not refer back to the narrative of 3:1–7 at all. There is a reference in 3:17a, but this line lies outside the metrical structure of the curse, and appears to be a literary seam. Begrich has concluded from this that the sin story originally had only two actors, the woman and the serpent.[74] This is too much to draw from a single piece of evidence. But there are other factors to be considered. As the story of the sin stands, it has, in reality, only two actors; the man is silent and performs no independent action. Furthermore, the curse of the man is entirely free from any sexual motif. These, taken together, do suggest that the curse of the man and consequently the man himself were not present in the pre-literary sin story. We have in Ezek 28 a conception of the sin of a man alone, which supports the assumption that Hebrew folklore knew the story in this form. If the author has assimilated this account, he has harmonized the stories in an artistic manner; and by doing so has given both breadth and depth to his conception. Even if the story of the woman and the serpent had a sexual motif, the amalgamation of the story of the man has broadened the idea of sin, so that the story in its finished form shows the effects of sin not only in the sexual field, but in human life in general. As the affliction proper to woman is sexual life and chattel ownership by the man, so the affliction proper to man is the struggle for food—especially if we view this against a Palestinian background.

Now if these considerations have any validity, the material appears to fall into three independent pieces of popular tradition: the creation of the sexes, the sin of the woman, and the sin of the man. In the form into which the story has been put in Genesis, the role of the woman is more significant than the role of the man in both chapters. This I do not propose as something new; but I do not find that commentators have emphasized its importance. If we are to understand the Paradise narrative, this feature must be given its due weight.

The expulsion of the pair from Paradise is mentioned twice (3:23–

[74] *ZATW*, L (1932), 108.

24), and this should not be disputed. Unfortunately, the textual corruption of 3:24 does not permit us to form any conclusions. The correction of the Greek is too suspiciously harmonizing to be easily accepted. The two verses have been linked by the mention of the garden and Eden in both; the allusion *'ādām-'ᵃdāmāh* appears in 23, but not in 24. The *kᵉrûbîm* of 24 are undoubtedly of Mesopotamian origin; the winged genii which guard gates are a characteristically Mesopotamian conception. This is not true of the flaming whirling sword; other biblical parallels suggest that the lightning is meant here (Ps 104:4; Deut 32:22). This is a Syrian and Canaanite rather than a Babylonian idea, and such a conjunction of diverse ideas should be attributed to the author who gave the story its final form.[75] Due to the corruption of the text, I admit the activity of the redactor here and in 3:18; his restoration failed to give back what must have been as smooth a fusion of diverse ideas as we find elsewhere in the story.

These considerations show us that the author has, by skilful creative imagination, woven into a unified whole popular traditions and background elements drawn from highly diversified sources. Paradise is, geographically speaking, nowhere. Man is described as a primitive agriculturist; this is not only historically impossible, but was known to be impossible by the ancient Semitic peoples. The biblical conception of the pre-Canaanite inhabitants of Canaan, fragmentary as are our notices, did not regard them as urban-agricultural. The formation of man from clay is not only imaginative, but is paralleled in Mesopotamian literature. The order of creation—man, beasts, woman—is evidently an imaginative arrangement, invented for the purpose of the narrative. The serpent is symbolic on the basis of biblical allusions alone, without invoking Coppen's hypothesis of the sexual motif. The trees are symbolic, as is their eating; and the curses reflect a social and cultural milieu which is not that of primitive man, but of Mesopotamian and Palestinian civilization in the first or second millennium B.C.

SCOPE OF THE NARRATIVE

The preceding analysis is in general agreement with the opinion of the majority of commentators that the Paradise story is a unified nar-

[75] Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, p. 39 ff. Cf. the stele of Aleyan Baal of Ugarit (Schaeffer, *Ugaritica*, II, pl. XXIII–XXIV, pp. 121–30).

rative with a climactic structure. I have rather attended to the provenance of the elements of this narrative. Many of the conclusions which may be formulated as a result of this analysis are, in the present state of exegesis, extremely hypothetical; and, while I desire that they be accorded their due meed of probability, I do not wish to propose them for more than they are worth.

There can be no doubt that the Paradise story is, as it has long been interpreted, anthropocentric; it is a story of human sin, of a fall from a primitive state which was free of sin and its consequences. There is no doubt likewise that the narrative in its present form is intended to signify that the ills of mankind arise from sin. Sin, as Chaine remarks, disturbs the order of creation.[76] This is evident if we take the Paradise story in its present context, preceding the account of the spread of sin and the degeneration of mankind in the following chapters; if the Paradise story existed independently of this context, this meaning would be less evident, but it would still be present.

The possibility of foreign influence can be traced in a number of details. I can say no more than "possibility," because the extant literary remains do not permit us to argue dependence. But there are two facts to be taken into account. In the first place, the author of the Paradise story was endowed with a creative and subtle mind. What foreign material he employed was assimilated into his account; there is no "borrowing," in the ordinary sense of the word. Hence foreign material is so transfigured that it is less easily traced. In the second place, the literature of the Hebrews manifests a wide acquaintance with the mythology and folklore of both Mesopotamia and Canaan. It is no longer possible to assert that the Hebrews ignored them or refused to allude to them. Where such an allusion appears, it must be assumed that the author was aware of the source of the allusion.

Now the details in which such allusions may be traced are not to be found in any single Mesopotamian composition; the author has not drawn his narrative from any single source. We find that the idea of man from clay mixed with a divine element, of a single pair living in solitary beatitude, of a man living alone with the brutes, of Paradise, of the tree of life, of the serpent, of the genii guarding the gates, are all certainly or very probably of diverse origin. Their present position

[76] *Genèse*, p. 51,

and function in the narrative is due entirely to the creative imagination of the writer, and they indicate his capacity to assemble scattered strands from many sources into a compactly unified narrative. They form the ideal background of the narrative. On the other hand, the essential features of the narrative not only reflect no foreign influence, but are out of harmony with any foreign material which deals with similar subjects.

The importance of the woman in both chapters is, I think, the key (if we may speak of a key) to the narrative. Her position in chapter 2 at the climax of the creative process has led me to conclude that the account of the process must have ended in an epithalamion, which the author of the Paradise story has suppressed. This immediately implies that the creation account of chapter 2 was not original with the author himself, and that it must have existed in Hebrew folklore as an independent unit. Furthermore, the variation between *'ādām-'ᵃdāmāh* and *'îš-'iššāh* suggests that in chapter 2 itself there may be a fusion of two accounts of the origin of man. In the present form of chapter 2, the pre-existing materials have been fused into an account, not of the creation of man, but of the origin of the sexes.

I do not believe that we can understand the prominence accorded to the woman except against the background of comparative religion; and here I follow a line of thought suggested by the work of Coppens. Let us recall the prominence of the female principle in the religion and mythology of Mesopotamia and Canaan. The female principle is deified—Inanna, Ishtar, Astarte, Anath—and is the object of the licentious cult in which sexual excess is sanctified as an act of worship. Yet the human beings of which Ishtar and Anath are the representatives were socially inferior, the property of man and the creatures of his pleasure. May we not conceive that the Hebrews, revolting against this, composed this account of the origin of sex, of such striking dignity and chastity, in which the female principle is put in its proper place? Here the woman is, like the man, a creature of God, his partner in life as well as in the sexual act, of equal dignity with him. The distinction of sexes is a divine creation; there is no distinction of sex on the divine level. The woman is the center of the family; and the Hebrews had a strong sense of family solidarity. Here, certainly, we meet a profound mind, which sensed that both the deification of the female principle and the social depression of woman (which he could

observe in his own people) were contrary to nature and, even more, that the second evil grows out of the first: that the woman who is a goddess of pleasure, worshipped for her sexual attractiveness, must of necessity be socially depressed in the world of reality. Such a conception of the narrative of chapter 2 shows how it could exist as an independent unit of Hebrew tradition, with its own significance, before it was incorporated into the Paradise narrative.

The prominence of the woman in chapter 3 is also evident. The drama of sin has really only two actors: the serpent and the woman. It is not by chance that the woman is the first to fall; the pre-literary story expressed, beyond doubt, the popular belief that the weaker sex is the morally feeble side of the race. In view of the symbolism of the serpent, it is altogether likely that the moral weakness of the woman which is here indicated is sexual; this also is in harmony with popular belief. But we must, I think, look deeper than this platitude; for, as we have noticed many times, we are dealing with a subtle mind. We may suppose that the pre-literary piece of folklore told no more than this, that the moral weakness of woman is the cause of man's troubles; but it is extremely likely that the writer who united it with other materials to form the Paradise story meant it to signify more here. And I think Coppens is right in seeing here an allusion to the licentious cult of the female principle. It is not merely the alleged moral weakness of woman that is responsible for the troubles of man; it is precisely her sexual attraction that has ruined both him and herself, has made the man the slave of the goddess of sex, and the woman the slave of the man. And, in this sense, the forbidden fruit has a sexual significance. But the author has broadened the scope of the pre-literary story beyond the merely sexual field by the addition of the curse of the man.

Coppen's interpretation suggests still another line of thought. He does not believe that "knowledge of good and evil" has of itself a sexual significance. The repetition of the phrase, "like *'ĕlōhîm*, knowing good and evil," in 3:5,22 is very striking. It certainly does not mean the same thing in the mouth of the serpent and in the mouth of Yahweh. Yet there must be some fundamental idea which permits this play on the phrase. In referring to the fertility cults, M. Coppens has, I believe, indicated the key to this repetition. The fertility rite was a mystic communion of the worshipper with his gods; by inter-

course under the auspices of the rites he shared the divine prerogative of procreation; he became, in a sense, the master of the force of life. This mastery, this communion with *'ĕlōhîm*, is what the serpent promises. In a writer of such consummate artistry it is not mere coincidence but supreme irony that, when the fruit which holds such promise is consumed, the man and the woman know—that they are naked. The promised communion has issued in shame. The promise is false, and the words chosen to express this have an obvious allusion to sexual life. The knowledge of good and evil, in the concrete, is the knowledge that they are naked, i.e., that they are the slaves of sexual desire. The promise of the knowledge of good and evil held out the alluring prospect of rising to the divine level of independence by mastery of the life force; the reality is shame. By the fertility cult the sublime power of procreation has been debased.

We may conclude, then, that the ancient Hebrews who told and heard this story viewed it as an idealized account of the origin of sex and of the perversion of sexual life from its primitive integrity. It is composed of many threads from many fabrics, carefully and skilfully woven into a new account. The religious and moral transcendence of the story, thus understood, needs neither explanation nor apology, and it fits into the basic categories of Hebrew thought. The central fact upon which the writer has constructed his story is the moral degeneration of man and of society. This degeneration, in his mind, comes to a focus in the perversion of sexual relations, but it is not limited to this. Coupled with this idea is his awareness of man's struggle with nature itself, which he sees as an inevitable consequence of the breakdown of personal and social integrity. This condition he traces back to the beginning of the race—ultimately, to man's attempt to arrogate to himself divine prerogatives, of which the fertility cult is a horrible example. With M. Chaine, we must attribute this profound and lofty view of human origins and sin to the influence of divine revelation.[77]

We think of folklore as simple and unsophisticated; have we overreached ourselves by this complex analysis? We should not forget that the simplicity of folklore is sometimes deceptive, and that this folklore comes to us through the genius of the author of these chapters. Folklore, in the hands of writers such as Homer or this author, can be

[77] *Genèse*, p. 71.

elevated to a lofty level of wisdom. There is subtlety in the conception of Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Gilgamesh epic; there is irony in the portrayal of Ishtar in the Gilgamesh epic which rivals that of Homer's Ares and Aphrodite—attributed, in the epic, to a wandering bard. There is irony in the story of the Tower of Babel. Let us not think that wit and irony, profundity and wisdom were beyond the reach of the ancient Hebrew story-tellers; there was genius before Homer.

CONCLUSION

This paper is, perhaps, an essay in the history of interpretation rather than an essay in interpretation itself. It attempts to recover some of the significance which the narrative of Paradise and the fall must have had for the Israelites. This significance has not received much attention in modern theology and exegesis; the development of doctrine and the necessities of controversy have led theologians—if not forced them—to place the emphasis upon other elements. Probably a study of the meaning of the story in its original historical and cultural *Sitz im Leben* will contribute little to the necessities of modern theological discussion; at the same time there is no antinomy between the meaning which we suppose the ancient Israelites perceived in this narrative and the meaning which it has come to have in modern theology. Exegesis itself is a sufficient justification for recalling—or rather attempting to reconstruct—this meaning, in the hope that a clearer understanding of the historical, cultural, and literary background of the passage will deepen our appreciation of its content and enable us to draw from it a fund of truth which is not irrelevant for Catholic doctrine and Catholic life in the modern world.

The pursuit of this meaning has led me into the literary characteristics of Gen 2–3—a question which has always fascinated exegetes. Where so many renowned interpreters have run their heads against a stone wall, it would be the height of temerity to claim that I have found the clue which has escaped them. But I have enjoyed the advantage of their work. All the same, it is unfortunate that the significance of the text which I propose depends so largely upon a literary analysis which is the most novel feature of all that I have written here. I can, consequently, do no more than present these ideas to my colleagues in theology and exegesis with the proper diffidence, knowing that they will try them and hold fast to what is good.