

while Greek Matthew has "borrowed something" from Mark (many writers of course hold that there was a still greater influence of Mark on Greek Matthew). M. Osty, on the other hand, explains the likenesses between the first two Gospels on the sole grounds of the catechesis of Peter.

In any case, these two authors are agreed on the literary *genre* of the synoptic Gospels. They are not books of history in the strict meaning of that word, but collections of religious testimony, put together to satisfy the needs of the first Christian communities. Hence we do find historical accounts, but fragmentary ones, often a mere selection of events.

The Rev. Father Braun, in ch. i of his *Jésus, histoire et critique*¹ shows conclusively that we cannot invoke as explanation the creative power of the primitive Christian community. The Gospel is not a figment of their imagination, as advocates of the Formgeschichte would have us believe. The first community was not an abstract entity, but a living group, well placed for getting full information: a group moreover which required its tradition to be solidly based on the testimony of eye-witnesses.

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GENESIS RECONSIDERED²

THE first challenge to the older ideas of biblical inspiration and inerrancy came with modern discoveries about the constitution of the universe. Until it became patent that biblical cosmology does not represent the world as it is in fact, it was taken for granted that the divine origin of Scripture guaranteed its freedom from error in matters of purely physical science, though it has long been recognized that the sacred writers often speak according to appearances. It is now universally admitted that in scientific matters they speak as the men of their time spoke. On such problems, the solution of which does not help man to lead a good life, it was not God's purpose to forestall the workings of the human mind. Thus, as the late regretted author of this new commentary points out, both light and darkness were conceived as two separate and independent entities, each succeeding the other over the face of the earth. This is nowhere explicitly asserted in the Bible, but is the conception which lies behind what is said of light and darkness and is the key to its understanding. As he also points out, it was supposed that the domesticated animals were created such from the beginning (Gen. i, 24). He asserts, as many have done before, that according to

¹ F. M. Braun, O.P.: *Jésus. Histoire et critique*, Tournai-Paris, 1947, pp. 257.

² J. Chaîne, *Le Livre de la Genèse* (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf) 1948. Pp. 526 600 fr., paper back. (Lectio Divina, 3.)

Gen. i, 2 the world was originally in a state of chaos. On this it should be noted first that this word "chaos" has come to have a very different meaning from that anciently given to it. Thus in the breviary hymn for Sunday Vespers the Church sings: "Qui mane junctum vesperi Diem vocari praecipis: Illabitur tetrum chaos, Audi preces cum fletibus." These hymns are based on the account of creation and this one for the first day of the week starts with the creation of light. The "chaos" which is described as approaching at vesper-time is simply the night blacking out all visible things. The creation of light according to Genesis succeeded a period of darkness, which was the first period of this "chaos," and this ancient terminology seems to have influenced even modern authors and to have resulted in the conception that the world was said to have been originally a chaotic mass in our modern sense. On the contrary, it seems clear that the earth was thought to have been created as the solid mass which mankind has always known. This conception is more probable on account of its very simplicity. Just as the animals were supposed always to have been from the time of their creation what they actually were, so the existing shape of the earth was conceived to have been given it from the beginning. The earth was covered by the waters of the deep or primitive ocean, and over the waters was a pall of darkness. The earth was waste, because it was not adorned as yet by its covering of vegetation, and void because as yet uninhabited by beast or man. This is how it was understood in Ps. 103, the Psalm of Creation, where verse 4 says "above the mountains stood the waters." The earth was shaped with mountains and valleys before the mass of waters was withdrawn from its surface.

The second great challenge to ancient ideas has come in our own time. It used to be thought that man had been on this globe for no longer than the Bible would seem to indicate, or that if the period was actually longer, at least it was not so long as to render impossible an oral tradition going back to the Garden of Eden. Now all investigators are agreed that man's existence is to be measured not in thousands but in tens of thousands of years if not in hundreds of thousands. This rules out the possibility of tradition descending by natural means from the first generation of mankind to Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people. Thus is presented one of the chief problems in arriving at the true sense of the sacred writings to which Pius XII drew attention in his Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. He further encouraged Catholic scholars to renewed efforts in the quest for the solution of these problems, and, foreseeing that these new problems will bring new solutions unsuspected by our forefathers, the Holy Father warns us all to receive the results of these investigations in the spirit of charity. This does not, of course, mean that criticism and discussion of new views is discouraged. On the contrary, it is only by such full examination that the truth can ultimately be recognized and embraced by all. It does mean that it would

be wrong to go beyond criticism of the opinions expressed to attack the orthodoxy or motives of the scholars who propound them. The solution proposed by M. Chaine is radical. He regards the whole story of Paradise as a symbolical framework to convey religious truth. "In marriage, which is willed by God, man and woman, equal in nature, are the complement each of the other and make only one flesh, that is, a new being (ii, 22-4). They should transmit life, multiply their offspring to people the earth (i, 28). If the animals and inanimate beings of the world have their end and purpose in them, they themselves are subordinated to God: they must obey him. God is their Master. Here lies the drama of humanity. Man and woman, created in a state of moral equilibrium and enjoying the friendship of God, became guilty of sin. Sin once introduced into the world destroys the equilibrium of creation. It introduces disorder into human nature, moral evil into his soul, physical evil into his body; social evil also, represented by the servile position of woman. The evils which afflict mankind were not willed by God. From the beginning they are the consequences of sin." This is the summary given of the religious teaching of these chapters (pp. 513-4). But the Garden of Eden is only the clothing of this teaching. "The doctrine of the first three chapters of Genesis has been thought and transmitted with a whole world of scientific and mythical concepts which are no part of it, like those of a solid firmament, of marvellous trees, of an enchanted garden" (p. 73).

There was an idea in the early Church, shared by many of the Fathers, that the Garden of Eden was not in this world of ours but somewhere in the heavens. Consequently many details in the story were considered by these Fathers to be metaphorical or symbolic. Thus St. Gregory of Nyssa asks how could there be animals in Paradise? A question which it would not occur to any of us to ask. All, however, considered Paradise to be a place, whether on this globe or above. Origen is not an exception to this statement as he has not the rank or the authority of a Father of the Church, and besides held various views afterwards condemned as heretical. He, however, did hold the opinion that Adam and Eve before their sin were pure spirits and were, so to say, imprisoned in their bodies as a result of sin and therewith banished down to this terrestrial habitation. This unanimity serves to emphasize the novelty of the view here proposed, but does not demonstrate that it is unorthodox. The Fathers and the Church since their day have never regarded the historicity of the Garden of Eden as a matter of Faith. Now that the ancient view is challenged, time will show the mind of the Church.

Even in the stories of the Patriarchs from Abraham our author finds a mixture of legend. "One teaching, one affirmation may be the outcome of one or of several pages. Thus in the history of the Patriarchs the teaching bears on the election of Israel in the person of its ancestor, on the religious and moral truths which emerge from the writings."

(p. 511). Here there is no longer that same difficulty in a faithful transmission of events. How often must the stories have been told and retold in the tents and round the fires as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob moved about the land of Canaan. Those were the days of listening and not of reading; and the powers of memory were not confused as in subsequent ages when the multiplicity of books on many diverse subjects tended to distract the mind. The Psalmist shows what was the practice: "what our fathers have told us . . . which he commanded our fathers to make known to their children that another generation might know, the children that should be born and should rise up and declare them to their children" (lxxvii, 3-6). And the details fit all that we know of the circumstances of the time. Abraham receives her handmaid from the sterile Sara in the hope of progeny, a custom mentioned in the Code of Hammurabi which prevailed in the land whence the Patriarch had come to Canaan. Jacob marries two sisters, which is forbidden in the later law of Leviticus. Not one of the names is compounded with the divine name Yahweh, whereas such names were very common after this name had become familiar among the Hebrews through the instrumentality of Moses. It is hard to resist the conviction that the author is unduly sceptical.

The reader who looks for help on theological questions is apt to be disappointed. Thus after the statement that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth it is added only that creation out of nothing is not formulated in Genesis, p. 21, and to this on p. 513 that the initial words of Genesis will suggest it to subsequent reflection. A little more is said, p. 50, about the protoevangelium, iii, 15, but, without exaggeration, nothing helpful from the theological point of view except the quotation from Fr Lagrange that "in this scene everything indicates that God is on the side of man."

The author's interest seems rather to have lain in the dissection of sources. He accepts the three found by the Graf-Wellhausen school, namely, J, E, and P, without, however, admitting their late dates for the two former. Not all by any means will agree with this analysis, which has been the subject of so much discussion in the last fifty years and more. Dr Heinisch in his commentary on Genesis in the *Bonner Bibel* (1930) concludes his treatment of the subject with a reminder of the wide divergence of opinion reigning about it and of "how much laborious and minute investigation is still necessary before we can form a clear and certain picture" of the way in which the Pentateuch came to be composed (p. 65). And Professor H. H. Rowley of Manchester University has written recently: "Some scholars have questioned the existence of the once generally acknowledged sources, while others have attempted to carry the analysis further, and isolate still further sources. Never has there been so much fluidity in Pentateuchal criticism. Yet while many scholars would agree that the days of the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen theory are numbered, agreement ends as soon as the question

what is to succeed is asked," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (1946) 52f. Confidence in the results of the dissection is not heightened by the fact that expressions of P are used in J and expressions of J in P; and most readers will probably feel that the time has not yet come when we can feel assured that the solution has been found of the problem what were the sources used in the compilation of Genesis.

However composed, the book has always been recognized as a masterpiece and it cannot be that inferior brains were responsible for its production. In particular the story of the Garden of Eden is a gem of literature. It is consequently very surprising to find that Chaine had a low opinion of the intellectual capacity of its author. In ii, 15, it is said that God placed Adam in the Garden, according to Chaine's translation "pour le travailler et le garder." He then comments: "As for the defence of the garden, it is not clear what need it meets, since the man is alone and is to have dominion over all the animals. It is a slip of memory." But it is no oversight on the part of the writer of Genesis. The translator has missed the sense. The verb in question has the meaning "to keep, have charge of, tend." It is so used in Exod. xxii, 7 of keeping a deposit, in 1 Sam. vii, 1 of having charge of the Ark, in Gen. iv, 9, "Am I my brother's keeper?" , 2 Kings xxii, 14, "the Keeper of the wardrobe." Chaine discovers a similar oversight in iv, 14, "Cain and Abel are the first men"; who then is there to kill Cain? But our commentator himself overlooked the fact that Seth was born to replace the murdered Abel when Adam was 130 years old. Now Adam and Eve had received the divine command to increase and multiply and fill the earth. According to the conception of the writer of Genesis there would have been a very large number of people already alive when Abel was done to death.

It appears to the reviewer that depreciation of the powers of intelligence responsible for Genesis has led M. Chaine into many errors. The importance of the matter may warrant the mention of one or two more. On p. 82 he says that Lamech's words to his two wives have nothing to do with the context. But the whole point of this address is that Lamech and his family owing to their discovery of the use of metals are in possession of weapons such as no adversary of theirs would possess, and consequently were in a position to exact terrible vengeance.

In vi, 2, he understands "the sons of God" to be angels, which is the meaning of the expression in Job i and ii. But Job was written some hundreds of years after Gen. vi, 1-4 on Chaine's later dating of the document which itself would reproduce a more ancient tradition. The usage of language can alter in a shorter period of time and it is not legitimate to assume identity of meaning without proof. The only proof offered is that the alternative of understanding the daughters of men as descendants of Cain and the sons of God as the descendants of Seth is to give the word "men" in verse 2 a meaning different from that

which it has in verse 1, p. 102. But this is not the only other explanation, nor, I agree, the correct one. The author has said all he wishes to say about Cain and the Cainites in chap. iv, and from chap. v, 1 is concerned only with the Sethites. To introduce the angels here is to read into the text an unpleasant interpretation quite opposed to sound theology. Aware of this our author writes: "To admit that the ancient Hebrews had notions about the angels different from those which we have to-day is not to attack the honour of God," p. 102. No, but does the interpretation take account of inspiration and inerrancy? It does not take account of the context. In the context this account is part of the introduction to the story of the Flood and presents the background of human vice which determined God to send that chastisement. A sin of the angels would have nothing to do with that catastrophe. In the immediately preceding section the genealogy of the Sethites, of whom Noe was one, has been traced back to God himself (v, 1-31). The divine fatherhood of God is stressed by the remark that God created Adam in his likeness and that Adam begot Seth in his, in other words that Adam passed on the likeness that he had himself received from God (v, 1-3). After the account of the wickedness into which the Cainites early fell following the example of their ancestor, the sacred writer in chap. vi says that at length the descendants of Seth, the sons of God, fell into like or worse corruption, and this corruption determined God to inflict salutary punishment.

One last example. In ii, 5, it is said that as yet there was no vegetation, and two reasons are given. God had not yet rained on the earth and there was no man to till the earth. Moisture is necessary for plant life and this can be provided in two ways. God may provide it by sending down beneficent showers or man may provide it, as in Babylonia and Egypt, by providing canals and channels through which water from a spring or river can be made to pass to irrigate his fields. Both conditions were so far lacking at least in the region which the sacred author had in mind. Now the next verse goes on to say that "a spring rose out of the earth watering all the surface of the earth" (Douay). Our commentator finds a contradiction here (p. 32). He says that "the author recalls two traditions. . . . He puts them side by side without troubling to harmonize them." We are more likely to arrive at the author's mind by supposing him to be at least as intelligent as ourselves. After his mention of the two deficiencies recalled above the sequence of his story required the information that there was water available if there were anyone to utilize it. As pointed out by A. Bea, S.J., *De Pentateucho* (Romae, 1933²) 148f, where other references may be found, verse 6 runs on from 5—there was no man to till the soil, to raise the water from its source and so to irrigate the surface of the earth. This makes perfect sense. The advice that is often necessary for boys, to remember that their translation of a Latin or Greek unseen will not be right if it

does not make sense, is no less in place in regard to the books of the Bible. It remains on this subject only to add that there is no inconsistency with the foregoing in the further statement of Genesis about trees growing before the creation of man. Trees with their deep roots will flourish where plants with shallow roots cannot and precisely such a locality is figured in the story of the Garden of Eden. The source of water in verse 6 seeped through the undersoil of itself but required the work of man to spread it on the surface of the ground.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In view of certain passages in the New Testament which suggest that Christ would return soon, could the prediction be conditional? Could we hold that as the prophet Jonas was sent by God to announce the destruction of Ninive within forty days and yet it did not really happen, because the Ninivites repented, so God sent the Apostles to announce the speedy return of Christ to judge the world; that the early Christians rightly believed it and yet it did not really happen because something intervened of which we know nothing?

No, the cases are not parallel. The destruction of Ninive was evidently conditional on repentance. The Ninivites understood it so. If it was unconditional, the mission of Jonas lacks its obvious purpose. Jonas erred and was rebuked for wishing it to be unconditional. If the Apostles announced Christ's speedy return as a truth revealed to them by Christ, as part indeed of their divine message, and this return was in reality conditional on something of which we know nothing, their message would necessarily be deceptive and inconsistent with divine veracity. As a matter of fact there is no evidence that the Apostles preached the speediness of Christ's return as part of divine revelation commissioned to them. They surely did not contradict their Master, who as recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark, stated that no one knew of the day, not even the angels in heaven, but the Father alone, their Master who on the day of his Ascension had said to them: "It is not yours to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power." As to what their private opinions and expectations were is of no importance, as long as they did not express them in their written or spoken word as part of divine revelation whether directly or by implication. St. Paul warned his converts "not to be terrified neither by supposed spirit messages, nor word, nor by epistle supposed to be sent by him as if the day of the Lord were at hand." A teacher is not always to be blamed for the errors of his disciples. From the above quotation (II Thess. ii, 2) it is clear that St. Paul was convinced that none of his teaching demanded the inference that Christ would return within his lifetime