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The Primordial Human Beings According to the Biblical Tradition[1]

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Abstract. This article outlines salient features of the primordial humans as portrayed in the Book of Genesis: their creation, their nature and the qualities with which they are endowed, their relation to God and the created universe, as well as their vocation and destiny. In our compass are not only the figures of Adam and Eve, but also that of Noah who, while echoing Adam, represents yet another type of the father of humankind. In Sections *I–IV* the Biblical accounts are analysed against the background of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources, while Section *IV.I* explores the localisation of the beginnings of the post-diluvian humanity on the Biblical map of the world. In Section *V*, a special attention is paid to the connections between the humans, the plants and the animals, before and after the flood. The focus of Section *VI* is on the representation of the primæval humans in Jewish and Christian para-Biblical literature. Section *VII* is dedicated to the reception of the Biblical tradition of human origins in the New Testament and its elaboration in early Patristic texts, apocryphal writings and figurative sources. Our investigation highlights the persistence of royal imagery in textual and figurative portrayals of Adam.

[1] The author owes a debt of gratitude to Prof. Charles Lock for his invaluable stylistic advice. Several of the themes explored in the article have been discussed in the seminars 'Скритото и откритото' (Hidden and Revealed) convened by Prof. Gergana Ruseva at the Centre for Oriental Languages and Cultures, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. The author wishes to thank her for offering him these important occasions of scholarly exchange.

Keywords: Adam, Ararat (Mt), Apocrypha of Adam and Eve, Armenia, Dogmatical sarcophagus, Eve, Genesis (the Book of), Infancy Gospels, Kingship in the Bible, S. Maria Maggiore (iconography), Nakhichevan, Noah, Urartu

Игор Дорфман-Лазарев. НАЙ-ДРЕВНИТЕ ЧОВЕШКИ СЪЩЕСТВА СПОРЕД БИБЛЕЙСКАТА ТРАДИЦИЯ

Резюме. Статията разглежда основните черти на първите човешки същества, представени в книгата *Битие*: тяхното създаване, тяхната природа и качествата, с които са надарени; връзката им с Бог и сътворената вселена, както и тяхното призвание и съдба. Обхванати са не само образите на Адам и Ева, но и на Ной, който, макар и да отразява Адам, представлява един различен вид баща на човечеството. В раздели *I–IV* библейските повествования се анализират на фона на древни месопотамски и египетски източници, а раздел *IV.1* изследва мястото на зараждане на човечеството след потопа върху библейската карта на света. В раздел *V* се обръща особено внимание на връзките между човешкия, растителния и животинския свят преди и след потопа. Раздел *VI* се съсредоточава върху представянето на първите хора в еврейската и в християнската парабиблейска литература. Раздел *VII* е посветен на рецепцията на библейското предание за човешкия произход в *Новия завет* и на развиването на това предание в ранни патристични текстове, апокрифни писания и визуални източници. Проучването подчертава устойчивостта на царската образност в текстуалните и визуалните представяния на Адам.

Ключови думи: Адам, Арарат (планина), Апокрифи за Адам и Ева, Армения, Догматичен саркофаг, Ева, Битие (Книга), Протоевангелия, царски образи в Библията, Санта Мария Маджоре (иконография), Нахичеван, Ной, Урарту

Research/Научно изследване

The figures of the primordial human beings appear in the opening chapters of *Genesis*, the first book of the Jewish and Christian Bible. The Book of Genesis reveals numerous parallels to ancient Mesopotamian sources, yet unlike them it offers not a story of the feats and vicissitudes of gods but a systematic and focused account of the creation of the world, a deliberate and sovereign act of one God.[2] The opening chapters convey to the reader fundamental knowledge regarding human existence as related to the structure of the universe. They are especially concerned with the nature of the human, the relations between the human being and God, between man and woman, and between human being and the world which is designed for human habitation and activity. Within the inner structure of the book of Genesis, these chapters represent a prologue to the history of humankind; the concepts that they introduce and their narratives are to be foundational for human society.

[2] Carr, 2020, p. 13.

While the Hebrew Bible contains various allusions to narratives of origins (e.g. Ps. 104 and Prov. 30.4), the opening chapters of *Genesis* never serve, surprisingly, as a point of explicit reference for the later Biblical authors; even Ezekiel (28.12-17) refers to a different tradition of Paradise. In spite of this 'silence' of the later Biblical authors, this prologue has played a pivotal role in both Jewish (at least, since the second century BCE onwards) and Christian reflection (starting from St Paul). In different settings, it was understood either as a history of the origins or as a paradigm of the human condition.[3]

This article outlines salient features of the primordial humans as portrayed in *Genesis*, also taking into examination their remote background in the traditions of Mesopotamia, with which Judæan sages in exile were familiar at least since the sixth century BCE, and of Egypt, as well as the interpretation of these figures in para-Biblical and early Christian sources.

i. The First Account of Creation in the Book of Genesis

There are two accounts of creation in *Genesis*, each evidencing a distinct theological perspective. No definitive opinion has so far been reached as to the chronological relation between the two, and this complex question will not be addressed here.[4] The first account, Gen. 1.1–2.4a, is largely regarded to have been shaped in circles expressing the outlook of the priests in the Temple of Jerusalem, either in the aftermath of the destruction of the city in 587 BCE, or reflecting the foundation of the Persian empire by Cyrus (539–529 BCE), or after the return from the Babylonian exile, *ca* 520–480 BCE. The priestly outlook established a link between the building of the Temple in Jerusalem and the worship therein, and the creation of the world. The very form of the account may even indicate its liturgical derivation.[5]

Following this account, the human being (*adam* and, with a definite article, *ha-ʾadam*) was created by God (*Elohim*) not as an individual but as a couple.[6] No such explicit statement is made regarding the rest of living beings, created before the human, which indicates that in the Bible it is much more than a mere physiological distinction: it pertains to the inner order of the world in which humans are assigned specific tasks.[7]

The dual nature of the human being and the complementarity of the two sexes are notably stressed by means of the intercalation of singular and plural in Gen. 1.26-27: 'Let us make a human being (sing.) in our image [...], so that they may

[3] Collins, 2004, pp. 299-301.

[4] Cf. Weinfeld, 1980, p. 433.

[5] Weinfeld, 1981, pp. 501-512.

[6] Ego, 2011, p. 32.

[7] de Pury, 2016, p. 20-31.

rule (pl.) over [all the living creatures]. And God created the human being (sing.) in his image, in God's image he created him (sing.), he created them (pl.) male and female'; and, again, in 5.1-2: 'in God's likeness he made him (sing.). He created them (pl.) male and female and he blessed them and called their (pl.) name (sing.) Adam on the day on which he created them (pl.)'.

Both Gen. 1.27 and 5.1-2, which speak of the creation of the human being as a couple, also affirm their creation in 'God's image' or 'God's likeness'. The bilingual Assyrian-Aramaic inscription (ninth century BCE) discovered at Tell-Fekheriye, in the upper stream of the river Khabur, suggests that the terms *ṣelem* (image) and *dĕmuṯ* (likeness) are extremely close semantically.[8] Consequently, the unique God of *Genesis* is to be thought of as reflected either in both man and woman singly or in the human being conceived of in its duality. The fact that at the beginning only one couple is created means that everything concerning them also concerns the whole of humanity understood as a single family (cf. 9.5-6).

Furthermore, the duality of 'God's image' informs the reader of the Bible of the Creator himself who, following this account, may not be thought of as a simple monad.[9] In this connection, it may also be recalled that 'the Spirit of God' (*ruaḥ ʾElohim*) in Gen. 1.2 is a feminine noun (cf. the form of the verb 'hovers' [over], *meraḥepeṯ*).

The Biblical account does not explain in what God's image consists, but, as 1.26, 28 indicate, it is not so much related to the humans' bodily form as to their tasks within the world, and especially the government of the animal world and procreation: '...in our image, after our likeness, *so that* they should have dominion (*we-yirdu*; Septuagint: *kai arkhetôsan*)...' (Gen. 1.26).[10] Unlike the beings created before humans, the latter are not defined as 'good' (cf. 1.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 vs. 1.27-28). This distinction may be indicative of their freedom which stems precisely from their being God-like.[11]

The first humans exist in relation to the beings made before them. In Gen. 1.26 and 28 they are commanded 'to subdue the earth' and 'to have dominion' over the living beings in the sea, in the air and on the earth. In the mythology of the ancient Near East, the government of the animal world was a distinctly royal task defined after descriptions of divine sovereignty over the world. Indeed, the living beings in *Genesis* represent the same three spheres composing the universe, over which gods, and hence the kings empowered by gods, exercised their rulership in ancient Babylon.[12] This kingly understanding of the human, whose dominion is not con-

[8] See Abou-Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard, 1982.

[9] Römer, 2018, p. 1739.

[10] Waltke and O'Connor, 1990, pp. 577-578; L'Hour, 2016, p. 181.

[11] de Pury, 1986, pp. 21-22.

[12] Cf. *Atra-Ḫasīs* I.i, 12-16; George and Al-Rawi, 1996, p. 153; cf. Lambert and Millard, 1969, pp. 8, 45; on this source, see Section III below.

fined to any one of the three spheres, will be developed in a variety of ways in both the haggadah and midrashim, and in Christian para-Biblical and exegetical works (see Sections *VI* and *VII* below).

The verb *radah b-* ('to have dominion'), which we encounter in these two verses, derives from the descriptions of rulership going back to Akkad.[13] The differentiation between the vegetable sources of nourishment of humans and animals (Gen. 1.29-30) excludes, though, every competition for food between them, thus implying a non-violent hierarchy within the created universe.[14]

Most likely, the term 'image', *ṣelem*, originally presupposed a carved, sculpted figure or a statue;[15] this meaning is also attested in the Bible and notably in the priestly stratum of the Pentateuch (cf. Num 33.52). It may have at its background the Mesopotamian idea of the king as an image (*ṣalmu*) of the major gods, idea first attested in the thirteenth century BCE. In Egypt, already from the seventeenth century BCE, a king in his public appearances had furthermore been perceived as an embodiment, and therefore a representative, of divinity on earth, while his acts and words were regarded as divine manifestations.[16] In the 'Instructions' allegedly given by Pharaoh Khety (?) to his son, Pharaoh Merikare (P 132), which are preserved in three fragmentary papyri and are tentatively dated to the end of the third millennium BCE,[17] humans, who derive from the body of god the creator, are his images.[18]

Consequently, by designating the human being as an image of God, *Genesis* confers on it the vocation of a king to whom dominion over the works of God's hands is given 'in the fields, in the air and in the sea' (cf. Pss. 8.6-9). Such a conception of humans — articulated at a time when royalty in Israel had been interrupted — finds itself in contrast to the known traditions of the ancient Near East, according to which kingship was a gift of civilisation extended by gods to the human race naturally barbarous.[19] Thus, the Neo-Babylonian text VAT 17019 (BE 13383), coming from the city of Babylon, which reflects a tradition shaped at the beginning of the first millennium BCE, recounts the creation of a king — a 'man who reflects and decides' and who possesses 'harmonious traits and beautiful body' — separately from the rest of humanity.[20]

In conclusion it should also be noted that in the Bible, the same term *ṣelem* also designates idols (cf. 1 Sam. 6.5, 11). Appointed to govern the other living creatures,

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[13] Janowski, 2004, pp. 189-196; Neumann-Gorsolke, 2012, pp. 201-229.

[14] de Pury, 1986, pp. 16-18.

[15] Sasson, 1985, pp. 86-103.

[16] Koch, 2000, pp. 17-20.

[17] Lichtheim, 2006, p. 106.

[18] Herrmann, 1961, pp. 418-420; Keel and Schroer, 2002, pp. 142, 178-179.

[19] Lambert and Millard, 1969, pp. 18-21; Angerstorfer, 1997, pp. 47-58.

[20] Mayer, 1987, pp. 55-68.

the human being is, however, not expected to receive their worship. Consequently, such a royal conception articulated by the Biblical author may indirectly imply a polemic against the authority of the Mesopotamian kings and, in particular, against idolatry denounced in Isaiah, Jeremiah and other Biblical books.

II. The Second Account of Creation in *Genesis*

The second account of creation, Gen. 2.4b–3.24, must arise from the sapiential tradition in Israel, which was primarily concerned with deciphering the inner order of the created universe regarded as the basis of the organisation of social life and the horizon of human activities in the world. In this account, the Lord (*Yahweh*) first forms the man Adam, then gives life to the plants and the beings inhabiting the earth and the air (2.9, 19), which, differently from the first account, become a stage in Adam's biography; eventually, the woman is 'built' (< *banah*) by the Creator (2.22) from Adam's 'rib', *ṣela*ʿ, a term also employed in architectonic contexts.[21]

This account stresses the connection between the earth (also in the specific meaning of 'ground', 'soil' and 'farmland'), Adam, the land animals, the birds and the plants. In Gen. 2.5 it is indicated that the earth was bare because there was yet 'no man (*adam*) to till the ground' (ve-ʾ*adam* ʾayn laʿabod ʾet ha-ʾ*adamah*), while according to 2.7, it is 'from the ground' (*adamah*) that God, as a potter, 'moulded' (*yaṣar*) Adam as, successively, he did also the plants, the land animals and the birds (2.9, 19). Unlike the first account, here the animals living in water remain outside the picture. While the etymological link between *adam* and *adamah* remains uncertain, the alliteration and the assonances existing between the two terms are significant within the account quite apart from any etymological quest. They imply not only man's ontological constitution but also his vocation anticipated in 2.5 and further clarified in 2.9 where we are told that trees 'good for food' are 'made to grow from the ground'.

Adam — a name which may thus appropriately be translated as 'earthling'[22] — is placed in a garden planted on purpose, which he is assigned to guard and to cultivate (Gen. 2.8-9, 15-16). He receives these tasks not only insofar as both he himself and the trees have the same 'earthly' origin (2.7, 9) and thus possess a certain kinship, but especially because in 2.5 it is stated that the earth cannot produce fruit without Adam's toil. This suggests that the earth existed in the expectation that humanity would appear.[23]

To confirm the relationship between *adam* and *adamah*, later in the account the ground is 'cursed because of Adam' (Gen. 3.17), i.e. owing to his transgression. Adam will next receive the task 'to till the ground from which he was taken' (3.23),

[21] Sarna, 1989, p. 22.

[22] Speiser, 1964, p. 16.

[23] Castellino, 1957, pp. 120-121.

now accursed, and will eventually be doomed to 'return to the ground, out of which he was taken' (3.19).

According to both accounts of creation in *Genesis*, the world is brought into being out of concern for humanity. In both, the earth and living beings are entrusted to them. In the first account we saw that humans are given dominion over the beings inhabiting the sea, the air and the earth (Gen. 1.26); they are called to 'be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth' (1.28); and that all the vegetables and trees are given to them as nourishment (1.29). In the second account, 'every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food' grows in the garden in which Adam is put by God (2.8-10, 15-16). These statements may be juxtaposed with the *Instructions* addressed to Merikare (P 131-34), mentioned above, according to which the sky, the earth, the winds, the vegetable and the animal worlds are all made, and the waters are restrained, for man's sake.[24]

As does the idea of God's image in the first account, the appointment of Adam to God's garden in the second account indicates Adam's royal dignity: it evokes the Mesopotamian idea of the king as gods' gardener. But there is more to the Biblical account: Adam's work, the 'tilling of the garden and keeping it' (Gen. 2.15), is a clear complement to that of God himself who 'made to grow every tree' in it (2.9). Adam thus appears as a collaborator of the Creator.[25]

In the second account, the concern for the human being is also expressed in the extensive story (composed of six verses, Gen. 2.21-25) of the creation of woman (see Section *III* below), which has no parallels in the ancient Near East. The prelude to this story is to be found in 2.18: 'And the Lord God said, It is not good that Adam should be alone (*le<u>b</u>ado*); I will make him a helpmate fitting him'. That upon receiving his task as God's gardener, Adam is deemed to remain 'lonely' is an enigmatic statement. While it is God who enunciates Adam's loneliness and the need of remedy, it should be acknowledged that the words 'it is not good for Adam to be alone' are pronounced not only on behalf of the Creator but also on behalf of his sensible creature. It should, furthermore, not be denied that the underlying tradition contained a dialogue between God and his creature, perhaps analogous to that in 3.9-13. No unambiguous indication of God's taking charge of Adam's self-perception is, however, to be found in *Genesis*.

In the form in which the composite text of *Genesis* has been fixed (admittedly, well before the middle of the fourth century BCE), this Biblical book does not allow us to determine whether the words contained in 2.18 are pronounced before the reader or a heavenly audience. Here, again, it may not be ruled out that this statement bears a trace of an underlying tradition which also knew of angelic witnesses of the creation of the Universe or other assistants, or even participants, in the

[24] Helck, 1977, p. 83.

[25] Keel and Schroer, 2002, p. 144.

act of creation.[26] Traces of such traditions still linger in the Bible (cf. Gen. 3.22; 1 Kgs. 22.19; Job 38.7), while the frequency with which angels appear elsewhere in *Genesis*, and the prominent role played by them in this book, are exceptional for the Bible.[27] An echo of Mesopotamian legends about divine consultation preceding the creation of humanity, which are notably reflected in the cosmogonic account *Enûma Elish* ('Whilst On High...') (iv.3-30) compiled in Babylon towards the end of the twelfth century but deriving from far more ancient Mesopotamian traditions,[28] may, in particular, be detected in Gen. 1.26: 'Let us make (pl.) man in our image (pl.), after our likeness (pl.)'.[29]

Since the land animals and the birds are 'formed from the ground', like Adam, and on the same day, and since both are defined as 'living souls' (*nepeš ḥayah*: Gen. 2.7, 19), the phrase about God 'bringing them to Adam to see what he would call them' (2.19) may presuppose Adam's implicit familiarity with the beings that are connatural to him.[30] The naming of living beings (2.19-20) expresses Adam's lordship over the world, comparably to the first account of creation, which explains this (as we saw in Section *I*) in even more radical terms (1.28). Adam gives names to living beings by 'calling' (*qraʾ*) them. This again reminds us of the first account in which God 'calls' (*qraʾ*) the light Day, the darkness Night, the firmament Heaven, the dry land Earth and the waters gathered together Seas (1.5, 8, 10). We may thus conclude that the definitive redaction of *Genesis*, by combining the two accounts, enhances the image of Adam as God's companion in the work of creation.

III. The Creation of Woman and the Vocation of Humans, According to *Genesis*

The creation of living beings and their presentation to Adam (Gen. 2.19), immediately following the declaration of Adam's loneliness, appear as a search for a remedy or as a demonstration that a remedy is to be sought elsewhere. Only after Adam gave living beings names are we told that a fitting 'helpmate' was not found for him amongst them (2.20). The term *ʿezer*, here translated as 'helpmate', is used elsewhere in the Bible chiefly as a divine title or a term indicating divine succour in situations of extreme danger.[31] As in 2.18, so here it remains unclear whether it is Adam or God who discovers that none of the beings connatural to him could become a companion 'opposite him' (*kĕnegdo*) (2.18, 20), i.e. corresponding to

[26] Heckl, 2012, pp. 3-37.

[27] Sarna, 1989, p. xv.

[28] See Talon, 2005, p. 99.

[29] Carr, 2020, pp. 20-21.

[30] Cf. Keel and Schroer, 2002, pp. 69, 147.

[31] Ska, 1984, pp. 234-236.

Adam, fitting his stature, capable of standing in front of him or 'vis-à-vis him'.[32] Indeed, here too we may suspect that God speaks both in his own name and on behalf of Adam. It is upon this affirmation, i.e. primarily not in a perspective of childbearing, that Eve is then created (2.21-22).

That this occurs while Adam is in 'deep sleep' (*tardemah*) signifies the imponderable mystery of Eve's advent.[33] In Adam's reaction to her appearance in front of his eyes an implicit comparison, even a contrast can be recognised: between the woman arising from his own body (Gen. 2.21-23) — 'brought' to him by the Creator — and all other living creatures. The syntagma *zʾot ha-paʿam* 'this at last' (2.23) seems to juxtapose the woman with the living beings already presented to Adam. Therefore, Adam's words strengthen the consequential relation that we identified between 2.18 and 2.19 (see Section *II* above). Hence, we can conclude that living beings are presented to the first human precisely in order that he can select an adequate counterpart, the need for which is apprehended not only by the Creator but also by Adam himself.

In the light of Gen. 2.18-23, the primordial Adam in 2.7-8, 15-20 thus cannot be deemed an accomplished being; he only becomes himself with the appearance of the woman (2.21-23), i.e. as a dialogical creature. This is notably observed in the Jewish Palestinian midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* 17 which was edited towards the beginning of the fifth century. Reporting much earlier authorities, this midrash suspects, moreover, that when living alone a human diminishes (*měmaʿeṭ*) his likeness to God. In 2.23-24 the complementarity of man and woman is expressed by means of alliteration and assonance existing between the words *iš*, 'man', and *išah*, 'woman' (although these — similarly to the couple *adam*/*adamah* — are likely to be different etymologically).

The image of the two trees in the Garden (Gen. 2.9, 16-17 and Chapter 3) is, admittedly, related to the old Israelite tradition of wisdom as a source of life, which will not be treated here in detail. As a consequence of transgressing God's prohibition and eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the original relationship between humankind and God is broken, and Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden. The expulsion ensues from the autonomy with which Adam was endowed before the creation of Eve (2.16-17). The text does not allow us to see exactly what disobedience entailed for the first humans or for their offspring. *Genesis* would suggest that Adam and Eve were created mortal (3.22-23) but had the possibility of becoming immortal.[34] Indeed, they were expelled precisely in order to prevent them from 'taking also of the tree of life, and eating, and living for ever' (3.22). The expulsion of Adam and Eve inaugurates the beginning of historical time in Chapter Four of *Genesis*.

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[32] L'Hour, 2018, p. 234.

[33] Gunkel, 1901, pp. 9-10.

[34] Witte, 1998, p. 79.

The history of the first humans in *Genesis* has to be set against the background of ancient Mesopotamian sources.[35] The theme of wisdom and immortality, in particular, may be kindred to the myth of Adapa, which is transmitted in both Akkadian and Sumerian texts. Its earliest, Akkadian, witnesses, dateable to the middle of the fourteenth century BCE, reach us not from Mesopotamia but from Amarna on the Nile (south of Asyut), which is indicative of the vast spread of this tradition. Adapa, an antediluvian priest and advisor living in Southern Mesopotamia, is endowed with wisdom but not with immortality, gods' exclusive prerogative.[36] Thanks to his wisdom, Adapa represents a model human and the teacher of humankind, whereas in the Bible the primordial human being is never portrayed as a teacher of civilisation. The myth of Adapa can thus clarify the world of ideas in which *Genesis* was shaped; however, nothing would point to a direct dependence of the Biblical account on this, nor indeed on any other known Mesopotamian myth.[37]

Amongst the ancient Mesopotamian sources of the creation of humankind, of particular interest for the understanding of the account in *Genesis* is the Old Babylonian epic poem *Atra-Ḫasīs*, i.e. the story about the One Full of Understanding (see Section *1* above).[38] The earliest surviving copies of the poem are preserved, albeit with significant lacunæ, on the site of the Babylonian city of Sippar on the lower Euphrates. These pertain to 1646–1626 BCE, yet the poem must already have been written down for the first time in the nineteenth–eighteenth centuries, if not earlier. It was then broadly spread across the Near East, and continued to be transmitted during the late Assyrian period. A shorter version of *Atra-Ḫasīs* was known in Sumer in the seventeenth century BCE.

The narrative framework of *Atra-Ḫasīs* reveals, admittedly, the closest affinity to the portrayal of the primordial human being in *Genesis*. Thus, clay is one of the ingredients of which the human being is moulded, similar to the dust of which humans are created in Gen. 2.7. Furthermore, similarly to *Genesis*, according to *Atra-Ḫasīs* human nature contains divine elements. These, however, are not in God's image: the clay is first mixed with the blood of a slaughtered god and with his flesh bearing a divine spirit; this mixture is then vivified by a spit of the superior gods (I.iv, 208, 212-13, 223-26, 231-34).[39] Unlike the Biblical account, which institutes the humans' role in the world by drawing analogies with divine activities, *Atra-Ḫasīs* makes an affirmation regarding the essence of the humans, which makes them members of the complex society of divine beings.

Indeed, an even greater difference between the ancient Mesopotamian myths and the primordial world in *Genesis* consists precisely in the fact that in the latter,

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[35] George, 2003, p. 507.

[36] See A4, in Picchioni, 1981, p. 113.

[37] Sjöberg, 1984, pp. 217-221; Andreasen, 1981, pp. 185-194; Bottéro, 1986, pp. 190-202.

[38] Kvanvig, 2011, pp. 39-57, 235-263.

[39] George and Al-Rawi, 1996, p. 171.

the sphere and the horizon of human activities are the created world, and in particular the earth, and not the divine realm. Even descriptions of religious worship do not appear in the Bible before the account of Cain and Abel in Gen. 4.3-5.[40] In *Atra-Ḫasīs*, by contrast, as in other Mesopotamian myths, it is in order to relieve gods of their labours that man is created (I.iv, 192-97; vii, 337-39). In *Enûma Elish*, the creation of such a race of god's servants (vi.6-8, 32-36) is, furthermore, immediately followed by the foundation of a sanctuary as the locality of gods' repose (vi.49-53).[41] The mental representation of space and time that this text suggests thus diverges significantly from that of the Bible, which is marked by the account of God's rest following the creation of the world: God's rest is not confined to any specific place (cf. Gen. 2.2-3).

iv. The Primaeval Humanity and the Story of the Flood in *Genesis*

The protagonist of *Atra-Ḫasīs*, a king communicating with his god, intercedes for his people in face of the disasters contrived by other gods over the world and is then instructed by this benevolent god to build an ark in which he rescues his family; these are the only people to be delivered from the universal flood (II.v – III.vii). Given its wide diffusion, both spatial and temporary, this story must have been a remote background of the Biblical story of the flood. As for the description of the flood in *Genesis* whereby, in particular, both 'all the fountains *of the great deep* burst apart' and 'the windows *of the heavens* broke open' (7.11), it is reminiscent of the Akkadian epos of Erra (ninth century BCE?). The main body of the story of the flood in *Genesis* must be of priestly origin, as is the first account of creation, in which the world is made by means of the separation between 'the waters which were *under the firmament* from the waters which were *above the firmament*' (Gen. 1.7). The renewal of the world indicated by the flood in *Genesis* is, therefore, radical (cf. 7.21-23). Unlike most of its Mesopotamian parallels, the Biblical story of the flood stresses the identity of the God who creates the world, destroys it when it becomes corrupt, falling into violence, alerts Noah, 'remembers' him and all living beings remaining 'shut in the ark' (7.16; 8.1) during the flood and saves them.[42] Via the eternal covenant that God eventually concludes with Noah he establishes 'binding relationships with the world and its human population'.[43] The creation cannot be undone again (9.13-16).

The flood is especially connected to the violence that develops after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden, and it underlines the fragility of the creation. It changes the relations both between man and woman and between the

[40] Edelman, Davies, Nihan and Römer, 2011, pp. 136-137.

[41] Talon, 2005, pp. 99-100.

[42] Glassner, 2015, pp. 487-498.

[43] Noort, 1999, pp. 7, 18.

human and animal worlds. Indeed, in the first account of creation, all the living creatures are appointed to eat plants (Gen. 1.29-30). And although the second account does not speak explicitly of the animals' nourishment, it harmonises with the first account regarding the nourishment of Adam (2.16). The end of this non-violent world is already pronounced by God upon Adam's and Eve's expulsion from the Garden (3.15), yet it is the murder of Abel by Cain in 4.8, which actually introduces violence into the world. In 6.11-13 the earth is declared to be already 'filled with violence' (*ḥamas*), and not only through humans but 'through all flesh': this becomes the direct cause of the flood. Henceforth, the laws regulating the post-diluvian world will no longer foresee a non-violent human community (cf. 9.6).

Within the deteriorating world in which Adam's offspring find themselves, Noah is the only one who 'found grace in the eyes of the Lord' (Gen. 6.8) and is also declared to be the only 'righteous' (*ṣadiq*) human being (7.1). Insofar as he gives origin to post-diluvian humankind, i.e. immanent to that of the authors and the readers of *Genesis*, Noah — the first man born after Adam's death (cf. 5.28-29) — represents yet another Biblical type of the father of humankind. The figure of Adam, the 'earthling', may be recognised in him as a watermark. Thus, while Adam receives the commandment 'to till the soil (*adamah*) from which he was taken' (3.23), Noah, descending on earth after the flood, is called in 9.20 'a man of the soil' (*ʾiš ha-ʾadamah*).

The parallel between Adam and Noah is also stressed in the lines speaking of the ark, which echo the first week of creation (the week being a liturgical unit in the priestly outlook), in the four following ways: as the earth brings forth living creatures — and in particular fowl, cattle, creeping things and beasts (Gen. 1.20, 22, 24-25) — so these same categories of living beings are introduced into the ark (6.19-20; 7.2, 8-9, 14; cf. 8.1). The ark is thus depicted as a shrunken universe, the matrix of a new creation.[44] After the flood, living beings are brought forth by Noah from the ark so that — just as when they had first been created (1.22) — 'they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply' (8.17, 19). Thirdly, Noah, similarly to Adam, exercises dominion over the animal world: just as Adam is appointed to be a ruler of living beings and the giver of their names, so living beings obey Noah's voice by entering the ark and, after the flood, are 'delivered into Noah's hand' (9.2). Fourthly, as the first created humans in 1.28, Noah and his descendants are blessed, and are invited to multiply and to populate the earth (9.1). The parallel between Adam and Noah is strengthened in the Septuagint version of the flood story.[45]

[44] Sarna, 1989, pp. 49-50.

[45] Wright III, 2010, p. 141.

IV.1. The Ark's Landing. Excursus

Genesis allows us to identify the site of Noah's settlement with higher precision than that of the prediluvian humanity. The ark lands 'on the mountains [in plural] of Ararat' (*ʿal hare ʾararaṭ*), Gen. 8.4. Under the name *ʾrrṭ* (vocalised as *Ararat* in the Septuagint and in the Masoretic Bible) the mountainous country lying north of Mesopotamia can be recognised. Indeed, from Assyrian cuneiform sources that land is known as *Urarṭu* (*var*. Uraṭri, Uruaṭri or Uraarṭu).[46] The vocalisation of the name of the mountainous country, in both the Greek and Hebrew Biblical texts, was established at a time when the pronunciation of its Assyrian name, presupposing the same three consonants, had long since been forgotten.

Between the first half of the ninth century and 590 BCE, Urarṭu existed as a unified kingdom centred around Lake Van thence extending north to the river Araxes. From the end of the ninth century it expanded its territory to the bent of the Euphrates in the west and, from the middle of the eighth century BCE, also occupied territories north of the Araxes, while at the beginning of the seventh century BCE it held sway over the present-day regions of Siunik and Karabagh (Artsʿakh). This kingdom thus encompassed a territory which from the later part of the sixth century BCE onwards would be known as Armenia.[47]

Urarṭu was a powerful kingdom which was, according to Béatrice and Mirjo Salvini, 'one of the principal objectives of the Assyrian expeditions towards the mountainous north'; for the inhabitants of Mesopotamia during the Assyrian period, it embodied the idea of the mountainous country *par excellence*.[48] Elements of its topography, thus, could not be unfamiliar to Biblical authors, nor to the earliest readers of *Genesis* living on the territories subjugated to Assyria.[49]

The sense of what 'the Mountains of Ararat' meant for the dwellers of the Mesopotamian lowlands and the Mediterranean coasts may be gained from Assyrian annals which stress the difficulties of access to the land of Urarṭu. Thus, on clay tablets preserved in Aššur, Emperor Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–1056 BCE) speaks of 'difficult roads', 'impassable routes', 'rugged paths' and 'difficult passes' leading to it, of 'barriers which even the [winged] birds of the sky could not pass' and of

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[46] Salvini, 2003, pp. 228-229; *Ead*., 2015, p. 84; On the durable influence exerted by the Mesopotamian cultural world on Urarṭu, see Salvini, 1995, pp. 19-20, 25-27, 36-37, 137.

[47] Salvini, 1995, pp. 14-17; on the gradual permeating of Urarṭu by the Armenians see *Ivi*, pp. 120-121; Mahé, 2012, pp. 31-34.

[48] Salvini, 2003, pp. 228, 235. The memory of Urartu also lingered during the late Babylonian era, and in a Babylonian chronicle of the end of the seventh century BCE this country is cited as Urašṭu, in *Ivi*, pp. 229-230; see also Grayson, 1996, p. 3.

[49] The topography of Urarṭu could also have been known to Biblical authors via the Hurrians who inhabited the area of Harran, Abraham's ancestral land according to *Genesis*, and the highlands rising to the north-east of Harran. The Hebrew Bible contains a number of indications of contacts between Hurrians and Hebrews; Speiser, 1964, pp. xl, xliii, 42, 46, 55, 69, 80; Wilhem, 1989, pp. 5, 7, 41, 50, 53, 74-75.

a way that had to be 'hacked out with bronze picks' before his army could enter that land.[50] These lines most certainly describe a passage through the defiles of the mountains of Gordyene (Kordu-kʿ, in Armenian) leading to Lake Van in the north.[51] It is in this terrain that the first steps of the postdiluvian humanity were imagined by the Biblical authors. The Aramaic Biblical translation of Onqelos (second century CE?), reflecting a Babylonian Jewish tradition, locates Ararat precisely in that chain, in the 'Mountains of Qardo'.[52]

In later times, Gordyene would represent the southern fringes of Armenia.[53] According to Origen (*ca* 185 – *ca* 254), three revisions of the Septuagint — made between the first century BCE and 200 CE under different theological premises and traditionally associated with the names of Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus — all interpreted 'Ararat' as Armenia in the translation of Gen. 8.4 (cf. *'Armenías*, i.e. [mountains] 'of Armenia').[54] The earliest of these revisions was carried out in Palestine.[55] Besides, this localisation of the ark's resting is also confirmed by the translation of 'the land of Ararat' as Armenia in the Septuagint version of Is. 37.38, deriving from Alexandria, and by several witnesses of Greek translation of 2 Kings (4 Kings) 19.37.[56] Eusebius of Cæsarea, furthermore, preserves for us a retelling of Noah's story transmitted by the Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon, native of Caria and active in Rhodes and in Rome at the beginning of the first century BCE. According to Molon, 'after the flood, the man who survived [it] left Armenia with his sons'.[57] This is indicative of the spread of the tradition identifying Ararat with Armenia by the first century BCE, amongst both Jews and pagans, across the Mediterranean region and up to the south-western coasts of Asia Minor, thence extending further west.[58] This version of events will be inherited by later traditions, both Jewish and Christian. The reference to Gordyene that we find in the translation of Onqelos and later Aramaic and Syriac versions does not necessarily imply a divergent localisation of Ararat with respect to Armenia because if a southern, Mesopotamian, viewpoint is adopted, Gordyene stands out as the first region where a traveller proceeding northwards would encounter a consistent Armenian population, and the one which also formed part of the Artaxiad and Arsacid Armenian kingdoms. Josephus, writing *ca* 93/94 CE, reports a tradition relating to the flood

[50] Grayson, 1991, p. 91; Salvini, 2003, p. 230; cf also references to a campaign against Urarṭu conducted by Shalmaneser III in 858 BCE, in Grayson, 1996, p. 14.

[51] Salvini, 1995, p. 20.

[52] Stone, 2010, p. 309; *Id*., 2015, pp. 398-401.

[53] Mahé, 2012, pp. 25-31; Hewsen, 2001, maps 17, 19, 62, 110.

[54] Field, 1875, p. 26 (I. 18b–25a).

[55] Kreuzer, 2021, pp. 449-458.

[56] Field, 1875, p. 690.

[57] Stern, 1974, p. 150.

[58] Stone and Topchyan, 2022, p. 2, n. 7.

and associated with Berosus, a Babylonian contemporary of Alexander the Great: it locates the 'mountain of the Cordyæans' precisely in Armenia (*AI* 1.93).

Josephus furthermore tells us that the Armenians kept the memory of the site of the ark's return to the land — the same upon which Noah and all those present in the ark first trod when leaving the ark. According to Josephus, it was called by the Armenians precisely 'Place of Landing' (*apobatêrion*, *AI* 1.92). While speaking of 'Armenians', he must imply that the Biblical account was received there also in a non-Jewish environment. The tradition of the 'Place of Landing' could have endured in Armenia through centuries and have been preserved there in the name of the city of Nakhichevan: while in the earliest Armenian documents it is recorded as *Nakhchawan*, later — certainly under the influence of popular etymology — its name was written as *Nakhidjewan* (the name under which the city is known in Armenian until today): this can be interpreted in Armenian as 'Place of the First Descent'.[59] Both summits of Ararat, situated *ca* 110 km to the north-west, are clearly visible from the city (today in Azerbaijan).[60] The Armenian apocryphal account 'Concerning the Good Tidings of Seth' provides an ætiological explanation of this name precisely as the place of Noah's descent.[61] This tradition was memorialised in Nakhichevan by a mediæval chapel, of uncertain dating and destroyed by Azerbaijani authorities at the end of the twentieth century, which had been considered by the local population and by pilgrims to be Noah's mausoleum.[62]

Little and Greater Ararat as seen from Nakhichevan

[59] The name of the city is built upon the adjective *nakh* ('first') and the noun *ijewan* ('place of descent', deriving from the root [ēǰ-], 'to descend'); see Stone, 2010, pp. 307-316.

[60] Stone and Topchyan, 2022, p. 10 (also with reference to R.H. Hewsen).

[61] Lipscomb, 1990, p. 188.

[62] Donabédian, 2023, pp. 74-75.

v. Humans vis-à-vis Animals

Although the figure of Noah can be closely assimilated to that of Adam, the relation of humans to plants and the command that humans should dominate the animal world (Gen. 1.26-30) are modified after the flood: humans are now allowed to eat both green grass (which in 1.30 had been reserved exclusively for the rest of the living beings) and other living beings themselves (9.3). This enables us to conclude that in the Bible, the peace between living beings characterises life beyond the temporary frame of the historical world, i.e. both the beginnings of the universe and the End Times (cf. Is. 11.6-9; 65.25; Ezek. 34.25; Hos. 2.20). This would allow the apocryphal *Life of Adam and Eve* (Latin 37 / Greek 10) to claim that after Adam's fall, the beasts renounced their obedience to man (see Sections *VI* and *VII* below).

Nevertheless, in both the accounts of creation, as well as in the account of the flood, gardening and the cultivation of the ground are foreseen as the central tasks of humanity and their main source of food (cf. Gen. 1.28-29; 2.8-16; 3.23 vs. 8.22; 9.20). The specific indications of human activities regarding the soil and the differentiated treatment of plants are not matched by any reference to cattle which, astonishingly, are assigned no particular role amongst the rest of living beings, either in the accounts of Adam or in that of Noah. And this, in spite of Adam's knowledge of the animal world explained by his naming of living beings in the second account of creation and even in spite of the distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean' animals, both of which enter the ark (7.2, 8). The 'toil' and the 'sweat' connected to the obtaining of food after the transgression will be a result of tilling the soil and not of pastoral work or animal herding (3.17-19). Even the permission to eat living beings after the flood does not allow us to discern any society based on animal husbandry: '*Every* moving thing (*remeš*) that lives shall be food for you' (9.3). Thus, also after the flood the primacy in the construction of the primæval human civilisation in *Genesis* continues to belong to agriculture.

Yet *Genesis* was moulded in a world profoundly marked not only by various activities involving stock breeding and husbandry, but also by specific distinctions, proper to Israelite society, between the animals licit and illicit for food, as well as by detailed precepts regulating the offering of sacrifices, the slaughter of cattle and the consumption of meat. All the more striking, therefore, is the fact that the diversity of the categories of animals that were present to the Israelites' minds does not structure either story in the prologue of *Genesis*, those of Adam or that of Noah: both the land animals and the birds are all part of a single whole, that of the 'living souls', when in the second account they are presented to Adam in order to receive their names (cf. Gen. 2.19 vs. 2.7). Analogously, fowl, cattle, creeping things and beasts all obey Noah's voice. This raises the question regarding the role to which the world of speechless beings as such was assigned by the authors of *Genesis* in their depiction of human origins. This role had necessarily to correlate with, and

yet to be contrasted with, the ancestral beliefs inherited by the implied readers and auditors of the accounts of Adam and Noah.

While analysing the accounts of creation in *Genesis*, Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer pointedly observe that

> people in ancient Israel evidently viewed themselves as relatives of the animals which were feared as much as admired [...]. The Israelites clearly felt themselves closer to animals than we do. About forty appellations of animals served them also as personal names [...]. Numberless comparisons and metaphors show how closely against the background of animals and the patterns of their behaviour they perceived themselves.[63]

To this it may be added that one of the consequences of such a rapprochement of humans with animals was, conversely, a certain degree of humanisation of the animals; indeed, side by side with humans, they feature as protagonists of the stories of Adam and Noah.

The importance of observation and description of the animal world, presupposed by the accounts of naming and calling animals in the prologue of *Genesis*, can be observed far beyond the framework of the ancient civilisations of the Near East, transmitted whether in the form of coherent worldviews or as residual beliefs integrated within various mythological and religious systems. One encounters it starting from the most remote antiquity of humankind onwards, in cultures distant from each other not only in time but also in space.[64] By apprehending the pervasive presence of animals in diverse mythological and magical traditions, one is led to surmise that the interpretation of the animal world, which in *Genesis* is indicated by its naming, was inherent to the elaboration of human identity itself, as occurred in various eras and various regions.

The prominence of animals in the two foundational accounts in *Genesis* clarifies the Biblical authors' intention to dissociate themselves from such traditions: in spite of their proximity to humans — endowed as they are with souls, being named by Adam and called by Noah — the animals do not become their real interlocutors; nor do they provide humans with any access to the world of spirits. The profound distinction subsisting according to the Bible between the two is epitomised in the affirmation of Adam's 'loneliness' *vis-à-vis* the rest of the ensouled world (Gen. 2.18, 20; see Sections *II–III* above).

[63] Keel and Schroer, 2002, pp. 69, 147.

[64] Robert-Lamblin, 2001, pp. 203-208; Clottes and Lewis-Williams, 2012, pp. 18-21.

VI. Retellings of the Biblical Story of the Primordial Human Beings

That the later Biblical authors make almost no explicit references to the first chapters of *Genesis* is, arguably, one of the reasons that prompted the profusion of later Jewish and Christian speculation about human origins. Its witnesses we find especially in apocrypha preserved in the languages of various Christian traditions. The transmission of ancient texts of Jewish origin in the Christian environment and their later textual and pictorial elaborations were a consequence of those metaphysical questions which had been sown by Christianisation, yet could not be answered exhaustively by the texts officially sanctioned by Churches.

One of the earliest witnesses of retelling of the story of *Genesis* is to be found in the Book of Jubilees which was originally written in Hebrew in the middle of the second century BCE. It is fully preserved only in Ge'ez into which it had been translated from Greek: the Ethiopian Church is also the only one to recognise *Jubilees* as canonical. *Jubilees* stresses the dignity of the human being created in God's image and acting in the world as a participant in creation: thus, in Jub. 3.1-6, Adam's naming of living beings is spread over a week, as a reflection of the six days of creation.

One may perceive a certain rationalising bent in *Jubilees* in its treatment of the Biblical account. Thus, it offers us a slightly different picture of the advent of the woman, thereby attempting to resolve the enigma of the second account of creation in *Genesis*: while naming the living beings presented to him, Adam observes that they live in couples. When he realises his dissimilarity from them, he apprehends his loneliness, and it is by endorsing Adam's apprehension that God eventually creates a woman (Jub. 3.1-3). This ancient tendency to rationalise the account of *Genesis* is inherited by the midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* 17.5.

Jubilees also strengthens the reciprocity of the images of Adam and Noah. Thus, in Jub. 3.27, upon leaving the Garden, Adam burns incense at its gate. While prefiguring the acts of a priest (cf. Exod. 30.7-8, 34-38; Lev. 16.12-13; Num. 17.5), he is also acting here in anticipation of the history of Noah who, upon 'going forth of the ark', sacrifices burnt offerings (Gen. 8.20; Jub. 6.3). Consequently, the Garden, according to *Jubilees*, prefigures not only the Temple but also the ark.[65]

Other writings, which are not included in the Hebrew Bible, develop the idea of God's image impressed on Adam. Thus, the Book of Ben Sira, written in its earliest part in Hebrew *ca* 190 BCE, probably in Jerusalem, expanded a few decades later, then several times revised, is our earliest datable source making an explicit reference to the story of Adam and Eve from *Genesis*. Ben Sira insists that the first humans were endowed with the capacities of discernment (*diaboulion*) and reasoning (*dianoia*), with knowledge (*epistèmè*) and understanding (*synesis*) (Sir. 17.6, 7, 11; cf. 15.14). So do also several texts discovered at Qumran by the Dead Sea, such

[65] Hayward, 2012, pp. 375-404.

as the liturgical prayer *Words of the Heavenly Luminaries* (Cave Four Q504, fragment 8), according to which Adam was filled 'with understanding and knowledge' (*binah wa-daʿaṯ*) in order to rule over the Garden.[66] Such statements may directly be dependent on the account of Adam's naming of living beings.[67]

The earliest surviving interpretations of *Genesis* contain only fleeting references to the event that changed human existence at the dawn of the history of the world. They allow us to draw only a fragmentary picture of the variety of ways in which that event, and especially the effects of human disobedience, were understood.[68] Ben Sira does not mention any prohibition to eat of a tree, nor does he know of an original sin which would produce a radical change of human nature; according to him, God from the beginning had allotted humans 'numbered days and time' (Sir. 17.2; 41.4). Yet Ben Sira also affirms that 'because of a woman we all die' (Sir. 25.24) which must indicate that he knew the second account from *Genesis*. This viewpoint of Ben Sira becomes standard in later traditions, including the New Testament.[69]

According to the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a book written in Greek in the second half of the first century BCE, 'God created man for incorruptibility (*ep' aphtharsiai*), made him to be an image of his own eternity (*var*. his proper being)' (Wis. Sol. 2. 23), whereas in the following verse this incorruptibility is opposed to man's mortality after his fall: 'Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world' (2. 24).

The *Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch 1–36), an apocalyptic text shaped, admittedly, towards the end of the third century BCE, knows of the tree of wisdom. It is by eating from it that the primordial man and woman learnt wisdom. After they ate of its fruits, their eyes were opened, they knew that they were naked and they were expelled from the Garden (32.6). However, according to the *Book of the Watchers*, 'the holy ones [also] eat its fruits and learn great wisdom' (32.3). Eating from this tree is thus not regarded as an act contrary to God's will. Neither a prohibition to eat from that tree, nor the incurring of death on account of eating are mentioned in this book in reference to the primordial humans.

The *Book of the Watchers* does not specify the reason of the expulsion from the garden, nor does it explain its consequences. It furthermore suggests that woman was created in order to perpetuate life (1 Enoch 15.4-7), which, again, does not allow us to draw any conclusion about an ontological change occurring after the expulsion from the Garden.[70] It was precisely this indeterminacy regarding the consequences of the key event in the Biblical story of primordial humankind for hu-

[66] Baillet, 1982, p. 162.

[67] Collins, 2012, pp. 157-175.

[68] Ego, 2011, pp. 44-45.

[69] Collins, 2017, pp. 273-288.

[70] Collins, 2017.

mans themselves and for the world, that would provoke and nourish the thinking of para-Biblical authors, Rabbis and Fathers of the Church. One of the crucial questions being asked was who should be blamed for the disasters of human history. This question was linked to another one, whether humans are supposed to resign themselves to adversity or to resist it.

The account of the two trees in *Genesis* reveals a discrepancy between the initial threat for disobedience and the actual punishment: the couple does not die but is only expelled from the Garden. This leads the reader to conclude that, if humankind still survives, it is because of God's benevolence. The apocryphal *Life of Adam and Eve* and its expansions preserve elaborate stories about the penitence of the primordial humans after their expulsion from Paradise. The Armenian and Georgian versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (11.1; 16.3), admittedly deriving from a Greek original now lost (second – third centuries CE), seem to reflect an earlier Jewish tradition which minimised Adam's sin by presenting it as a fact of inadvertency. According to the Armenian *Sermon about Adam and Eve* and *Departure of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, the present condition of humankind is not so much a result of the first humans' disobedience as that of their deception by Satan that occurred *after* their expulsion from Paradise.[71] The Samaritan midrash *Asāṭīr*, which regards Adam as the 'foundation' (Samar. Aram. *ʾrš*) of the world, blurs Eve's and Adam's responsibility for the transgression, while only mentioning the fruits that 'were plucked (*helaqṭu*)', in passive voice, without indicating the agent.[72] The elaboration of the story of the first humans' disobedience and their expulsion from Paradise, the change of human nature after the fall, as well as the legends about their temptation, penance, continuing deception by Satan and Satan's contract with them, must, however, remain beyond our compass.

VII. The Primordial Human Beings in the New Testament and Early Christian Interpretation

According to 4 Ezra, a Jewish apocalyptic text from the end of the first century CE, 'the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him'. 'The disease' thus 'becomes permanent' for all Adam's descendants (4 Ezra 3.21-22; 7.118).[73] Paul, however, accords Adam a level of responsibility even superior to 4 Ezra and, indeed, to any known early Jewish source: according to Rom. 5.12, sin came into the world through Adam, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all.

However, Paul also regards Adam as the 'type of the one who was to come' (*typos tou mellontos*), i.e. Christ (Rom. 5.14). While Adam introduced death and

[71] Stone, 2002, pp. 3-9, 71-72, 84-85, 112-116.

[72] Tal, 2021, p. 264.

[73] Böttrich, 2011, p. 80.

universal sinfulness into the world, Christ, 'The Last Adam' (I Cor. 15.45, 47), became a new beginning of human history (I Cor. 15.21-23; Rom. 5.15-17; 8.29).[74] The Gospel of Luke even traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam (Lk. 3.38) in order to indicate that Christ's salvific work involves all the previous generations of the human family.[75] Ever since, there would exist in Christian thought a direct line between Adam and Christ (e.g. Heb. 2.7-9).[76] Apocryphal legends, one of the earliest of which is transmitted by Origen, explain the name 'Golgotha', i.e. 'The Place of the Skull' (Mk. 15.22; Mt. 27.33; Jn. 19.17), as the ancient burial place of Adam's skull (*Commentary on Matthew* 27.32).[77] The prologue of *Genesis* was thus not only perceived as the story of the origins — a sequence of single and distinct events that had taken in a remote past — but was also endowed, typologically, with timeless and enduring validity.[78]

In the New Testament, Christ not only has Adam as his prototype but is himself, more truly than Adam, the image (*eikon*) of God (II Cor. 4.4; Col. 1.15). This becomes a premise of Patristic anthropology. According to Tertullian (*fl.* 196 – 214), while kneading the clay in order to create Adam, God was thinking of Christ — 'the man to come' (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 6.IV). The human being is, therefore, 'an image of the image' (e.g. Marius Victorinus [*ca* 282 – *ca* 365], *Against Arius* I.20). The creation of humans in the image of God (Gen. 1.26, 27) is understood as designating the scope towards which humankind must tend, namely, becoming Christ-like (Col. 3.9-10). According to Paul, bearing now 'the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven' (I Cor. 15.49; II Cor. 3.18; cf. also I Jn 3.2). This eschatological dimension of God's image could also be sustained by one peculiarity of the Septuagint version of Gen. 1.26, in which the abstract noun 'likeness' (*dĕmut̲*) is translated by the deverbal noun *omoiôsis*. This allows the Greek Fathers to understand the process of likening, or assimilation, to God as a goal set forth before the human being at its creation. Man will acquire for himself God's likeness by his own earnest efforts to imitate God (e.g. Origen, *On First Principles* 3.6.1).

The New Testament conceives not only of the Saviour's advent but also of the structure of Christian society against the background of the history of human origins. Paul expects that Christ 'may be formed' (*morphôthei*) in his flock (Gal. 4.19), while the Epistle to the Ephesians considers the relations between man and woman, as defined in Gen. 2.23-24, to be a prototype of the relations existing between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5.30-32).

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[74] Böttrich, 2011, pp. 83, 109.

[75] Bovon, 1989, pp. 186-191.

[76] Murmelstein, 1928, pp. 245-252.

[77] Aptowitzer, 1924, pp. 148-153; Grypeou, and Spurling, 2013, pp. 72-74.

[78] Stone, 2019, p. 155.

Christianity situated the present between, at one extremity, the origins (including the story of Adam and Eve and the Flood, which would explain the human condition as it is today) and, at the other end, the End Times, the attaining of God's likeness by humans and the return in glory of the Last Adam, i.e. Christ. This transcendent horizon of human life conditioned the understanding of time and chronology. It underlay numerous para-Biblical writings and, throughout almost two millennia, has played a defining role in the formation of biographical, historiographical and figurative representations.

References to the primordial humans are to be found in both the apocrypha related to the beginning and the end of Christ's ministry in the world. In the first part of the *Questions of Bartholomew*, written towards the end of the second century in Greek and transmitted in various languages, Jesus disappears from the Cross at the moment when the darkness envelops the earth, then becomes visible again and converses with Adam whom he has delivered from the realm of death (1.7-22).[79] In an analogous way, Chapters 17–27 of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (*Acts of Pilate*), which, admittedly, were composed in the fifth–sixth centuries in Latin, then underwent numerous alterations in various languages down to the beginning of the twentieth century, recount Christ descending into Hades after his crucifixion, taking hold of Adam and raising him up from the abyss (24.1).[80] This account has exercised an important influence on the development of iconographic traditions, in particular in Byzantium and in the Orthodox countries.[81]

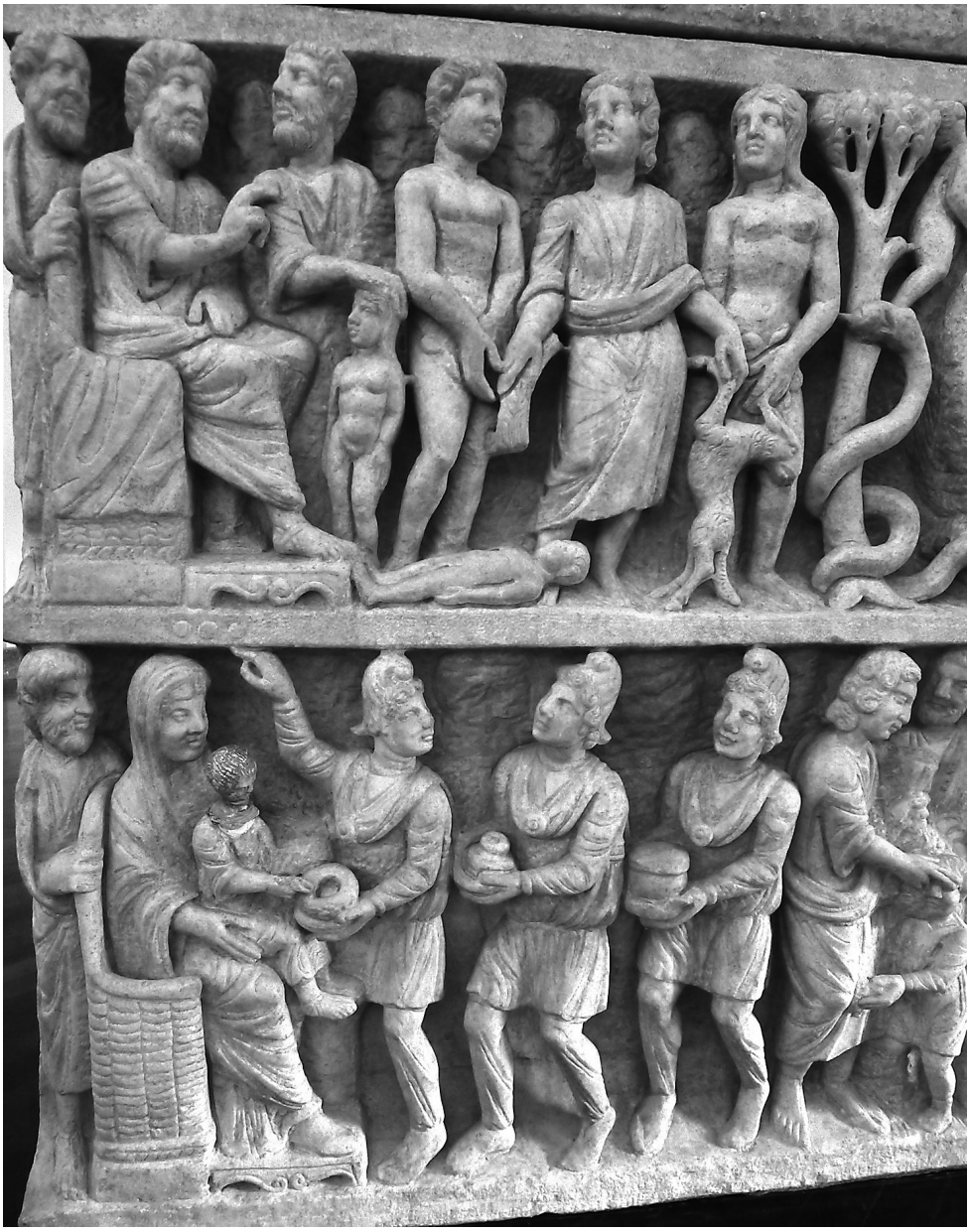
The Nativity of Christ echoes the creation of the first humans. This is notably reflected in the iconographic programme of the so-called 'dogmatical sarcophagus' (330-40 CE) from the basilica of *San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, Rome. Conceived for a privileged burial and originally located in the most honourable place of the basilica, it must reflect the doctrine upheld by the Roman Church. The narrative sequence of its lower register commences with the scene of the Adoration of the Magi, whereas the opening scene of its upper register, situated exactly above the scene of the Adoration, depicts the Creation of Eve by the Triune God. The formal characteristics of the two scenes, and especially the gestures and the gaze of the first of the three Wise Men, create a web of semantic links between these scenes. They suggest that the creation of Eve is in the Magi's minds and forms the background to Christ's Nativity which they have come to celebrate in Bethlehem.[82]

[79] Kaestli, 1997, pp. 268-271.

[80] Gounelle, 2008.

[81] Kartsonis, 1986.

[82] Dorfmann-Lazarev, 2014, pp. 292-298, 310-323, 334; *Id*., 2020, pp. 276-293; *Id*., 2021[b], pp. 306-313.



Dogmatical sarcophagus, fragment. Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican. Photo of the author

Adam is not only shaped in the anticipation and in the likeness of the future Saviour; he is himself depicted as the recipient of a revelation regarding the course of the history of the world. A text preserved in Qumran hints at a book given to

Adam by God (4Q417.2.I.15-18).[83] In the Latin version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* 29.7,[84] which admittedly derives from a Greek original predating the extant Greek recensions, and in the Syriac *Testament of Adam* 3.1-4 (third century CE) Adam tells his son Seth about the revelation received from God concerning the future coming of the Saviour.[85] A cognate tradition is also reflected in the *Apocalypse in which Adam Informed his Son Seth* 85.19-24 (*ca* 200 CE) — a document attributed to the Gnostic current which in Christian heresiological literature is identified as Sethian — from the Coptic library of Nag Hammadi (*NH* V.5).[86] Four Armenian documents, which must have been shaped before the sixth century, speak of God's written revelation received by Adam,[87] while three of these describe how this document reached the Magi.[88] These accounts may derive from an ancient tradition first attested in Qumran.

In the Armenian *Script of the Lord's Infancy* (sixth century?) the new-born child is, moreover, visited by Eve who, suddenly reappearing in the world, recognises in him her awaited Saviour and ministers as his midwife. Eve may, arguably, also be recognised in the scene of the Adoration of the Magi in the mosaic (433–40 CE) of what is now the triumphal arch in the church of *Santa Maria Maggiore*, Rome. To the right of the infant, who is enthroned and is receiving the Magi's gifts, we see his Mother. On his left, symmetrically, and on an even larger scale than Mary, is depicted an enigmatic matron whose posture strongly reminds of Eve's gesture of contrition on the fresco in the New Catacomb in Via Latina, Rome (*ca* 320-50 CE).[89]

The Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, which was elaborated in the Church of Edessa starting from the third century and was enriched with successive additions until the sixth century, highlights Adam's royal dignity which we observed in Sections *I–II*: after receiving their names from Adam, all the living creatures honour him as their king. Moreover, all that exists was created for Adam's sake. According to the *Cave of Treasures*, Adam was created in the middle of the earth, the place where the creation of the earth had been completed. In the same place Adam was also invested as king, priest and prophet. There also Adam's and his children's salvation shall be realised. In the middle of the earth Adam was also buried.[90] The *Cave of Treasures* also indicates that Adam's bones were carried in Noah's ark in order to be bequeathed to the postdiluvian world (Ms. Oc. II.15-25; Ms. Or. II.16, 22; V.11-

[83] Collins, 1999, pp. 609-618.

[84] Pettorelli, 2012, p. 350.

[85] Kmosko, 1907, pp. 1339-1342, 1345-1348; Stone, 1992, pp. 53-63.

[86] Parrott, 1979, pp. 155, 193, 195.

[87] Stone, 1982, pp. 28, 30, 54-58.

[88] Dorfmann-Lazarev, 2014, pp. 298-309, 325-333.

[89] *Ivi*, pp. 292-298, 310-323, 334.

[90] Grypeou and Spurling, 2013, pp. 50-54.

12; xvii.21; xviii.3, 6; xlix.5-7, 9-10; Oc. et Or. xxii.9; xlix.2-3). Adam, i.e. the one who was created by God's hand, and his memory of promised redemption were regarded as a foundation stone of the new world, and of new Christian kingdoms,[91] as well as a token of the future salvation of humankind.

Reflecting these ideas, in a mosaic covering the floor of a church at Ḥauarte near Apamea (*ca* 486–87) Adam, already clothed, reigns surrounded by animals. The fragmentary image from Hamma and that preserved in the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, must reflect an analogous conception of the first human being.[92] It harmonises with Gregory of Nyssa (*ca* 335 – *ca* 395 CE) according to whom 'our nature' is, from the first, created 'fit for the exercise of royalty' (*eis basileias energeian epitêdeion*) ('On the Creation of Man' 4).

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[91] Dorfmann-Lazarev, 2016, pp. 493-515; *Id*., 2021[a], pp. 250-253, 286-287.

[92] Canivet, 1987, Vol. i, pp. 213-215, ill. 67, 70; *Ivi*, Vol. ii, ill. cxvi-cxix; Donceel-Voûte, 1988, pp. 102-115, figs 71, 78, 79, pl. hors-texte 5; Bisconti, 1988, pp. 429-436.

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