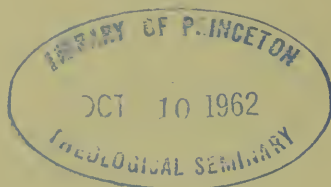


Chas. A. Briggs

The Poem
of the
Fall of Man

BSI235
.4.B85



BS 1235
4.885

Field Library

1937
BB

FIELD LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
1937

THE POEM
OF THE
FALL OF MAN.
BY
Prof. CHAS. A. BRIGGS, D. D.

THE POEM
OF THE
FALL OF MAN.

By Prof. Chas. A. Briggs, D.D.

THE earlier chapters of Genesis contain a series of brief, simple and charming stories of the origin and early history of mankind, that bear the traces of great antiquity. They were doubtless handed down for many generations as unwritten tradition, ere they were committed to writing by the sacred writers. They passed through a series of editions, until, at last, they were compacted in that unique collection of inspired Scripture which we call the book of Genesis. The literary beauties of these stories have been recognized since Herder, by those who have studied the Scriptures with their æsthetic taste. Poetic features have been noticed by a number of scholars, but, so far as we know, no one has previously observed that they are a series of real poems. It was the good fortune of the author to make this discovery. Annual work upon these passages with his classes led him gradually towards it. He first noted a number of striking instances of parallelism of lines here and there, and thus detected snatches of poetry in several passages. These continued to enlarge, from year to year, until he was constrained to ask the question, how much real poetry there was in these ancient stories, and to apply the tests of poetic composition to the entire series. The first passage to disclose itself as poetry was the Elohist narrative of the creation. This proved to be a poem of six strophes, with refrains. The lines are pentameters, measured by five beats of the word accent, with the cæsura dividing the lines into two

sections. The first and second strophes have seven lines each, the third, fourth and fifth strophes ten lines each, and the sixth strophe twenty lines; thus increasing in length, according to a frequent usage of Hebrew poetry in hymns and descriptive poems.

All the characteristic features of Hebrew poetry are clearly manifested in the poem. We have given this piece of poetry to the public in the "*Old Testament Student*," April, 1884. This led us to examine the Elohist narrative of the flood, and it proved to be a poem of the same essential structure as the Elohist story of the creation. We next examined the Jehovistic narrative of the temptation and fall, and found it to be a poem of an entirely different structure from the poems of the Elohist. The lines of this poem are trimeters, and the strophes are regularly composed of fourteen lines each. We then examined the Jehovistic story of the flood, and found that it was a poem of the same structure as the Jehovistic poem of the fall. The stories of Cain and Abel, and the dispersion of the nations from Babel, resolved themselves into the same poetical structure. And thus it has become manifest that the earlier chapters of Genesis are a series of real poems, which have passed through the hands of several editors in the earlier collections of the Elohist and Jehovist, until at last they were compacted by the redactor of the Hexateuch into their present form.

If it be thought surprising that the poetical structure of these poems has so long been hidden from Hebrew scholars, it is sufficient to mention that Bishop Lowth, in the middle of the last century, was the first to discover and to unfold the essential principle of Hebrew poetry, namely, the parallelism of lines, and to show that the prophecies of the book of Isaiah were chiefly poetry. From time to time, during the past century, a large number of poetical extracts have been discovered in the historical books, as well as in the prophetic literature. The great majority of scholars have studied the Old Testament in the interests of dogma, or else of grammatical, historical or practical exegesis. Very few have studied the literary features

of the Old Testament. The structure of the Hebrew strophe and the measurement of the lines of Hebrew poetry are known to comparatively few Hebrew scholars.

We propose to limit ourselves for the present to the poem of the fall of mankind. This poem exhibits the several features of Hebrew poetry.

First. The lines show all the various features of parallelism that are found in other Hebrew poetry, synonymous, antithetical and progressive, and the several varieties of these. The lines are grouped in distichs, tristichs, tetrastichs, pentastichs, hexastichs, heptastichs, octostichs, nonastichs, decastichs, in accordance with the movement in the thought and the emotion. (See my *Biblical Study*, p. 264 sq.)

Second. The lines are trimeters with the exception of a very few broken lines, which are shortened in order to a pause in the thought, in accordance with the frequent usage of all Hebrew poetry of this measurement. The trimeters of Hebrew poetry are composed of three beats of the word accent. The Hebrew poet has the power of combining two or more short words by a makkeph under one word accent. (See *Biblical Study*, p. 279 sq.)

Third. The poem has strophical organization. It is composed of ten strophes of fourteen lines each. These are arranged in two groups. The first group is composed of four strophes, arranged on the principle of strophe and anti-strophe. The second is composed of two sets of three strophes each. The second set is balanced against the first set. The ten strophes are equal in the number of the lines. There are fourteen lines to each strophe. These strophes are always divided into two parts, but there is a considerable variety in the inter-relation of these parts. Thus the first strophe is composed of two heptastichs, the third and sixth strophes have a hexastich followed by an octostich. The fifth and seventh strophes reverse the order, and have an octostich followed by a hexastich. The second and tenth strophes have a pentastich followed by a nonastich. The eighth strophe reverses the order and gives

a nonastich followed by a pentastich. The fourth strophe has a decastich folowed by a tetrastich. (See *Biblical Study*, p. 272 and sq.).

Fourth. There are a considerable number of archaic words which belong to the language of Hebrew poetry : שִׁיחַ (II. 5); אֵר (II. 5); כִּנְנוֹ (II. 18, 20); תְּחִתָּנָה (II. 21); עֵרֶם (III. 7, 10, 11); תִּפְרַח (III. 7); אֵיכָה (III. 9); אֵיכָה (III. 15); יִשׁוּפֹךְ and תְּשׁוּפְנָה (III. 15); תְּשׁוּקָה (III. 16); קוֹץ וְדִרְדֵר (III. 18); יָעָה (III. 19); אַחֲרַי מִמֶּנִּי (III. 22); לֶחֶט (III. 24).

1.—*The Formation of the Man.*

In the day of God's making earth and heaven,
 No shrub of the field having yet appeared,
 And no herb of the field having yet sprouted;
 For God had not rained upon the earth,
 And man there was none to till the ground;
 But a mist was ascending from the earth,
 And watering all the face of the ground;
 Then God formed the man,
 Of dust from the ground,
 And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,
 And the man became a living being.
 And God planted a garden in Eden,
 And put therein the man,
 Whom he had formed.

This strophe is a temporal clause. The protasis gives the time and circumstances of the formation of man. The apodosis gives an account of the formation of man, and of the garden of Eden as his home. The protasis and apodosis are seven lines each, and are of the nature of strophe and antistrophe in the system of parallelism. The protasis is composed of an introductory line, giving a general statement as to time; a synonymous distich giving the circumstances, namely, the absence of vegetation suited to man, and the tetrastich of reasons for the absence of this vegetation. The apodosis gives a tetrastich, describing the formation of man, and a tristich representing the placing of him in the garden of Eden.

The poem doubtless used the divine name "*Elohim.*" When

the poem was taken up into the Jehovistic narrative, it was supplied with editorial notes. Thus the divine name "*Jahveh*" is prefixed to Elohim, everywhere in chapter second, and generally in chapter third. It should be omitted altogether from the poem. It was probably a marginal note, and only at a later date incorporated with other notes in the text. It is also probable that בִּאֶרֶץ in the second line, and בְּקֶרֶם in the twelfth line are editorial notes. "In the earth" is a natural suggestion from the context, but it is prosaic. "In the East" is not appropriate to the poem. It is characteristic of the Jehovistic narrator to make just such geographical remarks. The lines of the strophe are all trimeters, with the exception of the last line which is shortened, in order to obtain a pause, and dwell upon the thought of the divine formation of man, which is the essential theme of the entire strophe.

The poetical structure guides to its interpretation. The time of the formation of man was that day in which God made earth and heaven. The poet thinks that the earth and heaven were created in a day of divine activity. Our poet thinks of a day, where the poem of the creation thinks of six days. There is a different poetical conception. Neither of these poets thought of a day of twenty-four hours, a day of man's labor and rest, but of days of divine activity. It is noteworthy that the two poems have the same syntactical structure in the formation of their strophes, namely, protasis, circumstantial clause, and apodosis. It is instructive to compare them, and to see the differences. The protasis of the poem of the creation contains a time-word בְּרֵאשִׁית in the construct state before the relative clause of time, with the perfect tense בָּרָא and the objects created, "the heaven and the earth." The protasis of our poem contains another timeword בַּיּוֹם with the infinitive construct עָשִׂית, and the objects created "earth and heaven." The apodosis of the poem of the creation gives the creation of light. The apodosis of our poem the formation of man. As the apodosis of the poem of the creation leaps over the creation of the waste and empty earth, and

begins with the creation of light; so the apodosis of our poem leaps over the creation of earth and heaven and begins with the formation of man, the last of the divine creations in the poem of the creation. This difference in the apodosis involves a difference in the circumstantial clauses. The circumstances of the creation of light were a defect in the condition of the earth.

“The earth being waste and empty, and darkness upon the face of the deep,
And the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters.

The circumstantial clause of our poem involves a corresponding defect.

“No shrub of the field having yet appeared,
And no herb of the field having yet sprouted.”

According to the poem of the creation vegetation appeared on the third day, midway between the creation of light and the creation of man. If the two poets thought of the same thing, there is a manifest disagreement. We might have appealed to the word “field” as implying a different kind of vegetation from that contemplated in the poem of the creation, but this would not be sufficiently evident.

We have, however, a sufficient guide to the meaning in the reasons assigned for the absence of this vegetation. First, God had not rained upon the earth; but instead of the rain the ground was watered by the mist. This is a reason for the absence of such vegetation as needed the sunlight and the rain; but this is no reason for the absence of the lower forms of vegetation, that thrive sufficiently well, without rain or sunshine, in ground watered by a mist. The second reason given is that man there was none to till the ground. This implies the absence of such vegetation as needed tillage, but is no reason for the absence of vegetation that thrives without tillage. These reasons seem to indicate that the shrubs and herbs, that had not yet appeared, were such as required sunshine, rain, and tillage, such as were especially for the use of man, such as the grains, the domestic fruits and plants; in

other words according to the next strophe, those that were planted by God in the garden for the use and care of man. At this time, and under these circumstances God created man and the garden, with such vegetation as was needed for his support.

In the apodosis God is represented as forming man as an individual, where the poem of the creation represents that man was created as a race. God is represented as a sculptor, forming or moulding the body of man *יצר*. The material which God uses is dust or soil *עפר* taken out of the ground. This sculptured form is represented as inanimate. Its life is derived from a second divine activity. God is represented as breathing or blowing into the nostrils of the body of man the breath of life. *נשמתחיים*. The life originates from the breath that proceeds from the mouth of God. Thus man originates from two divine activities: the body is formed by the divine fingers, and the life is imparted by the divine breath. The result of both is that man becomes a living being. The earth was not suited for the abode of man: hence God plants a garden for him. This garden is placed in Eden, a section of the earth. The author thus conceives of a three-fold division of the earth: the earth itself, Eden and the garden; somewhat after the manner of the three grades of access to God as represented in the structure of the tabernacle and the temple.

God is graphically represented as a gardener, planting shrubs and herbage and trees for the use of the man; and the man is designed to be a gardener to till the ground under the divine direction. The poet conceives that God was really present in human form. He has in mind a *theophany*. This conception is true to the scope and method of divine revelation in the Old Testament. The story is not to be resolved into a lifeless anthropomorphism of abstract dogma, on the one hand; or an unsubstantial highly-colored ideal, on the other. It is intensely realistic. The man was not formed by a divine fiat, or by a chain of secondary causes; God appears in theophany, and the first man originates from His fingers and breath. A divine advent in theophany was necessary at the creation, as well as at the redemption and final judgment.

II. The Garden in Eden.

And God caused to sprout from the ground,
 Every tree desirable in appearance,
 And (every tree) good for eating,
 And the tree of life in the midst of the garden,
 And the tree of knowing good and evil.

And a river was flowing forth from Eden,
 Watering the garden and thence dividing itself.
 And becoming four heads :
 The name of the first Pishon,
 And the name of the second river Gihon,
 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel,
 And the fourth river is Euphrates.

And God took the man,
 And placed him in the garden of Eden to till it.

This strophe gives an account of the garden of Eden. It is composed of two parts: a pentastich and a nonastich. The pentastich is composed of an introductory line representing the divine agency in the production of the trees, and four synonymous lines giving the kinds of trees. The nonastich is composed of a tristich describing the river and its dividing itself into four channels; the tetrastich giving the names of the channels, and the distich describing the placing of man in the garden of Eden. This strophe is furnished with editorial notes describing the geographical position of the rivers.

The Pishon. ("That is the one that meanders through the whole land of Havila, where there is gold, and the gold of that land is excellent. There is the bdellium and the onyx stone.")

The Gihon. ("That is the one which meanders through the whole land of Cush.")

The Hiddekel. ("That is the one which flows in front of Assyria.") We must also regard as an editorial note, לשמרה (*to keep it*). It seems to us also necessary to insert the words "every tree" in the third line.

The strophe begins with an account of the production of the trees in the garden of Eden. As the man had been formed

out of the dust of the ground, so the trees were to sprout from the ground. Man and the trees are composed of the same material substance. The trees take the place of the shrubs and plants of the previous strophe. There are four kinds of trees, which may be arranged in two classes: trees for beauty and trees for fruit. There are two trees mentioned of especial importance: the tree of life in the midst of the garden, which was a fruit-tree, whose fruit secured the perpetuation of life. Over against the tree of life was the tree of the knowing of good and evil. This seems to belong to the class of trees of beauty. It was given the property of imparting the knowledge of good and evil.

The garden was watered by four streams. These streams were channels of the one river which flowed from the land of Eden into the garden of Eden. At its very entrance into the garden it divided itself into four channels in order to irrigate it.

The river and its streams take the place of the rain of the previous strophe, as the trees take the place of its shrubs and herbs. It is not necessary to think of the delta of a great river. The poet conceives of a garden. God is the gardener: as He plants the trees of the garden, so He divides up the river into four channels for the purpose of watering the garden. The division of the river for purposes of irrigation is as much the gardener's work as the planting of the trees. The poet gives the names of these streams. A later editor endeavors to give their geographical position; but with such obscurity that, notwithstanding volumes of fruitless discussion, no one has yet been able to discover the original home of our race. The man was placed in this garden of trees and streams to till it. The previous strophe represents that there were no trees and shrubs, because there was no man to till them, and there was no rain to water them. This strophe now gives the man, and the rivers, and the trees. The garden needed the man as much as the man needed the garden. This strophe is an anti-strophe to the previous one.

III. The Charge to the Man.

And God charged upon the man :
 Of all the trees of the garden thou mayest freely eat,
 But of the tree of knowing good and evil,
 Thou shalt not eat of it ;
 For in the day of thy eating of it,
 Thou shalt utterly die.

And God said, It is not well,
 The continuing of the man by himself ;
 I shall make him a help as his counterpart.

And God formed from the ground
 All the animals of the field,
 And all the birds of heaven,
 And brought them all to the man,
 To see what he would call them.

This strophe is divided into a hexastich and an octostich. The hexastich gives the divine charge to the man with reference to the trees. The octostich the bringing of the animals to the man. The hexastich is composed of three distichs. The octostich is composed of a distich and pentastich. There are two editorial notes in this strophe. לֹא־אָמַר at the close of the first line and the clause "and whatever the man called the living beings that was its name." In this strophe God gives the man a solemn charge granting him the privilege of eating of all the trees of the garden with the single exception of the tree of knowing good and evil. This tree was prohibited under the penalty of death. The eating of all the other trees involved the privilege of eating of the tree of life and living forever. The privilege was given to *freely* eat of them. The tree of the knowing good and evil was entirely prohibited under the penalty of utter, entire, complete death. The knowing of good and evil was imparted in the very presence of the forbidden tree. It was ever good to eat of the tree of life and the other trees in the garden ; it was ever evil to eat of the prohibited tree. The prohibition discriminated between good and evil, between life and death. The eating of the tree of life gave the experimental knowledge of the good,

the looking at the tree of the knowing of good and evil gave theoretical knowledge of evil. The two trees were for the religious training of the man. The longer the abstinence from the evil and the enjoyment of the good continued, the higher the religious development of man. Such a discrimination was indeed necessary for the ethical developments of human nature. No discrimination could have been made more simple and appropriate for the beginning of the ethical development of mankind. The second part of the strophe represents the intellectual and social developments of man. The poem of the creation represents that mankind was created as a race the last work,—of God. Our poet, however, proposes to give an account of the origin and development of this race from a single individual. There is something defective in the condition of the man in the garden of Eden alone by himself. He needs a companion, his counterpart. God trains him to recognize this need. Animals are brought to man in order for him to learn that they are not his companions. These animals were formed from the dust of the ground by God, as man himself had been. Man and animals are made of the same material substance. These animals are probably the higher animals designed by the creator for the garden of Eden to be the especial servants of man.

It is probable that the poet has in mind the domestic animals of Eden and not the wild animals of the outer earth. The poet limits himself to the garden of Eden and its inhabitants. These animals are named by man, and are recognised to be a different kind of beings from himself. He does not find his counterpart in any of them. This naming of the animals is the training of man, not only in the intellectual perception but also of conception and speech. It is natural to suppose that our poet is thinking of the gift of speech as the peculiar endowment of man and that this recognition of his own exclusive possession of this faculty made it evident to him that the animals were his servants and could not be his companions.

IV. The Formation of the Woman.

When the man had given names
 To all cattle and to the birds of heaven,
 And to all the animals of the field,
 And for the man a helper, a counterpart, He had not found,

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man,
 And when he slept, took one of his ribs,
 And closed up flesh in its place;
 And God built the rib,
 Which he had taken from the man,
 Into a woman, and brought her unto the man;

And the man said, This now—
 Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh—
 This shall be called woman;
 For from man has she been taken.

This strophe is composed of two parts,—decastich and tetrastich. The decastich is divided into tetrastich and hexastich. The Masoretic text has $\square\aleph$ without the article in the fourth line, but it should be supplied in accordance with the usage of the poem throughout. This strophe is also supplied with an editorial note at the end as follows: “Wherefore man is accustomed to leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife, so that they become one flesh.” And they were both of them naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed. The first part of the strophe is a temporal clause. The protasis in four lines states the fact that a companion was not found among the animals and that the man needed one like himself. The apodosis describes the creation of the woman. God might have formed the woman as he did the man, out of the dust of the ground, but it was his design that the woman should originate from the man. The poet changes the figure. God is now represented as performing a surgical operation upon the man. He causes him to fall into an unconscious condition as if under the influence of an anæsthetic. He then removes one of the ribs of the man and replaces it with flesh, and heals the wound. This rib he builds up into the woman. God is represented as

forming the man by moulding him out of the dust of the ground, under the image of a sculptor; so now he is represented as forming the woman by erecting her out of the rib of the man, under the image of an architect or builder. The material out of which man was made was the dust of the ground, the material out of which woman is made is that dust transformed into the rib of the man. Hence it is that in the second part of the strophe, when God brought the woman unto the man that the man recognizes the woman as made out of his flesh and bone, a part of his very self, his counterpart.

This fourth strophe is the anti-strophe to the third. The third strophe presents us with something defective in the condition and circumstances of the man. Provision is made for his religious and intellectual culture. The fourth strophe now shows that the intellectual training has led man to a sense of his need of a companion like himself; and the defect is supplied by the erection of the woman, and man's recognition of her as his counterpart.

V. The Temptation.

Then the serpent said unto the woman :
Is it true that God hath said,
Ye shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden ?

The woman said unto the Serpent,
Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat ;
But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,
God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it,
And ye shall not touch it lest ye die.

Then the Serpent said to the woman,
Ye shall not die at all ;
For God well knows,
That in the day of your eating of it,
Your eyes shall be open and ye shall become
Like God, knowers of good and evil.

This strophe is composed of an octostich and a hexastich. The octostich is subdivided into a tristich and a pentastich. This strophe is furnished with an introductory editorial note :

“ Now the serpent was more subtle than all the animals of the field which God had made.” The serpent is introduced as a source of evil among the animals, as the tree of the knowing of good and evil had been among the trees. The human pair had learned to discriminate evil among the trees of the garden; they were now to learn to discriminate evil among the animals of the garden. The latter discrimination was first presented to the woman, as the former had been to the man. The woman in her reply to the serpent, shows that she understood the prohibition of the tree, and that they had learned to avoid it, and had not even touched it. There is something more in this tempting serpent than a serpent. There is intelligence, conception, speech and knowledge higher than that of the man or the woman. The woman knew that she had to deal not with a mere serpent, but with a higher power, a spiritual intelligence, who had entered the garden in hostility to the Creator, to deliver the man and the woman from His sway. As God assumes human form, in order to the creation and training of the human pair in the garden of Eden; so now a hostile evil spirit assumes the form of the serpent to deceive them and ruin them. Here, then, is an evil being, higher than man, rising up in hostility to God. Over against God’s warning, “ Ye shall utterly die,” the serpent makes the assertion, “ Ye shall not die at all.” Instead of the tree bringing death, as God had said, the tree will open their eyes and make them equal with God. Thus evil has come to the human pair in its highest form. They had withstood the temptation to evil in the tree alone. The unintelligent animal would not have succeeded in enticing them to transgression. But when the evil intelligence, which is wiser than themselves, uses the tree and the animal, they are put in extreme jeopardy. The poet does not propose to give an account of the origin of evil. That is beyond the scope of his story; in the dark and mysterious background of his picture, in the higher world of spiritual intelligences. The poet shows the evil as it enters into Eden from without, under the divine permission, to test the religious character of man, and give him the moral development

and growth that he needs in order to the perfection of his nature.

VI. The Fall.

When the woman saw,
That the tree was good for eating,
And that it was lovely to the eyes,
And the tree was desirable to give wisdom;
She took of the fruit and ate,
And gave also to her husband with her.

When he had eaten, the eyes of them both were opened,
And they knew that they were naked,
And they sewed fig leaves,
And made for themselves girdles.

And when they heard the sound of God,
Walking in the garden at the breeze of the day,
The man and the woman hid themselves,
From the face of God in the midst of the trees of the garden.

This strophe is composed of two parts, a hexastich and an octostich. The octostich is subdivided into two tetrastichs. The first line is a broken line. We disregard the Masoretic accents, and detach לֵשׂוֹן from the sixth verse, and make it the beginning of the seventh verse of the chapter, and the seventh line of the strophe. The hexastich gives an account of the threefold attraction of the tree, in the light of the temptation by the serpent. It appeals to her physical appetite; "it was good for eating;" to her æsthetic taste, "it was lovely to the eyes;" and to her intelligence, "it was desirable to give wisdom." It seemed to be the very thing she most needed to satisfy all the cravings of her nature; and so she took of the fruit and ate, and gave also to her husband. The poet does not tell us of any additional influences brought upon the man by the woman to induce him to eat with her; but briefly indicates that the woman becomes the tempter of her husband, soliciting him with all the charms of her nature.

The octostich gives an account of the immediate consequences of the eating. It has often been asked, why we have

no divine interposition here to prevent the transgression. The poet does not answer such questions. He gives us little material for theological speculation. It might be said that this test had become necessary to the religious development of mankind. The tree, and the serpent, and the evil spirit all have their place in the divine plan for the education of the race. There can be no religious growth without trial, and victory over temptation. If evil in the tree and the animal had not been already overcome, the evil spirit would not have been admitted into the garden. They had advanced in their ethical developments to the position in which it was indispensable that they should submit to this highest test. The second Adam, the Redeemer, was obliged to submit to it, ere He could enter upon His public ministry of redemption. If God had interposed in theophany to prevent the external act of transgression, He would not thereby have prevented the fall. There still would have been the fall in the evil disposition to transgress. The failure to resist the temptation by the ability which God had given them, was the essential element in the fall. The time for divine interposition was not prior to the fall, but subsequent to it. It was better for man that the internal failure should result in the external transgression, with its evil consequences, for only thereby could there be possibility of redemption.

The result of the eating was the opening of the eyes to what they had never seen before, namely, the evil in themselves, in their own bodies, expressed as we may suppose, by a flush of shame, which they strove to hide from each other. The knowing of good was a past experience, and present theory as something external to themselves. The knowledge of evil, which had been theoretical, as something external to themselves in the serpent, and the tree, and the evil spirit, had now become experimental, as internal to their very nature. They have lost the experimental good, and gained the experimental evil. They have lost their likeness to God in the being good and becoming better, and have gained a likeness to the evil spirit

in being evil, with a tendency to become worse. The first tetrastich represents them as ashamed in the presence of each other, the second tetrastich represents them as ashamed in the presence of God. They strive to hide their shame from each other by fig leaves and girdles: they strive to hide their shame from God by plunging into the midst of the trees of the garden. The time for divine interposition has now come. They hear the sound of the approaching theophany in the evening of this day of transgression.

VII.—The Divine Inquiry.

When God called unto the man,
And said to him, Where art thou? he said,
Thy voice I heard in the garden,
And I was afraid because I was naked.

And he said, Who told thee,
That thou art naked?
Of the tree hast thou eaten,
Of which I commanded thee not to eat?

The man said, The woman—
Whom thou gavest to be with me—
She gave me of the tree.

And God said to the woman
What then hast thou done? and she said,
The serpent deceived me and I ate.

This strophe is composed of a double tetrastich, and a double tristich. We disregard the Masoretic accents, and detach *וַיִּאָכֵל* from the beginning of verse ten, and make it the closing word of verse nine. We transfer *אָכַלְתָּ*, the last word of verse eleven, so as to immediately follow *הִכִּין הָעֵץ* in the middle of the same verse. We regard *וַיִּהְיֶה* the last word of verse ten, and *וַיִּאָכֵל* the last word of verse twelve, and *הָאִשָּׁה* at the beginning of the last line of the strophe, as prosaic additions by the Jehovistic editor.

God first calls the man to account, and says "Where art thou?" The confession of fear of the presence of God involves an acknowledgment of the sin. The second tetrastich gives

the second inquiry of God as to the source of the knowledge of nakedness, and a call for an exact account of the transgression. In the first tristich the man offers an excuse by referring to the woman. In the second tristich the woman offers an excuse by referring to the deception of the serpent. Thus the divine inquiry determines in a simple and graphic manner the exact measure of the guilt of each of the three parties to the transgression, involving three gradations of guilt, which are to receive their appropriate punishment.

VIII.—The Punishment of the Serpent and of the Woman.

And God said unto the Serpent,
 Because thou hast done this, cursed be thou,
 From all beasts and from all animals of the field,
 Upon thy belly thou shalt go,
 And dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;
 And enmity will I put between thee and the woman,
 And between thy seed and her seed,
 He shall bruise thee on the head,
 And thou shalt bruise him on the heel.

And unto the woman (God) said,
 I will greatly increase thy sorrow,
 In sorrow shalt thou bear children,
 And unto thy husband will thy longing be,
 And he will rule over thee.

This strophe is composed of a nonastich and a pentastich. The nonastich is subdivided into a pentastich and a tetrastich. It seems probable that in the sixteenth verse אלהים should be inserted in the first line after אמר, and that יהונר should be omitted at the close of the next line as an editorial note. The nonastich gives the curse of the serpent. It first in a tetrastich punishes the animal serpent with degradation of condition, banishment from the animals and trees of the garden, and condemnation to a life of crawling upon the ground in the dust. Some of the older interpreters have thought that the form of the serpent was changed. There is, however, nothing to suggest a change in the nature or form of the animal serpent. The curse has its significance in the degradation of its

condition and its life. The strophe then rises to the punishment of the evil spirit, which used the animal as his instrument. There is a prediction of a perpetual enmity not only between the woman and the serpent, but the entire race and descendants of the woman and the serpent. This enmity involves a perpetual conflict in which injury will be wrought on both sides. The wounds inflicted by the serpent are made in secret and in treachery, behind the back of man and beneath his feet on his heel. But the wounds inflicted by man upon the serpent are openly upon his head crushing him to death in the dust.

This enmity and conflict is to result in an eventual and final victory of man over the serpent. This conflict and victory is something more than a mere dislike and hostility to snakes; it is a conflict in which man is to bear a brave and a hazardous part, and the victory is one which is to overcome the vast injury wrought by the serpent in the temptation and fall of man. It is a victory which has in it redemption from evil, as the temptation involved the falling into evil. We have then a blessing to the human race involved in this curse of the serpent: a Messianic promise of redemption to be accomplished, not by the woman, but by her seed. Her seed is the entire race of her descendants. But inasmuch as the serpent is represented as bruising the heel of the man and is distinguished from his seed in the direct address of God to him as "thou," it seems to be necessary to think of the seed of the woman as culminating in an individual man, who will accomplish the final victory over the serpent. We have here, then, the original Messianic prophecy which unfolds in the development of the Messianic idea, until it is realized in Jesus, the Messiah.

The closing pentastich of this strophe gives the punishment of the woman. This consists in sorrow, in connection with child-bearing, and in subjugation to her husband.

IX. The Punishment of the Man.

And to (the) man (God) said,
Because thou didst hearken to the voice of thy wife,

And eat of the tree,
Of which I enjoined thee, saying,
Thou shalt not eat of it ;

Cursed be the ground for thy sake,
In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life,
Thorns and thistles shall it produce for thee,
And thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,
Until thy return unto the ground ;
For out of it thou wast taken,

For dust art thou,
And unto dust shalt thou return.

This strophe is composed of a nonastich and a pentastich. The nonastich is subdivided into a pentastich and tetrastich. In the first line the Masoretic text has omitted the article with ארם. We restore it in accordance with the usage of this poem. We also insert the subject אלהים before אמר. At the close of the strophe the editor inserts the twentieth verse: "And the man called the name of his wife Eve, for she became the mother of every living person."

This strophe gives the punishment of the man. The first pentastich gives the reason of this punishment; namely, the eating of the forbidden tree as the result of hearkening unto the voice of his wife, instead of obeying the command of God. This is followed by a tetrastich pronouncing a curse upon the ground for man's sake. It was the design of God, according to the first and second strophes, that man should till the ground, and that it should reward him with its fruits. Evil is now introduced into the soil of the earth. It is to produce the herb of the field for the food of man in response to his tillage; but it is also to produce thorns and thistles. To combat them will require hard labor and produce great sorrow. Anxious, ill-requited toil is the punishment of the man. The concluding pentastich goes back upon the penalty of death, which was attached to the transgression. This penalty is now explained as anxious toil, resulting in eventual death. Death is represented

as a returning unto the ground, and a becoming again the dust, out of which God had originally formed him.

X. The Banishment from Eden.

And God made for the man and for his wife,
Tunics of skin and clothed them.
And God said, Behold the man!
Has he become like one of us,
Knowing good and evil?

And now, lest he should put forth his hand,
And take also of the tree of life,
And eat and live forever;
God sent him forth from the garden of Eden
To till the ground.

And drove out the man,
And caused to dwell on the east of the garden of Eden
The cherubim and the revolving flaming sword,
Guarding the way to the tree of life.

This strophe is composed of a pentastich and a nonastich. In the first line the Masoretic text has omitted the article with ארס. This should be restored. We regard the relative clause: "Whence he had been taken," at the close of the twenty-third verse as a prosaic editorial note.

The pentastich represents that God gives clothing to the guilty pair. The clothing suited to fallen man is not fig leaves and girdles, but the skins of slaughtered animals. We are at once confronted, therefore, with death in the animal kingdom. The animals, which had been formed for the service of man in the garden, now give their life in order to furnish him with appropriate clothing. Death in the animal kingdom teaches man to prepare for his own impending death. The tristich, which closes the first part of this strophe, represents God as speaking to the heavenly intelligences, and calling their attention to the condition of the man. There is a holy irony in the divine words, "Has he become like one of us?" that is, like one of the spiritual intelligences, the cherubim and the holy angels.

The serpent had promised the woman that eating of the tree would open their eyes and make them like God. God had appointed the tree to be a means of teaching them the difference between good and evil. They were learning, under divine guidance, to know good and evil as God and the holy angels know it, by a theoretical and objective knowledge of the evil, and an experimental and internal knowledge of the good. They were constantly growing more like God and the holy spirits, as they advanced in this knowledge. They have now broken away from the guidance of God, and followed the guidance of the evil spirit. "Has he become like one of us?" says God in holy irony to the holy spirits who are round about Him. Nay, man has become like the evil spirit. He has an experimental and internal knowledge of the evil. His knowledge of the good is an external knowledge of that which he himself has lost, but now sees external to himself in God. There is also in this tristich a strain of triumph over the machinations of the evil spirit.

The nonastich gives an account of the banishment of the human pair from the garden of Eden. It is composed of a hexastich and tristich. The hexastich gives an account of the banishment itself, and of the principal reason for it. There were two trees in the garden, which were contrasted in their nature and in their effects, the tree of life and the tree of death. It was not proper that the human pair should partake of both at the same time. He, who had partaken of the tree of death, and incurred the penalty of death, could not be permitted to have access to the tree of life, to eat of it and live forever. Sinful man needed redemption, and redemption required that he should die; and only through death gain everlasting life. Furthermore, man, the sinner, should not be permitted to enjoy the happy tillage of the garden of Eden. He must go forth from the garden and till the ground, which had been cursed, and by thorns and thistles and the sweat of anxious tillage, learn repentance unto salvation.

The closing tristich of the poem presents us with a picture

of the guards of the garden, which prevent human access to it. These are the cherubim, and the revolving flaming sword. The cherubim are exalted spiritual intelligences, who are always associated with the divine throne whenever it appears in theophany. The abiding of the cherubim at the entrance of the garden of Eden involves the abiding of the theophanic presence of God there. The throne of God was erected at the entrance of the garden, whither the banished human pair might ever turn in worship. With the cherubim are associated a revolving sword, probably conceived somewhat after the form of the disc represented as the most potent weapon of the Babylonian deities. It is a fiery flaming blade, because it is wielded in the midst of the blazing glory of the theophany.

Thus the poem of the fall of man presents in ten equal strophes the saddest story in human history.

DATE DUE

APR 30 '64


~~JUN 15 1979~~


CAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Gaylord 

PAMPHLET BINDER

 Syracuse, N. Y.

 Stockton, Calif.

BS1235.4 .B85
The poem of the fall of man.

c

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00043 5745