

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COSMOLOGY IN GENESIS I IN RELATION TO ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PARALLELS

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When in 1872 George Smith made known a Babylonian version of the flood story,¹ which is part of the famous Gilgamesh Epic, and announced three years later a Babylonian creation story,² which was published the following year in book form,³ the attention of OT scholars was assured and a new era of the study of Gn was inaugurated. Following the new trend numerous writers have taken it for granted that the opening narratives of Gn rest squarely on earlier Babylonian mythological texts and folklore. J. Skinner speaks, in summing up his discussion of the naturalization of Babylonian myths in Israel, of "Hebrew legends and their Babylonian originals."⁴ More specifically he writes ". . . it seems impossible to doubt that the cosmogony of Gn I rests on a conception of the process of creation fundamentally identical with that of the

¹ The first news of this flood account was conveyed by Smith in 1872 through the columns of *The Times* and a paper read to the Society of Biblical Archaeology on Dec. 3, 1872, which was printed in the Society's Transactions, IT (1873), 13-34.

² In a letter by Smith published in the *Daily Telegraph*, March 4, 1875.

³ G. Smith, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis* (London, 1876).

⁴ John Skinner, *Genesis* (ICC; 2d ed.; Edinburgh, 1930), p. xi, who followed H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (HKAT; Gottingen, 1901), p. I; an English translation of the introduction of the commentary is published as *The Legends of Genesis. The Biblical Saga and History*, Schocken Book (New York, 1964). The term "legend" is the unfortunate translation of the German term "Sage" by which Gunkel meant the tradition of those who are not in the habit of writing, while "history" is written tradition. Gunkel did not intend to prejudge the historicity of a given narrative by calling it "legend."

Enuma elish tablets."⁵ Thus by the turn of the century and continuing into the twenties and thirties the idea of a direct connection of some kind between the Babylonian and Hebrew accounts of creation was taken for granted, with the general consensus of critical opinion that the Hebrew creation story depended on a Babylonian original.

The last six decades have witnessed vast increases in knowledge of the various factors involved in the matter of parallels and relationships. W. G. Lambert and others⁶ remind us that one can no longer talk glibly about Babylonian civilization, because we now know that it was composed of three main strands before the end of the third millennium B.C. Furthermore, it is no longer scientifically sound to assume that all ideas originated in Mesopotamia and moved westward as H. Winckler's "pan-Babylonian" theory had claimed under the support of Friedrich Delitzsch and others.⁷ The cultural situation is extremely complex and diverse. Today we know that "a great variety of ideas circulated in ancient Mesopotamia."⁸

In the last few decades there has been a change in the way in which scholars understand religio-historical parallels to Gn 1-3. In the past, scholars have approached the ancient Near Eastern creation accounts in general from the point of view that there seems to be in man a natural curiosity that leads him to inquire intellectually, at some stage, "How did

⁵ Skinner, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁶ W. G. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," *JTS*, N.S. XVI (1965), 288, 289; cf. A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia. Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (2d ed.; Chicago, 1968); S. N. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (2d ed.; Garden City, 1959)

⁷ This theory led to the unfortunate "Bible versus Babel" controversy in the first decade of the twentieth century. Cf. Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel and Bibel* (Leipzig, 1902); Alfred Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alters Orients* (Leipzig, 1904; 3d rev. ed., 1916). Criticisms of this approach are given by William L. Wardle, *Israel and Babylon* (London, 1925), pp. 302-330; Leonard W. King, *History of Babylon* (London, 1915), pp. 291-313.

⁸ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

everything begin? How did the vast complex of life and nature originate?" In the words of a contemporary scholar, man sought "to abstract himself from immersion in present experience, and to conceive of the world as having had a beginning, and to make a sustained intellectual effort to account for it."⁹ Here the speaking about creator and creation in the ancient Near Eastern creation accounts is understood to be the result of an intellectual thought process. Over against this understanding of the ancient Near Eastern creation myths and myths of beginning there are scholars who believe that in these myths the existence of mankind in the present is described as depending in some way on the story of the origin of world and man.¹⁰ This means that in the first instance it is a question of the concern to secure and ensure that which is, namely, the world and man in it. It recognizes that the question of "how" man can continue to live and exist has prior concern over the intellectual question of the world's and man's beginning.¹¹

Correspondences and parallels between the Hebrew creation account of Gn 1:1-2:4¹² and the cosmogonies or Israel's earlier

⁹ S. G. F. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East* (London, 1963), p. 65.

¹⁰ This has been well summarized by R. Pettazoni, "Myths of Beginning and Creation-Myths," in *Essays on the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen; Leiden, 1967)*, pp. 24-36; cf. C. Westermann, *Genesis* (Neukirchen- 'luyn, 1966 If.), pp. 28, 29. N. M. Sarna (*Understanding Genesis*, Schocken Book [New York, 1970], pp. 7-9), points out correctly that the so-called Babylonian Epic of Creation, Enema elfish, was annually reenacted at the Babylonian New Year festival. However, the "inextricable tie between myth and ritual, the mimetic enactment of the cosmogony in the fore: of ritual drama ... finds no counterpart in the Israelite cult" (p. 9).

¹¹ Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 29; B. W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos* (New York, 1967), pp. 83-89.

¹² C Westermann explained the complementary relationship between Gen. 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-2d in the following way: "In Genesis 1 the question is, F3-om where does everything originate and how did it come about? In Genesis 2 the question is, Why is lean as he is?" *The Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 24. Thus the complementary nature of the two creation accounts lies in the fact that Gn 1 is more concerned with the entirety of the creation of the World and Gn 2 more with the entirety of particular aspects of

and contemporary civilization in the ancient Near East have to be approached with an open mind.¹³ The recognition of correspondences and parallels raises the difficult question of relationship and borrowing as well as the problem of evaluation. N. M. Sarna, who wrote one of the most comprehensive recent studies on the relationship between Gn and extra-biblical sources bearing on it, states: ". . . to ignore subtle differences [between Genesis and ancient Near Eastern parallels] is to present an unbalanced and untrue perspective and to pervert the scientific method."¹⁴ The importance of difference is, therefore, just as crucial as the importance of similarity. Both must receive careful and studied attention in order to avoid a misreading of elements of one culture in terms of another, which produces gross distortion.¹⁵

The method employed in this paper is to discuss the similarities and differences of certain terms and motifs in the Hebrew creation account of Gn 1 over against similar or related terms and motifs in ancient Near Eastern cosmologies with a view to discovering the relationship and distinction between them. This procedure is aimed to reveal certain aspects of the nature of the Hebrew creation account.

Tehom--Tiamat

Since the year 1895 many OT scholars have argued that there is a definite relationship between the term *tehom* (deep) in Gn 1:2 and *Tiamat*, the Babylonian female monster of the primordial salt-water ocean in *Enuma elish*.¹⁶ Some scholars

creation. Cf. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 31-34.

¹³ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 289, makes this point in reaction to earlier excesses by scholars who traced almost every OT idea to Babylonia.

¹⁴ Sarna, *off. cit.*, p. xxvii.

¹⁵ See Kitchen, *off. cit.*, pp. 87 ff.; Sarna, *op. cit.*, pp. xxii ff.; Lambert, *op. cit.*, pp. 287 ff.

is This identification was made especially by H. Gunkel, *Schopfung and Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit* (Gottingen, 1895), pp. 29 ff.

to the present day claim that there is in Gn 1:2 an "echo of the old cosmogonic myth,"¹⁷ while others deny it.¹⁸

The question of a philological connection between the Babylonian *Tiamat* and the Biblical *tehom*, "deep," has its problems. A. Heidel¹⁹ has pointed out that the second radical of the Hebrew term *tehom*, i.e., the letter ת (h), in corresponding loan-words from Akkadian would have to be an ח (‘) and that in addition, the Hebrew term would have to be feminine whereas it is masculine.²⁰ If *Tiamat* had been taken over into Hebrew, it would have been left as it was or it would have been changed to ti/e'ama (תאמא).²¹ Heidel has argued convincingly that both words go back to a common Semitic root from which also the Babylonian term *tiamtu*, *tamtu*, meaning "ocean, sea," is derived. Additional evidence for this has come from Ugarit where the word *thm/thmt*, meaning "ocean, deep, sea," has come to light,²² and from Arabic *Tihamatu* or

¹⁷ Cf. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 39; B. S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (2d ed. ; London, 1962), p. 37; S. H. Hooke, "Genesis," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. by H. H. Rowley and M. Black (London, 1962), p. 179.

¹⁸ W. Zimmerli, *Die Urgeschichte, I. Mose I-II* (3d ed. ; Zurich, 1967), p. 42; Kitchen, *op. cit.*, pp. 89, 90; Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 149; K. Galling, "Der Charakter der Chaosschilderung in Gen. i, 2," *ZThK*, XLVII (1950), 151; L. I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (Rome, 1970), p. 13; D. F. Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (London, 1968), pp. 10ff.; W. H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (2d ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967), p. 80, n. 5; and many others.

¹⁹ A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, Phoenix Book (Chicago, 1963), p. 100. Heidel's argumentation has been accepted by Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 146; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 80, n. 5; Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11; and others.

²⁰ Sarna, *op. cit.*, p. 22, agrees that *tehom* is not feminine by grammatical form, but points out that "it is frequently employed with a feminine verb or adjective." See also the discussion by M. K. Wakeman, "God's Battle With the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1969), pp. 143 ff.

²¹ Heidel, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

²² It is often found parallel to the Ugaritic *ym*; cf. G. D. Young, *Concordance of Ugaritic* (Rome, 1956), p. 68, No. 1925. C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome, 1955) p. 332, No. 1925; M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Leiden, 1955) p. 61; O. Kaiser, *Die mythische*

Tihama which is the name for the low-lying Arabian coastal land.²³ On this basis there is a growing consensus of opinion that the Biblical term *tehom* and the Babylonian *Tiamat* derive from a common Semitic root.²⁴ This means that the use of the word of *tehom* in Gn 1:2 cannot be used as an argument for a direct dependence of Gn I on the Babylonian *Enuma elish*.²⁵

In contrast to the concept of the personified *Tiamat*, the mythical antagonist of the creator-god Marduk, the *tehom* in Gn 1:2 lacks any aspect of personification. It is clearly an inanimate part of the cosmos, simply a part of the created world. The "deep" does not offer any resistance to God's creative activity. In view of these observations it is unsustainable to speak of a "demythologizing" of a mythical being in Gn 1:2. The term *tehom* as used in vs. 2 does not suggest that there is present in this usage the remnant of a latent conflict between a chaos monster and a creator god.²⁶ The author of Gn 1 employs this term in a "depersonalized"²⁷ and "non-mythical"²⁸ way. Over against the Egyptian cosmogonic mythology contained in the Heliopolitan, Memphite, and Hermopolitan theologies, it is of significance that there is in Gn 1:2 neither a god rising out of *tehom* to proceed with creation nor does this term express the notion of a pre-

Bedeutung des Meeres in Agypten, Ugarit and Israel (2d ed. ; Berlin, 1962), p. 52; Wakeman, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-161.

²³ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 23; Heidel, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

²⁴ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 293; Kaiser, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Kitchen, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 146; P. Reymond, *L'eau, sa vie, et sa signification dans l'Ancien Testament* (Leiden, 1958), p. 187 and n. z ; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 80, n. 5 ; D. Kidney, *Genesis* (London, 1967), p. 45.

²⁵ With Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 146.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of the relationship between *tehom* and corresponding Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian notions, see the writer's forthcoming essay, "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," to be published in *VT*, XXII (1972).

²⁷ Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²⁸ Gallig, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

existent, personified Ocean (Nun).²⁹ With T. H. Gaster it is to be observed that Gn 1:2 "nowhere implies. ..that all things actually issued out of water."³⁰

In short, the description of the depersonalized, undifferentiated, unorganized, and passive state of *tehom* in Gn 1:2 is not due to any influence from non-Israelite mythology but is motivated through the Hebrew conception of the world.³¹ In stating the conditions in which this earth existed before God commanded that light should spring forth, the author of Gn 1 rejected explicitly contemporary mythological notions. He uses the term *tehom*, whose cognates are deeply mythological in their usage in ancient Near Eastern creation speculations, in such a way that it is not only non-mythical in content but antimythical in purpose.

The Separation of Heaven and Earth

The idea of a separation of heaven and earth is present in all ancient Near Eastern mythologies. Sumerian mythology tells that the "earth had been separated from heaven"³² by Enlil, the air-god, while his father An "carried off the heaven."³³ Babylonian mythology in *Enuma elish* reports the division of heaven and earth when the victorious god Marduk forms

²⁹ Nun, the primeval ocean, "came into being by himself," ANET³, p. 4. For discussions of the distinctions between Egyptian cosmogonic speculation and Gen. 1, see H. Brunner, "Die Grenzen von Zeit and Raum bei den Agyptern," *AfO*, XVI.I (1954/56), 141-145; E. Hornung, "Chaotische Bereiche in der geordneten Welt," *ZAS*, LXXXI (1956), 28-32; S. Morenz, *Agyptische Religion* (Stuttgart, 1960), pp. 167 ff. ; E. Wurthwein, "Chaos and Schopfung im mythischen Denken and in der biblischen Urgeschichte," in *Wort and Existent* (Gottingen, 1970), pp. 29 ff. ; and *supra*, n. 26.

³⁰ T. H. Gaster, "Cosmogony," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1962), I, 703; cf. Sarna, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³¹ On the distinction between the Hebrew world-view and that of its neighbors, see Galling, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 155; Wurthwein, *op. cit.*, p. 36; Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 178 ff.

³² N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (2d ed. ; New York, 1961), p. 37; cf. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

³³ Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, p. 82.

heaven from the upper half of the slain *Tiamat*, the primeval salt-water ocean

IV: 138 He split her like a shellfish into two parts
139 Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky.³⁴

From the remaining parts of *Tiamat* Marduk makes the earth and the deep.³⁵ The Hittite Kumarbi myth, a version of a Hurrian myth, visualizes that heaven and earth were separated by a cutting tool:

When heaven and earth were built upon me [Upelluri, an Atlas figure] I knew nothing of it, and when they came and cut heaven and earth asunder with a copper tool, that also I knew not.³⁶

In Egyptian mythology Shu, the god of the air, is referred to as he who "raised Nut [the sky-goddess] above him, Geb [the earth-god] being at his feet."³⁷ Thus heaven and earth were separated from an embrace by god Shu (or, in other versions, Ptah, Sokaris, Osiris, Khnum, and Upuwest of Assiut), 'who raised heaven aloft to make the sky.'³⁸ In Phoenician mythology the separation is pictured as splitting the world egg.³⁹

The similarity between the Biblical account and mythology lies in the fact that both describe the creation of heaven and earth to be an act of separation.⁴⁰ The similarity, however, does not seem to be as significant as the differences. In Gn 1 the firmament (or heaven) is raised simply by the fiat of God. In contrast to this, *Enuma elish* and Egyptian mythology have water as the primal generating force, a notion utterly foreign to Gn creation.⁴¹ In Gn, God wills and the powerless, inani-

³⁴ ANET³, p. 67.

³⁵ According too a newly discovered fragment of Tablet V. See Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³⁶ O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites* (2d ed.; Baltimore, 1966), p. 193.

³⁷ Coffin Texts (ed. de Buck), II, 78a, p. 19, as quoted by Brandon, *op. cit.*, p. 28. The date is the Middle Kingdom (2060-1788 B.c.).

³⁸ Morenz, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-182.

³⁹ H. W. Haussig, ed., *Worterbuch der Mythologie* (Stuttgart, 1961), I, 309, 310.

⁴⁰ Westermann, *Genesis*, pp. 47 ff., 160 ff.

⁴¹ Sarna, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

mate, and inert waters obey. Furthermore, there is a notable difference with regard to how the "firmament" was fashioned and the material employed for that purpose, and how Marduk created in *Enuma elish*. The separation of waters in Gn is carried out in two steps: (1) There is a separation of waters on a horizontal level with waters above and below the firmament (expanse) (Gn 1:6-8) ; and (2) a separation of waters on the vertical level, namely the separation of waters below the firmament (expanse) in one place (ocean) to let the dry land (earth = ground) appear (Gn 1:9, 10).

These notable differences have led T. H. Gaster to suggest that "the writer [of Gn 1] has suppressed or expurgated older and cruder mythological fancies."⁴² But these differences are not so much due to suppressing or expurgating mythology. They rather indicate a radical break with the mythical cosmogony. We agree with C. Westermann that the Biblical author in explaining the creation of the firmament (expanse) "does not reflect in this act of creation the contemporary world-view, rather he overcomes it."⁴³ Inherent in this presentation of the separation of heaven and earth is the same antimythical emphasis of the author of Gn 1 which we have already noted.

Creation by Word

It has been maintained that the concept of the creation of the world by means of the spoken word has a wide ancient Near Eastern background.⁴⁴ It goes beyond the limits of this paper to cite every evidence for this idea.

⁴² T. H. Gaster; *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York, 1969), p. 6.

⁴³ Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 160, against G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh, 1962), I, 148 "This account of Creation is, of course, completely bound to the cosmological knowledge of its time." Zimmerli, *op. cit.*, p. 53; p. Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, 1965), I, 98: Gn 1 "borrowed from the ideas of those days about the physical constitution of the world,..."

⁴⁴ See the discussion with literature by Schmidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-177; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I, 143; Westermann, *Genesis*,

In *Enuma elish* Marduk was able by word of mouth to let a "cloth" vanish and restore it again.⁴⁵ "A creation of the world by word, however, is not known in Mesopotamia."⁴⁶ This situation is different in Egypt. From the period of Ptolemy IV (221-204 B.C.) comes a praise to the god Thoth: "Everything that is has come about through his word."⁴⁷ In Memphite theology it is stated that Atum, the creator-god, was created by the speech of Ptah. The climax comes in the sentence

Indeed, all the divine order really came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded.⁴⁸

The idea of creation by divine word is clearly apparent.⁴⁹ This notion appears again. ". . . the Creator [Hike = magic itself] commanded, a venerable god, who speaks with his mouth... ." ⁵⁰ G. F. Brandon points out that the notion of creation by word in Egyptian thought is to be understood that "creation was effected by magical utterance."⁵¹ Further-

pp. 52-57; D. J. France, "Creation by the Word" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1969).

⁴⁵ ANET³, p. 66: IV: 19-26; Heidel, *oohc cit.*, pp. 126 ff.

⁴⁶ Schmidt, *olh. cit.*, p. 174. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp. 79, 80, makes the point that the Near Eastern idea of the creative power of the divine word was a Sumerian development. "All that the creating deity had to do ... was to lay his plans, utter the word, and pronounce a name" (p. 79). This he believes was an abstraction of the power of the command of the king.

⁴⁷ L. Durr, *Die Wertung des gottlichen Wortes im Alten Testament und im antiken Orient* (Leipzig, 1933), p. 28.

⁴⁸ ANET³, p. s.

⁴⁹ Detailed discussions of the Egyptian idea of creation by divine word in relation to the OT idea of creation by divine word have been presented by K. Koch, "Wort und Einheit des Schopfergottes in Memphis und Jerusalem," *ZThK*, 62 (1965), 251-293, and Frame, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 ff. Koch claims that the OT idea of creation by divine word is derived from the Memphite cosmogony. But a direct dependence is to be rejected. Cf. Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 56; Schmidt, *o,h. cit.*, p. 177. In Egypt creation comes by a magic word, an idea alien to Genesis creation.

⁵⁰ Brandon, *o/7. cit.*, p. 37, from a Coffin Text dated to 2240 u.c.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

more, creation by magical power of the spoken word is only one of many ways creation takes place in Egyptian mythology.⁵²

N. M. Sarna considers the similarity between the Egyptian notion of creation by word and the one in Gn 1 as "wholly superficial."⁵³ In Egyptian thought the pronouncement of the right magical word, like the performance of the right magical action, is able to actualize the potentialities inherent in matter. The Gn concept of creation by divine fiat is not obscured by polytheistic and mantic-magic distortions.⁵⁴ Gn 1 passes in absolute silence over the nature of matter upon which the divine word acted creatively. The constant phrase "and God said" (Gn 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26) with the concluding refrain "and it was so" (Gn 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30) indicates that God's creative word does not refer to the utterance of a magic word, but to the expression of an effortless, omnipotent, unchallengeable word of a God who transcends the world. The author of Gn I thus shows here again his distance from mythical thought. The total concept of the creation by word in Gn I is unique in the ancient world. The writer of Gn I attacks the idea of creation by means of a magical utterance with the concept of a God who creates by an effortless word.⁵⁵ It is his way of indicating that Israelite religion is liberated from the baneful influence of magic. But he also wishes to stress the essential difference of created being from divine

⁵² E. D. James, "The Conception of Creation in Cosmology," in *Liber Amicorum. Studies in Honor of C. J. Bleeker* (Suppi. to Nunzen, XII; Leiden, 1969), pp. 99-106.

⁵³ Sarna, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁴ L. Scheffczyk, *Creation and Providence* (New York, 1970), p. 7.

⁵⁵ E. Hilgert, "References to Creation in the Old Testament other than in Genesis 1 and 2," in *The Stature of Christ. Essays in Honor of E. Heppenstall*, ed. by V. Carner and G. Stanhiser (Loma Linda, Calif., 1970), pp. 83-87, concludes that in Gn 1 there is a complete lack of a primeval dualism, i.e., a cosmic struggle from which a particular god emerged victorious. Yahweh is asserted always to have been the supreme omnipotent God. This is true also of other OT creation passages.

Being, i.e., in Gn 1 creation by word is to exclude any idea of emanationism, pantheism, and primeval dualism.

The Creation and Function of the Luminaries

Astral worship was supported in a variety of forms by the entire civilization of the ancient Near East, especially in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Among the Sumerians the moon as the major astral deity was born of Enlil and Ninlil, the air-god and air-goddess respectively. He was known as Nanna. Nanna, the moon-god, and his wife Ningal are the parents of Utu, the sun-god or the sun.⁵⁶ In Egypt the sun in its varied appearances was the highest deity, so that in the course of time many gods acquired sun characteristics. On the other hand, the moon had an inferior role. The daily appearance of the sun was considered as its birth.⁵⁷ The moon waned because it was the ailing eye of Horus, the falcon god. It goes without saying that both sun and moon as deities were worshiped. In Hittite religion the "first goddess of the country" was the sun-goddess Arinna, who was also the "chief deity of the Hittite pantheon."⁵⁸ In Ugarit the deities of sun and moon are not as highly honored as other deities. One text asks that sacrifices be made to "the sun, the lady [= moon], and the stars."⁵⁹ The great Baal myth has a number of references to the sun-goddess who seeks Baal.⁶⁰ A separate hymn celebrates the marriage of the moon-god Yarikh, "the One Lighting Up Heaven," with the goddess Nikkal.⁶¹

In *Enuma elish* one could speak of a creation of the moon only if one understands the expression "caused to shine"⁶² as indicating the creation of the moon. It is to be noted that

⁵⁶ Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ H. Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (2d ed.; New York, 1961), p. 28.

⁵⁸ Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁵⁹ Text 52 (= SS), 54.

⁶⁰ Text 62 (= IAB); 49 (= IIIAB).

⁶¹ Text 77 (= NK).

⁶² ANET³, p. 68.

the order of the heavenly bodies in *Enuma elish* is stars-sun-moon.⁶³ The stars are undoubtedly referred to first because of the astral worship accorded them in Babylonia and "because of the great significance of the stars in the lives of the astronomically and astrologically minded Babylonians."⁶⁴ The stars are not reported to have been created; the work of Marduk consists singularly in founding stations for the "great gods ... the stars" (Tablet V: 1-2).⁶⁵ There is likewise no mention of the creation of the sun.

Against this background the contrast between the Biblical and the non-Biblical ideas on sun, moon, and stars becomes apparent. "Indeed," says W. H. Schmidt, "there comes to expression here [in Gn 1:14-18] in a number of ways a polemic against astral religion."⁶⁶

(1) In the Biblical presentation everything that is created, whatever it may be, cannot be more than creature, i.e., creatureliness remains the fundamental and determining characteristic of all creation. In *Enuma elish* Marduk fixes the astral likenesses of the gods as constellations (Tablet V:2), for the gods cannot be separated from the stars and constellations which represent them.

(2) In the place of an expressly mythical rulership of the star Jupiter over the other stars of astral deities in *Enuma elish*, we find in Gn the rulership of a limited part of creation, namely day and night through the sun and the moon, both of which are themselves created objects made by God.

(3) The heavenly bodies in the Biblical creation narrative are not "from eternity" as the Hittite Karatepe texts claim for the sun-god.⁶⁷ The heavenly bodies do have a beginning; they are created and are neither independent nor autonomous.

(4) The author of the Biblical creation story in Gn 1 avoids

⁶³ Not as Heidel, *off. cit.*, p. 117, says, "stars, moon, sun."

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ ANET³, p. 68.

⁶⁶ Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 119; cf. Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁶⁷ Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

the names "sun" and "moon," which are among Israel's neighbors' designations for deities. A conscious opposition to ancient Near Eastern astral worship is apparent, for the common Semitic word for "sun" was also a divine name.⁶⁸

(5) The heavenly bodies appear in Gn 1 in the "degrading"⁶⁹ status of "luminaries" whose function it is to "rule." They have a serving function and are not the light itself. As carriers of light they merely are "to give light" (Gn 1:15-18).

(6) The Biblical narrative hardly mentions the stars. The Hebrew phrase "and the stars" is a seemingly parenthetical addition to the general emphasis on the greater and smaller luminaries. In view of star worship so prevalent in Mesopotamia,⁷⁰ it appears that the writer intended to emphasize that the stars themselves are created things and nothing more. An autonomous divine quality of the stars is thus denied. They are neither more nor less than all the other created things, i.e., they share completely in the creatureliness of creation. With von Rad and others we may conclude that "the entire passage vs. 14-19 breathes a strongly antimythical pathos"⁷¹ or polemic. Living in the world of his day, the writer of Gn 1 was undoubtedly well acquainted with pagan astral worship, as were the readers for whom he wrote. The Hebrew account of the creation, function, and limitation of the luminaries demonstrates that he did not borrow his unique thoughts from

⁶⁸ Stadelmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff.

⁶⁹ Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 53.

⁷⁰ E. Dhorme, *Les Religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* (Paris, 1949), p. 82, presents evidence for the general tendency of giving divine attributes to the stars. T. H. Gaster, *Thespis* (2d ed.; New York, 1961), pp. 320 ff., links certain characteristics of astral worship with the seasonal myth of the dying and rising god of fertility (Tammuz, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, etc.).

⁷¹ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, p. 53; cf. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. ii: "Ja, hier [Gn 1:14 ff.] aussert sich auf mehrfache Weise eine Polemik gegen die Astralreligion." Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Sarna, *off. cit.*, pp. 9 ff., 76; H. Junker, "In Principio Creavit Deus Coelum Et Terram. Eine Untersuchung zum Thema Mythos and Theologie," *Biblica*, 45 (1965), 483; J. Albertson, "Genesis i and the Babylonian Creation Myth," *Thought*, XXXVII (1962), 231; Stadelmann, *off. cit.*, p. 17.

the prevailing pagan mythical views. Rather he combats them while, at the same time, he portrays his own picture of the creatureliness of the luminaries and of their limitations.

The Purpose of Man's Creation

We need to discuss also the matter of the purpose of man's creation in Sumero-Akkadian mythology and in Gn 1. The recently published Atrahasis Epic,⁷² which parallels Gn 1-9 in the sequence of Creation-Rebellion-Man's Achievements-Flood,⁷³ is concerned exclusively with the story of man and his relationship with the gods.⁷⁴ It should be noted, however, that this oldest Old Babylonian epic⁷⁵ does not open with an account of the creation of the world. Rather its opening describes the situation when the world had been divided among the three major deities of the Sumerian-Akkadian pantheon. The seven senior-gods (Anunnaki) were making the junior-gods (Igigi) suffer with physical work.

I : i : 3-4 The toil of the gods was great,
The work was heavy, the distress was much--⁷⁶

The work was indeed so much for the junior-gods that they decided to strike and depose their taskmaster, Enlil. When Enlil learned of this he decided to counsel with his senior-god colleagues upon a means to appease the rebel-gods. Finally, the senior-gods in council decided to make a substitute to do the work:

"Let man carry the toil of the gods."⁷⁷

⁷² W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-hasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford, 1969).

⁷³ A very cautiously argued comparison between the Atrahasis Epic and the early chapters of Genesis is presented by A. R. Millard, "A New Babylonian 'Genesis' Story," *Tyndale Bulletin*, XVIII (1967), 3-18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6. Note now also the article by W. L. Moran, "The Creation of Man in Atrahasis I 192-248," *BASOR*, 200 (1970), 48-56, who deals with the origins and nature of man in Atrahasis.

⁷⁵ In its present form it dates to ca. 1635 s.c.; see Lambert-Millard, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

In *Enuma elish* the gods were also liberated from work by the creation of man.⁷⁸ The idea that man was created for the purpose of relieving the gods of hard labor by supplying them with food and drink was standard among the Babylonians.⁷⁹ This motif may derive from Sumerian prototypes. In the Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninmah* we also find that man is created for the purpose of freeing the gods from laboring for their sustenance.⁸⁰

The description of the creation of man in Gn 1:26-28 has one thing in common with Mesopotamian mythology, namely, that in both instances man has been created for a certain purpose. Yet this very similarity between Gn 1 and pagan mythology affords us an excellent example of the superficiality of parallels if a single feature is torn from its cultural and contextual moorings and treated independently. T. H. Gaster makes the following significant statement

But when it comes to defining the purpose of man's creation, he [the scriptural writer] makes a supremely significant advance upon the time-honored pagan view. In contrast to the doctrine enunciated in the Mesopotamian myths. . . , man is here represented, not as the menial of the gods, but as the ruler of the animal and vegetable kingdoms (1:28) ...⁸¹

In Gn 1 "man is the pinnacle of creation," to use the words of N. H. Sarna.⁸² On the other hand, in Mesopotamian mythology the creation of man is almost incidental, presented as a kind of afterthought, where he is a menial of the gods to provide them with nourishment and to satisfy their physical needs. The author of Gn 1 presents an antithetical view. The very first communication between God and man comes in the form of a divine blessing

⁷⁸ Tablet IV: 107-121, 127; V:147, 148; VI:152, 153; VII 27-29; ANET³, pp. 66-70.

⁷⁹ For other Babylonian texts which contain this idea, see Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63, 65, 66.

⁸⁰ Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, pp. 69, 70.

⁸¹ Gaster, *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I, 704.

⁸² Sarna, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth (1:28 NEB).

This is followed by the pronouncement that all seed-bearing plants and fruit trees "shall be yours for food" (1:29 NEB). This expresses divine care and concern for man's physical needs and well-being in antithesis to man's purpose to care for the needs and well-being of the gods in Mesopotamian mythology. In stressing the uniqueness of the purpose of man's creation the Biblical writer has subtly and effectively succeeded, not just in combatting pagan mythological notions, but also in conveying at the same time the human-centered orientation of Gn 1 and the sense of man's glory and freedom to rule the earth for his own needs.

The Order of Creation

There is general agreement that there is a certain correspondence between the order of creation in *Enuma elish* and Gn 1. In Gn 1 the order is light, firmament, seas and dry land with vegetation, luminaries, animal life in sea and sky, animal life on earth, and man. A comparison with *Enuma elish* indicates certain analogies in the order of creation: firmament, dry land, luminaries, and lastly man.⁸³ These orders of creation certainly resemble each other in a remarkable way. But there are some rather significant differences which have been too often overlooked. (1) There is no explicit statement in *Enuma elish* that light was created before the creation of luminaries. Although scholars have in the past maintained that *Enuma elish* has the notion of light before the creation of the heavenly luminaries, such a view is based on dubious interpretations of certain phenomena.⁸⁴ (2) There is no explicit reference

⁸³ See the convenient summary of the order of creation in Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 128, 129, which is, however, not correct on all points.

⁸⁴ Against Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 101, 102, 129, 135 and E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, "The Anchor Bible" (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), p. to Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 100, n. 5, points out correctly that the reference in Tablet 1:68 concerning the halo which surrounded Apsu and which

in *Enuma elish* to the creation of the sun. To infer this from Marduk's character as a solar deity and from what is said about the creation of the moon in Tablet V is too precarious.⁸⁵

(3) Missing also in *Enuma elish* is the creation of vegetation, although Marduk is known to be the "creator of grains and herbs."⁸⁶ Even if the creation of vegetation were mentioned in the missing lines of Tablet V, its appearance would have been after the luminaries whereas in Gn it is before the luminaries.⁸⁷ (4) Finally, *Enuma elish* knows nothing of the creation of any animal life in sea and sky or on earth.⁸⁸

A comparison of creative processes and their order indicates the following: (1) Gn 1 outlines twice as many processes of creation as *Enuma elish*; and (2) there is only a general analogy between the order of creation in both accounts; it is not identical.⁸⁹

We can turn only briefly to the question of dependence.⁹⁰ Against the view of earlier scholars, A. Heidel, C. F. Whitley, J. Albertson, and others⁹¹ seem to be correct in pointing out that the general analogy between both stories does not suggest a direct borrowing on the part of Gn 1 from *Enuma elish*. It is not inconceivable that the general analogy in the order of creation, which is far from being identical, may be accounted

was put on by Marduk, the solar deity, has nothing to do with the creation of light as Gn 1:3f. describes it.

⁸⁵ With C. F. Whitley, "The Pattern of Creation in Genesis, Chapter 1," *JNES*, XVII (1958), 34, and Albertson, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁸⁶ Tablet VII:2; ANET³, p. 70.

⁸⁷ Whitley, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁸⁸ Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 f., has given reasons for doubting that the missing lines of Tablet V could have contained an account of the creation of vegetation, of animals, birds, reptiles, and fishes. His doubts have since been justified; see B. Landsberger and J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "The Fifth Tablet of *Enuma elish*," *JNES*, XX (1961), 154-179.

⁸⁹ Whitley, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 35, is correct in concluding that "there is no close parallel in the sequence of the creation of elements common to both cosmogonies."

⁹⁰ For a recent discussion on the various views with regard to the question of dependence, see Albertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-239.

⁹¹ Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-139; Whitley, *op. cit.*, p. 38; Albertson, *op. cit.*, p. 239; Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 13; etc.

for on the basis of the assumption that both stories may have sprung from a common tradition of remote origin in the pre-patriarchal period when the Hebrew ancestors dwelt in Mesopotamia.⁹²

As a matter of fact, a comparison of the general thrust of *Enuma elish* and Gn 1 makes the sublime and unique character of the latter stand out in even bolder relief. The battle myth which is a key motif in *Enuma elish* is completely absent in Gn 1. J. Hempel seems to be correct when he points out that it was the "conscious intent" of the author of Gn 1 to destroy the myth's theogony by his statement that it was the God of Israel who created heaven and earth.⁹³ Along the same line W. Eichrodt sees in the use of the name Elohim in Gn 1 a tool to assist Israel to clarify her concepts of God against pagan polytheistic theogony.⁹⁴ E. Wurthwein suggests that the placing of the creation accounts in Gn at the beginning of a linear history emphasizes a contrast to the cyclical nature of mythology, which is especially significant in view of the fact that creation in Gn 1 comes to a close within a certain non-repeatable period of creative time that closed with the seventh day. In his view this should be understood as a polemic which marks off, defends, and delimits against such mythical speculations that maintain a constantly repeating re-enactment of creation.⁹⁵ Furthermore, it should not go unnoticed that the creation of the *tanninim*, "sea monsters," in Gn 1:21 reflects a deliberate effort to contradict the notion of creation in terms of a struggle, which is a key motif in the battle myth of pagan cosmogony. It also puts emphasis upon the creatureliness of

⁹² This view has been held in some form or other by, among others, Ira M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1925), pp. 129 f.; Heide, *op. cit.*, p. 139; Albertson, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁹³ J. Hempel, "Glaube, Mythos and Geschichte im Alten Testament," ZAW, LXV (1953), 126, 127.

⁹⁴ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1961), I, 186; 187; cf. Sarna, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 ff.; Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. LVI.

⁹⁵ Wurthwein, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

the *tanninim* as being identical to that of other created animals.⁹⁶

Our examination of crucial terms and motifs in the cosmology of Gn 1 in comparison with ancient Near Eastern analogues indicates that the author of Gn 1 exhibits in a number of critical instances a sharply antimythical polemic. With a great many safeguards he employs certain terms and motifs, partly taken from his ideologically incompatible predecessors and partly chosen in contrast to comparable concepts in ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, and fills them in his own usage with new meaning consonant with his aim and world-view. Gn cosmology as presented in Gn 1:1-2:4a appears thus basically different from the mythological cosmologies of the ancient Near East. It represents not only a "complete break"⁹⁷ with the ancient Near Eastern mythological cosmologies but represents a parting of the spiritual ways which meant an undermining of the prevailing mythological cosmologies.⁹⁸ This was brought about by the conscious and deliberate antimythical polemic that runs as a red thread through the entire Gn cosmology. The antimythical polemic has its roots in the Hebrew understanding of reality which is fundamentally opposed to the mythological one.

⁹⁶ For a detailed discussion, see the writer's forthcoming essay, *supra*, n. 26.

⁹⁷ So Sarna, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff., who points out that the Genesis creation account in its "non-political," "non-cultic," and "non-mythological" nature and function "represents a complete break with Near Eastern tradition" (p. 9). Independent of the former, Payne, *off. cit.*, p. 29, maintains that "the biblical account is theologically not only far different from, but totally opposed to, the ancient Near Eastern myths."

⁹⁸ Childs, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 ff., speaks of the "concept of the world as present in Genesis z" being in "conflict with the myth" (p. 39). "The Priestly writer has broken the myth ... " (p. 43). However, he also claims that the Biblical writer "did not fully destroy the myth," but "reshaped" and "assimilated" it in a stage of "demythologization" (pp. 42, 43). Later he concludes that "Israel succeeded in overcoming myth because of an understanding of reality which opposed the mythical" (p. 97). However, myth was "overcome" already in Gn 1 and not merely "broken" there.

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