

Recent Foreign Theology.

THE latest addition to the 'Mémoires' of the Neuchatel University, namely, *Études sur le Récit du Paradis et de la Chute dans la Genèse* (Neuchatel, Secrétariat de l'Université; fr. 7.50), by Professor Paul Humbert, forms a valuable contribution towards a complex and difficult subject—the critical exegesis of the first two chapters of Genesis. The main object of the author is not to investigate the question of Paradise and the Fall, but rather to point out and emphasize the personal and synthetic conception of the Yahwist redactor who gave these chapters their present definite form. He has naturally avoided any examination of the oral or literary sources, as well as any discussion on the comparative accounts of such early stories found elsewhere in the Near East. On this last point his views agree with those recently put forward by the Dutch scholar, Th. C. Vriezen.¹

According to Professor Humbert the real personal thought of the Yahwist redactor is expressed in the Paradise story. He regards the Creation legend as a primitively independent one, taken by the redactor from oral, or rather written, tradition, and not altogether in agreement with his views, but nevertheless utilized by him in a subordinate way towards organic unity. It was necessary for the redactor, he holds, to refer first of all to the origin of the world and to point out its primordial state. Hence the description of the *adâmâh*, or 'soil,' which forms the background of the whole picture, and from which the Creator formed a man, *âdâm*, into whom He infused the breath of life—a story which breathes the air of Canaan, and reflects its fertile fields and the agricultural work of its fellahs. By this 'incorporation of the Creation myth' the Yahwist's object was only to stress the puny and ephemeral condition of man, and the great abyss between him and God—a relationship afterwards maintained even more rigorously by the Priestly Code in its efforts towards the same end.

Having thus sketched the background of his

¹ *Onderzoek naar de Paradijsvoorstelling bij de oude semietische Volken*, 1937.

account, the Yahwist then superimposed on it artificially his own specific picture—a description of Paradise, a 'Garden of Eden' somewhere in the East. The reader is no longer on the Canaanite *adâmâh*, but is transported to a distant marvellous oasis of verdure, in the midst of which is a mysterious tree, connected with the knowledge of good and evil. God Himself walks there 'in the vesper wind' (Gn 3⁸), and the introduction of the serpent is intended to discharge Him from all responsibility for man's fall (here Professor Humbert takes the opposite view from Paul Volz, *Prophetengestalten des Alten Testaments*, 1938, p. 87). The Paradise picture shows that, in the thought of the Yahwist, the Canaanite land (*adâmâh*) was under a curse, and that settled life and agricultural work were curse-laden. He thus betrays his nomad origin, and his preference for the careless, happy, undisciplined life of the desert, as adopted by the Rechabites and others (a conclusion also put forward some years ago by Albert, in *ZAW*, 1913, p. 14 ff.). The volume does not end here, but goes on to the Fall of Man and Paradise Lost.

Such is a brief synopsis of the contents, and there is also an excellent chapter on 'The Image of God' (Gn 1²⁶). Although the author does not touch on the documentary theory, the book is thoroughly modern in its scholarship and outlook. It was formerly the custom, in discussing the opening chapters of Genesis, to compare the statements with the up-to-date results of scientific research. But now the theory of a progressive revelation relieves writers from the necessity of any such discussion. In these chapters in Genesis we have an almost scientific account of the Creation and Paradise, according to the knowledge of those early times. Professor Humbert rightly assumes all this, and leaves himself free to deal with the stories themselves as treated by the Yahwist redactor. The volume is simply and clearly written, and will be welcomed by all Old Testament scholars.

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