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*THE LITERARY ORIGIN OF THE NARRATIVE  
OF THE FALL.*

GENESIS II.-III.

THE teaching conveyed by the narrative of the Fall, Genesis ii.-iii., may be fairly set forth as to its substance under the following heads: In their original state the first human beings, the parents of mankind, led a happy, innocent life, in close intercourse with God, and were free from bodily evils and from subjection to death.<sup>1</sup> Deceived and misled by a hostile power, they transgressed a direct command imposed upon them by God; the immediate result of the transgression was a sense of shame and guilt, its punishment misery and suffering ending in certain death; the hostile power, never relenting from its enmity and opposition towards God and man, will one day be overthrown by the seed of the woman.

That the inspired author means to assert, on his own responsibility, the real truth of those essential contents of his narrative, should, we think, be held as certain by the theologian, if it were only on account of the deep religious interest which attaches to that real truth.

But an altogether different one is the question whether the picturesque scenery occurring in the narrative is in

<sup>1</sup> It has been recently denied by some scholars that the privilege of deathless life would appear in the narrative of Gen. ii.-iii. as belonging to the original state of man, that liability to death would there be stated to be a sequel of sin. We cannot in the present paper enter into any discussion of the question. We feel, however, obliged to express our conviction that the grounds on which this denial has been set forth against the obvious meaning of the texts do not rest on solid foundation.

the same way meant and proposed by the author as actual fact,—if it were not rather to be considered as mere framework and accident form. By the notice that God put the man into the *garden* of Eden, we are taught that God created the first man in a state of delight and happiness; but should it therefore be understood that that happiness really consisted in the sojourn in a garden? The "*tree of life*," whose fruit man was allowed to eat, suggests the notion that the first men in their original state were provided with security against death; but must, therefore, that security have been really procured by eating from the fruit of a tree? The taking and eating of the fruit of another tree, "*the tree of knowledge of good and evil*," show us that the first men transgressed a definite command of God; but must, therefore, the divine command and the transgression have really stood in relation to the fruit of a tree?

Sure it is that in the Christian Church a different opinion on that subject has been at all times set forth from most authoritative quarters. The earthly paradise, with its two wonderful trees, the serpent in conversation with the woman, God walking about in the garden, the Cherûbîm placed as a watch at the entrance of the garden after the driving out of man, those are things of which it has always been admitted that they are not necessarily to be taken in the literal sense, as real history. Among the Fathers many were concerned with explaining those traits in an exclusively allegorical way, giving them out as profound symbols, conceived by the biblical writer himself under divine inspiration, of moral lessons and supernatural truths;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Allegorism in the exposition of Holy Scripture was borrowed by the Christian Fathers from the learned Jews of Alexandria (Philo); Jewish schools in Palestine followed a quite different course, as may be seen, for the narratives of Genesis, in the Book of Jubilees.

and till in late Middle Ages similar views met with approbation. It is a long time, however, since it has been perceived that such explanations oftentimes lack solid ground. Moreover the comparison with similar traits in the traditions and literature of other ancient nations does not in the least favour the supposition that such particulars as those just mentioned were the literary product of the inspired genius of the Hebrew author.

Thus whilst on the side of biblical rationalism the assertion of absolute equivalence of form and contents in the biblical narrative led to the construction and increasing diffusion of mythical interpretations, it happened that amongst a large number of Christian scholars, who could not resolve to attribute any historical value to some details of the paradise story, the so-called historical-folklorist system made its way and found warm defenders. According to those scholars, the images or elements of scenery which, with regard to the doctrinal substance of the narrative sketched above, may be fairly considered as mere accidental means of representation, were, at least for the main part, borrowed material, taken from widespread traditions or legends, and worked out by the sacred author in order to present historical-religious truth in a familiar, popular form.

But here a serious difficulty arises. On what ground, by what standard, will it be decided whether such or such a particular is to be considered as foreign to the supposed doctrinal kernel and as belonging rather to the accessory envelope? Had also the ancient Hebrew readers, for whom the narrative was originally devised, any means at hand to distinguish essential contents from the so-called mere ornamental framework or form?

To this question the historical-folklorists will answer at once that at least in some instances the soundness of their

way of dealing with the text cannot be doubted. Such is the case with the far-going anthropomorphisms, in the passages where God is spoken of as having at first, like a potter, made the body of man out of clay and afterwards breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life ; or as planting a garden and as walking in the garden in the cool of day ; as conversing with man in the most familiar way, calling unto him when he does not come forward. Of course all agree that in such descriptions of divine activity, taking into account the spiritual, monotheistic standpoint of the author, the share of imagination is a very extensive one. But the scholars whose opinion we are now outlining think that even that remark offers a foundation to further inferences in the same direction. From descriptions of that kind, thus they argue, we are logically compelled, and the Hebrews also had every reason to guess or to conclude, that the narrative was composed in the picturesque popular style, and that consequently there might be expected in it other notions borrowed from, or adapted to, legendary traditions.

The serpent appears in the narrative as the well-known reptile of that name. But again it is, and especially for the ancient Hebrews<sup>1</sup> it must have been, easy to perceive, so at least it would seem, that we are confronted here with a metamorphosis in the style of popular tale of higher symbolical speculations. As a symbol of the power of darkness, hostilely raging against the Creator of light and order, the serpent-like figure was so generally recognised amongst peoples of antiquity, notably amongst such as

<sup>1</sup> In later Jewish schools things were rather understood in a rough, literal way, and the case of the serpent's conversation with the woman led to the extravagant belief that before the Fall beasts in general were endowed with the faculty of speaking as well as man. But from this fact no one will infer that such would have been the meaning intended by the author, or admitted by the first readers of the narrative.

Babylonians and Egyptians, with whom the Hebrew lived in close intercourse, and the Hebrews themselves, as appears, for instance, from the book of Job (iii. 8, vii. 12, ix. 13, xxvi. 12, 13), were so apt to make use of the symbolical value of the serpent monster in the mythology of their neighbours, that they hardly could fail to consider that the serpent of the paradise story, which acts the part of God's adversary, was meant as a realistic reproduction of the power of darkness, acting here on the field of morals. The text itself pointed clearly enough that way. The first part of the malediction of the serpent (iii. 14) answers, in fact, to the metamorphosis under which the narrative introduces the tempter: "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle . . . ; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life . . ." But, that the author would have the rebuke to be implicitly understood according to an intended analogy, the repulsiveness of the serpent being meant as figurative of the reprobation of the fiend, the immediate sequel of the divine sentence distinctly suggested (v. 15): "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." These solemn words do not simply refer to the sense of aversion that man feels towards the serpent as towards many other kinds of animals, nor to the eager pursuit of extermination which animates man against the serpent as against many other animals, such inclinations or affections of the mind having no concern whatever with the fate of mankind. A great victory is promised to the seed of the woman. The struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, in which the former is indeed hurt at the heel, thus undergoing an accidental injury, but at the same time crushes the enemy's head, is, as to the mere image, a speaking counterpart to the serpent-

struggle which, according to heathen mythology, ends with the triumph of the God of light over the power of night, with this difference, that in the biblical document the serpent and its seed represent in a definite manner the principle of moral evil, the seed of the woman that of moral good.

When one, reading Genesis iii. 15, thinks of the fight of Marduk against Tiamat in the Babylonian epic, or of the struggle between the serpent Apophis and Osiris depicted in the 39th chapter of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, or of other similar descriptions, he only follows the direction given in the Apocalypse of St. John. The author of the Apocalypse, in chapter xii., obviously looking back to the prophecy of the contest between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, shows us the bearing Woman, clothed with the light of sun and moon and stars, against whom war is waged by the great seven-headed, ten-horned red dragon, with the result that the dragon, "*that old serpent*," called the devil and Satan," is cast out into earth by Michael and his angels. All circumstances being taken into account, it does not appear that the dragon of the Apocalypse is the exaggeration, but the serpent of the paradise story the reduction of the original figure.

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But the question about the standard according to which the essential contents of the history of the Fall ought to be distinguished from the accidental form of the narrative, is perhaps susceptible of being answered in a more comprehensive manner.

The objections to which the credibility of the history of the Fall has been in the past, and is still at present, liable among many, are all closely connected with the matter of the earthly paradise. If now it were true that a distinction ought to be made in our story between kernel or doctrinal

substance and mere external envelope or form, most likely this would be owing to the literary process by which the biblical narrative came into existence. Let us, for the sake of argument, provisionally suppose that there was current or commonly known amongst the ancient Hebrews a popular tale, no matter whether inherited from the primitive common stock of Semitic traditions or borrowed from without, which in its proper form had no concern whatever with the history of men, but told of a paradise or a wonderful garden occupied by inmates of a quite different kind ; let us further suppose that such a tale was in course of time taken up by the biblical author, or even before him, orally, by the spiritual leaders of the people, and made use of in order to serve as a means for the narration and adornment of the history of the parents of mankind. Then we shall understand at once how it came that the state of happiness of the first men was depicted as the sojourn in a garden, why Sin was represented as having consisted in the eating of the forbidden fruit of a wonderful tree—without the least necessity of such images being intended as part of the doctrinal truth. There also would be no doubt whatever that the ancient Hebrew readers of the narrative were apt, indeed at least as well as we are, to distinguish in it doctrinal contents from accessories, seeing that they surely would have knowledge of the supposed primitive tale.

The question, therefore, is whether there are sufficient grounds for us to justify our view concerning the literary process by which the narrative of Genesis ii.-iii. took its actual form.

At the very outset an objection might be raised against our view, from the fact that in Genesis ii. 8, it seems to be stated explicitly that the paradise was from the first moment of its existence exclusively destined to serve as a dwelling-



place for man : “ And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden ; and there he put the man whom he had formed. . . . ” This statement, however, would not in any case seriously impair our argument. It could be accounted for as a quite natural result of the adaptation of the original tale to the history of the first man.

Moreover, a closer consideration of the text would possibly bring us to a starting-point on the true track. Further on in the narrative it is recorded again that God placed the man in the paradise, as if no mention had been made of it before, (ii. 15) : “ And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (לעבדה ולשמרה) ; (16) and the Lord God commanded the man. . . . ” etc. Critics now pronounce that ii. 15 is a later addition to the text, interpolated, thus they argue, to resume the thread of the narrative after it had been interrupted by the long description of the lands watered by the four rivers (ii. 10–14), which is also held by them as interpolated. But the supposition that the description of the rivers and the lands irrigated by them should be held as inserted by a second hand, is a quite gratuitous one. The passage appears, in fact, to be a very old one, except perhaps some slight modifications. That it belongs, as to its main traits, to the original description of the paradise in our narrative, may be inferred from the consideration that the stream of vivifying waters appears also as an essential element in Ezekiel’s poetical picture of the new paradise into which the holy land will be converted (Ezek. xlvii. ; cf. Zech. xiv. 8, Joel iv. 18), and even in the vision of the heavenly paradise in the book of Revelation (xxii.). As to the thread of the narrative which is said to be interrupted by Genesis ii. 10–14, it will suffice to notice that the only place in which that thread is to be traced before the description of the rivers is just the incidental mention of

God putting the man in the garden in *v. 8b*, and that therefore it would be much simpler to suppress this statement alone as a later interpolation. This would seem, in fact, an advisable correction, as a glance at the text will convince us: (8) "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; *and there He put the man whom He had formed.* (9) And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree . . ." etc. Here the man appears to be put into the garden before the trees are there, which is not quite appropriate. If anywhere a thread would appear to be cut off, it would be the one connecting *v. 8a* with *v. 9*. Very likely *v. 8b* was originally a marginal note indicating, in the same way as the chapter-headings in our books do, the contents of the narrative beginning at that point, and afterwards introduced into the text at the cost of the repetition of the subject in *v. 9*.

The only authentic mention of putting the man into the garden will be that of *v. 15*, where it stands in its place, after the description of the paradise.

Now, in *v. 15*, we read that Jahve God put the man into the garden *to till it and to guard it*. Some critics assert that this is contradictory to *iii. 17 ff.*, where it is stated (according to their view) that the man was condemned to till the ground *as a punishment for his sin*. The remark is not correct. Not properly to be bound to work, but to be doomed to lifelong hard and painful working "in the sweat of his face," to laborious struggling against a hostile ground that brings forth thorns and thistles, is man's punishment for sin. Nevertheless the charge imposed upon him, in *ii. 15*, does deserve all our attention. It is remarkable that the man does not appear here as a master in the paradise, nor simply as an enjoyer of it, but in the first place as appointed to a definite office. If he had had to till the ground only for himself and for his own convenience,

why should it be said that he was put there *to till the ground*? It seems to be supposed that there was another being, or were some other beings, in whose service the man might be understood to be charged with tilling, and in whose behalf he had to guard the paradise. One could ask why it was at all necessary that the wonderful garden should be tilled? Did not plants of every kind grow there by themselves? And then, against whom or what had the garden to be protected? Not against the beasts, as later Jewish exposition would have it (Jubilees iii. 16); for the beasts are supposed to have had free access to the paradise (Gen. ii. 19 f.; iii. 1). From such considerations it might seem already as if in our narrative the man was connected with the paradise by something as an artificial link, binding divergent notions and representations together.

Our suspicion becomes stronger when we ask ourselves how it comes that the first punishment of the man's sin consists, not in the suppression of the paradise, but in his expulsion out of it, precautions being taken against his coming ever back to it again and approaching to the tree of life. Even without men the paradise, with its wonderful trees, is preserved as having still a reason for its existence and a proper destination. What this destination was, for whom the paradise had still to serve as a dwelling-place after the driving out of the two first men, the narrative in Genesis does not tell. But even from this we are apt to infer or to guess that the Genesis narrative supposes, as its literary substructure, a well-known tale which conveyed information on that subject.

At the entrance of the garden, according to Genesis iii. 24, Jahve God put as a watch *the Cherûbîm* and the flaming fire of the revolving sword. Readers are understood to be well acquainted with those Cherûbîm in connexion with the wonderful garden. Would not, perhaps,

in a pre-existing tale which was made use of for the purpose of a popular account of the history of the Fall, the Cherúbim have appeared as the proper original inmates of the divine paradise ?

\* \* \* \* \*

Here is the opportune place to turn our attention to a well-known passage in the Book of Ezekiel, where the divine garden of Eden forms also a foremost part of the scenery. In figurative style the prophet describes the fall of the King of Tyre, the city itself, or the state, interchanging in the prophet's mind with the King. In the first verses of chapter xxviii. he has stigmatised the haughtiness of the prince who said : A god I am, in the seat of a god I sit in the midst of the seas ! Therefore, because his heart was lifted up as the heart of a god, will the Lord let loose against him the enemy who will destroy all his magnificence and wisdom. In *vv.* 11 ff. the sentence is then repeated under a still bolder image :

<sup>11</sup>“The word of the Lord came to me saying : <sup>12</sup> Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the King of Tyre and say to him : Thus saith the Lord God :

“Thou wert a seal of perfection (?), full of wisdom and complete in beauty. <sup>13</sup> In Eden, the garden of Elohim, thou wert ; every precious stone was thy covering : ruby, chrysolite and diamond, topaz, onyx and jasper, sapphire, carbuncle and emerald ; and golden was the work (= *the setting* ?) of thy jewels and thy pearls. In the day that thou wast created, as a ward (?) <sup>14</sup> by the protecting Cherúb I set thee.<sup>1</sup> On the holy mountain of Elohim thou wert and walkedst in the midst of the stones of fire. <sup>15</sup> Thou wast perfect

<sup>1</sup> The massoretic punctuation, as dividing sentences and marking vowels, here and elsewhere in the passage, cannot be maintained. V. 13 : as a *ward* (?) ; thus we venture to translate, reading קַנְנִי (comp. Arab. *kanna*) instead of כַּנְנִי which yields no sense at all ; *v.* 14 : by the protecting Cherúb ; before the word הַכּוֹכָבִים the massoretic text inserts the unintelligible מַשְׁמַרְטִים, probably meant originally as an explanatory gloss on כּוֹכָב (= *protecting*), wrongly taken as a derivate from כּוֹכָב (*to anoint*). The Septuagint Greek translation simply has (13-14) : “From the day (that) I created thee with the Cherúb I set thee. . . .” which very likely may correspond to the original Hebrew.

in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. <sup>16</sup> By the multitude of thy merchandise thou filledst the midst of thee with injustice; thou sinnedst and wert cast out of the mountain of Elohim and the protecting Cherub drove thee out of the midst of the stones of fire. <sup>17</sup> Thine heart was lifted up on account of thy beauty; thou corruptedst thy wisdom for thy brightness. (Because of the multitude of thine iniquities),<sup>1</sup> I cast thee to the ground. Before the kings I laid thee, that they might behold thee. <sup>18</sup> <sup>1</sup> By the iniquity of thy traffic thou defiledst thy holy gifts, and I brought forth a fire from the midst of thee that devoured thee and I brought thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. . .”

Happiness connected with innocence was the original condition of the King or the State of Tyre. That blessedness of former times is pictured by the prophet as a sojourn of the prince in the paradise of Eden. It lasted “from the day that he was created” till “iniquity was found in him.” Then, when opulence, born from traffic, had corrupted his heart, he was driven out of the delightful dwelling-place; the proud city will be reduced to ashes! <sup>2</sup>

Ezekiel certainly knew the story of the Fall. But still it is manifest that some of the traits in his description of the garden of Elohim are not derived directly from the narrative of Genesis. Firstly, this fixed appellation itself of “garden of Elohim,” or “mountain of Elohim,” here (*vv.* 13, 14, 16), and in chapter xxxi. 8 (bis), 9. That the paradise was situated on a mountain (*vv.* 14, 16) Ezekiel did

<sup>1</sup> The words: *because of the multitude of thine iniquities*, must be transferred from the beginning of *v.* 18, where they are not exactly fitting to the context, to *v.* 17, before the sentence: *I cast thee to the ground*. A copyist, in the first instance, wrote them twice, firstly in *v.* 17, in their proper place, then, by repetition, at the beginning of *v.* 18. Thus they appear *twice* in the Greek version of the Septuagint. Afterwards they were omitted in *v.* 17 and preserved only in the wrong place, at the beginning of *v.* 18, as the massoretic text has it.

<sup>2</sup> On Ezek. xxviii. cf. the highly interesting paper of Prof. Bevan, “The King of Tyre in Ezekiel xxviii.,” in the *Journal of Theological Studies* (vol. iv., 1903, p. 500 ff.), which was brought to my notice by Prof. Emery Barnes, only, as I deeply regret, after the present article was printed.

not find in the Genesis document. The stones of fire strewed all over the garden (14, 16) are also taken from elsewhere. Finally and chiefly the notion that the paradise was the proper homestead of the "protecting Cherûb," thus a place of residence of Cherûbîm, where a human being only could abide as a guest, Ezekiel surely had not to infer from the Genesis narrative, but learned, as explicitly stated, from another source.

At the same time, however, the parallelism between the "lamentation" on the king of Tyre and the Genesis account of the Fall is evident. Of course the prophet does not make the sin of the king to consist in the eating of a forbidden fruit. He knew from the source that he made use of that the garden of Elohîm was planted with magnificent trees (xxx. 8, 9). But the fault with which he intended to charge the prince representing Tyre was not a definite act of disobedience and rebellion, it was in a more general way the corruption gradually engendered by commerce. Such a moral condition could not be figured by any single action such as the violation of the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil." Nor was there any room for such a metaphor as the tree of "life"; the prophet never intended to teach that immortality or preventatives against death once were provided for the King of Tyre; and, moreover, it was natural, since the tree of knowledge was not to be mentioned, that both trees were left out of notice. But as to the main purpose, the time of Tyre's good fortune and happiness is described as a sojourn of the king, from the day of his creation, in the wonderful garden of Eden, just as the original state of happiness of the first human pair is depicted in the Genesis document as a sojourn, from the day of their creation, in the paradise of Eden. Through sin the king forfeits his happiness or prosperity and is banished from the mountain

of Elohim and cast down on the earth, where he,—that is his city—shall be reduced to ashes, just as the first two human beings forfeit their privileges and are driven out of the paradise, smitten with the malediction which condemns man to return one day to the dust of the earth. Of such a parallelism Ezekiel was not unaware; it may safely be held as intended by him.

The conclusion seems to be unavoidable that Ezekiel knew how to distinguish in the narrative of Genesis the essential doctrinal contents from mere ornamental form borrowed from the legend of the garden of Elohim. The use that the prophet made, with regard to the King of Tyre, of the image of the wonderful garden, as it was known by him even independently from the Genesis account, that same use he surely meant to have been made of the image by the author of this account, *imitated by him*, with regard to the first human pair. To the history of the first man in Genesis the paradise must not have been more than it is to the poetical sketch of the long career of Tyre in the Book of Ezekiel: a means of adaptation to popular lore and notions.

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Before we proceed to adduce one or two more grounds for the proposed explanation of the literary origin of the Genesis narrative, it will not be out of place to insert here just a word of precaution to prevent any misunderstanding of the position we have taken. In the previous pages we put the question as if the author of Genesis, or, if one likes, the initiator or initiators of the oral tradition which led directly to the Genesis account of the Fall, had been the first to make the notion of the garden of the Cherubim subservient to some teaching or consideration about human beings. In reality, however, we do not mean to deny that, just as Ezekiel imitated the proceeding of the author of

Genesis, even so this author himself may have found, in Babylonian literature, some model to work after. This would not in any way impair the originality or the value of his own special teaching.

\* \* \* \* \*

The garden of Eden being commonly known amongst ancient Hebrews as the dwelling-place of the Cherûbîm, it is not to be wondered at that the narrator in Genesis supposes his readers acquainted with the connexion of the Cherûbîm with the paradise when he speaks of *the* Cherûbîm put as a watch at the entrance of the garden. Nor does it any longer surprise us that the loss of supernatural privileges for the first man is described, not as a suppression of the garden and the tree of life, but as a banishment of man out of the garden and from the neighbourhood of the tree. According to the popular notion, used as a means or instrument of teaching by the inspired author, the garden and the tree retained, even after the driving out of the man, their proper original destination with regard to the Cherûbîm.

Whom the serpent meant, when it said to the woman "you will be as *elohîm*"—that is to say, as *divine beings*—"who know good and evil"; whom consequently also Jahve meant, when, alluding to the serpent's words, he made the ironical statement: "Behold, the man is become as one of us," may now be guessed in a quite satisfactory way. "*Elohîm*" here are not exactly "gods," and the assertion that the terms in which the statement attributed to Jahve is expressed contain a relic of old polytheistic belief, is gratuitous. The name "*elohîm*" was used also to signify, in a more general, indefinite manner, superhuman beings (1 Sam. xxvii. 13). In the serpent's address to the woman, and in the corresponding statement of Jahve, most probably the Cherûbîm are referred to, whom Jahve associates



with Himself as the celestial inmates of the wonderful garden, in opposition to man. The appellation "garden—or mountain—of *elohîm*," in Ezekiel's description, might well have the same import; Ezekiel does not usually name God by the mere appellation "Elohîm."

Keeping in mind the view presented above we can understand perfectly how it came that in the paradise there was a tree, the tree of "knowledge of good and evil," of which man was forbidden to eat. The objection that such a tree should never have been in the garden is not, we think, adequately answered by the consideration that the forbidden fruit was only a means of trial for man's obedience. With regard to such a purpose an indifferent tree would have been quite sufficient. Now, the qualification of the tree of *knowledge of good and evil* points to an inward, specific character of the tree in view. It is a tree the eating of whose fruit is expected to make man equal to "*elohîm*," as the serpent supposes the woman prepared to admit; the tree of "knowledge," as one of a special kind, is intimately associated with the tree of "life," even before any mention is made of God's command (ii. 9). Therefore the question arises: To what end should such a tree, which it was forbidden to man to touch, have been in the garden at all? Our answer is that both the trees of knowledge and of life were, of course, according to the popular notion of the garden of the Cherûbîm, primarily intended for the use of those Cherûbîm. The doctrine that man was created in a state of happiness is intimated in our narrative by the statement that he was placed in the wonderful garden; the doctrine that man, in his original state of innocence, was destined never to die, is intimated by the circumstance that he once had access to the tree of life, from which the Cherûbîm ate immortality; that a definite rule of life was imposed upon man by God is intimated in the prohibition

to partake of the tree of knowledge which is understood to remain exclusively reserved for the use of the Cherûbîm : men must not attempt to become the equals of superhuman beings.

But when man transgressed the divine law, he lost his privileges without attaining the coveted advantage. Critics and expositors try at best to explain how the account of man's experience after the eating of the forbidden fruit, Genesis iii. 7, signifies the acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil. Their endeavours are as painful as they are in vain. The opinion, in particular, that, according to iii. 7, man's gaining the knowledge of good and evil would consist in his growing to the consciousness of sexual difference, is, in regard of the man's address to the woman when he first saw her (ii. 23 f.), and of the qualification of the first men, even there and in the subsequent narrative, as man and wife, absolutely untenable. In fact Genesis iii. 7 does not intend to signify that by eating of the forbidden tree the first men acquired the knowledge of good and evil ; but, on the contrary, that they did *not* acquire it. The remark has been made, quite rightly, that the knowledge of *good and evil* considered in the narrative does not refer properly to *moral* good and evil in general as its object. One does not see how the knowledge of moral good and evil could have been represented by the tempter as a privilege making man equal to " *elohîm*," nor why the man would have been so eager to acquire that knowledge ; nor why God would have at all been imagined to have forbidden the acquisition of such knowledge by man. Moreover, the knowledge of moral good and evil must evidently be supposed to have been in man before the eating of the fruit, since it was the condition of his responsibility in his behaviour towards God's law. In Hebrew the phrase " good and evil " is employed to denote the notion of " every-

thing" (Gen. xxiv. 50 ; xxxi. 24, 29 ; 2 Sam. xiii. 22, etc.). To *know everything* was what the tempter promised to the woman (iii. 5): ". . . God knows that in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as *elohim* who know good and evil." And what was the result? v. 7: ". . . And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" . . . Purposely the narrator repeats the mention of the opening of the eyes in order to express more keenly the opposition between the promised and expected boon and the wretched outcome. Not the knowledge of "everything"—a knowledge that he could boast of—but one to abasement and shame, the consciousness of the rupture of harmony between his higher and his lower faculties was all that man had won. Therefore we said that God's statement in iii. 22 was ironical.<sup>1</sup> But now again: How did it come that the tree of knowledge of "good and evil," whose fruit was apt to impart knowledge of "everything," missed its effect with man? Because, as the ancient Hebrews well knew to read between the lines, the tree of knowledge was held to be intended not for the use of man, but for the use of the super-human beings whose natural dwelling-place the wonderful garden of Eden was.

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<sup>1</sup> It would be out of place to dwell longer on this point here. Let us only notice that the ironical character of God's words is suggested also by His putting it as a sufficient condition for man to secure for himself eternal life, that he should put forth his hand and eat *once* from the tree of life.