

Creation Tradition in Proverbs 8: 22–31 and Genesis 1

It is somewhat surprising to discover that scholarly treatments dealing with a more or less detailed comparison between Prov 8: 22–31 and Gen 1 are virtually nonexistent. To be sure, in the massive literature on Gen 1, there are occasional allusions to Prov 8: 22–31; while in the somewhat less numerous studies on the latter, there are also sporadic references to specific points in Gen 1. But apparently nowhere has anyone concentrated on examining these two literary units in relation to one another. Presumably this is because even a superficial study of them turns up more obvious differences than points of contact, so that the effort of closely comparing them would not seem to be a very fruitful or appropriate enterprise. Hence, though in 1914 Morris Jastrow asserted rather categorically that in Prov 8 “the description given of Creation may be regarded as a poetical paraphrase of the account of Creation in Genesis,”¹ few scholars—including Jastrow himself—have bothered to demonstrate the validity of such a statement through a searching comparative analysis of the two texts. Perhaps what would seem to be a scholarly consensus in this respect is correct: except for drawing upon some common resources of ancient Near Eastern creation tradition, Prov 8 and Gen 1 diverge quite radically from each other in form, style, purpose, and certain matters of content. Nevertheless, it is the underlying contention of this paper that these two passages deserve a more careful comparative study than has hitherto been given them, not because their acknowledged differences are deemed any less striking or significant but because what points of contact between them do exist merit greater attention and more thorough evaluation than they have previously received, while the results of the comparative analysis do suggest certain implications for the

understanding of each that are not clear when they are studied in isolation. The limitations of time and space imposed on the preparation and length of this study have precluded the present writer from undertaking the most comprehensive type of examination needed, but perhaps the basic data can be set forth here, leaving the treatment of some of the more complex issues and problems raised for a later investigation.

At the outset, it is important to be clear about the distinctive differences between Prov 8 and Gen 1, as the proper background against which to distinguish and analyze their similarities and mutually informing conceptions. With regard to *form*, Prov 8: 22 ff serves as the final strophe of a three-strophe poem which Aage Bentzen has perhaps correctly characterized as a poetic allegory.² Its predominant poetic unit is the bicolon (the principal exceptions are vss 29–30, which are tricola), with a 3 + 3 meter and synonymous parallelism. Gen 1 of course is a prose narrative or story, and though Cassuto³ is probably right that it goes back to an original poetic prototype (a fragment of which is most clearly seen in the section on the creation of man, 1: 27–28), the subsequent prose form has sufficiently modified the verse structure of the poetic original so that it is no longer possible to reconstruct the verse units or discern their metrical patterns,⁴ except in 1: 27–28 and possibly at several other points where poetic reminiscences seem to be present (in 1: 2, 5, 16, and in the refrains . . . *wyhy 'rb wyhy bqr ywm . . .* and *wyr' 'lhym ky-*twb**. But even here, what parallelism is noticeable is not of the most archaic type—that is, synonymous.⁵ The *Sitz im Leben* for the form of Prov 8: 22 ff was presumably the same as for the nine discourses in Prov 1–7—the teacher-pupil relationship, in which the hearer would be instructed in the nature, function, value, and origin of wisdom. The *Sitz im Leben* for Gen 1 is more difficult to ascertain with any assurance. Its original setting was perhaps cultic, celebrating not only the Creator-God and his creation works, but also the climactic event of the cessation of creation activity, which Israelite tradition related to the institution of the sabbath. All efforts, however, to persuade us that Gen 1 represents the later reworking of a cultic liturgy used in the Temple on the occasion of some kind of Yahwistically baptized Hebrew New Year's festival fall short of convincing evidence or proof.⁶ Whether in its present form Gen 1 ever served a nonliturgical purpose outside its context in the Genesis traditions is impossible to say. It is not inconceivable that it may have been used to instruct about the peculiarly Israelite conception of God's creation activity in vivid contrast to that manifest in the Canaanite milieu. But there is little clear evidence to show that Gen 1 was ever used (and hence perhaps redacted) by the wise men in the pursuance of their pedagogical interests. Unlike Prov 8: 22 ff, Gen 1 is largely devoid of specific wisdom motifs and

terminology, though there are places where it is possible some wisdom influence may lie in the background. We shall return to that matter toward the end of this study.

An examination of *language and terminology* in Prov 8: 22 ff leaves the impression that it is somewhat more archaic, with a richer diversity of expression than is found in Gen 1. To be sure, there are not many rare or unusual words in Prov 8: 22 ff, and few, if any, indisputable remnants of old Canaanite grammatical features. But several words do point to older usages. Three of these occur in the opening verse: *qnyy*, where the meaning “to beget, produce, create,” would seem to be earlier than the much more common “to buy, acquire, possess”;⁷ *drkw*, which probably should not be related to *derek*, “way”, but to Ugar *drkt*, “dominion, authority” (unless Dahood⁸ is correct that we should read this as a verb form, and even so, in accordance with his interpretation, the meaning would be rare); and *qdm* in the sense of a divine appellative, “the Primeval One” (so Dahood), which accords well with the parallelism in vs 22, though the usual understanding of “before” cannot be ruled out. In vs 23, there would seem to be two old usages: *m'wlm* makes good sense construed as a divine appellative, “the Eternal One” (again following Dahood⁹), particularly if *m'z* is made the first word of the second bicolon, as seems stylistically and metrically preferable to the MT division; the verb *nskty*, if the Masoretic pointing is correct, refers to a creation by “outpouring,” apparently a very archaic idea in the ancient Near East,¹⁰ though used only here in that sense in the Old Testament.¹¹ If *nkbdy-mym* in vs 24 should stand for an original *nbkmym* or *nbky-mym*, we would clearly be dealing with an old expression referring to the primordial waters, well known from Ugaritic.¹² *Bhkynw* (vs 27) is probably best understood in light of Ugaritic-Phoenician *kwn*, “to be”; only here it is in the *Hiph'il*, “to bring into being.”¹³ Finally, Albright would seem to be correct in viewing *'mwn* (vs 30) as a Canaanite reminiscence.¹⁴

By contrast with Prov 8: 22 ff, the vocabulary of Gen 1 is much more typically classical Hebrew and less varied. Though it agrees with Prov 8 in using certain words,¹⁵ none of the rarer forms mentioned above occur in Gen 1.¹⁶ It is true that Gen 1 has some rare forms of its own that do not appear in Prov 8: 22 ff, but they are not quite so numerous.¹⁷ The vocabulary referring to similar actions or things tends to be more variegated in Prov 8: 22 ff than in Gen 1. For example, the former employs ten different verbal roots to indicate creation (*qnh*, *nsk*, *hwl*, *tb'*, *'sh*, *kwn*, *hqq*, *'ms*, *'zz*, and *sym*), while Gen 1 has basically only three (*br'*, *'sh*, and *hyh*, though perhaps *bdl* should be added, since it is the verb used with the distinctive creation act of separating between light and darkness). Prov 8: 22 ff and Gen 1

thus agree only in the use of one of these verbs (*'šh*), and even here the object(s) of the verbal action is (are) different. Strikingly, the root *br'* occurs nowhere in Prov 8: 22 ff, while it is used four times in Gen 1 (as is *'šh*). In the terminology indicating what is created—the constituent elements of the world and the cosmos—Prov 8: 22 ff and Gen 1 are in basic agreement on the following: *lhw̄m*, *mym*, *šmym*, *ym*, *'rš*, and possibly *'dm* (though no explicit Creation vocabulary is used with *'dm* in Prov 8: 31). Prov 8: 22 ff, however, has one or more synonyms for several of these words: for *lhw̄m*: *lhw̄wt*, *m'ynwt*, *nbkm-ym* or *nbky-mym*, *'ynwt*; for *šmym*: *hwg*, *šhqqm*; for *'rš*: *hwšwt*, *'prwt lbl*, *lbl 'ršw*. Gen 1 uses *rqy'* for *šmym* and *ybšh* for *'rš*. In Prov 8: 22 ff, eight objects receive mention as being created which are not specified as such in Gen 1: *hkmh*, *m'ynwt*, *hrym*, *gb'wt*, *hwšwt*, *'prwt*, *lbl*, *hwg 'l-pny lhw̄m*, *mwsdy 'rš*. Of these, perhaps only *hkmh*, *hrym*, *gb'wt*, and *mwsdy 'rš* should be understood as not covered by another expression in Gen 1. On the other hand, Gen 1 describes the creation of six things not so indicated in Prov 8: 22 ff: light, plants, heavenly bodies, marine life, animals, and man. Prov 8: 22 ff also omits any mention of the primordial darkness, and hence of the separation of light and darkness. Another interesting terminological difference is in the name of the creator-God: for Prov 8: 22 ff, it is the personal name Yahweh, mentioned only once (vs 22), together with perhaps two appellatives, *qdm* (vs 22) and *'wlm* (vs 23), while for Gen 1, it is always 'Elohim, mentioned twenty-seven times.¹⁸ The terminological differences between Prov 8: 22 ff and Gen 1 are, of course, due not simply to variant origins and sources of creation tradition but also to the different purposes for which each document was composed, and to that we now turn.

The purpose of Prov 8: 22 ff within the entire poem of chapter 8 would seem to embody three basic points: 1) the priority of wisdom's creation in relation to all other creation activity by Yahweh (8: 22–26); 2) the presence of wisdom in the time when all other creation events took place (8: 27–30a); and 3) the constant joy of God in wisdom and wisdom's reciprocal delight in God and in the world (8: 30a–31). It follows from this that Prov 8: 22 ff does not seek to be a creation story in poetic form; nor does it necessarily reflect a full account of Yahweh's creation activity. Thus, it should not be judged by what it omits in relation to Gen 1. The latter, on the other hand, does intend to give a more comprehensive account of creation. It is interested in the origin of the cosmos and each of its fundamental constitutive elements. But it wants to say something not only about *what* was created—including its ordering and goodness—but also about *who* is the Creator—including the mode of his creating and the relationship between himself and what he creates. In light of these differences in purpose, it is easier

to account for the differences in content between the two passages. Thus, in order to accomplish his purpose, the poet of Prov 8: 22 ff does not need to include such creation events as light, its separation from darkness, the making of the heavenly bodies and of all the forms of life from plants to man, while the author of Gen 1, on his part, had no compelling reason to say something about the creation of wisdom, or to add such details as the topographical features of hills, mountains, and fields, or such cosmic elements as the foundations of the earth. But though these differences do exist, and cannot be discounted, it is instructive to look at those points where certain affinities occur between Prov 8: 22 ff and Gen 1, and to probe their implications.

AFFINITIES BETWEEN PROV 8: 22 ff AND GEN 1

THE NATURE OF CREATION EVENTS

Though Prov 8: 22 ff is not a creation story like Gen 1, it does mention certain creation events. Verse 22–26 speak of the cosmic and world situation *before* creation of the heavens and the earth—that is, when only wisdom had been created. Though creation events are mentioned here as having not yet occurred, it is doubtful that the author intended the order in which he mentions them to correspond with the order of their later occurrence. In vss 27–29 he speaks of creation events, not still to come but as having already happened: the bringing into being of the heavens and the placing of the vault on the surface of the circumambient ocean that surrounds and is beneath the earth (vs 27); the strengthening of the vault of heaven above and of the sources of the Deep below (vs 28)¹⁹; setting limits for the sea beyond which it is not to pass (vs 29a); and carving the subterranean mountains, the pillars upon which the flat disk of the earth rests (vs 29b).

Gen 1 would seem to tie in with two of these events: the making of the *rqy'* or heavenly vault (1: 6–8), and the gathering of the waters into one place (1: 9–10). They occur together in the same order as in Prov 8: 27–29, though their respective descriptions are quite different. Whereas in Prov 8: 27, the *šmym* are “brought into being” (*hkyn*), in Gen 1: 7, God “makes” (*wy's*) the *rqy'* which will be subsequently named *šmym* (1: 8). To be sure, the *rqy'* is one of those elements which God creates by fiat: *yhy rqy'*, but this does not preclude additional divine activity in “making” and “separating.” Thus Prov 8: 22 ff agrees with Gen 1 that the heavens involved more than the divine fiat in their creation, but they diverge in the terminology used to describe the divine activity. Prov 8: 22 ff and Gen 1 also agree that creation of the heavenly vault at the same time involved some action with regard to the already existing primordial waters. In both texts, these

waters are conceived as below the vault, though the Genesis passage is quite explicit that they are both below *and above* the vault—it is the vault itself that separates the waters above from those below. The Proverbs text may also presuppose the same conceptuality, but it is not explicit. Certainly the inscribing of the circle on the surface of *thwm* suggests the preparation for the placing of the circular heavenly vault on the waters that surround the earth (which is perhaps still thought of as uncreated, or at least hidden within the waters, as in Gen 1: 9). The fact that this vault needs to be strengthened or steadied (*b'mšw*) “from above” (*mm'l*) is perhaps meant to suggest that the waters above it are quite powerful, so that what is to keep them back must be strong or steady. But how does this relate to *b'zwz ynwł thwm*? Scott's translation in the Anchor Bible²⁰ gives the impression he thinks these words may refer to the creation of the sources of the Deep (“and made the mighty fountains of the abyss”), but this is problematical in light of 8: 27b, in which *thwm* is already in existence. Perhaps it means that when the Deep had to bear the whole weight of the heavenly vault, with the waters above pressing down upon it, it had to be strengthened in order to support the vault. This would seem to be the best interpretation in the context. Prov 8: 29a should possibly be connected with Gen 1: 9, where action with respect to the waters below the heavens is described. Again the terminology is somewhat different, but the basic idea may be the same. In Gen 1: 9, the lower waters are to be gathered into one gathering (or place), which clearly implies limitation. Moreover, these waters receive the name *yammim*, which is quite close to *layyām* in Prov 8: 29a. The meaning of the following words, *wym l' y'brw-pyw*, is somewhat difficult, but clearly they reinforce the idea of limitation and control. If Dahood's translation is followed (“lest the waters should cross its edge”),²¹ the “limit” or “edge” of the sea would presumably be the earth or “dry land” of Gen 1: 9, where it is the purpose of the gathering of the waters into one area to cause the dry land to appear. In light of this, it is perhaps significant that the next words in Prov 8: 29 refer to the carving of the “foundations of the earth”—that is, making the necessary preparations so that the earth can be fixed above the subterranean waters of the Deep. Thus Prov 8: 29b would envision the creation of the earth after the limitation imposed upon the sea, just as in Gen 1: 9–10.

THE MODE OF CREATION ACTIVITY

As already pointed out, Prov 8: 22 ff employs a great many more verbs than does Gen 1 to describe God's creative work. They agree in the use of *'šh*, though not explicitly in the object of this verb. In Prov 8: 26, the object is *'rs*, while in Gen 1, there are four objects: *rqy'* (1: 7), *šny hm'rt hgdlym* (1: 16), *h'yt h'rs* (1: 25), and *'dm* (1: 26). Though *'rs* is not among any of

these, it is perhaps implicit in Gen 1: 31, *wyr' 'lhy m 't . . . kl-'šr 'šh*. Thus Prov 8: 22 ff and Gen 1 are in agreement that creation does involve direct and mediate divine activity. All the other verbs used in Prov 8: 22 ff reinforce this, though the images are quite varied and more precise in some respects than those contained or conveyed in *br'*, *'šh*, and *hyh* of Genesis. Thus we have “begetting” or “creating” (*qnh*), emanation or outpouring (*nsk*); birth (*hwl*), planting (*tb'*), inscribing (*hqq*), strengthening (*'zz*), (*'mš*), setting (*šym*), and carving (*hqq*). Quite distinct in Gen 1 is the conception of creation by divine fiat or command, or by fiat accompanied either by God's activity (“making”, *wy's*) or by some created element participating in furthering the creative process. Light is the only thing in Gen 1 described as created by fiat alone (1: 3). Darkness, the sky, earth, seas, heavenly bodies, and man are all created by fiat *plus* some divinely instigated type of activity, described by the verbs *bdl* (for darkness), *'šh* (for the heavenly vault, luminaries, and man), *qwh* (for the waters), and *br'* (for the sea monsters and man). In the creation of plant and marine life, God is assisted by *h'rs* (1: 11) and *hmym* (1: 20), respectively. Even with regard to animal life, *h'rs* seems to play a mediating role (1: 24). For the creation of man, God apparently first consults or deliberates with his divine council (1: 26), though it is not clear that they assist in bringing man to existence. If the motif of *hkmh* had been in Gen 1, even implicitly, one might conclude, in light of one possible interpretation of the role of *hkmh* in Prov 8, that the subject of *n'sh* could refer to 'Elohim and wisdom, or to the presence of wisdom personified among the members of God's council. However, with no mention or even allusion to *hkmh* in Gen 1, this interpretation is ruled out.

But this raises the question of what role or function *hkmh* has in Prov 8: 22 ff. In vss 22–29, it is clear that *hkmh* is present and existing when the creation of the cosmos takes place. It is not obvious that *hkmh* assists or in any way executes the divine will with respect to the creation events.²² Though this may be what the author wanted understood, particularly in view of Prov 3: 19, it is also possible that only the existence, as against the participation, of wisdom in creation is all that was intended to be emphasized. The crux is the interpretation of the disputed *'mwn* in 8: 30a. If *'mwn* means “craftsman, architect, wizard,” or the like, and is to be construed as identifying wisdom's role in creation, then the problem is solved. Here we would have explicit indication of wisdom's active functioning in creation. But if Dahood is right,²³ and *'mwn* is to be understood as an appositive related to the suffix on *'šlw* referring to God, then wisdom's presence but passive role would seem to be all that is meant. I am inclined toward the latter interpretation, agreeing with Dahood that if the former were meant, the expression and arrangement of words would most likely be different.

However, if *ḥkmh* does assist Yahweh in creation, then its role is somewhat in line with *'rṣ* and *hmym* (and perhaps the other members in the subject of *n'sh* in 1: 26) in Gen 1.

CREATION AND THE PRIMORDIAL WATERS

To my knowledge, there is no text in the Old Testament which speaks directly of God's creation of the primordial waters (*thwm*, *thwmwt*). Prov 8: 22 ff comes closest when it states quite explicitly (8: 24) that there was a time "when there were no deeps" (*thwmwt*), and then in 8: 27-28 speaks of *thwm* as existing, the implication being that subsequently the subterranean waters were created, presumably prior to the heavens. In Gen 1, the creation of *thwm* is not described as a part of God's creative activity in relation to the world. It is already assumed to be in existence, along with darkness and *h'rṣ* in the state of *thw wbhw*, in Gen 1: 2. All these are "givens" when God begins to create the heavens and the earth.²⁴ The negative formulations in Prov 8: 24, 26 are rightly compared to similarly cast statements in several of the ancient Near Eastern creation traditions,²⁵ but in contrast to this type of formulation in Prov 8: 22 ff and the ancient Near Eastern creation texts, Gen 1: 2 is not negative in form, even though it may be somewhat in meaning. It is asserted there not what *h'rṣ* was *not* but what it *was*—that is, *thw wbhw*. Admittedly, *thw wbhw* bears a negative connotation by implication, in that it describes *h'rṣ* in its pre-creation form of darkened desolation or gloomy waste—certainly negative qualities—but it is only by implication and not by a formal, direct negation. There may also be a question as to how negative darkness was considered to be by the Gen 1 author, for it is not radically changed or destroyed in creation, but simply limited and incorporated into the temporal structure of the world as night. With respect to *thwm*, its existence in the pre-creation situation is simply assumed, without any overt perjorative connotations. Nothing is said about its origin or of conditions before its existence. The only hint of a possible negative note is in the presence of the *rwḥ 'lhym*, "soaring" or "hovering" over *hmym*, where the image is either of the eagle or the hawk circling its prey, thus possibly suggesting some hostility,²⁶ or of the eagle teaching its young to fly by forcing it out of the nest into the air (as in Deut 32: 11). The hostility or conflict motif fits well with those Old Testament passages where Yahweh is depicted as entering into combat with the mighty waters, often personified as Rahab or Leviathan. The word *thwm* does not appear in any of these texts, but we do find *myjm* in parallelism with *thwm* in Ps 104: 6-7, and we find the plural form of *thwm* in a passage alluding to the act of gathering the waters in Ps 33: 6-7. Is Gen 1: 2 intentionally alluding to the motif of God's conflict with the rebellious waters, or is the idea simply of God's

control and authority over the waters for the purpose of utilizing them in creation? Since we perceive no other clues to suggest the writer may have had in mind the more violent conceptuality, it is perhaps better to adhere to the second interpretation—that is, God's moving above the waters in the power of his direction and ordering. Significantly, quite in contrast with the Babylonian conception, where Ti'amat is slain and annihilated before the cosmos is created, the biblical picture never portrays the destruction of the waters or of *thwm*, but only their control and ordering by Yahweh *within* the created cosmos, which, interestingly, is in keeping with Egyptian creation tradition.

THE MOTIF OF PRIORITY IN CREATION

I am unaware of any creation tradition within Israel or elsewhere in the ancient Near East which refers to an absolute beginning—that is, a beginning of *all* things, including the gods. Thus, in the Old Testament, when *r'syt* is used temporally, it never indisputably means "in the beginning" with reference to either the beginning of time or creation. It follows that in Prov 8: 22 and Gen 1: 1, *r'syt* and *br'syt*, respectively, should not be rendered "in the beginning." From the context in Prov 8: 22 ff, it seems clear that *r'syt* means "first" or "foremost," indicating that *ḥkmh* was the first thing to be created, even before the cosmos. This does raise a problem with *drkw* if the latter is not to be construed verbally (with Dahood), but it is not insuperable. If *drk* means "power, authority," then *r'syt drkw* would presumably be something like "the first [manifestation] of his [Yahweh's] power [or authority]," maintaining the idea of priority. This understanding seems to fit the context of Prov 8: 22 quite satisfactorily, and also causes no problems when compared with Gen 1: 1, even though the idea there is somewhat different. Before dealing with that, however, we should mention one other text which does appear to be in tension with Prov 8: 22 if translated as just indicated, and that is Job 40: 19. This passage is the closest parallel in terminology to Prov 8: 22, though it deals not with the creation of *ḥkmh* but of *bhmwt*, the primordial beast. In vs 15, the writer says Yahweh made *bhmwt* but he amplifies this in vs 19 by adding: *hw' r'syt drky-'l*, which the RSV translates: "He is the first of the works of God." Here, however, as in Prov 8: 22, it is likely that *drk* is better connected with the word meaning "power, dominion, sovereignty," so that the translation should be: "He is the first [manifestation or example] of the divine power [dominion or authority]." In 1952, Dahood translated this passage: "He is the finest manifestation of God's power."²⁷ Marvin Pope²⁸ renders: "He is a primordial production of God," which is the most neutral rendition, but not without its difficulties. The Jerusalem Bible has: "He is the masterpiece of all God's

work," admitting in a footnote that the translation is conjectural. If one opts for the priority of *bhmwt* in creation here, then the text clearly opposes Prov 8: 22 (unless of course Scott²⁹ and others are right and vs 22 is not really speaking about the creation of wisdom by God, but only of his possession of it). It would seem unlikely there were two traditions in circulation among the wise men with regard to what God had created first: on the one hand, wisdom; on the other, *bhmwt*. Given such a choice, it is doubtful they would have assigned preeminence to anything but *hkmh*. I am inclined to think that, in view of the whole context of Job 40: 19, *r'syt* should probably be translated much as Dahood has done. Hence, *bhmwt* would not necessarily be Yahweh's first created work, but the finest example of his creative power or dominion (cf vs 19b, "but his Maker must threaten him with the sword"), and consequently imply nothing as to his priority in the whole creative process. Or it is possible that *bhmwt* was thought of simply as the first creature subdued or held in check by God. There is nothing in the context of this passage which forces us to interpret *bhmwt* as a male counterpart of *thwm*, and the Hebrew myth with which he was originally connected may have had nothing to do with a creation story. The setting in which *bhmwt* is described actually presupposes the earth's creation, for it speaks of the mountains which provide food for him, of his natural habitat among lotus plants and trees, reeds, marshes, willows, brooks, and even the river Jordan! Hence this mythological material may have come from a tradition dealing with a post-creation relationship between Yahweh and *bhmwt*.

In Gen 1: 1, *br'syt* is used differently from *r'syt* in Prov 8: 22. The opening of Genesis does not speak of what God created first of all—that is, what he created *before* the heavens and the earth (though this is probably implicit in Gen 1: 2)—but of what he created first when he began to create the cosmos—light. Hence, there is no tension between (*b*) *r'syt* in Gen 1: 1 and Prov 8: 22, though in both texts the word is used to indicate a priority—in each case, a different priority—and to emphasize that there was creation activity prior to the creation of the heavens and the earth. This is of course only implicit in Gen 1: 1–3, more explicit in Prov 8: 22 ff.

THE MOTIF OF JOY IN CREATION

Prov 8: 22 ff concludes on a threefold note of joy: God's constant delight in the wisdom he has created; wisdom's equally perpetual joy in God's presence; and wisdom's rejoicing in the world and mankind (8: 30–31). There is no clear point of contact here with Gen 1, where the motif of joy, if present at all, is considerably more subtle. One may perhaps detect it in the reiterated divine approval of what has been created: "And God saw how good it was . . ." (1: 4 etc.); "And God saw everything he had made, and found it very

good" (1: 31). And perhaps too it was understood as the predominant emotion prevailing when God ceased creating and blessed and sanctified the seventh day. But no verbs or nouns directly indicating joy occur in Gen 1, so that the motif is not as obvious as in Prov 8: 31 or Job 38: 7 ("Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth . . . when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"). Moreover, it would appear that the theme of divine joy in creation in Prov 8 is limited to joy in wisdom, not in the whole creation.

GENESIS 1 AND WISDOM CREATION TRADITIONS

Though Gen 1 is traditionally assigned to the Priestly stratum of literary material in the Pentateuch, there is no compelling demonstration that the priests actually composed this story themselves or even left their unmistakable literary marks upon it.³⁰ This raises anew the question about the literary origin and composition of Gen 1, which, I regret, cannot be undertaken here. It has sometimes been suggested, however, that Gen 1 shows certain affinities to wisdom traditions about creation and to other features characteristic of wisdom interests, and so it is legitimate to ask whether the origin of Gen 1 should not be traced to the literary activity of the wise men. Comparison with Prov 8: 22 ff, however, as well as with wisdom traditions about creation in the Psalter and in Job, does not appear to lend very strong support for such an hypothesis. Both Gen 1 and the wisdom creation texts draw upon common ancient Near Eastern sources for some of their conceptions, but neither seems to be more directly related to one another. Our study of Prov 8: 22 ff in particular has not left the impression that this passage was composed under the influence of Gen 1 or vice versa. The failure of Gen 1 to make any mention at all of *hkmh* or of its function in creation encourages the doubt that this narrative came directly from the hands of the wisdom scribes. Yet, are there any evidences of indirect wisdom influence on Gen 1? It is possible that the two types of plant distinctions made in 1: 11–12 (*dš' 'sb mzyr' zr' lmynhw 'š 'sh pry 'šr zr'w-bw lmynhw*) go back to the kind of observations and classifications associated with the activity of the wise men, though I know of no wisdom text where this specific division is made. A more general relationship to the wise men has been pointed out in the lists of natural phenomena and constituents of the cosmos which one finds in wisdom literature. In his monograph on Gen 1, Werner Schmidt has studied these in relation to the initial creation story, and concluded that there is no convincing case to be made for thinking that the order and arrangement of the created universe and what is named as its constituent elements go back in detail to any of the wise men's *Listenwissenschaft*.³¹

Moreover, there is very little in the language, style, and purpose of Gen 1 that suggests any clear ties with the wisdom movement. But is it possible that some of the traditional elements in Gen 1 came into Israel through Canaanite-Phoenician sources with which the wise men were particularly familiar?³² There are a number of Canaanite-Phoenician reminiscences in Gen 1 that possibly point in this direction. For example, in Gen 1: 2, *bhw* is probably a mythological recollection of the old Phoenician goddess Baau, known from Philo as quoted by Eusebius (*Praep. Evang.* I, 10: 7), but going back originally to the work, now lost, of Sanchuniaton.³³ Baau was a night goddess, who, according to Phoenician myth, united with the east(?) wind to produce the first human creatures. It is possible also that *tnym* in Gen 1: 21 reflects a Canaanite-Phoenician background, since the singular form *tnyn*, referring to some kind of huge marine creature, occurs a number of times in Old Testament poetic passages, and seems related to the Ugaritic figure of the same name (*tnn*). Did *thwm* likewise come into Israel through Canaanite-Phoenician intermediaries? Ugaritic *thm* appears to be used in the same way in Hebrew—that is, always with the meaning Deep(s), and rarely, if ever, personified, as is the Mesopotamian goddess Ti'amat. Other clues to Phoenician influence might possibly be:³⁴ 1) The use of *ky* in the refrain, *wyr' l'hy m ky t'wb*, to mean "how" rather than "that," a usage with good examples attested at Ugarit, as well as in the Amarna letters and Mari texts;³⁵ 2) the use of *mrhpt* in Gen 1: 2, attested in the Ugaritic Dan'el texts;³⁶ 3) the enclitic *mem* in 1: 9, if *miqwēmi* is the correct vocalization of *mqum*;³⁷ 4) the so-called *waw compaginis* in *hytw-ʾrʿ* of 1: 24, certainly an archaic poetic feature which probably represents an original Canaanite **hayyatu 'arʿi*; 5) the employment of the heptaemeron structure for the whole narrative, a literary device found some seven times in the Ugaritic mythological texts as well as in the Gilgamesh Epic.³⁸ Significant Phoenician contact and influence upon Israel had certainly begun by the tenth century B.C., and continued down to about the sixth century, when Israelite literary materials coming from this period show the largest number of Ugaritic points of contact. Both Prov 8 and Gen 1 contain clues that suggest Phoenicia as a source for their common traditions. Even the evidence for an ultimate Egyptian conceptuality underlying a number of features in Gen 1 may have come through Phoenicia rather than directly from Egypt. From the standpoint of poetic verse form, Prov 8 would appear to be the older, and quite conceivably could go back to the tenth century for its original composition. Gen 1 too may go back just as far in its initial poetic form, but even its prose rendition should probably not be dated later than the seventh century B.C.³⁹

In conclusion, I would say Gen 1 and Prov 8: 22 ff probably have a common heritage in specifically Canaanite-Phoenician traditions about creation, mixed with other ancient Near Eastern traditions which came into Israel through a Phoenician alembic. Within Israel, the composition of Gen 1 and Prov 8: 22 ff was by different circles, the latter most clearly from the wise men; the former, though perhaps ultimately redacted by the priests, goes back in both its putative poetic and its present prose form to literary artists whose identity still remains obscure and problematic.

NOTES

¹ Jastrow, M., *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions* (New York, 1914), p. 125.

² Defining "allegory" as he does—as a series of metaphors which are often personifications of inanimate things or abstract ideas. See his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Copenhagen, 1958), Vol. I, p. 180. B. Gemser, on the other hand, thinks the *Stilform* is reminiscent of the *Schöpfungshymnus* (cf. *HAT, Sprüche Salomos* [Tübingen, 1963], and in his new commentary on the book of Proverbs, William McKane would appear to agree with him (*Proverbs: A New Approach* [Philadelphia, 1970], p. 352).

³ Cassuto, U., *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part I: From Adam to Noah*, translated by I. Abrahams (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 8, 10 f.

⁴ In the way, for example, that Jacob Myers has shown can be done for the book of Ruth. Neither Bruno (*Die Bücher Genesis-Exodus: eine rhythmische Untersuchung* [Stockholm, 1953]) nor Sievers, earlier (*Metrische Studien II. Die hebräische Genesis . . .* [Leipzig, 1904–5]), has done this with any great success for Gen 1.

⁵ For a recent discussion of this, see Albright, W. F., *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (London, 1968), chapter 1.

⁶ For the literature, see Schmidt, W. H., *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1964), p. 73, n. 1. An excellent discussion of the whole question of the *Sitz-im-Leben* for Gen 1 may now be found in Westermann, C., *Genesis (BKAT, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967–)*, pp. 127–30.

⁷ For the principal arguments over whether to render by "beget, create" or "acquire, possess," see McKane, *op. cit.*, pp. 352 f, and Scott, R. B. Y., *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* (AB, Vol. 18, Garden City, N.Y., 1965), pp. 71–73.

⁸ Dahood, M., "Proverbs 8, 22–31, Translation and Commentary," *CBQ* 30 (1968), 514.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 515.

¹⁰ Creation by divine exudation is attested primarily in Egypt, certainly as early as the Middle Kingdom (ca 2000 B.C.) in one of the Egyptian Coffin Texts, where Re is said to have brought forth some of the gods from his perspiration, mankind from the tears of his eye. For an English translation of the text in question, cf. *ANET*², p. 8. Dahood (*loc. cit.*) suggests the concept of emanation of wisdom came to Israel through Canaanite sources.

¹¹ Even should *nskty* be derived from the root *skk*, comparing Ps 139: 13, the conceptuality would still be very old.

¹² For my earlier study of these words in Prov 8: 24, see "The Fountain of Jazer," *BASOR* 144 (1956), 32 f. For the occurrences of *nbk|mbk* in Ugaritic, consult the glossary in C. H. Gordon's *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome, 1965), § 1597.

- ¹³ Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 517.
- ¹⁴ Albright, W. F., "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (VTS, Vol. III, Leiden, 1955), p. 8 and n. 4.
- ¹⁵ *r'syt*, *thum*, *'rs*, *mym*, *'sh*, *šmym*, and *ym*; possibly *'dm*, if Dahood's emendation is not accepted (*op. cit.*, p. 521), and also *ywm*, though used in an entirely different way.
- ¹⁶ As does neither *hwswt* (8: 26) nor *hwg* (8: 27).
- ¹⁷ For rare and/or old forms and expressions in Gen 1, cf *thw wbhw* and *mrhpt* in 1: 2, the latter best explained in light of Ugar *rhp*; the use of *l* meaning "from" in *mym lnym* in 1: 6; the verb *qwh* with its noun cognate *mqwh* in 1: 9-10, and the possibility in 1: 9 that *mqwm* should be *miqwēmt*, with final enclitic *mem* (so far neither *qwh* nor *mqwh* has turned up in Ugaritic, to my knowledge); *tnym* in 1: 21, cf Ugar. *tnn*; the puzzling so-called *waw compaginis* in *hytw-'rs* in 1: 24, which is usually interpreted as an archaic feature, though still not satisfactorily explained. See p. 290 above.
- ¹⁸ This is interesting in light of the fact that 'Elohim is often the designation for deity preferred by the wise men, and has been thought one reason Gen 1 should be considered in the orbit of wisdom influence; yet here in Prov 8: 22 ff, we have the most obvious wisdom text using Yahweh and never 'Elohim. Of course in Israelite wisdom circles there was no great hesitation in using the personal name of God, as can be seen in a large number of the proverbs that have been preserved. On this point, see the study of Michael V. Fox, "Aspects of the Religion of the Book of Proverbs," *HUCA* 39 (1968), 55-70.
- ¹⁹ Following Dahood's interpretation of *b'zwz*, *op. cit.*, p. 518.
- ²⁰ Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- ²¹ Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 513.
- ²² Cf Whybray, *op. cit.*, p. 357 and references.
- ²³ Dahood, *op. cit.*, pp. 518 f.
- ²⁴ We find the same situation in Egypt. In the mythical account of the repulsing of Apophis, the sun god speaks of creating parts of the universe in the primordial waters, Nun, which somehow already exist, and whose origin is not mentioned. Presumably Nun came into being after the sun god, but there is no clear indication the sun god created Nun. Cf John Wilson's translation of this text in *ANET*², p. 6, and also one of the versions of the creation by Atum in chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead, *ANET*², pp. 3 f.
- ²⁵ Cf, e.g., the opening lines of *Enuma elish* (*ANET*², pp. 60 f), or the introduction to an incantation that was recited for the purification of Ezida, the temple of Nabû at Borsippa (English translation in Heide, A., *The Babylonian Genesis* [Chicago, 1951], p. 62). The same motif also appears in Egypt in the so-called Book of Knowing the Creations of Re and of Overthrowing Apophis (translated by John Wilson in *ANET*², p. 6) and in one of the versions of the creation by Atum (*ANET*², p. 4).
- ²⁶ As in the Ugaritic Dan'el texts, where the goddess Anat will make her divine servitor Yatpun into an eagle or vulture, who will then fly and hover over Aqhat at his meal, ready to fall upon him and kill him as an eagle hovers over its prey until it swoops down and takes it. Cf Dan'el III D 1, 20-21, 31-32 (textual references from Virolleaud; referred to as *AQHT B(iv)* in the English translation by H. L. Ginsberg in *ANET*², pp. 152 f).
- ²⁷ Dahood, M. review of G. Hölscher, *Das Buch Hiob*, *Theological Studies* 13 (1952), 593 f.
- ²⁸ *Job* (AB, Vol. 15, Garden City, N. Y., 1965), pp. 266, 272.
- ²⁹ Scott, R. B. Y., *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 73.
- ³⁰ The whole question of the authorship of Gen 1, and the assumptions underlying it, is in need of a thorough reexamination, not only in light of recent research in ancient Near Eastern creation materials but also in stylistic, grammatical, conceptual motifs that would

- seem to challenge both the sixth century B.C. origin of Gen 1 as a literary unit and its original composition by Israelite priestly circles. I hope to treat this matter in a separate study.
- ³¹ Schmidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-47.
- ³² See Albright's study already cited above (n. 14).
- ³³ Cf Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 27, and n. 4 for literature.
- ³⁴ See n. 17, above.
- ³⁵ Cf Albright, W. F., "The Refrain 'And God Saw KI TOB' in Genesis," in *Mélanges bibliques, rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* (Paris, 1957), pp. 22-26.
- ³⁶ Cf above, n. 26.
- ³⁷ See Freedman, D. N., "Notes on Genesis," *ZAW* 64 (1952), 190 f.
- ³⁸ See Bauer, J., "Die literarische Form des Heptaameron," *BZ* 1 (1957), 273-77.
- ³⁹ Cf Albright, W. F., *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, p. 80.