II
Discovering Literary Sources

Genesis is still a good place to begin reading the Old Testament. And Genesis 1–9 is a suitable location in the Pentateuch to illustrate the process of literary criticism. What literary sources and characteristics can be isolated in these chapters by using the techniques of literary analysis introduced above? What contributions to the understanding of this crucial portion of the Scriptures are made by such an analysis? These are the basic questions to which we shall address ourselves in this chapter. The general categories for investigating the literary evidence involved will be those of style, terminology, and perspective. Under the first category we shall consider writing technique, structural arrangement, and use of language. Under the second we shall give attention to recurring terms, names, key expressions, and clusters of words. Under the third we shall focus upon the central thrust, outlook, or vantage point of a specific section.

A search for oral forms or preliterary traditions may operate with much of the same evidence and some of the same methods demonstrated here. The recognition of a literary source or literary tradition, however, demands that we uncover a continuity of related literary evidence in an extended sequence of passages. The plausibility of a literary hand depends on the evidence of a common style, a related set of terminology, a generally consistent perspective, and/or a literary superstructure over a series of literary contexts. Such is the broader task of literary criticism. By a simple inductive study of Genesis 1–9 we plan to illustrate this process and isolate the evidence for two major literary sources.

ISOLATING THE EVIDENCE OF GENESIS 1–5

Literary Style

Differences in literary style are sometimes easier to feel than to define. The listener in the pew can often recognize the difference in the style of one preacher from that of another without being able to verbalize the precise nature of the difference. One preacher may employ a conversational approach while another may operate as a dramatic herald.

Each contemporary author too has his own style and a description of that style should be possible even if not comprehensive. Similar variations in style are to be found in ancient authors. A careful survey of the Pentateuch discloses a diversity of stylistic features.

Differences in style between Genesis 1 and most of Genesis 2 are immediately apparent. Genesis 1 is repetitious, tabular, and formal. Not only do certain words and expressions keep repeating but each of the days of creation are reported in much the same way. The events of each day are set into a fixed pattern which does not change. This pattern or framework has been summarized by Westermann[1] as follows:

Announcement:	And God said . . .
Command:	Let there be . . . and let . . .
Report:	And it was so!
Evaluation:	And God saw that it was good.
Temporal Framework:	And there was evening and there was morning, the . . . day.

The writer of the creation account has organized each of the six days into a structure that expresses order and planning for each day. In the broader structure we see a tenfold announcement of God. Ten times we hear, "And God said . . ." followed by the resultant creative movement from chaos to order. This arrangement of the materials is like a catalog of all the major units of the cosmos.

But the style is more than that of a cataloger. There is a kind of authority in the brevity and form of the repeated elements like, "Let there be . . .," "It was so," or "And God saw that it was good." And there is a certain solemn majesty about the tone of the entire account. This structure and tone stands in contrast to most of the creation accounts of the ancient Near East. In these myths there is a story with characters, plot, and conflict. Such myths reflect the annual drama between the gods of chaos and the gods of creation. In Genesis 1 the mood has changed. Instead of a drama there is a series of solemn announcements or commands. Some of these announcements may, however, reflect a polemic against the creation myths of the ancient Near East. Expressions like, "face of the deep," "the greater light,"

1. C. Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 1–7. For a fine popular treatment of the early chapters of Genesis according to their literary sources see T. E. Fretheim, *Creation, Fall and Flood* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969).

or "the great sea monsters" suggest an underlying polemic consistent with the style and structure of this account of creation.[2] The style of the creation text of Genesis 1:1–2:4a, therefore, seems to be that of someone ordering his materials into a series of similar solemn commands in such a way that the authority of the one giving the command stands unchallenged, and the content of his commands presents a comprehensive catalog of the major divisions of the created world known to the writer.

A second creation text seems to begin in Genesis 2:4b with a temporal introduction, "In the day that. . . ." A temporal introduction had appeared in Genesis 1:1 as "When God began to create . . ." or "In the beginning God created. . . ." Similar expressions introduce other creation accounts of the ancient world. After the new beginning of Genesis 2:4b we meet a sudden switch in form and style. The creation text of Genesis 2:4b–25 is a story with a sequel in Genesis 3:1–24. The relationship of the characters rather than the tabulation of events or commands is primary here. The language is picturesque and flowing. The various acts of God the creator are closely interrelated rather than separated by distinct periods of time or repeated expressions such as "It was so," or "It was good." In Genesis 2:4b–25 there is no uniform framework for each act of God. The creative workings of God are interdependent parts of one story.

Evocative poetic terms such as "mist," "rib," "deep sleep," and "cleave" abound in this account. These terms appeal to the imagination and enable the reader to visualize the creation scene more readily. At this point a knowledge of the Hebrew text proves advantageous. The colorful scene portrayed in Genesis 2:5–7 is that of God laboring like a potter or sculptor in the midst of a desert land free from vegetation. There he "molds" man as a potter would mold a piece of clay. From this clay he forms a model, draws it to himself and breathes life into its nostrils. In so doing he seems to reflect the ancient practice of mouth-to-mouth breathing (cf. 2 Kings 4:34). No two creative acts are alike in Genesis 2:4b–25. None of the creative activities of God are preceded by the formal divine command found in Genesis 1. On the one occasion when God does speak before

2. See below under Theological Perspective. Polemical elements in the creation narrative in no way eliminate the possibility that the order of the creation events was originally borrowed from ancient Near Eastern myth traditions such as those of the Enuma Elish of Babylon.

creating woman, he is portrayed as speaking to himself about the situation. "It is not good for man to be alone," he muses. Such a statement is in contrast to the affirmations of Genesis 1: "And God said: 'Let there be . . .!'" The same kind of flowing narrative and style continues through Genesis 4:16, where a similar economy of words is evident. The dramatic dimension of this story is increased by the introduction of dialogue. "Did God say?" asks the snake. "We can eat!" retorts the woman. "But you won't really die," adds the snake. These conversations make this account far more than a dry report and completely unlike the catalog of commands in Genesis 1. Thus in Genesis 2:4b–4:16 we meet concise and vivid stories told in a masterful fashion.

When the reader reaches Genesis 5, however, he is confronted with a genealogy which exhibits a structured tabular form. The life of each individual in the genealogy is summarized with the same outline and fixed set of expressions. This process reminds us of the tabular format employed in the creation sequence of Genesis 1. The pattern for each primeval hero in Genesis 5 can be seen in the following summary:

> When A had lived . . . years he became the
> father of B . . .
> A lived . . . years after the birth of B . . .
> and he had sons and daughters . . .
> thus all the days of A were . . .
> and he died!

A second look at Genesis 5 reveals the presence of a formal introduction: "This is the book of the generations (*toledot*) of Adam." A comparable statement seems to provide a conclusion to the creation story in Genesis 2:4a. A survey of Genesis discloses a number of similar introductory statements pertaining to the generations of the heroes of Genesis (6:9; 10:1; 11:27; etc.). This evidence suggests the possibility that the same formal method of structuring the story of the creation in Genesis 1 and the ordering of the family history of the ancestors in Genesis 5 may be part of a literary superstructure for all of Genesis.

One frequent reaction of students to any claim of divergent style is an appeal to divergent subject matter. This argument needs to be tested by specific cases. One may readily assume that a genealogy, by virtue of its very nature, will be structured or rigid in its form and dull or monotonous

in style. However, a glance at the genealogy of Genesis 4:17–25 demonstrates that the opposite is possible. In addition to variant ways of describing the several family relationships involved, this text is interspersed with items of human interest. These prevent the genealogy from becoming a dry tabulation of names and figures. Enoch is said to have built a city, Lamech is credited with two wives, Jabal is the first tent dweller, and Tubal-cain is introduced as the first man to forge metal instruments. Nor is it possible to demand that the subject matter of Genesis 1 necessarily dictated the style of writing employed. Essentially the same acts and sequence of creation appear in Psalm 104 where the poetic style and form of writing are totally different.

In recent times the discipline of form criticism has raised the question of whether we can speak of literary style at all. Are not the differences between the creation texts of Genesis 1 and 2, for example, explainable on the basis of the two literary forms which these chapters represent? To some extent this is true. However, we must raise the question of whether or not the isolation of literary forms is sufficient for an understanding of all the evidence involved. Genesis 4:17–26 and Genesis 5 have the same basic literary form, but reflect different methods of treating the material. Where a common literary form of the same story or material is presented with major differences in style and approach, the possibility exists that two different authors or traditions are at work. If we posit the presence of several authors in Genesis, we must also grant the possibility that one author may have a propensity for using one literary form rather than another, but to support such a hypothesis we must be able to see the evidence of his hand apart from the use of a particular literary form as such. To test this possibility we shall search through Genesis 1–5 again for the kind of recurring terminology which distinguishes the emphases and perspective of one group of materials from those of the other.

Distinctive Terminology

The difference in literary style between Genesis 1 and 5 on the one hand and Genesis 2:4b–4:26 on the other is complemented by the specific terminology used in these two sets of material. For the creative process Genesis 1 uses the term "create" (*bara'*) several times (1:1, 21, 27; 2:4a). Genesis 2 drops the term "create" in favor of the verb "form" (*yaṣar*)

as in 2:7, 8, 19. The verb create first reappears in Genesis 5:1 and 2, a section which was previously linked with Genesis 1 on stylistic grounds. A second example of how these two sections differ is in the use of crucial terms defining the character of man. In Genesis 1 and 5 man is described as being in the "likeness" and the "image" of God (1:26–27 and 5:1–3). In Genesis 2, however, where the creation of man is the central subject, these two terms are absent and man is designated a "living being" (*nepesh ḥayah*), an expression also used to characterize the animals (2:7, 19). Genesis 1 and 5 speak of man as "male and female" (or "masculine and feminine") while Genesis 2 and 3 use the terms "man and woman."

These and similar terms or idioms for parallel ideas or subjects suggest the possibility of two minds at work. The possibility also exists that these variations in terminology are due to an oral situation where these materials were first formulated rather than to the literary hands which preserved or remolded them. The persistent appearance of the distinguishing terms and idioms in each of these groups of materials throughout other parts of Genesis must first be demonstrated if we are to substantiate the hypothesis of separate literary authors.

Perhaps the most important difference in terminology which persists throughout Genesis is found in the use of the divine names. Throughout Genesis 1:1–2:4a the name God (*Elohim*) is used to designate the deity. As soon as the style and subject changes in Genesis 2:4b, the expressions Lord (*Yahweh*) or Lord God (*Yahweh Elohim*) appear and continue through Genesis 4. With Genesis 5 *Elohim* again appears and *Yahweh* is again avoided. This usage demands some kind of explanation. Granting the theological significance of each of these names, the fact remains that the way in which these names are used is a major piece of literary evidence in the analysis of the book of Genesis. Yahweh is studiously avoided as a designation for God in those sections of Genesis which correspond to the style, terminology, and perspective of Genesis 1.[3] And this factor becomes another

3. The evidence needs to be stated clearly at this point. The materials consistent with Genesis 1 avoid the use of the term Yahweh until that name is revealed to Moses (Exod. 6:2 ff.). The materials consistent with Genesis 2:4b–26 do not necessarily avoid the term Elohim. On the contrary, where this writer himself mentions God, however, he normally uses Yahweh. The one verse in Genesis 1–5 which perhaps challenges our observations is Genesis 5:29. This verse seems to be a Yahwist intrusion into the Priestly genealogy of Genesis 5.

constant in the accumulation of evidence in favor of a consistent literary author in these portions of Genesis.

Theological Perspective

The preceding variations in style and terminology between the two groupings under discussion are balanced by a corresponding difference in theological interest or perspective. Were the texts under discussion not theological in content, this difference might be sought in the writer's attitude to life, nature, mankind, and similar concerns. To some extent also, divergencies of interest may be the natural outgrowth of variation in subject matter. But where the basic theological approach of two sections differs, we are led to search for something more than the topic involved for an explanation of the evidence.

The characterization of God differs markedly in the two sections of Genesis 1–5 under consideration. In Genesis 1 the majestic transcendence of a powerful cosmic organizer is primary. In line with this basic viewpoint Elohim creates and orders the universe by a series of decrees. He issues his command and the results are automatic. God appears as a being who stands outside of his cosmos and controls it with his mighty word. Hence the possible "anthropomorphic" expressions of Genesis 1 ("God said," "God saw," and "God rested") are reserved in character and tend to preserve the transcendence of God. They do not suggest the close proximity of a God who acts and looks like men.

Mankind in turn is created to rule the earth and act as God's vice-regent. He controls the earth for the sovereign overlord. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our *image* after our likeness; and let them have *dominion* . . . over all the earth'" (Gen. 1:26). The image of God is that special character and relationship of man to God which enables him to represent God as the ruler of the earth. The divine blessing given to man empowers him to execute his function as God's representative by propagating his kind to fill and subdue the earth for which he is responsible. In Genesis 5 the same concept of the image and blessing of God is perpetuated in man's descendants (cf. Gen. 9:1–6). There is no indication that the events related in Genesis 2–4 affected this role of man as a being who is to exercise this special function. In other words, Genesis 5 seems to be a direct continuation of Genesis 1:1–2:4a both in terms of style and theological perspective. The image of God, in this sense, con-

tinues as a unifying concept in Genesis 5 and in Genesis 9:1–6.

In Genesis 2:4b–4:26 the portrait of God is very different. Here his immanence, personal nearness, and local involvement on the human scene are basic features. Yahweh is not a detached sovereign overlord but a God at hand as an intimate master. He is a God with whom man has ready contact and immediate responsibility. Accordingly the anthropomorphisms of Genesis 2–4 are so bold that they almost seem to depict Yahweh in terms of human limitations. He molds with his hands as a potter, he breathes into the mouth of a clay model, he plants a garden, he digs a rib from a man, he walks through a garden, he searches for a man, he has private conversations with man, woman, and beast, and he places a mark on yet another man. One almost gets the impression that he is experimenting and feeling his way as a creator. He discovers that "it is not good for man to be alone" and so he makes animals for man. But they are not the right company for man. "There was not found a helper fit for man." And so Yahweh makes a woman who proves to be an equal companion for man (Gen. 2:18–24).

The absence of the terms "image of God," "likeness," and "have dominion," in Genesis 2–4 is significant especially where the creation and character of man are central themes of the writer. The emphasis here does not lie on man as the authorized representative of God who rules the world on his behalf (as in Genesis 1) but, among other things, on man's close link with the ground. Man is distinguished from the animals in that he is personally addressed by Yahweh but he is one with the animals in terms of his origin from the dust of the ground. The repeated wordplay between "man" (*'aḏam*) and "ground" (*'aḏamah*) in Genesis 2:6, 7, 19; 3:17, 19; 4:11 emphasize this relationship. Terms like "dust," "form," and "living creature" (*nepesh ḥayah*) belong to the same complex of thought. The alienation of man from the ground is expressed by the term "curse" (in Gen. 3:14, 17; 4:11).

Many of these elements may reflect an agricultural perspective on the part of the writer. Man is viewed as a farmer and is condemned to labor as a man of the soil until he returns to the soil (Gen. 2:5; 3:17-19). The fig trees, the reference to Eden as a location "in the East," and the barrenness of the land after the fall suggest a Palestinian background for the writer of Genesis 2–4. Moreover the tempta-

tions and issues of life which the writer appears to be tracing through his narrative were especially pertinent to the Palestinian Israelites, and the polemic implied in his interpretation of the fall of man seems to be directed against the fertility cults of Canaan.[4]

The polemical accents of Genesis 1, however, are much different in intent. At several points in the creation sequence there appear polemics against mythical concepts of life which were integral to the creation theology of the ancient world. More specifically, the creation tradition reflected in ancient Near Eastern creation myths such as the *Enuma Elish* seems to be repudiated at certain points in Genesis 1. Thus, for example, it is hardly accidental that the sun (*shemesh*) and the moon (*yareaḥ*) which were names of Near Eastern deities, are not mentioned by name, but are referred to indirectly as the greater and lesser lights. The chaos monster (*tannin*) is not presented in Genesis 1:6–8 as the formidable foe which God had to conquer in order to divide the chaos waters, but rather sea monsters (*tannin*) appear on the fifth day as a kind of afterthought when the fish have been created. Likewise the chaos deep (Gen. 1:2) is no longer the archenemy of the creator God. Polemical elements appear throughout Genesis 1–4, but the background and orientation of the issue in Genesis 1 seem to be considerably different from those in Genesis 2–4.

A complete study of the theological, cultural and polemical dimensions of these chapters demands much more space than we have at our disposal. Suffice it to say that the differing viewpoints cited above do exist and contribute greatly to the significance and value of these materials. Whether this difference reflects the activity of two minds, two communities, or one mind on different occasions, or some other possibility, is for the reader to decide after weighing this and the subsequent evidence.

Summary

Most scholars have identified the proposed author of the materials in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and Genesis 5 as the Priestly Writer, primarily because of his later concern for the priesthood, the cult and worship activities. His treatment of the seventh day in Genesis 2:1–3 illustrates this concern. The second proposed author has been designated the Yahwist

4. See T. E. Fretheim, *Creation, Fall and Flood*, pp. 80–82. On snake worship in Israel see K. R. Jones, "The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult," *JBL* 87 (1968): 245–56.

because he, in contrast to the Priestly Writer, regularly uses the name Yahweh for God prior to the time when that name was revealed to Moses in a special way (in Exod. 6:2 ff.). A tabular summary of the evidence from Genesis 1–5 discussed above is given below to provide a useful reference guide for the analysis of similar evidence in the subsequent chapters of Genesis.

Distinguishing Category	Genesis 1:1–2:4a and Genesis 5	Genesis 2:4b–4:26
Style	solemn and majestic	story form—artistic
	repetitive	economy of words
	stereotype idioms	picturesque and evocative
	balanced structures	dramatic use of dialogue
	appeals to the intellect	appeals to the imagination
Terminology	create (*bara'*)	form (*yaṣar*)
	image—likeness	living being
	male and female	man and woman
	the deep	the dust
	the waters	the ground (*'aḏamah*)
	sea monster (*tannin*)	snake (*naḥash*)
	swarm	curse
	ha'aḏam as mankind	*ha'aḏam* as the first man
Idioms	(These are) the generations of . . .	
	and God blessed and said . . .	Cursed is . . .
	be fruitful and multiply . . .	
	and fill the earth . . .	from the (face of) the ground . . .
	according to its kind . . .	
	for food . . .	
	God said . . . and it was so!	
The Divine Name	Elohim	Yahweh
		Yahweh Elohim
Theology	cosmic perspective	man the central concern
	the ordered world	the cursed ground
	God as transcendent	God as immanent
	God majestic	God intimate and involved
	restrained anthropomorphisms	bold anthropomorphisms
	creation by word	creation by hand
	God as sovereign	God as gracious