

The Garden of Communion and the Ground of Dominion: Genesis 2,4b-3,24 as an Aetiology of Domination

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Source-critical studies on Gen 2,4b-3,24 had assigned a very early pre-exilic date to its composition. But recent research has challenged this century long hypothesis. There is a growing consensus that the final text of the second creation narrative was completed during the post-exilic period. There are similarities between in Gen 2,4b–3,24 and late texts in Ezekiel, Second Isaiah and Job. Furthermore pre-exilic texts of the OT hardly refer to the second story of creation. These reasons prompt the exegetes to posit a post-exilic date to the final version of the text. Without excluding the possibility that the text contains redactional layers, it is possible to consider it as a post-exilic work.

Interpreting the symbol of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” as “freedom” and the serpent/ground as the unorganised appetite, it is possible to see an evaluation of the Ancient Israelite History in Gen 2,4b-3,24. Israel was expelled from the garden of communion because of the loss of equilibrium between the world of freedom and the world of the appetite. While presenting a historical evaluation, the second story of creation also functions as an aetiology of domination.

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