

Eitology

Napier, B. Davie, Song of the Vineyard. Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York, 1962
 (Napier - Holmes Professor of O.T. Criticism and Interpretation, Yale University
 Divinity School)

p. 55 [The flood story]. . . is taken over into biblical use not from what in any sense we could call "historical" from, but from a prior and pre-dominant etiological function - to give, in charming, interest-holding narration, an "explanation" of such common phenomena as the rainbow (9.13), the cultivation of wine (9.20f.), the "racial" distinctions and divisions (9.24-27), the occurrence of men of abnormally large stature (in the originally separate and probably truncated tale of the sons of God and the daughters of men which now introduces the account, 6.1-4), and many other etiologies more blunted in present form.

The same is true of the three other tales which form the main body of the section Genesis 3 - 11. We list some of the most conspicuous etiologies: pain of childbirth, 3.16; the relative position of man and woman in society, 3.16; the intractability of man's natural environment and the consequent necessity of his hard labor; 3.17-19; man's irrevocable consignment to death, 3.19; the antipathy between the nomad and the agriculturalist and perhaps also the origin of violence in human relationships in the Brothers, 4.1-16; and the frustrating fact in the human situation of fundamental communication thwarted by plurality of speech and wide geographical dispersion, 11.1-9.