Critical Methods

Prologue to the Torah

- Source Criticism — what written sources made up the text we now have?
- Traditions Criticism — what oral traditions lie behind the written sources?
- Literary Criticism — how does structure, form, etc., shape the theme of the text?
- Feminist Criticism — how has the translation and interpretation of this text been affected by *patriarchy*?

Reading Gen. 1-2

- Group 1 – Read Gen. 1-2:4a
- Group 2 – Read Gen. 2:4b-25
- What is the condition of things before God creates?
- What is created first?
  - Place the following things in the order they were created:
    - Woman
    - Plants
    - Animals
    - Man
  - In one sentence, describe the most noticeable characteristic of God

Genesis 1-4: Source Criticism

The Problem

- Inconsistencies between Genesis 1-2:4a and 2:4b-4
  - **Creation of men and women vs. Creation of a man, then later a woman**
  - **Creation of vegetation and animals before humans vs. Creation of garden and animals after the man**
  - **Structured account where God is cosmic vs. Narrative account where God is anthropomorphic**
  - **Use of the name Elohim for God vs. Use of name YHWH (LORD) for God**

Documentary Hypothesis

A Solution

- **Documentary Hypothesis suggests that Gen. 2:4b-4 came from a different written source than Gen. 1-2:4a**
  - **Gen. 2:4b-4 comes from "J" source (J=J[Y]ahweh) — probably from 10th century in the south, Judah**
  - **Gen. 1-2:4a comes from "P" source (P=Priestly) -- probably from the 6th century, Jerusalem**
  - **J and P are found throughout most of the Torah; in addition there is an "E" source (E=Elohist) — probably from the 9th century in north, "Ephraim" and a "D" source (D=Deuteronomist) — probably 7th century, Jerusalem**

Yahwist (J) Source

Gen. 2:4b ff.

- Preference for the name YHWH
- Portrayal of God in anthropomorphic terms
- Narrative style
- Written during reign of Solomon, shortly after the death of David and the intrigue for his throne (see 2 Sam 11 and 13:23 ff.)
  - **Parallels between Adam & Eve, Cain Abel with David & Bethsheba, Absolom and Amnon**
  - **Pattern: (1)sin of taking what is forbidden (2) attempted cover up (3) punishment (4) YHWH's mercy**

Feminist Questions of Adam & Eve in the Garden

Yahwist (J) Source (cont.)

Feminist Critique

- Was the woman the villain?
  - **"Helpmate"?**
  - **Where was Adam when the woman ate the fruit?**
  - **Who received the worst punishment?**
- A Patriarchal reading vs. A Radical Feminist reading

Priestly Source

Gen. 1-2:4a

- God portrayed in more cosmic terms
- Concern for order in God's plan
- Concern for religious observances, especially Sabbath

Elsewhere

- Lots of genealogies
- Focus upon covenant

Gen. 1 — Priestly Source Structure

(Bandstra, pp. 52-64)

DAY	CREATED>	DAY	CREATED
Day	Light >	Day	Lights-sun,
Day	Sky&sea >	Day	Animals
Day	Dry	Day	land

Genesis 1 — Traditions Criticism

- Final written forms come from same time geographic region and time
- World created in midst of watery chaos
- Same cosmology: earth/firmament/waters
- Culminates in creation of humans

Genesis 1 — Traditions Criticism

Differences Between Enuma Elish & Gen. 1

Enuma Elish	Gen. 1
Polytheistic	Monotheistic
Creation thru violence & chaos	Creation thru word and order
Humans created to serve gods	Humans created in image of God

Cain and Abel

Gen. 4

- Follows pattern of Adam and Eve (see 2 Sam 13:23 ff.)
  - **(1)sin of taking what is forbidden (2) attempted cover up (3) punishment (4) YHWH's mercy**
  - God's warning about anger and sin lurking at the door
- Favoring of younger over older
  - Favoring of shepherd over farmer?
- Gen. 4:6-7 – warning?

Critical Questions

Done in Class

- If the stories of Gen. 1-5 are taken as historical, what critical questions emerge?
- If the stories of Gen. 1-5 are taken as scientifically accurate, what critical questions emerge?
- To what extent do you think that the first hearers/readers of Gen. 1-5 would think of history and science as we do in the 21st century?
- If the stories are neither historical nor scientific, what is their purpose?
  - Are they less true?