

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

The Garden of Eden from Antiquity to Modernity

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"Geographia Sacra": The Placing of Paradise in Late Seventeenth-Century French Theology

Franco Motta

Tertullian argues correctly in the *Adversus Praxeam*, that everything that comes before is true, and everything that comes afterwards is false. It is indeed inevitable that truth precedes the lie, since of course the latter is the corruption of the truth. [...] In its turn, the antiquity of Christian doctrine cannot be better proved than by showing that all that is most ancient in the pagan peoples is borrowed—or a version taken—from our Scriptures.¹

With these words Samuel Bochart, a Caen minister and important figure in the French reformed church, opens his *Phaleg, seu de dispersione gentium* (1646). Bochart was one of the most knowledgeable scholars of the *grand siècle*, repository of that philological culture taught in the Protestant schools of northern Europe that Richard Simon harshly criticized as *hébraisants*—excellent as far as the study of the grammar of Semitic languages went, but poor in their knowledge of Christian sources.²

¹ "Tertullianus adversus Praxeam recte asserit *id esse verum quodcumque primum, id esse adulterum quodcumque posterius*. Necesse enim est ut veritas sit prior mendacio, cum mendacium nihil aliud sit quam corruptio veritatis. [...] Haec porro doctrinae antiquitas non aliunde melius potest adstrui, quam si doceamus in gentibus quicquid fuit antiquissimum, id ex Scripturis nostris aut petium esse aut detortum." (Italics in the text) *Phaleg, seu de dispersione gentium*, column 2, here in the edition of 1707, *Samuelis Bocharti Geographia Sacra, seu Phaleg et Canaan, cui accedunt variae dissertationes philologicae, geographicae, theologicae, etc. antehac ineditae: ut et tabulae geographicae et indices, longe quam antea luculentiores et locupletiores. Editio quarta prioribus multo correctior, et splendidior*. Procuravit Petrus de Villemandy, Lugduni Batavorum, apud Cornelium Boutesteyn, et Jordanum Luchtman; Trajecti ad Rhenum, apud Guilielmum vande Water (henceforth, GS).

² In the absence of recent biographies of Bochart (1599–1667), see the entry by H. Diez in A. Baudrillart (dir.), *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, Paris-VI, Letouzey et Ané, IX, 1937, 313–14. More recently see F. Laplanche, *L'Écriture, le sacré et l'histoire. Érudits et politiques protestants devant la Bible en France au XVII^e siècle* (Amsterdam, Maarsen, APA: Holland University Press, 1986), 250–54. On Protestant Semitic studies, see S. Kessler-Merguich, *Les hébraisants chrétiens*, in J.-R. Armogathe (dir.), *Le Grand siècle et la Bible* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 83–95.

Simon was unsympathetic to Bochart's epistemology, despite its prodigious demonstration of erudition and subtlety, because in it the overlapping of conjectures risks overwhelming the overall framework:

...he has clarified a large number of biblical passages; but since he is too diffuse, and seems to assume the role of wise or judicious or erudite scholar, a compendium of these two works [the *Phaleg* and the 1663 *Hierozoicon*] is to be desired which retains what may be useful to the understanding of the Holy books.³

If in 1707 a late editor of the *Phaleg* finds himself having to extricate the author from the charge of being a *merus grammatista*,⁴ Simon's authority evidently ends up seriously compromising the reception of the book in the decades following its publication. The point is that Bochart's probable goal is not to create an instrument for the consultation of the Scriptures, but rather an apology for Christianity on a grand scale, based on linguistics, ancient history and geography. The subject would become a classic in learned writing in the second half of the seventeenth century: the origins of man, the antiquity of the world, and the remote mythologies of the pagans. The problem was the struggle against libertinism which, after oriental chronologies spread throughout Europe, attacked the biblical foundations of biological and cultural monogenism.⁵

³ *Historie critique du Vieux Testament, par le P. Richard Simon, prêtre de la Congregation de l'Oratoire*, V ed. (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1685), 481: "Bochart a aussi composé deux grands ouvrages sous le nom de Phaleg, et De animalibus Scripturae Sacrae, où il a expliqué un grand nombre de passages de la Bible: mais comme cet auteur est beaucoup étendu, et qu'il semble avoir affecté de paroître plutot sçavant et homme d'erudition, que judicieux, il seroit à desirer qu'on abregeat ces deux ouvrages, en retenant ce qui peut être utile pour l'intelligence des livres sacrés." A contextualizing, certainly limiting, discussion of Bochart's work in the context of the historical and geographical literature in support of the Bible is found in R. Fabris, "Strumenti e sussidi per lo studio della Bibbia nei secoli XV–XVII," in Fabris, ed., *La Bibbia nell'epoca moderna e contemporanea* (Bologna: EDB, 1992), 47–73, 64.

⁴ GS, *Praefatio*, a4r.

⁵ The standard reference work on this subject is of course P. Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: History of the Earth and History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). On Bochart in particular, see 183 ff.

Every time antiquity is spoken of at length, [the pagans] fall into ridiculous fables. Some say they were born of oaks or stones, others of mushrooms, cicadas, ants or the teeth of dragons. So how can information on the origins of other peoples, from those who spread such lies about themselves, be believed? The only thing to do is to fall back on Scripture, our anchor, that not only teaches that all men have been generated by one seed, i.e., Adam's at the time of the Creation and that of Noah and his three sons after the Flood, but also lists Noah's grandchildren, and which peoples go back to which one of them. And in this way, from a chapter of Moses properly interpreted, many more certain things can be understood on the origins of populations than from all that has survived of the most ancient pagans' teachings put together.⁶

Thus we are dealing with a genealogical reconstruction on a grand scale, leading a multiplicity of traditions back to the single genetic line of Adam. What goes first, then, is true, and everything that comes afterwards, where it differs, can only be a corruption of it. The truth, inasmuch as it is a primordial condition of being, is expressed in the corporeal realization, in the physical existence, of the characters in Genesis, and the only link between the contemporary and the first-born, the proof of that existence, is of a linguistic nature: the names are the connection between the Babel of races and cultures and its single root of divine origin. The problem lies in tracing the fragments and distortions of the names listed by Moses among the infinite number of names of the ancient peoples, an effort made all the more difficult, if possible,

⁶ "Proinde quoties de rebus vetustis sermonem instituunt ad fabulas devolvuntur. Atque alii se ex quercubus aut lapidibus, alii ex fungis, alii ex cicadis, alii ex formicis, alii ex draconis dentibus se fabulantur ortos. Quis porro gentium aliarum incunabula et primordia edoceri posse se putet ab iis, qui de propria origine talia mentiuntur? Itaque hoc restat unicum, ut ad sacram anchoram, hoc est, ad Scripturam confugiamus. Quae non solum in genere docet omnes homines ex uno semine esse editos, nempe ex Adamo in Creatione et post Diluvium ex Noa et tribus filiis, sed et recenset nepotes Noae, et qui populi ex singulis ortum duxerint. Ita ex uno capite Mosis, si modo recte intelligatur, multo plura et certiora possint erui de populorum originibus, quam ex omnibus, quotquot supersunt, vetustissimarum gentium monumentis." GS, in *quatuor libros Phaleg praefatio*, 37.

by Greek historiography, through which most ethnographic knowledge had been transmitted. This historiography, believing Hebrew vocabulary to be crude, had deformed it to such an extent that it was not easily recognizable. Bochart wrote: "In this work we are trying to bring light to such darkness, keeping the true part of what the ancients said, and confirming it with new evidence, and in part rejecting what seems to us mistaken."⁷

The central point at issue clearly lies in the interpretative criteria: the decoding of a vast series of words, extraordinary both in quantity and variety, is the key to the progressive reduction of linguistic chaos, and therefore also of the ethnic chaos which is a substratum of it, to a clear and orderly biblical matrix. It is an achievement that the author carries out with the help of a specific methodology. First, a macro-analysis *ex sono vocis* is made possible by the assumption of the conservation of the names, however modified in the transition from one language to another, at the level of the root. The second and third stages of the research inquire into the *vocum origines*, the etymologies, and the *vocum significationes*, so that the Perizziti owe their surnames to the villages they live in, the Sinei to the muddy terrain on which they settled, the Gergesei to clay, and so forth. Further instruments are (in order) the resolution of synonyms, ethnographical summaries, naturalistic descriptions, the order the people are mentioned and their neighborhood, the territories Moses assigned to each of them, and the names of the cities, the mountains and the rivers.⁸

The first three stages of the method clearly determine the shape of the entire work, offering to the scholar the means to set up the linguistic links to lead the individual anomalies back to the common source:

⁷ "Inde factum, ut Veteres in tam diversa abierint. Aliter enim haec nomina Josephus interpretatur, aliter Africanus, quos sequuntur plerique Patres, aliter Chaldaei paraphraetae, aliter Arabs interpres Lutetiae nuper editus, aliter denique Gorjonides et auctor libri Juchasim. [...] Nos in hoc opere conati sumus his tenebris lucem inferre, partim ea tuendo novaque argumentorum accessione firmando quae a veteribus recte dicta sunt, partim etiam ea oppugnando in quibus videntur errasse" (GS).

⁸ GS, 38-42.

in the passage from the phonetic level (*vocis sonus*), to the etymological (*vocum origines*), to the semantic (*vocum significationes*), a progressive reification of the word seems to occur, thanks to which the exact and systematic attribution of meaning is made possible. Only later do the contributions of history, geography and ethnology come into play; their role is to support the linguistic analysis with its evidence, useful for the solution of such knotty problems as the presence of synonyms. Linguistics is therefore capable of "jumping over" history, of tracing the direct relation that, buried in the debris of the experience of human groups, still lives and speaks to us, capable of revealing the divine ancestry of the names to those who are able to decode them. Bochart was still operating within an analogical universe laden with meaning, in that "pre-classical" episteme explored by Foucault which survived until the second half of the seventeenth century, in which the link between signifying and signified was immediate, and the word and the thing both inserted in a continuous unit that guaranteed the correspondence of forms and concepts:

Moses eloquently conveys [wrote Bochart's disciple and biographer, in his presentation of the massive treatise of biblical zoology, *Hierozoicon*], the way pack animals, beasts, reptiles, fish, enormous cetaceans, the birds and all living beings were created by God, and consequently [Bochart] was able to deal generically with all of them, and to explain their specific natures: above all the names, which are said to have been given by Adam, allowed him to carry out a careful examination of many of them, to check whether they conformed to [*convenientiam haberent*] the first primogenial original language, and the faculties assigned to them by nature; for example, the *camelus* of the Latini, and the *Kamelos* of the Greeks, lead us spontaneously to the Hebrew *gamal* [...]; as far as the reason for the name is concerned, it is very obvious, since *gamal* means to give back, and it would seem that the camel has a better memory for offenses than any other animal, so much so that historians who have dealt with it call it *mnesikakon*.⁹

⁹ "Ex multiplici animalium mentione, quam fecit Moses, similiter coaluit, et longe plura etiam commemoranda fuerunt, quia nonnulla eorum nomina diversis fuerunt attributa speciebu, quas opus fuit attente considerare, ut ex earum proprietatibus agnoscerentur eae, quibus praecipue convenirent. Praeterea Moses disertis verbis declarat jumenta, feras, reptilia, pisces, immania cete, aveque et omnia viventia a Deo condita

Very much in evidence once again is the centrality of interpretation, understood as an act of removing the superficial strata of oral transmission (the differences in pronunciation) and written transmission (the adaptation of classical authors) that impede access to the expressive nucleus of the word. This expressive nucleus can be trusted to the extent that it fits into the probatory category of chronological precedence. The principle of *post quod, ergo propter quod* reigns unchallenged in Bochart's logical construction; he declares programmatically that he will not abandon the opinion of an ancient author unless he is contradicted by an author more ancient still. The historical-hermeneutic demonstration, in the context of late seventeenth-century apologetics, still enjoys a status of certainty equal to that of rational, Cartesian demonstration; this is the epistemological premise that justifies the massive labors on the ancestry of peoples, addressed to the production of a solid defense of religion against the attacks of the sceptics and followers of Spinoza. The equating of history with truth is among the first victims of the Enlightenment critique of Christianity, but its demonstrative force, and the fascination that emanates from it, evidently enjoy a good deal of credit until well after the middle of the century.¹⁰ In Bochart's universe, a universe that makes sense, what follows descends necessarily from

fuisse, et consequenter de illis omnibus amplam de illis saltem generaliter agendi, et illorum peculiare dotes explicandi habuit occasionem: praesertim nomina, quae ipsis dicuntur fuisse ab Adamo imposita, fecerunt ut plurimorum nomina excuteret ad videndum an quamdam cum lingua primigenia, et inditis a natura facultatibus convenientiam haberent: verbi gratia, *camelus* Latinorum, et Graecorum *Kàmelos* ad *gamal* nos sponte deducit [...]: ad rationem nominis quod spectat, evidentissima est, *gamal* enim significat *rependere* [to give back], et *retribuere*, constat autem *Camelum* prae caeteris animalibus injuriarum memorem, et ideo dicit ab historicis qui de illo agunt *mnesikakon*." *De clarissimo Bocharto et ejus scriptis*, GS, 4. See the arguments in Claude Duret's *Trésor de l'histoire des langues* (1613) quoted in M. Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses. Une Archéologie des Sciences Humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

¹⁰ On the distinction between hermeneutic demonstration and rational demonstration in rationalist apologetics, see A. McKenna, "Deus absconditus: quelques réflexions sur la crise du rationalisme chrétien entre 1670 et 1740," in M.-C. Pitassi (ed.), *Apologétique 1680-1740. Sauvetage ou naufrage de la théologie?*, Actes du Colloque de Genève, juin 1990 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991), 13-28, 21 ff.

what preceded it: given the initial axiom of the chronological precedence of the Mosaic source over every other, this means that pagan cosmogonies are almost automatically reduced to millennial deformations of the crystal-clear narration of Genesis. The inhabitants of Hierapolis remember the Flood, only substituting Deucalion for Moses, while Abydene, Berosus, Polyhistor and Nicholas of Damascus expressly quote the arrival of the Ark on the mountains of Armenia; the Greeks consider themselves the descendants of Japheth, while the Africans' cult of Cham goes under the name of Amon and that of Noah, Saturn; likewise the *nebris*, the skin worn by Bacchus, goes back to Nimrod, or Nebrod, son of Cush, or Bar Chus, translated as Bacchus.¹¹

From the comparative study of the languages, carried out against a background of the primordial nature of Hebrew which Bochart takes for granted, emerges the reconstruction of the descent of the whole of humanity from Adam: a bridge suspended over the emptiness of that grey zone distinguished by the absence of written testimony, going from the Flood to the first signs of classical historiography.¹² This reconstruction is developed in the follow-up to the *Phaleg*, the *Chanaan, seu de sermone Phoenicum*, also published in 1646, in Caen; it is presented by the publisher of the reprint as a passage through the dark corridor that extends from the world before the Flood to that already familiar to the Greeks. Although the *Hierozoicon*, Bochart's monumental catalogue of the animals to be found in the Bible, dates from twenty years later, with the *Chanaan* Bochart's great project achieves its first aim, touching the goal of a consistent theory of the spread of human groups according to God's design. In it we have the "sacred geography," the alliance between a literal exegesis of the Scriptures, of a faithfully Calvinist approach, and a complex historicization, carried out in the study of the evolution of the languages from the primordial act of *onomatesia*, the naming of the natural things with which mankind came into contact: the earth and the animals (the plan for a further treatise on botanical and miner-

¹¹ GS, in *quatuor libros Phaleg praefatio*, 43.

¹² On the question of the times of human history, see chs. 2 and 3 of P. Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time*.

ological scriptural writing was never realized). It was an enterprise both profoundly religious and simultaneously rational. That immoderate demonstration of erudition and speculation, for which Simon criticizes the author of *Geographia Sacra*, is the distinctive figure of a tendency to join a deeply-felt biblical devotion with the decision to tackle the interpretation of the text in light of the complexity of the real, without conceding anything to the fondness for allegory or fideistic impasse. From this perspective, Bochart's entire activity can be structurally inserted into the context of the so-called school of Saumur, that network of reformed exegetes of northern France who made some of the most important contributions to the birth of testament criticism and of oriental studies.

The Academy of Saumur was founded in 1600 as the first Huguenot educational institution in the kingdom of France qualified to give degrees in philosophy and theology; it was suppressed in January 1685 on the eve of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Academy of Saumur paid for its "humanistic theology" with its conflict with reformed orthodoxy, and incurred the constant hostility of the Catholic Church. If Moïse Amyraut, that moderate believer in predestination and a leading representative of the school, was condemned by the national synods of Alençon (1637), Charenton (1644-45) and Loudun (1659), interest in philology as a tool in resolving controversies able to demonstrate the uncertainty and contradictory nature of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical institutions, resulted in repeated demands for closure sent by the French clergy to the Crown.¹³ Moreover, even on the side of biblical exegesis, a territory in which the unusual and indeed undeclared pragmatic alliance between counter-reformation needs and libertine trends intended to emphasize the substantial uncertainty of

¹³ On the Academy of Saumur see F. Laplanche, *L'Écriture*, which is entirely devoted to it, and J. P. Dray, "The Protestant Academy of Saumur and Its Relations with the Oratorians of Les Ardilliers," *History of European Ideas* 9/4 (1988), 465-78. Laplanche, recalling Troeltsch's distinction (*Die Bedeutung der Protestantismus für die Entstehung der Modernen Welt*, 1911) between forms of dissident protestantism in humanistic circles, sects, and individualistic mysticism, sees in Saumur "une résurgence humaniste à l'intérieur de l'orthodoxie réformée": Laplanche, *L'Écriture*, 17-18.

scriptural texts (with authoritative premises in one case, and skeptical ones in the other), fixed radical opposition is countered by Saumur philology with the vigorous affirmation of the *perspicuitas Scripturae*, the transparency of the Bible. This transparency is pursued through a work on the text which led the biblical scholars of northern France to point out a stratification in the Hebrew testament, work which culminated in Louis Cappel's *Arcanum punctationis* (1624), which contested the primitive nature of the Masoretic transcription.¹⁴

Samuel Bochart's work can clearly be understood within the framework of a vast project to revise biblical exegesis in a critical-historical sense, of a confessional kind, that towards the middle of the seventeenth century takes for granted the relevance of the Mosaic language to a varied Semitic branch. Nevertheless both *Phaleg* and *Chanaan* may have a more specific function in the cultural debate of the period.

The subjects of the ancientness or wisdom of the ancients, and of the selective activity of time, take various forms in the disputes of the seventeenth century. One of the most famous, which bears a notable resemblance to the *Geographia Sacra*, was launched by the pre-adamitic hypothesis of Isaac de La Peyrère, the disturbing attack on monogenism and hence on scriptural authority itself, against which the orthodox intelligentsia of Europe reacted violently. Bochart's proposal, that there was an occult coincidence between the figures of mythology and those of Genesis, was with reason considered to be an explanation, both flexible and constructive, for the multiplication of man's descendents, on the same level as the *Theologia gentilis et philosophia christiana* by Gerhard Voss (1642), and the later *Demonstratio evangelica* of Pierre-Daniel Huet (1679).¹⁵ While accepting on the whole the conceptual validity of this interpretation, we must recall that la Peyrère's *Preadamitae* were published in Amsterdam in 1655, a decade after the *Phaleg* (though the first draft was complete in 1642), so that the latter should rather be placed in the context of already existing polemic against the skeptical tastes of

¹⁴ Laplanche, 211 ff. By the same author, see also *Débats et combats autour de la Bible dans l'orthodoxie réformée*, in Armogathe (dir.), *Le Grand siècle et la Bible*, 117–40.

¹⁵ Rossi, 183 ff.

humanists and classicists, of a clearly libertine matrix. The clash over the mythology of the gentiles recalls the figure of François de La Mothe le Vayer, the Dauphin's tutor and *esprit fort* who appealed greatly to the cultured circles of the kingdom, and whose *De la vertu de payens* was published in 1642 with a dedication to Richelieu.¹⁶ Here the philosophical universe of Greek and Latin antiquity was described with stylish elegance, converging with the barely concealed theory of a skeptical relativism open to recognizing the possible coexistence of the various traditions. The most natural result was the blurring of the luminous clarity of the Christian example.¹⁷ The second part of the volume is structured as a gallery of famous people to be praised, and includes Epicurus, Julian the Apostate and Confucius (typical of missionary literature); in it the provocations which damage the uniqueness of Christian morality play on the comparison between the religious *topoi* of the various cultures, unscrupulously matched on the basis of the criteria of analogy alone. Even the specificity of Christ's teaching and the story of Genesis are put to the test:

According to Origen, Celsus was so impious as to argue that Jesus took his finest phrases from Plato, especially the one in which a camel, or rather a rope, would pass more easily through the eye of a needle, than a rich man enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. [...] Those who loved Plato and his work excessively found the birth of the world explained better in the *Timaeus* than in Genesis. That fine country that Socrates describes to Simmias in the *Phaedo* was far more full of grace than the earthly paradise. And the fable of the Androgyne was incomparably better devised than all that Moses had said about the extraction of Eve from one of Adam's ribs. [...] And instead of admitting that Homer and Plato in their fantastic stories counterfeited what

¹⁶ The influence of le Vayer on La Peyrère is suggested by Giuliano Gliozzi in *Adamo e il nuovo mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1977), 533 ff.

¹⁷ On the pyrrhonism of La Mothe le Vayer see L. Bianchi, *Alle fonti della ragione. Il pensiero libertino di fronte alla tradizione filosofica*, in G. Canziani-Y. C. Zarka (eds.), *L'interpretazione nei secoli XVI e XVII*, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), 127-53. The classic text on the author and his intellectual background is R. Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII siècle* (Geneva-Paris: Slatkine Reprints, 1983; original edition, 1943).

they learnt in Egypt from the books of Moses, more ancient by several centuries than any pagan, they had the audacity to argue the opposite, and pretend that Moses was the transcriber of the inventions of Homer and Hesiod.¹⁸

The heart of the *Geographia Sacra* lies in this coherent polemic against this kind of use of classical authorities—a polemic which aimed less to reject profane sources and knowledge indiscriminately, or to renounce the use of critical reason, but rather to reduce to zero their dignity as plausible alternatives to revealed history. If le Vayer sets out the moral and civil forms established by God and those established by the profanity of the gentiles horizontally, one next to the other, Bochart tries to bring out the existence of a hierarchical criterion which makes the latter descend from the former in every case. As we have already seen, the criterion is that of identifying antiquity and causality.

The crisis lasted for decades, as can be seen from Pierre de Villemandy's preface to the 1707 edition, which reiterates the work's total extraneity to the imaginative *Genèsis* of Adam, to the Columns of Seth, to the prophecies of Enoch and to the rest of fabulous ancient repertory of the libertines.¹⁹ But already in 1646, in introducing the original, Bochart prudently allows us to glimpse the nature of the adversary—who, we should recall, held a prestigious position at court:

¹⁸ "Nous voions dans Origene que Celsus avoit eu assez d'impieté pour soustenir que Jesus Christ tenoit de Platon les plus belles sentences qu'il eust dites, et particulièrement celle qui porte qu'un chameau, ou plutot un cable, passeroit plus aisément par le trou d'un aiguille, qu'un homme riche n'entreroit au Royaume des Cieux. [...] Ceux qui ont eu de ces passions indiscrettes pour luy, et pour ses ouvrages, trouvoient que la naissance du monde, estoit bien mieux couchée dans le Timée, que dans la Genese. Ce beau país que Socrate décrit a Simmias dans le Phaedon, avoit beaucoup plus de grace que le Paradis terrestre. Et la fable de l'Androgyne estoit sans comparaison mieux inventée que tout ce que Moïse a dit de l'extraction d'Eve de l'un des costes d'Adam. [...] Et au lieu de reconnoistre qu'un Homère et Platon ont deguisé dans leurs contes fabuleux ce qu'ils avoient appris en Egypte des livres de Moïse, plus ancien de tant de siècles qu'aucun auteur profane; ils estoient si impertinens que de soustenir tout le contraire, et de vouloir que Moïse eust esté le Transcripateur des inventions d'Hesiodé et d'Homere." *De la vertu des payens*, in *Oeuvres*, Vol. V (Paris: Louis Billaine, 1669), 93–95.

¹⁹ GS, *Praefatio*, a2r–v.

The year just past, having been asked by friends to express myself on the placing of the earthly paradise, I embarked on a new path, trodden by no one. When I realized that because of its novelty it irritated those who still clung on so stubbornly to the opinions of the ancients that they believed it to be illegitimate to deviate from them by as much as an inch, I felt I would be doing a service if, by eliminating this misconception, I had shown with a second example, itself very well-known, that Moses' words on geography are not well enough known. So I decided to add as an appendix to the treatise on paradise a short exposition of the tenth chapter of Genesis, on the descent of humanity from the descendants of Noah, from which it was clear the way not just the ancients, but also their present-day interpreters, have often deviated from the sacred writer through ignorance. And while I reflected on this many things came to mind, so that what I had hoped to finish in a chapter spread out into many books while I was writing it.²⁰

At the origin of the work, then, is the wish to show how only a superficial knowledge of the historical and geographical context of Moses' narration can lead one to prefer, for reliability and completeness, the ancient sources. Bochart reaches his objective in his ambitious reconstruction, through the models of the genealogy of humanity (*Phaleg*) and the universal diffusion of the primeval language (*Chanaan*) of the centuries before the Flood; but he recalls the way that the original project, the "first example" that can be produced to support this thesis, depends on the localization of the earthly paradise. This is a subject that he did not manage to face in its entirety, devoting himself to the exegesis of the chapters following on from Genesis; to his heirs, frantically seeking that treatise on Paradise expected by the correspondents of the erudite scholar

²⁰ "Anno proxime praeterito rogatus ab amicis ut sententiam meam scriberem de loco Paradisi Terrestris, novam institi viam, neque a quoquam tritam hactenus. Quod cum ipsa novitate illis displicere sensissem, qui decessorum sententiis haerent ita mordicus ut ne larum quidem unguem ab iis discedere fas putent; operae pretium me facturum putavi, si, ut ex hominum animis hunc errorem revellerem, altero exemplo docerem, eoque perillustri, geographica Mosis vocabula nondum fuisse satis cognita. Consilium igitur fuit Tractatui de Paradiso pro appendice subnectere brevem expositionem decimi capituli Geneseos de humani generis propagatione ex stirpe Noae. Ex qua non veteres modo, sed et novitios interpretes horum ignoratione a Sacri Scriptoris scopo saepe aberrasse pateret. Sed hoc meditantibus mihi tam multa se obtulerunt, ut quod unius capituli angustiis concludi posse speraveram sub manu creverit in multos libros." GS, in *Phaleg praefatio*, 37.

after his death, only a few manuscript drafts remained, together with the text of a sermon.²¹ In fact, the idea of studying the question more deeply never left Bochart, to the very last years of his life; in April 1665 he imputed the lack of time to dedicate to it to the tensions provoked by the Catholic party, who that year had formally requested Louis XIV to close the Protestant schools.²² He did however manage to outline his opinion on two occasions; the first perhaps in 1645, on the occasion (mentioned above) that gave rise to the *Phaleg*, he wrote to Louis Cappel, the author of the *Critica Sacra*, that he essentially accepted Calvin's comment on Genesis. This proposal placed Paradise in Mesopotamia on the basis of his liking of the text of LXX, which translates the Hebrew terms *eden* and *mikkedem* using the spatial attributes Eden and orient, whereas in the Vulgate they stand for *garden of delights* and *in the beginning*. This proposal still prevails among Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the four rivers described by Moses would be none other than the Tigris and Euphrates, which meet near Apamea and then divide up again later.²³ Bochart restricts himself to inverting the position of the Havilah and Chus regions, the former to the west of the lower reaches of the Euphrates, Pishôn in the Bible, the latter to the west of the lower Tigris or Gihôn. There are just a few lines, with clear favor being given to that linguistic analysis so characteristic of this writer.²⁴ A second time, writing to Jacques Cappel (the son of Louis and also a Saumur orientalist), Bochart hints at the place of Paradise in the context of a dissertation on the nature of the tempting serpent: "in a word, I place it in the same place as Calvin," except for a correction of the major mistakes of the lands around the rivers;²⁵ the issue of the serpent, however, can be indicative of a more general hermeneutic, applicable also to the localization of Eden.

²¹ GS, *De clarissimo Bocharto et ejus scriptis*, 5.

²² GS, *De serpente tentatore, Paradiso terrestri, nonnullisque aliis*, 834.

²³ The question of its placing is fully dealt with in J. Delumeau, *Une histoire du Paradis, Le Jardin des délices* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 209 ff.

²⁴ GS, *Paradisi terrestri situs juxta Sa. Bochartum*, 29–30.

²⁵ GS, *De serpente tentatore*, 833.

The polemic against the allegorists, with the firm position taken in favor of a literal exegesis, runs throughout the entire piece. The opinion of those—among them Moïse Amyraut—for whom the serpent is none other than a symbolic reference to Satan, tends toward that emptying of literal meaning carried out by the allegorists, who see in Paradise the delights of the spirit, and in the four rivers the moral virtues. This for Bochart is a very dangerous choice, in that it comes near to negating even what in the Bible is related in the clearest possible way, and to substituting it with fantasies, *phantasmata*. It is to be rejected on two levels: anthropologically, because it presupposes that man may be seduced by temptations even in the state of innocence; and figuratively, in that the description of the animal is too exact not to imply the concrete reality of the subject represented. The serpent's characteristics in Genesis exactly fit the zoological framework of the tradition of medieval bestiaries, to whose model Bochart was still faithful; it is the most cunning of animals, with the sharpest sight, with a sense of taste and smell similar to mankind's, greedy for fruit, vegetables, meat, milk, and wine, and able to penetrate everywhere thanks to its flexibility. It was chosen by Satan as his instrument of seduction because of these physical characteristics, and for others of a symbolic nature, which can be included in the discourse of analogy. The serpent and the devil are in this sense mirror images that reflect each other in the world, going beyond the limits of the material and the spiritual: just as one slides along the ground, the other attempts hidden ambush; just as one has a forked tongue, the other hypnotizes with words, and so forth.²⁶

The problem remains of the absence of an actual key within the text which could explain the allegory: why did not Moses make any explicit reference to the Devil, narrating only the meeting between Eve and the serpent? The point is that

...in telling the story, Moses functions as a historiographer [*historiographus*] rather than as an interpreter, and for this reason he only recounts those things that were evident, rather than those which were hidden.²⁷

²⁶ GS, 838 ff.

²⁷ "...in ea narratione Moses historiographi, minime vero interpretis, fungitur officio; eapropter ea tantum, quae apparebant, non autem quae latebant, commemorat..." GS 840.

If the Bible is a *historia*, an exposition of the facts as they happened, it should be read with the instruments that allow us to grasp its original meaning, which is that of a narration; once the evidence of that meaning has been reached, such a *historia* receives the confirmation of its own truth. It is quite natural that the instruments are those which are made available at various times by the natural and historical sciences, by geography, and by philology. A correct exegesis, for this reason, understood as a reappropriation of the original sense of the text in order to progressively overcome the different interpretations in approaching its nucleus of meaning, must be carried out with the help of an enormous accumulation of information; only the erudite scholar is capable of constructing informed hypotheses, and not *phantasmata*.²⁸ Bochart's correctives concerning the real latitude of the lands of Chus and Havilah, in the context of the localization of the site of Eden, are to be understood in the same way, as a manifestation of the race backwards towards the primitive sense of the Scriptures, in this case relating to the representation of space—as in Louis Cappel, the original lesson of the text.

This does not mean that Bochart wants to reduce the hermeneutic to a bare, literal sense. He was a minister at Caen, and the sermons on the second chapter of Genesis were the point of departure for his research. The question of the placing of Paradise, also for reasons beyond his control, was brought to an end for him in those few lines to the Cappels. It was still very much an open question, however, to his contemporaries, and destined to become still more so over the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth; "sacred geography" was raised to the level of a subject in itself, studied by Bible scholars and orientalists (categories which still for the most part overlap) on the tracks of the hydrography of Eden, on the route

²⁸ Jean-Robert Massimi's analysis goes in the same direction, in reference to the *Traité de la situation du Paradis terrestre* by Pierre Daniel Huet, in *Montrer et démontrer: autour du Traité de la situation du Paradis terrestre de P. D. Huet (1691)*, in A. Desreumaux and F. Schmidt (eds.), *Moïse géographe. Recherches sur les représentations juives et chrétiennes de l'espace* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1988), 203–25, 223.

Solomon's fleet took to Ophir, and of Mount Garizim.²⁹ There is probably no single reason for the popularity of this public debate. One important reason would seem to derive from the tastes of an educated public, in connection with the spread of interest in an exoticism of Asiatic matrix. A second reason is the specifically Protestant tendency to emphasize the centrality of the Hebrew text of the Bible (as opposed to the Latin text) and the ultimate clarity of the word of God. Some texts, from this point of view, were born with the needs of controversy obviously very much in mind: the *Dissertatio de Paradiso* of Joannes Vorst, the Lutheran theologian active in Brandenburg, rejects the placing in Armenia proposed by Robert Bellarmine in the book *De gratia primi hominis* of the *Controversiae*.³⁰ In fact, the tracing of the primordial sense of the Scriptures, carried out through a rigorous critical method, can only be damaging to the authority of the Roman Catholic institutions, founded on an interpretation of the text which can be determined historically.

The third reason for the proliferation of the genre, which with the onset of the eighteenth century involved Roman Catholic culture as well, is undoubtedly the spread of a scepticism which doubts the very bases of religion of the book—that cultural relativism which Bochart himself had already attacked. Sacred geography (as can be argued for chronology, history and the other sacred sciences) is not a subsidiary subject, an aid to, the reading of the Bible, despite the fact that the prefaces to the individual works boast of their practical usefulness for exegetes and theologians. It is essentially an apologetic genre, redacted by extremely competent scholars for a highly educated public dangerously vulnerable to the lure of rationalism, which required refined instruments rather than defensive reactions. The aim was to establish a solid relationship between two truths of a superficially different nature,

²⁹ An exemplary collection of this kind of literature is Vol. VII of the *Thesaurus antiquitatum sacrarum... in quibus, veterum hebraeorum mores leges, instituta, ritus sacri, et civiles illustrantur*, ed. Biagio Ugolini, Venetiis, apud Johannem Gabrielem Herthz, 1747".

³⁰ *Dissertatio de Paradiso*, in Ugolini, 695–714.

to demonstrate that they were substantially identical: the truth of the text and that of the geographical place.³¹ The earthly Paradise, in this sense, offered a very important testing ground for that truth. Insofar as it was the chronologically founding moment of the relation between man and the world, the very relation that presides over the birth of modern science in the seventeenth century, it could, if guaranteed by the concrete reality of geographical space, contribute to the foundation of a new relation between man and Christianity, this time based on reason. If what is most ancient is by virtue of its antiquity most true, Paradise, as the most ancient place of all, the primordial place, contains in itself the truth in its condition of purity.

In 1691 Pierre Daniel Huet, under the pretext of putting the chaos of topographies in order, dedicates to Eden a disquisition which is a brilliant example of this apologetic attitude. His *Traité de la situation du Paradis terrestre*—here *situer* is meant in its locative sense—opens with a detailed map of Mesopotamia, with the Garden in the middle. This is no longer Calvin's 1553 map, full of imprecisions and reproduced mainly as an aid to the Bibles of the Dutch, English and French Reformation, but an accurate geographical map of the whole region which sums up the sense of the written text itself, in other words the visible representation of the reality in Moses' narration.³² Huet is not interested in anything in the second chapter of Genesis except the geographical determination of Paradise. He proceeds to analyze verse by verse, imposing a clear framework on the intricacies of the glosses with the criterion of biblical philology. The return to the original sense of the words is the leitmotif of the entire work. Huet is Roman Catholic, and very close to Bossuet, and will soon be appointed bishop of Avranches; but as a scholar of European fame and *politique* far from confessional conflicts, he does not hesitate to consider the *perspicuitas* of ancient Hebrew the most suitable instrument for the defense of the Bible. Moreover,

³¹ On this see Massimi, 205 ff.

³² On Calvin's map of Paradise, and more in general on the representation of geographical space in editions of the Bible, see C. Delano-Smith and E. Morley, *Maps in Bibles 1500–1600: An Illustrated Catalogue* (Geneva: Droz, 1991).

psychological reasons are not quite extraneous to the composition of the treatise; in taking on the question of Eden, a treatment of which was so eagerly awaited by Bochart's readers and never found among his papers, Huet is settling an intellectual debt. He had been a disciple of Bochart, and a friend and traveling companion at the court of Christina of Sweden, before the relation was broken off because of a controversial edition of Origen and the sudden death of the old theologian. Huet pays off the debt with interest, with the insinuation that he had copied Bochart's notes on the subject. Certainly Huet, their religious differences aside, shares with Bochart the flexible and innovative approach of the polemic against the libertines; in the *Demonstratio evangelica* (1679), for example, he replies to Spinoza in seeking the rational proof of Christianity, and finding in the pagan Gods the germ of revelation.³³ His use of reason in the dissertation on Paradise conforms entirely to the hermeneutic project of sacred geography; not a further interpretation of Genesis, but its clarification, achieved thanks to a comparison of the ancient sources so as to contextualize the speaking Moses as closely as possible in reality. He takes a circular route, starting with the Masoretic text, which he thinks is the nearest to the original, and going back to it, rendering it more objective through fields of knowledge extraneous to the religious dimension.³⁴ Huet maintains that the exposition is so clear that it is hard to believe that Eden could have been placed in places so very different from each other.³⁵ The key lies in placing the words of the narrator in the conditions in which they were pronounced. One case among many concerns that of the Hebrew term *mikkedem*, with reference to the Garden, understood by some as the locative term "in the east," and by others—the majority of vulgarizers—as the temporal term "in the beginning." Having chosen the first meaning as the correct one, Huet is faced with the choice between placing

³³ J. Le Brun, "Entre la Perpetuité et la *Demonstratio evangelica*," in *Leibniz à Paris, Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa*, XVIII (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978), II, 1-13, 10 ff.

³⁴ Massimi, 216.

³⁵ *Tractatus de situ Paradisi terrestris*, here in the Latin translation of 1698, "excludunt Amstelædami Henr. et vid. Th. Boom...; et Ultrajecti, Guil. vande Water").

Eden in the Far East, or in the region between Palestine and the Persian Gulf: and here he claims that it is necessary to look with the eyes of Moses. Moses wrote near the western boundary of the continent; like the contemporary Jews and Arabs he probably called *sabios* (orientals) the inhabitants of the lower reaches of the Euphrates; in the Bible itself he several times uses the word *kedem* for the area a little to the east of the Tigris: thus there is no doubt that Paradise is to be placed in Mesopotamia. As for the possibility of understanding the passage in both spatial and temporal terms, going along with a presumed ambiguity inspired by God, it should not be forgotten that Jerome translates *a principio* above all in homage to the authority of the Greek paraphrasers Aquila, Symmac and Theodotius; many other Fathers, by contrast, believed that the temples of the ancient church faced east to commemorate the first country of mankind.

With Huet the inquiry into where Paradise was found reaches its most extreme form of meticulous, detailed scholarship, although it does not seem to have been considered to be complete. French Reformed scholarship, exiled into the Protestant states after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, is by no means silent; the bitterness over the savage repression experienced over the century, and for the eradication of circles of such a high intellectual level as the academies of Saumur and Sedan, is also nourished in the cult of great figures of Hebrew scholarship, Cameron, Cappel and Bochart. The latter's biography was published in 1692, produced by his pupil Etienne Morin, pastor at Caen and after his expulsion teacher of oriental languages at Amsterdam. The reconstruction of Eden *secundum mentem Bocharti*, based on the memories of more than twenty years earlier, is a clear sign of the vitality of those who had been defeated in the reign of Louis XIV.

Morin's thesis is essentially the same as Huet's, placing Eden at the meeting of the Tigris and the Euphrates; and the visible epicenter of the biography is a great map of the region, similar to that of the *Traité* (figure 1). The reasoning, however, is quite different: Huet's insistence on exegesis, which he showed in the constant work of comparison of the Scriptures' translations, such as to confer on his dissertation the coloring of biblical criticism, are very nearly absent. The main lines of

the text belong essentially to Semitic studies, juxtaposing observations more strictly philological with others of a historical and ethnographical nature, and the route backwards through the interpretations, the method favored by Huet, is substituted by going directly to the analysis of the Hebrew text, considered as the written expression of the language spoken by Adam. In this sense Morin is moving in the temporal mode translated spatially into the engraving that is included in the 1707 edition of Bochart's *Works*, in which the *Life* is republished (figure 2): the interval between the naming of the animals in the Garden—the primordial act of the founding onomatesia of human vocal expression and simultaneously the sign of God's approval of man's dominion over other creatures—and the building of the tower of Babel, which represents the dissolution of that primitive linguistic unity that was similarly a privilege conceded by divine benevolence. After the fracture marked by the tower the ancient idiom survives, through the age of barbarism, as the prerogative of the descendants of the devout, and can be the key to enter into the age before the diaspora, that of Genesis and unity. In the

Di Gemoro Giannelli



Figure 2. Anonymous, Adam and Nimrod, in *Samuelis Bocharti Geographia Sacra*, op. cit.

Exercitationes de lingua primaeva, published in Utrecht a couple of years later, Morin faces the question of the original language of humanity, pleading the cause of Hebrew in a project that concerns from the very first the truthful status of the Bible, guaranteed by the intrinsic and transcendent force of the phonemes:

...certainly proper nouns have their own efficacy; but when they are drawn out of another language that intrinsic efficacy cannot be sought for, because there can be no certainty that it belongs to the original nouns. It is therefore important to be quite sure of the actual words of the sacred text, so that one can deduce more convincing arguments from them, superior to any objections.³⁶

In line with tradition, Morin rejects the idea that language can be innate in man. Although gestures and facial expressions linked to emotions are expressive features common to all humanity, words are not, so that indeed language is learned with difficulty, and the child raised by wild animals would develop an idiom close to their vocal sounds. Language cannot be considered to be born of reason, either, since in the beginning Adam spoke to God and to Eve in a language which was already complete, without forming it progressively through his relationship with things and by comparison with other expressive modes. However, Morin's main interest lies elsewhere, in such questions as, has Adam's language kept its original purity? Does anyone speak it today? According to Gregory of Nyssa, Grotius and Huet, it could not have survived in its integral form, but only in oral traces in the peoples that came after the Flood. Morin is certain that the language of Adam was Hebrew, handed down to his descendents by Shem and by his son Heber, shut into their dwelling on the slopes of Ararat at the time of the construction of the tower and therefore immune to punishment. This con-

³⁶ "Sane suam habent efficaciam nomina; sed cum ex alia lingua petuntur, insita illa efficacia non potest urgeri, quia incertum est an primitivis etiam inesset; itaque expedit certiozem fieri de genuinis Textus sacri verbis, ut ex iis validiora, et omni exceptione majora argumenta firmiter deducantur..." *Exercitationes de lingua primaeva ejusque appendicibus, in quibus multa S. Scripturae loca, diversae in linguis mutationes, multiplices nummorum Israelitarum, et Samaritanorum species, atque variae veterum consuetudines exponuntur*, Ultrajecti, apud Gulielmum Broedelet, 1694, f. 4r.

clusion allows him to follow a third path beyond the opposing schools of Protestant philology, expressed some decades earlier by Louis Cappel and Johann Buxtorf Jr. On the one hand, the introduction of a clear evolutionary dynamic of languages, with the affirmation of the later development of Masoretic vocal characteristics (to which the second half of the book is devoted) and the recognition of a derivation of the Semitic family from Hebrew; on the other, the confident reaffirmation of the divine nature of Hebrew, and of its metaphysical connotations.³⁷

Supported by the flexibility of theses whose theme at least was already set out at the moment of writing the dissertation on Paradise, Morin is able to utilize linguistics more effectively to explore the region of Eden, understood as much as a place of apologetic utterance as a testing-ground of an already autonomous sphere of Hebrew studies. Once again, only the placing is of interest, and it is no longer a question of the logical orientation towards the various lexical interpretations, but the consideration of the possible alternatives in their relation to the geographical space. Of the various classifiable opinions the first—from Origen to Francesco Zorzi—believes Paradise to be an allegorical construction: one can only contest it by faith in the literal meaning of the words. The second group, led by the Valentinians, believe it to have a physical reality, but outside this world, in the third heaven, an opinion denied by the presence of the angel on its threshold, a sign of the fact that men could reach it in the flesh. The third opinion, typical of medieval map culture, and rendered improbable by the roundness of the earth, places Paradise girding the world, beyond the oceans. Then gradually the more recent hypotheses: according to Joachim von Watt, or Vadianus Sangallensis, Eden can be superimposed over the entire world. This was a more convincing hypothesis, except for the enigma of the four rivers rising at the center of the Garden. For François du Jon Eden was Mesopotamia, whose inhabitants practiced agriculture from the remotest times, almost as if they wished to recreate the primordial con-

³⁷ *Exercitationes de lingua primaeva*, 39 ff. On human language in the period before the Flood see Delumeau, 262 ff.; on the Cappel-Buxtorf polemic which arose out of the *Arcanum punctationis*, see Laplanche, 220 ff.

ditions. Finally with Calvin, and above all with Bochart, we arrive at the exact collocation, on the banks of the Tigris between the cities of Ctesiphon and Apamea.³⁸ The mapping dimension, thanks to which the Scripture manifests the guarantee of its truthfulness, takes shape by gradually getting nearer to the exact center of the space and the discourse; the search for the rational proof of the Revelation can only mean descending to the knowable level of nature: from the spiritual dimension of allegory, to that of the third heaven, to that of the unknown region beyond the oceans, up to the definition of Eden within a land the size of a small county, what we see is the atomization of the object of study, as in the microscopic analysis of living tissues, in the search for the ultimate components of things. In a further magnification, the lens focuses on the critical point of the identification of the two unknown rivers, the Pishôn and the Gihôn, on which every treatise on Paradise hinges. Here, having arrived at the definition of the area of interest, Morin avoids getting involved in the interpretations of the vulgarizers, to get straight at the production of proof through the use of scientific instruments. These instruments are the ethnographical summaries, from which the ancient memory of a land of delights near the peoples of the Middle East were found, or more often the classical authors, e.g., Pliny's *Natural History* and Strabo's *Geography*. But it is the comparative approach to the Semitic languages, with Hebrew at the center, which confers real sense on the construction and ensure on the basis of the cross-referencing and checking of the etymologies, the certainty of the thesis.

The studies by Huet and Morin, for number of sources and breadth of analysis, are the culminating point of the historical and geographical literature of the earthly Paradise. In them, in fact, the apologetic tensions of intellectual elites disposed to take on religious relativism on a rational terrain, and the projects of language disciplines divided between biblical exegesis and more strictly scientific interests, converge. Sacred geography was a genre which, when grafted onto the study of antiquity, maintained its appeal and continued to provoke polemics

³⁸ GS, *Dissertatio de Paradiso terrestri secundum mentem S. Bocharti*, 9 ff.

until at least the fourth decade of the eighteenth century. If the research on the placing of Eden testifies to the great rational defensive effort made by Christianity to protect itself against the threat of scepticism, it was also a vigorous demonstration of the need to have the Hebrew text in front of one, at least in order to understand the words, and not simply at a fideistic level. This is a demonstration which could only undermine the authority of the Latin translation, and against which, on the Roman Catholic side, intervention was thought necessary. Of course Huet was also Catholic, but close to the general tendency of Protestant exegetes, and more interested in scholarship than in dogmatic theology. It was more likely from Jesuit circles that drafts for the mapping of Eden emerged, addressed to presenting the question from another point of view. There is an ample Jesuit tradition on the subject. Between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries some of the most important theologians of the Roman Catholic church touch on it: Pereira, Mariana, Bellarmine, and van den Steen.³⁹ In 1635 Father Abram, in his voluminous gloss on Virgil's *Georgics*, addresses it. About forty years later we find Athanasius Kircher—polygraph, scientist and great artificer of marvels of the Roman baroque—involved in the Garden, devoting a chapter of his spectacular *Arca Noë* to the question of the destruction of Paradise, and where it was to be found.⁴⁰ From the dogmatic point of view, he was not of course one of the most active of the Society of Jesus, which he generally praised propagandistically more for its scientific than for its religious merits. However, some details of his exposition are help to illustrate the change of perspective: the presence of a skeptical influence, starting with the opening acknowledging the fact that the controversy over the placing "is great, and always will be;" the reluctance to examine the Hebrew text, which Kircher nevertheless knows; and the faith in the exegesis of

³⁹ Delumeau, 188.

⁴⁰ On the conception of nature involved in Kircher's placing of Eden see I. Cantoni, "Tempora labuntur irrequieta cyclis: Tempo e cosmologia nella filosofia della natura di Athanasius Kircher," in the volume edited by W. Tega, *Le origini della modernità. Linguaggi e saperi nel XVII secolo* (Florence: Olschki, 1999), II, 361–90, 78–79.



Figure 3. C. Decker, The Earthly Paradise, in A. Kircher, *Arca Noë*, Amstelodami, apud Joannem Janssonium a Waesberge, 1675.

the Vulgate, where he accepts the translation of *mikkedem* as “in the beginning.”⁴¹ Above all, the presence of motifs of a clearly allegorical and moral character, entirely absent from the writings of his French contemporaries, in a work that is in any case apologetic in nature, intent on demonstrating the technical feasibility of the ark and of its navigation on the surface of the ocean of the Flood. Probably the dry literalism behind the geographical analysis cannot be accepted in a Catholic context, striking at the bases of a pastoral reading of the Bible, and aiming directly at the affirmation of its immediate understanding. The graphic representation of Paradise itself includes a series of elements foreign to the tradition of sacred geography (figure 3). These elements are the theme of the *hortus conclusus*, charged with moral symbolism, that in the description Kircher defines as being the mirror of the heavenly city

⁴¹ *Arca Noë, in tres libros digesta, quorum I. de rebus quae ante Diluuium, II. de iis, quae ipso Diluuiio ejusque duratione, III. de iis, quae post Diluuium a Noemo gesta sunt... explicantur, et demonstrantur*, Amstelodami, apud Joannem Janssonium a Waesberge, 1675, 197 ff.

described in the Apocalypse; the centrality of the reproduction of the angels (in homage to the Chaldee paraphrase, that uses the plural) guarding the entrances, and of the tree of life and of knowledge, figures of the state of grace, of the fall and of its punishment; and the contemporary presence of events that happened later than Genesis, scarcely relevant to the question of geography. These are the signs of a probable difficulty of the Catholic church, towards the last three decades of the seventeenth century, in making the established features of the rational foundation of religion their own, or in Huet's words, of the "demonstration of the Gospel."

This does not mean that these subjects do not come into play in a later age. In a softer version, in keeping with the character's usual balance, in the 1707 *Commentaire* on the Christian Testament, Benedictine Father Augustin Calmet suggests a placing in Armenia; even while making use of the comparative exegesis of the various translations of the Bible, he prefers not to negotiate a linguistic analysis of the Semitic family like those proposed by Huet and the Protestants.⁴² This may be the reason for choosing Armenia, isolated from the Semitic linguistic context, and consequently less involved in the controversy on the origin of languages, and simultaneously dear to the evidence of Greek historiography, particularly Xenophon. In addition, a similar framework can be seen in the *Disseratio de situ Paradisi terrestris* of Adrian Reland, an orientalist from Utrecht, which can be dated a few years after Calmet's work, and which takes up both the idea of Eden in Armenia and the ample use of classical sources.⁴³ A more rigorous appeal to Catholic orthodoxy on the issue of mapping Eden, on the other hand, is made by Jean Hardouin, an aggressive polemicist at the Paris Jesuit College, who in 1723 on the occasion of the publication of a sumptuous edition of Pliny's *ad usum Delphini*, published a disquisitio on Paradise whose title was already an indication of a change of perspective: "Pliny's con-

⁴² *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament*, here in the edition of 1724, Paris, chez Emery, Saugrain, Pierre Martin, t. 1, 1; short notes on the text in P. Marsauche, "Présentation de Dom Augustin Calmet (1672-1757): Dissertation sur les possessions du Démon," in *Armogathe*, 233-53, 240.

⁴³ *Dissertatio de situ Paradisi terrestris*, in Ugolini, 581-608.

formity to Moses.⁴⁴ Here we are not dealing with the concordance of pagan literature with revealed wisdom which Bochart and Huet theorized, but with a matching, of a veiled skeptical flavor, of Moses and Pliny as authors on a more or less analogous level: among the aims of the text, in fact, is the desire to demonstrate that the conservation of the *Historia Naturalis*, the only work of antiquity to mention the rivers of Paradise, is due to Providence.⁴⁵ The importance of those few pages on the location of Paradise, in the context of the imposing volume itself, is clear from the little map that follows the frontispiece and the index; the map reserves the first collocation of Eden to Palestine, the sign of a typologizing attitude, and therefore one more markedly pedagogical than Kircher's. The role of the Bible is not to be assimilated to that of the text endowed with history and of the various redactive levels studied at the Saumur Academy, but that of a holy book in every way not historical but confessional; Hardouin states programmatically that he is using the Vulgate "both because it is right for a Catholic to do so, and because on this subject it is extremely accurate, and clearer than anyone else."⁴⁶ From such a set of assumptions it is quite as natural to identify the spring in the center of Eden with the spring at the head of the Jordan, as the rhetorical nature of Moses' description of Paradise, recalled to the minds of the people of Israel to exhort it to the reconquest of the Promised Land, which is none other than mankind's primordial seat.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *De situ Paradisi terrestris disquisitio, sive de Plinii cum Mose convenientia in Paradisi fluminibus indicandis*, in *Caii Plinii Secundi Historiae Naturalis libri XXXVII... Editio altera emendatior et auctior*, Parisiis, typis Antonii-Urbani Coustelier, I, 1723, 359-68. The text, vulgarized, is republished in 1733 in a sylloge of *Traité géographiques et historiques* edited by A. H. Bruzen de la Martinière; Massimi, *Traité*, 219, and Delumeau, *Traité*, 188, indicate 1716 as the date of first publication, contradicting the *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* of C. Sommervogel, IV, s.v., whose opinion, in the absence of documentary proofs, is to be preferred.

⁴⁵ Hardouin, 359.

⁴⁶ Hardouin, "quoniam et sic facere catholicum decet, et est ea in hoc argumento perquam accurata, et ceteris omnibus multo apertior."

⁴⁷ Hardouin, 362 ff. Hardouin's thesis is taken up again, with not many variations, by the *Histoire du peuple de Dieu, depuis son origine jusqu'à la naissance du Messie*

Father Hardouin's treatise is perhaps the last to be specifically devoted to the place of Paradise; the project of rationalist apologetics, faced with the evident contradictions of its own nature, has by now definitively failed, and with it the subject of sacred geography. It is significant that having begun as an area where faith and critical reason met, it ends its career in the conceptual space of confessional conflict.

(1728), of Isaac-Joseph Berruyer, here consulted in the 1734 edition, Paris, chez J. B. Coignard fils, 17-19. It should be noted that Hardouin and Berruyer, for the christology expressed in the comments on the Gospels, are both together accused of Socinianism in a violent anti-Jesuit campaign, and the *Opera* of the former are placed on the Index in 1739.