

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Man's very element from man,
Saying, 'But all is God's,'—whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,
But able to glorify Him too
As a mere machine could never do.

BROWNING'S *Christmas Eve*.

GOD'S RECEPTION.—Here is no reluctant God, to be appeased or persuaded into forgiving His creatures. The Son comes from heaven to earth to do the Father's will, and that Father's will is to bless and heal. It is impossible, therefore,—it is inconceivable,—that He who comes simply to do that will on earth, as it is done in heaven, shall reject or repel a single soul that turns to Him. This would be to leave that will undone; nay, it would be to run right athwart and counter to it. *Therefore*, 'him that cometh to Me I shall not cast out.'—D. J. VAUGHAN.

THEY only miss

The winning of that final bliss,
Who will not count it true that love,
Blessing not cursing, rules above,
And that in it we live and move.

R. C. TRENCH.

GOD, who registers the cup

Of mere cold water, for His sake
To a disciple rendered up,
Disdains not His own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered.

BROWNING'S *Christmas Eve*.

Sermons for Reference.

- Davies (T.), *Sermons*, i. 306.
Hare (J. C.), *Mission of the Comforter*, ii. 310.
Harper (F.), *A Year with Christ*, 165.
Harris (R.), *Memoranda Sacra*, 101.
Moore (D.), *Seventy Sermons*.
Spurgeon (C. H.), *Evening by Evening*, 212, 213.
" " *Sermons*, vol. x. No. 599, vol. xxx.
" " No. 1762, vol. xl. No. 2349.
Vaughan (D. J.), *The Present Trial of Faith*, 163.
American Pulpit of the Day, i. 34.
Christian Treasury, xi. 481 (Mackenzie); xix. 337
(Clark).
Church of England Magazine, l. 168.
Clerical Library: Three Hundred Outlines on the New
Testament, 77.
Expositor, 3rd Series, iii.
Expository Times, iv. 287.
Homiletic Review, xiii. 417 (Junkin); xiv. 404
(Crosby).
Homilist, x., xxxiv.
" *New Series*, iii. 385.
National Preacher, i.
Penny Pulpit, *New Series*, iv. 373.
Sunday Magazine, 1875, 243 (Blaikie).

Archaeological Commentary on Genesis.

BY THE REV. A. H. SAYCE, LL.D., PROFESSOR OF ASSYRIOLOGY, OXFORD.

It will be observed that the resemblances between the biblical and Babylonian accounts of the Deluge extend equally to the so-called Elohist and Jehovistic portions of the Hebrew text. (α), (β), (γ), (δ), (ϵ), (ζ), (η), (θ), (ι), (κ), (ξ), and (\omicron) are common to the 'Elohist' and the epic; (β), (γ), (η), (ι), (λ), (μ) and (ν) to the 'Jehovist' and the epic. It will also be observed that in certain instances the epic explains what is doubtful or obscure in the biblical narrative. This is especially the case in the account of the sending out of the birds. Long before the discovery of the cuneiform document, it had been concluded that the biblical text could not be right: the birds were sent forth in order that Noah might know whether the earth were dry through their not returning to the ark, and yet the first that was sent out is made the one which did not return. The epic shows that the mention of the raven has been misplaced, and instead of being the first it

ought to have been the last of the birds that were despatched from the ark. It further shows what was the cause of the misplacement. The original narrative spoke of three birds, but the second of them, the swallow, which was called 'the bird of destiny' in Sumerian, had heathen and mythological associations connected with it; and it is accordingly omitted in the biblical text. The dove, therefore, has to take its place, and the fact of its being despatched three times is explained by making it on the second occasion the witness that the Flood was really past. Again, the Babylonian origin of the narrative alone explains the statement that the Deluge was partly caused by 'the fountains of the great deep' being broken up. The expression refers us to the Babylonian belief that the fountains of Tiamat, 'the Deep,' had been placed under guard at the time of the Creation, and so prevented from gushing forth and destroying the

world. In a mountainous country like Palestine the rain only, and not the sea, would have produced a flood. But primitive Babylonia was a low-lying plain washed and often inundated by the waters of the Persian Gulf. Here sea and storm would naturally have combined to produce the Flood.

There is yet another point to be noticed. As in the account of the Creation so in that of the Deluge, the biblical writer seems to have had the Babylonian version before him, and to have deliberately contradicted it where it introduced polytheistic and mythological conceptions, or narrowed the omnipotence of God. Thus, whereas the epic makes Xisuthros himself close the door of the ship, it is the Lord who shuts the door of the ark (Gen. vii. 16). So, again, the dove is substituted for the swallow—'the bird of destiny'—in Genesis, and while, according to the epic, Ea revealed the coming 'judgment' of mankind to Xisuthros without the knowledge of Bel who was about to bring it on, in the Bible God Himself reveals to Noah the approaching catastrophe. Throughout, moreover, there is in the scriptural narrative a tacit condemnation of the polytheism of the Chaldean story.

Lastly, it is clear that, although the account of the Deluge in the Book of Genesis is fundamentally Babylonian, it has received a Palestinian colouring. The 'ship' has become an 'ark,' as was natural in an inland country where there were no navigable rivers, and the olive leaf plucked by the dove points to Palestine and not to Babylonia. The mode of reckoning time, furthermore, is Palestinian.

To sum up : (1) The Babylonian account of the Deluge contained in the Epic of Gilgames goes back to the age of Abraham.

(2) The resemblances between this account and that in Genesis are so close and numerous as to show that the biblical writer must have been acquainted with the Babylonian version, not only in its general outlines, but also in its details.

(3) The resemblances extend alike to the 'Elohistic' and 'Jehovistic' portions of the biblical text.

(4) The Babylonian version explains obscurities in this text, *taken as a whole*, while, on the other hand, the text seems to imply an acquaintance with the actual language of the Babylonian version by its tacit contradictions of it.

(5) The Babylonian account has received a

Palestinian colouring before being used by the biblical writer.

The last-mentioned fact presupposes that it had long been known in Palestine before it was embodied in the narrative of Scripture. This excludes the supposition that the biblical narrative was written during the Babylonish Exile. The extraordinarily close resemblances between it and the Babylonian story, as well as its implicit contradictions of the latter, indicate that it cannot belong to the age of the kings. At this period Babylonian literature was not sufficiently known in Palestine to become, as it were, domesticated there, receiving a Palestinian colouring, and needing a silent but emphatic correction of the polytheistic and mythological ideas contained in it. Though Babylonian literary works may have been brought to the library of Jerusalem in the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah, they would have been known only to a very small and select body of readers—just the class, in fact, which least needed to be reminded of the omnipotence of Yahveh. Moreover, in such a case the Palestinian colouring of the narrative, as we have it in Genesis, would be inexplicable.

There is only one period left to which its introduction into the West can be assigned. That is the period which has been revealed to us by the Tel el-Amarna tablets, and the inscriptions of the early Babylonian kings—the period of the literary and political influence of Babylonia in Canaan, which extended from about B.C. 2500 down to the Mosaic epoch. This was the time when the literature of Babylonia was studied both in Palestine and on the banks of the Nile, when its traditions and legends made their way into the general culture and popular beliefs of the West, and when, therefore, a monotheistic version of them in Israel is intelligible. If the Egyptologists are right in regarding the Hebrew *tebah*, 'ark,' as borrowed from Egyptian in the age of the eighteenth dynasty, the use of the word in place of the Babylonian 'ship' would again point to the same period.

We have seen that the resemblances between the Babylonian and the biblical accounts are not confined to the so-called Elohistic or Jehovistic parts of the biblical narrative, but extend to the whole of it. We cannot suppose, however, that two Hebrew writers sat down to copy the same Babylonian original, the one agreeing to select what the other omitted, and that their versions were afterwards dovetailed together, nor can we assume

that the author of the Babylonian Epic, who flourished in the time of Abraham, had the biblical version before him in its present shape. The only other alternative seems to be that the division of the biblical text into an Elohist and a Jehovistic document is a philological mirage. And if it is a mirage in the account of the Deluge, where the marks of separate authorship appear to be clearer than anywhere else in the Pentateuch, it must be still more a mirage elsewhere. With the collapse of the literary analysis of the narrative of the Deluge, the whole fabric of the literary analysis of the Pentateuch falls to the ground. And yet there seems no escape from the archaeological conclusion. Henceforth, therefore, we shall disregard the analytic results of Pentateuchal criticism which have been arrived at upon purely philological grounds.

VI. 6, 7. Comp. ll. 150, 151 of the epic.

14. *Tébah*, 'ark,' is the Egyptian *teb*. 'Gopher' wood is probably connected etymologically with the Assyrian *gapru*, 'strong.' The Heb. *kopher*, 'pitch,' is the Bab. *kupru*, the word used in l. 51 of the epic.

18. It is noticeable that Noah and Xisuthros had alike but one wife (l. 167 of the epic).

21. The emphasis laid upon the fact that it was food which Noah took with him into the ark seems to point to the contrary statement of the epic that Xisuthros took with him gold and silver.

VII. 1. 'All thy house' includes the servants as well as the family (see l. 69 of the epic).

2. The distinction between clean and unclean beasts was known to the Babylonians, the flesh of certain animals being forbidden among them as food. Seven was a sacred number in Babylonia, and the Flood accordingly lasted, according to the epic, for seven days and nights.

4. In the Babylonian account the seven days were the days on which the rain fell. 'Forty' in the Old Testament is an indefinite number: thus in 2 Sam. xv. 7, 'forty years' represents only a few months.

5. Comp. l. 23 of the epic.

7. The *ner* of 600 years was a standard Babylonian division of time, which was reckoned by the *soas* of 60 years, the *ner* of 600 years, and the *sar* of 3600 years.

11. In *tehôm rabbah*, 'the great deep,' which is

used without the article, we have a reference to the Babylonian myth of Tiamat, who is called *ribbu*, 'the dragon,' in a fragmentary cuneiform version of her struggle with Merodach (Rm. 282, 17). It is possible, however, as Zimmern suggests, that *ribbu* is the Hebrew Rahab. The breaking-up of the 'fountains of the great deep' takes us back to the statement in the Babylonian Epic of the Creation, that when Merodach covered the firmament of heaven with one-half of the body of Tiamat, 'he caused a watch to be kept, enjoining that her waters should not gush forth.'

The 'second month' of the Hebrew civil year was the Canaanite Bul, the month of 'rain,' which corresponded to Marchesvan, 'the eighth month' of the Semitic Babylonian calendar, which was adopted by the Jews during the Captivity (1 Kings vi. 38). This was the season of the autumn or 'former rains' in Palestine, and answered to the latter part of October and the earlier part of November. In Babylonia, on the other hand, the rainy season was in January and February, during Sebat, the eleventh month of the year, which was accordingly called 'the month of the curse of rain' in Sumerian. The transference of the occurrence of the Deluge from Sebat to Marchesvan or Bul is thus a mark of the Palestinian colouring undergone by the account of the Deluge in the West. A writer in Babylonia in the age of the Captivity could never have dated the occurrence in such a way.

VIII. 4, 5. The 'seventh month' was the Canaanite Abib, the Babylonian Nisan (or March), the first month of the Babylonian year; when spring commenced, the rains of winter ceased. In Palestine, on the other hand, it was the season of the 'latter rains,' which generally passed away towards the end of the month. It was accordingly from the seventeenth day of the month on to the 'tenth month' (June) that 'the waters decreased continually.'

8. As in the Babylonian account, no mention is made of the interval of time which elapsed between the sending forth of the different birds, so in Genesis it is not stated how long after the despatch of the raven the dove was sent out. In this we may see another indication that the raven was originally the last bird despatched, and not the first. It will be noticed that the words in which the sending out of the birds is described

are almost a repetition of those of the epic. It is only in ver. 11, where the dove takes the place of the swallow, that the biblical language differs from that of the epic. And here, too, a Palestinian tree—the olive—makes its appearance.

15-19. After Noah had ascertained that the earth was dry, we should have expected him to leave the ark and send the animals out of it, as in the Babylonian account. Instead of this, he does not leave it until commanded to do so by God. Here we have the same contrast between the biblical and Babylonian versions, as in the case of the closing of the door of the ark. In this instance, moreover, there was a special reason why the fact that God told the patriarch to leave the ark should be emphasised. According to the epic the gods did not intervene until Xisuthros had offered sacrifice, and then they came about him like 'flies.' This was grossly polytheistic, and it also limited the omnipresence and omniscience of the Deity. In Genesis, therefore,—in contradiction apparently of the Babylonian narrative,—emphasis is laid on the fact that the one God, who had Himself caused the Deluge, also announced to Noah that it was over before any sacrifice was offered to Him.

21. Comp. l. 146 of the epic, where the polytheistic 'gods' take the place of 'Yahveh.' The latter part of the verse seems written in opposition to ll. 158-162 of the epic. In the epic 'the sinner' alone is to 'bear his own sin,' and to be cut off by wild beasts and famine; in Genesis 'the ground' is not to be cursed any more, merely 'because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,' and accordingly the Lord declares

that He will never again smite 'every thing living,' including man.

IX. 1. Comp. l. 169 of the epic. In opposition to the Babylonian account, according to which the blessing of Xisuthros consisted in his being translated out of the world, the blessing of Noah consisted in his remaining in the world and replenishing the earth.

13. Comp. l. 143 of the epic, and for the Babylonian 'bow of the Deluge,' see above.

20, 21. The vine seems to have been a native of Armenia and the Balkans, but was introduced into Babylonia and Egypt at an early date. 'Wine' was *kurunu* in Assyro-Babylonian, *karanu* being the 'vine'; the Canaanite *yayin*, 'wine,' is given in a cuneiform lexicon tablet as *inu*. The word, however, was never naturalised in Babylonia.

25. This verse must be quoted without alteration from some older document, since it does not harmonise with vers. 22 and 24, according to which it was Ham and not Canaan who committed the offence.

26, 27. This may possibly refer to the Babylonian domination in Canaan. Samu or Sumu was a deity worshipped by the dynasty to which Khammurabi, the contemporary of Abraham, belonged, the names of the first two kings of the dynasty being compounded with the name of the god, and the dynasty in question claimed sovereignty in Palestine. In this case, as Japhet represented the northern nations, there may be also a reference to the people of Mitanni, who, as we learn from the Tel el-Amarna tablets, were allied with the Babylonians in their attempts upon Canaan.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Dalman on the Divine Authority of the Old Testament.¹

THIS is an earnest and able attempt, by one who knows well the difficulties of the position, to conserve for the Old Testament its proper place in the scheme of divine revelation. The author reminds us how the majority of us reached our

¹ *Das Alte Testament ein Wort Gottes.* Ein Vortrag von Prof. G. Dalman. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs. 1896. 50 Pf.

religious convictions at first on the ground of the authority of Scripture. And so it has been all along. In proof of this, he refers to the place held by the Old Testament in the teaching of our Lord and His disciples, their unquestioning belief that in Jesus its Messianic expectations were realised; he shows how not only Jesus but even St. Paul ascribe a divine origin to the law, in spite of the provisional and transitory character of its enactments. Now comes the pertinent question, Is not