

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

---

## Notes of Recent Exposition.

A DISCUSSION recently took place in the Upper House of Convocation on 'The Dearth of Candidates for Holy Orders.' A full report of the discussion appeared in the *Guardian* of 15th May. All the most prominent bishops of the southern province took part in it. The Bishop of Winchester surveyed the facts and suggested the remedies. He was followed by the Bishops of London, Rochester, Exeter, Lincoln. It was the last of a series of discussions on this subject which has been going on for eighteen months or more. When the Archbishop of Canterbury closed the discussion, everything seemed to be said that could be said.

That there is an increasing reluctance to enter into Holy Orders was admitted by everyone. Four principal reasons were given by the bishops for this reluctance. First, the poverty of the clergy. Second, the attractiveness of the Home, and, still more, of the Indian Civil Service. Third, the decrease in the number of clerical masters in public schools. And fourth, intellectual difficulties.

The last was reckoned the least. It was reckoned the least by all the bishops. 'The cause of poverty,' said the Bishop of Exeter, 'is, I am sure, the one great cause. The unsettlement of the boys' minds and the men's minds is

really by comparison quite trifling. The unsettlement is, as a rule, an unsettlement in a man's first year of his University career. The second year will probably enable him to recover his equilibrium. There is a little wastage, but in comparison it is small.'

The Bishop of Lincoln, however, took a somewhat more serious view of the force and prevalence of intellectual difficulties. He recognized that in our teaching professions there was room for a new professor; there was need, as you might say, in our Colleges for the endowment of a new chair. 'We need some one,' he said, 'to help young men to get accustomed to the limitation of their faculties.' We have to hold truths in tendency, he said. 'We have to admit our inability to reconcile even the things which we know to be true. We have to confess that we cannot grasp really the whole of those truths which yet we say are necessary to salvation.' And these are just the things that young minds find it most difficult to do. They do not see why they should try to do them.

An anonymous contributor to the *Pilot*, whose account we are following, agrees with the Bishop of Lincoln. He even holds that intellectual obstacles are mainly accountable for the striking decrease in students of divinity. He does not

deny that the acceptance of the Creeds is easier at present than it was during the ascendancy of Mill and his school. But he thinks that young men's minds are more vigorous now. And he says that sensitiveness to doubt and difficulties is, as a rule, in direct proportion to the vitality of the mind.

He gives his own experience. He himself, though now he can look back upon some years of clerical life, once hesitated to take Orders, and that for intellectual reasons. He believes that the difficulty arises from the age at which men have to decide to take Orders. At the age of twenty-three or twenty-four men look upon the facts of the Creed as something outside their own experience. They are propositions, to be accepted or rejected as they appear probable or improbable in themselves. By the time the man has reached the age of forty, the statements of the Creed have verified themselves in his own spiritual experience. If the man of four and twenty could so forecast the years as see himself a man of forty, subscription would have no terrors for him. He would, at the most, be surrendering his immature to his own riper and richer judgment. Therefore this writer agrees with the Bishop of Lincoln, and says that we are greatly in need at this time of some one to help young men 'to get accustomed to the limitation of their faculties.'

The latest commentary on Ezekiel has been written by Dr. C. M. Cobern and published by Messrs. Eaton & Mains, of New York. Its strength lies in its archæology. The explanations which it contains of Ezekiel's chariot and Ezekiel's cherubim owe their probability as well as their novelty to Dr. Cobern's acquaintance with the monuments. But there are also occasional touches of interpretation that are both new and notable.

Take that most difficult passage, Ezk 20<sup>25, 26</sup>. The rendering of the Revised Version is this:

'Moreover also I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments wherein they should not live; and I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord.'

What are those statutes that were not good, and those judgments wherein they should not live? Were they certain Mosaic regulations, which were permitted because of the hardness of their hearts? Or were they the edicts of evil kings, such as the 'statutes of Omri' (Mic 6<sup>16</sup>), which they had to accept because they had accepted the kings themselves? Or are these statutes and judgments the cruel taxes which sin levies on every man who gives himself up to its dominion?

Dr. Cobern does not decide. He does not think it necessary to decide. While God retains His sovereignty, it is He that sends these statutes that are not good, and these judgments that are intolerable, even though from the side of science and of man they are to be described as the inevitable result of our own transgressions. It is the same laws, indeed, which are a savour of life unto life to the obedient, that become to the disobedient a savour of death unto death.

But the more difficult matter remains. In the 26th verse it is said that they caused their children to pass through the fire, and even this is somehow attributed to the ordinance of Jehovah. 'I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb.'

Professor König doubts if this refers to human sacrifice. Dr. Cobern, though he gives the doubt its value, thinks it most probable that it does. But he will not have the suggestion of Kuenen, Wellhausen, Smend, Toy, and others, that in the early days of Israel Jehovah ordained child-sacrifice, and that this is one of the statutes

which now seem 'not good' to Ezekiel. He will not have the explanation of Renan, that God commanded this evil thing for the very purpose of avenging Himself on the nation that had disobeyed Him. He calls that a horrible suggestion. He says it is opposed to all that we know of the Mosaic legislation, and in flat contradiction to the statements of Jeremiah (7<sup>st</sup> 19<sup>b</sup>). Bertholet declares that 'the fact that Jeremiah is of a different opinion is of no importance to the decision.' But Dr. Cobern prefers to hold with Jeremiah that Jehovah did not ordain child-sacrifice, rather than with Bertholet and all the rest of the modern expositors who say that He did.

No doubt there is the sacrifice of Isaac. But the sacrifice of Isaac was not a sacrifice. It did not come off. And the very point of it lies in that. Other gods will have the best that their worshippers can give them. Jehovah will have the best also. Other gods demand the offering of the first-born son. Jehovah demands that also, but not for death, for life. For a moment it seems to be for death, in order that it may be seen to be for life for ever.

So this seeming command to the Israelites to offer their children in sacrifice, is in Dr. Cobern's eyes simply a particular example of the universal law that the way of transgressors is hard. The Israelites rejected Jehovah, and chose Molech. Choosing Molech they chose the ordinances of his worship. They had to pass their children through the fire. To Jehovah it was a 'pollution.' Yet the very pollution was administered by Him in order to bring the Israelites back to their obedience.

During the last eighteen months a series of short scientific studies have been appearing in Germany under the general title of 'The Ancient East.' These studies are now being translated into English by Miss Jane Hutchison and published by Mr. David Nutt. Two have already appeared, and have been noticed in THE

EXPOSITORY TIMES: *The Realms of the Egyptian Dead*, by Professor Wiedemann of Bonn, and *The Tell el-Amarna Period*, by Carl Niebuhr. A third has just been published. It is entitled *The Babylonian and the Hebrew Genesis*. It is written by Dr. Heinrich Zimmern, Professor of Semitic Languages in the University of Leipzig.

Dr. Zimmern begins by recognizing the interest of his subject. It is true that the centre of interest has shifted. Able editors who used to welcome articles on 'The Bible and Natural Science' do so no longer. It has been discovered that the Bible is content to leave Natural Science alone, and Natural Science has been induced to leave the Bible alone. Their provinces and their purposes are distinct. To speak of 'the mistakes of Moses' is therefore itself a fundamental mistake. For Moses never intended to say the things that are attributed to him. And more than that, Moses is at the best only a link in a long chain of poets and editors, who received the materials out of which Genesis is composed from some far-distant past, perhaps also from some far-distant province, and passed them on. As they passed them on, they purified and fitted them for the highest uses. But even in the form they at last assumed, a form in which they will charm and instruct the generations of men till the end of time, they still bear traces of the rock whence they were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence they were digged.

So the centre of interest is not in science now, nor even in Moses. The 'First Book of Moses called Genesis' has been discovered, at least in its earlier portions, to belong to the history and religion of the great nations of the East. Babylonia also has her story of the Creation, of Paradise and the Fall, of the early Patriarchs, and of the Flood. And the great questions of interest now are these: What is the connexion between the Babylonian narratives and those in Genesis? Are these ancient stories mere myths, or have they a historical foundation? And whether they are myths or not, what is the meaning of them, and wherein

lies their profit for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness?

Our first business is to know what these ancient narratives are. The narratives of the Bible we have before us. The Babylonian versions come from different sources. First there are certain extracts happily preserved by Eusebius and others from the work of a Babylonian priest named Berosus, who flourished near the time of Alexander the Great. Next there is the *Chaldean Account of Genesis* of George Smith. Then there are the Tell el-Amarna tablets, especially the series now preserved in the Royal Museum at Berlin, which contain a story evidently related to the biblical narrative of Paradise. And lastly, there is the cuneiform tablet, quite recently discovered near Babylon itself, which deals with the Babylonian versions of the Deluge.

The narratives of the Bible we have before us. But do we understand them, and have we gathered them all together? Professor Zimmern presupposes a general knowledge of the biblical story of Creation, but he thinks it advisable to recapitulate its chief incidents as found even in Genesis, and he finds it absolutely necessary to gather together the references to it which are scattered through the Psalms and the Prophets.

The chief source for the Bible story of Creation is the first chapter of Genesis. There the creation of heaven and earth is ascribed to the word of the Almighty. The language, says Dr. Zimmern, is solemn and simple, and it is penetrated by a sublime theological conception, though its phraseology suggests priestly learning and abstract thinking rather than the freshness and spontaneity of popular belief. The universe is represented as lying in a state of chaos until order is introduced by the word of God, the Creator. The chief phenomena of this primal state of chaos are darkness and water. An almost personal name is given to the watery deep. It is called 'Tehom.' And the first act of the Creator, the first day's

work of creation, is to bring light into this gloomy chaos.

Then the primeval waters, hitherto a single mass, are divided into two parts. One part forms the ocean that belongs to the earth. The other is sent to form the celestial ocean, which lies above the sky. The two oceans are understood to be separated by an actual and substantial vault of heaven, called the firmament. This is the work of the second day. On the third day the dry land appears and clothes itself in vegetation. The fourth day sees the creation of the heavenly bodies, and special emphasis is laid upon the 'rule' of the sun and of the moon. They are not mere lights in the sky, they have a certain control, the force of which we see when we turn to the Babylonian astrology. On the fifth day are created birds and fishes. On the sixth, beasts and reptiles, and, as crown of the whole, mankind.

This story is found in the first chapter of Genesis: is it the earliest written narrative in the Bible? No, says Professor Zimmern, it is one of the very latest. In its present form it is not older than the Babylonian exile, if it is as old. It dates at the earliest from the sixth century B.C. So its monotheism, for which we are so thankful, is no more, he says, than a reflection of the monotheism that marked the Jews of the exilic or post-exilic period. Its learned author, who betrays his hand in the carefulness, approaching to pedantry, with which the separate varieties of animals and plants are indicated, 'each after his kind,' has taken care that no gross polytheistic elements should be left in the story to scandalize a strictly monotheistic generation.

Nevertheless he has not eliminated every trace of its primitive origin. Chaos; 'Tohu-wa-Bohu'; the darkness on the face of the deep; 'Tehom'; the spirit of God moving, or more literally, 'brooding' upon the waters; the firmament dividing the waters above from the waters below; the

'rule' of the heavenly bodies; the conception of other divine beings besides the creative Deity implied by the use of the plural pronoun, 'Let us make man in our image'; the poetical form of expression retained in the account of the creation of man—

'And God created man in His own image,

In the image of God created He him,'—  
all these are relics of an earlier age and an earlier belief. Their presence is unaccountable until we read the parallel Babylonian narrative.

But the first chapter of Genesis does not contain all that the Bible has to say about the Creation. Following now somewhat closely Gunkel's remarkable book, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, Professor Zimmern discovers a series of passages in the poetical books of the Old Testament which refer to a struggle between Jehovah and a mythical monster. This mythical Being is the primeval chaotic deep. It is personified, and appears under various names, as Rahab, leviathan, dragon, serpent, or simply sea, but more especially as Tehom, the name employed in Genesis.

He quotes first of all from the 89th Psalm, and in this translation—

'Thou remainest lord, when the sea rageth,  
When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.  
Thou hast defiled Rahab as carrion,  
With arm of strength thou hast scattered thy foes.  
Thine is the heaven, thine is the earth;  
The world and its fulness, thou hast founded it.  
North and south, thou hast created them.'

He sees there a close connexion between the overthrow of Rahab and the creation of heaven and earth by Jehovah. He sees that the Creation takes place only after the fall of Rahab. He sees that in the struggle Rahab has had auxiliaries. He sees that they were only scattered, while Rahab was slain and even treated with ignominy after death. And all these things he sees in the parallel Babylonian narrative, as we shall see them also.

His next quotation is from the 51st chapter of Isaiah: 'Arise, arise, arm thee with strength, O arm of Jehovah! Arise as in the days of old, in the generations of ancient times! Art thou not he that shattered Rahab, that defiled the dragon? Art thou not he that dried up the sea, the waters of the great Tehom; that made the depths of the sea a path, that the saved might pass over by it?' The last words refer to the passage of the Red Sea. But the passage of the Red Sea does not exhaust the reference. The cutting of Rahab in pieces and the defiling of the dragon seem to Dr. Zimmern clearly to describe the struggle of Jehovah with the chaotic monster before the Creation. And he strengthens his opinion by a quotation from the 26th chapter of Job, where it is said of God—

'By his power hath he stilled the sea,

By his understanding hath he shattered Rahab,  
His hand hath defiled the wreathed serpent.'

Lastly, he quotes from the 74th Psalm. Here the part played by Rahab is attributed to leviathan, and the slaying of the dragon is again associated with the creation of the world—

'But thou Jehovah art my king from of old,  
That doest salvation in the midst of the earth;  
Thou hast divided the sea with might;  
Hast broken the heads of the dragons in the water.  
Thou hast bruised the heads of leviathan;  
Gavedst him for meat, for food to the jackals . . .  
Thine is the day, and thine is the night;  
Thou hast established moon and sun.  
Thou hast appointed all powers of the earth;  
Summer and winter, them hast thou formed.'

Now whether these passages are earlier or later in date than the first chapter of Genesis, they are clearly earlier in conception. The 'Jehovah-Tehom myth,' as Dr. Zimmern boldly calls it, is present in the first chapter of Genesis, but not in the crude form in which these poems present it. From the strictly religious point of view, therefore, the Genesis narrative ranks highest.

But from the purely historical point of view the other passages are by far the more valuable, since they exhibit the original story in its more naked and primitive form.

How remarkable is the parallel between this story as we now see it in fulness and its Babylonian equivalent. The Babylonian epic of Creation begins in this way—

'Of old, when above, the heaven was unnamed,  
Beneath, the earth bore not any name,  
While yet the ocean, the primeval, their begetter,  
The primeval source, Tihamat, mother of them  
all,  
Their waters in one mingled together, . . .  
Then appeared the first of the gods.'

Here are the primeval waters, but personified as male and female, and the female bears the name Tihamat, the same as the biblical Tehom. After this there follows an account of the origin of the gods, special prominence being given to the birth of Marduk. For it is this Marduk (the Merodach of the Bible) that offers himself to give battle to the rebellious and chaotic Tihamat. Marduk is victorious. He plunges his sword into the body of Tihamat, slays her, casts forth her corpse, and tramples on it. Then he turns on her allies and takes them captive. Returning to the body of Tihamat he cuts it in two pieces.

'The one half took he, thereof made the firmament,  
Bounds set he to it, watchers he placed there,  
To hold back the waters commanded he them.'

The parallel with the biblical narrative is obvious. The epic goes on to describe the creation of the heavenly bodies. Then comes a gap through the loss of some of the cuneiform tablets. But Berossus, to whose accuracy the tablets bear surprising testimony, enables us to affirm that the missing tablets must have contained an account of the creation of the dry land, plants, animals, and mankind.

Now the first thing that clearly emerges from

this comparison is, that the account of the Creation which we find in the Bible and the account which we find on the clay tablets of Babylonia are not independent. Recall the points of comparison. According to both accounts, before the Creation all was water. This watery deep is personified as a terrible monster, called 'Tihamat' in Babylonia, 'Tehom' in Hebrew. No article is used before the Hebrew word; as in the Babylonian mythology, it is a proper name. In both accounts the monster is dragon-like, and in both there are variants implying that it had several heads. In the Babylonian tradition there is specific mention of a seven-headed serpent. This conception does not appear distinctly in Genesis nor throughout the Old Testament. But we have it when we reach the Apocalypse in the New Testament, a book which has preserved other traces of this primeval conception. In the Babylonian narrative, Marduk gains his supremacy among the gods by his victory over the dragon; in the Israelite account Jehovah is already supreme, but other gods are apparently there and share in His deliberations. In both accounts the dragon of the deep and her allies are guilty of rebellion and an impious ambition to obtain dominion over the world. Marduk and Jehovah both go forth to war bearing a sword, with which they slay the dragon. The auxiliaries of Tihamat are more leniently treated by Marduk than herself; so likewise do the helpers of Rahab fare, at the hands of Jehovah. The body of Tihamat is divided into the upper and lower oceans; the dividing of the deep into the waters above and the waters below, precedes in Genesis the creation of heaven and earth.

With these resemblances in mind it is impossible to believe that the two accounts are independent. What is their relation to one another? There are three possible ways of it. The Babylonians may have borrowed their account from the Israelites; the Israelites may have borrowed theirs from the Babylonians; or both may go back to a common original.

Did the Babylonians borrow their account of the Creation from the Israelites? From the historical point of view, as regards both civilization and religion, that is to Professor Zimmern simply inconceivable. Do they both go back to a common original? That is quite conceivable, but quite improbable. For there are features of the story that are evidently and exclusively Babylonian. The whole scenery, indeed, is specially Babylonian. It is the scenery of alluvial plains, like those of Babylonia, not the scenery of Palestine, nor yet of the Syrian or Arabian desert. Its theology also is Babylonian. It was not Jehovah but Marduk that was the god of spring or of the morning sun. To Professor Zimmern's mind the demonstration is now complete, that the account of the Creation in the Bible is borrowed from Babylonia.

When was it borrowed? Not at the Exile. No doubt the first chapter of Genesis, in its present literary form, may be placed as late as the Exile. But it is incredible, says Professor Zimmern, that the Jews of the Exile, with their sharply distinctive Jehovah cult, should have taken this myth, as he calls it, ready-made from their heathen oppressors, and placed it at the beginning of their sacred writings. Some of the later kings, as Ahaz,

were friendly to the Assyrians, and coquetted with foreign customs, but that also is too late a time for such an appropriation. To account for the form in which the narrative in Genesis appears, we are bound, Dr. Zimmern holds, to assume a long development on Israelite, and indeed on Palestinian, soil. One period only remains that suits the conditions.

It is the period of the Tell el-Amarna letters. These letters belong to the middle of the second millennium B.C. They reveal an active intercourse carried on between Babylonia and the West, and especially Egypt and Palestine. The medium of intercourse was the Babylonian language and writing. It was mythological texts that served as exercises for Egyptians and Syrians in the study of the language of intercourse, and Dr. Zimmern thinks it highly probable that the matter of these texts would have entered the consciousness of the students. It has come about indeed, by a strange disposition of Providence, that one of the mythological texts used for this purpose, and discovered at Tell el-Amarna, is no other than that story of Adapa which bears so close a resemblance to the biblical story of Paradise.

## Ⓐ Remarkable Palimpsest.

BY AGNES SMITH LEWIS, PHIL. DR. (HALLE), LL.D. (ST. ANDREWS).

THOSE of your readers who take an interest in the palimpsest of the four Gospels in Syriac which I discovered in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai in 1892, will be pleased to learn that another manuscript has come into my hands, probably from the same quarter, which, though far its inferior in point of value, presents some features which are well worthy the consideration of the palæographer and the biblical scholar. It is a palimpsest, purchased at Suez in 1895, whose upper-script is a collection of extracts from the writings of the Christian Fathers in an Arabic

translation assigned to the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century. The under-script is chiefly Syriac, in two columns; a fifth or sixth century text of the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and *Transitus Mariæ* forming one book. Mingled with this are four leaves from two MSS of fifth century Peshitta Syriac Gospels, three leaves of an ancient Arabic document, and fourteen from the Syrian Father, Mar Jacob. Three leaves are a double palimpsest, Syriac texts from Exodus and Isaiah crossing each other beneath the later Arabic. But the book contains other