

# 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

## Recent Oriental Archaeology.

BY PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, LITT.D., LL.D., OXFORD.

M. DE MORGAN'S new work<sup>1</sup> is the most important that has appeared of late on the early history of civilization. The explorer and excavator of the Caucasus and Northern Persia, the discoverer of prehistoric Egypt, and the revealer of primeval Elam, is better qualified than any other living archæologist to write with authority upon the subject. M. de Morgan stands in the forefront of Oriental archæology; no one has had greater experience of practical work in the field, and his earlier training as an engineer and geologist has given him advantages which the archæologist does not always possess. It is to him that we owe the revelation of prehistoric Egypt, and the revolution in our conceptions of Egyptian history that the revelation brought with it; and, from an archæological point of view, the only really scientific work that has yet been done in the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates is that which he is still carrying on in the ancient Elam. To what, therefore, he has to say about the origin and development of civilization we are bound to listen.

Rather more than half the volume is occupied with what is usually called the prehistoric epoch, but what would more correctly be termed the pre-literary period. The length at which it is treated is by no means disproportionate. As M. de Morgan remarks: 'The prehistoric period must necessarily occupy at least nine-tenths of a work on the history of culture.'

The earlier progress of humanity was exceedingly slow; how slow may be gauged from the fact that even when man had advanced to the neolithic stage, it lasted long enough to allow the spread of a particular kind of pottery from Elam in the east to Spain in the west, and of the so-called 'celt' over the greater part of the Old World. M. de Morgan has done good service in classifying and criticising the various sources of our knowledge of the pre-literary period, geological, palæontological, botanical, ethnographical, anthropological, sociological, and linguistic, to which of course archæology proper must be added. Like most recent investigators he is inclined to place the beginnings of humanity in

<sup>1</sup> *Les Premières Civilisations*. By J. de Morgan. Paris: Leroux, 1909.

the pre-glacial age and to accept the 'eoliths' as evidence of the existence of a being like man. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how man could have first come into existence in the glacial epoch; it was as much as he could do to prevent himself from being exterminated by it.

The glacial epoch is naturally discussed by M. de Morgan at considerable length, though the causes of it remain as much a mystery as ever. But he points out that we are still living under the conditions of the last glacial age; the glaciers have merely retreated to the north for a while, and thus allowed civilization the chance of developing, but they may return at any time, and the struggle for existence that would then ensue in an overcrowded world between the fugitive races of the north and the inhabitants of a warmer region would be such as 'the most fertile imagination fails to picture.' The marvellous drawings of the Magdalenian period show what the race that achieved them could have accomplished in the domain of art and culture had it lived under more favourable conditions, and how in the west of Europe, at all events, man seized the first moment that the retreat of the glaciers allowed him to produce works of the highest artistic character.

But nature has ever been at war with culture. The gifted races have been very few, and they have had to struggle against all the destructive elements of nature—cold, earthquake, flood, and volcanic eruption—and the even more destructive assaults of brutal and uncultured man. The history of civilization, so far as we know it, is a history of slow development followed by destruction—a process which has been repeated time after time. According to M. de Morgan, literary history begins with the expansion of the Semites at the expense of more cultured but less hardy populations; then comes the period of Egyptian preponderance with the Asiatic conquests of the Pharaohs, and then that of the Assyrian preponderance which was distinguished by brute force and abominable cruelties. In the Assyrian conquests M. de Morgan sees little else than the successes of organized bandits who did their best to destroy the cultures of the past. They were followed by

a brief era of Iranian preponderance, which in its turn made way for that of the Greeks.

Not the least valuable part of *Les Premières Civilisations* are the numerous maps and plans with which it is enriched. For the pre-literary period of human history they are specially important, and enable the reader to see how the Mediterranean was gradually prepared for becoming the centre of the civilization of which we claim to be the heirs.

The Reader in Assyriology and Comparative Semitic Philology at Oxford, Dr. Langdon, has just published a work which will enhance the credit of Anglo-American scholarship.<sup>1</sup> To the student of Babylonian religion it will be found indispensable. The liturgical compositions of ancient Babylonia, as far as they are accessible, have been all arranged and classified in it, as well as translated and explained. The introductions with which they are furnished are full of new facts and suggestions from which Assyriologists, Old Testament scholars and students of Comparative Religion will alike receive profit and instruction. On the philological side also the book is of great value. Important additions are made in it to our knowledge of both the Sumerian and the Assyrian languages, and it is a pity that Dr. Langdon has lessened the usefulness of his work by not giving alphabetical indices of all the words found in the documents he has translated.

The first paragraph of the general Introduction explains briefly the nature of their contents. They consist of temple liturgies, and 'by temple liturgy,' says Dr. Langdon, 'I mean services of public praise and penance. A sharp division must be made between public services and private services, a distinction which was observed by the Babylonians themselves. Religious literature in Babylonia originated from two distinct sources; on the one hand, the priest of incantation exercised the mystic rites of magic over afflicted persons in huts in the fields; on the other hand, the psalmists had charge of the public services of the temples. In the earliest period the Sumerians, who created the entire form of Babylonian religious literature, had only these two classes of religious literature.' I need hardly say that a thorough study of the volume is necessary for any one who is interested in Old Testament criticism. Among other things,

<sup>1</sup> *Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms*. By Dr. Stephen Langdon. Paris: Geuthner, 1909.

he will find there a full discussion of the origin and meaning of the Babylonian *sabattu* or 'Sabbath,' the primitive signification of which Dr. Langdon believes to be 'wailing.' I am glad to see that respect for these early liturgies has not prevented Dr. Langdon from criticising their texts and separating the earlier from the later elements in them. My attempt to do this in my Hibbert Lectures unfortunately found no imitators for many years.

While Dr. Langdon has been scientifically editing the whole of the liturgical literature of early Babylonia, M. Combe has been devoting a very complete study to the cult of a single deity.<sup>2</sup> What he has thus done for the Moon-god, I hope he will do for the other chief divinities of the Babylonians. Only in this way shall we come to know what the Assyrians and Babylonians really thought about their gods, and clear away misconceptions which are the result of imperfect evidence. Thus M. Combe points out that the use of the numeral xxx to designate the Moon-god is not earlier than the age of Khammurabi. He has done his work well: it is clear and well arranged, and nothing relating to the Moon-god and his worship seems to have been omitted. Of particular value is the use he has made of names involving that of Sin, a complete list of which is given so far as they are known. But I cannot agree with him in his refusal to include among these names that of Sinai: at all events, the alternative origin proposed for the latter name (which I believe was first suggested by Dr. Neubauer) is inadmissible. The second part of the book consists of translations of the hymns addressed to the Moon-god.

The latest volume included in the *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* is a very valuable commentary by Dr. Ungnad on the cuneiform tablets from Dilbat (the modern Delem), which have been published by the Asiatic Society of Berlin. In the introductory remarks he discusses the documents belonging to the age of Khammurabi, which contain Mitannian names, and show not only that a considerable Mitannian population must have existed in Babylonia, but also that they enjoyed equal rights with the native Babylonians. Still more surprising is the fact that the earliest rulers of Assur bear Mitannian names.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire du Culte de Sin*. By Et. Combe. Paris: Geuthner, 1908.

Assyria, in other words, was Mitannian before it became Semitic. Dr. Ungnad quotes two passages from the great work on astrology, which in its present form belongs to the Khammurabi age, that make this pretty clear. As is well known, Assyria was once included in Subartu, the name under which Mitanni went in early days, and archaizing documents of the neo-Babylonian period insisted upon so calling it. Now in one of the astrological passages quoted by Dr. Ungnad we read: 'Subartu will devour the Akhlamâ; a foreign tongue will rule over the land of the Amorites: we (*i.e.* the Assyrian scribe and his fellow-countrymen) are Subartu.' The other passage reverses the situation: 'The Akhlamâ,' it says, 'will devour Subartu; a foreign tongue will rule over the land of the Amorites.'

Dr. Ungnad calls the Mitannians Hittites, but the Hittite and Mitannian languages are not the same, though they are probably distantly related to one another. Moreover, the Hittites are distinguished from the Mitannians, both in the great astrological work as well as in the documents of the Tel el-Amarna period. It was an invasion of Babylonia by the Hittites, and not by the Mitannians, which put an end to the dynasty of Khammurabi. But the fact remains that up to the age of

Abraham, Assyria was still Mitannian rather than Semitic, and that the earlier high priests of Assur, and therefore presumably the founders also of the city, were of Mitannian origin. This would appear to settle the controversy as to the correct translation of Gn 10<sup>11</sup>. It must read: 'out of that land he went forth to Assur,' and Nimrod would be the representative of the Semitic invader from Babylonia. Hence it is that in Mic 5<sup>6</sup>, Assyria, and not Babylonia, is called 'the land of Nimrod.'

M. Boissier has just published an interesting little *brochure* on *Les Éléments babyloniens de la Légende de Cain et Abel*, in which he points out that 'the Yahvist has merely paraphrased a Babylonian augural document.' The sacrifices of Cain and Abel presuppose a knowledge of 'the divinatory rites' of Babylonia, and the address of Yahveh to Cain comes from a Babylonian source. I think M. Boissier must be right in his explanation of the land of Nod: it is the Babylonian *nadû*, the 'wasteland' of the desert to which the evil spirits are banished by the exorcist. In Gn 25<sup>23</sup> he notes that the Hebrew words, 'the elder shall serve the younger,' are a translation of the common Babylonian augural phrase: 'the great country shall serve the small.'

## Literature.

### CHOPPER HANDLES.

THE STONE AGES IN NORTH BRITAIN AND IRELAND. By the Rev. Frederick Smith. (*Blackie & Sons.* 16s. net.)

AMONG the things which men make a hobby of are snakes' tongues and chopper handles. For snakes' tongues, inquire at the residence of the Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Cambridge. For chopper handles, go to the Rev. Frederick Smith.

The Rev. Frederick Smith has written a volume on *The Stone Ages in North Britain and Ireland*. It is a handsome volume. It gives an account of all sorts of stone implements which the Stone Age man made for his own use, and then left behind him for our enjoyment; and it is generously illustrated by over five hundred drawings of typical specimens. But while the Rev. Frederick Smith has an interest in all kinds of stone things, pro-

vided they have come down to us all the way from the Stone Ages, his enthusiasm is for chopper handles. He has three long chapters on handles. And that is not enough. The third chapter has an appendix nearly as long as itself. He calls the handle a fascinating and convincing feature. And, of course, there are many kinds of handles besides the chopper handle. Mr. Smith gives an account of almost innumerable weapon handles, and he even acknowledges that the weapon form of the handle was long retained in flayer and chopper. But he is manifestly a man of peace. Before he is half through the first chapter on handles he has arrived at the chopper. And he does not forget the chopper, that great instrument and evidence of civilization, to the very end. The appendix to the third chapter on handles deals entirely with choppers.