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The Seventeenth Chapter of Genesis.

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IN the EXPOSITORY TIMES of December 1921 (p. 127) the present writer showed that the LXX translated *El-Shaddai* quite differently from the real meaning of the Hebrew word. In the seven examples of this compound name of God which occur, *Shaddai* is not rendered by a Greek term—'the Almighty,' but by a possessive pronoun—'the God of me' ('of thee,' 'of them'), showing that the LXX used a version which I believe to have been Aramaic, but which in this case had preserved the reading of an older text.

In the 17th chapter of Genesis there is another word translated, namely *Yahveh* (יהוה), or in its original form יהו, which is rendered by *Yahu*, κύριος. If at the end of the first verse we have *El-Shaddai* translated by ὁ θεός σου, we have every reason to conclude that at the beginning κύριος is a translation of יהוה.

It has been said repeatedly that, the name JHVH never being pronounced, the four letters had received the vowels of *Adonai*, אֲדֹנָי, κύριος, so that this word was always to be substituted for JHVH. But this substitution is certainly of later date than the LXX translation; here they gave the sense of the word, as for *El-Shaddai*, so that afterwards, when the Jews read *Adonai* instead of *Yahveh* or *Yahu*, they read the translation of the word; they did not substitute one word for another.

Yahveh said unto Abram at Haran: 'Get thee out of thy country,' which means in modern language that Abram left Haran for a religious reason, because he was a worshipper of *Yahveh*. Probably there was great hostility against him, and he left Haran in order to be quite free and unmolested in his worship. *Yahveh* or *Yahu* was the name of his God, of his *Elohim* at Haran. *Elohim* has the general sense of 'God,' but it means also a god, a divinity. In antiquity, as now with non-Christian nations, the *Elohim* of each people had a name. The *Elohim* of the Philistines was Dagon, and they speak of him as their *Elohim* (Jg 16²³). In the scene on Mount Carmel (1 K 18²⁷) *Elijah* mocks the priests of Baal and says to them, 'Cry aloud, for he is an *Elohim*.' What marks the difference between the *Elohim* of *Elijah* and the

Elohim of the priests is the name. *Yahveh* or *Yahu* was the name of the *Elohim* of Abram at Haran; Abram took the name with him to Canaan, and there *Yahveh* told him that He would be his God and the God of his posterity.

Reverting now to the LXX, if κύριος is a translation, do we find in the language which Abram spoke a word sounding like יהו of the Aramaic papyri, יאω, יאου of the Greeks, and meaning κύριος? The question here arises, What was the language of Abram? If it was Semitic, which seems most probable, which was it of the dialects spoken in Mesopotamia? Was it Akkadian or Amorite; or could it be the non-Semitic Sumerian of Ur?

On the word *Yahu*, one of the leading French Assyriologists, P. Scheil, kindly gave me the following information:

For *Yau* we find in Sumerian *i, ia*, which means 'height,' 'glory,' 'to be high or lofty.' This is not κύριος. At the time of Hammurabi are found the following proper names:

Yau-um-ilu, *Yawi-ilu*, 'Yau is god.' In this case it is generally thought that *Yau* is a West-Semitic god.

This does not give us the sense of the name *Yau*, but it agrees remarkably well with Professor Clay's views. Abram is an *Amurru*, a West-Semite, and it is natural that his god should be West-Semitic. When he leaves Haran, he goes West towards the country from which the West-Semites originated, and this land is given to his posterity for an heritage.

The life of Abraham, as it is described in Genesis, is nothing but the narrative of the election of Abram and his posterity by *Yahveh*, who will be their God; they are chosen to be the worshippers of *Yahveh*, who will say: 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'

The god of a nation or a city has always a name. The Egyptians, for instance, have a word, *nouti*, which corresponds exactly with *Elohim*; it conveys the idea of 'Godhead' in general; but it may also designate the god attached to a locality or to a city, where he has always a name. The temples are not dedicated to nameless gods; they are built at Thebes for Amon, at Denderah for Hathor, at

Memphis for Phtah. Amon or Phtah are *nouti*, 'gods,' but *nouti* is not only Amon, it may stand for many other gods. It is the same with *Elohim* and *Yahveh*. The two words are not synonymous. *Yahveh* may be called *Elohim*, but *Elohim* is not necessarily *Yahveh*. It may stand for Baal, or Moloch, or the gods of the Egyptians or the Syrians, or others. Therefore one cannot always use the two names *ad libitum*. There are cases in which one or the other is necessary, or both have to be used together.

This is the case in the chapter we are studying. Abram knows *Yahveh*, since he has already heard these words: 'I am *Yahveh* that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees.' To which Abram has answered, 'O *Yahveh Elohim*, whereby shall I know.' . . . Now *Yahveh* is going to make a covenant 'to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.' Here it is obvious that the two names *Yahveh* and *Elohim* must be used. It is an alliance between *Yahveh* and Abram, in which *Yahveh* settles that He will be Abram's *Elohim*. It is clear that in the description of a contract, both contracting parties must be named. The writer of the chapter could not do otherwise.

Nevertheless we are told that we have to bow before the critical theory which has a ruling voice. There are an Elohist and a Yahvist writer; and, since the name *Elohim* is predominant, the chapter must be by the chief Elohist writer, the Priestly Code, a post-exilic document which never uses the name *Yahveh* before the Exodus. Therefore the name *Yahveh* cannot be admitted in this chapter, it must be an interpolation due to a late redactor, and instead of *Yahveh* we must read *Elohim*.

An *Elohim* says to Abram, 'I am thy *Elohim*; I

make an everlasting covenant to be an *Elohim* unto thee and unto thy seed after thee.' This *Elohim* who will be Abram's god, who is he? Is he Dagon, Moloch, or a god Abram brought from Egypt? Every man has an *Elohim*, and this covenant might have been made in the same terms with Abimelech or any one of Abram's neighbours. A god says to Abram, 'I am thy God'; that is a formula which may be applied to any one. It is evident that here there must be a name. The critical theory makes of this sentence and of the whole chapter a composition which has no sense. This chapter is certainly the most positive condemnation of the theory of the Elohist and Yahvist, and also of Kuenen's idea, which has been adopted by many critics, that the name *Yahveh* was not known to the Hebrews before the Exodus.

I shall not dwell on what I said in my former article. Expunge *Yahveh's* name from Abraham's life, and you destroy entirely the history of this patriarch, which unfolds itself in the most simple and logical way. He leaves Haran to be faithful to *Yahveh*, who promises to him that his posterity will be a great nation in the land where he is going to settle. This promise is confirmed by an alliance. A more solemn covenant is that in which *Yahveh* declared to Abram that he will be his God and the God of his seed after him; and the guarantee of that covenant is circumcision, which, being practised through all generations, will remind them of it. The whole biography of Abraham is the narrative of the dealings of *Yahveh* with the patriarch, the man elected to be the father of a nation worshipping *Yahveh*. Strike out the name *Yahveh*, and what remains of Abraham's life?

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Keep Step.¹

'All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel.'—I Ch 12³⁸.

WHAT an impressive thing it is to see a great body of men in ordered ranks, marching along with perfect

¹ By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

step. Their mighty tramp thrills you. You march with them, and if you are tired you feel less tired, you catch some of their strength. It's easier to march in a great company than to walk alone; and it is easier to march in rank and in step than when every one takes his own pace. Then the step goes and the ranks sag, tiredness soon shows itself; but a drum tap or a voice to give the time pulls every one together. With the rhythm of the one