

ARTICLE X.

TRADITIONS OF THE DELUGE.

BY WILLIAM RESTELLE.

RESEARCHES during the nineteenth century into the languages, myths, and racial characteristics of various peoples have disclosed many interesting facts bearing upon the early history of mankind. Races, separated from each other by vast bodies of water, varying in their degrees of civilization and differing in their modes of life, betray their historical relations to each other by their languages and traditions. The nursery tales, which we delighted to listen to in our childhood days, are related by mothers to attentive ears among all the Aryan peoples, among the Hindoos and Chinese, and even among the Redmen of North America, and the blacks of tropical Africa. Legends which we used to accept as true and thought were peculiar to our own chronicles are told and retold with certain modifications in countries far distant from ours. But of all the traditions and myths found in the records of the past, or among the living races of to-day, that of the Deluge is the most remarkable. The story of a great cataclysm which swept mankind from off the face of the earth, allowing only of the providential escape of from two to eight persons, who afterwards re-peopled the world, is, with only two exceptions, found among all races, ancient or modern. These stories of the Flood, though substantially the same, all possess considerable human interest, varying, as they do, in their form of narration. Many of them are graphically told and embellished with the wildest imagination.

The oldest and most remarkable narrative of the Deluge is undoubtedly the one discovered a quarter of a century ago by Mr. George Smith in his excavations in Assyria. The whole story of this great event is narrated in an epic found on some cuneiform tablets exhumed at Nineveh, and is as follows:—

The god Hea appeared to Xisuthrus, a Chaldean king, in a dream, and warned him that all flesh should perish in a great flood. The god bade him take all the sacred writings, and bury them in Sippara, the City of the Sun; then build himself a huge ship, store therein a large quantity of provisions, and “cause to go up into the vessel the substance of all that has life,” his family and his most intimate friends. Xisuthrus obeyed. When all had been prepared, the waters belched forth from their caverns and overwhelmed the earth.

“The archangels of the abyss brought destruction—in their terrors they agitated the earth.—The inundation of Ramman swelled up to the sky—and the earth became without lustre, was changed into a desert. . . . Brother no longer saw his brother. . . . Six days and as many nights passed, the wind, the water-spout, and the diluvian rain were all in their strength. At the approach of the seventh day the diluvian rain grew weaker, the terrible water-spout—which had assailed after the fashion of the earthquake—grew calm, the sea inclined to dry up and the wind and the water-spout came to an end. I looked at the sea, attentively observing—and the whole of humanity had returned to mud. I opened the window, and the light smote on my face. I was seized with sadness; I sat down and wept.”

Thus does the hero of the poem passionately relate his experience. The ship stranded on Mount Nizir, but the waters abated not. The seventh day after the ship had stranded, Xisuthrus sent out a dove, and later, a swallow, both of which returned. He then loosed a raven, which did not return, for it fed and rested on the floating carcasses of animals. Xisuthrus now built an altar on the peak of the mountain, and offered up sacrifice unto heaven. The deities accepted his offerings, and gave ear unto his supplication, for in answer

to his prayers they caused the waters to subside, and commissioned Bel to enter the vessel, and carry to their reward Xisuthrus and the few pious souls who were spared the awful curse which befell the rest of humanity.

There are two versions of the Babylonian account, thought to be due to the existence of two different documents. The one I have here epitomized is derived from those cuneiform tablets recently exhumed at Nineveh, and is doubtless the more authoritative. The other version comes through Berosus, an historian of Chaldea, and a contemporary of Alexander the Great, who apparently possessed important documents from which he obtained a description of the Deluge. According to Berosus, only Xisuthrus and his wife were carried to the realm of the gods, his companions being informed that the place they were now in was Armenia. "They therefore returned to Babylon, disinterred the sacred writings left at Sippara, founded numerous cities, built temples, and restored Babylon." Berosus also records that pilgrims journeyed to the Gordyan Mountains in Armenia even in his day, and sought fragments of the ark's wreckage to use as amulets against witchcraft.

Little need here be said of the biblical narrative: it is too well known to require telling. What is not generally known, however, is that there are two Jewish renderings of the Deluge story,—the Elohist and the Jehovist. These are substantially the same, differing only in the length of the flood's duration and certain legal distinctions between clean and unclean animals. The analogies between the Babylonian and Jewish traditions, it will be observed, are very striking, so striking, indeed, that there can be no doubt but that the two were one and the same before the time when Abraham went up out of Chaldea into the land of Palestine. "The con-

clusion is almost irresistible," says Goldziher, "that the Hebrews borrowed this whole story of the Deluge from the Babylonian original, even in its detail and mode of expression."¹ A discussion of this assertion lies not within the scope of this article. But, whatever the truth, we must admit that the Hebrew narrative lies before us in a purer and more dignified form than the Babylonian. The Jews, in their account, emphasize a moral purpose behind the memorable event, namely, the cleansing of the earth from a corrupt generation of men, and its preparation for a new and better race. Moreover, if the Jews derived their story of the Deluge from the Babylonians, we must credit them with expurgating it of its polytheism, with which the original was burdened.

It is a fact of no little significance that the oldest nation of antiquity should leave us no distinct record of a deluge. The Egyptians, in all their speculations on the cosmogony, make only one distant allusion to the destruction of the human race. Ra, the Creator, becomes so chagrined at the insolence of man that he resolves to exterminate him. He decrees a massacre, the blood of which flows up to Heliopolis, the home of the gods. Ra is so affected by the heinousness of the deed that he repents, and swears nevermore to destroy mankind. There is also reference to an Egyptian legend of the Deluge in Plato's "Timæus" in which the gods are said to have cleansed and purified the earth by a great flood of water, from which only a few shepherds escaped by climbing to the summit of a high mountain.

There is little about the Flood in Indian mythology. Accounts occur in the "Satapatha Brahmins," in the "Mahābhārata," and in the "Bhāgavata," but not in the "Rig

¹ *Mythology among the Hebrews.*

Veda." The oldest of these accounts is thought to be the legend of Manu, which is thus translated by Max Müller:—

"One morning water for washing was brought to Manu, and when he had washed himself, a fish remained in his hands. And it addressed these words to him:—'Protect me, and I will save thee.'

'From what wilt thou save me?' 'A deluge will sweep all creatures away; it is from that I will save thee.' 'How shall I protect thee?' The fish replied: 'While we are small, we run great dangers, for fish swallow fish. Keep me at first in a vase; when I become too large for it, dig a basin to put me into. When I have grown still more, throw me into the ocean; then I shall be preserved from destruction.' Soon it grew a large fish. It said to Manu: 'The very year I shall have reached my full growth, the Deluge will happen. Then build a vessel and worship me. When the waters arise, enter the vessel, and I will save thee.'

"After keeping him thus, Manu carried the fish to the sea. In the year indicated, Manu built a vessel and worshipped the fish. And when the Deluge came, he entered the vessel. Then the fish came swimming up to him, and Manu fastened the cable of the ship to the horn of the fish, by which means the latter made it pass over the mountains of the North. The fish said: 'I have saved thee; fasten the vessel to a tree that the water may not sweep it away while thou art in the mountain; and in proportion as the waters decrease, thou shalt descend.' Manu descended with the waters, and this is what is called the Descent of Manu on the mountains of the North. The Deluge had carried away all creatures, and Manu remained alone."

Manu, after the waters had subsided, offered up sacrifice, and obtained thereby a daughter, who supernaturally became the mother of all mankind. Indian scholars, such as Wilson and Burnouf, maintain that this legend of Manu must have been imported from Semitic sources; as the fish feature of the story is foreign to Indian mythology, but was common to that of the Semitic peoples.

The Chinese also have a tradition of a terrible inundation which destroyed their wicked ancestors. In their book "Li-Ki" the Deluge is thus described:—

"And now the pillars of heaven were broken, the earth shook to its very foundation; the sun, and the stars changed their motions; the earth fell to pieces, and the waters inclosed within its bosom burst

forth with violence, and overflowed. Man having rebelled against heaven, the system of the universe was totally disordered, and the grand harmony of nature destroyed. All these evils arose from man's despising the supreme power of the universe. He fixed his looks upon terrestrial objects and loved them to excess, until gradually he became transformed into the objects which he loved, and celestial reason entirely abandoned him."

In what sublime language does the Chinese sage explain the reason for the flood! Does anything in all the literature and accounts of the Deluge excel it? We answer, unhesitatingly, No. It is possible, however, as François Lenormant points out, that the Chinese story refers to such destructive floods as are of historical date, and not to the great cataclysm described in Genesis. What supports this latter view is the fact that there is little in common between the Semitic and the Chinese legends, and that very wide-spread and destructive inundations are known to have occurred in China. In the Chinese Encyclopædia is an interesting description of East Tartary, which Dr. Tylor in his "Early History of Mankind" quotes at length. The region is described as intersected by mountains and valleys, yet entirely destitute of lakes and rivers. "Nevertheless, there are found in the sand, very far from sea, oyster shells and the shields of crabs. The tradition of the Mongols who inhabit the country is that it has been said from time immemorial that in remote antiquity the waters of the Deluge flooded the district, and when they retired, the places where they had been made their appearance covered with land." We shall learn further on in this article of other tribes who point to marine remains as proofs of the truth of their Deluge tradition.

Like the Babylonians and the Jews, the Greeks had more than one story of the Deluge. "Plutarch enumerates no fewer than five, and Plato makes his Egyptian priest describe the

Greek deluge as oft repeated and numerous.”¹ But whether these are but modifications of one original tradition, or really remembrances of several distinct inundations, has long been a matter of uncertainty. The most complete and fascinating of these Greek legends is that of Deucalion. Zeus, the greatest of the national deities, unable to endure any longer the wickedness and insolence of men, resolved to destroy them by a great flood. Warned by his father, Prometheus, of the impending destruction, Deucalion constructed an ark, and took refuge therein with his wife Pyrrha. When the Flood came, the ark floated safely above the waters, and on the ninth day stranded on Mount Parnassus in Thessaly. After the waters had subsided, Deucalion and his wife went to the sanctuary of Themis, and asked the oracle how they might repeople the world. The goddess replied that they must throw behind them the bones of their grandmother. This strange answer perplexed the lonely couple for a considerable time, but finally it dawned upon them that their grandmother was the Earth, the bones of whom were the rocks. So picking up stones, they did as was commanded by the goddess; those which Deucalion threw became men, and those which Pyrrha threw became women. Lucian, in his work “*De Dea Syria*,” relates the legend of Deucalion, which he seems to have obtained from the Asiatic nations, among whom he was born.

“The present race of mankind [wrote Lucian] is different from that which first existed; for those of the antediluvian world were all destroyed. The present world is peopled from the sons of Deucalion, having increased to so great a number from one person. In respect to the former brood, they were men of violence, and lawless in their dealings; they regarded not oaths, nor observed the rites of hospitality, nor showed mercy to those who sued for it. On this account they were doomed to destruction, and for this purpose there was a mighty eruption of waters from the earth, attended with heavy show-

¹ Hugh Miller, *Testimony of the Rocks*.

ers from above, so that the rivers swelled and the sea overflowed, till the whole earth was covered with a flood, and all flesh drowned. Deucalion alone was preserved to people the world. This mercy was shown him on account of his justice and piety. His preservation was affected in this manner: He put all his family, both his sons and their wives, into a vast ark which he had provided, and then he went into it himself. At the same time, animals of every species—boars, horses, lions, serpents,—whatever lived upon the face of the earth—followed him by pairs; all of which he received into the ark, and experienced no evil from them, by the immediate influence of the Deity."

When the waters had almost subsided, Deucalion, according to Plutarch, sent forth a dove, which soon returned to him; a second time he sent it forth, and it returned with its feet tinged with mud, thus intimating to him the abatement of the flood. The tradition of the Deluge is not indigenious to the Greeks; if it were, Homer and Hesiod would in all probability have embodied it in their poems. That the Greeks imported it from other peoples is now generally conceded. Some mythologists maintain that it came from Semitic sources; others that it was borrowed from the Hindoos.

Turning now to early Britain, we find that our barbaric ancestors had a fairly complete tradition of the Deluge. Ed. Davies, in his "Mythology and Rites of British Druids," records very fully the Celtic traditions.

"The Druids [he says] represented the Deluge under the figure of a lake, called *Llyn Llŷon*, the waters of which burst forth, and covered the face of the whole earth. Hence, they regarded the lake as a just symbol of the Deluge. But the Deluge itself was viewed, not merely as an instrument of punishment to destroy the wicked inhabitants of the globe, but also as a divine illustration, which washed away the bane of corruption and purified the earth for the reception of the 'just ones,' or of the deified patriarch and his family. Consequently, it was deemed peculiarly sacred, and communicated its distinguishing character to those lakes and bays, by which it was locally represented."

The Deluge itself is graphically described as follows:—

“The profligacy of mankind had provoked the great supreme to send a pestilential wind upon the earth,—a fierce poison descended, and every blast was death. Then the Patriarch, distinguished for his integrity, was shut up, together with his select company, in the enclosure with the strong door. Presently a tempest of fire arose; it split the earth asunder to the great deep. The lake *Lion* then burst its bounds. The waves of the sea lifted themselves on high round the borders of Britain. The rain poured down from heaven, and the waters covered the earth, but that water was intended to purify the polluted world, to render it fit for the renewal of life, and to wash away the contagion and evil of its former inhabitants into the chasms of the Abyss. The flood which swept away the patriarch's contemporaries raised his vessel on high, bore it safely upon the summit of the waters, and proved to him and to his associates to be the water of life and of renovation.”

One Celtic legend states that a male and a female of every kind of animal were preserved, and that the cause of the lake *Lion's* belching forth its destructive waters was a beaver, which a yoke of oxen managed to pull out, so that the lake burst no more. Another legend has it that Dwyvach and Dwyvan alone escaped in a naked boat (i. e. a boat without sails), and that these two afterwards re-peopled the world. The Druids, according to Mr. Davies, also had a vague idea that some great power protected the world from a repetition of the Deluge.

Leaving now the Old World and its ancient peoples, we come to America. Here mythologists are confronted with considerable difficulty. Missionary effort long preceded any attempt to study in a scientific way the Indians and their legends. The result is that the Red man's ideas are so fused with those of the white man's that it is almost impossible to separate them. Nevertheless, the researches of Schoolcraft and Catlin have done much to bring to light the original myths of that almost extinct race, which hunted and fought in the wilderness of America long before Columbus visited its shores. Stories of the Deluge were very numerous through-

out the two Americas, but most of them bear the stamp of Christian influence. "Among the one hundred and twenty different tribes which I have visited in North, South, and Central America," wrote Mr. Catlin, "not a tribe exists that has not related to me distinct or vague traditions of such a calamity, in which one, or three, or eight persons were saved above the waters on the top of a high mountain." Of all the American traditions, the Mexican is considered the least open to the charge of *non-originality*. According to Mexican cosmogony, there were four ages, in the last of which—the age of water—men are said to have been turned into fishes. From this fate only one man and one woman were spared,—Tezpi and his wife Hochiquetzal. These two, with their children, took refuge in a ship, taking with them many animals, and every sort of grain. Then in a mighty tempest, the Deluge overwhelmed the earth, but the ship sailed safely over the agitated waters. When the flood began to subside, the ship stranded on Mount Cohuacan, and Tezpi, feeling his boat run aground, sent forth a vulture to ascertain the state of the earth. The vulture, finding carcasses of animals on the mountain, did not return. "Then Tezpi sent forth a humming bird, which returned with some leaves in its beak. Thereupon Tezpi and his family left their boat and took up their residence on the mount." The analogies between this legend and some of the Old World traditions of the Deluge are very striking, and have led to considerable speculation on the part of scholars concerning the probable historical connection between America and Asia. Some ethnologists consider the similarity between the mythologies of the Old and the New World as very convincing evidence that the Indian races of America were cradled in the heart of Asia.

The Peruvian story of the Deluge was obtained by the

Bishop of Cuzco, in 1570 A. D., from the lips of elderly priests, who got their information from painted records in the Temple of the Sun near Cuzco. The story bears little or no resemblance to the other American traditions, much less to those of Chaldea and Israel. Previous to the Deluge, the Inca priests explained, man inhabited the earth, but a great cataclysm destroyed all human beings except a man and a woman, who found refuge in a box. In such frail craft they floated hundreds of miles from Cuzco, until they came to an unknown land, where they disembarked. "Here they made clay images of all races, attired them in their natural dress, and then animated them." These manufactured people buried themselves in the earth, and emerged in various parts of the world, some coming out of fountains, some from trees, and some finding their way out through caves. Thus does the Peruvian explain the diversity of the races on the earth to-day.

From the tropical regions of Mexico and Peru and their civilizations, we leap to the frozen North. Here, even here, the stunted Eskimo has preserved a fairly definite story of the Deluge, and passes it down from generation to generation. The Moravian missionary Cranz says that

"The first missionaries among the Greenlanders found a tolerably distinct tradition of the Deluge, of which almost all heathen nations still know something, namely, that the earth was once tilted over, and all men were drowned, but some became fire spirits. The only man who remained alive smote afterwards with his stick upon the ground, and thence came out a woman with whom he peopled the earth again. They tell, moreover, that far up in the country where men could never have dwelt, there are found all sorts of remains of fishes, and even the bones of whales on high mountains, from which they make it clear that the earth was once flooded."¹

The North American Indians relate numerous stories of the Deluge, most of which are embellished with the wildest imagination. The Red man, evidently, was not content with

¹ Cranz, page 262.

sober history; he desired something marvelous and full of intrepidity. And so his legends of the Deluge tell of the exploits of some great hero, then of the land being bathed in a terrible flood, from which the hero escapes to create a new world, and people it with a new race. One of these legends relates the adventures of Manabozo, a renowned chief. Manabozo, it is said, killed the prince of some monstrous serpents, and had to flee for his life from the subject serpents. In spite of his fleetness the serpents gained upon him, and threatened to overtake him. In desperation, Manabozo leaped to the top of a mountain, but when he turned and looked back, lo, the earth was covered with a vast expanse of water which was rapidly rising. He climbed a lofty pine, but to his dismay he found his already high position endangered by the rising waters. Addressing the tree, he cried, "Grandfather, stretch thyself." The tree obeyed, but the water rose higher and higher. Again he bade the tree to stretch itself, but it could stretch no more. Up, up the waters rose, as if determined to drag him from his height, but when they reached his chin, they could rise no higher. Looking about him, Manabozo spied a loon, and commanded it to dive and bring up earth, with which he might create a new world. The loon did so, but rose to the surface a corpse. A muskrat then approached him, and thus he spoke to it: "Dive for earth, and if you succeed you may hereafter live on land or water as you please." The muskrat dived, but shared the same fate as the loon. It fulfilled its mission, however, for in its forepaws was clutched a little earth. With this Manabozo created a new world, and placed thereupon new animals and plants. Another Indian legend tells how an ambitious hare undertook to slay the sun, and the fatal consequences which ensued. The hare threw a puff-ball at the sun as it appeared above the horizon, splitting

it into a thousand fragments. These fragments, falling on the earth, caused a great conflagration. Forests, lodges, wigwams, and animals were all consumed, and the hare alone was left to gradually suffer for its folly. First his limbs were burned off, then his body was scorched to ashes, and lastly his head was enveloped by relentless flame. Under this torture, the hare's eyes bulged to an enormous size, and finally burst, flooding the earth with oceans of tears and extinguishing the world-wide conflagration.

There is a Guatemala tradition of the Deluge sufficiently unlike the biblical account to remove from it any suspicion of missionary influence. According to this legend, the earth was once inhabited only by animals, but as the brute creation lacked intelligence and was therefore incapable of worshipping, the gods resolved to make creatures in their own image who would be able to worship them. They first fashioned men in clay, but the experiment was a failure, for these creatures could not move their heads nor understand anything. Destroying these with a deluge, the gods made a man of wood and a woman of resin, but the race resulting from this pair were little better than the first brood, and were therefore consumed in a rain of burning resin. A third attempt resulted excellently, for out of white and yellow maize the gods produced four perfect men, and gave unto them four wives of great beauty, three of whom became the mothers of the Quiché's, the fourth not bringing forth any children. Unfortunately, the perfection of these parents of mankind was not hereditary, but, like the Adam of Hebrew mythology, they gave birth to a sinful race of men and women who fondly embraced corruption, and worshiped the Golden Calf and "plated Mars" rather than the great Supreme.

Humboldt, in his travels through the wooded wilderness of

the Orinoco, discovered among the Indian tribes which he visited unmistakable traces of Deluge traditions. Among the Tamanacs he even found a tradition which sounds like a faint echo from ancient Greece. They say that the present race of man is descended from a man and a woman who escaped from a great deluge by climbing a high mountain. When the waters subsided, they *cast behind them over their heads* the fruits of the Mauritia palm-tree, the seeds of which turned into men and women who reseeded the world. Nor was the belief in a deluge confined to the Tamanacs alone, for among the Maypures of the great cataracts, among the Indians of the Rio Erevato, and amongst almost all the tribes of the upper Orinoco, Humboldt was told stories of the Flood, many of which, he thinks, are but remembrances of local inundations, which at times have devastated the tropical regions of South America.

The Maoris of New Zealand had a remarkable legend of the Deluge, remarkable because of its close resemblance to the account contained in Genesis. According to this intelligent race of savages, men had become very numerous on the earth and were involved in perpetual strife. A wave of skepticism had, moreover, swept over mankind, so that the worship of Tane and the other gods was neglected. Indeed, men openly denied that the deities had done what tradition had credited them with doing, and, instead of revering the prophets, Parawhenua-me and Tupa-nui-a-uta, they abused and scoffed at them. Parawhenua and his brother prophet endured this ill-treatment for a considerable time, but, finding all exhortation and all patience unavailing, they resolved upon radical means to cleanse the earth of its corruption. Building themselves a raft of light timber trees, they called upon the gods to so flood the earth as to convince men of the power of Tane.

Their prayer was heard and granted. For five days and five nights the rain descended in torrents, but only the two prophets and a few others, including a woman, escaped the death-engulfing waters. The story goes on to relate the adventures these few privileged souls had on the bosom of the flood, how they anxiously looked for and interpreted the signs in the heavens for its abatement, and with what joy they beheld the reappearance of land and the presence of a rainbow in the sky, which was to them a sign of safety. The other Australasian legends of the Deluge are simple and childish in their make-up, and probably refer to local floods. The natives of the Society Islands tell how a fisherman excited the wrath of Ruahata, god of the sea, by waking him when he was asleep among the corals, and how in his fit of anger Ruahata caused the ocean to leave its bounds and to deluge the earth. Yet strangely enough, he spared the fisherman and his wife from destruction, but only to inflict on them the task of re-peopling the world.

There are many other legends of the Deluge, but of comparatively little importance. The Norse and other Aryan peoples all relate stories of the Flood, but so mixed up are these in their cosmogonies that it would be burdensome to the reader to give them here. It will be seen from the traditions already related that the belief in a deluge is almost universal among mankind, being found in the remotest parts of the earth and even among races so low in their intelligence as to be only able to count on their fingers. Yet it is a singular anomaly that the Negroes of Africa know nothing of a deluge, and that the Egyptians, the most ancient of all peoples, only make a few doubtful references to it. If there was a deluge, we may well ask why no records of it are left on the monuments of Egypt, and why the Negro race has not preserved its

memory. The fact is of no little importance that these two great African races—the Egyptians and the Negroes—have lost, or else never had, the story of the Deluge which has clung so persistently to the folk-lore of other peoples.

In addition to the remembrance of the Flood in their traditions, many nations commemorate the event in their religious rites. According to Bryant,¹ the ship Isis, in the Egyptian mysteries, was an emblem of the Ark, and the same writer points out, in detail, religious observances in other countries in which the Ark was treated with reverence, and Noah and his family (under different names, of course) almost worshiped. Further, coins and medals have been found in Greece and other countries of the ancient world, notably Phrygia, which bear imprinted on them pictorial allusions to the Ark and the circumstances attending the Deluge. On one coin, minted in the reign of Philip the Elder, is found the name NOE inscribed “on a floating chest or ark, within which a man and a woman are seen seated, and to which a bird on the wing is represented as bearing a branch.”

Now, what is the conclusion naturally forced upon us by the universality of these Deluge traditions, and especially by their remarkable similarity to each other? Christian writers, approaching the subject with preconceived ideas and anxious to prove the truth of biblical records, unhesitatingly answer that the conclusion is inevitable that there was a deluge. Other writers, desirous of destroying the authenticity of the Bible, eager to prove its fallibility, maintain that these traditions of a great deluge are nothing more than myths, that the biblical story itself is a myth, just as much a myth as the story of the tortoise found in the mythologies of most races. Both these schools of writers are biased in their point of view, and both

¹ *Mythology of Ancient Peoples.*

are unscientific in their attitude towards the problem. They set out to prove a theory rather than to elicit the facts; their judgments bear the stamp of personal bias, and so we must accept them with reservation. In our consideration of this question we must be willing to face the facts, no matter to what conclusion they may lead us.

Some of these Deluge traditions, such as the Polynesian, Brazilian, some of the North American Indian, and possibly the Chinese, undoubtedly refer to local phenomena. This is the opinion of that eminent philosophic traveler, Humboldt; and also of Max Müller, the well-known mythologist and scholar. In his "Contributions to the Science of Mythology," the latter says: "There are certain mythological ideas, such as the Deluge, by which their very recurrence among many and widely separated nations shows that they did not arise from some isolated historical fact, as even Huxley seemed to imagine, but that they express physical phenomena which occur and recur every year, and all over the globe." We cannot look into many of these traditions without admitting that Müller's explanation of their existence is probably the true one, but yet it is utterly inadequate to account for them all. The striking similarity of most of these legends demands another theory. We cannot put them all down to coincidence. It is extremely unlikely, though not impossible, that two nations separated by a vast body of water and not knowing of each other's existence, and differing, moreover, in their customs and modes of thought, should invent the same story or narrate a similar event in the same way. How, then, are we to explain the analogies between the Mexican and the Hebrew stories of the Deluge, how are we to account for the common features in many of these traditions, namely, the providential escape of from two to eight persons in an ark or

upon a high mountain, the sending out of birds to ascertain the state of the earth, and the preservation of pairs of every kind of animals? And when we further note that the birds sent out to the earth correspond to each other in the various legends, and that there are even agreements in the length of the flood's duration, not to mention the correspondences which philologists have traced in the names given to Noah and his family, etc., we must needs find a theory for these traditions other than that they merely describe local and repeated phenomena. The nature-myth theory of Dr. Tylor¹ clears up much of the difficulty; it may even account exclusively for some of the legends. But even it will not satisfactorily or fully answer the question: How comes it that so many traditions of a deluge, all more or less alike, are found among the most diverse and widely separated races? The only theory left us is that of historical connection. And this is probably the best solution of the problem yet offered. Of all the traditions of the Deluge we can only say positively of a few that they are indigenous in the countries in which they were found. We have seen that the Indian and Greek traditions betray signs of Semitic influence, that the American Indian legends bear the stamp of Christian teaching, or else refer only to local floods.

That there has been a process of borrowing going on is irrefutable; but from whom, we may well ask, did the Mexicans or the Maoris borrow their traditions,—traditions which startle us by their analogies to the Semitic narratives? The great probability is that they never borrowed them at all, but that they have preserved them from time immemorial. Taking everything into account, the unbiassed student of comparative mythology and philology is forced to admit that the present great divisions of humanity probably radiated from a common

¹ Cf. *Early History of Mankind*.

center. If this be so, then it is not altogether inconceivable that before the separation of tribes from the original home took place some great mishap—such as an exceedingly destructive inundation—occurred to the human race which so indelibly impressed itself upon the human mind as never to be erased by centuries or vicissitude. And I may here remark that the memory of this great event would be kept fresh by every minor flood which subsequently took place; for every time the overflow of a river devastated the lands of a tribe, the story of *the great overflow* would be revived and thus perpetuated from generation to generation. That these traditions of the Deluge are mostly modifications of one original story, a story which must have been impressed upon the human mind before the dispersion of the human family took place, is the conclusion of many scholars of no mean repute, and of scholars not noted for their devotion to orthodoxy. François Lenormant, in a lengthy review of Deluge myths in the *Contemporary Review* for November, 1879, concludes his article thus:—

“But as the case now stands, we do not hesitate to declare that, far from being a myth, the Biblical Deluge is a real and historical fact, having, to say the least, left its impress on the ancestors of three races—Aryan, or Indo-European, Semitic, or Syro-Arabian, Chamitic, or Kushite—that is to say on the three great civilized races of the ancient world, those which constitute the higher humanity—before the ancestors of those races had as yet separated, and in the part of Asia together inhabited.”

It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the scientific aspects of the Deluge controversy. Suffice it to say that science does not deny the possibility of a great cataclysm having occurred in Asia, either by a submergence of the land or the overflow of rivers; but it does deny that an inundation such as described in Genesis could have enveloped the whole earth or covered high mountains. A discussion of the geologi-

cal evidence for and against the Deluge is, I repeat, not within the scope of the present article. We are not here concerned with the testimony of science; we have only to do with the testimony of man. An examination, brief and incomplete though it has been, into the traditions, folk-lore, and religious rites of various peoples has revealed the highly interesting fact that the story of the Deluge is not confined to the chronicles of a single race, but is found among every great division of humanity except the Negroes. Thus does man almost universally testify in his traditions and religions to the outpourings of divine wrath upon the wickedness of his ancestors,—to the almost entire destruction of the race by a terrible deluge.