

ARTICLE VII.

THE GLACIAL EPOCH, AND THE NOACHIAN
DELUGE.

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III.

It has been commonly supposed that Noah landed on Mount Ararat. The Bible does not so teach, however; for it does not say, "Ararat," but, "the mountains of Ararat," referring, evidently, to a district. The fact that Mount Ararat has two peaks, one about forty-five hundred feet lower than the other, does not justify the assumption that this particular mountain was meant by the Bible expression, although the name has survived as a designation for the two peaks in question. It therefore seems clear that the words are general in their application and not particular. They probably have reference to some indefinite point on a range of mountains in Armenia, in a region then known as Ararat, which may have included the present Ararat, the name having ultimately survived as a designation for the most conspicuous mountain in the neighborhood. Strange as the landing seems, — inland, up-stream, and some hundreds of miles northward from the point of departure, — it is by no means inexplicable, if all the facts are considered.

The Persian Gulf has a narrow entrance flanked by headlands, beyond which it broadens out into a bay of large dimensions. This is a dominating factor in the problem; for the first tidal waves from the Indian Ocean had to pass through this narrow inlet and then spread themselves over the surface of

the great basin beyond before they could reach the Euphrates valley. When that point was finally attained, their fury was spent; and, while they must have continued to rise with a rapidity that was frightful, their power to destroy by violence had been reduced to a minimum. The ark was therefore lifted by the advancing flood and not wrecked by an avalanche of water. As the upheavals grew in power, the tidal waves were also intensified; but a floating vessel would be carried forward with little danger from that particular source.

Before each wave culminated and began its return, a new one probably overtook it and forced it onward; and, in this way, the "head" finally became sufficient to carry the water, and the ark, over the highlands of Armenia, beyond which other waves from the Atlantic by this time must have begun their work of devastation. Somewhere in the general region of the Black Sea, whither the strange craft was probably wafted, the inevitable reaction finally took place, and the ark must then have been carried approximately in the direction of the strongest current. It is not necessary to suppose that Ararat itself was sighted in the upward voyage; for it would seem to be too far to the eastward to be in line with the natural movement of the waters under the conditions mentioned. It is therefore not necessary to conclude that it was covered at all; for the "high mountains" of the revised text — the old version has "hills" — must be the mountains within the horizon of the observers in the floating ark. This is plainly the meaning of Genesis vii. 19,¹ and the conclusion is obvious.

¹ Even in verse 20, where both versions have "mountains," the Hebrew word is the same (*har*). It means "mount," "hill," "hill country" (cf. Josh. xiii. 6, where the same word is used in the original), and it is not well to force this term by assuming that it means more than it says, for Oriental languages are not given to understating facts, while they do lean to Hyperbole. The same

According to the story, all the high hills and the mountains were covered; but the mountains were those within their range of vision,—they could not have known about any others,—and these probably disappeared from sight one after another beneath the waves, as they were swept towards them by the advancing flood. Other and higher mountains were not necessarily submerged, and Ararat may have been of the number. Awful breakers took the place of submergence for these.

The Genesis narrative implies that the ark drifted for many weeks after the catastrophe, which seems to have occupied forty days from its beginning to its culmination. For one hundred and ten days after that, things were trembling in the balance, so-to-speak, and there was a ceaseless ebb and flow. Re-adjustment then began and continued for many months. It was accompanied by a change in the weather according to Genesis viii. 1–3. Some combination of conflicting currents now swept the ark far enough to the east to strand it at last on a mountain in the region described above, which is recognized by Kiepert's "Atlas Antiquus," although no Mount Ararat is found in that excellent authority.

In the meantime the released ice had contributed enormously to the bulk of the shifting waters, and this had kept them deep enough to cover the high hills and even some of the mountains,

word (*har*) is used for mountains in the rest of the narrative. Although it is rendered "mountain" over four hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament, it is also rendered "hill" more than fifty times. The true content of the Hebrew term is the only sound basis of judgment. This story was not written primarily for men of the twentieth century, but for the ancient Hebrews. How, then, shall it be judged,—by modern educational standards, or with a due regard for the limitations and restricted ideas of the men for whom it was originally intended? And if it has a broader application, as this story undoubtedly has, is that application primary and fundamental, or secondary and incidental? In these matters there is room for thought and improvement. (See below.)

because the affected portions of the ocean bed had not yet begun the process of settling to their present level from the elevation at which they had been left by the successive upheavals. The level of the sea had to correspond, and the inordinate precipitation had added its quota to the swollen waters.¹ The problem of where so much water came from is therefore not difficult to solve. As it subsided and the fog and the mist dispersed, the tops of the mountains gradually became visible, and a little more than a year after the date of their embarkation the survivors left the ark to begin life anew.

As to the notion that Noah had living specimens of all the world's animals — carnivora and herbivora — in his vessel, it is perhaps enough to say that he probably had a sufficient task on hand in the construction of his ship without taking a trip on foot to Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the two Americas, none of which can have been known to him, to gather and drive to the Euphrates valley animal pairs from all parts of the earth against the day of his embarkation. Comment is unnecessary. The language refers merely to such animals as he was able to find in his own part of the world, and the expression "all the earth" means only what was to him all the earth. It could not signify the earth of modern Geography, or much more than the narrow limits of Mesopotamia, which certainly embraced "all the earth" from his standpoint.

The animals of that region, then, were the ones which he collected, and the behavior of wild or semi-wild creatures on the eve of a great convulsion of nature is known to be such that they can be handled in a manner quite impossible at other times. Noah was not given a command that was beyond his powers of accomplishment, although popular notions on this

¹The appearance of a rainbow may have been due to this loss of a cloud cap, which was now destroyed sufficiently to permit it to be seen.

subject involve a task far greater than the fabled labors of Hercules. Indeed, they really involve one that was quite impossible of achievement, except by the aid of a stupendous miracle, requiring a vast and unnecessary waste of energy, a thing of which God is never guilty.

The great mammals of Europe perished in the flood. So did those of the Western Hemisphere. For the most part the carnivora and the herbivora of these regions were simply exterminated. So were those of Northern Asia, and it was certainly for the good of the coming Neolithic race that this was so. A few may have survived in the mountains. In Asia, in particular, such an event seems to have taken place; and it may be that elephants and some other tropical animals were still able to live in Kashmir and Thibet, where they certainly abounded at one time when those lands were apparently at a lower level than that which they now occupy.¹ In Africa, the elephant, the hippopotamus, and the rhinoceros with other animals appear to have survived, and the cause is not far to seek. The conformation of the highlands near the coast is such that the flood must have been turned back upon itself and the tidal waves broken so effectually that they were unable to reach the great central table-lands and plains of the interior,² although vast sections of the continent in the north and west were submerged along with Europe and the rest.

But if animals survived in some of these remote regions, men may have done so likewise. The Bible language does not forbid such an assumption, as has already been suggested; for even our own matter-of-fact and literal English allows its users

¹It is not impossible that they were still at a lower level than the present one and that their final elevation occurred at about this time. See Enc. Brit. (Ninth Ed.), vol. xl. p. 828. The common view has already been given.

²This may account for the lack of a flood legend among the Blacks.

to say, "Everybody knows," when only a few of one's intimates really do so. Again, "All the world was there" means merely that a respectable number of one's neighbors was observed at some local function. It does not imply that the entire population of the earth was present, and it would be absurd to take it so. "Everybody says so" does not even include all the inhabitants of one's native town or his place of residence. It merely means that Thomas and James and Peter and possibly a few other personal friends have casually made the same remark. Such forms of statement are typically Oriental; but the matter goes deeper than that.

All Noah's world really was affected, though his world was not our world; and, while all our world was affected too, the fact was beyond his ken. Of his world all that is stated was literally true, and it should be so taken. His account of the events was doubtless handed down to his posterity, and it probably reached the author of Genesis by direct tradition through the descendants of Shem. Beyond Noah's world the words did not and could not then apply; for no user of language can consciously put into it more than he himself knows. He may be led to use a form of words which can mean far more than he realizes; but that is beyond the scope of their original or local application, and it is therefore a secondary matter so far as he is concerned. The presumption is that it is also secondary so far as others are concerned, and the burden of proof lies with those who wish to reverse this arrangement.

Language always contains these possibilities; for no two persons ever use it with precisely the same limitations. The meaning of each individual word is a composite, with sharp central features and a nebulous border; and even then forms of expression may sometimes vary beyond their natural or prescribed limits. Hearing some amazing tale, a German may

exclaim: "Das ist Geschichte!" Its English equivalent, 'That is history,' reproduces its form with accuracy and precision; but it utterly fails to represent its content. Translation, in fact, is impossible; for the meaning is the same as that of the English slang phrase "That is a whopper!" The content of words is always affected by their environment and by the limitations of their users. For this reason care should be taken in interpretation not to overstep the boundaries set by the circumstances and the individual knowledge of the particular speakers or writers. If exception is to be made, there should be ample grounds for it, and even then the two meanings should be clearly differentiated so that the double application may be plain.

This general principle applies in many Bible passages besides the one in question, and it is well to recognize it. When Genesis makes Cain say (iv. 14) that he is driven out from "the face of the earth,"—the revision has "ground,"—it is plain that his home lands are all that he could have had in mind. He could not even conceive of the entire globe, unless all our ideas on this subject are false. So "all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth," in Isaiah's condemnation of Tyre (xxiii. 17), can hardly include much, if anything, beyond the countries bordering the Mediterranean. Other similar passages have corresponding limitations. Daniel varies the matter somewhat; but his "dominion to the end of the earth" (iv. 22) has a very limited range centering in the Euphrates valley. The same is true of his "people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth" (vi. 25). The "whole earth" which his fourth beast was to devour (vii. 23) was more extensive, including essentially the two general regions just mentioned; but it was still a very limited earth from our standpoint. The boundaries set by their knowledge must

determine the content of such passages, not the ideas of the present day; and the language is not even figurative, or was not when it was framed, since it contained no intentional or even conscious hyperbole. To them it meant exactly what it said, and on that basis alone can it be interpreted fairly or fairly judged. What the words may now mean after centuries of growth and expansion is irrelevant,¹ and any attempt to deal with them on such a basis shows a singular lack of historical perspective, to say the least.

¹ Cf. Wright, *Scientific Confirmations of Old Testament History*, pp. 184 ff. If objection is made to these statements on the ground that they assail the doctrine of inspiration, let it be remembered that no document can claim to be inspired if it fails to meet the needs of the persons for whom it was originally intended, and no document can meet those needs unless it uses the idioms of the people with the content which they are familiar with. The Bible does not fail; for it does exactly these things, which is all that is here claimed. But it does more than this: it adapts itself perfectly to the needs of every age and people, irrespective of the shifting ideas and changing nomenclature, including the content of words, that come and go with the centuries. Under the guidance of the Spirit, the Old Testament authors wrote better than they knew; but they also wrote as they saw, and their own words and expressions were not interfered with in the process, save as they themselves were guided in so selecting their terms that the language would meet the growing requirements of succeeding ages. God never rules out the human element. He uses it. A clear vision, an intense desire to know and tell the truth, and a complete dependence upon Him, rendered these men fit instruments for the work it was given them to do. They were led accordingly; but they were not mere automata worked by wires, so-to-speak, from heaven. In some instances ancient ideas ran counter to scientific fact; but to have formulated a statement in strict accordance with the truth would have involved a lack of understanding for many centuries and a defeat, to that extent, of the purpose of revelation. The limitation was ignored and the idea was used as it stood; but that merely shows God's wisdom and patience in so shaping his teachings to human comprehension that all men can understand. The present age knows what was meant with the same precision as have former generations of men, and that is the supreme test in the premises as well as the only real necessity.

This consideration makes it clear that the survival of a few individuals outside the narrow limits of Mesopotamia may not be excluded by the Bible language; and it is therefore possible that the words, having reference, as they do, to Noah's personal experience, are to be taken somewhat as the English expressions given above are, or as is the saying "The army was annihilated," a form of words which does not deny the possibility of survivors but rather implies them. Some of the accounts introduce elements that are not found in the Bible story, but are necessarily involved in the general catastrophe, and these may be regarded, in some cases, as actual traditions, handed down to posterity by genuine survivors of the deluge. The Assyrian flood legend and some others undoubtedly came from the same ultimate source as the Bible story; but the Chinese and certain others must have had a different origin.

The Assyrian version has taken on various mythological elements in the course of its transmission, while the Bible account has been handed down in all its purity; but that does not prevent the two from having come from the same fountain head in the first place. The Chinese version, on the contrary, although it is far more sober than the Assyrian and appears to faithfully record the frightful convulsions produced by successive earthquakes, contains no ark element and differs in other respects so materially from the Mesopotamian account that it cannot be referred to such a source. It is rather an independent record, based on local conditions, but recognizing the moral elements involved.¹ The truth is that conscience is the same in all men; and, when the catastrophe came, conscience awoke. The few who survived knew that

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. lxi. pp. 152 f. Some refer the story to a local flood; but it seems to have been too serious a catastrophe for that. The author has looked in vain for this version in the *Li Ki*, *Sacred Books of the East*, xxvii., xxviii.

the destruction was deserved, and they made their inference accordingly.

In the distant north, near the coast, where the climate was still mild because of the warm sea, some man may have escaped on some lofty mountain peak, whither he may have gone in search of food, since it was now November, the time when nuts are ripe; and some woman too, bound on a similar errand, may have survived and been attracted to him later by sounds suggesting a human neighbor marooned like herself in the midst of a waste of waters on a mountain that had been changed to an island by the flood. Other similar pairs may possibly be postulated in a few instances; for the Voguls,¹ who dwell on the slopes of the Ural Mountains in Perm and Tobolsk, in Western Siberia, tell how a "great man" and his wife made two dugouts from a poplar tree and twisted a rope of willow roots, some three thousand feet in length, which was used as a cable to hold the boats to an anchorage when the deluge finally came. Skins were used as a cover, and provisions for seven days were taken in each boat, with butter to ease the cable as it was drawn outward. Taking his advice, some of his tribe did likewise, while others gave no heed. He told them that the water was coming soon; for they had already heard its roar for two days. It came; and those without boats, those whose cables were too short, and those who had no butter to prevent excessive friction from the running cables, all perished. After seven days the waters began to subside; but the devastation was complete. In all of this there may be elements of truth; for it is possible that there were places where the flood was comparatively mild and of short duration. Mountain ranges in the interior of a continent far re-

¹ See Lenormant, *The Beginnings of History*, Trans. from the Second French Ed., pp. 453 f., or Urquhart, *New Biblical Guide*, vol. 1. pp. 271 f.

moved from the centers of disturbance in the ocean bed might certainly favor such an outcome; for they might escape all but the culminating waves of the uplift. For this reason the Vogul story cannot be lightly dismissed. It may be true.

The vaunted antiquity of the Chinese may likewise be no empty boast; for they may be the direct descendants of Cain. He wandered to the eastward, and he seems to have gone further and further away from his home. It is therefore possible that the Dravidian and Chinese races, along with the so-called Turanians of Central Asia, may be his posterity. The Sumerians, who seem to have set the fashion of migrating westward, may also be of the same stock; for a few survivors in Kashmir and on the mountains to the west would furnish all the needed material for the propagation of the races in question. Records of the Sumerians which were made in the early days of Babylonia, days not far removed from the time of the flood apparently, contain proper names that are still common among the Dravidians of Southern India; and this suggests the possibility that the two races — if they are not really one — came from a single original source somewhere between India and the Euphrates valley.

The Hindu Kush Mountains appear to have escaped the worst ravages of the deluge, although they may have suffered some alterations from earthquakes and possibly some from changes of level. Their situation is such that survivors from the flood could emigrate without difficulty to either or both of the countries named, and they may have done so. The possibility of such a parentage for the Asiatic races as that here suggested, relieves the difficulty of accounting for their languages, since a race division in the days of Adam would easily explain the peculiarities of their tongues and the impossibility of classifying them with those of other peoples.

This field is worthy of investigation. It has never been worked, apparently.

By the time the Semites were returning to the Euphrates valley from Armenia, the Aryans may have begun their migrations, which seem to have taken them first to the steppes of Southern Russia, whence some of them finally made their way eastward into India. This part of their history can still be traced in the Vedic literature. Others went west into the rest of Europe, but Southern Russia was the cradle of the race,¹ in all probability, and Japheth was its progenitor, although it has been supposed by scholars that no connection, either historical or linguistic, could ever be shown between them and the Semites. That position must now be definitely abandoned as no longer tenable; for a linguistic connection has been established by such works as Professor Hermann Möller's "Semitisch und Indogermanisch" and Dr. A. E. Drake's "Discoveries in Hebrew, Gaelic, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Basque, and other Caucasian Languages," which aim to show that there is a fundamental kinship underlying the Aryan and Semitic tongues. Each of these books is wonderfully suggestive and each is profoundly significant. They forge a new link in the evidence steadily accumulating of Bible accuracy and reliability from a historical standpoint.

The first migrations of the Sumerians into the Euphrates valley may have antedated the flood; for it is certain that they were found there at a very early period. These first settlers may have contributed materially to the prevalent wickedness, and they probably suffered extermination in the deluge. Later on, their kinsmen from the east, following in their wake, may have settled, during the ages subsequent to that event, in the

¹See Schrader and Jevons, *Prehistoric Antiquities of the Aryan Peoples*, Part IV. Chap. xiv., especially pp. 432 ff.

valley of Shinar (or Shumer), where the Semites found them on their return into Mesopotamia. It therefore seems likely that they had pushed westward, as the population in Asia began to increase once more, and were building themselves cities on the ruins of ancient Semitic and Sumerian towns. The returning Semites tarried with them; but the Hamites, who apparently accompanied the Semites in this migration, continued to the south and west, making their way ultimately into Egypt and beyond.

The Semites, in their turn, now began to rear new habitations; and, in time, they borrowed the Sumerian culture and adopted their ideographs, using them as their own.¹ Both races were there, according to the monuments, and a prolonged speech contest undoubtedly took place in consequence, evidences of which can still be found. Somewhere in this general connection the Babel incident of Genesis must be placed; for the double use to which the ideographs were put, must certainly have led to confusion in the end. Here, again, the content of the Bible language needs to be carefully studied; for some things have been read into it which are hardly correct in the light of recent evidence. It was to preserve their name rather than to reach heaven that the tower was projected, and the idea seems to have been borrowed from the Sumerians, whose power they evidently feared.

The moral elements, including the pride and the conceit, were doubtless there; but care should be taken not to interpret the forms of language then used, with too much literalness. They were an intense people, prone to excesses, and their ideas and expressions must be judged accordingly. In this connection, it may be said that if there is half as much in heredity as is often claimed, the Sumerian contingent may have come hon-

¹ See Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*, pp. 89 ff.

estly by such characteristics, as the direct descendants of Cain. The Asiatic and more especially the Chinese disregard of life, including their own, may not be altogether surprising on the same basis. The possibility that a few of Cain's posterity may have survived the flood on the mountains mentioned, and on the lofty plateau near by, which has been aptly called "the roof of the world," offers a simple solution of difficulties that have long seemed hopeless and insurmountable.

If these conjectures are in harmony with the facts, the story of the ark came into Babylonia with the returning Semites, but soon became common property. It was dealt with accordingly. One thing is made clear by the Assyrian flood tablets, if they are at all reliable in their statement of contemporary facts; namely, the existence of sacred writings before the time of the deluge. Such writings, the tablets say, were to be buried in the city of Sippara (or Shurippak) in anticipation of that dire event.¹ They also state that the survivors returned and dug them up after its occurrence. It may be inferred that there were such writings, and that they were buried by the flood and afterward found by the Sumerians while they were leveling off the surface of the ruins to rebuild. The presence of these statements in the tablets must have some significance, and it seems likely that they arose from the recovery of ancient writings or sacred records in some such way as that suggested. The suspicion that we may have parts of Noah's log-book is therefore not without foundation, apart from the internal evidence,² for, in addition to the above facts, it is clear that the art of writing must long antedate the year 4000 B.C., since it is impossible to account for the conditions found, on any other basis.³ What, then, was the date of the flood?

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. lxiv. pp. 149 ff.

² See *Ibid.*, vol. lxiii. pp. 510 ff.

³ See Clay, *l. c.*, pp. 19 ff., 138.

Many replies to this question have been given; but it is doubtful whether any of them constitute an answer. The evidence bearing on the subject deserves a separate treatment, and certain neglected elements require recognition. They will receive it in the argument that is to follow.

In the meantime, let the following facts be remembered. Difficulties there must be; but there is no need of exaggerating them. The divinity of Christ is a difficulty; but so is radium, which seems to defy all the known laws of nature. What radium is to all other material substances, Christ was to other men. That should suffice. As to the supposition that the Bible story of the flood includes two separate accounts, as set forth in the two-document theory, — a thing which may trouble some, — little need be said. According to Exodus xviii., Moses appointed subordinate judges. They must have had a written document to consult; for he could not attend personally to all their questions about the law, which they had to know to do their work. In Exodus xxviii., the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood appears. They too needed a written authority, and there is no question but that Moses could write. Two documents, both prepared by Moses, are thus provided for. They would naturally differ somewhat, and in time would tend to be united into one. This simple supposition, which no one seems to have even thought of, appears to meet all the difficulties, including those of the critics themselves.